

**A SOCIAL-SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF
THE STATUS OF WIDOWS IN
1 TIMOTHY**

1998

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A SOCIAL-SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF THE STATUS OF WIDOWS IN 1 TIMOTHY

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**SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE
MAGISTER ARTIUM**

**IN THE DEPARTMENT OF BIBLICAL LITERATURE
IN THE FACULTY OF THEOLOGY
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF DURBAN-WESTVILLE**

DATE SUBMITTED: NOVEMBER 1998

SUPERVISOR: MR. J.A. SMIT



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Summary

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

A brief overview concerning the scholarly issues related to the topic of this thesis is provided in the first chapter. These comprise: 1) the circumstances under which the posing of the problem arose; 2) the research problem; 3) the overarching theoretical context; 4) the hypothesis; 5) the areas within which key questions concerning the problem arose; 6) the posing of key critical questions; 7) objectives; 8) the value of the research; 9) the theoretical approach; 9) the research approach and methodology.

The particular sequence of headings starts out from a historically-specific situation. This is important because the problematising of a particular phenomenon (such as the plight of widows) must arise from particular circumstances. If this does not happen, then the posing of the problem as well as its research would be irrelevant, both contextually and universally speaking. Taking this stance, however, does not mean that one can work outside a broadly-defined and overarching theoretical problematic. All research - whether acknowledged or not - links up with particular models. As such, problematisation seeks points of contact and linkage with previous theorising and research. On this level, with available information, a preliminary hypothesis directing the research, may be formulated.

In order to engage the problematic more particularly, the areas in which questions concerning the problem arise, may be formulated. Key critical questions within these areas, again, bring greater detail to the problematic. The posing of the objectives, theoretical approach developed and their articulation with methodology bring focus to the study.

1.1 Circumstances of the Problem

In the pastoral work conducted in the Independent Methodist Church of Africa, it was the researcher's personal experience that it often happens that widows find themselves in destitute situations. Being black and being women, such persons are already disadvantaged. In addition, it often happens that they are cut off from family, community and cultural life and they have to fend for themselves - some are forced into prostitution. In preliminary research into the significance of 1 Timothy in its late first century context as well as in scholarly work on the plight of widows in other parts in Africa, it was found that there exists some remarkable similarities. Within the context of the ministry of the church, such similarities may contribute to our understanding of the status and experiences of widows as well as assist us in the ministering of the gospel as a message which makes a difference to peoples' lives in real terms.

1.2 Research Problem

The *problem* to be researched is the plight of widows in a particular African Christian society but also in late first century Mediterranean society and the incentives to create a better situation for such persons. Hermeneutically speaking, this problem links up with Old Testament concerns as well as with current experiences of widowed women in society at large. Within particular historical circumstances and a particular historically-developed social world, the author of 1 Timothy provided one way to approach this problem. Within the Christian tradition, this approach may assist church members and ministers to constructively engage the circumstances determining the status and plight of the widowed woman.

1.3 Overarching Theoretical Context

In order to engage this complex problematic, a comprehensive theoretical

model addressing its various elements must be developed. The *overarching theoretical context* within which it is undertaken, is in terms of the Social-scientific study of the Bible. This approach has been most definitively introduced into New Testament scholarship by the 1981 work of Bruce Malina - *The New Testament World. Insights from Cultural Anthropology*. The research of the Context Group which developed from Malina's basic approach, has since its inception in 1984, achieved some remarkable results. Publications by John Elliott, Jerome Neyrey, Richard Rohrbaugh, Halver Moxnes, Denis Duling and David Rhoads amongst others, have opened the way to innovative research into the significance of the New Testament in its own time and context. The study of social and cultural anthropology as well as economic and political circumstances of the time form an integrated part of the Social-scientific study of the New Testament.

Since there is a causal connection between a particular socio-cultural situation (with its institutions) and the 'plight' of widows, 1 Timothy's engagement with their status as well as the changing of their status and experience of the widowed state can be best addressed within the context of the development of Social-scientific studies. It is then within this complex which the theory for addressing the problem concerning the status of women must be developed. Since this is a dynamics and not merely a systemic status, the most appropriate approach within which the theory must be developed is that of social-symbolic interactionism.

1.4 Hypothesis

The basic *hypothesis* is that there are culture and society-specific factors which determine the status and quality of life of widows. These factors are of a symbolic nature. Since the gospel message itself is symbolic, it may provide elements which can be used to conscientise church members concerning the plight of widows in society generally speaking, challenge them to

constructively assist widows and provide a way in which widows themselves can lay claim to their alternated status in terms of the gospel message.

In Social and Cultural Anthropology, status is related to the social stratification of and culturally-determined behaviour in a society. As such, it forms an important critical concept in terms of which relations, ritual, circumstances, honour and shame and in general the condition in which people find themselves, can be studied. Since women's status was embedded in the honour of males, the widow did not have a male in which she could still retain honour, could defend her shame, and in general provide her with the social status necessary to handle her affairs. This situation led to prostitution (in some cases) and left women in a variety of other social predicaments. The author of 1 Timothy's concern for widows and his recommendations regarding widows and the responsibility of the church for them is evident in the large section of this epistle which is dedicated to widows.

The challenge of the gospel to serve people irrespective of whether they conform to culture- and society- specific norms and mores may provide an important incentive to create practically operating ways and means through which the church can serve these people. Alternatively, as canonical text, 1 Timothy provides a basis in terms of which widows may lay claim to their actual participation within church life, and through the gospel message, with society at large.

1.5 Areas for Questioning

The major questions which are addressed relate to the status of women and more particularly that of widows in first century Mediterranean society, the identification of the recommendations of 1 Timothy, their impact on the symbolically-structured lifeworld of socially-determined kingroup formations

and the potential for resultant change in their status. These include questions related to the following:

1.5.1 the Social-scientific definition and description of status in the late first century Mediterranean World as it relates to social stratification and anthropological conventions related to kingroup formations;

1.5.2 definition and description of the status of women, especially in terms of the same generalized first century Mediterranean socially stratified society and anthropological conventions;

1.5.3 a description of how institutions determine the status of women and especially widows;

1.5.4 the recommendations of 1 Timothy and how it relates to the symbolic world functioning as symbolically-structured background for these recommendations;

1.5.5 the interaction of the symbolically-backed recommendations of 1 Timothy with the symbolically-structured kingroup formation determined by social stratification and anthropological conventions.

1.5.6 the description of the theological argument underlying the argument in 1 Timothy;

1.5.7 a comparative study of the result of 3-6 in terms of the current situation of women in South Africa, especially as it impacts on the situation of widows in Zulu society and the Independent Methodist Church of Africa.

1.5.8 in order to study the interaction as described in point 7, research related to the plight of widows in African society in general and in Zulu society in particular, the gospel message and guidelines from 1 Timothy may play an important role in empirical studies concerning the plight and status of women.

1.6 Key Critical Questions

Since the plight of widows are not only determined structurally and systemically but dynamically in the actual interaction between people, the best available paradigm within which the research and theory concerning social anthropology and social systems may be developed, is that of social symbolic interactionism. From this premise, the key critical questions for this dissertation are:

1.4.1 How can symbolic interactionism be described theoretically and what is the criticism against such an approach? How can it be developed for textual interpretation, hermeneutically?

1.4.2 How is status in the late first century Mediterranean World as it relates to social stratification and anthropological conventions related to kingroup formations to be defined and described social-scientifically?

1.4.3 What was the status of women and especially widows in terms of a generalised first century Mediterranean socially stratified society and anthropological conventions?

1.4.4 How do institutions determine the status of women and especially widows?

1.4.5 What is the tradition in which 1 Timothy 5:1-16 must be understood?

1.4.6 What are the recommendations of 1 Timothy and how do these relate to the symbolic world functioning as symbolically-structured background for these recommendations? How do the results of the exegesis relate to existing research on 1 Timothy?

1.4.7 What is the result of the interaction of the symbolically-backed recommendations of 1 Timothy with the symbolically-structured kingroup formation determined by social stratification and anthropological conventions?

1.4.8 What is the theological argument underlying the argument/recommendations in 1 Timothy? How do the results of the exegesis relate to existing research on 1 Timothy?

1.4.9 What is the result of a comparative study of the result of research on questions 1-8 in terms of the current situation of women/widows in Africa and South Africa, especially as it impacts on or can improve the situation of widows in Zulu society and the Independent Methodist Church of Africa.

1.4.10 How can empirical research assist in redressing the situation of widows?

1.7 Objectives

On the basis of these questions, the major objectives for this thesis can be formulated as follows:

1.7.1 to research the status of widows in first century Mediterranean society as it is determined by the cultural-anthropological symbolic universe of late first century social, economic and political circumstances;

1.7.2 to research the culturally-induced plight of widows in late first century Mediterranean society and the incentives to create a better situation for such persons as found in 1 Timothy in terms of social symbolic interaction theory.

1.7.3 to research the status of widows generally in African society and more particularly in Zulu society;

1.7.4 to research the possibility of using 1 Timothy in Church ministries to improve the quality of life of widows.

1.8 Theoretical Approach

Theoretically, the study develops the hermeneutic use of the theory of symbolic interactionism as developed by George Herbert Mead and later by H Blumer. This takes place in the broader context of the hermeneutic use of cultural, anthropological and social theory, especially as symbolic interaction is determined by stratified societies. The basic hypothesis is that there are culture- and society-specific factors which determine the status and quality of life of widows. These factors are of a symbolic nature.

1.9 The Value of the Research - Nationally and Internationally

1.9.1 The Value of the Research - Nationally

a This research will provide information concerning the culturally-determined status and resultant circumstances of widows in three particular African contexts, namely in the following areas: 1) Pietermaritzburg - Bulwer; 2) Sizananjane; 3) Klipwal - Piet Retief; 4) Soweto; and 5) Springs.

b Evidence from empirical research will add to the limited knowledge available on the status and experiences of widows.

c The study of the interpretive impact of the relationship between an ancient canonical text and our own southern African context will provide incentives for the church to improve its service and to enhance programmes of redress amongst women, especially widows.

d While this study does not deny that the church may play a similar role concerning the plight of widows in other ethnic-specific societies, this research may assist churches as well as other organizations aiming at redressing the status and circumstances of widows in African community life.

1.9.2 Value of the Research: Internationally

a This research will provide information concerning the culturally-determined status and resultant circumstances of widows in first century Mediterranean society.

b The symbolically-determined interaction between recommendations such as found in 1 Timothy and cultural contexts requiring redress, will provide information on the interpretive impact of the relationship between text and context.

c Theoretically, the development of symbolic interactionism in terms of hermeneutics will make a contribution to the use and importance of this theory in both understanding how the status of people is determined and how it in turn determines interaction of people in society.

1.10 Research Approach and Methodology

The research approach and methods consecutively follow the chapters of the dissertation.

Question 1 is dealt with in *chapter two* under the heading of 'Symbolic Interactionism and Textual Interpretation'.

Chapter three provides an overview of existing socio-scientific research on women and more particularly, widows, in the first century Mediterranean context. Questions 2,3 and 4 are addressed in chapter three under the heading of 'Mediterranean Society and Widows'.

Chapter four focuses more particularly on the Biblical background or tradition to 1 Timothy. It overviews Old Testament and New Testament texts dealing with widows. This chapter answers question 5.

Chapter five deals with questions 6 and 7 and provides a symbolic-interactionist interpretation of 1 Timothy 5:3-16.

Chapter six situates this exegesis in the broader context of the theology of 'God our Saviour', shared with Luke 1:47, Titus 1:3; 2:10; 3:4 and Jude 1:25 but also developing a tradition strand from the Old Testament (2 Sm 22:3; Ps 17:7; 106:21; Is 43:3,11; 45:15,21; 49:26; 60:16; 63:8; Jr 14:8; Hs 13:4) within the context of the issues addressed in 1 Timothy. Here, question 8 is addressed, especially in so far as there is a distinction within the tradition between God functioning as saviour, God appointing a saviour or Jesus functioning as saviour. The respective headings are as follows: for chapter four, it is 'A Symbolic Interactionist Interpretation of "Widow" in the Old Testament and the New Testament; for chapter five, 'A Symbolic Interactionist Interpretation of 1 Timothy 5:3-16'; and for chapter six, 'Contextualising "Widows" in the Theology of "God the Saviour"'.

Questions 9-10 are addressed in *chapter seven* by the empirical research. The information thus acquired, is used to study the possible use and

effect of the use of 1 Timothy by the church to redress the situation of women and more particularly widows. A qualitative questionnaire was used and interviews conducted to collect material from widows. The ultimate ethical responsibility of this study is to provide feedback to both the local church and the widows interviewed concerning the research. For chapter seven, the heading is then, 'Qualitative Interactive Empirical Research for Widows'.

The conclusion, *chapter eight*, summarises and condenses the research. This is done in terms of the nine questions which informed the research.

1.11 Summary

In this first chapter, the researcher has provided a brief overview of the research. The issues which were untangled are the circumstances of the problem; the stating of the research problem; the overarching theoretical context in which the research was conducted; the hypothesis; the areas for questioning; the key critical questions; the objectives of the research; the theoretical approach; the value of the research - nationally and internationally; and finally the research approach and methods.

CHAPTER TWO

SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM AND TEXTUAL INTERPRETATION

2.0 Introduction

Herbert Blumer coined the term 'symbolic interactionism' first in a rather 'offhand way' in an article of 1937. However, it caught on and developed into a major area of study. Significant American scholars who contributed to this area of study include George Herbert Mead, John Dewey, W.I. Thomas, Robert E. Park, William James, Charles Horton Cooley, Florian Znaniecki, James Mark Baldwin, Robert Redfield and Louis Wirth (Blumer 1969:1). Despite the numerous insights these scholars developed, it was Blumer's (1969) book, *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method* which mapped the field and provided certain parameters for its study. It is especially his first chapter, 'The Methodological Position of Symbolic Interactionism' which is of value in this regard. In order to position this dissertation, this chapter provides the primary guidelines. In addition, insights of George Herbert Mead, Jonathan H. Turner, Ralph H. Turner and Josef Bleicher which is relevant to the dissertation, will also be used.

The first key critical question which is posed for this dissertation was formulated as follows: How can symbolic interactionism be described theoretically and what is the criticism against such an approach? How can it be developed for textual interpretation, hermeneutically? For these questions, the seminal work of Herbert Blumer but also that of George Herbert Mead, Jonathan H. Turner and Josef Bleicher is used. The researcher uses these scholars' work to provide a theory and a methodology which answers these questions but which also sets the parameters for this study.

This chapter deals firstly with the work of Blumer (1969). This is done in three sections. The first deals with 'Positioning and Clarifying Symbolic

Interactionism'; the second, with the 'Guiding Principles of the Methodology of Symbolic Interactionism' and the third, with the 'Methodological Positioning of Symbolic Interactionism'. This comprises a close reading of Blumer's theorising, especially on the first part, because it laid the foundation for 'symbolic interactionist studies.

This section is followed by fourthly, a brief overview of Blumer's view of how George Herbert Mead's work provides the basis for his own theorising; fifthly, Ralph H. Turner's process role theory; sixthly, Jonathan H. Turner's comparison of the symbolic interactionist theories of Herbert Blumer, Manfred Kuhn and Ralph H. Turner; seventhly, Josef Bleicher's overview of points of appreciation and critique of symbolic interactionism; and eighthly, ethnomethodology and the further development of symbolic interactionism. The chapter concludes, ninthly, with a brief introduction to symbolic interactionism in the context of the analogical study of social symbolic realities present in a current situation as well as in an ancient canonical text.

2.1 Positioning and Clarifying Symbolic Interactionism

Blumer (1969:2ff) grounds symbolic interactionism on three premises. The first is that 'human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them'; the second, that the 'source of meaning' is neither 'intrinsic to the thing that has it' nor a 'psychical accretion brought to the thing by the person for whom the thing has meaning' but 'the process of interaction between people'; and the third, that 'the use of meaning' is not merely an 'application' of meaning derived from social interaction but is itself 'a process of interpretation' (Blumer 1969:2-4). More closely specified, this section first elaborates on each of these premises and then continues to overview Blumer's (1969:2-21) description of the 'nature of human society or human group life'; the 'nature of social interaction'; the 'nature of objects';

the 'human being as an acting organism'; the 'nature of human action'; 'interlinkage of action'.

2.1.1 The Three Premises of Symbolic Interactionism

The first premise: 'human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them'. Blumer (1969:2) describes the things as follows:

physical objects, such as trees or chairs; other human beings as a mother or a store clerk; categories of human beings, such as friends or enemies; institutions, as a school or a government; guiding ideals, such as individual independence or honesty; activities of others, such as their commands or requests; and such situations as an individual encounters in daily life.

Even though this first premise may seem quite obvious, the problem is that both 'social science' and 'psychological science' do not treat it as central to their studies. For psychology, such factors as 'stimuli, attitudes, conscious or unconscious motives, various kinds of psychological inputs, perception and cognition, and various features of personal organization' are used to account for human behaviour. For sociologists, again, factors such as 'social position, status demands, social roles, cultural prescriptions, norms and values, social pressures and group affiliation' are used to describe human conduct. In both these disciplines,

'the meaning of things for the human beings who are acting are either bypassed or swallowed up in the factors used to account for their behaviour'.

It is important to account for 'the meaning of the things toward which human beings act' and not only for the factors which produce them and the resulting behaviour. This is important because one can then account for precisely the meaning which *mediates* between causative factors and resulting conduct (Blumer 1969:3).

The second premise: the 'source of meaning' is neither 'intrinsic to the thing that has it' nor a 'psychical accretion brought to the thing by the person

for whom the thing has meaning' but 'the process of interaction between people'. Phenomenological realism in philosophy seeks to describe meaning 'intrinsic to the thing that has it, as being a natural part of the objective makeup of the thing'. The corresponding view in psychology is that "meaning" is a psychical accretion brought to the thing by the person for whom the thing has meaning'. The 'person's psyche, mind, or psychological organization' is expressed in the 'psychical accretion'. 'Sensations, feelings, ideas, memories, motives, and attitudes' constitute the meaning of a thing. The sensations within the object or the subject viewing it provide the meaning of the thing. In this approach, the 'processes of the formation of meaning' are limited to elements such as 'perception, cognition, repression, transfer of feelings, and association of ideas' (Blumer 1969:4).

For symbolic interactionism, meaning is neither intrinsic to the thing nor intrinsic to a person's psychological makeup. Rather, it is in the 'process of interaction between people' i.e.

'[t]he meaning of a thing for a person grows out of the ways in which other persons act toward the person with regard to the thing. Their actions operate to define the thing for the person. Thus, symbolic interactionism sees meanings as social products, as creations that are formed in and through the defining activities of people as they interact' (Blumer 1969:4f)

*The third premise: 'the use of meaning' is not merely an 'application' of meaning derived from social interaction but is itself 'a process of interpretation'. Similar to the phenomenological and psychological approaches above, those who see meaning as 'application' sees it as persons just applying already established meanings. These are either caused meanings or the meanings in the psychological makeup of a person. Rather, 'the use of meanings by a person in his action involves an interpretive process'. This interpretive process has two elements. *Firstly*, the person is in communication with him- or herself. He or she has to point out to him- or herself what 'the things towards which he [or she] is acting'; he or she 'has to point out to*

himself the things that have meaning'. *Secondly*,

'by virtue of this process of communicating with himself, interpretation becomes a matter of handling meanings. The actor selects, checks suspends, regroups, and transforms the meanings in the light of the situation in which he is placed and the direction of his action interpretation is a formative process in which meanings are used and revised as instruments for the guidance and formation of action meanings play their part in action through a process of self-interaction (Blumer 1969:5).

In order to elaborate 'an analytic scheme of human society and human conduct' in terms of symbolic interactionism, one must address the basic ideas or 'root images' which 'depict the nature' of 'human groups or societies, social interaction, objects, the human being as an actor, human action, and the interconnection of the lines of action'. This will provide the basic parameters in terms of which symbolic interactionism sees human society and conduct (see Blumer 1969:6).

2.1.2 Nature of Human Society or Human Group Life

In society, human beings engage themselves in action (Blumer 1969:6). It is through their action that humans encounter one another. Action is also the motivating factor for this encounter. All such action takes place in situations and the succession of situations in which actors find themselves. Actors may act individually, collectively, on behalf of others, or as representatives of an organization or a group. This means that 'human groups or society *exists in action* and must be seen in terms of action' (Blumer 1969:6). This is the basic scheme in terms of which symbolic interactionism functions and it stands over and against conceptual schemes based in culture or social structure.

Whereas symbolic interaction's basic scheme is provided by 'action', culture studies sees it in terms of 'custom, tradition, norm, value, rules' or something similar. Social structure studies again sees it in terms of 'social position, status, role, authority, and prestige' (Blumer 1969:6f). Like the other approaches already mentioned, these two complexes of studies do make

their contributions. However, they do not make 'action' central to their research. They do not 'respect the fact that in the first and last instances human society consists of people engaging in action'. The 'nature of the social action of human beings' provides the basic scheme in terms of which empirical studies must take place. This fact is both the point of departure as well as the endpoint of symbolic interactionism.

2.1.3 Nature of Social Interaction

The central feature of social interaction is that it comes about by virtue of the interaction of group members or 'individuals interacting with one another'. This takes place either as responses to other members' actions or in relation to others' actions. Social interaction is not based merely on the factors which are attributed to behaviour. This means that both sociological and psychological schemes which only treat the factors but not the actual interaction, are in the wrong, i.e. where a sociological scheme ascribe behaviour to factors such as 'status position, cultural prescriptions, norms, values, sanctions, role demands, and social system requirements'; and the 'typical' psychological scheme to factors such as 'motives, attitudes, hidden complexes, elements of psychological organization, and psychological processes'. Such approaches ignore the empirical social interaction between actors and jump from causal factors to the behaviour they supposedly produce. Social interaction does not concern factors but the interaction of actors (Blumer 1969:7).

The importance of this point is that social interaction '*forms* human conduct'. This means that

human beings interacting with one another have to take account of what each other is doing or is about to do; they are forced to direct their own conduct or handle their situations in terms of what they take into account. Thus, the activities of others enter as positive factors in the formation of their own conduct; in the face of the actions of others one may abandon an intention or purpose, revise it, check or suspend it, intensify it, or replace it. The actions of others enter to set what one

plans to do, may oppose or prevent such plans, may require a revision of such plans, and may demand a very different set of such plans. One has to *fit* one's own line of activity in some manner to the actions of others. The actions of others have to be taken into account and cannot be regarded as merely an arena for the expression of what one is disposed to do or sets out to do (Blumer 1969:8).

In this context, George Herbert Mead's distinction between two forms or levels of social interaction in human society - 'the conversation of gestures' and 'the use of significant symbols' - is important. Blumer (1969:8) calls them 'non-symbolic interaction' and 'symbolic interaction'.

Non-symbolic interaction takes place when one responds directly to the action of another without interpreting that action; symbolic interaction involves interpretation of the action. Non-symbolic interaction is most readily apparent in reflex responses [In symbolic interaction, one would] reflectively identify [the gesture] [and] endeavour to ascertain the meaning of [the gesture], that is, what the [gesture] signifies as to [one's] opponent's plan (Blumer 1969:8).

In this context, symbolic interaction is central. Symbolically interactive gestures must be interpreted in terms of the larger whole of which they are part - e.g. 'the shaking of a fist is an indication of a possible attack, or the declaration of war by a nation as an indication of a posture and line of action of that nation'. Gestures such as 'requests, orders, commands, cues, and declarations' are gestures which indicate to a respondent 1) the intention or plan of the actor; 2) what the respondent is to do in response to the intention or plan; 3) what the joint action of both actor and respondent should or could be when plan and response are articulated with one another; and 4) that both actor and respondent must be able to take one another's positions or roles. If any of these four processes are misunderstood, then there is a break-down in symbolic interaction.

When people follow these principles of human interaction - when they act individually, collectively or as agents of some organization - they both

fit their activities to one another and ... form their own individual conduct By virtue of symbolic interaction, human group life is necessarily a formative process and not a mere arena for the expression of pre-existing factors' as is the case when only the factors are studied (Blumer 1969:10).

2.1.4 Nature of Objects

The symbolic interaction within groups in society can be studied when one views all social interaction to take place in 'worlds' which people share. These worlds comprise of 'objects' which are the product of symbolic interaction. One can define an object as anything that can be indicated, pointed to or referred to such as a 'cloud, a book, a legislature, a banker, a religious doctrine, a ghost, and so forth'. They can be classified in the following categories:

a) physical objects such as chairs, trees, or bicycles; b) social objects such as students, priests, a president, a mother, or a friend [to which we may add, women, widows, orphans, the poor, etc.]; and c) abstract objects, such as moral principles, philosophical doctrines, or ideas such as justice exploitation, or compassion (Blumer 1969:10f).

As something which can be 'pointed to or referred to', an object has meaning for the person who does the referring, sets the parameters in which he or she 'is prepared to act toward it, and the way in which [one] is prepared to talk about it'. An object will have a different meaning for each kind of career a person referring to it, follows; or whether it is an insider or an outsider who does the referring. Centrally important for the study of objects in symbolic interactionism is that

the meaning of objects for a person arises fundamentally out of the way they are defined to him [or her] by others with whom he [or she] interacts.

In interaction, it is out of the reference of others - e.g. to chairs, the president, widows, etc. - that one learns. 'Out of a process of mutual indications, common objects emerge - objects that have the same meaning for a given set of people and are seen in the same manner by them'. This fact have two important consequences.

Firstly, if people learn from others about objects and these objects belong to a particular world - which they all share - then it means that they understand the ways in which they interact as well as interact meaningfully with others. However, if people were not exposed to the same learning process. they do not share the same meanings about objects and therefore the

world these objects belong to. When such people interact, with one another, they will not understand one another, even if they live close together. 'It follows that in order to understand the action of people it is necessary to identify their world of objects' (Blumer 1969:11).

Secondly, 'objects (in the sense of their meaning) must be seen as social creations'. They are 'being formed in and arising out of the process of definition and interpretation as this process takes place in the interaction of people' (Blumer 1969:11f). Since such meaning is continuously formed, learned and transmitted through a process of indication, it is necessarily social in nature. It is people within a group which form, change, sustain or transform objects within their world. Since the sustaining of meaning depends on whether the meaning is retained in socio-symbolic processes, they may change if social processes of interaction change regarding objects. This means that

from the standpoint of symbolic interactionism, human group life is a process in which objects are being created, affirmed, transformed, and cast aside. The life and action of people necessarily change in line with the changes taking place in their world of objects (Blumer 1969:12).

2.1.5 Human Being as an Acting Organism

The human being not only responds to others on the non-symbolic level but also acts towards others and interprets their actions or indications. This is possible - following Mead - because the individual has a 'self'.

The idea of a 'self' merely means that an individual can make his or her own actions an object. The individual recognises him- or herself and acts toward him- or herself 'on the basis of the kind of object he [or she] is to himself [or herself]'. This understanding, however, is not based on an individualistic perception.

Like other objects, the self-object emerges from the process of social interaction in which other people are defining a person to himself [or herself] [As Mead has pointed out], in order to become an object to himself a person has to see himself [or herself] from the outside. One can do this only by placing [oneself] in the position of others and viewing [oneself] from that position. The roles the person takes range from that of discrete individuals (the 'play stage'), through that of

discrete organized groups (the 'game' stage) to that of the abstract community (the 'generalized other'). We form our objects of ourselves through ... a process of role-taking (Blumer 1969:12f).

This notion that an individual has a self has an even more important element to it. This is that it enables [one] to interact with oneself. This is different from the psychological scheme where one studies such interaction as that between 'needs, or between emotions, or between ideas, or between the id and ego in the Freudian scheme'. This means that 'self-interaction exists fundamentally as a process of making indications to oneself'. In symbolic interactionism, such indications are used to direct one's actions (see Blumer 1969:13).

The human being is then 'an organism that interacts with itself through a process of making indications to itself'. This is radically different from a certain strand of social and psychology studies. The human being is not merely responding to factors aiming to organise it, e.g. 'stimuli, organic drives, need-dispositions, conscious motives, unconscious motives, emotions, attitudes, ideas, cultural prescriptions, norms, values, status demands, social roles, reference group affiliations, and institutional pressures. This deterministic view only focuses on the passive side of human life and is different from that of symbolic interactionism. Symbolic interactionism places sees the person as 'an organism that engages in social interaction with itself by making indications to itself and responding to such indications'. This means that the human being is positioned in a different way towards its environment. It does not merely 'respond'; rather, it has to deal with what it notes or indicates to itself. The human being

makes an object of what it notes, gives it meaning, and uses the meaning as the basis for directing its action. Its behaviour with regard to what it notes is not a response called forth by the presentation of what it notes but instead is an action that arises out of the interpretation made through the process of self-indication. In this sense, the human being who is engaging in self-interaction is not a mere responding organism but an acting organism - an organism that has to mold a line of action on the basis of what it takes into account instead of merely releasing a response to the play of some factor on its organization (Blumer 1969:15).

2.1.6 Nature of Human Action

Different from the view that the human being responds to his or environment, symbolic interactionism works with the notion that the human individual confronts a world which must be interpreted 'in order to act'. In particular situations, the individual ascertains 'the meaning of the actions of others' and constructs, maps out and guides his or her own 'line of action'. This is radically different from the sociological and psychological positions (referred to above) which 'ascribe[] human action to an initiating factor or a combination of such factors. Symbolic interactionism, however, makes central 'the process of self-interaction through which the individual handles his [or her] world and constructs his [or her] action'. Here, the door is opened

to the vital process of interpretation in which the individual notes and assesses what is presented to him [or her] and through which he [or she] maps out lines of overt behavior prior to their execution.

The factors an individual takes into consideration in planning to act and in actually acting comprise

wishes and wants, his [or her] objectives, the available means for their achievement, the actions and anticipated actions of others, his [or her] image of himself [or herself], and the likely result of a given line of action' (Blumer 1969:15). His [or her] conduct is formed and guided through such a process of indication and interpretation. In this process, given lines of action may be started or stopped, they may be abandoned or postponed, they may be confined to mere planning or to an inner life of reverie, or if initiated, they may be transformed.

This means that human action is not primarily determined by factors affecting humans. Rather, the 'activity of human beings consists of meeting a flow of situations'. In each of these situations, human being 'have to act' and they know that their 'action is built on the basis of what they note, how they assess and interpret what they note, and what kind of projected lines of action they map out'. 'One has to get inside of the defining process of the actor in order to understand his [or her] action'.

All the explanations concerning individuals above, can be equally

developed for collective social behaviour and joint collective action, e.g. in the behaviour of 'groups, institutions, organizations, and social classes'. Such social behaviour means that individuals fit their 'lines of action to one another'. As an acting organism, the group has a 'self', recognises itself and acts toward itself 'on the basis of the kind of object it is to itself. This means that the group collectively and interactively engages in such activities as 'indication', confronts other worlds which must be interpreted 'in order to act' - all this, in particular situations, etc. 'Joint or collective action is an outcome of such a process of interpretative interaction' (Blumer 1969:16).

2.1.7 Interlinkage of Action

The 'interlinkage of action' indicates that human group life - which 'consists of, and exists in, the fitting of lines of action to each other by the members of a group' - articulates lines of action in order to plan, map and construct 'joint action' (see Blumer 1969:16f). Joint action is the 'societal organization of conduct of different acts of diverse participants'. Even though the actions of the different participants differ, they are all articulated to form part of the joint action of the group. This means that such diverse actions are not merely an aggregate of actions. Rather, the character of the joint action lies in the ways the actions are interlinked and coordinated. Joint action can therefore not be refracted to its individual parts. '[M]arriage, a trading transaction, war, a parliamentary discussion, or a church service' each is collective in which participants participate collectively, i.e. as 'family, a business corporation, a church, a university, or a nation'. In this context, the task of the social scientist is precisely to 'study joint action' and the 'collectivities that engage in joint action'.

Central to the social scientist's study of joint action is to study it as the 'joint action of the collectivity ... an interlinkage of the separate acts of the participants', as a 'process of formation' and as such, as coming about

through 'the dual process of designation and interpretation'. As such, participants 'guide their respective acts by forming and using meanings' or by repeating 'well-established' forms of social action habitually. Three facts should lead the social scientist in the study of 'interlinkage' in joint action, i.e. 1) 'instances of joint action that are repetitive and stable'; 2) 'the extended connection of actions that make up so much of human group life'; and 3) that 'any instance of joint action, whether newly formed or long established, has necessarily arisen out of a background of previous actions of the participants'.

Firstly, instances of joint action that are repetitive and stable. This form of joint action - recurrent patterns of joint action - forms the most significant or largest area of action and interaction, especially in a 'settled society'.

In most situations in which people act towards one another they have in advance a firm understanding of how to act and of how other people will act. They share common and pre-established meanings of what is expected in the action of the participants, and accordingly each participant able to guide his [or her] own behavior by such meanings (Blumer 1969:17).

'Culture' and 'social order' studies usually focus on this level of study. These studies assume that the 'established order of living' is guided by 'rules, norms, values, and sanctions that specify to people how they are to act' in the various culture-specific situations which have been pre-coded.

This view is not correct. *Firstly*, human societies are not over-determined by 'pre-established forms of joint action'. 'New situations are constantly arising within the scope of group life that are problematic and for which existing rules are inadequate'. No society is free of problems and people continuously have to engage and address situations which the habitual ways of action do not cater for. *Secondly*, even if people participate in habitual and joint action, the pre-established meanings have to be reconstituted anew in each individual or collective repetition. Participants

must still interlink their action through 'designation and interpretation'. 'Repetitive and stable joint action is just as much a result of interpretative process as is a new form of joint action that is being developed for the first time'. Pressures of 'reinforcement ... incipient dissatisfaction as well as ... indifference' constantly arise and may either challenged, changed or affirmed. The social scientist cannot ignore these facts because it is these facts which not only effect retention of joint of social action but more importantly, that of change.

It is the social process in group life that creates and upholds the rules, not the rules that create and uphold group life (Blumer 1969:19).

Secondly, the extended connection of actions that make up so much of human group life. Group life is characterised by 'large complex networks of action involving an interlinkage and interdependency of diverse actions of diverse people'. Actions within these networks are usually 'regularised', e.g. in systems such as a farmer's growing of grain to the selling of bread in a shop; the arresting of a suspect to his release from prison; the diagnosing of physical or mental illness to recovery discharge; a child's upbringing and socialisation into a cultural system through his or her active participation in such a system to his continuation or not of the culture; etc. The same can be said of economic, agricultural, educational, legal, rural, urban, family systems, etc. This fact has been realised and consciously researched by sociologists - i.e. the regularised nature of such systems. However, by just focusing on the 'system' and not on the actual interaction among diverse people within the system, the actual fact of particular people acting within particular situations within a particular symbolic system, has not received the deserved attention it requires. Rather,

[o]ne should recognize what is true, namely, that the diverse array of participants occupying different points in the network engage in their actions at those points on the basis of using given sets of meanings. A network or an institution does not function automatically because of some inner dynamics or system requirements; it functions because people at different points do something, and what they do is a

result of how they define the situation in which they are called to act (Blumer 1969:19).

Such a focus will provide the opportunity to study how systems actually are continued and perpetuated or change due to the interpretative acts of particular individuals in particular situations.

It is necessary to recognise that the sets of meanings that lead participants to act as they do at their stationed points in the network have their own setting in a localised process of social interaction - and that these meanings are formed, sustained, weakened, strengthened, or transformed, as the case may be, through a socially defining process. Both the functioning and the fate of institutions are set by this process of interpretation as it takes place among the diverse sets of participants (Blumer 1969:19f).

Thirdly, any instance of joint action, whether newly formed or long established, has necessarily arisen out of a background of previous actions of the participants. The continuation of joint action within an existing system, the developing of joint action within an alternative system or the developing of a new system with the developing of new forms of joint action within the newly emerging system are three kinds of cases but all of them are based on or are emerging from within a particular background of 'previous actions of the participants'. In each case, participants 'bring to that formation the world of objects, the sets of meanings, and the schemes of interpretation that they already possess', i.e. they are 'connected with a context of previous joint action'. Empirically, the social scientists must therefore research such historical linkages of joint action. Even in cases of changing to a different existing system or the developing of a new one, there are always linkages to forms of joint action which went before.

In the face of radically different and stressful situations people may be led to develop new forms of joint action that are markedly different from those in which they previously engaged, yet even in such cases there is always some connection and continuity with what went on before (Blumer 1969:20).

2.2 Guiding Principles of the Methodology of Symbolic Interactionism

Some of the basic requirements for the empirical study of 'symbolic interactionism' are set out in this section. The main assumption is that the

social scientist must 'presuppose the existence of an empirical world' or actual 'reality' which can be studied and analysed through actual observation. This means that despite the creation of images, concepts or schemes to capture reality in study, actual reality always has an 'obdurate character' which can 'talk back' to the researcher. Further, reality is not stable. It occurs in particular situations and continuously perpetuates or re-casts symbolic understanding. Closely related is that it cannot be captured finally in a scheme. Due to its 'obdurate character', reality will always not fit the social scientist's scheme(s). In this context, the social scientist's 'methodology' must cover 'the principles that underlie and guide the full process of studying the obdurate character of the given empirical world' (see Blumer 1969:21-23). There are three main points to this fact: 1) methodology must not be partial but be as comprehensively as possible embedded in 'the entire scientific quest'; 2) each element of the methodology but also the methodology as a whole must 'fit the obdurate character of the empirical world under study'; 3) not a pre-established scientific scheme but the empirical world remains both the resource for the methodology as well as the test-case for the outcome of the research. Each of these elements can be further elaborated upon (Blumer 1969:24).

As part of the *first* assertion, *methodology must not be partial but be as comprehensively as possible embedded in 'the entire scientific quest'*. Here, the following must be accounted for: 1) 'the possession and use of a prior picture or scheme of the empirical world'; 2) 'the asking of questions of the empirical world and the conversion of the questions into problems'; 3) 'the determination of the data to be sought and the means to be employed in getting the data'; 4) 'determination of relations between the data'; 5) 'interpretation of the findings; 6) the use of concepts' (Blumer 1969:25f).

Firstly, the description of the 'prior picture' sets the 'world' in terms of which 'objects' and other data are identified and treated as relevant,

marginalised, interlinked with others or how they form part of a particular kind of social interaction and communication with regard to status or roles with the resultant effects on other objects. In terms of the scheme, the researcher's questions will lead to the formulation of 'problems', challenges or the core problem but also to possible remedial or redress suggestions for particular institutions in society - e.g. a family, a culture or a church, etc. All this will have to take place in terms of the requirement that society is treated as empirical and that the researcher must empirically interact with respondents.

Secondly, if the researcher empirically interview respondents, then the questions or statements used in the interview situation are crucial for both the description of problems and the outcome of the research. In terms of symbolic interactionism, such an enquiry will have to deal with terms, definitions, cultural understanding, norms and values not as pre-set but as arising from the actual interaction with subjects.

Thirdly, since the data are 'set by the problem', the data may provide the opportunity to reset the problem or reject it for a different one. Since the main problem researched in this dissertation is the status of widows in the African society, data relevant to this problem must be gathered through actual empirical interviews. Important is that the data must arise from how the widows actually view themselves in their different contexts as well as what they actually do to deal with their widowhood and how they actually attempt to play their role(s) in society effectively.

Fourthly, particular cultural formations, norms and values - as they interlink, are practiced and in terms of which people actually interact - may be identified as part of the problem. Other cultural formations and interlinking of data may improve the quality of life of widows. Or if (Christian) African culture is used as resource, then different linkages may do the same, preventing the marginalisation of widows or their marginalisation

from actual social interaction.

Fifthly, the interpretation of the findings may be slanted when unwarranted data are treated as such. This must be guarded against. Actual data must be dealt with in this aspect of the research - i.e. to determine whether it is true that widows are marginalised and suffer because of their marginalised status; whether it is problem also affecting widows in other societies or ethnic/racial groups; whether society is aware of this problem; whether the problems has physical, financial, material, sexual, and/or spiritual dimensions to it. In addition, one has to interpret the early church's addressing of a similar problem in terms of the facts and whether its approach can provide guidelines for how the problem can be addressed.

Sixthly, in order to 'anchor points in interpretation of the data', concepts which arise from the actual interview situation can importantly contribute to the ordering of the data and the identification of the linkages between data elements. In the act of scientific inquiry, concepts provide the key to the connecting of data. They also make the interpretation of findings well connected. Ultimately, they contain the sense which gives the research its empirical character (Blumer 1969:25f).

The *second* assertion: *each element of the methodology but also the methodology as a whole must 'fit the obdurate character of the empirical world under study'*. This means that the focus must not the methodology itself but the actual empirical world and the methodology treated as mere 'tools' which must be forged to account for particular facts (see Blumer 1969:27). This calls for the fact that adherence to 'scientific protocol'; 'engaging in replication'; the 'testing of hypotheses' and 'using operational procedure' in themselves do not warrant good research. The only way to be assured of quality research is 'to go directly to the empirical social world' (Blumer 1989:32).

The *third* assertion: *not a pre-established scientific scheme but the*

empirical world remains both the resource for the methodology as well as the test-case for the outcome of the research. Good social scientific research is warranted only by actual empirical research and in how it challenges the methodology and empirically validate schemes, problems, data, relations, concepts, and interpretations (Blumer 1989:33f). In this research, the social scientist must acknowledge and consciously deal with the fact that there is a 'lack of familiarity' with the actual empirical world the social scientist wishes to study; that his or her own previously set views, concepts, images, schemes, stereotypical perceptions, etc. may slant the research (Blumer 1969:35f). This calls for diligence concerning empirical data and how subjects actually formulate their views, etc. This is so also for a researcher with first hand acquaintance with the sphere of social life. This researcher shares the same sentiments. It is a matter of fact that core exploration cannot be accomplished if the reality of life is not dealt with on its own terms.

In order to address these challenges concerning the research of the empirical social world', two more elements must form part of the empirical research, e.g. 'exploration' which deals with 'depiction' and 'inspection' which deals with 'analysis'.

The *fourth* assertion: *exploratory research helps to acquaint the scholar with a symbolic world different from his or her own and provides initial direction to 'inquiry, data, analytical relations and interpretations'.* This primarily deals with individual and joint action depiction as described above. Subsequent development of the research and as the researcher becomes more intimately acquainted with the objects of study, it may bring about changes in concepts, images, schemes, and even the problem to be researched (see Blumer 1969:40ff).

The *fifth* assertion: *'inspection' is related to the quality of the 'analysis' in so far as the social scientist must not only 'describe' but actually theorise the problem and identify 'generic relations' and 'connotative references of*

concepts' (Blumer 1969:42ff). This must still be determined by the actual empirical data, such as acquired through a holistically as possible approach informed by direct observation, e.g. in the interviewing of people: to listen, learn and accept the presentation of the stories of individuals and groups; to listen to subjects' conversation; to observe the depiction and the usage of words and concepts; to review memories, future hopes, fears in life, traumatic experiences, hardships, government involvement in the situation, marginalisation by community practices, financial situation and beliefs. All these must provide the data for the theorising.

2.3 Methodological Positioning of Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionist studies deals with the real world in which actual people actually live in concrete circumstances and interact in actual relations, actions and responses. It uses 'a down-to-earth approach to scientific study of human group life and human conduct' (Blumer 1969:47).

Its empirical world is the natural world of such group life and conduct. It lodges its problems in this natural world, conducts its studies in it, and derives its interpretations from such naturalistic studies. If it wishes to study religious cult behaviour it will go to actual religious cults and observe them carefully as they carry on their lives. If it wishes to study social movements it will trace carefully the career, the history, and the life experiences of actual movements. If it wishes to study drug use among adolescents it will go to the actual life of such adolescents to observe and analyse such use (Blumer 1969:47).

The 'direct examination of the empirical social world' is symbolic interactionism's primary focus (Blumer 1969:47). This answer's the critique that this approach 'does not lend itself to scientific research' (see Blumer 1969:48). The formulation and developing of

problems, concepts, research techniques, and other theoretical schemes should be done by the *direct* examination of the actual empirical social world rather than by working with a simulation of that world, or with a preset model of that world, or with a picture of that world derived from a few scattered observations of it, or with a picture of that world fashioned in advance to meet the dictates of some imported theoretical scheme or of some scheme of 'scientific procedure, or with a picture of the world built up from partial and untested accounts of that world.

Empirical validity is tested by a researcher's first hand experiences, and premises built from the direct examination of actual human group life. In this context, symbolic interactionism has four primary 'conceptions': 1) people - as both individuals or as part of a collectivity - 'are prepared to act on the basis of the meanings of the objects that comprise their world'; 2) people become and continue to be a collectivity or an association by virtue of their 'making indications to one another and interpreting each other's indications'; 3) whether as individuals or as a group, people's social acts 'are constructed through a process in which the actors note, interpret and assess the situations confronting them'; 4) the 'complex interlinkages in terms of which people act and interact - and which provides a sense of organization, the construction of and participation in institutions, demarcate 'divisions of labour and networks of interdependency' - are all moving and not static (Blumer 1969:50).

It is in terms of the methodological considerations above that the social scientist research these areas. It also means that the researcher is to become part of the community studied or else be acquainted with it. He or she must be positioned to come to an understanding of both individual and collective experience.

Initial interaction with widows have revealed that have experiences of not being treated fairly; that the community indicates to them that they are useless; that they have no dignity; that they are marginalised, abused emotionally, psychologically and spiritually to various degrees. Culturally, they are often treated as non-speaking entities, also suffering the consequences of loneliness and vulnerability, while it is simultaneously expected of them to comply silently without speaking out. This shows that the empirical research must deal with these women's experiences and their understandings of their predicament themselves but also on how the larger community sees their situation and interact with them in the context of such understandings.

In addition, the research must aim to sufficiently empower the respondents to embark on social action in a different way from that to which they are currently subjected. The one who is confronted with a situation in particular circumstances and interlinkages is the one who is to act differently in similar situations. Both in self-interaction and in interaction with others, the assessing of the circumstances and the concomitant interpretations may be changed collectively to improve the plight of widows. Ultimately it is through 'self-interaction' by widows themselves individually and as groups but also that of the larger society, which may bring about the constructing of different lines of action, plans, goals and other possibilities. This means that the widows cannot achieve a better situation on their own. Collective self-interaction must include broader society through discussion, counselling, and debate.

2.4 George Herbert Mead's Contribution towards Symbolic Interactionism

Mead's contributions towards symbolic interactionism are primarily 'implicit' (Blumer 1969:61). It comprises the notions of 1) the self; 2) the act; 3) social interaction; 4) objects; and 5) joint action. Since most of these elements are already expounded above, the researcher shall only briefly point to Mead's contributions.

2.4.1 The Self

Mead's view that the human being is an actor differs remarkably from the then prevalent psychological and social science conceptions. It is as actor that the human being has a self, i.e. that he or she is an object to him- or herself. As pointed out above, it is through self-designation that the human being designates wants, pains, goals, objects, the presence of others, their actions, expected actions, etc. In the process, a person judges, analyses and evaluates.

As such, the self is a 'process' and not a 'structure'. Whereas structuralist thought cannot account for actual human interaction and reflexivity, symbolic interactionism as developed from Mead's work, focuses on the actual interpretation processes of the individual and his or her actual actions within systems of meaning. Because the self is engaged in process, it also means that the actual actions of a person gives his or her actions a unique character but also that it can bring about self transformation. It implies that the human being is an object to him- or herself. He or she communicates with him- or herself and acts toward him- or herself. The actor becomes the object of his or her own action, addressing him- or herself and also reacts to his own addresses or to open new lines of action in particular circumstances (Blumer 1969:62-64).

2.4.2 The Act

As indicated already, the human being is not merely something which has a pre-set or inbuilt program for action or something which merely responds to other actions. The human being is not merely a recipient. Rather, the human being acts in terms of what he or she wants, an objective, and lines or plans of action which he or she has identified through self-communication. The human act, therefore, is self-directed to a degree and means that he or she can act constructively in order to either comply effectively with a situation confronting him or her, or act creatively.

Contrary to views which see the human being as merely something which is acted upon - e.g. by 'physiological stimulations, organic drives, needs, feelings, unconscious motives, conscious motives, sentiments, ideas, attitudes, norms, values, role requirements, status demands, cultural prescriptions, institutional pressures, or social system requirements' - Mead asserted that the human being is not merely a medium for such effects. Rather, the human being is 'an active organism in his [or her] own right,

facing, dealing with, and acting toward the objects he [or she] indicates, Action is seen as conduct which is constructed by the actor instead of response elicited from some kind of preformed organization' (see Blumer 1969:64-65).

2.4.3 Social Interaction

Mead's analysis of social interaction contains two forms, non-symbolic interaction and symbolic interaction. In his thought, non-symbolic interaction occurs when human beings respond directly to one another's gestures or actions. In symbolic interpretation, however, actors interpret gestures of each other as well as act on the basis of interpreted meaning. As the latter involves the interpretation of the meaning of action, 'indications' are conveyed by oneself to oneself as well as to others. As such, social interaction has a process character but also

covers the full range of the generic forms of human association. It embraces equally well such relationships as cooperation, conflict, domination, exploitation, consensus, disagreement, closely knit identification, and indifferent concern for another' (Blumer 1969:66-68).

2.4.4 Objects

As Human beings live in an object-environment, they interact with the objects in their world. As Mead pointed out,

objects are human constructs and not self-existing entities with intrinsic natures. Their nature is dependent on the orientation and action of people toward them (Blumer 1989:68).

As such, objects have meaning in terms of the meaning they have for particular people; the meaning is not intrinsic but arises from how the person acts towards it; all objects are social products; people act towards objects in terms of the meaning the objects have for them; one can - through designation, interpretation and the constructing of lines of action - change one's actions towards objects (Blumer 1969:68-70).

Each of these elements are important for the research in this dissertation. Briefly we can formulate them as follows:

- a) widows as individuals but also as a group of people - who are usually separated off from one another - are objects who have meaning in terms of the meaning they have for themselves but also for (particular) family and other community members;
- b) the meaning widows have is not intrinsic but arises from how particular people act towards them and also how they interact with such people;
- c) as objects, 'widows' are social products;
- d) people act towards a widow in terms of the meaning she has for them;
- e) a widow but also widows as a group can - through designation, interpretation and the constructing of lines of action - change their actions towards others but others can also change their actions towards widows.

Ultimately, any changes to designation must be to the benefit of the community. Since - in Mead's thought - it is clear that a person is the initiator of both naming and the action concerning objects, a person or group can observe the object, think about it, work out a plan of action towards it, or individually and collectively decide how to act toward it or interact with it. If this is done collectively, then the larger community will benefit from such action.

The analysis of objects in particular situations of human group life must carefully deal with the fact that humans are living beings who are living in a world of meaningful objects. The social scientist must take care to not pressurise community life - which is often precarious and delicate, especially where the larger society is vulnerable to exploitation. If there are, however, possibilities to improve the quality of life of the community at large through the collective changes to action, the social scientists may be a medium to

empower such a society.

2.4.5 Joint Action

Blumer (1969:70) replaced Mead's notion of 'social act' with that of 'joint action'. With this phrase, he refers to 'the larger collective form of action that is constituted by the fitting together of the lines of behaviour of the separate participants'. As such, 'joint action' also opposes the notion that groups are mere recipients or responding organisms of social or psychological effects. Typical situations of joint action are that of 'a trading transaction, a family dinner, a marriage ceremony, a shopping expedition, a game, a convivial party, a debate, a court trial, a war', etc. (Blumer 1969:70).

Important is that action should be planned and made from the position of the actor. Methodologically, the study of the position of the actor is vital for the outsider who is engaged in empirical research, because if this point is misunderstood, no proper perception of the actor, as well as the interpretation and judgement of the observer can be arrived at adequately. But if the observer is observing the operating situation as the actor sees it, the observer can be in the position to perceive the situation of the object holistically, and ascertain its meaning as it has it for the actor. It also implies that the observer is to act in line with the conduct of the actor. Ultimately, this means that 'social interaction is obviously an interaction between people and not between roles' (Blumer 1989:75).

In terms of the overview of symbolic interactionism above, human society is seen as consisting of acting people. This means that the life of the society is to be seen as consisting of their actions (Blumer 1989:85). Even though this focus does not neglect the social organization of a society inside of which acting units develop their actions, structural features such as 'culture', 'social systems', 'social stratification' or 'social roles' set

conditions for action but cannot account for the actual actions of people. This also means that the actions of people are not deterministically fixed and unchangeable.

Finally, social organization and attitudes may motivate action to shape situations in which people act and they may supply fixed sets of symbols people use to interpret situations. However, they cannot fully account for how people indeed act and interact in particular situations. Human action is not an already organized fact but is continuously constructed by an actor. Further, human action is built through a process of self-indication, and symbolic interactionist processes. For this dissertation, it means that the empirical environment of widows and the people with whom they interact must be explored interactively and the researcher will have to aim to come to an understanding of how they themselves understand their own actions and how they think they can change them to improve the quality of the life of widows but also that of the larger social whole.

2.5 The Process Role Theory of Ralph H. Turner

The main questions for role theorists are whether 'role' 'is simply overt behaviour'; whether it is 'a conception of appropriate behaviour'; whether it is 'normatively expected behavior'; whether it is 'behavior enacted by virtue of incumbency in a status position' (Turner 1978:353). Jonathan Turner (1978:353) distinguishes between a process and a structural approach to role theory. Structural role theory is more akin to that of drama - where 'interaction [is] highly structured by the script, directors, other actors, and the audience'. Process role theory on the other hand is more akin to a game - where 'interaction is more likely to be seen as less structured and as influenced by the wide range of tactics available to participants' (Turner 1978:354).

2.5.1 Structural Role Theory

Modelled after drama, structural role theory draws the analogy that people in society each 1) has a clearly defined part or position in society; 2) follows norms; 3) conforms to the dictates of persons with power or significant others; 4) interacts with other people and adjust their positions in relation to the positions of others; 5) acts in response to various audiences or 'generalized others'; 6) bring to the role one plays in society, one's own self-conceptions, role-playing skills and styles of interaction (Turner 1987:354).

Structural role theory views the *organization of society* in terms of 'networks of statuses and positions' within which 'individuals enact roles'. 'For each position, as well as for groups and classes of positions, various kinds of expectations about how incumbents are to behave can be discerned' (Turner 1987:355). Status networks are usually defined in terms of 'types of expectations', of which there are mainly three: 1) expectations concerning the adherence to norms - and the question of the variables determining norms such as 'scope, power, efficacy, specificity, clarity, and degree of conflict with each other'; 2) expectations concerning the positions and demands of others; 3) expectations concerning real or imagined audiences. The empirical question to be asked in this context is 'which types of expectations are attendant upon a given status, or network of positions' (Turner 1987:356). This is usually focused on a micro social context and not a macro one such as that of 'the nation'.

In terms of this understanding, structural role theory understands the *nature of the individual* in terms of 1) 'self related characteristics' such as self-conception concerning roles to play; and 2) 'role-playing skills, capacities' and styles of interaction. Conformity of the individual usually depends on 1) the degree of the internalization of expectations 'as part of an individual's need structure'; 2) the positive and negative sanctions related to the expectations perceived; 3) how expectations serve as yardstick for self-

evaluation; and 4) whether expectations represent either 'interpretations of others' actual responses or ... potential responses'. The individual so perceived is not 'a creative role entrepreneur' but 'a pragmatic performed who attempts to cope with and adjust to the variety of expectations inhering in social structure' (Turner 1978:357f).

In the *individual-society nexus*, there are for the individual 1) 'prescribed roles'; 2) 'subjective roles'; and 3) 'enacted roles' which the individual perform to various degrees, competencies and in different situations (Turner 1978:359).

Concerning *methodology*, role enactment can be measured through empirical observation. The problem, however, is that it is not possible to measure the relationship between an individual's processing of 'expectations' and actual role taking. One could 1) 'infer expectations from observed behaviour'; 2) accumulate the 'verbal accounts of individuals prior to a particular interaction sequence; 3) infer 'what types of expectations are guiding conduct'; 4) predict 'how role behaviour will unfold in terms of these expectations'. Despite these possibilities, this remain an area not easily measured (Turner 1987:364f).

The *problem* with structural role theory is that it works with a notion of society which is too highly structured. One could argue that 'conflicts (conflicts among expectations), role strain (the impossibility of meeting all expectations) and anomie (the lack of clear-cut expectations) would balance out the deterministic character of this theory. However, since these are viewed as deviant or abnormal situations, the whole system of structural role theory is still too deterministic (see Turner 1987:367). This is also the thrust of Ralph H. Turner's criticism.

Turner's criticism focuses on the fact that 1) 'role theory presents an overly structured vision of the social world, with its emphasis upon norms, status positions, and enactment of normative expectations'; 2) 'role theory

tends to concentrate an inordinate amount of research and theory-building effort on “abnormal” social processes, such as role conflict and role strain, thereby ignoring normal processes of human interaction’; 3) that ‘role theory is not theory but rather a series of disjointed and unconnected propositions’; and finally, 4) ‘role theory has not utilized to the degree required Mead’s concept of role-taking as its central concept’ (Turner 1987:369f).

Manfred Kuhn mainly followed the structural approach to symbolic interactionism.

2.5.2 Process Role Theory

Ralph H. Turner’s development of process role theory is related to his criticism of structural role theory. He develops his theory in the context of ‘interaction and roles’ and ‘the strategy for building role theory’.

2.5.2.1 Interaction and Roles

Ralph H. Turner’s focus on ‘interaction and roles’ in his development of process role theory deals with 1) the role-making process; 2) the ‘folk norm of consistency’; 3) the tentative nature of interaction; 4) the process of role verification; and 5) the interaction between self-conceptions and role (see Turner 1987:371-374).

Ralph Turner bases his understanding of *the role-making process* on Mead’s notion of ‘role-taking’ and says that it is the human ‘tendency to shape the phenomenal world into roles’ which provides the key to understanding role-taking. It is the gestures which people emit - ‘words, bodily countenance, voice inflections, dress, facial expressions, and other gestures’ - which give cues to others as to put themselves into another’s role. He then extends Mead’s understanding by saying that cultural definitions do not provide ultimate definitions of roles - they are often ‘vague and contradictory’ - but that actors ‘make’ their roles, communicate them to

others, and also act 'as if' all others in their environment are playing *identifiable roles*'. It is this 'as if' character - which is a 'folk assumption' - which gives interaction 'a common basis' (Turner 1987:371). Role-taking is therefore also 'role-making'. In summary, 1) 'humans are often faced with only a loose cultural framework in which they must make a role to play'; 2) they assume others are playing a role and make an effort to discover the underlying role behind a person's acts'; 3) they 'seek to make a role themselves in all social situations by emitting cues to others that give them claim on a particular role' (Turner 1987:372).

The '*folk norm of consistency*' impacts on the fact that, in interaction, people do not assess behaviour against norms or their position in a social structure but against the consistency of behaviour. People usually weave such consistency into *gestalts* or wholes. It is in terms of such wholes that they can understand and anticipate one another's behaviour or adjust to another's responses. If there is no such 'consistency' - provided by the *gestalt* of another's behaviour - the interaction is difficult and misunderstanding frequent.

Despite consistency the interaction between people is always *tentative*. It is tentative because one has to continuously test the other for consistency - or whether the idea of the role of another one has, is correct. If the cues one gets from another remain consistent with the *gestalt* one has of the other, then interaction will continue; if not, then one will have to make an adjustment to the understanding of the role of the other one has.

The tentative nature of role-making means that one has to constantly *verify* the role of another. This is done in order to verify that the behaviors of another and cues emitted by another are consistent with the *gestalt* one has of another's role. Such verification takes place through internal criteria - that another's behaviour facilitates interaction - and external criteria - the assessing of one's role by 'important others, relevant groups, or commonly

agreed-upon standards'. When a role is verified, then it provides a stable base for interaction.

The interaction between self-conceptions and role focuses on the fact that actors act in such a way that their behaviour reinforces the role they see themselves to play - conduct reinforces self-conception. Through the cues and gestures an individual gives, he or she informs others as to the degree to which each sees him- or her own self to be 'anchored in a role'. In this context, Turner retains the notions that 'it is through behavioural cues that actors impute roles to each other'; 'that roles are conceptions of expected behaviors'; 'that roles are the norms attendant on status positions is given less emphasis'; that roles are 'parts that people learn to play ... by virtue of their prior socialization into a common role repertoire' (Turner 1987:373f). As such, Ralph Turner attempted to reconcile structural and radical role theory (Turner 1987:374).

2.5.2.2 Strategy for Building Role Theory

For his 'strategy for building role theory', Ralph H. Turner (see Turner 1987:374-387) deals with 1) the concepts of role theory; 2) the sorting out of tendencies - which focus on the emergence and character of roles, role as an interactive framework, role in relation to actor, role in organizational settings and role in societal setting; 3) generating and organizing empirical propositions; and 4) the development of explanatory propositions - focusing on the functionality proposition and the tenability proposition.

The concepts of role theory: Ralph H Turner retains Blumer's notion that one must use concepts only loosely and generally - e.g. 'actor', 'role', 'other', and 'situation', in order to remain open to empirical study (Turner 1987:375).

The sorting out of tendencies - which focus on the emergence and character of roles, role as an interactive framework, role in relation to actor,

role in organizational settings and role in societal setting: Consistent with Blumer's approach, Ralph Turner advocates that general tendencies within empirical situations be described generally, i.e. in the form that 'in most normal situations, event x occurs' (Turner 1987:375). This must be done in six areas, each containing some propositions or generalisations Turner advances: 1) the emergence and character of roles; 2) role as an interactive framework; 3) roles in relation to actors; 4) role in organizational setting; 5) role in societal setting; 6) role and the person (Turner 1987:375).

Each of these can be briefly described as follows.

Firstly, the emergence and character of roles: 1) in a particular situation of empirical interaction, one must differentiate between behaviours, sentiments and motives which can be assigned to particular roles; 2) the meaning of action is particular to ego but also alter; 3) observe the role cues an actor emits; 4) the definition of roles will depend on both changes in both behaviour or context; 5) every role is related to evaluation, rank and social desirability (Turner 1987:375f).

Secondly, role as an interactive framework: 6) ego and alter roles are established and persist; 7) from the perspective of each particular role, this role complements others both ego and alter attempt to cope with. 8) roles are stabilised in terms of the legitimate expectations related to them (Turner 1987:376).

Thirdly, roles in relation to actors: 9) once stabilised, an actor conforms to that particular role behaviour; 10) a role is allocated to an individual in a particular interaction; 11) 'role-taking' means that ego adapts to alter; 12) the role actually played is assessed in relation to whether it is regarded as adequate or not; 13) the degree of adequacy in role performance will correspond to others' responses to the role actually played (Turner 1987:377).

Fourthly, role in organizational setting: 14) organizational goals determine 'role differentiation, evaluation, complementarity, legitimacy or expectation, consensus, allocation, and judgements of adequacy; 15) such evaluations are inscribed in actual roles as defined by the organization; 16) roles are related to status within the organization; 17) each real develops a pattern of adapting to other roles within the organization; 18) tradition and formalisation set continued standards for the persistence of roles (Turner 1987:377f).

Fifthly, role in societal setting: 19) there is an economy of roles in so far as roles which are similar in different contexts become merged; 20) in more general social contexts, roles become anchored to social values; 21) an individual's role in society is dependent on the coherence between the role assigned and the role actually assumed (and played) (Turner 1987:378).

Sixthly, role and the person: 22) role contradiction and role strain is minimised in the face of a sense of seeking role gratification; 23) individuals in a common culture develop a role competency with regard to the roles of both ego and alter; 24) an individual selectively indicate roles with which to identify and then to anchor a self-conception in these roles; 25) in social and interactive context, the actor seeks out especially those roles which form the basis for adaptation to others; 26) where there are situations in which there is a contradiction between self-conception and the context, the actor will distance him or herself from such contexts (Turner 1987:379).

Generating and organizing empirical propositions. These are generalisations, and Ralph Turner is at pains to point out that they must be related to empirical propositions in the context of the form: 'x varies with y' (Turner 1987:379). This is important, because it will allow the researcher to identify a variable - e.g. to alleviate role strain (22) - as an initial condition under which a particular actor act. From this follows, that empirical propositions can be organised around the six clusters of propositions. More

particularly, one can identify more specific guidelines as to study 1) others and role merger in a particular situation; 2) others, person, and role in multiple settings; and 3) individual efforts at role merger.

Firstly, the tendency of members of the social circle to identify a role with a person and an actor to accept the identification, will depend on: the inflexibility of the role allocation; the degree of differentiation and comprehensivity of the role; the degree of conflict between roles; the degree of consistency in the judgement of roles; the degree of difficulty of the role; the degree of evaluating the role as favourable or not; the social rank (high or low) of the role; the degree of social power invested in the role; the degree of discretion vested in the role; the degree to which role incumbents within a social circle are bonded to the role; the degree of intimacy between the actor's role and that of alter roles within the social circle (Turner 1987:381).

Secondly, the tendency for others to identify an actor with a role and for an actor to appropriate it, depends on: the space of the setting of the role; the power of a role in one setting to influence roles in others; whether the role is conspicuous and widely recognisable; the degree to which the role expresses the goals and nature of the group or organization. The degree to which the role is temporary and discontinuous with other roles will bring actors not to be willing to occupy it (Turner 1987:382).

Thirdly, the tendency to locate oneself in a particular role will depend on whether it: is highly evaluated; can be performed adequately; is viewed as of more value than others; is more visible than others requiring the same quality in adequacy and value; is required by a wider social circle; has more intrinsic than extrinsic benefits; requires more time and effort to acquire and maintain a role; requires more sacrifice to acquire and maintain a role; is more publicly sanctioned and appreciated; is open to more and prolonged unresolved role strain (Turner 1987:381).

The development of explanatory propositions - focusing on the functionality proposition and the tenability proposition. The developing of a *functionality proposition* is the developing of a generalisation which can account for 'the process whereby roles are used to achieve ends or goals in an effective and efficient manner' (Turner 1987:385). In other words, people occupy roles in order to reach goals. The developing of a *tenability proposition* means that 'the conditions surrounding performance of that role make it possible to play it with some personal reward' (Turner 1987:385).

These two propositions means that:

1. The more goal-oriented interaction among individuals, the more operative are considerations of functionality, and the less operative considerations of tenability.
2. The more individuals bring to an interaction external power and other salient attributes, the more operative are considerations of viability, and the less operative are considerations of functionality (Turner 1987:385).

So one can continue (see Turner 1987:386). For the purposes of this dissertation, all these indicators - as variable propositions, guidelines or conditions - will be developed for the particular circumstances in which widows find themselves.

2.6 Jonathan H. Turner's Comparison of the Symbolic Interactionist Theories of Herbert Blumer, Manfred Kuhn and Ralph H. Turner

Turner's (1987:352) *appreciation* of symbolic interactionism is two-fold: symbolic interactionism has challenged sociological studies to 1) 'undertake the difficult task of linking conceptually structural categories to classes of social processes that underlie these categories'; 2) to link and relate 'macrosociological theorizing' with the processes of the social world it attempts to describe'.

Turner (1987:349) criticises symbolic interactionism for 1) not being able 'to link conceptually the processes of symbolic interaction to the formation of different patterns of social organization'; 2) not being able to demonstrate how induction 'from the symbolic exchanges among individuals

[can be made to serve] the analysis of interaction among more macro, collective social units'; 3) for not being able to show 'what types of emergent structures are created, sustained, and changed by what types of interaction in what types of contexts'; 4) the 'vagueness of the links between the interaction process and its social structural products' (Turner 1978:349,352).

In this context, this section deals with the points of convergence between Blumer and Kuhn; their differences; and an assessment of Ralph H Turner's approach.

2.6.1 Points of Convergence between Blumer and Kuhn

The 'points of convergence' between the theorisings of Herbert Blumer and Manfred Kuhn mainly focus on 1) the fact that human beings are symbol users; 2) communicate through symbols; 3) use symbols in interaction and role-taking; and 4) develop society through interaction and the coining and use of symbols (see Turner 1987:333-337).

The *first* point is important, because as Blumer has repeatedly pointed out, humans act and are not merely mediums for pre-determined systems or institutions in society. Humans create symbols to designate 'each other, objects, ideas, and virtually any phase of their experience' (Turner 1987:335). *Secondly*, it is due to their symbol- and meaning creating powers that humans can agree on certain meanings of symbols and through these symbols interact and communicate. Symbolic communication, however, is extremely complex and takes place through 'facial gestures, voice tones, body countenance, and other symbolic gestures in which there is common meaning and understanding' (Turner 1987:335).

Thirdly, since it is through the interpretation of other's gestures that humans interact and communicate, humans mutually 'read', 'anticipate responses' and 'adjust to each other'. The ability to 'see and interpret another's attitudes and dispositions' means that one is able to - in Mead's

words - 'take the role of the other'. As such, role-taking means that one is able to anticipate the responses of others towards or with oneself in a particular social act. To see another's point of view is the prerequisite for interaction but also for 'patterns of social organization'. Alternatively, the failure to take the role of another, is a contributing factor to failure of the patterns of social organization (Turner 1987:335).

Fourthly, it is the symbolic nature of human interaction - especially with regard to Mead's notion of self expounded above - which makes humans human and society possible. It is through self-designation that individuals individually or collectively 'name, categorise, ... orient themselves' or develop lines of action and then practice them. This happens in particular situations. This is also true of individual and collective self-images and relatively stable patterns of interaction which shared by people within a particular culture, language or group (Turner 1987:336).

2.6.2 Differences

Differences primarily occur within the context of the perception of 1) the nature of the individual; 2) the nature of interaction; 3) the nature of social organization; 4) the nature of methods; 5) the nature and possibilities of sociological theory.

Firstly, concerning the 'degree of structure and stability in human personality', Blumer's views relate to the fact that humans designate objects to themselves and also designate themselves as object. This is the basis for his main assertion that humans are not totally determined by outside circumstances but that they are active creators of the objects and the world the objects belong to. This fact is of central importance when one studies interaction and especially 'emergent patterns of social organization' (Turner 1978:338). Moreover this theory allows for

spontaneity and indeterminacy in human behaviour. If humans can invoke any object into a situation, they can radically alter their definitions of that situation, and hence their behaviors (Turner 1987:338f).

Kuhn, again emphasised the fact that individuals acquire a 'core self' - of meanings and attitudes - through socialisation which remains relatively stable throughout their lives. This lends predictability and continuity to people's actions. If the 'core self' is therefore understood - in terms of statuses and roles - one can with a high degree of probability predict how people would make plans of action, act in specific situations, interact with one another and evaluate issues or circumstances.

Secondly, whereas Kuhn emphasises the relatively stable way in which people can take roles in terms of the 'core self' - with the result that action and interaction are 'released' rather than constructed - Blumer points to the fact that the human being has the capacity to take radically different roles from those he or she has been socialised into. This is based on the nature of the self as object; types of expectation; manipulation of objects; the nature of the symbolically created object world; the individual or group's definition or mapping of a situation as well as their devising of plans or lines of action; the ability of the human being to introduce new objects and to change the meaning of the symbolically structured world. By

emphasizing the interpreting, evaluating, defining, and mapping processes, Blumer stressed the creative, constructed, and changeable nature of interaction. Rather than constituting the mere vehicle through which preexisting psychological, social, and cultural structures inexorably shape behavior, the symbolic nature of interaction assures that social, cultural, and psychological structures will be altered and changed through shifting the definitions and behaviors of humans (Turner 1987:339).

Thirdly, since symbolic interactionism focuses on processes rather than the end products of human interaction, it is the 'microprocesses' which come under scrutiny. For Blumer, social organization is therefore 'temporary and constantly changing' - in line with his notions of the acting individual or group; interlinkage; 'reinterpretation, reevaluation, redefinition and remapping'; and the view that all kinds of social organization are always

'emergent phenomena'. Kuhn, however, focused on the more 'structured aspects of social situations' in terms of what Turner has called 'structural role theory' (see Turner 1987:340f).

Fourthly, following Mead's notion of empirical research, Blumer's methodology is much more focused and inductively determined by physical observation whereas that of Kuhn is much more abstract. The main point of divergence is concerning their views of 'causality' (see Turner 1987:341f). Whereas Blumer emphasises the makability of the world and the defining of its objects - allowing for a non-deterministic view of the world - that of Kuhn is more deterministic, emphasising that human action is determined by social structure, etc. This also means that Kuhn's views are much more determined by current sociological theorising, protocol in science (the commonality of methods in all sciences) whereas Blumer aims to let 'the empirical world dictate the kinds of research strategy used' (see above) (Turner 1987:341-343).

Fifthly, since their views differ concerning the nature of the individual; the nature of interaction; the nature of social organization; and the nature of methods ('causality') as outlined, it follows that Blumer's 'theory-building strategy' is mainly characterised by 'the constructed nature of reality and ... the types of concepts that this fact necessitates [and the emphasising of] inductive theory construction. Kuhn's 'theory-building strategy' is more deductive, primarily emanating from his notion of the 'core-self', and aimed at ultimately to develop a unified system from which specific propositions about different aspects of symbolic interactionism could be derived (see Turner 1987:346-349).

2.6.3 Ralph H. Turner's Approach

Even though Turner follows Blumer in terms of the 'fluid; nature of interactive processes', his model has a much more 'deterministic view of

causality' (Turner 1987:387). More conservative than Blumer in his theory, Ralph Turner focuses more on the fact that as actors interact in the microprocesses of specific but varying contexts, they are determined to various degrees. Further, he does not claim that his role theory accounts for all social events. He does, however, argue that, as far as individual interaction is concerned, his theory is the most appropriate. This is so, especially because he developed his theory in such a way that it remains open to 1) empirical observation; 2) structured measuring notions; as well as the fact that it 3) remains open to development in terms of the propositions and their variables (Turner 1987:387). It is this last element, to be concerned with building of theory, which is important for this dissertation but also for South Africa at large - in this period of transition. It is especially from his distinction between structurality and tenability propositions, that further work may be done - especially in different microsituations. The topic of this dissertation focuses on such a micro-area but also takes into consideration the larger framework in which people act, interact and experience such interaction.

2.7 Josef Bleicher's Summary of the 'Dilemma' within Symbolic Interactionism

Together with phenomenological 'life-world' analysis and the linguistic development of sociology, Josef Bleicher (1982) positions symbolic interactionism in the broader field of 'interpretive sociology'. As such, interpretive sociology functions within 'humanist orientations' and sees 'action'

in relation to human agency which is historically situated; that is to say, action is an intentional mode of interacting in socio-historical reality which is both changed and reproduced through it. Actors are consequently not passive recipients of existing demands and constraints but conscious, willing agents who create themselves and their environment in an ongoing process (Bleicher 1982:105).

After pointing to elements of symbolic interactionism already covered, Bleicher (1982:110-114) summarises some of the issues concerning the dilemma of symbolic interactionism.

Firstly, scientific research based on 'Grand Theory' imposes a 'pre-established methodology onto the object', raising the issue of 'the adequacy of the methods employed' - i.e. (similar to hermeneutic misgivings) the 'structure of the object' is predetermined and the issue concerning 'appropriate methods' is not raised. The alternative would be to fully develop a double hermeneutic - i.e. to deal with the fact that 1) the study of social phenomena is only possible on the basis of some pre-understanding; and 2) that social phenomena are themselves meaningfully structured (Bleicher 1982:110f,2). Symbolic interactionism has failed to develop this model satisfactorily (Bleicher 1982:110f).

Secondly, the problem with the detached and objective study of social phenomena is that an observer may merely replace an actor's own perception of action with his or her own (Bleicher 1982:111).

Thirdly, when documents are studied - e.g. in order to identify 'general laws of human behaviour' - the problem is that 'theoretical conceptions' developed in the process may not come from the documents themselves but from that of the researcher. This means that the researcher's own understanding of meaning may influence such study. This is the hermeneutic dilemma - the role subjective meaning plays in research - i.e. that one cannot determine whether the research on documents results in 'true' interpretations (Bleicher 1982:111f).

Fourthly, in empirical research concerning the subject-object relationship, the 'object' may be such that it cannot 'talk back' to the scientist. This calls for a hermeneutic foundation for symbolic interactionism and not empirical science (Bleicher 1982:112).

Fifthly, faced with the dilemma of objectivism, symbolic interactionism may either opt for a 'complete identification with the underdog' or - like the Iowa school - 'use definite concepts, deductive argument and a stress on quantification'. The problem with the first option is that its scope is too limited - it cannot account for the 'wider perspective' in which the underdog finds itself, meaning that the underdog's own views are limited (Bleicher 1982:112f). The problem with the second option is that the access to the object as well as dialogic interaction with it, remains impoverished (Bleicher 1982:113).

Sixthly, theoretically-founded research - which arises from 'data' - does not take into consideration the hermeneutic dimension or 'pre-understanding' 'and the need to be prepared to adjust it in its course'. Theory based on data free from preconceptions, is an impossibility.

In this context, it is evident that the main critique of symbolic interactionism comes from the side of hermeneutics. The way in which Bleicher (1982) developed this further - i.e. his notion of 'dialectical hermeneutics' - may pave the way for future research (see also Smit 1999). The researcher is aware that this dissertation may be a signpost on this route.

2.8 Ethnomethodology and the further Development of Symbolic Interactionism

As Turner (1987:292) indicates, apart from drawing on the work of Blumer and other symbolic interactionists, ethnomethodology also drew on the work by Husserl and Schutz. The main focus, here, however, is to uncover the 'methods' particular to specific ethnic or social groups - i.e. methods they use for purposes of interpretation and their own definitions of situation, etc. It focuses on

methods employed by those under study in creating, maintaining, and altering their presumption that a social order actually exists out there in the real world (Turner 1987:394).

Five points in this context is important for the researcher: reflexive action and interaction; indexicality of meaning; normal form; reciprocity of perspectives; and the *et cetera* principle. 'Reflexive action and interaction' serves to 'sustain a particular vision of reality', e.g. ritual (Turner 1987:395). 'Indexicality of meaning' means that 'gestures, cues, words and other information' have meaning in a *particular context*, i.e. actors within a particular context construct or index a particular vision of reality specific to that context. 'Normal form' indicates that participants in situation indicate to one another that, in the event of ambiguity in a situation, they adjust to a normal form of interaction, demanded by the situation. 'Reciprocity of perspectives' means that, if participants in a situation change places, they would have the same experiences. The '*et cetera* principle' indicates that interacting actors wait for information to make sense of what is relevant to a situation if they do not have it immediately (Turner 1987:396f).

Turner (1987:397) holds that contra ethnomethodologists' own view, ethnomethodology is just a further development of symbolic interactionism - which merely functions on a higher level of abstraction. In this context, he formulates two propositions which could be developed further, namely:

1. The more actors fail to agree on the use of interactive techniques, such as the *et cetera* principle, the search for the normal form, and doing the reciprocity of perspective, the more likely is interaction to be disrupted, and hence, the less likely is social order to be maintained.
2. The more interaction proceeds on the basis of different, taken-for-granted visions of reality, the more likely is interaction to be disrupted, and hence, the less likely is social order to be maintained (Turner 1987:397).

These views may serve as further indications on the regularities determining symbolic interactionism.

The challenge, now, however, is to indicate how to relate social symbolic realities present in a current situation and an ancient canonical text.

2.9 Symbolic Interactionism in the Context of the Analogical Study of Social Symbolic Realities Present in a Current situation as well as in an Ancient Canonical Text

The analogical study of action and interaction in a current empirical situation and an ancient canonical text is possible through symbolic interactionist studies. Even though the *substance* of what is studied - interaction in empirical experience and interaction in a text - differ, the focus on 'interaction' and not on the modes of representation, makes such a study analogically viable. Secondly, even though we deal with a remarkable *historical distance* of the kinds of experience - contemporary experience and experience as represented in an ancient canonical text - the study is equally viable because it focuses on interaction in particular situations which can be related analogically. Further, within the context of Christian Theology, the analogical study of 'widows' is positioned within the context of a *theological perspective*. Each of these three areas will be overviewed briefly. Since 'analogy' provides the basis of the study, this will, however, be dealt with first.

2.9.1 The Analogical Imagination

The basic premise for analogical studies is the fact that each individual has the ability to provide an account of his or her life projects and his or her perspectives 'in a public conversation' (Jeanrond 1988:149). This links up with the notion of symbolic interactionism because here, the basic premise is that a person can provide an account of his or her own perspectives but can also position him or herself in that of another. The basic common premise, therefore, is that of 'interaction' or as in Tracy's (1981:x) study of 'the analogical imagination', that of 'conversation' (see Tracy 1981:x).

In theological context, this means that the analogical imagination functions in the correlation of two sources: the interpretation of the

theological tradition and the current situation (Tracy 1985:36). In such correlation - as in the context of interaction and conversation - one finds analogies, i.e. 'similarity in difference' (Tracy 1981:454; 1977:123). This comes about especially when one interacts with an ancient canonical text. In such interaction,

we find something valuable, something 'important'; some disclosure of reality in a moment that must be called one of 'recognition' which surprises, provokes, challenges, shocks and eventually transforms us; an experience that upsets conventional opinions and expands the sense of the possible (Tracy 1981:108)

In such a conversation, there are obviously also differences. These differences are in fact elements of a conflict of interpretations. When one sees 'interpretation' as a dialogue, then, in the context of conversation, 'conflict, confrontation, argument can prove liberating possibilities' (Tracy 1981:447). Here, despite the fact that one can place oneself in another's position, the recognition of another means that one may be liberated oneself when one sees or experiences something from another's perspective or experience (in the interactive situation). If this is indeed taken in the context of interaction with an ancient canonical text, then the text as other questions or challenges one. The prerequisite, however, is that one remains open to the perspective of the other as well as to the possibility for synthesising the challenge with one's own behaviour.

2.9.2 Symbolic Interactionism within Current Experience and an Ancient Canonical Text

The symbolic interactionist theory used in this dissertation mainly follows Blumer - i.e. in terms of the event-character of interaction - but takes into consideration the fact that all interaction always takes place in a larger context or world as Ralph H. Turner indicated. Empirical observation in the *current situation*, therefore, requires empirical work with the target group - concerning both the event character related to their experience and the larger

context in which their lives are determined. The study of widows in an *ancient canonical text*, likewise, must take into account empirical as well as structural features. Even though 'widows' as they are represented in the canonical text cannot be studied empirically, their empirical experience must be reconstructed as closely as possible. Within each separate context, what must be analysed, are the empirical experiences of widows themselves, but also how they are determined within their cultures.

In order to engage such study, the researcher therefore uses the following elements of symbolic interactionism explicitly. *Firstly*, departing from symbolic interactionism's main tenet - 'individuals as well as human groups or society exist in action and must be seen in terms of action' - the main elements of symbolic interactionism, such as notions of 1) the self; 2) the act; 3) social interaction; 4) objects; and 5) joint action. As such, Blumer's premises play a central role: 1) 'human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them'; 2) the 'source of meaning' is neither 'intrinsic to the thing that has it' nor a 'psychical accretion brought to the thing by the person for whom the thing has meaning' but 'the process of interaction between people'; 3) 'the use of meaning' is not merely an 'application' of meaning derived from social interaction but is itself 'a process of interpretation'. Here, the main points of convergence' between the theorisings of Herbert Blumer and Manfred Kuhn also play a role: 1) the fact that human beings are symbol users; 2) communicate through symbols; 3) use symbols in interaction and role-taking; and 4) develop society through interaction and the coining and use of symbols (see Turner 1987:333-337).

Secondly this must be studied within the context of structural role theory, i.e. the main notions as put forward by Jonathan H Turner: 1) each individual has a clearly defined part or position in society; 2) follows norms; 3) conforms to the dictates of persons with power or significant others; 4) interacts with other people and adjust their positions in relation to the

positions of others; 5) acts in response to various audiences or 'generalized others'; 6) bring to the role one plays in society, one's own self-conceptions, role-playing skills and styles of interaction.

Thirdly, in the context of Ralph H. Turner's process role theory - which holds that roles are never final, the following must be taken into consideration: 1) the role-making process; 2) the 'folk norm of consistency'; 3) the tentative nature of interaction; 4) the process of role verification; and 5) the interaction between self-conceptions and role

Fourthly, this requires also the sorting out of tendencies - which focus on the emergence and character of roles, role as an interactive framework, role in relation to actor, role in organizational settings and role in societal setting.

Fifthly, since roles are never final, the question of change must be addressed - i.e. how to account for the quest for the change of the position and experience of widows in ancient Mediterranean society. In the context of analogical interpretation, the researcher then addresses the question of how the position and experiences of widows in a current situation can be addressed. In terms of social interactionism, the question here arises as to how things were defined differently in both the ancient text and the current situation. Such definition is, ultimately what will change human conduct and interaction within an altered 'world'.

Finally, the question is how repetitive action and interaction can change the plight of widows. This, obviously, also raises the sensitive question of how human group life concerning widows can be changed.

2.9.3 The Problem of Historical distance

If it is true - as symbolic interactionism holds - that any instance of joint action, whether newly formed or long established, has necessarily arisen out of a background of previous actions of the participants, this background can

take the form of a tradition, a culture, a social and/or institutional structure, etc. For obvious reasons, the present and canonical textually represented plight of widows are variously determined by such backgrounds. Moreover, in both cases, language is used to bring such suffering on them, to represent their experiences, but also to change it. In the context of change, again, one may draw on tradition, i.e. theological and/or cultural tradition.

In terms of historical distance, hermeneutics deals with the analogical relations which exist between the conditions of a situation in the past and the conditions of a situation in the present.

2.9.4 Symbolic Interactionism within Theological Perspective

Within theological perspective, human interaction attempts to configure human behaviour after theological perspectives. Within Christian theology, the main base for such work takes place in the context of Biblical interpretation. Since 'widows' is such an important topic virtually throughout the Bible, this will have to be researched - not only in terms of the actual interaction and the historical distance one is confronted with but also within the context of theological perspectives brought to bear on this issue. The main theological nexus in this context is that of 'God the Saviour'.

In addition, the institutional development in line with theological points must be addressed too. This is done in the context of the critique of institutions by theological perspectives.

2.10 Summary

This chapter overviewed the work of Blumer; Blumer's view of how George Herbert Mead's work provides the basis for his own theorising; Ralph H. Turner's process role theory; Jonathan H. Turner's comparison of the symbolic interactionist theories of Blumer, Kuhn and Ralph H. Turner; Josef Bleicher's overview of points of appreciation and critique of symbolic

interactionism; and ethnomethodology and the further development of symbolic interactionism. The chapter concluded with a brief introduction to symbolic interactionism in the context of the analogical study of social symbolic realities present in a current situation as well as in an ancient canonical text.

In chapter four, the theoretical points concerning the development of symbolic interactionism are condensed into a workable model and used for the interpretation of Old Testament traditions which function as background for 1 Timothy 5:1-16.

CHAPTER THREE

MEDITERRANEAN SOCIETY AND WIDOWS

3.0 Introduction

This chapter addresses four main complexes. The first provides a brief historico-systemic overview of Greek and the second, Roman societies. As such, these systems, to various degrees, influenced Palestine. It is within this broadly-mapped historico-systemic structure which one should understand the more particular functioning of the general Mediterranean socio-anthropological codes. The historical survey is therefore followed, thirdly, by an explication of these codes.

The broad map of the historico-systemic and socio-anthropological issues which determined the Mediterranean world provides the general framework within which one can situate the social functioning of women and more particularly widows. For this reason, general descriptions provide information on how widows were positioned within the broad structure.

The fourth complex deals more particularly with widows in the Greek, Roman and Jewish societies.

This procedure is followed because it relates to the main notions Jonathan H Turner put forward concerning structural elements which influence symbolic interactionism, 1) each individual has a clearly defined part or position in society; 2) follows norms; 3) conforms to the dictates of persons with power or significant others; 4) interacts with other people and adjust their positions in relation to the positions of others; 5) acts in response to various audiences or 'generalized others'. Further, in the context of Ralph H. Turner's process role theory - which holds that roles are never final, this chapter also provides information concerning the 'folk norm of consistency'.

3.1 The Historical Background of Greek Society

The main accomplishment of Philip, the father of Alexander the Great (356-

323 BCE), was to unite the Greeks and to attempt to make the Greeks share in a common culture (cf. Encyclopedia 1995:279). Following in his father's footsteps, Alexander was eager to develop 'a world state, ... a universal brotherhood of man' (Ferguson 1987:8). Setting out to conquer other world powers, he achieved his ambitions by force. Asia Minor, The Persian Empire, Egypt as well as the Western parts of India were conquered. These conquests took place between 332 and 323 BCE (Stambaugh & Balch 1992:13). In these conquests, Tyre offered the 'most stubborn resistance' (Koester 1986:10).

The intention of Alexander's mission was to implement Greek culture throughout the world. For this purpose, he took poets, philosophers and historians with him on his conquests and urged them to settle in some of the most important cities in the Mediterranean world (Johnson 1986:24). Another of his strategies to spread Greek influence, was 'to encourage his soldiers to intermarry with native women to create one race' (Johnson 1986:24; Gundry 1987:4). By marrying a native woman (Roxanne) himself, he demonstrated this to his soldiers.

To different degrees, all conquered cities were supposed to be turned into cities modelled after the Greek city state. The polis was the symbol as well as the centre of Greek culture (paideia). It had to function as 'a place where citizens could meet, market, debate, and vote', master and communicate in the Greek language and share in Greek education (cf. Johnson 1986:24). In classical Greece, the rituals and the liturgies of the city gave its citizens a sense of personal and communal identity. Conquered cities (including Jerusalem), had to transform their constitution to comply with the demands and ideologies of Hellenism. Whereas this did not happen easily in Palestine and more particularly Jerusalem, new cities like Alexandria in Egypt, were Hellenized from their inception. 'Alexander founded seventy cities and modeled them after the Greek style' (Gundry 1987:4).

When Alexander died in 323 BCE at the age of 33, his leading generals divided the empire into four parts. Two of these parts are important for the understanding of the New Testament's historical background. The first was the Ptolemaic Empire centred in Egypt with its capital Alexandria and the second, the Seleucid Empire centred in Syria and its capital, Antioch. When Pompey made Syria into a Roman province in 64 BCE, the Seleucid Empire came to an end.

Central to the influence of Hellenism was three strategies. The first is that it regarded itself as 'civilized' over and against the 'uncivilized'. The world-wide empire system and after Alexander's death, the empire systems of the Ptolemies and the Seleucids, were created for the possibility of a new kind of identity. The local identity fostered by the ancient city faded away and was replaced by a notion of becoming a citizen of the world.

The second strategy which Hellenism fostered was to unify people (speaking different languages) by fostering the education in and speaking of one universal language, Greek. This was the most powerful tool because Greek developed into the common language or koine of the oikoumene and remained so even in the time of Rome. In the latter period, Latin became the official imperial language (Johnson 1986:25) but Greek was still widely regarded as the lingua franca. It was used by traders, government bureaucrats, philosophers and in religion. Since communication between widely diverse people in all these institutions is centrally important, the Greek language concretized the interaction between people, access to institutions and pulled people into Hellenistic systems.

The third strategy which dates from the time of Alexander, was to use religion to Hellenise people. The worshipping of the Greek local gods such as Zeus Olympus was especially propagated. Consequently, both religion and philosophy in the Hellenistic period focused its attention on individuals (Johnson 1986:26). In their administration of their empires, the Ptolemies and the Seleucids continued the strategies of Hellenization. In many ways,

Palestine became a victim of the rivalries between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids.

3.2 The Historical Background of Roman Society

In Rome, society was controlled by jurisdiction. The complete power or 'imperium' was given to the magistrates by state. Both *Ius* 'force' and *fas* 'religious Law' fell under one ruling body (Ferguson 1987:15). This meant that theocracy was exercised legally in Rome. The major difference between Greece and Rome was based on their different ideologies. Generally speaking, man was used as the measure of all things in Greece. In Rome, the measure of all things was the law. Both these approaches, however, contrast with the Jews which had God and especially Torah, as the measure of all things (Ferguson 1987:15).

In order to conquer a country, the Romans used the very same strategies the Greeks did: they imposed their language and culture on them.

By the end of the fourth century BCE, Rome was in charge of Carthage in the Western Mediterranean (Ferguson 1987:17). After the Romans conquered Carthage, Latin and Roman culture became prevalent in Spain, Gaul, Britain, the Rhineland and North Africa.

Despite the fact that southern Italy (and some Roman power) was conquered by Greece in 280-275 BCE and the spread of Greek influence in Italy, they in turn conquered the Macedonians. The whole province came under Roman jurisdiction in 148 BCE. Syria fell and became a Roman province in 63 BCE. Politically and culturally, Roman power was respected in the east.

The Roman republic came into being due to civil war and differences on land reform between Tiberius and his brother Caius in 133 BCE. The Roman senate was against their plans. They lost their lives. Conflict within Roman society and with Roman subject peoples primarily impacted on the

governance of the country. After the civil war of 90 BCE and in the context of the rebellious Italians (Ferguson 1987:18), Sulla made himself the champion of the senate. His troops seized Rome in order to suppress opposing political elements. Later he had himself appointed dictator in order to put the Republican constitution back in working order. After the decisive battle at Pharsalus, (48 BCE), Julius Caesar was recognized as the master of the Romans.

Cassius and Brutus assassinated Caesar on the Ides in 44 BCE. The *triumvirs* gained control of Rome and formed the senatorial and equestrian classes. Ultimately the civil war was brought to an end at the expense of forming an imperial republic. Even so, the empire remained. Caesar's nephew, Octavian, established a new constitution.

Octavian was later called Augustus. He had absolute power. The final legal definition of the new constitutional arrangement was made in 23 BCE. He was allowed to have proconsular power over the provinces. Further, he had the right of interference in any province to protect the power of the people.

Tiberius (AD 14-37) was the son of Augustus. Gaius Caligula (AD 37-41) began to rule with the support of the senate. But his reign was marked by conflict with the Jews. He did not favour the Jewish religion and custom (Ferguson 1987:24-25). The Jews reacted to his order that a statue of himself be set up in the temple in Jerusalem by tearing down an altar erected by him in AD 40.

Claudius (AD 41-54) was strongly supported by the army. He confirmed the privilege of the Jews in Alexandria. Even so, he expelled Jews from Rome (Acts 18:2). Under his leadership, Roman citizenship was developed to a high standard and the business of the senate became more efficient than it probably ever was.

In the first five years of his reign, Nero's (AD 54-68) rule was

progressive - basically because affairs of state were under the control of Seneca. When Nero decided to take affairs into his own hands, things changed. Burrus his adviser was poisoned and he died in AD 62. His wife Octavia was assassinated in AD 62 because he desired to marry Poppaea who was known as a 'worshiper of God' - perhaps she was a proselyte. His attitude towards Jews and Christians was negative. Part of the evidence is that he blamed Jews and Christians for the great fire of Rome (AD 64).

Furthermore, the martyrdom of the apostle Peter and Paul occurred during his reign. Ultimately, he committed suicide. By terminating his life, Julio-Claudian dynasty came to an end. (All the emperors from Augustus to Nero were related to the Julian and Claudian senatorial families. Those who did not belong to these families were eliminated - cf. Ferguson 1987:27.)

Vespasian had the ability to develop and reconstruct business, restore financial stability, provide confidence in the central government as well as unite the provinces (Ferguson 1998:28). The emperor cult which came into being in the time of Augustus was not important for him. Even though his son Titus (AD 79-81) was a popular ruler, his early death preempted his plans for the Roman empire.

Domitian's reign was characterised by the exiling or the execution of senatorial families and the persecution of Christians. In the time of the 'five good emperors' (AD 96-98) Rome reached its highest development in terms of prosperity. The provinces were well governed and people experienced peace - both within Roman society as well as in the provinces. Trajan's (AD 98-117) reign motivated the provinces to become full partners in the ruling of the empire. He extended the territory of the empire through his successful campaigns.

Throughout the historico-political developments within Roman society, the cities played an important role. The main influence of Roman society and administration was in and via the cities, i.e. in urban contexts. Important

here, was that it was not only the citizens themselves but also the cities which were classified according to the privileges they shared.

The most important colonial cities belonged to the Roman citizens. These cities included Philippi, Corinth, Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Troas. Mostly those who settled here were Roman war veterans.

The next in importance were towns which possessed Roman franchise. They were also considered towns with Roman citizens.

The third important category was the 'Latin' towns where Roman franchise could be obtained by holding a magistracy in the town government.

Some other cities possessed no official privileges, and called themselves 'free' such as Ephesus, Smyrna, Tarsus, Antioch of Syria. Internal affairs in these cities were conducted according to local laws.

In the time of the Republic, the highest officials were the consuls, the 'praetors', judges who ran local affairs (municipalities). They could also fill other administrative posts. The Quaestors or 'treasurers' were assigned to financial administration. It was the lowest office in terms of senate entrance.

The Roman towns in the west had two chief magistrates, 'duovirs' whereas Rome had two consuls.

The next category was regarded as an inferior office. It was for those who supervised buildings and were also involved in the public works.

In contrast to cities of the west, the local administration of cities in the eastern Mediterranean was different from the Roman administration. Each line of demarcation was based on the tradition which applied to each administration. The eastern Mediterranean kept the old traditions of municipal organizations rather than emulating Rome.

The Greek cities in the east were often subdivided into corporations (politeumata). Each corporation was a self-governing division of the city based on nationality. They had a religious centre, a council and magistrates with citizens divided into tribes (Ferguson 1987:33). Even Jews who lived in

Alexandria adopted this system of corporation. Although this system was widely applied, the aliens in a city did not have access nor full citizenship.

Even though the Greek and Roman systems outlined above changed over time as indicated, local people would be informed about systemic requirements to various degrees. Within the cities, people were positioned with regard to the Greek and Roman systems. If one was not a Roman citizen, it would still be one's own 'folk' culture which determined one's position, status and role in society. On the one hand, one's position and therefore also the nature of one's interaction with others, will have been determined by the Greek or Roman system, especially by the dictates of persons with power or significant others. On the other hand, one will have been determined by the folk culture and the significant others of one's own social group. From within these complexes, one would act in response to various audiences or 'generalized others'. More generally speaking, however, there developed over time some general codes to which virtually all cultures subscribed and which influenced and determined action and interaction. The next section provides an outline of this general socio-anthropological matrix. Since these elements were fairly stable, we shall call them 'codes'.

3.3 Five General Mediterranean Socio-anthropological Codes

If one wants to understand how widows were positioned within Mediterranean society, one has to understand how particularly Mediterranean socio-anthropological codes functioned. It is true that the Greek and Roman politico-systemic structures as well as the different folk cultures provided a social grid which positioned women. Even more important, however, is that within this grid, people functioned according to ancient social codes of conduct.

Since honour was such a strong factor in Mediterranean society, this

will form the primary focus of this section of the overview, especially as it determined the division of the sexes in terms of honour and shame as well as space.

3.3.1 Honour in the Mediterranean World

Neyrey (1991:25) defines honour as 'a claim to a positive worth along with the social acknowledgement of that worth by others'. The honour of the individual determines the position of that particular individual in the society. 'It indicates a person's social standing and rightful place in the society' (Neyrey 1991:25). Both Neyrey (1991:25) and Malina (1981:27f) confirm that 'it contains power, gender or sexual status and religion'.

In the Mediterranean world, the father of a household has as male, absolute honour. His honour is approved and confirmed by his children's recognition of it. Their obedience shows his power. The honour a father has within his family is reflected to society. Society mirrors this honour back in the way it treats the father and by implication the household. If, however, the father's honour is not acknowledged within his family, the same is the result in society: he will not be honoured and by implication, his family will also not be honoured. In other words, honour reflects the status of a person inside as well as outside the family context.

3.3.2 The Sources of Honour

The sources of honour is that it may be both ascribed and/or acquired. Ascribed honour refers to honour that a person obtains through kinship and not because of any effort or achievement. This kind of honour is derived from kinship in terms of belonging to an honourable family. Acquired honour is honour which a person acquires as social recognition of worth through certain achievements (Neyrey 1991:28; Malina 1981:28). The latter is a more significant form of honour within society than the former, because it may

bring about the status transformation of a person (and his family). Arising from social recognition, the latter cannot be claimed by an individual.

From this brief overview, it is evident that ascribed honour is recognised in the context of social interaction. Within the social codes posed by these two forms and sources of honour, interaction among people within the kingroup as well as recognition by society can be said to be effective and free. Outsiders who impacted on these interactions, were seen as challengers of either family or kingroup honour (Malina 1981:28).

The process of acquiring honour, equally, comes about through a particular kind of social interaction. Through an action, the actor sends a message by means of a culturally recognized channel to a receiving individual. Such effective action produces the recognition of worth by others in society. In this case, the source acts as a challenger, while the message itself functions as a symbol (Malina 1981:29). Social recognition means that an actor acquires honour.

In order to acquire honour, an actor enters into the social space of another. Such actions constitute challenges and may be either negative or positive. 'These actions constitute the message that has to be perceived and interpreted by a receiving individual as well as by the public at large' (Malina 1981:30). In order for the communication to be effective, it must be recognised in terms of a mutual understanding between the source and the receiver. If the challenge is positively received, cooperation is likely to emerge as well as mutual understanding between the challenger and the receiver.

However, if the challenger makes a negative claim on another, the other may be shamed. Alternatively, if the other responds effectively, the challenger may be shamed. The public enacts the evaluation of the interaction.

3.3.3 Gender-Based Honour

The most important relations within which sexual division took place, is within the family and kinship group. It is here, where primarily honour, divides male and female. The big difference, is that whereas males only have honour, females have shame. 'Shame' refers to the sensitivity Mediterranean people have for the difference of women. Shame has to do with what others think, say, and do with regard to the worth of women (Neyrey 1991:41).

Honour and shame represent the position of each sex in society. Males represent the public and females the domestic spheres. Both male and female acquire a certain status in terms of how they act out their honour or shame. Once this status is obtained, it is validated by society. If one aspires to a certain status but is denied it (by society), this negative response put him or her in the position of shame.

Ultimately, honour stands for what comes from the inside to the outside. Shame, again, emanates from what comes from the outside to the inside. This implies that if the husband of a family is deceased, the honour is lost - what is left, is shame. All the eyes of the society is upon the widow and the members of the society feel the shame of the widow. As the headship is no longer there, the widow is left without protection. At the same time, she is vulnerable to the ravages and challenges of society. If women as such did not have any recognition in Mediterranean society, it is obvious that widows, even more, could not receive recognition.

3.3.4 The Dyadic Personality

Personality in the first century was not determined by individualist norms and values nor individualist honour. Rather, honour and shame as well as personality, were determined by social-individual 'dyadism', that is, the individual's interaction with the group. More particularly, the dyadic personality was formed as 'an individual who perceives himself and forms his

self image in terms of what others perceive and feed back to him' (Malina 1981:55). The individual was connected to the society and it was in terms and by the society that it received its worth of self. The same was true of morality - individuals were expected to comply with the norms of the society. If an individual could not compete effectively, not only the kingroup but even the whole society may be shamed.

Malina demonstrates three interactive elements individuals had with their environments. The first contains emotion-fused thought - the main focus of intellect, will, judgment, conscience, personality, trust, the core-personality, and affections etc. The second is represented by self-expressive speech - a main factor of communication with others and determined by a form of mutual self-unveiling. The third element comprises purposeful-action and deals with human behaviour as such. The latter can be described as an external activity as it is observable by members of family and of society.

3.3.5 The Perception of Limited Good

Like many other societies, Mediterranean society was segregated on the basis of the distinction between rich and poor. 'All the desired things in life, such as land, wealth, prestige, health, friendship and love, manliness, honour, respect and status, power and influence, security and safety' were only available in limited quantities' (Malina 1981).

Since these basic needs in life were only available in limited quantities, this fact brings to the fore the value of self-image. The rich were able to survive as they were honoured for their wealth. The poor, however, had a negative image because of their poverty. And this group formed the largest part of society.

Because of negative challenges, because they were often shamed and because they often lost honour or were shamed in society, the poor, the labourer, the landless peasant, widows and beggars - the latter two groups

were especially regarded as the poor of the poorest economically - could not maintain their status. The perception of people in a limited good society is that many could not attain honour or status. The main secret of this society was that economy together with the honour-shame codes within the realities that things were available only in limited quantities, meant that the only thing many could lay claim to, was lineage.

3.4 The Status of Widows in the First Century Mediterranean World

Turning now more particularly to the status of widows in the Mediterranean world, their status can be determined in terms of the historico-systemic grid functioning in society as well as in terms of how the five socio-anthropological codes functioned within this grid. This section, therefore, deals with the status of widows in the Hellenistic world, Roman and Jewish society. Each society is analyzed with the intention of exposing the societal understanding of the status of widows. Especially for the Jews, Torah played a pivotal role in the determination of the status of widows. Generally speaking, 'religion' can function as barometer for measuring status in these societies.

3.4.1 Greek Society

The political background of Greek society vividly demonstrates that Alexander the Great and his soldiers saw women as the means for purposes of hellenisation - procreation became one of the ways to have Hellenistic culture to spread. This shows the mentality of men towards the understanding of the status of women (and widows) in the Hellenistic world. Women became the means to attain political goals. Such a strategy gives the impression that men used their power not only to further their own goals but also that they used their power against the powerless - women. This statement shows that as women were powerless, had an inferior status to men, they

could be used as means for empire building.

Because of their lowly status, women were regarded as 'entities of the society - not as human beings' (Thurston 1989:10). Besides their inferiority to men in society, they were also not allowed to take part in public activities. Instead, they were kept as domestic entities. 'In classical Athens, women did not participate in public life but kept homes and raised legitimate children for the husband, the lord, (kyrios) of the oikos (house)'. The obvious reason for this fact was that they did not have any status in society - the public was the place of human beings - the men. This also means that women had virtually no status before the law, as was the case concerning custom (Thurston 1989:10; Ryrie 1979:2). Widows who had no honourable male in whom their status was embedded or to defend their shame, were even worse off.

Concerning the remarriage of widows, 'young widows were encouraged to remarry in order to maintain her first husband's house'. It was only by marrying again that young widows could lay claim to their erstwhile husband's house. If she could not find a suitable partner, she was allowed to return to her own family with her dowry. Old widows, however, were strictly forbidden to remarry. I assume that this denial was related to their age and impossibility of child bearing.

In contrast to the situation of young widows, the condition of 'barren widows' was worse. They were not allowed to own the property of their deceased husbands. This denial, it seems, stems from the fact that such a woman would be unable to provide heirs for the husband. Even so, it appears as if barren widows in actual fact were better off and had more privileges than young widows.

An additional fact which influenced women in society, was that they were marginalised educationally. To be a soldier was the most important occupation in the Mediterranean world. Since the gymnasium was the most important education institution - being responsible for the training of

professional soldiers - women were not allowed access. What education individual women had came about because they belonged to the upper classes or through other means - e.g. a husband could teach her.

Together with this situation, the fact that women were already disadvantaged by not having access to any form of education, the general perception of women (often inscribed in law) was that they were seen as bad educators of children. This attitude was also related to men's perception that women could not exercise proper discipline. This was compounded by the fact that men were mainly interested in the character and education of their sons and not their daughters. Moreover, philosophers like Aristotle held that women could not function as educators because their teaching would cause 'sexual inferiority' in men (Thurston 1989:55-56). In a society which was built on and functioned through honour, set as highest goal for men to become soldiers, and demanded that men be sexually aggressive, this could spell disaster.

In the thinking of Plato, the issue of inequality did not exist. He considered men and women on an equal basis. His educational approach was also based on equality for the benefit of society. Consequently, his approach shows the value of women not only in terms of their status but also in terms of their contribution in society.

Socrates shared the same educational ideology with Plato. He maintained, however, the inferiority women. Historically, Greek women were freed from bondage after the death of Alexander the Great. Since then, they had access to self-expression in public and they received recognition. They were also accepted as leaders of societies in Greek religion. Here, they often acted as priestesses serving alongside priests or on their own.

In Greek society, a widow was defined in terms of the law and not in terms of custom. 'A "widow" is a woman who has lost her husband, by death, has not remarried, and has thereby acquired certain legal rights of

inheritance from her husband's estates' (Thurston 1989:9). Greek thought defined a widow as a legal defenseless person due to the death of her husband.

For protection, a widow had only legal recourse. The Greek word used for widow was *χήρα*, the one who is 'forsaken' or 'left empty' or one who is 'without' or maybe 'left without'. This word, *χήρα*, was used in the New Testament context to define a woman who was 'left without a husband'. Therefore, she was regarded as one in a state of celibacy (Thurston 1989:9). Financially, the *χήρα* was left without a 'source of support' (Thurston 1989:10).

3.4.2 Roman Society

In Rome, the state had a strict authority over widows. The latter received subsidy from the state and they had to comply with the law of the state for survival.

The Roman empire encouraged widows to remarry and this was a very strict principle of the state (House 1990:59-62). Those who were between the ages of twenty and fifty, were compelled to remarry within one year after the death of a husband. Failure to comply with this law, spelled catastrophe for a widow because they had to suffer the consequences of marginalization from the state subsidy of the day.

Despite this limited assistance and the authority of the state over widows, the condition of inequality was the order of the day. As men had absolute authority, women had none.

Concerning divorce, for example, a man was granted the right to divorce his wife but a wife did not have the same right. The law of the day interpreted 'women as children before the law' (House 1990:59-60). 'Legally, the wife was still regarded merely as a piece of property completely under the control of the husband' (Ryrie 1979:5).

Roman philosophers perceived women as weak and light-minded entities (Wayne 1990:59f). As such, they undermined the power and intelligence of women. Due to the fact of marginalization 'they walked with their faces covered, but with soul uncovered' (Wayne 1990:61f). In a Roman society characterised by honour and prestige, women did not have much defense.

3.4.3 Jewish Society

In Jewish society, the 'free woman was only a widow' (Ryrie 1979:9). She was free to marry any man except a high priest (Encyclopedia Judaica 1982:491). Besides that, society put pressure on widows. 'A widow was assigned for levirate marriage or to react against levirate marriage in public before she could remarry outside her husband's family' (Ryrie 1979:9). In Jewish law, a widow could not inherit her husband's property.

In this society, however, women were also inferior to men. Philo himself had a negative attitude towards women. He 'saw women in a role strictly secondary, inferior and subordinate' (Wayne 1990:65). As in the rest of the Mediterranean world, a woman in Jewish society had an identity based on her embeddedness in the kingroup. 'A woman found her identify as a member of a family, as a daughter, wife, mother, rather than as an individual' (Wayne 1990:65). In the home, she, however, did have dignity and responsibility. Her status was assessed against her performance in the home. 'A Jewish mother fulfilling her responsibility in the sphere of her home receive[d] equal honour with the father' (Ryrie 1979:10).

Legally, a woman had no resources to divorce her husband. She also did not have any property rights. Before the Law, man and woman were unequal. Men were above women and at the same time had more rights and privileges than they. Another fact of inequality was that women were not allowed to defend themselves in a court situation. This was so because in the

eyes of the Law, women did not have any status (House 1990:65-68).

Women were also marginalized educationally. Although their intelligence was underrated, in the religious sphere, they did play important roles. Women such as Lois, Eunice, and Priscilla (mentioned in the New Testament) seems to have had more privileges in Hellenistic context than Jewish woman.

The Hebrew defined a widow as 'a helpless person who is exposed to oppression as well as to harsh treatment by the society' (Thurston 1989:9). The Hebrew word used for the widow was אֶלְמָנָה. It derived from the root meaning of the word אָלַם - one who is unable to speak. The specific use of the word אֶלְמָנָה did not directly refer to a woman whose husband was deceased, but rather to 'a once-married woman who had no means of financial support' (Encyclopedia Judaica 1982:487). The Jewish law stresses again the fact that 'the widow's right to maintenance also ceases if she remarries' (Encyclopedia Judaica 1982:493). It is obvious that she would be supported by her new marriage arrangement.

3.5 Summary

Politically, women (including widows) were used for procreation and the means for spreading Hellenistic culture. Their status was inferior to men. Young widows were encouraged to remarry while the old widows were denied such opportunity. Barren widows were more privileged than other widows in the same society - indicating some inequality in how widows were treated. It appears as if barren widows could function more like men because they had to fend for themselves. Widows who married again, however, remained in the subjected position of women generally speaking. Women were prevented from being educated as well as from partaking in education activities. After the death of Alexander, they were more free to play a more important role in society - i.e. in leadership capacities as well as in religious

ritual and ceremony.

The Roman state had so much control on the lives of widows that the subsidy widows received for the first year after the death of their husbands, basically functioned as a form of blackmail. We may infer that this measure kept women in the position of being useful only in so far as procreation. Legally, women were regarded as inferior to men, as a piece of property and as children before the law. Finally, Philosophers classified them with both the weak and light-minded.

Widows in Jewish society were challenged to remarry. A woman could find identity, as well as dignity in her home. Legally, she had fewer rights than her husband. Educationally, women did not have access to systems of education in society.

This chapter sought to position women and more particularly widows within the historico-systemic structures of Greek, Roman and Jewish societies. Within this broadly-mapped historico-systemic structure, one must understand how women and especially widows were positioned as regards the socio-anthropological codes which functioned within society.

The broad map of the historico-systemic and socio-anthropological issues which determined the Mediterranean world provides the general framework within which one can situate the social functioning of women and more particularly widows. For this reason, general descriptions provide information on how widows were positioned and defined within the broad structure. This information is important if one is to understand how these broader structural elements determined women but especially widows in their interaction with others in society. In terms of Ralph H. Turner's views, these structural elements required of people to be consistent with regard to their actions and interactions.

In this context, it was found that it is especially the codes of honour and shame and how they were determined by the sources of honour, gender, the dyadic personality and the perception of limited good, which determined

the status of widows.

A symbolic interactionist interpretation of the Old Testament and New Testament tradition in which 1 Timothy 5:1-16 function, follows in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

A SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONIST INTERPRETATION OF 'WIDOW' IN THE OLD TESTAMENT AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

4.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter the researcher dealt generally with the historico-systemic and socio-anthropological codes and structures of Greek, Roman and Jewish societies and how women and more particularly widows were positioned by these facts. In this chapter, the main focus is on a symbolic interactionist interpretation of widows in the Old Testament and New Testament.

Symbolic interactionism's main tenet is that 'individuals as well as human groups or society exist in action and must be seen in terms of action'. Here, Blumer's premises are important. They are: 1) 'human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them'; 2) the 'source of meaning' is neither 'intrinsic to the thing that has it' nor a 'psychical accretion brought to the thing by the person for whom the thing has meaning' but 'the process of interaction between people'; 3) 'the use of meaning' is not merely an 'application' of meaning derived from social interaction but is itself 'a process of interpretation'.

Firstly, *the nature of the action and interaction in the text*. This is analysed with attention to 'motion', to 'action', or the 'act'. The assumption is that such action represented in the text is empirical, and as such, representative of a wider phenomenon to various degrees. As such, the human being acts in terms of what he or she wants, an objective, and lines or plans of action which he or she has identified through self-communication. Here, the question is whether the actor complies with a situation confronting

(self-conceptions, role-playing skills and styles of interaction) brought to the interaction and which influence this process of interpretation? How does the folk norm of consistency, including role verification function interpretively? In terms of change, what is the different 'world' in terms of which things are defined and interpreted differently?

This chapter focuses mainly on a description of the situations, the actors and their actions in the context of different symbolic systems (or 'worlds'), contexts or categories. An integrated description in terms of these four areas of symbolic interactionism will be done as summary.

4.1 The Old Testament: A General Assessment

As social objects, widows are usually grouped together with other people who suffer injustice in society, i.e. the 'fatherless' and the 'alien'. Such people were usually not cared for by society, since they were seen as people who lack one or more of the basic elements which make a person a full participant in social interaction in society. Widows lacked a husband who would, according to normal convention, represent her. The same is true of the fatherless. The fatherless child lacks a father to represent him or her in society. The alien, again, would by definition not belong to society. The alien does not have any significant social relations in which he or she could be catered for and in terms of which he or she could interact with others. Due to the social exclusion and alienation which widows, the fatherless and the alien would experience in society, it is quite significant that compassion towards such people is one of the most central elements of the Bible's symbolic networks. The centrality of this focus shows the sensitivity for social injustice present in the Bible's symbolic universe. This sensitivity is also indicated in the 'cry' towards God for help, justice or salvation from situations of suffering at the hands of an inhuman society. God's intervention, again,

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shows divine compassion - compassion after which society was expected to model itself.

In order to explain how God's care for widows is present in the Bible and communicated through various of its literatures, this chapter focuses on a number of texts from both the Old Testament and the New Testament. In each instance, the interaction between a widow and her contemporaries is focused upon, together with how societal symbolic systems conflict with God's divine will of care and compassion for widows. This means that *the headings of each section is formulated either in terms of action - action which is already embedded in the normative evaluation of the Biblical text - or in terms of the symbolic world as defined by the Biblical text*. In its Old Testament section, this chapter focuses on:

- 1 Tamar's challenge of injustice concerning social requirements as laid down by the levirate marriage;
- 2 On abusing the already socially disadvantaged;
- 3 Priestly social prescriptions and the social positioning of widows
- 4 Vows and the social positioning of widows
- 5 The executing of justice for injustice done to the socially disadvantaged
- 6 On positively enabling the socially disadvantaged
- 7 Widows are not excluded from festivals
- 8 Scribal recognition of Abigail, Nabal's Widow
- 9 The wise widow from Tekoa who turned a King's mind
- 10 The son of a widow becomes the artisan of King Solomon
- 11 A widow's son becomes a rebel and then King
- 12 A widow cares for God's Prophet
- 13 Elijah raises a Widow's son from the dead
- 14 Defense of one's integrity by disclaiming harm to the socially disadvantaged

- 15 Cursing another
- 16 The Lord's care for the socially disadvantaged
- 17 Educating Israel concerning justice
- 18 The widow metaphor as indication of social vulnerability and scorn
- 19 The promise of God's presence on condition that justice be done to the socially disadvantaged
- 20 Social chaos due to exploitation by leaders
- 21 Social injustice and the judgement of the Lord
- 22 A plea for mercy

Despite overlap, these sections can be grouped together in terms of the two distinctions - primarily focusing on action or the Biblical symbolic world - as follows:

Symbolic Action

- 1 Tamar's challenge of injustice concerning social requirements as laid down by the levirate marriage;
- 2 On abusing the already socially disadvantaged;
- 5 The executing of justice for injustice done to the socially disadvantaged
- 6 On positively enabling the socially disadvantaged
- 9 The wise widow from Tekoa who turned a King's mind
- 10 The son of a widow becomes the artisan of King Solomon
- 11 A widow's son becomes a rebel and then King
- 12 A widow cares for God's Prophet
- 13 Elijah raises a Widow's son from the dead
- 14 Defense of one's integrity by disclaiming harm to the socially disadvantaged
- 15 Cursing another
- 20 Social chaos due to exploitation by leaders

- 21 Social injustice and the judgement of the Lord
- 22 A plea for mercy

The Biblical Symbolic World

- 3 Priestly social prescriptions and the social positioning of widows
- 4 Vows and the social positioning of widows
- 7 Widows are not excluded from festivals
- 8 Scribal recognition of Abigail, Nabal's Widow
- 16 The Lord's care for the socially disadvantaged
- 17 Educating Israel concerning justice
- 18 The widow metaphor as indication of social vulnerability and scorn
- 19 The promise of God's presence on condition that justice be done to the socially disadvantaged

4.2 אֶלְמָנָה in the Old Testament

In Biblical Hebrew, the word 'widow' is אֶלְמָנָה, with plural, אֶלְמָנוֹת. 'Widow' does not merely indicate a woman (as object) whose husband is dead. More specifically, a widow is someone who was once married, who was cared for financially and socially. As a once-married woman, she does not have the social system which is supposed to care for her. Whereas widows with a son may still have someone to protect her, care for her and represent the family in society, this is not the case when the Bible refers to women as widows. They are usually destitute and totally on their own. For various reasons, men would also not marry widows, aggravating their plight. In this system, widows form a *social category*.

In addition to forming a social category, the widow also does not have any financial support. In a patriarchal society where labour and the earning of money mainly constitutes the domain of men, poverty usually characterised

widows. Apart from a social category, 'widow' also indicates a *class category*. Both on the grounds of social and class realities, the widow is therefore in need of special protection and care, legally or otherwise (see Encyclopaedia Judaica 1982:487f).

Generally speaking, Jewish Law protected widows both economically and socially. The following is a brief overview of how such care manifested in both these spheres. For symbolic interaction purposes, widows in this context was an object in a *legal category*.

After the death of a husband, the widow was entitled to the return of all her property of whatever kind, since her ownership of it was not affected by marriage (Encyclopaedia Judaica 1982:493). In terms of maintenance, she was entitled to receive the same maintenance as she was entitled to receive during the husband's lifetime. Maintenance was to be provided by the family of the deceased husband. This family had to provide clothing, residence, medical expenses, the use of household articles and other forms of material (Encyclopaedia Judaica 1982:493). Since the woman usually joined the husband's family on marriage, she was allowed to stay on in the apartment she shared with her husband. The only difference is that she was not allowed to live in all the sections of the communal house as when the husband was alive. In addition, she was prohibited to transfer ownership of the apartment to others nor to let the whole or part of it. The right of residence but no right to ownership, meant that she could maintain a certain status but not as it was before.

Concerning the apartment she shared with the husband's family, the widow's right was to have use of it while she was still alive. On her death, it would return to her husband's family.

If the widow survived with small children of the husband, both boys and girls, and the estate is insufficient to maintain all of them, her right prevails. If however, the young children surviving with her are either all boys

or girls, they all shared equally in the estate.

Whenever the widow became engaged with another man, her right of maintenance ceased because she then started to depend on another man. She found another family in which her shame would be defended and her husband's honour would be the strong, male force protecting her. The classic example of the care of the widow by the deceased husband's family is that of the levirate marriage, i.e. where the father of the deceased husband had to give the eldest unmarried son to the widow as husband (see *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 1982:494).

In both the economic and social categories, Jewish Law therefore provided for the widow to different degrees. This, however, does not mean that this law was adhered to consistently. It is in this context that the Biblical 'symbolic world' advances widows who act creatively in the face of exploitation or challenges unjust action.

4.2.1 Tamar's Challenge of Injustice/Levirate Marriage

In Genesis 38:11,14, Tamar is called a widow, an אֵלְמָנָה. According to custom, the father-in-law of a widow had to give his eldest unmarried son to a widow as husband. The responsibility for this act was that of the father-in-law. In the Tamar story, her husband, Er, passed away. No child was conceived while Er was alive.

According to the levirate marriage practice, Tamar's father-in-law, Judah, assigned his second born son, Onan, to take care of his brother's wife. He had to at least be the substitute of the deceased brother by helping his widow to conceive an heir (Von Rad 1979:355). Besides that, the substitution meant the continuity of the name of the deceased brother in the community of Israel - 'That his brother's name may not be blotted out of Israel'. However, 'since Onan knew that the offspring would not be his, he spilled his semen on

the ground whenever he went in to his brother's wife, so that he would not give offspring to his brother' (Gn 38:39). When he died, Judah told Tamar to live in his house until his son, Shelah, has grown up.

Genesis 38:11: Then Judah said to his daughter-in-law Tamar, "Remain a widow in your father's house until my son Shelah grows up"--for he feared that he too would die, like his brothers. So Tamar went to live in her father's house.

אַלְמָנָה בֵּית־אָבִיהָ עַד־יִגְדַּל שְׁלָה בְּנִי כִּי אָמַר פֶּן־יָמוּת וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוּדָה לְתָמָר כְּלֹתוֹ שְׁבִי
גַם־הִוא
אַלְמָנָה בֵּית־אָבִיהָ עַד־יִגְדַּל שְׁלָה בְּנִי כִּי אָמַר כְּאָחִיו וּתְלֶךְ תָּמָר וּתֵשֶׁב בֵּית אָבִיהָ:
פֶּן־יָמוּת גַּם־הִוא

According to Deuteronomy 25:5-11, the second brother had to serve to continue and defend the identity of the deceased brother in the society of Israel.

Deuteronomy 25:7: But if the man has no desire to marry his brother's widow, then his brother's widow shall go up to the elders at the gate and say, "My husband's brother refuses to perpetuate his brother's name in Israel; he will not perform the duty of a husband's brother to me.

וְאִם־לֹא יַחְפֹּץ הָאִישׁ לְקַחַת אֶת־יְבֻמָּתוֹ וְעָלְתָה יְבֻמָּתוֹ
הַשְׁעֵרָה אֶל־הַזִּקְנִים וְאָמְרָה מֵאִין יְבָמִי לְהָקִים לְאָחִיו שֵׁם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל
לֹא אָבָה יְבָמִי:

The eldest non-married son had no option except to comply with the decision of his father effectively. But in this case the response was rare as Onan decided to spill his semen on the ground as a sign of rejecting the decision of his father. Since the levirate duty was part of the symbolic system of the control of society and activities of God, it is said that God killed both Er and Onan - the first for wickedness and the second because he did not comply with the levirate duty. Such reaction was not acceptable in the sight of the Lord and when it happened and Onan also died, Tamar had to wait for Shelah. Judah could have given Shelah as husband but that he feared for his life too and therefore insisted that Tamar wait till he is older (Von Rad 1979:358).

Since Tamar, however, was indirectly shamed by Judah - his son did not fulfill his duty and Shelah has grown up in the meantime - she made a plan to get Judah himself to help her to conceive a child. 'She had noticed that she had been deprived of her right because Shelah had grown up in the meantime. She decided therefore, to procure her right herself and devised a risky plan which could cost her both her honor and her life' (Westermann 1986:53).

Genesis 38:14: she put off her widow's garments, put on a veil, wrapped herself up, and sat down at the entrance to Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah. She saw that Shelah was grown up, yet she had not been given to him in marriage.

וַתִּסָּר בְּגָדֵי אֶלְמְנוּתָהּ מֵעָלֶיהָ וַתִּכְסּ בַּצִּעִיף וַתִּתְעַלֶּף וַתָּשָׁב בִּפְתַח עֵינַיִם אֲשֶׁר
עַל-דֶּרֶךְ תְּמָנָה כִּי רָאָתָה כִּי-גָדֹל שְׁלָה וְהוּא לֹא-נָתַןָּהּ לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה:

By trapping Judah to make her pregnant, she risked her shame as well as her life. If a widow was found to be pregnant by a man other than the deceased husband's brother, it could have

She pretended to be a prostitute and mislead her father-in-law to sleep with her. Prostitution was common in the Mediterranean world but for the Israelites, it was strictly forbidden. Deuteronomy 23:17 says, 'None of the daughters of Israel shall be a temple prostitute; none of the sons of Israel shall be a temple prostitute'. The fact that Judah himself slept with a prostitute may be because he himself was a widower.

Tamar became pregnant and this was communicated to Judah. He wanted to have her burned as was the custom. When she showed the signet, the cord and the staff which she took from him the night of the intercourse, however, Judah acknowledged his mistake. Genesis 38:24-27 says:

About three months later Judah was told, "Your daughter-in-law Tamar has played the whore; moreover she is pregnant as a result of whoredom." And Judah said, "Bring her out, and let her be burned." As she was being brought out, she sent word to her father-in-law, "It was the owner of these who made me pregnant." And she said, "Take note, please, whose these are, the signet and the cord and the staff." Then Judah acknowledged them and said, "She is more in the right than I, since I did not give her to my son Shelah." And he did not lie with her again.

In this narrative, we find God as the active agent who assures the continuance and reinforcement of a symbolic system - the levirate. God is the agent who kills both the wicked Er and the unfaithful Onan. We also find that the canny maneuvering of Tamar ensures the continuance of Israel's faith tradition and bloodline. The honourable Judah, finds himself in a situation where the canny maneuvering of Tamar is more in harmony with the intention of the symbolic system of Israel than that of such an honourable person as himself. The widow, Tamar, through her canny behaviour interacts with people to ensure justice being done to her as well as the honourable upholding of the symbol

system. Moreover, she risks her life to do so. In terms of her actual quality of life, she ensures that she will not continue to be shamed by her father.

In legal context, this situation was also dealt with in a different way.

But if the man has no desire to marry his brother's widow, then his brother's widow shall go up to the elders at the gate and say, "My husband's brother refuses to perpetuate his brother's name in Israel; he will not perform the duty of a husband's brother to me."

The law gave access to a widow to claim her husband's brother to become his replacement in levirate marriage. The official procedure to present this matter was through the elders of the society. They were entitled to attend to it lawfully. The provision made in this particular law is for a widow whose husband dies without a son. It applies in a situation where two brothers are living together and their families are under the same roof. In such circumstances, the brother of the deceased man was expected to enable the widow to have a child in the hope that a son would be born to take her husband's name, that is, the law of 'levirate marriage' which was to enable the woman to comply with the covenant - in which the family was of central importance.

First, we need to realize that in the Near Eastern world it was a social stigma for a woman not to give a son to her husband.

A widow would be grieved enough that she had lost her husband but to that agonizing hardship has been added in intense personal shame of not bearing a male child (Brown 1993:242).

Families were close-knit units and the birth of a baby boy gave a deep sense of security as well as pride to the parents. The continuity of the family name was an extremely influential factor in Hebrew life. The presence in both Old

Testament and New Testament of genealogies or 'family trees' illustrates the importance of a 'known' family background which can trace its ancestry back for many generations. 'A family without a male heir or successor ... would perish in Israel' (Brown 1993:243).

This law is designed to ensure that the deceased man's name will not be blotted out from Israel. We must realize that this law was designed to protect the widow as well as to continue the family line. It also enters into the realm of property rights.

If a woman was compelled to seek a husband outside the family, she would naturally remove various items and ancestral possessions belonging to the family, taking them outside the family circle. Such items were extremely important in Israel, providing the owner with some sense of continuity and security (Brown 1993:243).

4.2.2 On abusing the already Socially Disadvantaged

The maltreatment of a widow or orphan is forbidden by God. Since God wants to see justice for all in society, this justice includes those already socially disadvantaged due to their social positioning within the symbolic system. The quality of such concern is the same God showed towards Israel when they were aliens in Egypt. Exodus 22:21-24 put both the widow and the orphan in the position of the alien. Moreover, Israel is admonished to heed the care for the alien, widow and orphan because their ancestors experienced similar alienation in Egypt. Exodus 22:21-24 says:

You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. You shall not abuse any widow or orphan. If you do abuse them, when they cry out to me, I will surely heed their cry; my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children orphans.

כָּל־אַלְמָנָה וַיְתוֹם לֹא תַעֲנוּן:
אִם־עֲנֶה תַעֲנֶה אֹתוֹ כִּי אִם־
צָעַק יִצְעַק אֵלַי שָׁמַע אֲשָׁמַע צָעָקְתוֹ:
וְחָרָה אַפִּי וְהָרַגְתִּי אֶתְכֶם
בְּחָרֶב וְהָיוּ נָשִׁיכֶם אֲלֻמָּנוֹת וּבְנֵיכֶם יְתָמִים: ה'
אִם־כִּסֵּף |
תִּלְוֶה אֶת־עַמִּי אֶת־הָעַנִּי עִמָּךְ לֹא־תִהְיֶה לוֹ כְּנִשָּׁה לֹא־תִשְׁיָמוּן
עָלָיו נִשְׁךְ:

This text also shows that the cry towards God for help will surely bring his justice down for the alien, widow and orphan. Moreover, such justice on their behalf is positioned within the faith tradition of God as warrior as well as God as warrior-liberator God who liberates from oppression and lead the exodus. Since his concern is for such people in society, the threat to Israel is that they will become the object of God's wrath themselves when he acts on behalf of those who are socially oppressed. 'I will kill you with the sword' indicates that God acts as warrior.

This text also has the threat built into it that Israel themselves will then become widows and orphans. God is concerned about and functions as the protector of those who are already socially disadvantaged in terms of the symbolic system of Israel, i.e. those who experience not care, compassion and justice in their interaction with other people due to the functioning of the Israelite symbolic system, but oppression. They are the people who were exposed to violence in society since they did not have a husband or father or a patriarchal system which would be their protection. Within Israel's symbolic system, Exodus 22:21-24 therefore legislates on a strand in the symbolic system - the exodus from Egypt which may become secondary in the usual societal interaction of the people of Israel. God 'places himself directly in the role of a special protector' (see Childs 1979:478-479).

Within the context of the group of people the alien, widow and orphan form in society, similar admonishments are found in Deuteronomy 24:17f; 27:19; Job 22:9; 24:3,21; Psalms 94:6; Isaiah 10:2. These texts read as follows:

Deuteronomy 24:17f: You shall not deprive a resident alien or an orphan of justice; you shall not take a widow's garment in pledge. Remember that you were a slave in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this.

לא תטֹה מִשְׁפֹּט גֵר יְתוֹם וְלֹא
תִּחְבֹּל בְּגָד אִלְמָנָה:
וְזָכַרְתָּ כִּי עֶבֶד הָיִיתָ בְּמִצְרַיִם וַיִּפְדֶּךָ יְהוָה
אֱלֹהֶיךָ מִשָּׁם עַל־כֵּן אֲנֹכִי מְצֻוֶּה לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה: ס

Deuteronomy 27:19: "Cursed be anyone who deprives the alien, the orphan, and the widow of justice." All the people shall say, "Amen!"

אָרוּר מִטֹּה מִשְׁפֹּט גֵר־יְתוֹם וְאִלְמָנָה וְאָמַר כָּל־הָעָם אָמֵן: ס

Job 22:9: You have sent widows away empty-handed, and the arms of the orphans you have crushed.

אִלְמָנוֹת שְׁלַחְתָּ רֵיקָם וְזָרְעוֹת יְתִמִּים יִדָּכְאוּ:

Job 24:3: They drive away the donkey of the orphan; they take the widow's ox for a pledge.

חֲמֹר יְתוּמִים יִנְהָגוּ יִחְבְּלוּ שׁוֹר אִלְמָנָה:

Job 24:21: They harm the childless woman, and do no good to the widow.

רָעָה עֲקָרָה לֹא תֵלֵד וְאַלְמָנָה לֹא יִיטִיב:

Psalm 94:6: They kill the widow and the stranger, they murder the orphan,

אַלְמָנָה וְגֵר יַהַרְגוּ וַיְתוּמִים יִרְצְחוּ:

Isaiah 10:2: to turn aside the needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people of their right, that widows may be your spoil, and that you may make the orphans your prey!

לְהַטּוֹת מִדִּין דָּלִים וּלְגָזֹל מִשְׁפַּט עֲנִי עָמִי לְהִיּוֹת אֲלֻמְנוֹת שְׁלָלָם וְאֶת־יְתוּמִים יְבוֹזוּ:

In both the legislation in Deuteronomy 24:17f and the curses for those in Israel who break the covenant with God, it is stated that they exploit the widow. As in Exodus 22, this text in Deuteronomy grounds the will of God as he sides with the exploited widow, in the fact that Israel must remember that

‘you were a slave in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you from there’. This faith tradition strand is again that of the exodus, liberation and redemption. This is the grounding for the command. Since the deprivation from justice in Deuteronomy 24:17 is also the theme in the curse of Deuteronomy 27:19, we may infer that the same grounding underlies the latter text: Israel’s care for widows is based in their remembrance that they themselves were slaves in Egypt. As such, the curse, here, also draws on the exodus or liberation faith tradition.

The nature of the oppression is both in the contexts of social and

economic justice. Usually, the pledge indicated that the one who borrows would leave a pledge that he or she would repay the debtor. When people were too poor to give a pledge of value, the debtor might have taken even a garment of the poor person. In the case of a widow, of whom it is assumed that she would be already poor, it is said that her garment may not be taken as pledge. This means that this is an example of the most oppressive kind of exploitation - to take a garment meant that one takes something that is needed for survival. It is also important to notice that it is not only that one may not take such a pledge from a widow. It is implied that even though she cannot give a pledge, she may not be exploited by not allowing her to borrow. God's will, therefore impacts on both the economic and the social spheres of the widow's existence.

In Job 22:9, Eliphaz's accusation against Job is that he exploited the socially oppressed by not caring - sending widows away 'empty-handed'. Which was, as it turned out, not the case. The assumption, here, is that there is economic oppression present here - to send away the needy 'empty-handed'. In Job 24:3,21 where Job laments the exploitation of the widow and orphan by the wicked, the exploitation is again economic but also physical. The pledge in these instances are a donkey and an ox - two kinds of animals used for purposes of production.

Psalms 94:6 represents God as the avenger seeking justice for the socially oppressed. Social oppression by the wicked is countered by God's vengeance. Vengeance, here, again put God in the position of 'warrior', the image he is usually portrayed in when Israel reflected on the exodus from Egypt. Exploitation can also be in terms of statutes. Isaiah 10:2 brings in the charge that some in Israel may develop 'statutes' which are aimed at exploiting the already socially marginalised.

4.2.3 Priestly Social Prescriptions and the Social Positioning of Widows

Concerning the social positioning of widows in the hierarchical structure of Israel's priestly caste, the Bible excludes widows from some categories. This exclusion shows that widows were not treated equally with fellow Israelites. The reason is that they were perceived as defiled to a degree within the purity traditions of the priestly codes. Leviticus 21:13 and echoed by the priestly writer of Ezekiel, says that a priest shall only marry a virgin.

Leviticus 21:14: A widow, or a divorced woman, or a woman who has been defiled, a prostitute, these he shall not marry. He shall marry a virgin of his own kin,

אַלְמָנָה וְגֵרוּשָׁה וְחִלָּלָה זֶנָּה אֶת־אִלֶּה לֹא יִקַּח כִּי אִם־בְּתוּלָה מֵעַמּוּי יִקַּח אִשָּׁה:

Ezekiel 44:22: They shall not marry a widow, or a divorced woman, but only a virgin of the stock of the house of Israel, or a widow who is the widow of a priest.

וְאַלְמָנָה וְגֵרוּשָׁה לְנָשִׁים כִּי אִם־בְּתוּלַת מִזְרַע בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהָאֲלְמָנָה אֲשֶׁר תְּהִיָּה לֹא־יִקְחוּ לָהֶם
אַלְמָנָה מִכֹּהֵן יִקְחוּ:

Here, the widow is positioned together with a divorced woman and a prostitute. Concerning such a hierarchical structuring, the widow of a priest, again, is better off than one from an ordinary or lay Israelite. Leviticus 22:13 says:

Leviticus 22:13: but if a priest's daughter is widowed or divorced, without offspring, and returns to her father's house, as in her youth, she may eat of

her father's food. No lay person shall eat of it.

וּבֵת־כֹּהֵן כִּי תִהְיֶה אֶלְמָנָה וּגְרוּשָׁה וְזָרַע אֵין לָהּ וְשָׁבָה אֶל־בֵּית אָבִיהָ
כִּנְעוּרֶיהָ מִלֶּחֶם אָבִיהָ תֹאכֹל וְכָל־זֶרַע לֹא־יֹאכֹל בּוֹ: ס

Within the priestly hierarchy, the widow of an ordinary or lay Israelite is much worse off than a virgin. The widow of a priest, again is positioned higher up the social-symbolic ladder. Considered 'defiled', the ordinary widow was not considered qualified to give birth to a priestly child.

4.2.4 Vows and the Social Positioning of Widows

According to Numbers 30:9, a widow cannot be absolved from her vows. It says:

Numbers 30:9: (But every vow of a widow or of a divorced woman, by which she has bound herself, shall be binding upon her.)

וְנִדָּר אֶלְמָנָה וּגְרוּשָׁה כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־אָסְרָה עַל־נַפְשָׁהּ יִקּוּם עָלֶיהָ:

This prohibition must be understood in the context that a widow was protected by the fact that she did not have to give a pledge. To counter the possible exploitation of this allowance by widows, this prohibition seeks them to honour their vows when they cannot give a pledge in the economic context of borrowing and lending. This is especially clear from Numbers 3:3 which puts the section of Scripture this part forms part of, in the economic context of giving pledges in the context of economic interaction among Israelites.

4.2.5 The Executing of Justice for Injustice Done to the Socially Disadvantaged

In the exposition of the essence of the Law in Deuteronomy 10:12ff, it is stated explicitly that God executes justice for the orphan and widow and loves the strangers. The grouping of these three kinds of people together are similar to other passages in the Pentateuch. By implication and on the basis of texts such as Exodus 22:21ff this love and execution of justice for these people in society are based in God's liberation of Israel from Egypt. Deuteronomy 10:18f says:

Deuteronomy 10:18f: who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

עֲשֵׂה מִשְׁפָּט יְתוֹם וְאַלְמָנָה וְאַהֲב גֵּר לְתֵת לוֹ לֶחֶם וְשִׂמְלָה:
וְאַהֲבָתֶם אֶת־הַגֵּר כִּי־גֵרִים הָיִיתֶם בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם:

What is significant in this text, is that God's provision for the exploited in society is to provide them with 'food and clothing'. These are the most basic elements needed for survival in life. For obvious reasons, this does not indicate that God will personally provide such things. It is more by implication. If society follows God's will according to widows and other poor and exploited people in society, orphans, widows and strangers will never lack the basic needs - food and clothing.

These texts are also framed by the typical summary statements of true piety towards God, namely to revere him and nobody or nothing else - to 'fear' him. Deuteronomy 10:12f and 20 says:

Deuteronomy 10:12f So now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you? Only to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the LORD your God and his decrees that I am commanding you today, for your own well-being.

Deuteronomy 10:20 You shall fear the LORD your God; him alone you shall worship; to him you shall hold fast, and by his name you shall swear.

4.2.6 On Positively Enabling the Socially Disadvantaged

In all the texts discussed so far, we see that the laws were there to limit the possibilities of social and economic exploitation of widows. As such, these laws provide alternative contexts in which Israelites were to interpret the position of widows. These contexts, however, provided alternative assumptions concerning the actions towards and interaction with widows.

The priestly rules, again, positioned women in the female hierarchy of women in Israel. Here, widows were mentioned in the same categories that divorced women and prostitutes placed. There are, however, texts which positively aim at ways in which the ordinary Israelite can care for the physical well-being of widows, together with the Levites, resident aliens and orphans.

Deuteronomy 14:29 the Levites, because they have no allotment or inheritance with you, as well as the resident aliens, the orphans, and the widows in your towns, may come and eat their fill so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work that you undertake.

וּבֹא הַלֹּוֹי כִּי אֵין־לוֹ חֶלֶק וְנִחְלָה עִמָּךְ וְהַגֵּר וְהַיְתוֹם וְהָאֻלְמָנָה אֲשֶׁר
בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ וְאָכְלוּ וְשָׂבְעוּ לְמַעַן יְבָרְכְךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל־מַעֲשֵׂה
יָדְךָ אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה: ס

Deuteronomy 24:19-21:When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be left for the alien, the orphan, and the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all your undertakings. When you beat your olive trees, do not strip what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow. When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not glean what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow.

כִּי תִקְצֹר קִצִּירְךָ בְּשָׂדֶךָ וְשָׁכַחְתָּ עֹמֶר בְּשָׂדֶךָ לֹא תָשׁוּב לִקְחָתוֹ
לַגֵּר לַיְתוֹם וְלָאֻלְמָנָה יִהְיֶה לְמַעַן יְבָרְכְךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל־
מַעֲשֵׂה יָדֶיךָ:

כִּי תִחַבֵּט וַיִּתֶּךָ לֹא תִפָּאֵר אַחֲרֶיךָ לַגֵּר
לַיְתוֹם וְלָאֻלְמָנָה יִהְיֶה: ס

כִּי תִבְצֹר כֶּרֶמְךָ לֹא תַעֲזוֹלֵל
אַחֲרֶיךָ לַגֵּר לַיְתוֹם וְלָאֻלְמָנָה יִהְיֶה:

Deuteronomy 26:12f:When you have finished paying all the tithe of your produce in the third year (which is the year of the tithe), giving it to the Levites, the aliens, the orphans, and the widows, so that they may eat their fill within your towns, then you shall say before the LORD your God: “I have removed the sacred portion from the house, and I have given it to the Levites, the resident aliens, the orphans, and the widows, in accordance with

your entire commandment that you commanded me; I have neither transgressed nor forgotten any of your commandments:

כִּי תִכְלֶה לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־כָּל־מַעֲשֵׂי תְבוּאַתְךָ בַּשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁלִישִׁית
שָׁנַת הַמַּעֲשֵׂי וְנָתַתָּה לְלוֹי לֶגֶר לִיתוֹם וְלֹאֲלֻמָּנָה וְאָכְלוּ בְשַׁעְרֶיךָ
וְשָׁבְעוּ:
וְאָמַרְתָּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּעֶרְתִּי הַקֹּדֶשׁ מִן־הַבַּיִת וְגַם
נָתַתִּיו לְלוֹי וְלֶגֶר לִיתוֹם וְלֹאֲלֻמָּנָה כָּכֹל־מִצּוֹתֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתָנִי
לֹא־עֲבַרְתִּי מִמִּצְוֹתֶיךָ וְלֹא שָׁכַחְתִּי:

In these three textual complexes, the Levite, the resident aliens, the orphans and the widows who, it is stated, do not have any 'allotment or inheritance among you' [Israel], must be catered for. The assumption is that they do not legitimately have any land to farm on nor any inheritance on which to draw. This assumption in itself was not criticised, which, one can assume in terms of modern values, would have been the appropriate thing to do. This, however, was not the case. In terms of the existing system, these texts catered for such people in their own ways.

Deuteronomy 14:28 required that 'Every third year you shall bring out the full tithe of your produce for that year, and store it within your towns'. This tithe was to be for the benefit of the Levites, the resident aliens, the orphans and the widows. Moreover, such a full tithe for the benefit of such people would bring God's blessing on Israelites and 'in all the work that you undertake'. Apart from this systemic procedure, the farmer's left-over grain, olives and grapes were also for them. The Levites, the resident aliens, the orphans and the widows could gather these for their food and consequently, for their well-being and survival. It is indicated as the forgetting of 'a sheaf in the field' and that the farmer must not 'go back to get it' but rather 'be left'

for them; that when a farmer would beat [harvest] his olive trees, he was not to 'strip what is left'; that when a farmer would 'gather the grapes of your vineyard', he was not to 'glean what is left' because it was to be for them.

Deuteronomy 24:19 links these prescriptions to the blessing of the Lord when Israel will follow them. Deuteronomy 26:12, again refers to the third year tithe and in verse 13 states that, in the words of the priest - quoted verbatim what is to happen - that the tithe as 'sacred portion' has in fact been 'removed' and that it has in fact been 'given' to the 'Levites, the resident aliens, the orphans, and the widows'. More important, this act is equated to other commandments - 'blessing' follows adherence as in other commandments (Dt 24:19); this commandment as part of the 'entire commandment' is adhered to (Dt 26:12) - which God has commanded. Further, his commandments - none or 'any' of them - have not been 'transgressed nor forgotten'. The last element in this sentence shows the requirement for true piety in these activities of care and compassion meeting the demands of the Lord.

These texts, each in its way, show that, interpreted via the law, the plight of widows - given their lowly status - must be addressed in real terms. Actions which stem from an interpretation of the positioning and status of women in terms of the law, then, are different from those which stem from the regular contexts of interpretation.

4.2.7 Widows are not Excluded from Festivals

Despite the fact that widows were regarded as of a lower status in the hierarchies of the symbolic world of Israel, they were not excluded from ceremonial participation.

Deuteronomy 16:11: Rejoice before the LORD your God - you and your sons and your daughters, your male and female slaves, the Levites resident in

your towns, as well as the strangers, the orphans, and the widows who are among you - at the place that the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his name.

וְשִׂמְחַתְּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה

אֱלֹהֶיךָ אַתָּה וּבְנֶךָ וּבִתֶּךָ וְעַבְדְּךָ וְאִמָּתְךָ וְהַלְוִי אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ וְהַגֵּר

וְהִיתוּם וְהָאֻלְמָנָה אֲשֶׁר בְּקִרְבְּךָ בְּמָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ

לְשָׁכַן שְׁמוֹ שָׁם:

Deuteronomy 16:14: Rejoice during your festival, you and your sons and your daughters, your male and female slaves, as well as the Levites, the strangers, the orphans, and the widows resident in your towns. The participation of these people in festivals, are therefore to be interpreted in the context of the commandment and not the regular one of 'purity'.

וְשִׂמְחַתְּ בַחֲגֶיךָ אַתָּה וּבְנֶךָ וּבִתֶּךָ וְעַבְדְּךָ וְאִמָּתְךָ וְהַלְוִי וְהַגֵּר

וְהִיתוּם וְהָאֻלְמָנָה אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ:

As festivals at which purity played an important role, this is significant because the lowliest people together with those who might be viewed as defiled - aliens - could participate. In this context, the commandment, as commandment, transcends the purity requirements to a certain degree.

4.2.8 Scribal Recognition of Abigail, Nabal's Widow

In 1 Samuel 27:3; 30:5; 2 Samuel 2:2 and 3:3, the scribe explicitly refers to Abigail, one of David's wives, as 'Nabal's widow'. The textual references are as follows:

1 Samuel 27:3: David stayed with Achish at Gath, he and his troops, every man with his household, and David with his two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel, and Abigail of Carmel, Nabal's widow.

1 Samuel 30:5: David's two wives also had been taken captive, Ahinoam of Jezreel, and Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel.

2 Samuel 2:2: So David went up there, along with his two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel, and Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel.

2 Samuel 3:3: his second, Chileab, of Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel; the third, Absalom son of Maacah, daughter of King Talmai of Geshur;

This reference is a reference of honour - an honour which Abigail herself acquired when Nabal mistreated David's men and indirectly David himself. It was she who intervened on behalf of Nabal (and his honour) and took food and drink to David and his men when Nabal refused it. She basically positions herself in Nabal's place and acts on his behalf. For this action, Nabal was furious when it eventually came out. His own assumptions - as a man of 'folly' - are evil. Further, he does not acknowledge the fact that David's men protected them nor does he recognise the assumptions concerning the context in which David acts.

As her interaction with David shows, Abigail recognises both these complexes of assumptions. The most important, however, is that the incident is placed in the context of the fact that David fights 'the battles of the LORD' (1 Sm 25:29) and that the Lord has appointed him 'prince over Israel' (1 Sm 25:30). In this context, her intervention also prevented David from bloodguilt - i.e. if he did indeed avenge himself on Nabal. (David married Abigail after Nabal died.) Alternative contexts and the interpretation of actions within this

context, here, conflict with one another.

4.2.9 The Wise Widow from Tekoa Who Turned a King's Mind

2 Samuel 14:5: The king asked her, "What is your trouble?" She answered, "Alas, I am a widow; my husband is dead.

וַיֹּאמֶר-לָהּ הַמֶּלֶךְ מַה-לָּךְ וַתֹּאמֶר אֲבָל אִשָּׁה-אַלְמָנָה אֲנִי וַיָּמָת אִישִׁי:

Instigated by Joab, this widow from Tekoa tells David a story through which he basically convicts himself, i.e. concerning his banishment of Absalom. Her story is that her husband died, and that afterwards, when her two only remaining relatives - two sons - fought, one killed the other. In the context of the avenging of death, the supposed murder was to be handed over and killed too. However, if this happens, then her husband as well as both her sons would be killed. When David responded by stating that he would intervene on her behalf and prevent the killing of this son, he actually made a judgment which would also absolve Absalom for killing Amnon and that would also allow him to return home. Even though she was not a 'widow' this wise woman's widowhood was used in this context to procure justice.

In the situation in which David finds himself, David wants to reverse his decision concerning Absalom. However, if he does, he would lose honour and prestige. Joab and this woman's intervention constitutes an interaction with a significant other in order to facilitate a situation for him to reverse an earlier decision. Concerning self and alter switches, Joab and the woman - with the telling of their story - puts themselves in David's position. David again, puts himself in the supposedly widowed woman's position and judges to intervene on her behalf. The outcome is that he makes a judgement for his own as well as Absalom's benefit.

Concerning the process of interaction, the story - which turns out to be in fact a parable - becomes the means through which David can change an earlier decision and still retains his honour and prestige. The parable, then becomes the alternative symbolic world in terms of which his action of reversing an earlier decision can be justified. If it was not for this alternative symbolic world, the existing symbolic world would continue to prevent such change. In terms of role-positioning, David is in effect positioned in that of the widow.

The process of interpretation here is that it is mainly the assumptions of the alternative symbolic world which provides the interpretive context from which interpretation is done. In the context of Israelites who were to listen to the reading or telling of the story, this alternative interpretive context - provided by the parable - would provide a way for themselves to deal with similar situations, namely to, under similar conditions, judge and take action similar to that of David.

4.2.10 The Son of a Widow Becomes the Artisan of King Solomon

1 Kings 7:14: He was the son of a widow of the tribe of Naphtali, whose father, a man of Tyre, had been an artisan in bronze; he was full of skill, intelligence, and knowledge in working bronze. He came to King Solomon, and did all his work.

בֶּן־אִשָּׁה אֲלֻמָּנָה הוּא מִמַּטֵּה נַפְתָּלִי וְאָבִיו אִישׁ־צֹרִי חָרָשׁ נְחֹשֶׁת וַיִּמְלֵא אֶת־
הַחֲכֵמָה וְאֶת־הַתְּבוּנָה וְאֶת־הַדַּעַת לַעֲשׂוֹת כָּל־מְלָאכָה וַיָּבֹא אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ שְׁלֹמֹה וַיַּעַשׂ
בְּנְחֹשֶׁת
אֶת־כָּל־מְלָאכָתּוֹ

This reference is significant, because Solomon took someone in to work for

him (in the building of his palace and other buildings) even though this person was the offspring of an Israelite woman who married a man from Tyre and even though she was widowed. The fact that it is explicitly stated that this artisan was the son of a widow, suggests that if people - especially the king - would appoint such a person, there must have been some kind of disgrace attached to it. The most obvious explanation in this context is that, apart from the fact that he could represent his mother in society and represent his family's honour, it would still be limited because his father's family network would be in Tyre and not in Israel. Even so, Solomon's actions undercut this situation - mostly due to the fact that this person was an excellent craftsman.

4.2.11 A Widow's Son Becomes a Rebel and then King

1 Kings 11:26: Jeroboam son of Nebat, an Ephraimite of Zeredah, a servant of Solomon, whose mother's name was Zeruah, a widow, rebelled against the king.

וַיִּרְבֶּעַם בֶּן־דִּנְבָּט אֶפְרָתִי מִן־הַצֵּרְדָּה וְשֵׁם אִמּוֹ צְרוּעָה אִשָּׁה אֶלְמָנָה עֶבֶד
לְשִׁלְמָה וַיֵּרָם יָד בַּמֶּלֶךְ:

Shortly before his death, Solomon came in conflict with Jerobeam. Ahijah predicted that he would become the king of the ten tribes.

The reason why this was to happen, was because Solomon

has forsaken me, worshiped Astarte the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of Moab, and Milcom the god of the Ammonites, and has not walked in my ways, doing what is right in my sight and keeping my statutes and my ordinances, as his father David did.

The promise to Jeroboam was as follows (1 Ki 11:37-39):

I will take you, and you shall reign over all that your soul desires; you shall be king over Israel. If you will listen to all that I command you, walk in my ways, and do what is right in my sight by keeping my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did, I will be with you, and will build you an enduring house, as I built for David, and I will give Israel to you. For this reason I will punish the descendants of David, but not forever."

The narrative continues to state what happened subsequently.

Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam; but Jeroboam promptly fled to Egypt, to King Shishak of Egypt, and remained in Egypt until the death of Solomon.

It is significant that Jeroboam was appointed by Solomon over forced labour. It is here where he had first-hand experience of how Solomon's rule exploited people most. It is also on the same issue that Jeroboam and Rehabeam split - when Rehabeam followed the advice of his young friends to increase the exploitation of his subjects - through taxes, forced labour, etc. In the context of forced labour and the exploitation of people, it is evident that Jeroboam could position himself in the place of alter - those who suffered under the forced labour system and the severe demands the royal household made on Israel. Solomon and later, Rehabeam could not do so.

That Jeroboam, in this context is not only appointed as king over Israel and also receive promises similar to those David received, but also is the son of a widow, is significant. Similar to the fact that women who did not have a high standing in society were called on to be the channel through which God

developed his plan for and through Israel, this is another such incident. Interpreted from the perspective of Solomon, Jerobeam constituted a threat to the empire which he developed after David. Interpreted within the salvation-historical line in the Old Testament however, the fact that Jerobeam was the son of a widow constitutes another case where someone who is not of high rank or standing, provides the way through which God's will and plan is continued and further developed. The source of meaning, here, is the salvation-historical framework and not the prestige of the David house.

4.2.12 A Widow Cares for God's Prophet

1 Kings 17:9: "Go now to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and live there; for I have commanded a widow there to feed you."

קום לך צִרְפָּתָה אֲשֶׁר לְצִידוֹן וְיִשְׁבֶּתָ שָׁם הִנֵּה צֹוִיתִי שָׁם אִשָּׁה אֶלְמָנָה לְכַלְכֶּלְךָ:

1 Kings 17:10: So he set out and went to Zarephath. When he came to the gate of the town, a widow was there gathering sticks; he called to her and said, "Bring me a little water in a vessel, so that I may drink."

וַיָּקָם | וַיֵּלֶךְ צִרְפָּתָה וַיָּבֹא אֶל־פֶּתַח הָעִיר וְהִנֵּה־שָׁם אִשָּׁה אֶלְמָנָה מְקַשֶּׁשֶׁת עֵצִים
וַיִּקְרָא אֵלֶיהָ וַיֹּאמֶר קְחִי־נָא לִי מֵעֵט־מַיִם בְּכֶלִי וְאַשְׁתָּה:

The fact that it is a widow who has the honour to care for the prophet is significant because someone with virtually no income and in this situation, busy preparing for her and her son's last meal before they die of hunger, is trusted with this task. In the interaction between Elijah and the widow, his request to have him fed first asked trust from her side. In the context of God's continuing care for people and as promised to the widow, the jar of

meal and jug of oil did not run empty 'for many days'. Interpreted within the context of God's promises and care - and not within that of the fact of drought and hunger - this indicates that even the lowliest person can become an important element within God's plan with Israel.

4.2.13 Elijah Raises a Widow's Son from the Dead

1 Kings 17:20: He cried out to the LORD, "O LORD my God, have you brought calamity even upon the widow with whom I am staying, by killing her son?"

When the son of the same widow Elijah was staying with, died, she ascribed it to Elijah's actions and that of her own sin. At first, the widow interprets the event of the death of her son in the cultural symbolic context where something evil which comes over someone, is causally interpreted as the result of sin. The son's death is ascribed to an act of God - as punishment for sin. Elijah's prayer, however, intervenes in this context - where self-interpretation constitutes one as sinner and as someone open to calamity - and brings the son back to life again. The woman's response to say that she 'know' that Elijah is 'a man of God' and that 'God's word is in his mouth' places the little narrative again in the context not of the symbolically-structured cultural world but in that of God's will.

4.2.14 Defense of One's Integrity by Disclaiming Harm to the Socially Disadvantaged

Over and against Job's 'integrity' (in Job 27:15), he puts the 'wicked'. The wicked who hoards wealth at the detriment of others, will find their wives widowed. This widowhood will be at the hand of 'pestilence', indicating the hand of the Lord - the Lord as warrior who liberates and avenges the poor

and suffering. Presumably because their widows will recognise that their widowhood has come about through exploitation of others by their ex-husbands, they will not 'lament' them. In other words, after their husbands' death, they will reject what their husbands did and what they represented.

In Job 29:13, we find that, as part of his conclusion of his defense, Job says,

Job 29:13: The blessing of the wretched came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.

בְּרַכַּת אֶבֶד עָלַי תָּבֵא וְלֵב אִלְמָנָה אֲרַנֵּן:

This forms part of his view that he 'delivered the poor who cried, and the orphan who had no helper'. In this context, he says that he represented something the widow did not have, and that is the following (Job 29:14-21):

I put on righteousness, and it clothed me;

my justice was like a robe and a turban.

I was eyes to the blind,

and feet to the lame.

I was a father to the needy,

and I championed the cause of the stranger.

I broke the fangs of the unrighteous,

and made them drop their prey from their teeth.

Then I thought, 'I shall die in my nest,

and I shall multiply my days like the phoenix;

my roots spread out to the waters,

with the dew all night on my branches;

my glory was fresh with me,
and my bow ever new in my hand.'
"They listened to me, and waited,
and kept silence for my counsel.

From this, it is clear that the actions of Job are regarded as 'righteousness'. He had the capacity as well as the opportunity to do good to others. In this context, one must also interpret the fact that he has never failed to do good to people who were exploited or suffering in society. This he did since his youth.

Job 31:16: "If I have withheld anything that the poor desired, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail,

אם־אִמְנַע מִחֶפֶץ דָּלִים וְעֵינֵי אִלְמָנָה אֶכְלָה:

Job 31:18: for from my youth I reared the orphan like a father, and from my mother's womb I guided the widow-

4.2.15 Cursing Another

In the context of the cursing of another, the curser would curse another in such a way that he would wish the other to encounter the severest form of suffering. This is present in Psalm 109:9 and Jeremiah 18:21.

Psalms 109:9: May his children be orphans, and his wife a widow.

יְהִיו־בָּנָיו יְתוּמִים וְאִשְׁתּוֹ אִלְמָנָה:

Jeremiah 18:21: Therefore give their children over to famine; hurl them out to the power of the sword, let their wives become childless and widowed. May their men meet death by pestilence, their youths be slain by the sword in battle.

In the Jeremiah text, famine, to be killed by the sword, the barrenness of wives, women who become widows, 'pestilence', and the killing of youths - the category of people with which the future of the group rests - are all interlinked. This interlinkage of calamity shows that to be a widow is similar calamitous as famine, to be killed by the sword, the barrenness of wives, 'pestilence', and the killing of youths.

4.2.16 The Lord's Care for the Socially Disadvantaged

The symbolic world in which God's care comes to the fore, objectifies the widows as one category of people who suffers most severely in the regular socio-symbolic world. This is evident from texts throughout the Old Testament. In addition to those already discussed, we may add the following.

Psalms 68:5: Father of orphans and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation.

אֲבִי יְתוּמִים וְדִין אֶלְמָנוֹת אֱלֹהִים בְּמַעוֹן קָדְשׁ:

Psalms 146:9: The LORD watches over the strangers; he upholds the orphan and the widow, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

יְהוָה | שֹׁמֵר אֶת-גֵּרִים יְתוֹם וְאֶלְמָנָה יַעֲזֹדֵד וְדֹרֵךְ רָשָׁעִים יַעֲזוֹת:

Proverbs 15:25: The LORD tears down the house of the proud, but maintains the widow's boundaries.

בֵּית גָּאִים יִסָּח | יְהוָה וַיִּצַּב גְּבוּל אֶלְמָנָה:

Jeremiah 49:11: Leave your orphans, I will keep them alive; and let your widows trust in me.

God's fatherhood is related to the fact that he 'protects' and 'upholds' widows. They are already disadvantaged in the socio-cultural world. Where they do not have protection here, it is the alternative context of divine will and action which must cater and care for them. It is in this context that we must understand the statement that he 'maintains the widow's boundaries'. The assumption is that widows do not have protection in the regular world. Since God, however, 'protects' and 'upholds' them as well as maintains their boundaries, the assumption is that people should do similarly in their interaction with widows or wherever the plight of widows is under discussion. Similar to the laws, this calls for joint action. In other words, not only in distinct cases but in all cases should people unite to act similarly.

4.2.17 Educating Israel Concerning Justice

Closely related to the previous point is the fact that where such joint action does not exist, Israel should be educated concerning it.

Isaiah 1:17: learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.

לְמַדּוּ הַיָּטֵב דְּרָשׁוּ מִשְׁפָּט אֲשֶׁרוֹ חֲמוּץ שִׁפְטוֹ יְתוֹם רִיבוֹ אֶלְמָנָה: ס

Zechariah 7:10: do not oppress the widow, the orphan, the alien, or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another.

וְאַלִּמְנָה וְיָתוֹם גֵּר וְעֹנִי אַל־תַּעֲשׂוּ וְרַעַת אִישׁ אֶחָיו אַל־תִּחְשְׁבוּ בְּלִבְכֶּם:

In this context, it is stated that one should 'plead' for the widow. In other words, where she does not have anyone to represent her in public anymore - others must do so. This asks that another must be able to take up the cause of widows and represent them. One must then be able to position oneself in the situation of the widow. This is interlinked with other objects: learning to do good, the seeking of justice, the rescuing of the oppressed and the defending of the orphan. In the context, the specific acts are not described. They are general categories which must get specific content with particular acts in historically-specific contexts. The assumption is that if one is educated concerning the basic elements - of doing good - one can then act in particular contexts accordingly.

In similar general context, the commandment in Zechariah is aimed at the prevention of the oppressing of the 'widow, the orphan, the alien, or the poor'. Here, the interlinking of 'widow, the orphan, the alien, or the poor' place these categories of people together so that they form one larger category of people most vulnerable to suffering and active exploitation by people. This is then further related to an even more general context of interaction - not to 'devise evil in your hearts against one another'. The principle is that 'self' must be able to position itself in the situation of 'alter'. The result is that selfinterest must give way to the doing of good and not succumb to the devising of 'evil'.

4.2.18 The Widow Metaphor as Indication of Social Vulnerability and Scorn

Isaiah 47:8: Now therefore hear this, you lover of pleasures, who sit securely, who say in your heart, "I am, and there is no one besides me; I shall not sit as a widow or know the loss of children"-

וְעַתָּה שְׁמַעֲיִיזֹאת עֲדִינָה הַיּוֹשֶׁבֶת לְבֶטַח הָאִמְרָה בְּלִבָּבָהּ אֲנִי וְאִפְסִי עוֹד
לֹא אֵשֶׁב אֶלְמָנָה וְלֹא אֶדַע שְׂכוֹל:

This is a very interesting text because it shows how widowhood - as an indication of ridicule and condescension - is used as metaphor contrasting with arrogant vanity and haughtiness. In this context, 'evil' shall come upon such a person for his 'wickedness'. God, here, is the agent of the action. It also indicates that 'wickedness' is related to someone who makes himself invulnerable, i.e. who attempts to be invulnerable. Since widows are the most vulnerable, it also means that if someone makes himself invulnerable, this can only be at the cost of others' vulnerability.

4.2.19 The promise of God's Presence on Condition that Justice be Done to the Socially disadvantaged

In the context of Israelites claiming that the perfection of temple ritual and ceremony constitutes their rightness with God, Jeremiah brings condemnation but also outline what must be done. Their interpretation is in one context and contrasts strongly with that of Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 7:6: if you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own hurt,

גַּר יְתוֹם וְאַלְמָנָה לֹא תַעֲשִׂקוּ וְדָם נָקִי אַל־תִּשְׁפְּכוּ בַּמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה וְאַחֲרֵי אֱלֹהִים
אַחֲרִים לֹא תֵלְכוּ לְרַע לָכֶם:

Jeremiah 22:3: Thus says the LORD: Act with justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor anyone who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place.

כֹּה וְדָם נָקִי אָמַר יְהוָה עֲשׂוּ מִשְׁפָּט וְצִדְקָה וְהִצִּילוּ גְזוּל מִיַּד עָשׂוֹק וְגַר יְתוֹם וְאַלְמָנָה
אַל־תִּשְׁפְּכוּ בַּמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה

Lamentations 1:1: How lonely sits the city that once was full of people! How like a widow she has become, she that was great among the nations! She that was a princess among the provinces has become a vassal.

Jeremiah condemns Israel for not upholding justice in interaction with one another - especially, as is usual in the Old Testament, concerning the 'alien, the orphan, ... the widow, [the shedding of] innocent blood', and idolatry. Action must rather be directed towards these people, i.e. the active doing of 'justice and righteousness'. As general statements, these must be filled in with actual actions in specific contexts of suffering of such people.

In the context of the desolation of Jerusalem in Lamentations, the image of the widow calls up loneliness - of not being part of community and being unable to interact with others. Given the fact that community is the central element in terms of which people acquire self-worth but also interact meaningfully, this bleak image also indicates that, if one uses especially 'widow' as metaphor, this is the general perception of being a widow.

4.2.20 Social Chaos Due to Exploitation by Leaders

Social chaos is ascribed to the fact that Israelites are unable to position them in that of 'alter' and to rather exploit others. Whereas leaders are supposed to lead, they are the ones who are the sources of wrong-doing.

Ezekiel 22:7: Father and mother are treated with contempt in you; the alien residing within you suffers extortion; the orphan and the widow are wronged in you.

אָב וָאִם הִקְלּוּ בָךְ לְגֵר עָשׂוּ בְעֶשֶׂק בְּתוֹכְךָ יְתוֹם וְאַלְמָנָה הוֹנּוּ בָךְ:

Ezekiel 22:25: Its princes within it are like a roaring lion tearing the prey; they have devoured human lives; they have taken treasure and precious things; they have made many widows within it.

Isaiah 1:23: Your princes are rebels and companions of thieves. Everyone loves a bribe and runs after gifts. They do not defend the orphan, and the widow's cause does not come before them.

שְׂרִיף סוֹרְרִים וְחֻבְרֵי גִנְבִּים כָּלֹּא אָהֵב שְׂחָד וְרֹדֵף שְׁלֵמָנִים
יְתוֹם לֹא יִשְׁפֹּטוּ וְרֵיב אֶלְמָנָה לֹא־יָבֹא אֲלֵיהֶם: הִ

The wrong-doing of the leaders rests in the fact that they regard their subjects as 'prey'. In financial context, they take 'treasure and precious things'; they also kill others. In similar context, Isaiah describes the such leaders as 'rebels and companions of thieves'. In financial context, each 'loves a bribe and runs after gifts'. They do not care for the 'cause' of the widow. Such people must be significant others in society who are supposed to uphold justice, yet, here, they are the ones who actively exploit. This means that there are not other

significant others the people can turn to. It also means that in interaction, their active exploitation cause the people to be leaderless. They are unwilling and unable to position themselves in the position of these who are already disadvantaged in society and who, in addition, are the objects of continued and active exploitation by leaders.

4.2.21 Social Injustice and the Judgement of the Lord

In the context of the active abuse of widow and orphan, the Lord will judge Israel. Punishment will come in the form of such people's women becoming widows - they will be killed with the Lord as agent.

Exodus 22:24: my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children orphans.

וְחָרָה אִפִּי וְהָרַגְתִּי אֶתְכֶם בְּחֶרֶב וְהָיוּ נְשֵׁיכֶם אִלְמָנוֹת וּבְנֵיכֶם יְתָמִים: ָ

Psalms 78:64: Their priests fell by the sword, and their widows made no lamentation.

Isaiah 9:17: That is why the Lord did not have pity on their young people, or compassion on their orphans and widows; for everyone was godless and an evildoer, and every mouth spoke folly. For all this his anger has not turned away, his hand is stretched out still.

Jeremiah 15:8: Their widows became more numerous than the sand of the seas; I have brought against the mothers of youths a destroyer at noonday; I have made anguish and terror fall upon her suddenly.

Malachi 3:5: Then I will draw near to you for judgment; I will be swift to bear witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired workers in their wages, the widow and the orphan, against those who thrust aside the alien, and do not fear me, says the LORD of hosts.

וְקָרַבְתִּי אֵלֵיכֶם לְמִשְׁפָּט וְהָיִיתִי | עַד מְמַהֵר בְּמִכְשָׁפִים וּבִמְנַאֲפִים וּבְנִשְׁבָּעִים לְשָׁקֶר
וּבַעֲשָׂקֵי שְׂכָר־שָׂכִיר אֶלְמָנָה וְיָתוֹם וּמִטִּי־גֵר וְלֹא יִרְאוּנִי אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת:

In the context of social injustice - in the Exodus text - calamity as part of the Lord's judgement will befall Israelites who do not adhere and practice the commandments. In the Psalms text, the fact that Israel rebelled against God and were faithless, cause him to punish them similarly. Such wickedness caused the priests to be killed - an indication to other nations that the religion of the people is not effective - and made wives widows. Similarly in the Jeremiah text, the fact that Israel has actively rejected God, he acts similarly towards them.

In the context of active godlessness, evildoing, and the speaking of folly, in Isaiah, God's anger and outstretched hand - an image of both judgment and liberation - are against Israel. In this context, God also does not 'have pity on their young people, or compassion on their orphans and widows'. Widows are handed over to the bleak existence of widowhood due to the actions of actively doing evil.

In the context of the coming of the Lord's messenger, in Malachi, the Lord will judge Israel for their wrongdoing. The elements of such wrongdoing which is interlinked, are: that they are 'sorcerers', 'adulterers', 'swear falsely', 'oppress the hired workers in their wages', 'the widow and the orphan', 'thrust aside the alien', and do not 'fear' God. Sorcery is a form of idolatry, indicating that a symbolic universe which is different from the

one constituting Israel's religion, is adhered to. Adultery destroys community life as does false swearing in the context of legal life. In the context of economics, hired workers are oppressed concerning their wages. The widow and orphan, again, because they do not have anyone fending for them or representing in society, are not cared for. In addition, they do not honour the alien but 'thrust [him] aside'. As summary, they do not 'fear' or positively stated, revere God and live in obedience to him.

Even though these categories of evildoing are general, it is assumed that people fill them in with particular activities of evil. Again, they are not able to position them in the position of 'alter'. Rather, their interactions are characterised by active evildoing. Interlinked, all these are objects in terms of different contexts, e.g. idolatry, harmonious social and legal life, economics and the destitute.

4.2.22 A Plea for Mercy

Lamentations 5:3: We have become orphans, fatherless; our mothers are like widows.

This text is placed in the context of a plea for mercy. It is significant that their suffering enumerates on various elements usually mentioned in the context of God's judgement of Israel for its wickedness, e.g. Israel's inheritance is given to 'strangers' and their homes given to 'aliens' (5:2); in the context of desolation and being destitute, the reference is made to orphans and widows (5:3); in the context of labour, they are 'hard driven' - young men and boys (5:5,13); for basic foodstuffs and survival - water and bread - they must either pay or make pacts to get it (5:4,6); in the context of rule and administration, they are ruled by slaves - not royalty from Israel - and there is also no-one to liberate them (5:8); they are handed over to the wilderness and

the possibility of being killed by the sword (5:9); they suffer heat and famine (5:10); women and virgins are raped (5:11); princes are hung and elders receive no respect (5:12); and so it goes on. In general, the description of being orphans, fatherless and 'mothers ... like widows' can be taken as the general indexical situation of both the Lord's judgement and Israel's suffering. On this general level, it also functions as an indication to the fact that this is how widowhood can be described - i.e. in terms of the kind of desolation they experience in society. This is then also why the widow is the image par excellence to describe such situations.

4.3 The New Testament: A General Assessment

The grouping together of widows, aliens and orphans as a category of persons who suffer injustice in society, is one of the many tradition strands which the New Testament shares with the Old Testament. As pointed out in *The Old Testament: A General Assessment*, these people were usually not cared for by society, since they were seen as people who lack one or more of the basic elements which make a person a full participant in social interaction in society. Widows lacked a husband, orphans a father and the alien, again, would by definition not belong to society. The fact that both the Old Testament and the New Testament treats this problem in the general context of the social injustice they experience in society, shows the sensitivity for social injustice present in the Bible's symbolic universe. This sensitivity is also indicated in the 'cry' towards God for help, justice or salvation from situations of suffering at the hands of an inhuman society. God's intervention, again, shows divine compassion - compassion after which society was expected to model itself.

In order to explain how God's care for widows is present in the New Testament, this section of the chapter focuses on a number of New Testament texts. As above, the interaction between a widow and her contemporaries is

focused upon, together with how societal symbolic systems conflict with God's divine will of care and compassion for widows. This means that *the headings of each section is formulated either in terms of action - action which is already embedded in the normative evaluation of the Biblical text - or in terms of the symbolic world as defined by the Biblical text.* For the New Testament section, these headings are:

- 4.4.1 The Question Concerning Resurrection (and the Levirate)
- 4.4.2 The Woe on the Devouring of Widow's Houses
- 4.4.3 The Poor Widow's Temple Contribution
- 4.4.4 Anna the Prophet and Widow
- 4.4.5 Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath
- 4.4.6 The Raising of the Widow's Son
- 4.4.7 The Parable of the Widow and the Unjust Judge
- 4.4.8 The Widows of the Hellenists and the Daily Distribution of Food
- 4.4.9 The Lamenting Widows and Paul
- 4.4.10 Widows and the Quest of Pure and undefiled Religion
- 4.4.11 The Widow Metaphor as Indication of Social Vulnerability and Scorn

These sections can be grouped into those who primarily focus on symbolic action and those who focus on the Biblical symbolic world.

Symbolic Action

- 4.4.2 The Woe on the Devouring of Widow's Houses
- 4.4.3 The Poor Widow's Temple Contribution
- 4.4.4 Anna the Prophet and Widow
- 4.4.7 The Parable of the Widow and the Unjust Judge
- 4.4.8 The Widows of the Hellenists and the Daily Distribution of Food

4.4.9 The Lamenting Widows and Paul

4.4.11 The Widow Metaphor as Indication of Social Vulnerability and Scorn

The Biblical Symbolic World

4.4.1 The Question Concerning Resurrection (and the Levirate)

4.4.5 Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath

4.4.6 The Raising of the Widow's Son

4.4.10 Widows and the Quest of Pure and Undeiled Religion

4.4 *Χήρα* in the New Testament

To different degrees, what was said about widows in the Old Testament section on 'widow', is also the case for the New Testament. *Χήρα* indicates a woman whose husband is dead and who does not belong to a system of care as it was explained in terms of the socio-anthropological codes of Mediterranean society. In this sense, 'widows' formed a *social category*. In addition, because they suffered financially because of this social deprivation, they also formed a *class category*. Since the law did not adequately cater for them, they also formed a *legal category*.

Within the New Testament, we may add two more categories. The one deals with the fact that 'widows' formed that group of people to whom both Jesus and the early church ministered. In this sense, they were part of a *ministerial category*. In this sense, they were the object of the effective ministry of believers. However, they also indicated the most severely disadvantaged group in society, and as such, was the stock example of where the church's ministry must focus - those who are marginalised, those who do not have systems caring for or representing them; in short, those who suffer injustice. The other category is that of the house church. With the spread of the gospel, the house church was - sociologically speaking - the basis from

which the gospel was proclaimed. Since widows also formed part of this structure - and this is especially important for the exegesis of 1 Timothy - we can call them part of the *house church category*. This section first deals with each of these two categories and then with the different texts in the New Testament.

The ministerial category. The gospels contain information on Jesus' relationship to women and the involvement of women in Jesus' life and ministry. Jesus accepted and affirmed them as persons of worth as they were neglected or rejected within society. Jesus taught women and included them as his disciples. This confirms their involvement in the proclamation of the good news (Green 1992:880). This is in contrast to the larger Greco-Roman society in which the male view of women was usually negative and the place of women understood to be limited to domestic roles of wife and mother. Further, "women were perceived by extant male writers to be responsible for most sin, and especially for sexual temptation and sin" (Green 1992:880).

Through these actions, Jesus changed the society mind-set on its understanding of the status and roles of women (as well as widows). He changed it by showing his compassion and care to all segments of society. His attitude of accepting women as human beings contrasted with the attitude of religious functionaries. He did so even though he must have known that the law and the way it was practiced, did not allow any man to have social interaction with women. The law was hindering man to speak with a woman in public or touch a woman. Jesus broke with this law purposely.

From the canonical texts, it seems as if Jesus was a man who had the intention of transforming the negative attitudes of society towards widows and women. Ultimately, his objective was to put himself forward as a trustworthy model for both sexes. Despite the fact that he only chose twelve male apostles, it appears from the texts that he had a keen sense of not allowing for the superiority of man or the inferiority of women (House 1990:65-69).

Langley (1983:41) confirms the fact that

Jesus appears to have no 'problem' in relation to the status and position of woman. All four Gospels depict his relationship with woman as easy and natural. He allows women to touch him, accompany him, serve him and listen to his teaching.

Jesus' approach shows a different understanding of women and widows in society. He was not offended by their status and position as others were.

It is especially the gospel of Luke which portrays Jesus as a person who was able to approach all classes of people in society with compassion. Furthermore, he was able to reach the outcasts, the sick, publicans, and prostitutes with love and forgiveness (House 1990:69). In his approach, he gave women special attention. This is especially evident in his openness and on his acceptance of women. He regarded them on par with men in the community of faith. Mckenna (1994:147) confirms the fundamental reason why Jesus loved widows: 'Jesus has a special fondness for widows because his mother was one for most of her life' (Mckenna 1994:147).

Widows formed part of the 'anawim' - the poor ones of Yahweh. People regarded them as outcasts, marginalised and problematic to society. 'No one would choose to be part of this group, which is usually seen as suffering, alone, and without power' (Mckenna 1994:147). The attitude and the quality of interaction with women served as a criterion for one's faithfulness to God. This is so, because it was expected of believers to treat them with love and honour - to reveal integrity and faithfulness to the covenant in the community of Yahweh's people. As in the Old Testament, failure to comply with the covenant of Yahweh, provided a situation where Yahweh would send a prophet to remind them about the covenant.

Symbolically, then, the honour of God is the care of the poor. The Jewish community knew the impact of failing to take care of the poor.

In the Jewish tradition, the poor, the anawim, [constitute a] privileged presence, where the people of God practice their obedience to the covenant and reveal to the nations the presence of God in their midst (Mckenna 1994 148).

In this context, widows belonged to this category.

The house church category. As a sociological category, the house church model functioned within a context where the world was - in sociological terms - divided into two segments of traditional societies. These were the 'politeia', the public life of the city or state, and the 'oikonomia' or the household order into which one was attached (Birkey 1988:37 and Banks 1980:13-20-52-61). In the former tradition, slaves, various dependents, the unmarried, and the outcasts, were not allowed to participate in the activities of the public. Simultaneously, it shows the segregation which existed between domestic and public activities. Central to the house church, however, was the koinonia principle. Everyone had access to it and shared in partnership voluntarily.

The New Testament house churches was central to the development of Christianity in the first century. Filson criticises the fact that this is not appreciated by contemporary scholars. They misunderstand the concept as well as the importance of the house church. He affirms the value of the house church. This researcher agrees with him because when one studies the New Testament from the perspective of the house church, the social factors relevant to the early church come to the fore more pertinently - especially regarding women and widows. Filson (1939:109-112) says in this regard:

The New Testament would be better understood if more attention were paid on the actual physical conditions under which the first Christians met and lived. In particular, the importance and function of the house church should be carefully considered.

The following section briefly deals with this fact.

The first house church was established in Jerusalem in the home of a woman. It consisted of the 'people of the land', Jewish believers as well as Hellenist Jews in *Jerusalem*. Stephan and Philip came to serve among the latter group. Since its inception, it appears that there was a fairly substantial following for Christianity. Believers met in houses and this became the model

of the small house churches. The book of Acts insists that they broke bread 'in their homes' (Acts 2:46), furthermore, they did not cease teaching 'at home' (Acts 5:42). The actual prayer meeting was held in the home of Mary, the mother of Mark (Acts 12:12). This evidence of a home meeting confirms the importance of the house church for Christianity at its inception.

Important is that these house churches did not meet in large meetings. One gets the impression that they remained fairly independent (Birkey 1988:39-42). Peter and James, for instance, were not affiliated to the same house church. 'If Peter belonged to the group which met in the home of ... he knew that James and "the brethren" met somewhere else' (Acts 12:17). This gives an idea of more than one meeting and meeting place in the city.

The famous 'upper room' could also have been the model for the house church, i.e. where the first celebration of the Lord's Supper was held (Mk 14:13-16). Some scholars suggests that it was in the same house of Mary. It was also in this home in Jerusalem where the original group of one hundred and twenty gathered to wait for the day of the Pentecost (Acts 1:15; 2:1-2).

The house church at *Philippi* - a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony - was the first house church in Europe. They met at the house of Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a successful business woman from nearby Thyatira, a hospitable person and worshiper of God. Her family was baptized, and thereafter the church of Europe was formed.

When Paul was in *Corinth* he indicates that his host was Gaius. In Romans 16:23 he says, 'Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you'. This was most probably the first meeting place for the Corinthian church (Acts 18:7,11). Besides this family, there was another 'household of Stephanas' (1 Cor 16:5; Birkey 1988:43). This household is also regarded as one which became Christian in the province of Achaia. The most remarkable about this household was the unique way in which its members devoted

themselves to *diakonia*, to serve. They had the 'devoted themselves to the service of the saints'. Furthermore, they laid themselves out to serve God's people 'in other churches' (Birkey 1988:44). The last house church seems to be 'Chloe's people' who were regarded as a well-to-do house church.

It is possible that Priscilla and Aquila formed the house church in *Ephesus* - after they were expelled from Rome by the Edict of Claudius (Acts 18:2). As Christians who were business-minded it is assumed that they went to Corinth for business. After that they went to Ephesus (Birkey 1988:45).

In *Romans*, Priscilla and Aquila are mentioned as Christians who contributed in the formation of the house churches (Rm 16:3). Some who dedicated their households for the meeting of the churches includes those 'who belong to the household of Aristobulus' (Rm 16:10), as well as those 'in the household of Narcissus' (Rm 16:11). Finally, the cluster refers to the believers who are named in verse 15, including 'all the saints with them'. In this list, six women are included out of the twenty six names. In one of the households, Phoebe was serving as a *prostatis*, a woman set over others as a presiding candidate.

At Colossae, the church was fellowshiping in Philemon's house. The letter shows others who were fellowshiping in another place. Paul's greetings to the believers in that city also includes his best wishes to 'Nympha and the church in her house' (Birkey 1988:52). There is a strong suggestion about the fact that the second church was planted by Epaphras the evangelist.

It is evident that women played an important role in both Jesus' ministry as well as in the early church. Jesus showed his compassion to all segments of society. His relationship with widows and women indicates a different attitude towards them than the normal attitudes of the day. Secondly, he changed the domestic view of widows by society. Finally, he demonstrated with his actions and in interaction with women and widows how one can adhere to the age-old Biblical traditional principle. This aspect of Jesus'

ministry - maybe more than many others - drew his following.

It is possible that women played an important role in the actual formation of the house churches. It is obvious that it was not only men who were involved in the church activities but women as well. Some women had more status than their husbands. This is seen in the ministry of Priscilla and Aquila as well as in the ministry of Phoebe who was working as a person, responsible for others in the Roman church.

4.4.1 The Question Concerning Resurrection (and the Levirate)

This question, coming from the Sadducees, form part of a series of challenges some Jewish officials put to Jesus. In all three gospels, this interaction basically serves to prove from the Sadducee side, that there is no resurrection. This point is made not in terms of the substance, but in creating an effect, making such a belief ridiculous.

Matthew 22:24f“Teacher, Moses said, ‘If a man dies childless, his brother shall marry the widow, and raise up children for his brother.’ Now there were seven brothers among us; the first married, and died childless, leaving the widow to his brother.

λέγοντες, Διδάσκαλε, Μωϋσῆς εἶπεν, Ἐάν τις ἀποθάνῃ μὴ ἔχων τέκνα, ἐπιγαμβρεύσει ὁ ἀδελφὸς αὐτοῦ τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀναστήσει σπέρμα τῷ ἀδελφῷ αὐτοῦ. ἦσαν δὲ παρ’ ἡμῖν ἑπτὰ ἀδελφοί· καὶ ὁ πρῶτος γήμας ἐτελεύτησεν, καὶ μὴ ἔχων σπέρμα ἀφῆκεν τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ τῷ ἀδελφῷ αὐτοῦ·

Mark 12:19Teacher, Moses wrote for us that ‘if a man’s brother dies, leaving a wife but no child, the man shall marry the widow and raise up children for his brother.’

Διδάσκαλε, Μωϋσῆς ἔγραψεν ἡμῖν ὅτι ἐάν τις ἀδελφὸς ἀποθάνῃ καὶ καταλίπῃ γυναῖκα καὶ μὴ ἀφῇ τέκνον, ἵνα λάβῃ ὁ ἀδελφὸς αὐτοῦ τὴν γυναῖκα καὶ ἐξαναστήσῃ σπέρμα τῷ ἀδελφῷ αὐτοῦ.

Luke 20:28 and asked him a question, “Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man’s brother dies, leaving a wife but no children, the man shall marry the widow and raise up children for his brother.

λέγοντες, Διδάσκαλε, Μωϋσῆς ἔγραψεν ἡμῖν, ἐάν τις ἀδελφὸς ἀποθάνῃ ἔχων γυναῖκα, καὶ οὗτος ἄτεκνος ᾗ, ἵνα λάβῃ ὁ ἀδελφὸς αὐτοῦ τὴν γυναῖκα καὶ ἐξαναστήσῃ σπέρμα τῷ ἀδελφῷ αὐτοῦ.

The interesting fact of this interaction is that it is the notion of the widow together with levirate which forms the content of the argument. Apart from the fact that it is basically put forward as an argument against the probability of resurrection, the fact that it is the widow and the levirate which stands central, is significant. This is so, because it places the widow in this scenario in legal context, which is linked to both the social and economic context. The levirate was a law which was developed to care for widows both socially and economically. Jesus’ response of saying that the Sadducees are wrong - ‘because you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God’ (29) - means that his retort equally impacts in these contexts. As a social, economic but especially a legal category, this widow is catered for differently by God (in the resurrection). The resurrection, here, then, means that it is radically different from worldly systems. This difference lies precisely in the fact that people ‘neither marry nor are given in marriage’. This suggests an equality which transcends worldly systems - even those which are aimed at creating care and compassion for people, i.e. systems which are put in place to provide those without status with some status.

It is only after having made this point, that Jesus returns to the actual question concerning the resurrection. His point is the following:

And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is God not of the dead, but of the living."

The significance is that Abraham, Isaac as well as Jacob still lives. But in a secondary sense, that what God has achieved through them, is still important. Amongst others, such a statement could have triggered the memory of Tamar's seeking of justice from Jacob - in the context of the levirate. This also means that the widow of the story who did not receive justice while still alive, will receive it when alive after death - by not being bound to worldly categories (see Smit [1999]).

4.4.2 The Woe on the Devouring of Widow's Houses

It seems as if the reference to the Pharisees' devouring of widows' houses is cannot be substantiated historically. Even so, it is used mainly in economic context as it is tied to the legal context - i.e. concerning widows as both an economic and legal category.

Matthew 23:13 "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you lock people out of the kingdom of heaven. For you do not go in yourselves, and when others are going in, you stop them. (Other authorities add here (or after verse 12) verse 14, Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses and for the sake of appearance you make long prayers; therefore you will receive the greater condemnation)

Mark 12:40 They devour widows' houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation."

οἱ κατεσθίοντες τὰς οἰκίας τῶν χηρῶν καὶ προφάσει μακρὰ προσευχόμενοι· οὗτοι λήμψονται περισσότερον κρίμα.

Luke 20:47 They devour widows' houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation."

οἱ κατεσθίουσιν τὰς οἰκίας τῶν χηρῶν καὶ προφάσει μακρὰ προσεύχονται· οὗτοι λήμψονται περισσότερον κρίμα.

The reference to the 'devouring' of widows' houses means that, concerning the widows as economic category, they are ravaged by people as if by wolves - 'devour' is used here as verb metaphor in economic context. The researcher pointed to the following:

Since the woman usually joined the husband's family on marriage, she was allowed to stay on in the apartment she shared with her husband. The only difference is that she was not allowed to live in all the sections of the communal house as when the husband was alive. In addition, she was prohibited to transfer ownership of the apartment to others nor to let the whole or part of it. The right of residence but no right to ownership, meant that she could maintain a certain status but not as it was before.

Concerning the apartment she shared with the husband's family, the widow's right was to have use of it while she was still alive. On her death, it would return to her husband's family.

These would have been the general rules. However, it is possible to imagine circumstances in which these rules would not fit the case. An example is a situation where the husband did not have some kin to which the house could go back. It is especially in this and similar cases that one could imagine the pharisees as institution in society could intervene. It would be possible - in line with some hairsplitting legal developments - to oust a widow from her house. Moreover, it is possible that someone in a powerful institutional

position, could persuade rich (?) widows to give them their property, saying God desired it. It is possible that they were used to take very high fees from poor widows who had trusted them to look after their property (Hergreaves 1995:233).

Where a person with virtually no rights - on the death of a husband - comes to stand against such a socio-religious force in society as the Pharisees, it is quite possible to imagine a situation where they would exploit someone like this. Such a possibility is not related to the Pharisaic vocation as such, but more to the fact that someone in an institutional power situation, has the means and the power to exploit someone of low standing or someone who does not have any socio-legal representation in terms of the cultural structures of the time.

A second problem within the rules themselves is that the widow would be much more restricted than when her husband was still alive, e.g. 1) she was not allowed to live in all the sections of the communal house as when the husband was alive; 2) she was prohibited to transfer ownership of the apartment to others; 3) nor to let the whole or part of it; 4) on the widow's death, the house would return to her husband's family because she never had ownership of it. In terms of interaction in all these situations, the widow is restricted because she does not have any status (or representation) in society.

4.4.3 The Poor Widow's Temple Contribution

Jesus sat down opposite the treasury in the court of women. There were thirteen collecting boxes (with mouths shaped like a trumpet) into which women put their voluntary gifts.

Jesus saw a widow come and put 'two small copper coins' into the treasury. He judges that she 'has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury'.

Hergreaves (1995:233) judges that Jesus saw that 'it was given out of

the love she had for God' (Hergreaves 1995:233). The insight of this situation was based on this poor widow who sacrificed more than all. What is evident here is the acknowledgement of the fact that 'Jesus compared her gift with the gifts of others and judged hers to be of greater value' (Hergreaves 1995:233).

Mark 12:42A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. Then he called his disciples and said to them, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury.

καὶ ἐλθοῦσα μία χήρα πτωχὴ ἔβαλεν λεπτὰ δύο, ὃ ἐστὶν κοδράντης. καὶ προσκαλεσάμενος τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, Ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ἡ χήρα αὕτη ἡ πτωχὴ πλεῖον πάντων ἔβαλεν τῶν βαλλόντων εἰς τὸ γαζοφυλάκιον·

Luke 21:2he also saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. He said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them;

εἶδεν δέ τινα χήραν πενιχρὰν βάλλουσαν ἐκεῖ λεπτὰ δύο, καὶ εἶπεν, Ἀληθῶς λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ἡ χήρα αὕτη ἡ πτωχὴ πλεῖον πάντων ἔβαλεν·

There are at least two main and contrasting interpretations of this incident. The *first* is the more popular. Due to the fact that she gave 'all the money she had to keep herself alive' was given means that 'she had faith that God would look after her' (Hergreaves 1995:233 & Cole 1976:196). This indicates the faith of the widow. This was then contrasted with that of religious leaders who did not appreciate it. Different from others, Jesus could see and appreciate such action (see Mk 5:25-34).

According to this view, the widow is a symbol of total commitment to

God. The giving of the money is then interpreted as indicating total dependency in the provision of God. In this context, one could go further and say that as interaction with God, this is an example of commitment to God and dependency on God - in a situation where she did not have enough money for herself. Whereas this commitment and dependency is not recognised generally, the fact that Jesus recognises it means that it is only he who can see it, appreciate it and show compassion (see Thurston 1989:12).

This line of interpretation can be extended to show that Jesus' appreciation contrasts with that of others - especially those who are the hypocrites in the context. Jesus, can, then, put himself in the position of the widow, and they not. As such, Jesus saw a widow in the larger context of a society that did not care for her - a woman lost and forsaken, someone to be excluded from the life of the community and the city. He appreciated the fact that she gave this money even though she did not have any financial support system. Moreover, a widow had few ways of earning money in first century Judea and normally found life very difficult. A poor widow is thus almost proverbial for the poorest of people (Morris 1983:140).

The widow's own actions are then also contrasted with those of hypocrites who practice their religion as outward and empty glory of religious observance - the sin of pride (Cole 1976:195).

The *second* interpretation is that Jesus saw the effects of a system that would do nothing economically, socially, religiously, or politically to assist this woman. Moreover, the system exploited her in so far as it made her to pay to the temple even the little she had (see Smit [1999]).

4.4.4 Anna the Prophet and Widow

Luke, more than any of the other New Testament writers, portrayed the people's suffering but also joy. This is probably because he was a medical

doctor. In this case, this brief story of Anna is told. After seven years of marriage, she was a widow up to the age of eighty-four.

Luke 2:36 There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

Καὶ ἦν Ἄννα προφῆτις, θυγάτηρ Φανουήλ, ἐκ φυλῆς Ἀσήρ· αὕτη προβεβηκυῖα ἐν ἡμέραις πολλαῖς, ζήσασα μετὰ ἀνδρὸς ἔτη ἑπτὰ ἀπὸ τῆς παρθενίας αὐτῆς καὶ αὐτὴ χήρα ἕως ἐτῶν ὀγδοήκοντα τεσσάρων, ἣ οὐκ ἀφίστατο τοῦ ἱεροῦ νηστεύουσα καὶ δεήσεων λατρεύουσα νύκτα καὶ ἡμέραν. καὶ αὐτῇ τῇ ὥρᾳ ἐπιστᾶσα ἀνθρωπολογεῖτο τῷ θεῷ καὶ ἐλάλει περὶ αὐτοῦ πᾶσιν τοῖς προσδεχομένοις λύτρωσιν Ἱερουσαλήμ.

Anna 'never left the temple' but she stayed there night and day, worshipping God by praying and often without food. It is significant that she served as prophetess and that it is as such that she knew that the child was the Messiah. There are at least three important points here. *Firstly*, even though she was 'anawim', she could function as a prophet. The fact that the prophetic office in the Old Testament was especially critically aimed against unjust social structures, and unjust behaviour by leaders, but also able to detect and communicate the will of God, the fact that she is woman but even more importantly, a widow (!), is significant. *Secondly*, and related to the previous point, the status of Simeon was completely different from that of Anna. He was 'righteous and devout', 'guided by the Spirit', and 'came into the temple' that day. Anna, however, was in the office of the prophets, 'never left the

temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day'. It is in this situation that she not only functioned as 'prophet' and mediator between God and her nation (Tucker 1992:97). *Thirdly*, Thurston (1989) says that it is as such that she is a model for later 'order' for Christian widows who abstained from a second marriage, was regarded as 'honourable' and fulfilled the required qualification of 'enrolled widows'.

In all three these contexts, we have Anna as widow functioning within the divine salvation-historical tradition. That which is not honourable in the eyes and the systems of society, is made of the most important within this context.

4.4.5 Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath

The importance of this reference to the fact that Elijah was sent to the widow of Zarephath, takes place in the context of Jesus' reading from Isaiah in Luke 4:18. This is Jesus' first public appearance according to Luke and it took place in his home-town, Nazareth:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

After he says, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Lk 4:21), Luke reports that 'All spoke well of him and were amazed at the

gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, "Is not this Joseph's son?". This last statement means that, since they knew Jesus as a local boy, he cannot be a prophet. This is followed by Jesus' statements:

"Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Doctor, cure yourself!' And you will say, 'Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.'" And he said, "Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown.

But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. There were also many lepers¹ in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian."

ἐπ' ἀληθείας δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν, πολλοὶ χήραι ἦσαν ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις Ἡλίου ἐν τῷ Ἰσραήλ, ὅτε ἐκλείσθη ὁ οὐρανὸς ἐπὶ ἔτη τρία καὶ μῆνας ἕξ, ὥς ἐγένετο λιμὸς μέγας ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν, καὶ πρὸς οὐδεμίαν αὐτῶν ἐπέμφθη Ἡλίας εἰ μὴ εἰς Σάρεπτα τῆς Σιδωνίας πρὸς γυναῖκα χήραν.

The central element in the interaction between Jesus and his hometown people is that they cannot accept the fact that he is a prophet or that they reject this fact. This is contrasted with the interaction between Elijah and the widow of Zarephath and Elijah and Naaman the Syrian. In both these cases, acceptance and faith was central to the stories. As in many cases throughout the Gospels, the widow and Naaman belongs to that category of marginalised figures which responds in faith. The widow of Zarephath - even stated as one of 'many widows in Israel' - is put forward in this key text in Luke-Acts as example of faithful trust. Moreover, since the overall context is that of

¹The terms *leper* and *leprosy* can refer to several diseases

healing - in the Isaiah text; in Jesus' retort that they will say to him: 'Doctor, cure yourself!'; and Naaman's healing - the people from Nazareth's interaction with Jesus shows a rejection of the healing he offers. Since Elijah raised her son from the dead, there is also a secondary meaning related to resurrection. These meaning constructs contrast with the interaction of the people of Nazareth with Jesus.

4.4.6 The Raising of the Widow's Son

When Jesus raised the son of the widow, he stressed his compassion and his power over death.

Luke 7:12 As he approached the gate of the town, a man who had died was being carried out. He was his mother's only son, and she was a widow; and with her was a large crowd from the town.

ὥς δὲ ἤγγισεν τῇ πύλῃ τῆς πόλεως, καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐξεκομίζετο τεθνηκῶς μονογενὴς υἱὸς τῇ μητρὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ αὐτὴ ἦν χήρα, καὶ ὄχλος τῆς πόλεως ἱκανὸς ἦν σὺν αὐτῇ.

Jesus was moved by the fact that the dead man was the only son of his mother and that she was a widow. The widow was now all alone in the world, without a 'male protector and provider' (Morris 1983:140). She was left alone and in a state of depravation. Thurston (1989) elaborates by saying that the widow of Nain lost her, 'legal protector' and 'social security'. These two scholars depict the widow as a social, economic as well as a legal category. It is in these contexts that Jesus' compassion () must be understood. The story's point is therefore not merely that of Jesus' power to raise someone from the dead but to show that his compassion is a real compassion - dealing with the social, economic and legal deprivation of the widow. Jesus as 'self' is

therefore here able to place himself in the position of 'alter'. More importantly, however, is that - as prophet - he changes her plight.

When Jesus gave the child back to the mother, he restores both the life of the widow as well as the life of the son. She had a future again, meaning, responsibility and at least some dignity - through her son, she could again be represented in society, in legal matters as well as in economic affairs. If this did not happen, the widow could have been devalued to the level of a beggar. Without her child she could be put outside the confines of the town to beg, because the child was the hope for daily life and "the law stipulates that a first born son care for his widowed mother until he was thirty years of age" (Mckenna 1994:156). By raising the son, Jesus in actual fact saved two lives.

4.4.7 The Parable of the Widow and the Unjust Judge

This parable is a story which is told to show what the actual action and interaction must be of someone who is treated unjustly and who is in any case in a marginalised state when he or she interacts with someone who is in position of power and who has the means to change his or her fate.

Luke 18:1-18 Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart. He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, 'Grant me justice against my opponent.' For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, 'Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.'"² And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to

²Or so that she may not finally come and slap me in the face.

them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

Ἐλεγεν δὲ παραβολὴν αὐτοῖς πρὸς τὸ δεῖν πάντοτε προσεύχεσθαι αὐτοὺς καὶ μὴ ἐγκακεῖν, λέγων, Κριτὴς τις ἦν ἐν τινὶ πόλει τὸν θεὸν μὴ φοβούμενος καὶ ἄνθρωπον μὴ ἐντρέπόμενος. χήρα δὲ ἦν ἐν τῇ πόλει ἐκείνῃ καὶ ἤρχετο πρὸς αὐτὸν λέγουσα, Ἐκδίκησόν με ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀντιδίκου μου. καὶ οὐκ ἤθελεν ἐπὶ χρόνον. μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα εἶπεν ἐν ἑαυτῷ, Εἰ καὶ τὸν θεὸν οὐ φοβοῦμαι οὐδὲ ἄνθρωπον ἐντρέπομαι, διὰ γε τὸ παρέχειν μοι κόπον τὴν χήραν ταύτην ἐκδικήσω αὐτήν, ἵνα μὴ εἰς τέλος ἐρχομένη ὑπωπιάζῃ με. Εἶπεν δὲ ὁ κύριος, Ἀκούσατε τί ὁ κριτὴς τῆς ἀδικίας λέγει· ὁ δὲ θεὸς οὐ μὴ ποιήσῃ τὴν ἐκδίκησιν τῶν ἐκλεκτῶν αὐτοῦ τῶν βοώντων αὐτῷ ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτός, καὶ μακροθυμεῖ ἐπ' αὐτοῖς; λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ποιήσῃ τὴν ἐκδίκησιν αὐτῶν ἐν τάχει. πλὴν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐλθὼν ἄρα εὐρήσει τὴν πίστιν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς;

The judge in this parable is described as someone 'who neither feared God nor had respect for people' (18:2). The woman is described as someone 'who kept coming to him and saying, 'Grant me justice against my opponent.' It is evident that the widow did not have another person through whom she could have attempted to get justice done to her. She had to seek justice herself, and that directly from the judge. This is a contravention of the rules of interaction as laid down by the culture. The reasons which the judge give himself for eventually helping her are two-fold: 1) 'because this widow keeps bothering me'; 2) 'I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming'.

Luke contextualises this interaction in a 'spiritual context' - 'prayer; that God will grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night; and the faith the Son of Man will find when he comes. However, taken in itself, the parable provides a strategy widows can follow in the face of injustice done to them. They must not adhere to cultural convention but seek

justice repeatedly. This in any case links up with the Biblical tradition that justice must be done to those who are marginalised.

4.4.8 The Widows of the Hellenists and the Daily Distribution of Food

The context of Acts reflects the problem of the church in handling the dissatisfaction of Hebrew and Greek widows.

Acts 6:1 Now during those days, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food.

Ἐν δὲ ταῖς ἡμέραις ταύταις πληθυνόντων τῶν μαθητῶν ἐγένετο γογγυσμὸς τῶν Ἑλληνιστῶν πρὸς τοὺς Ἑβραίους, ὅτι παρεθεωροῦντο ἐν τῇ διακονίᾳ τῇ καθημερινῇ αἱ χῆραι αὐτῶν.

This context indicates a serious problem in the early church, namely that it was still primarily focused on the Jewish context and not on that of believers from other groups - especially the Hellenists. The result was the choosing of the seven deacons: 'Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch'. They were made responsible for the daily distribution of food - presumably not only for the Hellenist widows, but in general.

In the context of the house church category, this is significant for at least five reasons. *Firstly*, the need for the daily distribution of food - especially to widows - indicated that they formed a group of people who could not cater or care for themselves. They had to be cared for by the church. *Secondly*, there was some partiality, discrimination or bias in the early church. From the fact that it is later stated that the deacons were to take over the role of food distribution from the apostles, this partiality could have

been the result of the fact that they were all mainly from Jewish extraction. This had to be dealt with, and it appears as if the seven at least included some Hellenists to care for the Hellenistic widows. *Thirdly*, the Hellenists complained on behalf of the widows. The widows did not do it themselves. The complaint was also not registered by their sons or next of kin. It was raised by fellow (Hellenist) Christians. *Fourthly*, despite the fact of the division and bias between Hellenist and Hebrew, it is significant that all of these people mentioned were believers and that they functioned as such beyond the confines of cultural limitations. The fact that the issue included food - something which was severely determined by Jewish legal rules - shows that there is a universalising tendency here. As is evident from other texts in the New Testament - see for example Acts 10 and Galatians 2 - this problem was more widespread. This issue is then related to the house church category (see above). The house churches served to bring people together in this universalising context where people were to a certain degree cut loose from the constricting and biased cultural codes. *Fifthly*, the fact that it is widows which are made the object - and not Hellenists in general - shows again that 'widow' is here used as a stock-case to point to something problematic. By making the widow the object, the issue of extreme marginalisation is raised, linking it up with the whole Biblical tradition of injustice towards widows but also more generally to all marginalised people in society.

These are all elements which are important in the context of symbolic interactionism.

4.4.9 The Lamenting Widows and Paul

Since widows could not participate in social, economic and legal matters on their own terms, they were destitute. In this context, they were often used - and paid for this service - as mourners.

Acts 9:39,41 So Peter got up and went with them; and when he arrived, they took him to the room upstairs. All the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing tunics and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was with them He gave her his hand and helped her up. Then calling the saints and widows, he showed her to be alive.

ἀναστὰς δὲ Πέτρος συνῆλθεν αὐτοῖς· ὃν παραγενόμενον ἀνήγαγον εἰς τὸ ὑπερῶν καὶ παρέστησαν αὐτῷ πᾶσαι αἱ χήραι κλαίονσαι καὶ ἐπιδεικνύμεναι χιτῶνας καὶ ἱμάτια ὅσα ἐποίει μετ' αὐτῶν οὐσα ἡ Δορκάς δοὺς δὲ αὐτῇ χεῖρα ἀνέστησεν αὐτήν· φωνήσας δὲ τοὺς ἁγίους καὶ τὰς χήρας παρέστησεν αὐτήν ζῶσαν.

This incident as well as the fact that widows were used as mourners, shows that widows were closely related to death. *On the one hand*, since they were used as mourners, they were closely related to death. The link can be here extended to include the fact that a widow has experienced the death of someone close to herself. This experience made the widow someone who understood death to a certain degree experientially and as such could provide some compassion - especially to a fellow woman. (Since it is a woman who died, this link is not central to this text.) What is central is that the widows showed Peter 'tunics and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was with them' (9:39). It is also they who are shown that Tabitha was alive. As persons who know death experientially, they are also the ones who verify the fact that someone was raised from the dead. Indirectly, this links them to the notion of 'resurrection'. *On the other hand*, since widows could only be used as mourners, it also indicates that they themselves have become metaphorically dead in social, economic and legal context. This is definitively part of the subtext here. The results of labour - the clothing Dorcas made while still alive - contrasts with the fact that she is dead. It also contrasts with

the fact that the widows are dead metaphorically because they cannot participate in such labour - they have to function as mourners.

4.4.10 Widows and the Quest of Pure and undefiled Religion

Often described as the most Jewish text in the New Testament, it is significant that James has this verse.

James 1:27 Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

θηρησκεία καθαρὰ καὶ ἀμίαντος παρὰ τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρὶ αὕτη ἐστίν, ἐπισκέπτεσθαι ὀρφανοὺς καὶ χήρας ἐν τῇ θλίψει αὐτῶν, ἄσπιλον ἑαυτὸν τηρεῖν ἀπὸ τοῦ κόσμου.

Whereas purity language was a register for especially spatial, bodily and food purity in Jewish context, it is significant that this traditional notion from the Old Testament is used to denote 'religion that is pure and undefiled before God'. To care for orphans and widows in their distress indicates the fact that orphans as well as widows do not have representation in social, economic and legal contexts. Both the reference to 'keep oneself unstained by the world' as well as the fact that this statement is at the end of the context where James discusses the general problem of just hearing and not doing the word (1:19-26), indicates a certain universality of care for the marginalised.

4.4.11 The Widow Metaphor as Indication of Social Vulnerability and Scorn

Similar to Isaiah 47:8 above, where the Lord through Isaiah overviews the humiliation of Babylon and Babylon's boasting, this text - where Babylon

indicates Rome - similarly shows that the state of widowhood is despised and feared by people.

Revelation 18:7As she glorified herself and lived luxuriously,

so give her a like measure of torment and grief.

Since in her heart she says,

‘I rule as a queen;

I am no widow,

and I will never see grief,’

ὅσα ἐδόξασεν αὐτὴν καὶ ἐστρηνίασεν,

τοσοῦτον δότε αὐτῇ βασανισμὸν καὶ πένθος.

ὅτι ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτῆς λέγει ὅτι

Κάθημαι βασίλισσα

καὶ χήρα οὐκ εἰμὶ

καὶ πένθος οὐ μὴ ἴδω.

It also shows that widowhood is a metaphor for ridicule and condescension. This is contrasted with invulnerability. In this context, the claim to invulnerability is in the context of living ‘luxuriously’. This contrasts with widowhood which is a state of economic depravation. It also indicates that when a collective like Babylon or Rome claims of being absolutely protected, such a claim of security and selfrighteousness is the first indication of vulnerability. In the context of the Biblical tradition of care for the widow, it also means that if one does not care for the marginalised in society, then one becomes cut off from this social level - which may indicate that they will also rise against one.

4.5 Symbolic Interactionism and the Tamar Story

In symbolic interactionist terms the analyses above brought to light a number of points important for this dissertation. As one example of how the researcher worked in each case, the Tamar story is used as an example. After this example, a final summary for this chapter will be provided.

For the Tamar story, the researcher discusses the elements important in symbolic interactionist terms by focusing on: 1) the nature of the action and interaction in the text; 2) the meanings ascribed to things mentioned in the interaction; 3) the process of interaction as the source of meaning; and 4) the process of interpretation in the interaction. In this, the main tenets of symbolic interactionism will be followed, namely that people 1) 'act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them'; 2) the 'source of meaning' is 'the process of interaction between people'; 3) 'the use of meaning' is itself 'a process of interpretation'.

4.5.1 The Nature of the Action and Interaction in the Text

People act towards things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them. This also means that an act, action or motion is in terms of what one wants, an objective, and lines or plans of action which one has identified through self-communication. Here, the question is whether the actor complies with a situation confronting her/him, or act creatively, especially with regard to the fact that she/he is someone who can act creatively. This means that one must also look at responses, self and alter switches, repetitive action, interaction or joint action.

How do the meanings things have for the actors in the texts determine the nature of the action and/or interaction?

In the Tamar story, the fact that Onan spills his semen, that Judah does not see to it that she is indeed made pregnant and also the fact that even though Shelah has grown up but still is not made to make Tamar pregnant by Judah,

are all inactions with a particular meaning for Tamar. This inaction means that she remains without a son and her deceased husband without an heir. Such inaction in the face of the levirate requirements brings her to act towards Judah as prostitute. Illegitimate sex becomes the vehicle to have justice done to her.

What is the nature of the self-communication in the text; how does this relate to what one wants, one's objective, and lines or plans of action - does the actor comply with a situation confronting her/him, or act creatively?

Onan's self-communication in the text is that he does not want to give Tamar a child because it will not be his own. His plan of action is not to act in terms of the levirate. *Tamar's* self-communication is such that she recognises that justice is not done to her. In the face of this self-communication, she acts creatively, even though very unconventionally: she poses as a prostitute and sleeps with her father-in-law who makes her pregnant. On finding out that Tamar was pregnant, *Judah's* self-communication is that he had to uphold family honour and have Tamar killed. However, on finding out what had happened, he has to acknowledge to himself that he was wrong and Tamar 'more in the right' than he.

What is the nature of the responses in the text?

The responses by actors in the text are that of inaction by Judah and Onan in the face of the levirate requirements. The active, creative and even cunning action by Tamar is a justified response to a situation where justice is not done to her.

Which self and alter switches are present in the text?

Judah was to place himself in Tamar's position and see that she becomes pregnant. However, he did not do this. After she is found to be pregnant, Judah is in the position of judge and still does not put himself in her position. It is only when Tamar tells the whole story about how she became pregnant - and that by Judah himself - that Judah puts himself in her position and

acknowledges that she did indeed act in such a way that he cannot have her killed but that he himself was in the wrong.

Which repetitive action, interaction or joint action is present in the text?

There is repetitive inaction on the side of Judah. Together with the fact that Onan spills his semen, this repetitive inaction becomes joint action on behalf of Judah, Onan and Shelah. This repetitive joint inaction prevents Tamar to become pregnant and to remain with an honourable heir for her husband. Even more importantly: it prevents the functioning and rightful continuation of the levirate but also the salvation-historical line in Israel. In addition, after it was found out that Tamar was pregnant, the text says that Judah 'did not lie with her again' (Gn 38:26) - meaning that this was a special case where justice was not done and that Tamar's act was right under special circumstances.

4.5.2 The Meanings Ascribed to Things Mentioned in the Interaction

Here, one must look at the meaning of the 'object'. It can be physical objects but also specific individual human beings, categories of human beings, institutions, guiding ideals, activities of oneself or others, and such situations as an individual encounters in daily life.

What are the meanings of the physical objects mentioned in the text?

The signet, cord and staff are three things which belonged to Judah and in the story acquire the meaning of 'evidence' that Tamar slept with Judah and not with anyone. As evidence, these three things lend credibility to Tamar's action.

What are the meanings ascribed to specific individual human beings in the text?

The meaning ascribed to Er and Onan is that of being 'wicked'; to Judah and Onan, as inaction - by implication; to Tamar's action of playing prostitute, as

being 'more right' than Judah.

What are the categories to which human beings in the text belong?

Tamar forms part of a legal category - that of a widow who has to be cared for in terms of the levirate. By implication, she also belongs to a social and economic category: she does not have an heir of her deceased husband who can represent her in society or in economic affairs.

Which institutions are central in the text?

The levirate which has as aim that justice must be done to widows. Since justice is withheld, the institution of prostitution becomes the medium through which justice is achieved.

What are the guiding ideals, activities of oneself or others?

The levirate is an institution which has the guiding ideal of having justice done to a widow in Mediterranean society. The Judah and Tamar narrative becomes a story which can serve as providing guiding activities for a widow in a position similar to that of Tamar.

What are the situations in the text that an individual encounters in daily life?

It is possible that other widows may encounter similar inaction on behalf of her father-in-law and his sons.

4.5.3 The Process of Interaction as the Source of Meaning

As a source of meaning, the process of interaction focuses on the kind of the process of action, interaction and conversation or dialogue especially with regard to how action, interaction as well as things are redescribed and redefined. What is the start and what the end of the process, how does role-taking switches to and fro in the process, how are symbols coined, used, etc. How are actors' positions in relation to others adjusted in their interaction? What are the role-making processes? Are there tentative elements?

What is the process of the action, interaction and conversation or

dialogue as it is related to how action, interaction as well as things are redescribed and redefined.

Description and redefinition focus primarily on Tamar's act to pose and interact with Judah as prostitute. In these special circumstances, she is not branded as a prostitute but someone who act rightly - 'more right' than Judah.

What is the beginning and end of the process?

The beginning of the process is that Tamar does not have an heir, the process, that her father-in-law as well as his sons are inactive in seeing justice done to Tamar and the resultant action by Tamar to see that justice is done and the end of the process, that she is pregnant.

How does role-taking switches to and fro in the process?

Faced with the inaction of Judah and his sons to see justice done to her, Tamar takes the role of seeing justice done to her. She does this by playing the role of prostitute. Whereas Judah is presented as the person who has to protect the honour of the family, it turns out that he did not do so. He is placed in the role of someone who acts dishonourable and Tamar as honourable.

How are symbols coined, used, etc.

The most significant symbol coined in this narrative is that of a just prostitute or the just action of a prostitute. This is used to procure justice where justice is not done or at least obstructed.

How are actors' positions in relation to others adjusted in their interaction?

The most important is that Judah is put in the position of unjust action and Tamar, of just or justified action.

What are the role-making processes? Are there tentative elements?

The three most tentative moments are 1) whether Judah and his sons will act to see that right be done to Tamar; 2) where she acts as prostitute in her interaction with Judah and that the possibility exists that she be found out; 3)

that she is found to be pregnant and unable to convince others that she acted to become pregnant in a rightful manner in an unjust situation.

4.5.4 The Process of Interpretation in the Interaction.

This question raises the issue of pre-understanding of characters in the text, how characters in the text interpret the situation, action, interaction, objects, etc. Important here, is how they interpret their positions and roles in society and how they interpret existing things, what is the context in terms of which the meaning of things change and what the interpretation is when things change. What is the role of norms, significant others and the actor's own resources (self-conceptions, role-playing skills and styles of interaction) brought to the interaction and which influence this process of interpretation? How does the folk norm of consistency, including role verification function interpretively? In terms of change, what is the different 'world' in terms of which things are defined and interpreted differently?

Pre-understanding of characters in the text:

Tamar's pre-understanding - in the light of the levirate - is that one of Er's brothers must lie with her so that she could conceive. In the face of Onan's action and Judah's inaction, the pre-understanding changes: if she wants justice done, she must devise a plan to see that it happens. After it was found that Tamar was pregnant, Judah's pre-understanding is that she played prostitute and that she must be killed. However, in the light of the facts of what Tamar did, his pre-understanding has to function in a different context - that of him not fulfilling his role as patriarch of the family and not seeing to it that Tamar conceives.

How do characters in the text interpret the situation, action, interaction, objects, their positions and roles in society, what is the context in terms of which the meaning of things change and what the interpretation is when things change?

Tamar interprets the inaction of Judah and his sons as injustice done to her. Her decision to play prostitute with Judah is interpreted as just action on her own behalf. This is especially evident when Judah wants to have her killed and she comes out with the facts and reason why she did so. The context of interpretation switches here from that of judging a widow prostituting herself to that of a widow who acted creatively to see that right be done to her.

What is the role of norms?

The norm is that a widow must have a son through whom she can have representation in society. This norm, however, is violated by Onan when he spills his semen as well as by Judah in his inaction. The norm of not playing the prostitute - also for widows - is broken under special circumstances: in a situation where justice was not done to Tamar.

What is the role of significant others?

According to custom, the father-in-law of a widow had to give his eldest unmarried son to a widow as husband. The responsibility for this act was that of the father-in-law. In the Tamar story, her husband, Er, passed away. No child was conceived while Er was alive. Judah did not see to it that justice be done to Tamar.

What is the role of the actor's own resources (self-conceptions, role-playing skills and styles of interaction) brought to the interaction and which influence this process of interpretation?

The most significant is the fact that Tamar was able to act as prostitute and deceive Judah.

How does the folk norm of consistency, including role verification function interpretively?

The folk norm of consistency is especially that of honourable action by the father-in-law and his sons when they see to it that the widow of their deceased son/brother conceive. If they do this, then they are honourable. In this context, however, both Judah and his sons show themselves

untrustworthy. Interpretively, their roles are judged to be inconsistent with the requirements of folk culture. In the situation where justice is not done to Tamar, her role as prostitute is verified by the fact that she becomes pregnant. This role, however, is approved in the text - seeing that she had to deal with a situation of unjust inaction on behalf of significant others.

In terms of change, what is the different 'world' in terms of which things are defined and interpreted differently?

Where justice is not done to Tamar, she acts creatively. The world in which she acts is risky because if she were found out as playing prostitute or if she were found to be pregnant, then she could be killed. The 'world' in which her actions are approved of, is two-fold: 1) that of injustice done to her in the context of levirate requirements; and 2) that of God's plan for Israel through Abraham and Jacob's bloodline.

4.6 Summary

For the purposes of this dissertation, at least six points can be made from the research in this chapter.

4.6.1 Widows as Part of a Marginalised Category

Together with orphans and aliens, widows form the stock-category within Old Testament and New Testament concerning the socially, economically and legally marginalised (4.2.1 - 4.2.3; 4.2.5; 4.2.14 - 4.2.22; 4.4.2; 4.4.3; 4.4.7; 4.4.8). This was mainly due to the patriarchal nature of Mediterranean culture. The main principle was that only men could represent a household socially, economically and legally - women not. Men had honour and had to act honourably and women not. Due to this kind of socio-cultural system in the Mediterranean, someone who had no representation in social interaction was fatally disadvantaged. This mainly included widows, orphans and aliens.

Widows did not have a husband; orphans did not have a father; aliens did not have a family or extended system through which they could network in society. This means that the fact of being a widow, an orphan or alien in itself, disadvantaged such a person. They were - due to the state in which they found themselves - already disadvantaged. This state cut them off from the resources society provided in real terms. Apart from their being socially disadvantaged, they could not interact with others economically. They could not form part of the productive system in society (4.4.9). This meant poverty and hunger. The two incidents where Babylon (4.2.18) and Rome (4.4.11) are said to claim invulnerability, this is done in contrast to and with scorn of the most vulnerable position one could find oneself in: that of widowhood.

4.6.2 Culture-specific Institutions of Care

Given this particular socio-cultural system, it developed mechanisms through which to care for such people and also counter the possibility that widows, orphans and aliens be exploited. The most obvious mechanisms were that of the 1) levirate (4.2.1); 2) focused categorical legal pronouncements (4.2.2; 4.2.5); 3) the ruling on vows, harvesting and festivals (4.2.4; 4.2.6; 4.2.7); 4) the fact of the Lord's care for widows (4.2.16; 4.2.19); 5) the education of Israel concerning the socially disadvantaged (4.2.17; 4.4.10); 6) and the threat of judgment (4.2.20; 4.2.21). These social mechanisms had to ensure that justice be done but also that this category of people are not further exploited.

The *levirate* had to provide a male boy to continue the husband's bloodline but also a male representative for the widow and her household in social, economic and legal interaction. The *legal pronouncements* were made in the context of God's covenant with Israel: that he saved/liberated Israel from Egypt and slavery in order to both remain true to his promises to Israel's ancestors and have a nation through whom he could have his will

proclaimed in the world. The complement of this covenant was that Israel had to be and remain God's people. This was to be achieved through their obedient practice of the law. Such obedience would result in life and stability for Israel. The ruling on *vows* ensured that widows - who did not have legal representation and therefore - did not exploit the system by not keeping their vows. The rulings concerning *harvesting*, ensured a system whereby widows and other socially disadvantaged people could benefit from crop cultivation. The fact that widows were not excluded from *festivals* ensured that they were treated with the same respect and dignity as any other Israelite household. The fact of *the Lord's care for widows* links every Israelite's faithfulness to God, to his or her care for the socially disadvantaged. On the *education of Israel* concerning the socially disadvantaged, every text and mechanism discussed in this chapter has such an aim - through narratives, legal pronouncements, etc. The *threat of judgment* ensured that every Israelite care for the socially disadvantaged.

It is in this context that these mechanisms concerning the marginalised in society would not only cater and care for the marginalised but also ensure that Israelites would be able, in symbolic interactionist terms, to put self in the position of alter. This is especially exemplified in God's and also Jesus' acts of compassion.

4.6.3 Narratives on the Creative Action of Widows in Situations of Injustice

Tamar (4.2.1), Abigail (4.2.8) and the wise woman from Tekoa (4.2.9) acted creatively and intervened in three different contexts. Tamar acted within the context of male inaction on her own behalf; Abigail acted in the context of her husband's inaction concerning reciprocal care for David's soldiers and in order to save face for her husband - on behalf of his honour; the wise woman of Tekoa acted as a widow in the interests of king David who wanted to

reverse his decision concerning Absalom but would lose face if he did so. All three these women actors intervened in these contexts: Tamar on her own behalf; Abigail on behalf of her husband and the wise woman from Tekoa on behalf of king David.

The Widow from Zarephath (4.2.12) acted in faith on behalf of Elijah. She intervened on behalf of Elijah in the context of famine. Due to her faith of putting the prophet before her own and her son's possible starvation, her food-supply does not stop. In the New Testament, this incident is referred to in the context of Jesus' first public appearance (in Luke) in his home-town, Nazareth (4.4.5). More importantly, the context is that of healing. Related to all the statements of healing, this woman's faith intervenes in the context of the sick society which Israel was at the time of both Elijah and Jesus. These societies were sick because the leaders did not represent the Lord's will concerning the caring of the people. They rather exploited them. Healing, here, and the faith of the widow concerning God's prophet (who pronounced judgement on the leaders) are related in order to communicate the fact that Jesus is the ultimate cure for marginalised others - especially in the context where societal systems did not care for such people..

In the parable of the widow and the unjust judge (4.4.7), we have a widow acting on her own behalf. Centrally important to the perspective of widows acting in their own interest and in the face of cultural as well as pragmatic exploitation and non-care, this widow repeatedly challenges a judge - a person who is supposed to uphold the justice. It is this parable - as all the other narratives - which brings to the fore the strategies widows can follow when justice is not done to them.

The strategies which women can follow when they are not cared for - which means that such women can learn from these incidents - are five-fold. The *first* strategy, that of Tamar, was very risky and tentative. She posed and acted as prostitute. In this context, she was actually risking her life on at least

two counts. Firstly, if Judah found out who she were when he had intercourse with her, he could have her killed. Secondly, if Judah would not accept her argument, she could have been killed equally. Nevertheless, in a patriarchal society of male oppression, this would remain one option for a widow. The *second* strategy, that of Abigail, was also risky. Even though she acted in the interests of her husband and his honour, she still had to face his wrath. Her strategy was to not consult her husband when he was still alive but just to go ahead and to act justly and honourably in accordance with the socio-cultural requirements of the time. As the narrative shows, this eventually paid off because she became one of the wives of king David. The *third* strategy is that of the wise woman from Tekoa. Even though not actually a widow, it is through deception and on instructions of Joab that she intervenes on behalf of the honour of king David and provides an avenue for him to change his pronouncement on Absalom. The *fourth* strategy, that of the widow of Zarephath, directly relates to trust and faith in the face of disaster. Indirectly, it also means that this woman's faith - as strategy - stands critically over and against that of the leaders of Israel - all male.

The *fifth* strategy is that of the continuous challenging of a judge. This continuity of challenge is one strategy to get such an important person as the judge to give way and to pronounce justice.

In each of these five cases, it is especially in patriarchal context that all these strategies/plans/lines of action and the actual actions all have risk to them or have some inbuilt tentativity. This risk is that of the power of patriarchy. Even where a woman's intervening actions uphold patriarchy - as in the case of Abigail - it is still in such manner that it deconstructs and refracts the patriarchal attitude, inclination and actions.

In summary, then, there are three main elements to these strategies. Firstly, *deception* on behalf of one's own advantage, on behalf of an indiscrete husband or on behalf of someone who is equally caught up within

the dictates of socio-cultural or folk norms, can bring about justice. Secondly, *faith* in the face of disaster, brings about justice. Thirdly, the *continuous challenging of injustice or inaction* will eventually let the walls of patriarchal injustice and inaction crumble.

4.6.4 Creative Action on Behalf of Widows

Legal statements concerning the care for the socially disadvantaged (4.2.5; 4.2.6); Job's defense of his integrity by claiming never to have done anything bad towards the socially disadvantaged (4.2.14); and God's care for the socially disadvantaged (4.2.2; 4.2.16; 4.2.17; 4.2.19; 4.4.4; 4.4.10) are all general pronouncements which call for specific creative action towards the widows, orphans and strangers. Each Israelite or believer had to give specific expression in terms of which the general statements were made concrete in concrete situations and concrete interactions. However, there are also more specific events where creative actions were taken on behalf of widows.

These specific actions comprise that of David towards Abigail after her husband's death - he took her as one of his wives (4.2.8). In the narration concerning the artisan of king Solomon, Solomon acts creatively by not taking an Israelite but someone of mixed blood and a widow's son on top of that as his artisan (4.2.10). In the narration concerning Jerobeam - a widow's son - Jerobeam have concretely witnessed the exploitation of workers by the royal system and this made him acceptable as rival king to Rehabeam (4.2.11). When the widow's son dies, Elijah intervenes and raises him from the dead (4.2.13; 4.4.6). Quite important is Jesus' intervention on behalf of widows and by implication all socially disadvantaged - by criticising the systems and institutions which exploited such people (4.4.2; 4.4.3). In Mark, this is an event which stands as the high point just before the apocalyptic discourse, indicating that it can be seen as a summary statement of Jesus' whole ministry.

Whether as the concretising of general legal pronouncements or as explicit events, concrete exploitation calls for creative action.

4.6.5 Honourable and Dishonourable Action Concerning Widows

In the explicit narratives and references to ways in which widows were exploited, *dishonourable action* comprise that of Judah (4.2.1); the priestly positioning of widows together with prostitutes (4.4.6); Abigail's husband, Nabal (4.2.8); Israel's leaders (4.2.20); Babylon's (and Rome's) boasting (4.2.18; 4.4.11); the Pharisees' and temple institution's exploitation of widows (4.4.2; 4.4.3); the unjust judge (4.4.7).

Judah did not act to see that the levirate is adhered to. The priestly positioning of widows together with prostitutes in the context of purity ratings is negative in so far as it did not put active mechanisms in place to care for widows. Abigail's husband, Nabal, did not act honourably towards David's men. Israel's leaders - by not seeing that justice is done but actually and explicitly exploiting people calls forth God's judgement. Babylon's (and Rome's) boasting of invulnerability stands in stark contrast to how they perceive widows and orphans. They do not intervene in such situations. The Pharisees' and temple institution's exploitation of widows is severely criticised by Jesus. Finally, the unjust judge's inaction becomes the target of the widow's actions in seeking justice.

Honourable action comprise that of concretely giving expression to the general statements on care for widows (4.2.5; 4.2.6; 4.2.14; 4.2.2; 4.2.16; 4.2.17; 4.2.19; 4.4.4; 4.4.10) but also the more concrete creative actions taken by actors: David's action towards Abigail (4.2.8); Solomon's action concerning the artisan who was a widow's son (4.2.10); the fact that Jerobeam - a widow's son became king (4.2.11); Elijah's intervention on behalf of the widow by raising her son from the dead (4.2.13; 4.4.6); Jesus' intervention on behalf of widows and by implication all socially

disadvantaged - by criticising the systems and institutions which exploited such people (4.4.2; 4.4.3). To this may be added the fact that Anna, the widow but also prophet in the temple is positioned to be the one who recognises Jesus as Messiah (4.4.4). Structurally or organisationally, a system is created to care for the widows of the Hellenists concerning the daily distribution of food (4.4.8).

Primarily, all these incidents deal with either the inaction of people on behalf of widows, with actual and concrete acts of exploitation or with socio-cultural and systemic or institutional systems which did not cater for the continuous exploitation of widows and the socially disadvantaged. Whether as the concretising of general legal pronouncements or as explicit events, concrete exploitation calls for creative action. Within the Bible, the dishonourable as well as the honourable actions are examples of how not to act or how to act in concrete situations towards widows and the socially disadvantaged.

4.6.6 Norms Concerning Action Towards Widows

Each of the texts researched are saturated with normative elements. From this summary alone, we can identify norms concerning the ensuring that widows must be enabled to act and interact socially, economically and legally and not be marginalised in society (4.6.1). The levirate, focused categorical legal pronouncements, the ruling on vows, harvesting and festivals; the fact of the Lord's care for widows; the education of Israel concerning the socially disadvantaged; and the threat of judgment (4.6.2) all comprise of rules to be followed and norms. Similarly, the creative action by and on behalf of widows all provide mechanisms with rules and norms which can be followed in particular adhered to (4.6.3; 4.6.4). The same is true concerning the concretising of honourable and dishonourable action in general and in particular situations (4.6.5).

However, three additional normative elements must be highlighted: that of justice; salvation or liberation; and resurrection.

Justice - in social, economic and legal contexts - is one of the most central norms which permeates the Old Testament as well as the New Testament. It is especially the norm of just action and interaction in these spheres for which the actions towards the widow, orphan and alien forms the stock category. In terms of symbolic interactionism, the main requirement is that one who acts and interacts with people in this category must be able to position themselves in that of the other - self must position itself in the place of alter, and then act towards alter in terms of how one would have liked alter to act towards self. This requirement prevents social chaos and makes sure that society is closely knit without excluding anyone.

The *salvation or liberation norm*, similarly functions to facilitate self and alter switches. In this context, God is the warrior who liberates from oppression. Israel's liberation from Egypt forms the stock event in terms of which Israelites are called upon to remember that they themselves were in a position of exploitation. Their remembrance has three functions. *Firstly*, it must prevent them from acting in a discriminatory way towards anyone who is socially, economically and politically disadvantaged - because they have experienced such marginalisation themselves. *Secondly*, they must be able to trade places with the disadvantaged and then act towards alter as if it is self. *Thirdly*, if they do this, society will prosper and will receive the blessings of the Lord. If they do not do it, then Israel itself becomes God's enemy and open to judgement.

Finally, concerning *the relating of widows with the resurrection* (and healing), is normative in so far as the widow has not only experienced the death of a loved one - thereby knowing about death - but also is metaphorically dead in society since she does not have the means to participate fully in society. As the most disadvantaged in society the widow

knows death. As such, the widow is also one who must know about life after death. The extreme - death - is related to the other extreme - the belief in life after death. The faith of the widow which gives food to Elijah in the face of famine is related in Luke to healing and cure. As such, healing and cure is related to the belief in the resurrection and in this context, is normative: actions of faith-healing-resurrection.

In summary: widows had virtually no status in Mediterranean society. Society, however, did develop some measures to care for widows. Since these measures were often not practiced, the creative action of widows in their own interest or of others on behalf of their well-fare made for a body of literature which was to continuously conscientise people about care for widows.

CHAPTER FIVE

A SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONIST INTERPRETATION OF 1 Timothy 5:1-16

5.0 Introduction

In chapter two, the theory for this dissertation was developed. Chapter three dealt with the status of widows in the First Century Mediterranean World - Greek, Roman and Jewish societies - and chapter four with a symbolic interactionist interpretation of widows in the Old Testament and New Testament.

In order to focus the symbolic interactionist study of 1 Timothy 5:3-16 more particularly in its socio-cultural context, this chapter first provides an overview of the traditional households of both Greek and Roman societies. This is necessary because the household was the institution par excellence for the citizenry. In this context, we must understand the Pastorals' strategy to deal with household life in the context of 'the household of God'. This focus shows how the Pastorals portray the dual importance of the notion of the household. It was significant for family life under Roman rule but also for the church. The church attempted to define itself as an institution which could both cater for the diversity of people which belonged to it and function as an institution under Roman rule. The main difference between these two focuses was the nature and role of leadership or headship - in the ordinary family household and in the church as household of God. The status of women and widows must be studied in symbolic interactionist terms by departing from this main distinction. This is followed by a study of 1 Timothy 5:3-16.

5.1 The Household

For the author of the Pastorals, household life is one aspect of life in the household of God. His main perspective on the household is determined by the significance of headship in the household and subordinative roles. This

must be compared with the role of headship within the Greek, Roman and Jewish households.

Verner (1983:79) suggests that the following commonality existed between the Greek and Roman Societies.

in both societies the household was conceived as a patriarchal institution, whose male head (*kurios*, *pater familias*) exercised sweeping, although not entirely unrestricted authority over the other members. These members fell into three main categories, namely, wife, children, and slaves.

The traditional households of both the Greek and Roman societies were composed by citizen ranks. In both societies, the traditional households had structural similarities. One of the major similarities was the institution of citizenship and the way in which people were hierarchically positioned in relation to being or not being a citizen. In each society the husband was the authoritative figure and the wife a subordinate of her own husband. Within this relationship, the legal conjugal union was only recognised for procreation. The roles of male and female were therefore strictly organised according to one's gender. Males - who functioned as heads of households - had extensive sexual freedom and had to represent the honour of the family in all spheres of life. Women, on the other hand had only shame, and this had to be defended and guarded. This structure was also religiously sanctioned.

These societies did not only have similarities but differences as well. Within the Greek household system, women faced more limitations on their social activities than in the Roman. It was especially in the area of property ownership that Roman women had more freedom than Greek women.

Concerning authority, the Roman householders traditionally possessed more authority over their children and slaves than Greeks. In Rome, the powers of the *pater familias* over his wife, his children, and his slaves gradually changed over time (Verner 1983:80). Many marriages took place without *manus* (authority). In such households, married women were able to exercise an independence over against their husbands not found in Greek society.

In this social structure, the author of the Pastorals deals with the church as the household of God. He develops his perspectives in terms of the schema associated with the early church as well as the ethical codes for household life. His core objective was to develop an order in the Early church which took into consideration both the actual conditions in the church as well as in society.

5.1.1 The Householder

The author of the Pastorals concentrates on the qualifications for filling an office in the church as well as with the quality of the actual fulfilling of leadership roles. The qualities for these roles are described in 1 Timothy 3:2-7 for bishops; 1 Timothy 3:8-13 for deacons and women; and Titus 1:5b-11.

1 Timothy 3:2-7The saying is sure: whoever aspires to the office of bishop (or overseer) desires a noble task. Now a bishop (or overseer) must be above reproach, married only once (or the husband of one wife), temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, an apt teacher, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way--for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how can he take care of God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace and the snare of the devil.

δεῖ οὖν τὸν ἐπίσκοπον ἀνεπίλημπτον εἶναι, μιᾶς γυναικὸς ἄνδρα, νηφάλιον
σώφρονα κόσμιον φιλόξενον διδακτικόν, μὴ πάροινον μὴ πλήκτην, ἀλλὰ
ἐπιεικῆ ἄμαχον ἀφιλάργυρον, τοῦ ἰδίου οἴκου καλῶς προϊστάμενον, τέκνα
ἔχοντα ἐν ὑποταγῇ, μετὰ πάσης σεμνότητος εἰ δέ τις τοῦ ἰδίου οἴκου

προστῆναι οὐκ οἶδεν, πῶς ἐκκλησίας θεοῦ ἐπιμελήσεται; μὴ νεόφυτον, ἵνα μὴ τυφωθείς εἰς κρίμα ἐμπέσῃ τοῦ διαβόλου. δεῖ δὲ καὶ μαρτυρίαν καλὴν ἔχειν ἀπὸ τῶν ἑξωθεν, ἵνα μὴ εἰς ὀνειδισμόν ἐμπέσῃ καὶ παγίδα τοῦ διαβόλου.

1 Timothy 3:8-13 Deacons likewise must be serious, not double-tongued, not indulging in much wine, not greedy for money; they must hold fast to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them first be tested; then, if they prove themselves blameless, let them serve as deacons. Women (or their wives or women deacons) likewise must be serious, not slanderers, but temperate, faithful in all things. Let deacons be married only once (or be husbands of one wife), and let them manage their children and their households well; for those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and great boldness in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

Διακόνους ὡσαύτως σεμνοὺς, μὴ διλόγους, μὴ οἶνῳ πολλῷ προσέχοντας, μὴ αἰσχροκερδεῖς, ἔχοντας τὸ μυστήριον τῆς πίστεως ἐν καθαρᾷ συνειδήσει. καὶ οὗτοι δὲ δοκιμαζέσθωσαν πρῶτον, εἶτα διακονεῖτωσαν ἀνέγκλητοι ὄντες. γυναῖκας ὡσαύτως σεμνάς, μὴ διαβόλους, νηφαλίους, πιστὰς ἐν πᾶσιν. διάκονοι ἔστωσαν μιᾷς γυναικὸς ἄνδρες, τέκνων καλῶς προϋστάμενοι καὶ τῶν ιδίων οἴκων. οἱ γὰρ καλῶς διακονήσαντες βαθμὸν ἑαυτοῖς καλὸν περιποιοῦνται καὶ πολλὴν παρρησίαν ἐν πίστει τῇ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.

Titus 1:5b-11

... and should appoint elders in every town, as I directed you: someone who is blameless, married only once (or husband of one wife), whose children are believers, not accused of debauchery and not rebellious. For a bishop (or overseer), as God's steward, must be blameless; he must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or addicted to wine or violent or greedy for gain; but he must

be hospitable, a lover of goodness, prudent, upright, devout, and self-controlled. He must have a firm grasp of the word that is trustworthy in accordance with the teaching, so that he may be able both to preach with sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it. There are also many rebellious people, idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision; they must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for sordid gain what it is not right to teach.

Τούτου χάριν ἀπέλιπόν σε ἐν Κρήτῃ, ἵνα τὰ λείποντα ἐπιδιορθώσῃ καὶ καταστήσῃς κατὰ πόλιν πρεσβυτέρους, ὡς ἐγώ σοι διεταξάμην, εἴ τις ἐστὶν ἀνέγκλητος, μιᾶς γυναικὸς ἀνὴρ, τέκνα ἔχων πιστά, μὴ ἐν κατηγορίᾳ ἀσωτίας ἢ ἀνυπότακτα. δεῖ γὰρ τὸν ἐπίσκοπον ἀνέγκλητον εἶναι ὡς θεοῦ οἰκονόμον, μὴ αὐθάδη, μὴ ὀργίλον, μὴ πάροινον, μὴ πλήκτην, μὴ αἰσχροκερδῆ, ἀλλὰ φιλόξενον φιλάγαθον σώφρονα δίκαιον ὅσιον ἐγκρατῆ, ἀντεχόμενον τοῦ κατὰ τὴν διδαχὴν πιστοῦ λόγου, ἵνα δυνατὸς ᾖ καὶ παρακαλεῖν ἐν τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ τῇ ὑγιαίνουσῃ καὶ τοὺς ἀντιλέγοντας ἐλέγχειν. Εἰσὶν γὰρ πολλοὶ [καὶ] ἀνυπότακτοι, ματαιολόγοι καὶ φρεναπάται, μάλιστα οἱ ἐκ τῆς περιτομῆς, οὓς δεῖ ἐπιστομίζειν, οἵτινες ὅλους οἴκους ἀνατρέπουσιν διδάσκοντες ἅ μὴ δεῖ αἰσχροῦ κέρδους χάριν.

From these texts, the author's qualifications for leadership offices in the church are applicable to both sexes. One of the major qualifications for both sexes was to be married only once. This held for the offices of both bishop and deacon. In the context of this requirement, one may assume that it also required that - as a general principle - the widow was to be married only once. 1 Timothy 5:9 says: 'Let a widow be put on the list if she is not less than sixty years old and has been married only once (or the wife of only one husband)'. The alternative translation can be, that the husband must be the husband of only one wife; or the woman must be the wife of only one

husband. This prescription of monogamy was culturally induced:

Monogamy was the only recognized form of marriage in both Greek and Roman societies, but the Jewish law considered polygamy as legitimate alternative to monogamy (Verner 1983:129).

Since the Pastorals were written for people who were Christians in the Greek and Roman worlds, monogamy was the expected standard in the church. It had to match requirements of sexual fidelity and monogamy. This requirement of the church leadership linked up with the Synoptic tradition where remarriage after divorce was condemned as adultery (see Mt 5:31ff; 19:3ff; Mk 10:2ff); and with Paul's ruling that women who separated from their husbands were not to remarry (1 Cor 7:11). The Pastorals belong to the same tradition on this point - especially concerning believers who wanted to function in church offices. This reflects the ethical atmosphere in the early church.

In 1 Tim 5:14, the author advises the younger widows to marry again. Here, he refers again to those who were married only once. The author does not make any distinction between widows and divorcees. It is likely that even the divorcees were required to have been married only once - like the widows (Verner 1983:130). The motif behind the leadership requirements for the church officers and enrolled widows was the status of marriage. This also applied to young widows. This linked up with the Greek notion, namely, that 'husband of one wife' and 'wife of one husband' meant 'once-married'. This prohibition of second marriages for church officers and widows also to the ethical trends in the second century. To remain single in such a case brings honour to the Lord (see Paul in 1 Cor 7:39f).

The leadership of the bishop was regarded as an extension of his leadership in his own household. 1 Timothy 3:4 says that the leader must manage his own household well and 1 Timothy 3:5, 'for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how can he take care of God's church?' The Greek word for 'manage' is 'rule'. The leader had to see that his own

household behaved properly. The Greek word, here, means that the leader had to see that his own children were to be submissive, respectful or kept in subjection. They had to behave in a dignified manner towards the householder. If he could get dignified behaviour from his household, it would have been possible to get the same dignified behaviour from the church (Verner 1983:132).

τοῦ ἰδίου οἴκου καλῶς προϊστάμενον, τέκνα ἔχοντα ἐν ὑποταγῇ, μετὰ πάσης σεμνότητος εἰ δέ τις τοῦ ἰδίου οἴκου προστῆναι οὐκ οἶδεν, πῶς ἐκκλησίας θεοῦ ἐπιμελήσεται;

Deacons had to meet the same requirements. Female deacons or deacons' wives had to act similarly. The deacons were responsible for the conduct of their wives as well as their children (compare 1 Tim 3:4 and 3:12).

Finally, according to Titus 1:6, the elders were required to have believing children. These children were to be Christians through their father's religion. This means that the father had to train his children in the Christian way. Those fathers who failed to discipline their children, were unlikely to be considered for an office in the church.

5.1.2 Women in the Household

The author outlines various duties for women. He cites their duties in Titus 2:3-5.

Likewise, tell the older women to be reverent in behavior, not to be slanderers or slaves to drink; they are to teach what is good, so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be self-controlled, chaste, good managers of the household, kind, being

submissive to their husbands, so that the word of God may not be discredited.

πρεσβύτιδας ὡσαύτως ἐν καταστήματι ἱεροπρεπεῖς, μὴ διαβόλους μηδὲ οὔνῳ πολλῷ δεδουλωμέναι, καλοδιδασκάλους, ἵνα σωφρονίζωσιν τὰς νέας φιλάνδρους εἶναι, φιλοτέκνους σώφρονας ἀγνὰς οἰκουρούς ἀγαθὰς, ὑποτασσομένας τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν, ἵνα μὴ ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ βλασφημηται.

In Titus 2:4 the older women have the responsibility to instruct the younger married women. The Greek virtues of young married women were to 'love their husbands, to love their children, to be self-controlled, chaste, good managers of the household, kind, being submissive to their husbands, so that the word of God may not be discredited'. They had to comply with the order of the day. Verner (1983:135) suggests that self-control was linked to 'modesty', and connotes self-control in sexual matters. Another word which complies with self-control is 'purity' which refers to sexual continence. According to Verner, these two words emphasize uprightness and self-control in the area of sexual morality.

The word οἰκουρούς (verse 5) probably means 'busy with household duties'. Following Baltenswecler, οἰκουρούς can be taken with ἀγαθὰς, which means that the women had to be 'capable in household management'. These were the expected qualities in which the sphere of the household was functioning. The wife of such caliber could accept her subordinate role as the wife of the householder.

Similar to such expectations concerning women, the widows had to act likewise. We find this in 1 Timothy 5:10,13f.

she must be well attested for her good works, as one who has brought up children, shown hospitality, washed the saints' feet, helped the afflicted, and devoted herself to doing good in every way Besides that, they learn to be

idle, gadding about from house to house; and they are not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not say. So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, and manage their households, so as to give the adversary no occasion to revile us.

ἐν ἔργοις καλοῖς μαρτυρουμένη, εἰ ἐτεκνοτρόφησεν, εἰ ἐξενοδόχησεν, εἰ ἀγίων πόδας ἔνιψεν, εἰ θλιβομένοις ἐπήρκεσεν, εἰ παντὶ ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ ἐπηκολούθησεν ἅμα δὲ καὶ ἀργαὶ μανθάνουσιν περιερχόμεναι τὰς οἰκίας, οὐ μόνον δὲ ἀργαὶ ἀλλὰ καὶ φλύαροι καὶ περίεργοι, λαλοῦσαι τὰ μὴ δέοντα. βούλομαι οὖν νεωτέρας γαμεῖν, τεκνογονεῖν, οἰκοδεσποτεῖν, μηδεμίαν ἀφορμὴν διδόναι τῷ ἀντικειμένῳ λοιδορίας χάριν.

Similar to the requirements for men and women who desire to fill a position within the church, the widows who desire to play a role in the church, had to be someone who 'brought up children, shown hospitality' (εἰ ἐτεκνοτρόφησεν, εἰ ἐξενοδόχησεν) and younger widows, to 'marry, bear children, and manage their households' (γαμεῖν, τεκνογονεῖν, οἰκοδεσποτεῖν). This was contrasted with 'to be idle, gadding about from house to house; and they are not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not say' (καὶ ἀργαὶ μανθάνουσιν περιερχόμεναι τὰς οἰκίας, οὐ μόνον δὲ ἀργαὶ ἀλλὰ καὶ φλύαροι καὶ περίεργοι, λαλοῦσαι τὰ μὴ δέοντα). Here too, the widow's conduct was the measure for service in the church but also the status they had. Their upright behavior was to be demonstrated in actual behaviour and this would give them status in the church. Failure to produce the expected behaviour, would jeopardise their status.

The relationship to children which is mentioned time and again, means that women had to bring up and teach their children appropriately. In 2 Timothy 1:5, the author refers to Timothy's faith, which was the same as that of his grandmother Lo'is and mother Eunice. The mother's role was to act as

a caring mother and trainer of her children - especially in the Christian faith (Kelly 1963). Whereas fathers were mainly entrusted with the education of their children in the traditional Jewish society, mothers were accorded this function in Greek and Roman societies (Verner 1983:137).

5.1.3 Children

In the Pastorals, children are the objects of discipline, teaching and nurturing - especially by women. They had to behave in such a manner, that fathers and mothers were honoured. Their conduct was the measure of how they were educated and also whether the father and mother could fill a position in the church.

When a child's mother was widowed, he had to take responsibility for her. We find this explicitly stated in 1 Timothy 5:4,8.

If a widow has children or grandchildren, they should first learn their religious duty to their own family and make some repayment to their parents; for this is pleasing in God's sight.

And whoever does not provide for relatives, and especially for family members, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

εἰ δέ τις χήρα τέκνα ἢ ἔκγονα ἔχει, μανθανέτωσαν πρῶτον τὸν ἴδιον οἶκον εὐσεβεῖν καὶ ἀμοιβὰς ἀποδιδόναι τοῖς προγόνοις· τοῦτο γάρ ἐστιν ἀπόδεκτον ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ.

εἰ δέ τις τῶν ἰδίων καὶ μάλιστα οἰκείων οὐ προνοεῖ, τὴν πίστιν ἥρνηται καὶ ἔστιν ἀπίστου χείρων.

Typical of Mediterranean culture, the author prescribes that children must

take responsibility for the widowed mother. This responsibility was to be taken by both children and grandchildren. The texts do not give clarity on whether such widows lived with their children or grandchildren in the same house. Even so, the fact that children had to first learn how to conduct themselves in their own households, means that they lived with the mother and maybe at a later stage had to take the mother into their own households.

Their care for the widowed mother is described as a 'religious duty' or 'the showing of piety in their own household first' (*πρῶτον τὸν ἴδιον οἶκον εὐσεβεῖν*), means that this was of the utmost importance. Stated negatively in verse 8, it means that if this is not done, then such a person has 'denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever' (*τὴν πίστιν ἡρνήται καὶ ἔστιν ἀπίστου χείρων*).

There are three streams of care here. There are those widows who are cared for by their children, those widows who are cared for by the church and those who are cared for by fellow believing women. The author stresses the notion that widows who still have children, should be cared for by them. This becomes a religious duty. Those who do not have children, should be cared for by the church. In addition, the author speaks of women who most probably are from a higher social and economic stratum. If there are such women and they can take care of widows, they had to do so.

If any believing woman - other ancient authorities read believing man or woman; others, believing man - has relatives who are really widows, let her assist them; let the church not be burdened, so that it can assist those who are real widows.

εἴ τις πιστὴ ἔχει χήρας, ἐπαρκείτω αὐταῖς καὶ μὴ βαρεῖσθω ἡ ἐκκλησία, ἵνα ταῖς ὄντως χήραις ἐπαρκέσῃ.

In this incident the author refers to the *πιστὴ* who 'has widows' (*ἔχει χήρας*). In Acts 9:36ff Tabitha, a woman who was actively engaged in works of charity, died. The 'pistai' of the church in the Pastorals are women like Tabitha, who have taken poor widows under their protection. The author urges them to take full responsibility for the support of widows in their care so that the church will not be burdened. The author regards them as powerful women who take actions that can affect the financial health of the church.

It is evident from this overview, that what was required of widows, links up with what was required of anyone who desired leading positions in the church - e.g. bishops, deacons, elders - but also what was required of women more generally speaking. Their status in the church depended on how conducted themselves concerning their husbands and how they have raised their children. They were all expected to have been married only once. Furthermore, they had to conduct themselves in an exemplary manner towards their own children in terms of Christian faith and conduct. Widows who lived like this and met the general criteria which were set for all Christians, could count on church support.

5.2 The Household of God

After having looked at the household structures in the Roman, Greek and Jewish worlds, together with how the believing households had to fit in this context, the question now arises as to the actual structure of 'the household of God'. Here, it is important to look at the structure of the household churches as represented in the Pastorals and how it relates to the household. As clear already, one has to account for the leadership offices such as those of bishop,

deacon and elder. Each of these office-holders were to be blameless concerning background, character, and relationships with husbands, wives and children. This, also impacted on the social strata in the Early Church.

5.2.1 Offices and Official Structure

Previously, researchers have pointed to the problem that the bishop's office probably had the quality of a monarchical episcopate. The episcopos is referred to in the singular in 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:7. Deacons (1 Tm 3:8ff) and elders (1 Tm 5:15ff; Tt 1:6) are referred to in the plural. The Pastorals were addressed to single individuals, Timothy and Titus. They were church leaders. They are probably prototypes of the monarchical bishop. On the other hand, episcopos appears to be used interchangeably with presbuteros in Titus 1:5ff. Titus is instructed to appoint presbuteroi from among the men who meet a list of specified qualifications.

In 1 Timothy 1:3 the author urged Timothy to 'remain in Ephesus so that you may instruct certain people not to teach any different doctrine'. According to Titus 1:5, Titus was left in Crete so that he 'should put in order what remained to be done, and should appoint elders in every town, as I directed you'. They were not stationed in their positions indefinitely, but were rather to execute assigned tasks (2 Tm 4:9; Tt 3:12). In addition, they were to order the church comprehensively according to a definite model.

The Pastorals assume the existence of a council of elders (presbuterion) in the congregation (1 Tm 4:14), but it is unclear what their leadership role was. What we can glean from the information, is that elders were expected to meet the required standards set for bishops; that bishops formed a smaller group within the group of elders; that the author envisions congregations with a single bishop presiding over a council of elders; and that it is possible that 'elders' and 'bishop' were designated to the same office and that

congregations were governed by elder councils. Some of the elders knew how to accomplish their task effectively. This is shown in 1 Timothy 5:17.

Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor (or compensation), especially those who labor in preaching and teaching;

Οἱ καλῶς προεστῶτες πρεσβύτεροι διπλῆς τιμῆς ἀξιούσθωσαν, μάλιστα οἱ κοπιῶντες ἐν λόγῳ καὶ διδασκαλίᾳ.

Here, 'the elders who govern well' (Οἱ καλῶς προεστῶτες πρεσβύτεροι) as well as those among this group who labor in preaching and teaching (οἱ κοπιῶντες ἐν λόγῳ καὶ διδασκαλίᾳ) seems to refer to the existence of groups with particular duties within the larger group (see Verner 1983:149). It also seems as if one can distinguish between 1) elders who govern well; 2) elders who govern poorly; 3) elders who govern well and who also have duties of preaching and teaching; and 4) elders who do not govern. Among these elders there was a smaller group with particular leadership responsibilities that included in some cases preaching and teaching. These 'governing elders' would perhaps be equivalent to the bishop.

The evidence is that the deacon's office was subordinate to that of the bishop. However, in the Pastorals there is no indication of the deacon's relationship to the bishop or elders. There is no explicit reference to the duties of deacons apart from the elders. There is therefore no clear picture of official ecclesiastical structure in the Pastorals. They do, however, provide some information concerning the quality and nature of the people who had to function as church leaders (see Verner 1983:151).

The general qualifications in the Pastorals apply more to the office of bishop. In 1 Timothy 3:2 there is only one qualification for the bishop - he should be διδασκτικός - apt at teaching. The importance of teaching in the

church leadership is emphasized repeatedly in the Pastorals (see 1 Tm 3:4ff). The teaching of the bishop in the church was supposed to complement his household teaching. Being a man who governs (προϊστάναι) his own household well, he was charged with governing (ἐπιμελῆσθαι) the church. The office of bishop was the supreme office in the church and an office held by a single individual. In this, the bishop had to be οἰκονόμος - steward - of God. Although there is an argument about the monarchical position of the bishop (see above) the fact that the bishop had to be a 'steward' points more to his function of serving than ruling.

1 Timothy 3:6 suggests that the bishop should not be a 'new convert'. A new convert in position of bishop might become 'puffed up' and 'fall into' the judgment of the Devil. It implies that qualities of leadership and Spiritual maturity was acquired for the position of a bishop. Since false teaching was common in the time of the Pastorals, this was an important requirement (see 1 Tm 6:4; 2 Tm 3:4). Therefore, one had to prevent the new convert from disgracing the office of bishop.

In 1 Timothy 3:7 the bishop was not only expected to comply with his household and church position. But his conduct had to reflect good reputation - even to outsiders. For this reason, his behavior in the household as well as his office had to complement one another. The dignity but also the shaming of the church depended on both these areas of life. The virtuous behaviour of the bishop also correlated with the behaviour required of the other offices - also of widows. Those who failed to produce good behaviour according to the expectations of the church were shaming the church with shameful acts.

In Titus 1:5-9, similarities and a few differences of leadership in the Pastorals are reflected. In Titus 1:5, Titus was commissioned to appoint (καθιστάναι) elders. These elders were appointed 'in each city' (see Verner 1983:154). The government of officers was for the benefit of the local congregation in the city. This was a common procedure in the times of the

Pastorals. In the larger cities, Christians would have to assemble for worship and instruction in several smaller groups.

Deacons were part of the leadership and were also required to govern their household well (1 Tm 3:2). They occupied both positions in the household as well as in the church.

It is evident that - as far as the evidence goes - there was no very strict hierarchy in the Early Church with particular duties rigidly attached to each office. The hierarchy was loose to a certain degree - with bishops at the top, forming part of the elders or council of elders; deacons lower than this group and then the ordinary lay believers. More important than a supposed hierarchy, however, was that requirements for bishops, deacons, women but also widows, were roughly the same. Concerning teaching - all had teaching responsibilities concerning different audiences. Bishops had the most important task. But women too, had to teach their children and older widows had to teach younger widows, young women and the newly-wed.

Concerning women, the Pastorals depict them in a variety of domestic situations. Some are the wives of the prosperous householders. Still others are widows. Some widows probably live with their children or grandchildren, while others perhaps find shelter in the house of a 'piste'. Those widows who were not cared for and who could not care for themselves, were seen as putting a burden on the church. The author is suspicious of younger widows who do not remarry, yet at the same time has a high regard for men, women but also widows who have or had only one marriage partner (Verner 1983:139).

5.3 The Care of Widows in the Church (1 Timothy 5:1-16)

1 Timothy 5:1-16 can be divided into two sections. The first section deals with general commands concerning widows - modelled after the household (1 Tm 5:1-8) and the second, with prescriptions for widows wishing to serve in

a church office. In symbolic interactionist terms, the sections can be broken down as follows:

5.3.1 The Household as Model and First Responsibility for Interaction in the Church (1 Tm 5:1-8)

5.3.1.1 Interaction through Speech (1 Tm 5:1f)

5.3.1.2 Honouring Action towards Widows by Children and Grandchildren (1 Tm 5:3f,8)

- a Honour as Respect for Someone's Status in Society
- b Honouring as Caring for Someone Financially
- c Honouring Someone as Reciprocal Action
- d Honour related to Self and Alter switches in the Context of liberation/deliverance
- e The Guiding Ideal
- f Honour in Comparison with Others in Society
- g Responsibility for Widows

5.3.1.3 The Widow, God and Pleasure (1 Tm 5:5f)

- a The Nature of the Text: Commands
- b Hoping on God: Prayer and Supplications
- c Living for Pleasure Means that One is Dead Spiritually
- d On being above Reproach

5.3.2 Prescriptions for Widows Wishing to Serve in a Church Office (1 Tm 5:9-16)

5.3.2.1 Listing Widows for Service (1 Tm 5:9f)

5.3.2.2 Rulings on Younger Widows (1 Tm 5:11-15)

5.3.2.3 Fellow Responsibility: Caring for Widows and the Church (1 Tm 5:16)

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5.3.2.3 Fellow Responsibility: Caring for Widows and the Church (1 Tm 5:16)

The text reads as follows:

Do not speak harshly to an older man (or an elder, or a presbyter), but speak to him as to a father, to younger men as brothers, to older women as mothers, to younger women as sisters--with absolute purity. Honor widows who are really widows. If a widow has children or grandchildren, they should first learn their religious duty to their own family and make some repayment to their parents; for this is pleasing in God's sight. The real widow, left alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day; but the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives. Give these commands as well, so that they may be above reproach. And whoever does not provide for relatives, and especially for family members, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

Let a widow be put on the list if she is not less than sixty years old and has been married only once (or the wife of one husband); she must be well attested for her good works, as one who has brought up children, shown hospitality, washed the saints' feet, helped the afflicted, and devoted herself to doing good in every way. But refuse to put younger widows on the list; for when their sensual desires alienate them from Christ, they want to marry, and so they incur condemnation for having violated their first pledge. Besides that, they learn to be idle, gadding about from house to house; and they are not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not say. So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, and manage their households, so as to give the adversary no occasion to revile us. For some have already turned away to follow Satan. If any believing woman (or believing man or woman or believing man) has relatives who are really widows, let her assist them; let the church not be burdened, so that it can assist those who are really widows.

Πρεσβυτέρω μὴ ἐπιπλήξης ἀλλὰ παρακάλει ὡς πατέρα, νεωτέρους ὡς ἀδελφούς, πρεσβυτέρας ὡς μητέρας, νεωτέρας ὡς ἀδελφὰς ἐν πάσῃ ἀγνείᾳ. Χήρας τίμα τὰς ὄντως χήρας. εἰ δέ τις χήρα τέκνα ἢ ἔκγονα ἔχει, μανθανέτωσαν πρῶτον τὸν ἴδιον οἶκον εὐσεβεῖν καὶ ἀμοιβὰς ἀποδιδόναι τοῖς προγόνοις· τοῦτο γάρ ἐστιν ἀπόδεκτον ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ. ἡ δὲ ὄντως χήρα καὶ μεμονωμένη ἤλπικεν ἐπὶ θεὸν καὶ προσμένει ταῖς δεήσεσιν καὶ ταῖς προσευχαῖς νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας, ἡ δὲ σπαταλῶσα ζῶσα τέθνηκεν. καὶ ταῦτα παράγγελλε, ἵνα ἀνεπίλημπτοι ᾖσιν. εἰ δέ τις τῶν ἰδίων καὶ μάλιστα οἰκείων οὐ προνοεῖ, τὴν πίστιν ἥρνηται καὶ ἔστιν ἀπίστου χείρων.

Χήρα καταλεγέσθω μὴ ἔλαττον ἐτῶν ἐξήκοντα γεγονυῖα, ἐνὸς ἀνδρὸς γυνή, ἐν ἔργοις καλοῖς μαρτυρουμένη, εἰ ἐτεκνοτρόφησεν, εἰ ἐξενοδόχησεν, εἰ ἀγίων πόδας ἔνιψεν, εἰ θλιβομένοις ἐπήρκεσεν, εἰ παντὶ ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ ἐπηκολούθησεν. νεωτέρας δὲ χήρας παραιτοῦ· ὅταν γὰρ καταστρηνιάσωσιν τοῦ Χριστοῦ, γαμεῖν θέλουσιν ἔχουσαι κρίμα ὅτι τὴν πρώτην πίστιν ἠθέτησαν· ἅμα δὲ καὶ ἀργαὶ μανθάνουσιν περιερχόμεναι τὰς οἰκίας, οὐ μόνον δὲ ἀργαὶ ἀλλὰ καὶ φλύαροι καὶ περίεργοι, λαλοῦσαι τὰ μὴ δέοντα. βούλομαι οὖν νεωτέρας γαμεῖν, τεκνογονεῖν, οἰκοδεσποτεῖν, μηδεμίαν ἀφορμὴν διδόναι τῷ ἀντικειμένῳ λοιδορίας χάριν· ἥδη γάρ τινες ἐξετράπησαν ὀπίσω τοῦ Σατανᾶ. εἴ τις πιστὴ ἔχει χήρας, ἐπαρκείτω αὐταῖς καὶ μὴ βαρεῖσθω ἡ ἐκκλησία, ἵνα ταῖς ὄντως χήραις ἐπαρκέσῃ.

This text will now be analysed in symbolic interactionist terms as set out in chapters 2 and developed in chapter 4. The most important elements are: 1) the nature of the action and interaction (in terms of the meanings objects or categories of people have); 2) the meanings ascribed to things mentioned in the interaction; 3) the process of interaction as the source of meaning; and 4) the process of interpretation in the interaction. Since this text is a text where household and church are modelled onto one another in terms of rules and not narrative, the way to deal with it is to analyse the importance of this model

and the possible ways in which it would have influenced its audience.

5.3.1 The Household as Model and First Responsibility for Interaction in the Church (1 Tm 5:1-8)

In order to understand the model in terms of which people are to interact, we have to first point to the fact that 1 Timothy 5:1-8 focuses on the general context of 1) the household as model for interaction in the Church; and 2) the household as first responsibility for interaction in the Church. It is in terms of the meanings in this double-sided model that people are to interact.

Firstly, in order to speak to an older man (or an elder, or a presbyter) 'as to a father, to younger men as brothers, to older women as mothers, to younger women as sisters' means that the 'older man'; 'younger men'; 'older women'; 'younger women' are categories of people in the church. Interaction towards people in these categories are modelled after the regular interaction in the household. This is evident because the interaction towards them are compared to interaction in the household. This is evident in the 'as' used in all four cases: 'as to a father, ... as brothers, ... as mothers, ... as sisters'. This comparison means that as far as the status for action and interaction is concerned, the status of categories of people in regular society must be honoured in the church.

Secondly, throughout the first section, 1 Timothy 5:1-8, rules are provided which say that, where possible, the household is the first responsibility for believers. The assumption is that, when people became Christians, the church would be their household which transcends all other social formations. However, this could lead to a situation where 1) people would not take responsibility for their own kin any more - and neglect them; or 2) where the widows become an increasing burden on the resources of the church.

This double-sided model, the focus on both the household and the church modelled after the household, then, is the context in which we have to understand 1 Timothy 5:1-8.

5.3.1.1 Interaction through Speech (1 Tm 5:1f)

Do not speak harshly to an older man (or an elder, or a presbyter), but speak to him as to a father, to younger men as brothers, to older women as mothers, to younger women as sisters--with absolute purity.

Πρεσβυτέρῳ μὴ ἐπιπλήξῃς ἀλλὰ παρακάλει ὡς πατέρα, νεωτέρους ὡς ἀδελφούς, πρεσβυτέρας ὡς μητέρας, νεωτέρας ὡς ἀδελφὰς ἐν πάσῃ ἀγνείᾳ.

It is already pointed out that for this whole section, interaction in the church is modelled after the categories and statuses people have in the regular household. Important in the text are three things: 1) the focus on speech - 'do not speak harshly'; 2) the fact that the older man (or an elder, or a presbyter) is referred to in the singular and all the other categories in the plural; 3) that interaction must take place 'in absolute purity'.

Firstly, the focus on speech as interaction shows that speech in the church can be such that it does not recognise the status of people in society. The categories of people in wider society have to be respected - especially as they are church members. This does not mean that the categories outside the church take precedence over that of members in the church. This ruling for interaction is rather to be understood in the context - as stated towards the end - 'in purity'. Pure interaction in speech is here qualified to mean that one should not interact with another by speaking 'harshly' to that person. Even though different words are used in the Greek of the LXX and in the New

Testament, the notion that one would treat someone 'harshly' takes place in the context of oppression. In Deuteronomy 26:6, it says, When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labor on us, ...; in 1 Kings 12:13:, the king answered the people harshly. He disregarded the advice that the older men had given him ...; in 2 Chronicles 10:13: the king answered them harshly. King Rehobeam rejected the advice of the older men; in Colossians 3:19: Husbands, love your wives and never treat them harshly.

In general terms, this means that to speak harshly to another would have meanings of actively afflicting someone; to disregard advice for leniency; or to be harsh on someone close to oneself. All three these meanings are significant in the wider context of 1 Timothy 5:1ff. To actively afflict someone would link up with harsh or degrading speech towards another; to disregard advice could be linked to not adhering to the rules and regulations laid down in the whole text - e.g. concerning learning to care for one's own family (1 Tm 5:4) (and not to neglect it or leave it to others or the church to do so); to be harsh to someone close to oneself could link up with the fact that one could neglect caring for such a person - especially if that person does not have the same status as oneself, as when a husband would treat a woman harshly.

Secondly, the fact that the older man (or an elder, or a presbyter) is referred to in the singular and all the other categories in the plural, points to the fact that either in the household or in the church, the father or the presbyter had absolute authority. This - according to the socio-anthropological codes of the time - 'folk norms of consistency' - meant that this had to be respected. The oldest male in the household or the presbyter in the church are significant others and referred to in the singular.

Thirdly, As pointed out earlier, purity in this context means - as in James 1:27 - that one's religion must be 'pure' in terms of care for widows, orphans, and aliens: Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the

Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world. Purity, here, links up with the fact that the care for one's own family is described in 1 Timothy 5:4 is described as one's 'religious duty to [one's] own family'. The most important element here is that 'religion that is pure and undefiled before God' or one's 'religious duty' is described in terms of the nature of the interaction with another and not in terms of purity laws as among the Jewish people of the time. Similar sentiments come to the fore in a few other texts from 1 Timothy 4:12; 5:22.

1 Timothy 4:12 Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

μηδεὶς σου τῆς νεότητος καταφρονεῖτω, ἀλλὰ τύπος γίνου τῶν πιστῶν ἐν λόγῳ, ἐν ἀναστροφῇ, ἐν ἀγάπῃ, ἐν πίστει, ἐν ἀγνείᾳ.

1 Timothy 5:22 Do not ordain anyone hastily, and do not participate in the sins of others; keep yourself pure.

Χεῖρας ταχέως μηδενὶ ἐπιτίθει μηδὲ κοινώνει ἁμαρτίαις ἁλλοτρίαις· σεαυτὸν ἀγνὸν τήρει.

Even though the meanings ascribed to the people in the text are to be the same as that in broader society, the interaction with these people is placed in the context of 'pure religion'. This context of the meaning is the dominant and not that in society. The guiding ideal is therefore not to speak or act 'harshly' but in purity.

The beginning of the process - which is the assumption in this text - is that some could be acting harshly towards others and that their religion would not be pure. The end would be the opposite. Interpretively, there is then a change foreseen in this text. This change must relate to the ordinary social world of the time - as one would interact in one's own household. Theologically, however, there is also a different world to which the text relates: that of the world of slavery and liberation.

In Old Testament context, to act harshly has meanings similar to 'oppression', linking up with notions of slavery in Egypt and Rehabeam's oppression of his own people. This puts this text in liberation or salvation context. To act and interact in purity in this context, then, means that 'pure' action in the household but also in the church, has liberatory effects. Similar to the Old Testament repetition of Israel to 'remember' that they were once slaves and must not act harshly towards others, the persons to whom the text is addressed, must be able to switch places - self and alter. If this action is repeated and also shared in by church members as joint, action, their religion will be pure. Action and interaction is then here redefined and redescribed in terms of liberatory action.

5.3.1.2 Honouring Action towards Widows by Children and Grandchildren (1 Tm 5:3f,8)

Honor widows who are really widows. If a widow has children or grandchildren, they should first learn their religious duty to their own family and make some repayment to their parents; for this is pleasing in God's sight And whoever does not provide for relatives, and especially for family members, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

Χήρας τίμα τὰς ὄντως χήρας. εἰ δέ τις χήρα τέκνα ἢ ἔκγονα ἔχει, μανθανέτωσαν πρῶτον τὸν ἴδιον οἶκον εὐσεβεῖν καὶ ἀμοιβὰς ἀποδιδόναι τοῖς προγόνοις· τοῦτο γάρ ἐστιν ἀπόδεκτον ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ εἰ δέ τις τῶν ἰδίων καὶ μάλιστα οἰκείων οὐ προνοεῖ, τὴν πίστιν ἥρνηται καὶ ἔστιν ἀπίστου χείρων.

After the categories of older man (or presbyter), younger men, older women and to younger women are referred to in general context of society and the liberatory context, widows are singled out as a special category of people. The imperative to honour widows calls for explanation. In the wider context of both the Old Testament and the New Testament, there are at least five contexts in which honour here has significance: 1) honour as respect for someone's status in society (Ex 20:12;); 2) honouring as caring for someone financially; 3) honouring someone as reciprocal action; 4) Honour in comparison with others in society;

a Honour as Respect for Someone's Status in Society

The honour which must be shown to someone due to his or her status in society finds its most important expression in Exodus 20:12 and Deuteronomy 5:16 where the honouring of father and mother commandment is given. In the latter text, the promise is that someone honouring mother and father will experience longevity and prosperity. The honouring of someone because of his social status is also present in Esther 1:20; 6:3,6f,9,11; 10:2; and 1 Timothy 5:17f.

Since widows - who, as we have seen so far in this dissertation - were from the lowliest ranked in society, the honouring of widows contrasts with such a notion generally speaking. Here, the status of widows is redescribed or redefined. In the context of the fact that all people are equal before God and that all humanity has been created in the image of God, this would be the

more appropriate context in terms of which this statement concerning the honouring of widows must be interpreted. See for example Ps 8:5 which says: Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor. In the New Testament, similar assumptions are made: Husbands, in the same way, show consideration for your wives in your life together, paying honor to the woman as the weaker sex (or vessel), since they too are also heirs of the gracious gift of life--so that nothing may hinder your prayers.

The assumption here is that all widows are human just as anybody else and social rank should not prevent one from showing them respect and caring for them. The redescription of the widow as object means that the nature of the interaction is not determined by social rank but before God, on the fact that all are equal. In this sense, the widow is not a special category anymore but part of the category of all people created by God. This category transcends the categories and institutions of society.

b Honouring as Caring for Someone Financially

There are numerous references in Biblical Literature as to how riches, possessions and honour are related: see for example 1 Kings 3:13; 1 Chronicles 29:12,28; 2 Chronicles 1:11f; 17:5; 18:1; 32:27; Proverbs 3:16; 8:18; 22:4; Ecclesiastes 6:2; and Daniel 2:16; 11:38. More explicitly we can briefly look at a few other texts more closely: 1 Samuel 2:29-30; Ps 112:9; Proverbs 3:9; Matthew 15:5 and 1 Timothy 5:17f.

1 Samuel 2:29f: Why then look with greedy eye at my sacrifices and my offerings that I commanded, and honor your sons more than me by fattening yourselves on the choicest parts of every offering of my people Israel?' Therefore the LORD the God of Israel declares: 'I promised that your family and the family of your ancestor should go in and out before me forever'; but

now the LORD declares: 'Far be it from me; for those who honor me I will honor, and those who despise me shall be treated with contempt.

Ps 112:9:

They have distributed freely, they have given to the poor;
their righteousness endures forever;
their horn is exalted in honor.

Proverbs 3:9:

Honor the LORD with your substance
and with the first fruits of all your produce;

Matthew 15:5:

But you say that whoever tells father or mother, 'Whatever support you might have had from me is given to God,' then that person need not honor the father (or mother).

1 Timothy 5:17f:

Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor (or compensation), especially those who labor in preaching and teaching; for the scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves to be paid."

In the Samuel text, 'honour' is related to 'fattening yourselves on the choicest parts of every offering of my people Israel' which means that honour can mean enrichment or self-enrichment in this context. The text from the Psalms, 'to give to the poor' is related to both 'righteousness' and honour. In the Proverbs text, the honouring of God is related to the giving of produce. The Matthew text, again, shows that honouring of father and mother is

related to the (financial or substance) support one gives to father and mother. Closer to the context of 1 Timothy 5:3f, is 1 Timothy 5:17f where it is explicitly stated that honour is related to financial support or compensation - 'The laborer deserves to be paid'; the muzzling of the working ox throughout Scripture has a similar interpretation.

The honouring of widows, therefore does not mean only that one must respect the widow but it includes financial support or 'material provision' as well (Stott 1997:129f). Guthrie (1976:100) concretizes the personal respect and emotional support by saying that without financial provision, it is impossible to meet the needs of widows holistically.

c Honouring Someone as Reciprocal Action

The reason for the respect but especially financial or substance support of widows is explicitly related to the fact that either 'children or grandchildren' has to learn that it is their religious duty 'to their own family and make some repayment to their parents'. Reciprocal action within the family is central. It is something that children must 'learn' - because the assumption is that they would not be naturally inclined towards such care. The adverb *πρῶτον* (first) refers to first in time or priority (Macarthur 1995:198; Moellering 1970:101). In the Pastoral context members of the family should exercise their godliness first in their own families. The financial provision in the family context is designated as the task that should be dealt with by either children or grandchildren of the widows.

These children or grandchildren had to compensate for the fact that they were brought up by their parents. Therefore, Stott and Macarthur agree that they should be 'repaying their parents and grandparents who cared for them when they were young' (Stott 1997:130; Macarthur 1995:198).

Another example of such reciprocal action is found in Genesis 30:20. Then Leah said, "God has endowed me with a good dowry; now my husband

will honor (In Hebrew, it is *zabal*) me, because I have borne him six sons"; so she named him Zebulun.

In 1 Timothy 5:4, reciprocal action is generally towards 'parents'. However, it is in this particular text related to 'widows', because it appears as if there could arise situations where children would care for parents but even less for widowed mothers. Reciprocal action - concerning respect but especially concerning financial assistance - here, calls for self and alter switches. The children or grandchildren have to put themselves in the position of the parents or widow and act in a caring manner towards her.

Just as important is that it is here presented as an institution in society that children and grandchildren should learn how to take care for their parents - in Christian context. The nature of the response of children and grandchildren towards their parents but also to widowed relatives is that of reciprocal actions of care - through respect and financial care. It means that just as parents cared for children and/or grandchildren, children must care for their parents.

As part of a process of action and interaction, the initial assumption is that there may be children and grandchildren who are not caring for their parents - through respect or financially - and that they are not practicing self and alter switches in terms of reciprocal caring.

d Honour related to Self and Alter switches in the Context of liberation/deliverance

The self and alter switches in the context of honouring or restoring honour to someone, also relate to similar requirements in the Old Testament and New Testament. As already stated, self and alter switches relate to the context of oppression or suffering and liberation or deliverance. References to the returning of honour to those who were oppressed are found in Esther 8:16; Psalms 71:21; 84:11; 91:15; honour is related to salvation/liberation or

deliverance in Psalms 50:23; 62:7. The self and alter switches are also present in texts where honour is related to: 1) humility as in Proverbs 15:33; 18:29; 22:4; 29:23; 2) the fact that one does not seek one's own interests Isaiah 58:13; Romans 2:7,10,29; 12:10; that one honours those who honour God - even when it brings hardship - and pursues righteousness and kindness in Psalms 15:4; Proverbs 21:21.

In the context of the process of action and interaction in this text, there may be situations in which believers do not care for their parents or widowed parents. In this situation, they are oppressed and suffer. This is the beginning of the process. If, however, they change their actions towards their parents and widows, the plight of such people is changed. If this happens, the children and grandchildren are not silently standing by while their parents suffer and are exploited in the context of neglect. They are then in the position of actively caring people. The tentative element here, is whether the children and grandchildren are or have been educated to care for their parents and widows and whether they will actually and actively practice such caring.

Moffat's (1987:57) view that 'honour' is used deliberately to refer to both the reverence and actual assistance which is due to all who are 'afflicted' links up with this analysis.

From these general statements, people have to actually practice the rules laid down in this text in actual situations in daily life. This will mean that they will in actual terms, practice delivering and liberatory actions towards their parents and widows.

e The Guiding Ideal

The guiding ideal in this text is that all should honour - in terms of respect and through financial assistance - their parents and widows in their own house. This is to be learnt by the children while still in the house. In addition, the actual practicing of such care is related to the notions of 'religious duty'

and the fact that it would be 'pleasing in God's sight'. In the context of the relating of honouring someone financially and the pleasing of God, an opposite statement can be found in Proverbs 14:31 which says: Those who oppress the poor insult their Maker, but those who are kind to the needy honor him.

Centrally important is that the pleasing of God in this context is related not to ritual or purity observance but to actual actions of care and compassion - both in terms of respecting of people and the caring for them financially. If this does not happen, one is not only oppressing the poor and destitute but 'insult their Maker' - also linking up with the notion that all people are equal before God (see above).

f Honour in Comparison with Others in Society

As in numerous other contexts in the Bible - too numerous to mention here - degrading action by believers is compared with unbelievers and stated that often, unbelievers act in a better way in similar contexts. That is why 1 Timothy 5:8 is related to the actions of the children and grandchildren towards parents and widows. It reads: And whoever does not provide for relatives, and especially for family members, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

If one does not care - 'provide' - for such people, one denies the faith and 'is worse than an unbeliever'. Firstly, to deny the faith stands in opposition to fulfill one's religious duty as stated in verse 4. Secondly, such a person is worse than an unbeliever, because it is assumed that the conduct of unbelievers in such matters would be better than that of believers.

Firstly, Macarthur (1995) suggests that the repetition of the principle of one's religious duty in the negative - to deny the faith - implies that there were many violations of it in the church at Ephesus. He translates 'provide' (*προνοεῖ*) to mean 'to plan before'. It describes the forethought necessary to

provide care for the widows in one's family. Such forethought also relates to the forethought necessary to teach children to care for their parents. Believers are commanded to fulfill this responsibility faithfully.

Secondly, people who do not care for widows, make themselves guilty of not caring compassionately for others - something which is at the heart of the Christian faith. On the other side, such people are worse than an unbeliever in supporting one's family. Such believers are under judgement from God because they do not meet the requirements of the commandments (Macarthur 1995:202).

Such statements usually also occur in the context of God's blessing, namely that obedience will meet with honour among the nations, e.g. Deuteronomy 26:19: for him to set you high above all nations that he has made, in praise and in fame and in honor; and for you to be a people holy to the LORD your God, as he promised.

One's conduct must therefore bring about the fact that the nations or unbelievers will honour the believing community. This also related with the beautiful statement by Jesus in Matthew 5:16, which says that people will 'see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven'.

g Responsibility for Widows

In a situation where the church did not have resources to care for widows, the onus is on the children and grandchildren to care for widows. It is possible that the house church(es) to whom 1 Timothy was addressed also did not care financially for widows because they became believers and part of a new social grouping - the church - and that they neglected their general duties towards their regular family members. This was not to be.

In addition, the statement in verse 4 that only real widows must be honoured and cared for may mean that even though a woman could have lost here husband, she could have had sufficient means to care for herself and

household. Such widows would not be real widows in the traditional Biblical category of widows who - together with orphan and alien - do not have sufficient means for existence.

Since the Greek word 'honour' can also mean 'pay', it could also mean that what the author is trying to do here, is to make the church self-sufficient in terms of caring for one another. The use of the notion of 'honour' could mean that the widows are not to receive a 'pension' as in Greek and especially Roman societies. This would make them dependent on the state and would allow believers not to take responsibility for one another. According to Stott (1997:130) 'such a widow did not need the church support, since her own family had both a moral and a legal obligation to look after her'. This provides an additional context in terms of which one can interpret the statement that only real widows were to be cared for. Widows who could still rely on their families, did not have to depend primarily on church support. The sense of supporting the real widows is significant and it is repeatedly expressed also in verse 5 and 16. The real needy widow is destitute - she does not have any family or relatives but is alone according to verse 5 - being unable to support herself and having no relatives to support her - in the context of the traditional Biblical context of the destitute.

The facts mentioned here focus on the development of a proper church charity. This was meant for widows who were destitute in real terms, i.e. because 'widows without relatives are particularly helpless and are in need of support from the congregation' (Moellering 1970:101). Macarthur (1995:196) confirms that 'financial support is to go to those completely alone and without necessary resources for daily life' (Macarthur 1995:196). A widow who has close relations still alive should be looked after by them rather than by the congregation. The author's view may underline his exasperation at the selfishness of some families in the Ephesus church. It could also mean that families which allow their widows to take charity from

the church are more to blame than widows themselves. Whoever does not provide for his own relations - note the fact that because own (*ιδίων*) is mentioned, it is emphasised - has repudiated the faith. This means that charity begins at home (Moffat 1987:59).

5.3.1.3 The Widow, God and Pleasure (1 Tm 5:5)

After the text have addressed the general contexts of interaction in the church on the basis of the household model and then turned to how families must care for widows, it turns to the widows themselves from verse 5 to 7. In this context, there are four points which must be raised: 1) the fact that the nature of the text is that of 'commands'; 2) that the true widow - someone who is alone and without any family or relative must dedicate herself to God; 3) that such actions by this widow is contrasted with that of the widow who lives for pleasure; and 4) that she must be above reproach.

The real widow, left alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day; but the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives. Give these commands as well, so that they may be above reproach.

ἡ δὲ ὄντως χήρα καὶ μεμονωμένη ἤλπικεν ἐπὶ θεὸν καὶ προσμένει ταῖς δεήσεσιν καὶ ταῖς προσευχαῖς νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας, ἡ δὲ ὄντως χήρα καὶ μεμονωμένη ἤλπικεν ἐπὶ θεὸν καὶ προσμένει ταῖς δεήσεσιν καὶ ταῖς προσευχαῖς νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας, ἡ δὲ σπαταλῶσα ζῶσα τέθνηκεν. καὶ ταῦτα παράγγελλε, ἵνα ἀνεπίλημπτοι ᾦσιν.

a The Nature of the Text: Commands

As is evident in the Old Testament, the notion of the command is usually used where a person with higher status, lays down rules or commands for his more

junior subjects. Such people could be the Jacob (Gn 27:8), Joseph concerning the people (Gn 41:40), Moses (Ex 27:20), Aaron (Lv 6:9), a priest (Lv 13:54), Jesus concerning Peter (Mt 14:28); The Father concerning John (Jn 10:28); Jesus concerning the disciples (Jn 15:14); Paul concerning the people he wrote the letters to (2 Thess 3:4,6,10,12); the author of the Pastorals (1 Tm 6:17), etc. This is also the case in 1 Timothy. A more respected and wise person lays down rules for people who belong to the church and still has to acquire such wisdom.

b Hoping on God: Prayer and Supplications

The most important element in verse 6 is that 'the real widow' is someone who is 'left alone' and who therefore belongs to the poorest and destitute layer in society. This is said to be someone 'who has set her hope on God' and that she 'continues in supplications and prayers night and day'. The hope of the destitute is always in the Bible an indication that such persons do not receive any support from their society or community. Hope, here, therefore links up with the context of deliverance and liberation out of a situation of suffering. A few examples are Job 5:16: So the poor have hope; Psalms 9:18: For the needy shall not always be forgotten, nor the hope of the poor perish forever; Psalms 33:18: Truly the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love (see also Ps 33:22; 39:7; 42:5; 42:11; 43:5; 62:5; 69:6; 71:5,14; 147:11; Isaiah 8:17).

In this context, the believing widow whose hope is on God, means that she continuously hopes on God - this is because of the perfect tense of the verb for hope - ἡλπικεν. This hope, therefore is a continual condition. This also relates to Jeremiah 49:11: 'Let your widows trust in me'.

Statements relating hope more explicitly to deliverance are:

Psalms 65:5: By awesome deeds you answer us with deliverance, O God of our salvation; you are the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas.

Psalms 119:166: I hope for your salvation, O LORD, and I fulfill your commandments.

Jeremiah 14:8: O hope of Israel, its savior in time of trouble, why should you be like a stranger in the land, like a traveler turning aside for the night?

Jeremiah 29:11: For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.

Jeremiah 31:17: there is hope for your future, says the LORD: your children shall come back to their own country.

In terms of the radical hope of resurrection, see:

Acts 23:6: When Paul noticed that some were Sadducees and others were Pharisees, he called out in the council, "Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. I am on trial concerning the hope of the resurrection of the dead."

Acts 24:15:

I have a hope in God--a hope that they themselves also accept--that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous.

In addition to the fact that hope is that of someone suffering, that hope refers to future restitution due to the intervention of God and that, in the most basic existential context of human life, it refers to delivery from a life of suffering

and a movement into the resurrection, the reference of 'prayers and supplication' can refer to the cry of the destitute towards God for justice. The ultimate requirement was to be a godly believer. See for example:

Psalms 6:8f: Depart from me, all you workers of evil, for the LORD has heard the sound of my weeping. The LORD has heard my supplication; the LORD accepts my prayer.

Psalms 86:6f: Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer; listen to my cry of supplication. In the day of my trouble I call on you, for you will answer me.

Daniel 9:2f: in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the LORD to the prophet Jeremiah, must be fulfilled for the devastation of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years. Then I turned to the Lord God, to seek an answer by prayer and supplication with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.

In the context of no positive action towards widows, they turn to God for deliverance. According to Guthrie the widow must be a committed Christian in the church and she should further be without resources. Therefore, the church should be responsible for her care. Otherwise, she might be discouraged in her faith. More important, is that the church would not function as the household of God, where, irrespective of whether one is kin or relative, one acts to another as if she is a mother or a sister - as stated in verse 2.

Macarthur states that the widow 'must be one who continues in entreaties and prayers night and day'. The word *δεήσσειν* is used in the sense of manner or kind of requests, and that it could also include the pleas for personal needs. The Greek word *προσευχαῖς* (prayers) refers to communion

with God, which includes worship and praise.

The content of prayer does not only refer to requests on God, but also worship and deep communion with him. The Jewish word 'prayer' is an idiomatic expression which means 'constantly' or 'all the time' (see Acts 20:31). The widow's specific task throughout the day and night is to lift her heart to God in prayer and praise. The widow's posture would be reminiscent of that of the prophetess Anna (Lk 2:37) who served as a model for godly widows who received care from the church. It further suggests that her entire commitment to the Lord makes the distinction between the Christian widow and the pagan widow. Apart from that she demonstrates the christian pattern for others in the church. Through her constant prayer she also demonstrates the christian requirements of all the saints as stated in 1 Timothy 2:2-4. All christians are instructed to be praying and interceding irrespective of their conditions (Guthrie 1976:101).

Moffat (1987:58f) suggests that a widow who fulfills the requirements of the church, and who are destitute, should request the church, the household of God, to take care of her.

c Living for Pleasure Means that One is Dead Spiritually

The contrast with the godly widow is a widow 'who gives herself to wanton pleasure' and who does not qualify for church support. Such conduct was against the model of widows in the church and was described as a 'careless ease' (Macarthur 1995:200).

Such a widow 'is dead even while she lives'. The word 'dead', here, is used metaphorically. It means that although she is alive physically, she is dead spiritually. For Stott (1997:131), this means that she is 'separated from the life of God'. This was always a possibility for widows who cannot face their bereavement, sorrow and suffering. Similar to statements in the rest of the Bible, such women could attempt to survive by prostitution. This is most

probably why widowhood was sometimes associated with prostitution in the Mediterranean world. This would be the context that the author of the pastorals had in mind. Some would be led astray due to despair and emptiness - the vacuum in their lives due to the fact that they did not have any representation in society anymore. Moffat (1987:58f) suggests that 'in effect, a loose-living widow is only a nominal Christian'.

Moreover, if she totally indulges herself, it could bring about some luxury. The desire for luxury is the signal for replacing what is lost in their lives. In this context, it is not that they turn to licentiousness but that in a selfish, materialistic way seek to enrich their impoverished lives. For such unacceptable behaviour, she effectively separates herself from the fellowship of and believers. She would therefore not qualify for support from the church. Therefore, charity in the church is not to be squandered on those who did not commit themselves to the church. Church support was for those who really needed it but also committed themselves to God.

Acceptable behaviour was exercised by those widows who dedicated their lives to prayer and whose hope was upon God. However, those who were dead alive, were after pleasure rather than to enrich themselves spiritually. Therefore, the leader of the church was challenged to evaluate these conditions of eligibility for the church's maintenance of widows.

d On Being above Reproach

On being above reproach means that the widows must not act in such a way as to bring dishonour to God and the household of God. They must be really widows, alone and destitute (see Stott 1997:130; Guthrie 1976:101). The leader of the church was instructed to maintain the situation under control between the destitute widows and those who received legal aid from the government of the day. Care was to be taken that the widows themselves, but also the church remain above reproach (Moffat 1987:59). If the church care

for such widows, it will also be above reproach - the church would not stand by in silence when widows are suffering. This would also reflect on the integrity of the church in the area of hospitality.

Important, is that, like the requirement of bishops in 1 Timothy 3:2 who holds a congregational position, widows who enjoy congregational support should be above reproach. The underlying teaching here was to not distinguish between different categories of people and have one set of rules for some and another for others. By supporting deserving widows and refusing to support those who do not, the church, as well as its pastors ensured that the honour of the church was upheld (Macarthur 1995:202). The church was challenged to formulate a practical strategy for the care of widows 'so that no-one may be open to blame'. Alternatively, the believer who had the opportunity to learn the deeper meaning of love and failed to support the widows, would shame the church. Such a person would be a shameless believer in the sense that even the pagan children was supporting their widows.

5.3.2 Prescriptions for Widows Wishing to Serve in a Church Office (1 Tm 5:9-16)

As the church was obliged to support destitute widows, in turn widows were obliged to render their services to the Church. Following 1 Timothy 5:3-8, there are two categories of widows in the Pastorals: widows who still had relatives and widows who were alone and without any social support system - real widows. 1 Timothy 5:9-16 deals with two other categories: widows in general - older widows - and young widows. It was primarily the older widows who were required to minister in the church. The church could draw on their wealth of wisdom and experience.

For purposes of analysis, this section can be divided into three parts:

- 5.3.2.1 Listing Widows for Service (1 Tm 5:9f)
- 5.3.2.2 Rulings on Younger Widows (1 Tm 5:11-15)
- 5.3.2.3 Fellow Responsibility: Caring for Widows and the Church
(1 Tm 5:16)

Let a widow be put on the list if she is not less than sixty years old and has been married only once (or the wife of one husband); she must be well attested for her good works, as one who has brought up children, shown hospitality, washed the saints' feet, helped the afflicted, and devoted herself to doing good in every way. But refuse to put younger widows on the list; for when their sensual desires alienate them from Christ, they want to marry, and so they incur condemnation for having violated their first pledge. Besides that, they learn to be idle, gadding about from house to house; and they are not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not say. So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, and manage their households, so as to give the adversary no occasion to revile us. For some have already turned away to follow Satan. If any believing woman (or believing man or woman or believing man) has relatives who are really widows, let her assist them; let the church not be burdened, so that it can assist those who are really widows.

Χήρα καταλεγέσθω μὴ ἑλαττον ἐτῶν ἐξήκοντα γεγονυῖα, ἐνὸς ἀνδρὸς γυνή, ἐν ἔργοις καλοῖς μαρτυρουμένη, εἰ ἐτεκνοτρόφησεν, εἰ ἐξενοδόχησεν, εἰ ἁγίων πόδας ἔνιψεν, εἰ θλιβομένοις ἐπήρκεσεν, εἰ παντὶ ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ ἐπηκολούθησεν. νεωτέρας δὲ χήρας παραιτοῦ· ὅταν γὰρ καταστρηνιάσωσιν τοῦ Χριστοῦ, γαμεῖν θέλουσιν ἔχουσαι κρίμα ὅτι τὴν πρώτην πίστιν ἠθέτησαν· ἅμα δὲ καὶ ἀργαὶ μανθάνουσιν περιερχόμεναι τὰς οἰκίας, οὐ μόνον δὲ ἀργαὶ ἀλλὰ καὶ φλύαροι καὶ περίεργοι, λαλοῦσαι τὰ μὴ δέοντα. βούλομαι οὖν νεωτέρας γαμεῖν, τεκνογονεῖν, οἰκοδεσποτεῖν, μηδεμίαν

ἀφορμὴν διδόναι τῷ ἀντικειμένῳ λειδορίας χάριν· ἥδη γάρ τινες ἐξετράπησαν ὀπίσω τοῦ Σατανᾶ. εἴ τις πιστὴ ἔχει χήρας, ἐπαρκείτω αὐταῖς καὶ μὴ βαρεῖσθω ἡ ἐκκλησία, ἵνα ταῖς ὄντως χήραις ἐπαρκέσῃ.

5.3.2.1 Listing Widows for Service (1 Tm 5:9f)

Widows were put on a list for service in the same way as church leaders. The existence of a group of widows in the early church is known from extrabiblical sources. The purpose of putting them on the list was to use them to exercise their spiritual and practical ministry directly to the women and children of the church. Macarthur (1995:206) suggests that:

their duties surely included helping with the baptism of women, visiting the sick, visiting prisoners, teaching and disciplining younger women, helping younger women rear and nurture their children, and providing hospitality for visitors and strangers. They may have also assisted in placing orphans into proper Christians homes.

This ministry was extremely significant in the context of the Roman world because orphaned or abandoned children were frequently used as slaves and often as prostitutes. The presence of widows in the church made it possible for such people to be well attended to. The author's qualifications for the order of widows hints duties involved. She had to be 1) not less than sixty years old; 2) married only once (or the wife of one husband); 3) well attested for her good works, as one who has brought up children, shown hospitality, washed the saints' feet, helped the afflicted, and devoted herself to doing good in every way.

The *first* requirement for a widow who was to be added to the list was that she was not to be younger than sixty years of age. At the age of sixty, they would have given up all thoughts of remarriage. The empirical verb (καταλεγέσθω) literally means to 'be enrolled'. It is the technical term for being placed on a recognized list or 'catalogue' and makes it absolutely clear that there was a definite order of widows (Kelly 1983:115). Two terms with a technical meaning are employed here. The church kept a 'list' of persons who

were not only members but engaged in its service (Moffat 1987:60).

It was not a list for eligible church support as it has been stated in 1 Timothy 5:3-8. Church support did not acquire any age limit. Macarthur suggests that

sixty was the age in that culture for people to return from their activities to a life of contemplation. It was at that age that men and women were becoming priests and priestesses, according to Plato (Macarthur 1995:207; see also Barclay 1975:109).

One advantage for this stage was that sexual passion began to wane. For this reason, it gave assurance that those widows would not be driven by desire. Therefore, they qualified because of time, maturity, character, reputation, and compassion - to serve the Lord and the church. These qualifications are contrasted to needs of younger widows who still have desires for marriage.

The *second* requirement was that the officially enrolled widow should have been the wife of only one husband. This requirement corresponds to the rule for overseers (1 Tm 3:2), deacons (1 Tm 3:12), and elders (Titus 1.6). To have 'been the wife of one man' means - as the Greek text literally reads - 'a one-man woman'. She was supposed to be a woman who was entirely devoted to her husband, exercising purity in action and attitude. There are different interpretations of the formula. Most suggest that it means that such a woman has been faithful to her husband in marriage. However, the reading given alone - as here - means that, as in pagan, Jewish, and Christian inscriptions of the first centuries, *ἐνὸς ἀνδρὸς γυνή* referred to someone who had only one husband. Usually, as a term of eulogy, it was used of widows who have been content with one marriage.

Many commentaries find this exegesis inconsistent with the author's request in verse 14 that young widows should marry again, but they have missed the whole point of the argument. His advice to young widows is determined by a realistic appreciation of the emotional problem of a woman who has been left a widow while she is still in the prime of her life. The general attitude is clear and logical: a single marriage followed by permanent widowhood after the husband's death is the ideal, and should be demanded as

aspirants to the order of widows. But the demand that women left in widowhood when still comparatively young, would be excessive in most cases. It is therefore better that they should remarry rather than risk exposing the church to scandal.

In addition, ancient sentiments allowed a special credit to the widow who refrained from a second marriage - as was the case with Anna the prophetess in Luke 2:36. A woman who has been a widow and did not remarry, showed someone of high character and morality (Moffat 1987:60). In this sense, she was on the same level as a bishop, deacon, and elder. A widow - or someone in any other church office who did not measure up to this standard - would not have been a proper role model for the younger women to emulate (Macarthur 1995:207).

The *third* requirement was that 'she must be well attested for her good works'. This is closer specified with reference to four contexts: 1) child rearing - 'one who has brought up children'; 2) hospitality; 3) washed the saints' feet; 4) helped the afflicted. The last reference, 'and devoted herself to doing good in every way' links up again with the first statement concerning good works in an envelope structure.

In general, the widow must have

a reputation for good service. Her reputation should not only be based on bringing up her own children, not necessarily children of her own, that is, she must be a 'motherly' person. Her duties as a church 'widow' must be largely concerned with children, and she must have a real aptitude for dealing with them (Moffat 1987:61).

One of the major problems of the early church was the care for orphans. It seems likely that the official widows were given charge of them.

Firstly, as the deacons were 'tested; (1 Tm 3:10), the widow were tested as to whether they reared their own children well. *ἐτεκνοτρόφησεν* refers to the testing whether they brought up their children well. This quality views the godly widow as a Christian mother, rearing children in a godly home to follow the Lord. To do so is a woman's responsibility and greatest

privilege (see 1 Tm 2:15). A woman with no natural children of her own could manifest this quality by rearing orphans.

Secondly, she had to practically show hospitality. In the Early church, this was one of the most important elements of service to people irrespective of who they were. This also links up with the hospitality to strangers tradition in the Bible. This is another quality that the widow shared with elders. The widow's home was to be used for strangers, that is, evangelists, messengers, ordinary Christians travelling to and from which formed a prominent feature in the daily life of the church, friends and relatives. Moffat suggests that the church was to evaluate her motive of hosting her visitors before it would consider her for enrollment. 'The church must make sure before enrolling a widow that she has the right disposition for the work'. Christians away from home depended on the hospitality of other believers rather than to rely on the service of hotels who were not reliable (see Rm 16:2).

The third quality was that she had to demonstrate the character of humbleness as Christ did to his own disciples. As he 'washed the saints' feet' other believers had to do it too. MacArthur suggests that though this was a menial task and duty of slaves, the fact of doing it metaphorically indicated humility as in John 13:7-17. This requirement stresses that a widow has a humble servant's heart. She gives her life in lowly service to those in need and never seeks to exalt herself.

The fourth quality was that she had to have the gifts of attending the people who came to her with problems or crises - she was to help the afflicted or assisted those in distress. *θλιβομένοις* refers to 'those under pressure'. The widow was designated to help those who were under any kind of pressure - physical, mental, or emotional. *ἐπήρκεσεν* could refer to financial assistance. A godly widow was not only responsible for offering spiritual assistance. Even her financial assistance was required. She was obliged to use her financial resources for others.

The widow, was expected to live an exemplary lifestyle in the community of believers. In the closing reference to 'devoted herself to doing good in every way', ἐπηκολούθησεν is a strong verb. It describes the widow who has energetically and diligently given herself to the pursuit of good deeds (see Acts 9:36). These qualities, then, describe the character of a widow who qualified to serve the church. In general, the requirements were the same as for any other Christian and more particularly, the same as for any other office bearer.

5.3.2.2 Rulings on Younger Widows (1 Tm 5:11-15)

In the whole text of 1 Timothy 5:1-16, the largest portion is devoted to younger widows. They were not to be put on the list for service in the church. Two arguments are used to support this ruling: 1) they want to remarry; 2) they learn to be idle and they are gossips. This is followed by the ruling that they should remarry with a supporting argument.

The role of younger widows was different from that of older widows. Older widows were assigned to serve the church if they qualified for the church list. Younger widows, however, were instructed 'to get married'. The specific role of the church was to encourage them to see the importance of marriage. For that fact, the church leader was advised to refuse them on the list of widows who qualified for ministry in the church.

Younger widows are not to be admitted to the order of widows mentioned in 1 Timothy 5:9f. παραιτοῦ is used for this statement. The underlying reason for such refusal was that 'a young widow, out of sorrow for the loss of her husband and gratitude to the church for its support, will make a vow she cannot keep' (Macarthur 1995:211). These are widows under the age of sixty. According to Numbers 30:9, a widow was obligated to keep her vow. It appears as if this ancient ruling - which had to prevent widows exploiting their position for not being allowed to have representation in

society and legal matters - was still adhered to by the believers for whom the Pastorals were written. In Christian context, it meant that if the widow would break her vow, this would be shame the church.

The *first* reason explicitly stated in the text for not allowing a younger widow to be listed for service, is due to her 'feeling of sensual desires'. It would be difficulty for her to keep the vow she made during the emotional trauma of the loss of her husband (Macarthur 1995:211). The younger widow's sensual desires included sexual passion and marriage. Moellering (1970:101) suggests that 'Younger widows are not qualified since physical and emotional desires will likely assert themselves so that they will forsake the order and remarry' (Moellering 1970:101). In terms of becoming a model of spiritual virtue, she could become resentful, even hostile toward God. At best, she would be unfulfilled, unhappy, miserable, and unable to teach other women godly virtues. Worse still, her strong desire for a husband would leave her vulnerable. She might be tempted to go after someone else's husband.

The result of a younger widow's possible unfaithfulness was that they would incur 'condemnation'. God will chasten them 'because they have set aside their previous pledge' (Macarthur 1995:211). πίστις (pledge) is the normal New Testament word for faith. In classical Greek it can mean 'pledge'. In terms of faith, the word can mean that such widows have abandoned their original or first commitment to Christ - ὅτι τὴν πρώτην πίστιν ἠθέτησαν. The original commitment refers to the decision they made at salvation, namely to love, obey, and serve the Lord. If translated as 'pledge', it would refer to the specific covenant made when placed on the list of widows - to devote her life as a life of service to the Lord and the church.

The *second* reason for not allowing younger widows to be put on the list for service was that they were still immature. To be 'idle, gadding about from house to house ... gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not

say' indicates immaturity. Macarthur suggests that such immaturity would not meet the requirements for the purpose of ministry. Rather, they would speak nonsense, talk idly, make empty charges, or accuse with malicious words. 'Busybodies' - περιερχόμεναι - literally means 'one who moves around'. Such people were guilty of spreading slander instead of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Some may have been spreading false teaching (see 1 Tm 2:11-13). Alternatively, it could mean that they were 'over-careful' or 'taking needless trouble'. The nature of service required by the church could put younger widows in a position to contract bad habits. Older women whose characters are already formed, will not succumb so easily to temptations put in their way.

It takes serious-minded, mature, godly women to minister in homes to women and families. If widows were enrolled too young, they were liable to exploit their new career by gadding around from house to house. They would make their church work a mere pretext for poking into the affairs of others.

It is for these reasons that the ruling for younger widows is to get married - 'So I would have younger widows marry'. βούλομαι - I want - carries the force of a command. Macarthur (1995:212) suggests that 'Jewish custom encouraged women who lost their husbands legitimately to remarry'. The Scriptures also teach that a woman whose husband has died, or who is the innocent party in a divorce, has the right to remarry (see 1 Cor 7:39). Further, it is the responsibility of a widow who remarries to 'bear children and keep house'. τεκνογονεῖν - to bear children - means to have babies (see 1 Timothy 2:15). This also indicates that the widows the author refers to were generally of childbearing age.

To lose a husband was not the end of a widow's life. She still had the calling and privilege of bearing children and keep house - οἰκοδεσποτεῖν (Macarthur 1995:212). This includes all the aspects of running or 'ruling' a household (Guthrie 1976:104). By remarrying and raising a family, a young

widow will avoid bringing reproach on the church or cause of Christ. She would further avoid falling into some sexual sin or into some perversion of God's intended role for women described. These things are to be done to prevent the church for being slandered - 'so as to give the adversary no occasion to revile us'. 'Adversary' can mean anyone opposing the church or the gospel.

In 1 Timothy 5:15, the author gives the warning to the Ephesian church that 'some have already turned away to follow Satan'. In context, it must refer to frivolous or immoral habits into which some women had fallen, through abusing liberty permitted them by gospel (Moffat 1987:62; see also Macarthur 1995:212 and Moellering 1970:105). Some younger widows had abandoned their vows to Christ. Furthermore, they have also forsaken the possibility of having children, keep house, manage a home.

5.3.2.3 Fellow Responsibility: Caring for Widows and the Church (1 Tm 5:16)

In variant readings of this verse, the most important versions have 'any believing woman'. Others, however, have 'any believing man or woman' or 'any believing man'. This shows that scribes made adjustments as to the contexts in which the readings were necessary. In the original, it could have referred to a believing woman of means - someone who could afford it. In other contexts, it was expected not only of a woman of means but also of men and in still others, of men only, i.e. to care for widows.

Important in this context, is that if there was a woman who had relatives who were really widows - without any means of support and life - she must support them.

5.4 Summary

The fact that the largest portion of text in 1 Timothy is devoted to the topic of

widows, shows that this was a serious problem the Early Church had to deal with. This is stated explicitly in 1 Timothy 5:16: 'let the church not be burdened, so that it can assist those who are really widows'. On the one hand, the church was - in terms of the Biblical tradition of caring for widows as part of the category of the destitute, the alien and the orphan - committed to assist and help widows. On the other hand, this text explores four additional strategies of how to care for widows and how to lessen the burden on the church. These are that 1) relatives had to take care of them; 2) older widows had to serve in the church; 3) younger widows had to be married off; 4) a woman (or man) of means had to take care for widows.

In symbolic interactionist terms, we saw that the situation the church had to deal with was that widows were not cared for properly and that they put a burden on the church. This burden was not only that fellow believers did not adequately treat and respect widows (1 Tm 5:1f), but also that they did not care for them financially (1 Tm 5:3f,8). The processes at work in the text throughout is that - in this context - different plans had to be made and lines of action developed. This was done in the contexts of both the traditional Biblical requirement for caring for widows as the destitute and current institutional structures. It is especially concerning the pragmatics of the current situation that the author developed lines of action to be followed. *Firstly*, children and grandchildren had to be educated in the household to reciprocally care for their parents and widows when they are older and independent. *Secondly*, older widows had to meet requirements similar to that laid down for presbyters, deacons and elders and serve in the church. *Thirdly*, younger widows were to be married off. *Fourthly*, a woman (or man) of means had to take care for widows. Here we find that the institutions of the 1) household; 2) church service or ministry; 3) marriage; and 4) persons of means are used to care for widows. This is in addition to the church taking responsibility for widows according to the Biblical tradition for

caring for widows as part of the category of the destitute. These are five contexts in terms of which positive action was called for concerning widows.

In each context, the author gives reasons or requirements for the rulings. The most general - and applicable throughout - is that of action and interaction with 'absolute purity' (1 Tm 1:2). This must be understood in terms of actions of care and compassion towards the destitute - which for James too, means 'religion'. Pure action and interaction was thus the main requirement in each of the institutional contexts of 1) household; 2) church service or ministry; 3) marriage; and 4) care by persons of means. Such action would put widows as well as the church 'above reproach' and will prevent members to 'deny the faith' through acts of non-care.

Since all these actions are grounded in the Biblical tradition of care for the destitute, the widow, orphan, the stranger and the poor - people who do not have sufficient social means to have representation in social, economic and legal situations - the main context of this Biblical tradition must be researched. This will be done in the next chapter with a focus on contextualising 'widows' in the theology of 'God the Saviour'.

CHAPTER SIX

CONTEXTUALISING 'WIDOWS' IN THE THEOLOGY OF 'GOD THE SAVIOUR'

6.0 Introduction

If there is a theology to be ascribed to 1 Timothy, it is the theology of 'God the Saviour' or 'God the Liberator'. This theology dates back to the time of the Exodus, developed in Palestine throughout the time of the Old Testament and acquired a particular significance with regard to Jesus' ministry as well as his death. As a theology, it focuses on how and that God intervenes in general but also particular situations on behalf of his people. The most important general context is that of threatening death. The most significant historically-specific context is that of the deliverance from slavery in Egypt. It is especially this historically-specific context - where God functioned in terms of the Middle-Eastern 'warrior' imagery - which influenced the subsequent development of the salvation or liberation theology centrally related to the theology of 'God as Saviour'.

In order to explore how 1 Timothy 5:1-16 can be contextualised in this broader context, this chapter analyses particular texts in both the Old Testament and New Testament where God is represented as compassionate Saviour or Deliverer acting on behalf of the oppressed and repressed.

6.1 'God the Saviour' in the Old Testament

'God the Saviour' appears as Saviour in many areas of life in the Old Testament. He preserves both people and nature. When God acts as deliverer for his people, he frees them from danger, oppression, exploitation and threat. When Israel was threatened by its neighbours - since the time of David - God the Saviour intervened on their behalf. They turned to God for protection and deliverance from defeat and bondage (Bromiley 1988:287). As

such, he did not only act on behalf of the nation but also on behalf of individuals.

The greatest demonstration of God's salvation in the Old Testament was, however, the exodus from Egypt. Moses told the people to stand firm and see God's deliverance (Ex 14:13) and on that day 'The Lord saved Israel from the hands of Egyptians (Ex 14:30). Ultimately, messianic deliverance would be needed to restore the religious purity and integrity of God's people (Bromiley 1988:278). The aspect of God the Saviour in the Old Testament is broadly viewed in Scriptures. Messianic deliverance refers to its eschatological fulfillment in the New Testament (Bromiley 1988:288).

6.1.1 Exodus 15:1-12

In the Old Testament, 'God the Saviour' is displayed in four streams of traditions. The streams are: exodus, the way-conquest, the kingship and the temple traditions. It is the earliest text in the Old Testament in which all four appear together (cf. Swartley 1994:32f). The exodus tradition is cited here for expounding the theme of 'God the Saviour'.

Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD:

"I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously;
horse and rider he has thrown into the sea.

The LORD is my strength and my might,

and he has become my salvation;

this is my God, and I will praise him,

my father's God, and I will exalt him.

The LORD is a warrior;

the LORD is his name.

“Pharaoh’s chariots and his army he cast into the sea;

his picked officers were sunk in the Red Sea.

The floods covered them;

they went down into the depths like a stone.

Your right hand, O LORD, glorious in power--

your right hand, O LORD, shattered the enemy.

In the greatness of your majesty you overthrew your adversaries;

you sent out your fury, it consumed them like stubble.

At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up,

the floods stood up in a heap;

the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea.

The enemy said, ‘I will pursue, I will overtake,

I will divide the spoil, my desire shall have its fill of them.

I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.’

You blew with your wind, the sea covered them;

they sank like lead in the mighty waters.

“Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods?

Who is like you, majestic in holiness,

awesome in splendor, doing wonders?

You stretched out your right hand,

the earth swallowed them.

This is a song in which Israel celebrated the exodus from Egypt. There are primarily five elements to the fact of this deliverance which links up with our theme.

Firstly, the Lord is presented here as warrior who, with his ‘right hand ... glorious in power’, saved Israel from the oppression of slavery. He destroyed the Egyptians and demonstrated his triumph over the Egyptian army when they died in the sea while persecuting the Israelites. As such, he

demonstrated his power over the native ruler, Pharaoh, and his advanced army (Ex 15:3,12,14-6,9).

Secondly, The imagery of the Lord as warrior is related to that of majestic king, raging fire, and furious wind consuming his people's oppressors (Ex 15:7,8,10).

Thirdly, when Israel's God is compared to Pharaoh or other gods, his majestic holiness, awesome splendor and wonders transcends them (Ex 15:11). Pharaoh, the king of the Egyptians, has no power to complement the holiness of God. The power of the Egyptian king is very limited when compared to the power of God the Creator of the heavens and earth.

Fourthly, the text affirms that it is the Lord's power which provides a refuge as well as salvation to Israel (Ex 15:2a). As the Israelites were oppressed, dehumanised, and neglected by the Egyptians, God intervened. God the Saviour of humanity was in their midst to provide security and salvation for them. The belief of God as a refuge gives hope and protection to the Israelites in times of affliction and despair.

Fifthly, the text calls for Israel to sing, praise and exalt God (Ex 15:2b). The Saviour provides a genuine freedom and relief which motivates the Israelites to express their profound appreciation of Him as a Saviour. Singing, praising and exaltation is the expression of realities for his miraculous interventions in an oppressive situation - to appreciate that he is the sovereign God and that nothing and no-one can be compared to him.

Sixth, this takes place in the context of the fact that God is the same God as that of each Israelite's father or Israel's ancestors, bringing about a personal relationship with the Lord (Ex 15:2b). The existence of the personal relationship means that God saves his people through the Old covenant he made with the ancestors of his people.

The Lord presented Himself here as a careful observer who, because of what He had seen and heard, was aware of the situation in which His people found themselves. He called the Israelites 'my people'. And He had come down to

deliver them and to lead them to the land promised to their fathers, the land that was good and spacious, and that flowed with milk and honey (Gispen 1982:53-54).

'God the Saviour' demonstrates the elements of his humanity when observing, seeing and hearing the voices of his people in Egypt. To act against the Egyptians was influenced by the results of his people who released their cry from within oppression and suffering to him, their Saviour. The people of God were oppressed physically by working very hard for the Egyptians, emotionally depressed due to the tense situation daily, and spiritually. Further, they were deprived their rights as human beings, because they were treated as entities, not like dignified human beings. They could not overcome the situation on their own until God Himself was deeply moved by their cry. 'God the Saviour' was the only Saviour of 'his people' under the oppression of the Egyptians.

6.1.2 2 Samuel 22:3

David's 'Song of Thanksgiving' in 2 Samuel 22:1-51, is contextualised in terms of delivery from enemies (1 Sm 1:1). The most significant in terms of God as Saviour, is that he functions towards David and on behalf of David and his descendants as a rock, fortress and deliverer (2 Samuel 22:2).

'God the Saviour' is the saviour of individuals in times of affliction. His act of deliverance happens in real life. One who suffers, pours out his heart for deliverance. The way in which he expresses his cry for salvation, is a challenge to the Saviour to intervene in the situation. As such, God intervenes as the rock of Israel. Buttrick (1980:1162) says that the song of deliverance is a symbolic expression of thanksgiving for the power and grace of God.

The song of thanksgiving of the psalmist is the symbolic representation of the power and the grace of God. Here the psalmist depicts the cry to God out of distress.

It also contains metaphors which symbolise the greatness and strength

imparted to the distressful condition of the psalmist. God appears as a warrior: 'My rock ... my fortress indicates the place of security my deliverer ... my ... shield ... my high tower ... my refuge ... my saviour' (Buttrick 1980:1162). Such action is the context for our text:

my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge,
my shield and the horn of my salvation,
my stronghold and my refuge,
my savior; you save me from violence.

David calls God my rock, and my castle in Psalms 31:4 as well. The citing of these two epithets reflect the natural context of Palestine, where sheep and almost inaccessible rocks afford protection to the fugitive, as David had often found at the time when Saul was pursuing him (1 Sm 24:23; 22:5). But David took refuge in rocks, he placed his hopes of safety not in their inaccessible character, but in God the Lord, the eternal spiritual rock, whom he could see in the earthly rock, so that he called Him his true castle (Keil and Delitzsch 1976:47Of).

'My Rock-God', is equivalent to, God who is my Rock: this is formed after Deuteronomy 32:4, where Moses calls the Lord the Rock of Israel, because of His unchangeable faithfulness. Here, 'rock', is a figure used to represent immovable firmness. In Psalms 23:3, the phrase 'my God' are synonymously joined to 'my rock' to form one single predicate of God - which is repeated in 2 Samuel 22:47. The phrase 'my horn and my salvation-shield', describes God as the mighty protector and defender of the righteous. The righteous humble themselves before God even when they are facing their enemies. A shield covers against hostile attacks. He is the 'horn of salvation', because he overcomes enemies. 'My fortress' is a high place, where a person is secure against hostile attacks. The predicates which follow, emphasises

this: 'my refuge'; 'My Saviour, who redeemed me from violence'.

Even though there is mention of the Lord's (2 Sm 22:15) and David's (2 Sm 22:35,38f,41,43) own violent action, the notion of being saved from violence means that one does not find oneself in a violent situation. The most significant is that the Lord saved from death (2 Sm 22:5f). This was due to David's 'call upon God' (2 Sm 22:4,7). There is mention of the apocalyptic judgemental anger of God (2 Sm 22:8-17). Metaphorically, the saving event is described as follows:

He reached from on high, he took me,
 he drew me out of mighty waters.
He delivered me from my strong enemy,
 from those who hated me;
 for they were too mighty for me.
They came upon me in the day of my calamity,
 but the LORD was my stay.
He brought me out into a broad place;
 he delivered me, because he delighted in me.

Such salvation is the result of righteousness, cleanness of hands, for having kept the ways, ordinances and statutes of the Lord, for being loyal to God, being pure, being humble, etc. (2 Sm 22:21-25).

David gives thanks to God for victory over all his enemies, praises God the Saviour as his deliverer out of all dangers which threatened his life and from conflicts with his foes.

It was late in his life that David composed this song of praise to God. Confirming that God has rescued him from all his foes, and helped his kingdom to victory over all the neighbouring heathen nations. The phrase 'In the day' refers to the time 'when Jehovah had delivered him out of the hand

of Saul' (Buttrick 1980:1162f) not because this was the last event but because this was the greatest and the most glorious one.

6.1.3 Psalm 17:7

In this prayer for deliverance from persecutors, the central verse reads as follows:

Wondrously show your steadfast love,
O savior of those who seek refuge
from their adversaries at your right hand.

The steadfast love of God must be shown in saving action on behalf of those who seek refuge with him away from adversaries. The cry for salvation must come someone who is a just cause with 'lips free of deceit' (Ps 17:1; see also verses 3-5) and righteous (Ps 17:15). As such, God as saviour must vindicate the oppressed, guard him (or her). The wicked is said to 'close their hearts to pity' and their mouths 'speak arrogantly' (Ps 17:10f). The reference to the sword of God, is again a reference to the saviour God as warrior (Ps 17:13).

Kidner (1973:87) indicates that the we find here a retrieval of God's miraculous interventions (see also Ps 9:1). His steadfast love, or 'true love' is based on his faithfulness to his covenant, which depicts a marital-kind everlasting covenant between Him and his nation. The older versions translate the phrase 'true love' as 'lovingkindness' (Kidner 1973:87). The source of God as the Saviour is based on his genuine love for his people. The word 'Saviour' and 'salvation' in the Old Testament are primarily used to redress realities of material evils. It can, however, also be changed into the spiritual realm (see Ps 51:12,14). It is noticeable that in the Psalms, the frequency of seeking refuge shows distress of the psalmist, particularly as his foes were after him. It further suggests his reliance on God the Saviour in

times of sorrow.

6.1.4 Psalm 106:21

In this Psalm, 'A Confession of Israel's Sin', the reason for thanking God is that 'his steadfast love endures forever' (Ps 106:1). The Psalm covers the history of Israel's rebellions against God since their liberation from Egypt and throughout their trek to Canaan in the way-conquest tradition. The central verse - like many other statements in the Psalms - refers to the fact that Israel did not remember what God had done but actually 'forgot' (Ps 106:13,21) - especially the acts of salvation as he liberated Israel from Egypt. Further, in the Old Testament, to forget God, means much more than an inability to remember; it can be described as a guilty forgetfulness (see Ps 106:13,21); as being false to God's covenant and to turn to other gods (see Ps 44:17; Anderson 1972:813).

The text reads as follows:

They forgot God, their Savior,
who had done great things in Egypt,

Closely related are two texts such as Ps 106:10,43-45:

So he saved them from the hand of the foe,
and delivered them from the hand of the enemy.

Many times he delivered them,
but they were rebellious in their purposes,
and were brought low through their iniquity.

Nevertheless he regarded their distress
when he heard their cry.

For their sake he remembered his covenant,
and showed compassion according to the abundance of his
steadfast love.

In this context, it is important to emphasise especially those things which Israel did not do, because, if they did, their actions would have brought them on par with God's saving acts. Their actions would have meant that they observed 'justice' and did 'righteousness at all times' (Ps 106:3). This, however, stands in contrast to the fact that Israel 'Both we and our ancestors', 'have sinned, committed iniquity, have done wickedly'; 'rebelled' (Ps 106:6f). They 'did not consider [God's] wonderful works; [and] did not remember the abundance of [his] steadfast love'; they 'had a wanton craving in the wilderness'; they were 'jealous'; 'factions' formed; 'made a calf at Horeb and worshiped a cast image'; 'despised the pleasant land, having no faith in his promise'; 'grumbled in their tents, and did not obey the voice of the Lord'; 'provoked the Lord to anger with their deeds [of idolatry]; they did not destroy 'the peoples', ensuring Israel's independent existence but rather followed these peoples' idolatry, thereby becoming 'unclean by their acts, and prostituted themselves in their doings' (Ps 106:7,14,16f,19,24f,29,34-39). Intercession on behalf of the people in this context is reckoned as 'righteousness' (Ps 106:30f). Even in their sin, when they cried in their distress, the Lord responded by remembering his covenant and showing 'compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love' (Ps 106:45).

The phrase 'great things' refers to God's acts of salvation and judgment (see Ps 71:19; Anderson 1972:742f). The Israelites forgot the mighty deeds of Yahweh's saving works. The reason why they forgot Yahweh, was the fact that they 'they allowed mistrust and impatience to blind them, so that they no longer waited obediently for Yahweh and his plan' (Anderson 1972:740).

6.1.5 Isaiah 43:3,11

Isaiah 43, 'Restoration and Protection Promised', verses 3 and 11 respectively read:

For I am the LORD your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.
I give Egypt as your ransom,
Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you.

I, I am the LORD,
and besides me there is no savior.

Here, the prophet insists that God is the God of the exodus (Ex 20:2). They have not chosen God; rather he chose them (Is 43:10). The prophet uses the special title for addressing the Lord, 'the Holy One of Israel' and thereby combines 'the full reality of divine holiness with equal reality of his relationship to Israel' (Motyer 1993:331). The root idea of deliverance again stands behind seeing God as saviour (see Is 25:9). It points to the message of comfort. The Israelites are reminded to cling to God their Saviour and put their trust in him alone so that they can experience the joy of his salvation.

The perfect tense used, depicts the perfect changeless divine character of God's steadfast love to Israel. Hamlin (1997:53) also affirms that these verses emphasize that God is his own witness to Himself. 'I am the Lord (Yahweh)'. This is the name of the God who met Moses, who delivered the slaves from Egypt, who gave them a covenant and laws at Mount Sinai, and who guided them in the desert. He is 'the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour'.

6.1.6 Isaiah 45:15,21

In the context of Cyrus being the God-appointed instrument through which the exiles may return from Babylon, God is again addressed as Savior.

Truly, you are a God who hides himself,
O God of Israel, the Savior.

The heathen nations cannot know God - for them he is hidden - even though they function as his instrument of salvation. Isaiah 45:17f says:

But Israel is saved by the LORD
with everlasting salvation;
you shall not be put to shame or confounded
to all eternity.

For thus says the LORD,
who created the heavens
(he is God!),
who formed the earth and made it
(he established it;
he did not create it a chaos,
he formed it to be inhabited!):
I am the LORD, and there is no other.

God's salvation is here represented as an 'everlasting salvation' and this is related to his function as Creator-God in verse 18.

Declare and present your case;
let them take counsel together!

Who told this long ago?

Who declared it of old?

Was it not I, the LORD?

There is no other god besides me,
a righteous God and a Savior;
there is no one besides me.

This is contrasted in the following section, Isaiah 45:20ff with the fact that Idols cannot save Babylon. In this context, a universal appeal is made for the nations to believe in God the only savior (Isaiah 45:20-22).

Assemble yourselves and come together,

draw near, you survivors of the nations!

They have no knowledge--

those who carry about their wooden idols,
and keep on praying to a god
that cannot save.

Declare and present your case;

let them take counsel together!

Who told this long ago?

Who declared it of old?

Was it not I, the LORD?

There is no other god besides me,
a righteous God and a Savior;
there is no one besides me.

Turn to me and be saved,

all the ends of the earth!

For I am God, and there is no other.

The prophet in this case portrays the God of Israel, the Saviour, not as the Saviour of the Israelites only but as the Saviour of all people from all nations. The notion here, is that the Israelites should testify about Him to all the nations. They must discover his uniqueness as God and Saviour.

This text shows the integration of Israel and the Gentiles.

6.1.7 Isaiah 49:26

In this section which deals with 'Zion's Children to be brought home' (Isaiah 49:8ff), deals with Israel returning to Zion.

I will make your oppressors eat their own flesh,
and they shall be drunk with their own blood as with wine.
Then all flesh shall know
that I am the LORD your Savior,
and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.

In a universal context, this text positions oppressors over and against God who is the Saviour of Israel. As God liberates Israel from oppressors. oppressors cause their own downfall. the expressions, 'eat their own flesh' and 'drunk with their own blood' is an image of a city under siege and such conditions which bring about cannibalism as the last resort against starvation.

More generally, the reality is that those who choose their own way against God, are in the end self-destructive. Self-destruction is a recurring feature in the 'wars of the Lord' and refers to the fact that all humanity is 'all flesh'. This contrasts with the Lord who sees oppression and works with power to save his people and to overthrow their enemies. This is placed in covenantal context - 'the Mighty One of Jacob'.

The peoples can share in the blessing God intends to bestow on his people, or they can entirely cut themselves off from it. But they cannot claim

any relationship with God that by-passes identification with his people. This shows the 'invincible strength of God's commitment to his people' (Webb 1997:228-232).

6.1.8 Isaiah 60:16

This text forms part of the larger text, 'The Ingathering of the Dispersed' (Is 60:1-18). Verse 16 reads:

You shall suck the milk of nations,
you shall suck the breasts of kings;
and you shall know that I, the LORD, am your Savior
and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.

In this section in Isaiah, the glory of God - in which Israel shares - is contrasted with the darkness of other peoples. It is the fact that Israel has the light, that other nations will come from darkness to them (Is 60:1-4). This will bring joy and material prosperity to Israel (Is 60:5-7,10,13,18). This is the context of the text: because the nations will come to the light and acknowledge Israel's God as Saviour and Redeemer in the context of the covenant - 'the Mighty One of Jacob' - Israel will benefit materially from the nations' prosperity. The imagery of 'milk' and 'breasts' is related to the notions that God is Saviour, Redeemer and the covenant. This signals compassion and maternal care as the nature of God's saving acts (Motyer 1993:497). When this comes about, the belief is that 'violence', 'devastation', and 'destruction' will be done away with (Is 60:18).

6.1.9 Isaiah 63:8f

This text deals with 'God's Mercy Remembered'. It stands in the context of a believing Israelite recounting the deeds of God as acts showing his 'steadfast

love' (Is 63:7). He is Israel's Saviour because he has a relationship towards them as to a child (see Motyer 1993:513):

For he said, "Surely they are my people,
children who will not deal falsely";
and he became their savior
in all their distress.
It was no messenger or angel
but his presence that saved them;
in his love and in his pity he redeemed them;
he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

These actions of God are contrasted with Israel's rebellion - which made God their enemy (Is 63:10). This brings about remembrance in the context of Israel's liberation from Egypt and the covenant (Is 63:11-13; see Webb 1997:242).

God's gracious and powerful deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage established a father-child relationship between him and them, and through the whole wilderness experience he cherished them as his children. He felt their distress, saved them from the perils of the way, lifted them up and carried them when they were weak, and rightly expected that they would return his love by being true to him. But sadly, it was not so.

6.1.10 Jeremiah 14:8f

The section concerning 'The Great Drought', deals with the fact that Israel - despite their 'cry' (Jr 14:2) - turn to a fervent adherence and practicing of ritual (Jr 14:12) and not to God as Saviour in the context of the liberation from Egypt and the covenant. Although Israel's 'iniquities testify against [her]', the prophet calls on God to 'act' (Jr 14:7). Then follows our text:

O hope of Israel,
 its savior in time of trouble,
 why should you be like a stranger in the land,
 like a traveler turning aside for the night?
Why should you be like someone confused,
 like a mighty warrior who cannot give help?
Yet you, O LORD, are in the midst of us,
 and we are called by your name;
 do not forsake us!

In this text, 'warrior' refers to God's acts of liberation from Egypt and the expression, referring to the fact that God is 'in the midst of us, and we are called by your name' to the covenant. These are the elements which continuously is the context of 'hope' in the Old Testament (Thompson 1987:380f) (see Ez 10:2; Ps 9:18; 33:18f,20,22; 39:6-8; 62:5f; 65:5; 71:4-7; 78:7f; 119:43,49,81,114,166; 130:7f; 146:5; Jr 29:10f; etc.).

In general Yahweh acts as saviour in times of trouble and distress. In such situations, Israel cries to God for deliverance, liberation or salvation. The real need of Judah in Jeremiah's day was the physical deliverance from the looming disaster, with the approach of the Chaldean armies. Since Yahweh's help is not experienced, he is 'like a stranger in the land'. This was so, because Israel forsaked God. They 'neglected their God, rejected his sovereignty, and disobeyed his commandments. The sense of estrangement they experienced lay in their own neglect' (Thompson 1987:381)

Harlow (1989:81) views the situation as prayer to the LORD. 'Jeremiah here used these words as a name for the Lord, the hope of Israel. He was their only Saviour, there was certainly no one else'. The affirmation of God as the only Saviour, sovereign and majestic king contrasts with Baal

and the the queen of heaven - which could not help the Israelites (1 Ki 18:19; 29:45).

6.1.11 Hoseah 13:4

In the context of the judgement of Israel, this text is parallel to that of the introduction to the Law in Exodus 20. The divine self-introduction is expanded to remind Israel of the prologue to the ten commandment and of the first commandment itself (Ex 20:2f).

Yet I have been the LORD your God
ever since the land of Egypt;
you know no God but me,
and besides me there is no savior.

The realities of the liberation from Egypt as well as the giving of the Law, are contrasted with Israel's idolatry in this text. Expressions like 'no God but me' usually stands over and against idolatry and points to Israel's breaking of the exclusivity of the covenant relationship with God. Because of their sin, they will disappear (Hos 13:3).

Therefore they shall be like the morning mist
or like the dew that goes away early,
like chaff that swirls from the threshing floor
or like smoke from a window.

This means that God will destroy Israel, give them over to death (Hos 13:9,14).

The prophet represents Yahweh by reminding his people that he is the God of the Exodus. The personal name Yahweh, with its warm connotations,

is accompanied with Elohim to connote the sense of Yahweh, the God of the Israelites (McComiskey 1992:216). The statement that they know no God other than Yahweh seems strange in the light of their experience with the cult of Baal, especially since the word 'know' is used of the worship of false deities. Over the course of their history the Israelites knew no other God to be a deliverer like Yahweh. The people may have attributed their success to Baal but it was Yahweh who was their real Saviour (McComiskey 1992:216).

6.1.12 Summary

Throughout the texts surveyed, some of the main elements related to the notion of the 'Saviour God' were: 1) liberation from slavery, oppression and suffering in Egypt; 2) the law and covenant; 3) the breaking of the covenant relationship with God as Saviour in particular historical circumstances through specific acts; 4) the cry to God for help; 5) the call to remember the liberation from Egypt and the covenant; 6) Israel's hope for God's liberatory and restorative intervention in an eschatological future; 7) the result of liberation, salvation and restoration depended on Israel returning to God and to bring their own actions in line with his actions.

Analogically, when this theology is compared with the New Testament, we find that there are especially two elements which fell away: that of God as warrior God, and the focus on Israel as ethnic entity. Christianity acquires a universal scope - more in line with the universalist ideas present in Isaiah.

One primary element which is added more strongly than in the Old Testament, is that acts of liberation or salvation in the New Testament are practiced by believers concerning the suffering of others.

6.2 'God the Saviour' in the New Testament

Concerning 'salvation', the movement in Scripture is from the more physical aspects towards moral and spiritual deliverance. The earlier parts of the Old Testament lay stress on ways of escape for God's individual servants (from the hands of their enemies) or in general context, the emancipation of his people from bondage (and their establishment in a land of plenty).

In the New Testament, especially in the Synoptic Gospels, there are a number of occurrences of the verb 'to save'. They mainly refer to healing from disease or deliverance from threats to life and safety. This takes place in the context of 'faith'. Faith saved the sinful woman - the one who showed compassion and received forgiveness in the context of debt (Lk 7:36-50); the disciples and Peter are respectively saved from a storm at sea (Mt 8:25; 14:30); Jairus' daughter is saved from sickness and ultimately death (Lk 8:50); the blind man is saved from physical blindness (Lk 18:4). This 'saving' from physical threat, is also the context in which the three complexes of general statements must be understood first, before they acquire spiritual or theological meaning:

Matthew 16:25: For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it

Mark 8:35: For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel (or loose their live for the sake of the gospel), will save it.

Luke 9:24: For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it.

Matthew 18:10: "Take care that you do not despise one of these little ones; for, I tell you, in heaven their angels continually see the face of my Father in heaven (for the Son of Man came to save the lost).

Luke 9:56: Then he rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what spirit you are of, for the Son of Man has not come to destroy the lives of human beings but to save them." Then they went on to another village.

Luke 19:10: For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost."

Mark 3:4: Then he said to them, "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent.

Mark 6:9: Then Jesus said to them, "I ask you, is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to destroy it?"

The same idea of salvation from physical suffering and threat is present in the apocalyptic texts: those who endure in times of suffering will be saved (Mt 10:22; 24:13,22; Mk 10:26; 13:13,20; Lk 18:26). The same is true of the charges that Jesus 'saved' others but not himself (Mt 27:40,42,49; Mk 15:30f; Lk 23:35,37,39): See for example:

Matthew 27:42: "He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him.

Mark 15:31: In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him among themselves and saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself.

Luke 23:35: And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!"

In the context of 'faith' - which shows that there is relationship with God, and therefore with the covenant - physical suffering and salvation from it, therefore stood central to Jesus' ministry. Jesus' ministry must therefore be contextualised in the context of the theology of 'Saviour God' which is related to both the liberation from Egypt and the covenant. Most explicitly

stated in this context in the New Testament, is certainly that found in Zechariah's prophecy where the reference to being saved from enemies is referred to in covenant context (Lk 1:71).

In the context of the Synoptic Gospels, the elements identified as central to the Old Testament, are also found in the New Testament: 1) liberation from a situation of physical suffering; 2) that such liberation takes place in the context of the law and covenant; 3) that the breaking of the covenant relationship with God as Saviour in particular historical circumstances through specific acts - the Jewish officials in the gospels; 4) the cry to God for help - the numerous people who often cried out to Jesus for help; 5) references to remember the liberation from Egypt and the covenant; 6) Israel's hope for God's liberatory and restorative intervention in an eschatological future; 7) the result of liberation, salvation and restoration with people following after Jesus.

Just as the concept of 'God the Savior' functions in the Old Testament, it also does in the New Testament. It takes place in a broad eschatological context - which signals change. In each testament the saving power of God is demonstrated vividly in changes which take place in people's plight. In the New Testament the salvation of God or a particular act of God affects the entire person in all dimensions of life. This is true in both Testaments and in all aspects of salvation: from national deliverance, as at the exodus, to personal redemption (Bromiley 1988:288). 'God the Saviour' addresses personal salvation in which emphasis is based on personal wholeness. The experience of salvation produces the remedy from disease and from demon possession, along with spiritual redemption of sin. The broad concept of the Saviour-God touches both the general and the specific.

6.2.1 Luke 1:47

Linguistically there is a good case for finding a distinctive trait concerning

Luke's notion of salvation when compared with the other Gospels. It is true that the use of the verb 'to save', itself, is not particularly impressive. 'To save' is used frequently with the meaning 'to heal' and 'to save from danger'. Other words in this group are much more his own property. Even though the understanding of salvation - as explained above - are present in Matthew and Mark, 'saviour' and 'salvation' are not found here. In Luke-Acts, however, this notion occurs 8 times in Luke and 9 times in Acts.

These notions are not the exclusive property of Luke. They are also found elsewhere in the New Testament. Luke's theology, however, maybe more than that of the other Gospels, is firmly based in the traditions related to 'God the Saviour'.

Our claim is not that salvation is a feature unique to Lukan theology in comparison with the rest of the NT, but that it is the central motif in Lucan theology (Marshall 1971:92-93).

This links up especially with the doctrine of God and his plan of salvation - which forms the underlying basis of Luke's theology (Marshall 1971:94).

Luke's concept of salvation, then, is related to notions of 'saving action' and has as background, the theology of 'God the Saviour'. The concept of salvation in Luke's Gospel means the action or result of deliverance; or preservation from danger or disease, implying safety, health and prosperity. Jesus' acts of healing are related to the 'power of God revealed in Jesus in response to faith' because '[t]he power to heal and authority to save both reside in God' (Marshall 1971:95). It appears as if Luke is very aware of the uses the notion of salvation is put to in the Old Testament - i.e. to describe the liberating actions of God or the results of that action. This is especially evident from Luke 1:47 in the context of Mary's Song in Luke 1:46-55:

And Mary said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord,

and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.

His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.

He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;

he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

And Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.

H. Conzelmann emphatically stated that the birth stories play no role in Luke's economy of salvation. In his discussion of Luke's theology, he virtually ignores them. But this denigration of the birth stories to the level of a prelude is unjustified (Marshall 1971:97). On the other side of the coin, Veilhauer claimed that Luke's presentation of John the Baptist was an expression of his basic theology of salvation-history. The opening reference to salvation in the Gospel is found in Mary's description of God as her Saviour (Luke 1:47). The phrase comes from the Old Testament, but no one passage can be regarded as the direct source of the language here.

Called the Magnificat - it contains an outburst of praise, largely based on similar praises in the Old testament (Morris 1983:75). Tannehill (1986:26) suggests that 'the poetic structure' of the Magnificat is important for its interpretation. This poem should be 'understood as a traditional hymn of praise, beginning with an introductory statement of praise of God. The hymn of praise is modelled in general terms on 1 Samuel 2:1-10 - Hannah's Prayer (Tannehill 1986:18).

The text of 'The Song of Hannah' reads as follows.

Hannah prayed and said,

"My heart exults in the LORD;
my strength is exalted in my God.

My mouth derides my enemies,
because I rejoice in my victory.

"There is no Holy One like the LORD,
no one besides you;
there is no Rock like our God.

Talk no more so very proudly,
let not arrogance come from your mouth;
for the LORD is a God of knowledge,
and by him actions are weighed.

The bows of the mighty are broken,
but the feeble gird on strength.

Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread,
but those who were hungry are fat with spoil.

The barren has borne seven,
but she who has many children is forlorn.

The LORD kills and brings to life;
he brings down to Sheol and raises up.

The LORD makes poor and makes rich;
 he brings low, he also exalts.
He raises up the poor from the dust;
 he lifts the needy from the ash heap,
to make them sit with princes
 and inherit a seat of honor.
For the pillars of the earth are the LORD's,
 and on them he has set the world.
"He will guard the feet of his faithful ones,
 but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness;
 for not by might does one prevail.
The LORD! His adversaries shall be shattered;
 the Most High will thunder in heaven.
The LORD will judge the ends of the earth;
 he will give strength to his king,
 and exalt the power of his anointed."

In these texts, both are introduced by words of praise toward God; but also includes the following elements:

Luke

exulting names for God like
Lord/Saviour/Mighty One/holy is his name

1 Samuel

- Lord/Rock/Holy one;

God's mercy for the lowly/those who fear him - God weighs actions;

God's strength is in his arm and he - God has power over life and
scatters the proud/has power over the death, the rich and the poor
powerful and the lowly/the hungry and the rich the low and the exalted,

the needy and the poor, the
low and the exalted, the needy
and honoured, and can change
their fate;

his mercy is for Israel from generation to generation/He has helped and had mercy for his servant Israel in the context of the covenant promise. - God cares for the faithful ones

In both texts, the focus is on God's actions concerning the real conditions causing the suffering of people. Such actions are from within the context of the Israelite traditions of God's power and authority over any other power and also in the context of his saving actions concerning people in the tradition of Israel's covenant - God's care, and Israel's faithfulness. As such, God's actions on behalf of both Mary and Hannah are perceived as blessings and they praise him for them. Since their conditions changed from a previous situation to one where they have given birth to babies, there is an eschatological dimension here too (see Marshall 1971:97f). We may therefore state with some confidence that the thought of God as Saviour is related to his eschatological action in exalting the humble and filling the hungry with good things. Theologically the thought of God as Saviour is the correct place to begin to come to understanding of Luke. (This can also be linked to the name given to Jesus in the prophecy in Luke 1:31 which means 'Yahweh saves' (see also Mt 1:21; Marshall 1971:99). Jesus is here represented as the Messiah-saviour through whom God delivers His people. The ultimate 'source of salvation', however, is 'God the Saviour' - especially where he recognised each woman's need.

The main difference, between these two texts is that 'The Song of Hannah' is a shout of triumph in the face of her enemies, whereas, 'Mary's song depicts a humble contemplation of the mercies of God' (Morris 1983:75f).

Apart from the resemblance of Hannah's Song, the Magnificat also links up with Jesus' thanksgiving to the Father in Luke 10:21. Here, Jesus' joy is inspired by the Spirit (see also Acts 13:52). The saying follows the form of a thanksgiving Psalm in which the speaker praises God because of something that he has done. Similar praises by the lowly over and against 'the wise' or those who exult themselves, are also present in other texts (compare Sir.3:19; Wis 10:21; Bar.3:9ff with Mt 11:25; Acts 13:7; 1 Cor 1:19; (Marshall 1978:433f).

6.2.2 1 Timothy

The particular significance that the theology of 'God the Savior' has for 1 Timothy, is evident from especially 1 Timothy 1:1; 2:3; and 4:10.

1 Timothy 1:1: Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope,

Παῦλος ἀπόστολος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ κατ' ἐπιταγὴν θεοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν καὶ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ τῆς ἐλπίδος ἡμῶν

1 Timothy 2:3: This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,

τοῦτο καλὸν καὶ ἀπόδεκτον ἐνώπιον τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν θεοῦ,

1 Timothy 4:10: For to this end we toil and struggle (or suffer reproach), because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

εἰς τοῦτο γὰρ κοπιῶμεν καὶ ἀγωνιζόμεθα, ὅτι ἠλπίκαμεν ἐπὶ θεῷ ζῶντι, ὅς ἐστιν σωτὴρ πάντων ἀνθρώπων μάλιστα πιστῶν.

Quite significant in these texts is that God as savior is set off against Jesus. In *1 Timothy 1:1*, apostleship is ascribed to the 'command' of God the Saviour and Jesus is referred to as 'Jesus Christ our hope'. This means that apostleship in all its actions - in the Pastorals: the organization of the church - is not only related to the Messianic function and meaning of Jesus, but especially to the tradition of the salvation or liberating acts of God in history. In this perspective, institutional organisation must have effects similar to that which the theology of 'God the Saviour' had in history.

1 Timothy 2:3, again, says that the purpose of 'supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings' which are to be made 'for everyone' - for 'kings and all who are in high positions' - is 'so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity'. This is described as 'right and acceptable to God our Saviour'. Similar to *1 Timothy 1:1*, we find that the relating of the institution of prayer with the institutions represented by the power holders and significant others - kings and all ... in high positions' - in the secular political and social order of the day only acquires significance in the context of the theology of 'God the Saviour'. It is the theology of the tradition of God's saving and liberating actions in history which is to 1) influence the kind of 'supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings'; 2) the kind of actions by kings and all others in high positions; and 3) to 'lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and

dignity' in secular society.

In *1 Timothy 4:10*, the statement, 'For to this end we toil and struggle (or suffer reproach)' indicates - in the context of the Pastorals - the various ministries, organising and management functions and actions in the church. This is then related to the 'hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people'. This is the theological point in terms of which two immediate sections of Scripture must be interpreted: 1) the text dealing with how a servant/ minister/ deacon should conduct him- or herself concerning self-teaching of training in godliness as well as in the teaching of others (1 Tm 4:6-16); 2) how a minister should organise the church - especially concerning widows (1 Tm 5:1-16ff).

Firstly, the text dealing with how a servant/ minister/ deacon should conduct him- or herself concerning self-teaching of training in godliness as well as in the teaching of others (1 Tm 4:6-16), relates to the theology of 'God the Savior' in at least four instances: 1) the instructions which are to be put before fellow believers (1 Tm 4:6); 2) hope in the living God who is the savior of especially those who believe (1 Tm 4:10).

1) the instructions which are to be put before fellow believers (1 Tm 4:6) are instructions which can have repressive or liberatory effects. The repressive instructions and their actions are mentioned as the forbidding of marriage and the demanding of 'abstinence from foods'. People teaching such things, are said to be 'paying attention to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons', are hypocrites and liars (1 Tm 4:1-3). This is contrasted with the liberatory view that marriage as well as foods must be understood differently: that 'God created [them] to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth' (1 Tm 4:3). More generally, 'everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, provided it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by God's word and by prayer' (1 Tm 4:4f). Over and against such teaching which inhibits people, constrain them and

make them less free, is set the faith that God created everything. As such, the Creator God's goodness must be enjoyed in all its fullness. Liberatory action concerning material goods, as 1 Timothy 4:7 says, is set over and against 'profane myths and old wives' tales'.

2) 'Hope in the living God who is the savior of especially those who believe' (1 Tm 4:10) may relate to Jesus - due to the reference to hope (in the resurrection) and 'those who believe'. However, in context, the reference is to 'godliness', 'toil and struggle' and the practicing of the instructions and teachings (1 Tm 4:7,10,15). In the context of the theology of 'God the Savior', such actions have liberatory effects for oneself as well as others. This also links up with the actual and practical 'setting of an example to fellow believers 'in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity' (1 Tm 4:12). As we have seen already in the previous chapter - speech is used in the context of either oppressing someone or liberating someone. The same is true of 'purity' - which is not to be interpreted in the context of abstinence and purity rules concerning space and time but - which has to be interpreted in terms of actual action and interaction between people.

Secondly, the theology of 'God the Savior' has to be interpreted in the context of how a minister should organise the church - especially concerning widows (1 Tm 5:1-16ff). This has already been researched. In summary: the liberatory effects are created in a number of contexts:

- 1) in speech which is not harsh and does not oppress but recognises the status and dignity of people in society;
- 2) in honouring widows by caring financially for them;
- 3) in training children and grandchildren to care for their parents and widows;

- 4) in children and grandchildren actually caring for their parents and widows both in terms of respect but also financially;
- 5) in widows who have set their hope on God and who are above reproach;
- 6) in a widow who is sixty years or older and serve in the church through her good works, as one who has brought up children, shown hospitality, washed the saints' feet, helped the afflicted, and devoted herself to doing good in every way.
- 7) in younger widows who marry, bear children, and manage their households;
- 8) in any believing woman (or believing man or woman or believing man) who assists relatives who are really widows.

6.2.3 Titus

Within Titus, we find the saviour title used interchangeably for both God and Jesus. This indicates that there was strong sense of the fact that what was taught concerning the organizing of the church in the Pastorals, was grounded in the fact that Jesus continued the same kind of salvation God effected in the Old Testament.

6.2.3.1 Titus 1:3

In Titus 1:3, God is addressed as 'Saviour' and in Titus 1:4, Jesus. Both texts form part of the salutation. The first text forms part of the statement that 'God our Saviour' commanded that the author be entrusted with the proclamation of the word - especially as it concerns 'the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that is in accordance with godliness, in the

hope of eternal life' which was promised by God (Tt 1:1-3). The text reads as follows:

Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that is in accordance with godliness, in the hope of eternal life that God, who never lies, promised before the ages began--in due time he revealed his word through the proclamation with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior,

It is important that the proclamation of the word is primarily related to 'the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that is in accordance with godliness'. As we saw when analysing 1 Timothy, learning - or knowledge here - related to 'godliness' means a focus on actual behaviour, action and interaction in concrete circumstances. It is also in this context, that Titus continues the same notion as it relates to 'God the Saviour' in the Old Testament: actions of godliness which manifest the liberating actions of God in particular circumstances. In this context, 'Jesus our Saviour' (Tt 1:4) referred to Jesus who concretised the same effects of God's saving actions concerning people - the addition is that he brought about eternal life as promised by God (Tt 1:2).

Traditionally, the main concern for scholars was how to interpret the references to 'before the ages began' and 'time'. Guthrie (1976:182) relates 'before the ages began' to 'God the Saviour' as if God stands outside time. This, however, seems to the researcher, forced. In context, 'God the Saviour' relates - as in 1 Timothy - to the content: godliness as well as eternal which was manifested through Jesus as Saviour. This insight is missing here.

A.T. Hanson (1982:171) also did not have this insight and said that

this indiscriminate use of 'soter' (Saviour) undoubtedly implies a rather muddled soteriology on [the author's] part. But on the contrary, although the Father and the Son have different saving roles, both are engaged in the work of salvation and both together constitute the single source from which grace and peace flow forth (see also Guthrie 1976:182).

For this researcher - and in terms of the research done so far, this notion of a 'muddled soteriology' is not due to that of the author of Titus but rather that of Hanson and Guthrie.

6.2.3.2 Titus 2:10

This researcher's view on the interpretation of 'God the Saviour' is borne out by the use it is put to in Titus 2:10. Titus 2:9f reads as follows:

Tell slaves to be submissive to their masters and to give satisfaction in every respect; they are not to talk back, not to pilfer, but to show complete and perfect fidelity, so that in everything they may be an ornament to the doctrine of God our Savior.

The full text (Tt 2:1-15) - which can be summarised as 'Teach Sound Teaching' and not 'Teach Sound Doctrine' as some Bibles would have it - reads as follows:

But as for you, teach what is consistent with sound doctrine. Tell the older men to be temperate, serious, prudent, and sound in faith, in love, and in endurance. Likewise, tell the older women to be reverent in behavior, not to be slanderers or slaves to drink; they are to teach what is good, so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be self-controlled, chaste, good managers of the household, kind, being submissive to their husbands, so that the word of God may not be

discredited. Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. Show yourself in all respects a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, gravity, and sound speech that cannot be censured; then any opponent will be put to shame, having nothing evil to say of us. Tell slaves to be submissive to their masters and to give satisfaction in every respect; they are not to talk back,

not to pilfer, but to show complete and perfect fidelity, so that in everything they may be an ornament to the doctrine of God our Savior.

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

Declare these things; exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one look down on you.

As in 1 Timothy, practical interaction of people is based on social rank - which is to be respected. This is the context in which the saying towards slaves must be understood. The fact that there is reference in verse 10 to 'doctrine of God our Savior' - which can be translated rather as 'teaching of God our Saviour' - means that objects in this text have meanings similar to 1 Timothy 5:1-16, e.g. references to the conduct of 'older men'; 'older women'; 'young women'; 'younger men'; Titus himself; 'slaves'. Action and interaction based on the prescriptions in this text will result in effects in society which will be similar to that of 'God the Saviour'. Not only for slaves - as Guthrie (1976:196) and Stott (1997:191) have it - but for all these

categories of people mentioned, here, they had to 'in every way ... make the teaching about God our Saviour attractive'. The Greek for 'ornament' triggers the image of 'the arrangement of jewels in a manner to set off their full beauty'.

The slaves but also all other categories of people had to practice saving acts in accordance with the theology of God the Saviour.

6.2.3.3 Titus 3:4

As Titus 3:4 points out, to act in terms of the prescriptions in these texts, does not mean that one's 'righteousness' brings about salvation for oneself. Rather, they are part of the continuation of the theology of 'God the Saviour' - actions which have liberating effects in society. The text - Titus 3:4f - reads as follows:

But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

The fact that the theology of 'God the Saviour' as the researcher attempted to expound it is central here is evident from the fact that the author tries to prevent a wrong interpretation by saying that such actions and interactions is not 'righteousness' which brings about salvation. Salvation itself, only comes about on the basis of the mercy of God.

Under the heading 'Good Deeds', the full text, Titus 3:1-11, reads as follows.

Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be

gentle, and to show every courtesy to everyone. For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, despicable, hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. This Spirit he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. The saying is sure.

I desire that you insist on these things, so that those who have come to believe in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works; these things are excellent and profitable to everyone. But avoid stupid controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. After a first and second admonition, have nothing more to do with anyone who causes divisions, since you know that such a person is perverted and sinful, being self-condemned.

Again, as in 1 Timothy and the text above - Titus 2:1-15 - conduct, and practical interaction are related to the respect of social rank in society. In context, there is again a juxtaposition between 'God our Saviour' and 'Jesus Christ our Saviour'. The argument seems to be that as 'our righteousness' is embedded in 'God our Saviour', this in itself is nothing in terms of salvation of oneself. The latter is only possible through 'Jesus our Saviour'. In this context, it is 'God our Saviour' who also initiated this salvation.

Stott (1997:203), Guthrie (1976:204) and Kelly (1983:250) missed this point. If the notion of 'Saviour' contrasts with the Emperor-cult, then the main difference is that God's salvation is embedded in the tradition of those who suffer and who are destitute. And here, it is because of God's kindness, love, mercy and grace that he intervened on behalf of the destitute, that he

took the initiative, came after humanity, and rescued it from hopelessness (contra Stott 1997:203). It is in this context that all the organising actions of the Pastorals must be interpreted.

6.2.4 Jude 1:25

Jude makes a distinction between 'the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord'.

Now to him who is able to keep you from falling, and to make you stand without blemish in the presence of his glory with rejoicing, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

There is but one God and he is 'Saviour'. In the Old Testament it is emphasized that God is the Saviour of His people. In the context of idolatry and false teaching, there is nobody else. The Christian doctrine of salvation goes hand in hand with the unicity of God. 'The one, personal, holy, loving God made the world, maintains it ('to save', is often used in this sense), redeemed it through Jesus Christ, and will be glorified in it' (Green 1976:191). So far from setting the supreme God against the Demiurge (as some Gnostic systems were soon to do), this verse insists that there is only one God.

From setting the attitude of the Father against the Son in redemption (as some Christians have done in their atonement doctrine), this verse gives glory to the one Saviour God through Jesus Christ.

In the Old Testament God delivers his people Israel if and when they call upon Him. In the New Testament, he delivers those who have no claim on him whatever. Many were Gentiles without knowing him. Jesus Christ may refer either to the fact that it is through Christ that God saves man, or to

the fact that glory can only properly be given to God through Jesus (see 1 Pt 4:11).

6.3 Contextualising 'Widows' in the Theology of 'God the Saviour'

It has now become clear that the analysis of 'God the Saviour', links up with the analyses we did in both chapters 4 and 5 - concerning widows in the Old Testament and in 1 Timothy. In New testament context, the Pastorals made sure that there is not 'muddled thinking concerning 'God as Saviour' and Jesus as Saviour'. The actual conduct, actions and interactions of believers - whether they be presbyters, deacons, elders but also ordinary believers like widows - had to continue the actions which were related to the 'God the Saviour' theology. On the one hand, widows formed part of the category of people who were exploited most in society. On the other hand, if they were not 'real widows' - suffering especially financially - then they were asked to practice godliness - which stands in the tradition of God's saving, liberating and compassionate actions towards all.

6.4 Summary

The main theological argument can be formulated as follows: Since God has saved people (first Israel but later to include all people) from materially oppressive situations and has done so through Jesus' ministry too, the task of the church is to continue this tradition in its ministry and organisation, i.e. to act and interact in liberatory ways and to organise the church in such a way that it brings about not further repression, but effects freedom.

Throughout the texts surveyed, some of the main elements related to this argument and the notion of the 'Saviour God' were: 1) liberation from slavery, oppression and suffering in Egypt; 2) the law and covenant; 3) the breaking of the covenant relationship with God as Saviour in particular historical circumstances through specific acts; 4) the cry to God for help; 5)

the call to remember the liberation from Egypt and the covenant; 6) Israel's hope for God's liberatory and restorative intervention in an eschatological future; 7) the result of liberation, salvation and restoration depended on Israel returning to God and to bring their own actions in line with his actions.

Analogically, when this theology is compared with the New Testament, we find that there are especially two elements which fell away: that of God as warrior God, and the focus on Israel as ethnic entity. Christianity acquires a universal scope - more in line with the universalist ideas present in Isaiah.

One primary element which is added more strongly than in the Old Testament, is that acts of liberation or salvation in the New Testament are practiced by believers concerning the suffering of others.

In this context, the actual conduct, actions and interactions of believers - whether they be presbyters, deacons, elders but also ordinary believers like widows - had to continue the actions which were related to the 'God the Saviour' theology. On the one hand, widows formed part of the category of people who were exploited most in society. On the other hand, if they were not 'real widows' - suffering especially financially - then they were asked to practice godliness - which stands in the tradition of God's saving, liberating and compassionate actions towards all.

CHAPTER SEVEN

QUALITATIVE INTERACTIVE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH FOR WIDOWS

7.0 Introduction

The interest for this dissertation arose in an empirical context where the researcher was confronted with some problems widows experienced. Primarily, the research has been done for these widows. This was research into especially the socio-cultural conventions of first century Palestine (Chapter 3); the notion of widow in the Old Testament (Chapter 4); an interpretation of 1 Timothy 5:1-16 (Chapter 5); and the interpretation of widows in the context of the theology of 'God the Saviour'. For this purpose and in these contexts, a theory of 'symbolic interactionism' within the larger ambit of social-scientific research has been developed and illustrated and used to various degrees. This was to meet the challenge to contribute to theory development in our current theological context of transformation.

In line with the fact that theory was primarily developed for widows, this chapter now continues by providing an overview of the actual, empirical interactive research conducted for them. The first section overviews some research which has been done concerning widows in various different African cultures and the second provides an overview of the research conducted with widows concerning their own situation in the Independent Methodist Church. The reason for the focus in the first section is that it is important to see how the situation of widows in our Southern African context relate to 'the rest of Africa'. The focus in the second section provides an overview of the actual research - which may be followed and further developed.

7.1 Widows in Africa

The first section of this chapter focuses on the status of widows in the African cultural context. It consists of an the overview of eight culture-specific

analyses - in Tanzania, Kenya, Nigeria and Zambia. Besides the status of widows, the problems widows face, are focused on.

In African culture, each member of society is expected to abide by the norms and values of the culture. The African culture does consider men superior than women. Widows as women are classified under the category of women. However, they are often in position less valued than even the other members in the family of the deceased husband. They are marginalised. Furthermore, they are marginalised in church and society for various reasons. Culturally, they are also neglected in rituals, concerning their financial well-fare, and often denied the right to share their opinion concerning the difficult situations they find themselves in.

7.1.1 The Status of Widows in Luo Custom

The Luo reside along the Kenyan and Tanzanian border in East Africa. Luo custom uses the patrilineal system for determining the status of its widows. The status of widows in this clan is determined by Leviratic practices - both legally and culturally.

Legally, she may either 1. continue to live in her deceased husband's home, in which case she may cohabit with either (1) one of her deceased husband brothers, (2) one of her husband's male relatives, or (3) any man who has been adopted into the deceased husband's clan (Kirwen 1977:30).

Culturally, the widow is not empowered to cohabit with the brother of the deceased according to her desire because her choice is subject to the approval of the family and clan elders. It is possible that she cohabits with a man of whom they do not approve. The man may then be sued by the clan elders for adultery. The children who are conceived through the leviratic union belong to the family of the dead husband. In the case of returning to her father's home, her father is obliged to return a certain amount of the bridewealth depending on the number of children the widow has.

The source of living is agricultural and the major source of wealth is in the raising of livestock (cattle, sheep, and goats). The importance of livestock

is evident, because it is the principal mode of paying the bride price.

In some cases, widows are not allowed to remarry. The main reasons may be because: 1) a widow is still considered married even though her husband has physically died; 2) the continuation of the marriage is determined by the fact that the bride price paid by the husband's lineage had not been returned; 3) a widow is cared for by her brother-in-law who cohabits with her in a levirate union substituting for the dead husband (Kirwen 1977:35). In this custom, 'widows themselves know that they are still wives, therefore, they are not free for remarriage'. The 'widow' is still considered to be a functioning, legal wife. The technical term used for a widow in the Luo language is 'chiliel', literally a 'wife of a grave'. Not 'widow of a grave' but 'wife of a grave' (Kirwen 1977:36). She knows she is the wife of someone belonging to a family - she is already married.

The Luo custom insists on the fact that the brother of the deceased husband should be responsible for taking care of the widow. There are three reasons which are given, 1) 'he is like her husband'; 2) 'a woman with children knows that her people (husband lineage) will always help her if her husband dies'; (3) 'the wealth which married her came from the joint efforts of her husband's lineage' (Kirwen 1977:38).

The church's response to the cultural leviratic union, is to regard it as a sinful act before God because the widow may be a second wife of the deceased's brother. Furthermore, the church interprets that union as a promiscuous act - she is bound sexually to the deceased brother.

In some cases, the leviratic custom is approved by the church. Some of the reasons are as follows: Religiously, 'God did not forbid this custom'; ... morally, 'she is in need and in difficulty with her family and she should be helped by her brother-in-law to make her house grow'; ... 'the widow is not a prostitute but she will become one if she does not stay with her brother-in-law' (Kirwen 1977:46). The Luo people defends the fact that failure to care

properly for a widow will mean the loss of her dead husband's wealth and will to prostitution.

Traditionally, the Luo custom does not allow its widows to remarry, because of the bond between the two families. Therefore, 'a wife of bridewealth is a wife of a lineage and is cared for by her brother-in-law', and those who remarry are 'like prostitutes' (Kirwen 1977:49).

The leviratic union is not the same as remarriage because the widow can leave whenever she wants, or she can be dismissed by the brother-in-law even after having had children by him, since the children take the name of the dead husband. In that case, 'there is no bridewealth paid', 'that the widow is still called the wife of the dead husband', and 'that a single man is not considered married even if he is cohabiting with a widow' (Kirwen 1977:51). The wife remains married to the deceased husband in this custom.

Luo people have a strong belief in immortality. The deceased husband is believed to still have a relationship with his widow. The widow is compelled to remain on the premises of her husband so that she can maintain some status among the members of the deceased family and in society. Whenever she fails to comply with the norms of the family custom, she is sent back to her former family. Even there she is not supposed to remarry any person outside the clan of the deceased husband. The main arguments of the family is based on the fact that the 'She is already married with her deceased husband and she cannot be married twice as she is someone's wife' (Kirwen 1977:34).

She is further required to keep up the relationship with her husband clan. This custom insists on the norm of Leviratic custom for determining the accepted status of widows within the boundaries of the custom. The status of widows in this custom is determined by her compliance with the Leviratic custom. Kirwen further states that, with the inception of marriage, one of the important elements of the ceremony - a covenant - is that the family of the husband receives the authority to rule the widow in the event of death. 'When

the husband has deceased, the widow is prohibited to break the covenant until such time when the bride wealth is returned to the family of the husband'. The bridewealth plays a pivotal role between the bridegroom and the bride's families. It binds the ancestors of the two families. Therefore, the family of the deceased husband demands the widow to cohabit with one of her brothers-in-law in order to secure her status within this custom. If she undermines the demand of the family, she defies her status within family custom and she is marginalized.

7.1.2 The Status of Widows in Kuma Custom

The Kuria/Kuma in Tanzania are very similar to the Luo in terms of the patrilineal rules of inheritance, descent and the payment of bridewealth. They too, have a leviratic custom for the care of widows. However, there are differences.

There are differences between the Luo and the Kuria for the care of widows. The Kuria recognize four legal options, all of which are real possibilities:

(1) a widow can return to her father's home and be remarried; (2) a widow can cohabit with her brother-in-law in a leviratic union; (3) a widow can be leviratically inherited by her brother-in-law but choose to live alone and not cohabit with him; and (4) a widow can be leviratically inherited by her brother-in-law but choose to cohabit with a friend (Kirwen 1977:58).

Widows are inherited by the brothers or, if there are no brothers, by the nearest relatives of the deceased, but only if they agree. If a widow refuses to be inherited, the bridewealth paid for her can be reclaimed If the widow agrees to be inherited, she does not necessarily become the wife of the heir. She can live near him but he cannot force her to become his wife. If the widow wishes to return home and marry again into another family, the whole bridewealth, including the offspring of the bridewealth cattle, must be repaid, whether she has children or not. Legitimate children always belong to their father and their status cannot be altered by the payment or repayment of bridewealth (Kirwen 1977:59)

Traditionally, widows of this custom were forbidden to remarry. However, people say that it became more caring on the basis that, because the husband is dead, his death has to be seen as 'freeing' the widow for remarriage, rather than seeing the original marriage as continuing. The widow can remarry if

she does not have children, or if she cannot live on her own. In principle, there is nothing which prevents her from marrying again (Kirwen 1977:62).

The main reason why a widow sometimes do not remarry, is that she knows she is the wife and belongs to a family - she is already married. In this case, the brother-in-law is still regarded as a suitable replacement for the deceased brother, or 'the clan can best take care of a widow as they see her and treat her as a brother's wife' (Kirwen 1977:65). Here, the Kuria makes a distinction within the leviratic system: between 'inheritor' and 'sexual partner'.

A widow can agree to accept a brother-in-law as her leviratic inheritor while accepting a friend as her leviratic sexual partner. The Luo on the other hand do not make such a distinction. For them the leviratic inheritor and sexual partner are always one and the same person (Kirwen 1977:66).

According to the Kuria tradition, both the blood brother by birth and the blood brother by circumcision are seen as capable of substituting for a deceased man in a leviratic relationship with his widow. This is so because a man has communal identity with both his lineage and his circumcision-group fellows.

The role of the brother-in-law as the legal leviratic inheritor arises so as to ensure that the widow's wealth and children continue to remain in the lineage of the deceased husband and not switch to the lineage of the leviratic 'friend' (Kirwen 1977:67).

There are then a number of options for marital behavior possible for Kuria widows: 1) they can either choose to divorce and remarry; 2) choose to enter into a levirate union; 3) cohabit with a brother-in-law; 4) live alone; 5) or cohabit with a friend. If the option is for remarriage, this depends on the return of the bridewealth. In addition, research showed that one of the major reasons for decisions to remarry is that of the problem of sterility of the deceased husband. If the option is for a leviratic union, the main difference with the Luo is that the Kuria distinguish between the role of the leviratic inheritor and the cohabitor. If the option is to live alone, the Kuria may still be inherited by a brother but choose to live alone without a marital partner.

The status of widows in Kuma custom differs from the Luo on three more points. *The Luo does not believe in immortality*. Rather, they believe that, with the death of the husband, the widow is separated from him eternally. Furthermore, the lineage relationship which existed between individuals due to the marriage, cease to exist. It does not see the marriage arrangement as a covenant as the Luo does (Kirwen 1977:55-59). This is the reason why this custom also allows its widows to remarry outside the clan. They reject the idea of a blood brother who is related to the deceased. Some customs - like the Luo - insists on this relationship and that it must be replace the relationship with the deceased husband.

Secondly, *the Kuma is matrilineal* and not patrilineal like the Luo. In the matrilineal system, authority lies with the mother's lineage. Inheritance of children is claimed through the mother's lineage. The father's lineage is denied custom identity formation as well as inheritance for his own progeny. All powers are transferred to the maternal uncle, who is assigned to handle affairs on behalf of his sister's children. Further, this custom does not demand any bridewealth for their marriageable daughters. This is an additional reason why children do not belong to or are not inherited by the father's lineage. If bride prices are paid, they are for children in the father's lineage. In this instance, this custom integrates the matrilineal and partrilineal principles of inheritance.

Thirdly, *the Kuma allows the widow to take a decision for herself concerning her future*. It is part of the marriage agreement in this matrilineal system, that, in the event of the death of the husband, widows, together with their children must be given the opportunity to return to their father's home, i.e. with immediate effect after the funeral of the husband. This contrasts with the covenant of the patrilineal system where the bridewealth prohibits a widow to make a decision herself about her future. She has to comply with custom. Whereas the matrilineal system allows for the widow to make a decision on her own as to her future - to opt to accept 'leviratic union'; return

to her father's home with her children; decide to remarry outside the clan of the deceased husband - the patrilineal system does not do so. In the event of the maternal home not being in existence any more, widows usually enter into a 'leviratic union' with a brother-in-law. In this case, once they are engaged, they are supported by the family, without any association with the male partner. Young widows are encouraged to remarry, old widows not. In the patrilineal system, 'leviratic union' is compulsory. The only alternative for the widow to remarry outside this custom is conditioned on the return of the bridewealth.

The status of the widow in the clan is maintained customarily if she accepts the blood brother-in-law by birth voluntarily. Where there is no blood brother-in-law, the blood brother by circumcision can be an alternative person to enter into a relationship with the widow. According to custom, both are liable to substitute for the deceased husband.

From this information, it is evident that there is greater freedom for the widow in the matrilineal system. She is not restricted by custom rules.

7.1.3 The Status of Widows in Sukuma Custom

The status of widows in the Sukuma custom depends entirely on the patrilineal system. Even though this custom does not relate the belief in immortality to the widow like the Luo, it still requires the widow to comply with the 'leviratic custom' and enter into a relationship with a brother-in-law. In the absence of a brother-in-law, the family provides an alternative by appointing a male and close relative who is still considered as a compatible substitute. If there is not such a person available, then the widow is allowed to return to her paternal home and enter into another marriage if she wishes.

In the event of such a widow not returning to her own family home, and she decides to stay on in the residence of her husband, she is viewed with suspicion. This means that she is not recognised as a legal widow. The family as well as larger society defies her status. Such actions are regarded as

stubborn behaviour. The family suspects that, due to her behaviour, the 'ancestors' are punishing her for promiscuity.

If there is a suitable brother-in-law and the widow enters into a relationship with him according to custom, the brother-in-law secures both the widow's status and ensures that she does not become 'stubborn' and promiscuous.

The widow, therefore, ... experiences her husband in the ministrations of his brother, even in her sexual relations with the brother-in-law. The substitute brother-in-law maintains her husband's identity, the integrity of his family and his presence within the family (Kirwen 1977:177).

In terms of the belief in immortality, the deceased husband is regarded as a living being who is not only still 'present' but who is also able to influence the lives of his wife and children through his spirit. The children born from the union between the widow and the brother-in-law are born in the name of the deceased husband. In other words, even though the Sukuma are not as strict as the Luo, the widow is still the wife of the deceased husband in a secondary sense. The maintaining of good sexual relations with the brother-in-law is recognised as a moral responsibility, pure and recognised as good behaviour within the clan.

7.1.4 The Status of Widows in Hansa Society

The status of widows in Hansa society is primarily determined by ritual. Widows have and maintain their status primarily not through their behaviour but through the observance of ritual requirements. In order to maintain her status, the only requirement is that the widow must participate in the necessary ritual ceremonies. In this case, they are classified as single, previously married women and are simultaneously eligible for remarriage.

Another possibility which the widows have to cope with is that there is no distinction between the status of a divorcee and a widow. This fact - as in other West-African societies - is also reflected in language. The same words are used for both: 'Bazawara' (singular); 'Zazarawa' (plural). The word

identifies them as 'anything which has been used and is to be used' (Potash 1986:138-141).

Even so, the major difference between widows and divorcees is the mourning period. The mourning period for widows is known as 'takaba'. During this period, it is imperative for the widows to reside in the residence of their former husbands. Here, they are observed by members of the family and by society - to ensure that they conscientiously observe the mourning rituals. These are as follows.

Firstly, before the starting of 'takaba', widows are compelled to repeatedly take ritual baths on a Friday.

Secondly, all decorations inside the house are cleared out until such time as the mourning period is over. The decorations are seen as repository of the widow's memory, and to ensure true mourning, they are taken out. At this level, widows are compelled to comply with the mourning restrictions which are rooted in cultural beliefs.

Thirdly, due to the value put on mourning, widows are prohibited to adorn their bodies. They are also not allowed to use perfumed soap, but only the traditional black nupe soap. They are also forbidden to plait their hair or to use make-up. They have to keep the head covered with a sharol and wear traditional dress - an old unadorned wrapper - which they are not allowed to change until the end of the mourning period. After the first seven days of mourning, it can be washed frequently.

When the mourning period comes to an end, widows may decide for themselves where they prefer to reside. They can also consider remarriage outside the clan if they want to. There is no pressure from the family of the deceased husband in this regard. If the deceased husband did not own the residence where they stayed, the widow has to evacuate it as soon as the mourning period comes to an end. This counts for both young and old widows. Whereas younger widows are expected to remarry (they can still conceive), older widows - or widows who have reached menopause - are not.

The status of widows in terms of remarrying is determined by child-bearing possibilities.

7.1.5 The Status of Widows in the Dukawa Society

The status of widows in this society is determined by the outcome of the negotiation process which the family of the deceased husband initiates on his death. The motif behind the negotiation is to ensure that the widow remains within the clan. Widows are beseeched to remarry the younger brother of the deceased husband. Even so, it depends on the decision of the widow concerning such a request. The widow is not compelled to agree with the request if she is not satisfied with the offer at hand. The offer may come from either a younger brother or a younger cousin. She has the right to refuse any form of remarriage, either the 'leviratic union' or any other offer from whoever. If the widow complies with the request and marries the deceased's younger brother, he becomes responsible for rearing the children from the former marriage. Potash (1986:166f) says that

If a widow is happy with her husband's family, she is likely to agree to a leviratic arrangement and remain with them.

In the African context, this cultural approach is very rare, in the sense that widows are not recognised in most cultures. They can break the bond which binds them to the deceased husband without any strong reaction from the family. They are not prohibited to do so freely. Those who consider 'leviratic union', also often do not reside with their stand-in husbands or levirs. Instead, they, together with their children, often remain in their own residence. The levirs usually take their responsibility concerning the raising and caring of the children seriously and are also strongly aware that such children are not their own, but that of the deceased brother. The widow may become the levir's wife, but the children are his brother's.

The Dukawa does not allow extra-marital affairs, either for the husband or the wife. They are equally condemned for such involvement.

7.1.6 The Status of Widows in Akan Society

Akan society uses a system which is not strict on either women or men if they want to become a successor for a deceased person. This is because they belong to a variety of matrilineal lineages. If there is 'levirate union', the brother of the deceased becomes responsible for the maintenance of the widow and younger children. In this case, sexual intercourse can either be exercised or not - on this, there are strict rules. What is however significant about this kind of relationship, is that when one of the members in the relationship wishes to end it, he or she has power to terminate it without any consent from the other party.

The crux, however, is who intends to break the relationship. If the successor breaks it, restitution of property to the family of the widow takes place. If it is the widow who breaks the relationship, part of the marriage imbursement is to be returned to her deceased husband's family. This process can be defined as a divorce, because the tie between the families is broken. There is then no 'leviratic union' between the successor and the widow anymore. Rattray affirms that sometimes, the '[w]idows become property of their late husband's elder brothers, that is, the heir to the property of the deceased (see Potash 1986:192).

7.1.7 The Status of Widows in Baule Society

The Baule society follows very strict rules during the mourning period. The rules for widows and widowers are identical. The partner who is still alive has to wear special clothing as a sign of mourning in the family and in society. He or she must fast during the day, and literally weep throughout the day to show the sadness for loosing his or her partner.

Everyday, the partner must remain confined to the residence which was shared with the deceased partner, and exercise abstinence from any conversation with members from society until such time that the mourning period is over. The only people he or she is allowed to talk to, are those who

are also widowed. They serve as guides. Widowers must abstain from sexual intercourse with other women. After the rites of bereavement comes to an end, both widow and widower joins the activities of society only gradually.

One of the remarkable exercises when resuming sexual relations, is that, '[b]efore resuming normal sexual relations, he or she must first have a sexual encounter with a stranger' (Potash 1986:253). This has to do with the ghost of the deceased partner who can interfere in a new relationship through jealousy. The motif behind remarriage of the widower is that he cannot interfere in his ex-wife's kin-group. A widow who intends to remarry a husband's kinsman, is prohibited. The widow has to undergo a special ritual in which it is determined whether the new husband is related to the deceased or not.

After the rituals, the deceased husband's elders must 'divorce' the couple in the context of the sex which has to be had 'clandestinely'. Often, this is ritually acted out as simulated adultery, after which compensation is demanded in the form of a propitiatory sacrifice to the ghost of the deceased. The kinsman who wants to marry a widow, must also obtain permission from the deceased man through ritual. As in other societies, the main reason why there are institutions like the 'leviratic union', is to provide a new system in which children can be cared for (Potash 1986:253).

7.1.8 The Status of Widows in African Society

For the few societies overviewed here, there appears to be some remarkable freedoms for widows in some societies but also some remarkable constraints in others.

Matrilineal societies (Kuma) and societies with a variety of matrilineal lineages (Akan) seems to give the greatest freedom to widows. So too does societies where requirements for widows and widowers are the same (Baule). Strong patrilineal societies (Luo) on the other hand, seems to put the greatest constraints on widows. Not in general cultural terms - as overviewed here -

but specific empirical research needs to be done in terms of how widows suffer under existing cultural and customary norms and conventions. It is true that culture and custom provides group identity, but where it exploits women, it needs to be changed. Custom and culture have been and are made by people. They are human creations. And where it concerns suffering, they must be changed to cater more effectively for the suffering and lowly. In this context, even those cultures which allow the greatest freedom, may not be as helpful as one may think, i.e. if one enters into empirical research concerning particular widows in particular relationships and situations.

Even so, the 'leviratic union' and the various rituals are ways that the different cultures devised in time to care for widows in their particular ways. This fact is important, because societies recognise the central fact - as does the Bible - that widows can very easily become destitute, and in terms of the Biblical view, come to belong to the least-ranked persons in society. In this context, it appears as if it is the details of custom which may be experienced as restrictive or flexible, allowing for greater freedom but also responsibility.

In the context of the research into Mediterranean society and the Bible, it seems as if the research covered in this chapter does not deal with the exceptions to the rule. As we saw in Chapter 4, the Old Testament is full of exceptions. It is these exceptions which show alternative ways of how society not only care for its widows, but also how it educate itself in terms of ways and means which can be followed where there are no rules or where some rules outweigh others. We also saw that, in these stories, a great premium is placed on the initiative of widows. It is regrettable that the researcher could not find material covering such elements in African society. It is an area requiring further research.

Concerning the New Testament - where there is a distinction between 'real widows' and widows who are catered for in existing systems - African society must realise that institutions such as the church must cater for destitute widows. 'Real widows' are those who are suffering from disrespect

and financially. In order to research how the reality of widowhood impacts on widows in the Independent Methodist Church, the following is an overview of the research the researcher conducted in the course of two years.

7.2 Qualitative Interactive Empirical Research for Widows

7.2.0 Introduction

In addition to the problem of having lost a husband, widows in Africa also have to deal with cultural and customary restrictions. In many systems, they experience rejection, are excluded from decision making, and are often classified and treated as if something shameful happened to them. This is situation often ignored in the violent politics of South Africa. In this context, this section deals with the general situation of widows in South Africa; the questionnaire for widows in the Independent Methodist Church of Africa; the challenges facing Widows; and possibilities for pastoral care.

7.2.1 The General Situation of Widows in South Africa

The general situation of widows is primarily determined by 1) South African politics; 2) custom law theory; 3) the rights of women concerning land; 4) widows with grown children; 5) younger widows with young children.

7.2.1.1 South African Politics

Before and after the democratic elections in this country, tension was very high among the political parties in the KwaZulu-Natal region. Thousands of men have been deeply active in the struggle for the freedom of this country. The ultimate effect of the struggle was the termination of many lives of men who were bread winners of thousands of families in our country. Though positive results was achieved in the struggle, it has left thousands of women as widows, homeless, children as orphans.

After the elections, sporadic violent outbursts continue. In this

situation, institutions in society - such as the church - are called upon to have a healing effect in society. This must be done in the context of democracy, fairness and equal opportunity. Since, however, the African people has suffered so much, are extremely disadvantaged and suffered under the previous system, to arrive at a more equitable situation is a great challenge which will not be easily achieved.

On the way to equity, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission played an important role. It did bridge some gaps, between the families of victims and the perpetrators. The heavy burden of healing the wounds of the past is left as one of the major responsibilities to which the various churches in South Africa can contribute. It is in this context that the researcher focused on widows in the Independent Methodist Church of Africa. This focus did not want to exclude other widows or favour some and not others. This is the focus because the researcher did not want to encroach on areas of work of other churches and other institutions. Further research may be done more comprehensively, involving other religions and other institutions in the violent country which is South Africa.

7.2.1.2 Custom Law Theory

The main institution in African customary law which caters for widows is that of the 'levirate union'. Generally, a man's death does not automatically terminate his marriage. The reason is that, in technical terms, marriage is a union of two families, not of two individuals (Bennet 1995:410). It therefore endures until formal dissolution by settlement of the bridewealth. The main implication for the widow is that she must remain with her late husband's family under the protection of the heir until such dissolution takes place. In this context, few would demand a young widow to be chaste, particularly when the deceased died without an heir and the widow is still young and capable of having children. It would be expected of her to become part of a new relationship.

The 'levirate union' is an institution which provides a way in which a widow's status is recognised and her children prevented from suffering any stigma of illegitimacy (Bennet 1995:410). Where a deceased husband does not have an heir, the levir has to father a child which is not his. In this situation, no more bridewealth need be paid. Where the deceased was married but died without a son, one of his male relatives may arrange a 'seedraiser' union (Bennet 1995:411). These unions reflect the emphasis customary law places on social rather than genetic paternity: provided that bridewealth has been paid, all children accrue to the husband's family regardless of who fathered them (Bennet 1995:411).

The main problem in this context, however, is that much in custom law does not sufficiently care for widows - they may still provide conditions in which women are exploited.

7.2.1.3 The Rights of Women Concerning Land

In terms of the democratic constitution of South Africa, the main challenge for custom law is to come in line with the constitution and for our modern society not to separate itself off from the grassroots. In this context, women's access to land is a major issue and one from which widows may benefit. In this area, women's experiences have generally been hidden and are in danger of remaining shrouded unless a gender perspective is adopted. This is so in a world where women have less status, power, authority and access to resources, than men of their race and class, in the home, in the economy and in relation to the state. There are a number of issues which must be raised concerning this issue.

Class, age, marital status, kinship role and status - as wife, mother, sister, daughter - all intervene to create differences in power, authority, and access to resources (Meer 1987:16f; see Walker 1994; Gailey 1987; Cross & Friedman in this collection).

For most rural women in South Africa the lack of *legitimate access to land* is a major issue. However, in addition to land, women prioritise access to jobs, water, and basic services such as clinics and schools, as the means to secure livelihoods and improve the conditions of their reproductive labour.

Women are *insecure in their rights of access to land*. Single, widowed or divorced women are disadvantaged in access to land, and often have to depend on the whim of a chief or headmen to make a decision about their rights of access and use. Meer says that

Women are disadvantaged by social assumptions and informal land practices that are not controlled by law. These become particularly important when the land system is under pressure, either from overcrowding or from economic change (Meer 1997:17).

Men's and women's *concepts of land rights differ*. Men value land mainly for its place in organising social and political relationships; women value it mainly for its productive and reproductive use (Meer 1997:18). In essence, communal tenure is a system under which individual families hold land and run their own production, but the community maintains the right to approve of any outsiders who want to obtain land rights (Meer:1997:19; see Cross 1991). In these areas, the rights of the individual land holders may be in decline. Some chiefs now seem to see land as their private property.

Privately owned land in African rural areas includes farms owned communally by syndicates or tribes, farms subdivided into plots held by descendants of original buyers, and farms owned by descendants of a single buyer (Meer 1997:20).

Women's ownership rights are often squeezed as pressure on land increase and the resources are scarce.

Women and families of women are often forced off the farms. On farms in the advanced sectors, few workers seem to be able to retire on the farms where they live and work. When a worker dies, retires, or is evicted, usually, his whole family is forced to leave. Widows have little or no formal claim to remain or to keep their accommodation. The same applies for labour-tenant families evicted from unused farms or farms owned by absentee landlords.

Whether in rural towns or in black rural communities, households headed by women have a difficult time competing for land with male-headed households. If they have not maintained land rights in the reserve, or if they have no relatives to introduce them or no sons to do the negotiations, families displaced from farms may be unable to find a place to stay (Meer 1997:22-23).

Categories of disadvantage for women. Since only households that hold land are recognised for community membership, tenure is the process that defines the kinds of household that qualify socially and politically (Cross 1991; 1992). Since many of the families run by women do not qualify to hold land, they therefore do not have any official recognition as separate and independent households. Certain tenure systems are more open to women than others. Categories of advantage and disadvantage are also closely connected to poverty.

In view of the heavy burden on rural women, who often try to support both their own families and those of women relatives on their inadequate wages, there is clearly a great need for women with little access to urban income to be empowered to obtain land, and to use it to support their families (Meer 1997:29).

7.2.1.4 Widows with Grown Children

Older widows with grown children are the best-positioned group under most rural tenure systems (Meer 1997:29; see Walker 1994; Cross et al. 1995). This is because widows under both state tenure and informal tenure are normally allowed to keep a usufruct right to the landholding of their late husbands.

Widows with grown or adolescent children are also the category of female-headed household which can most easily move to a new area. Because the household was originally structured around a marriage, and because children are present, the family is usually viewed as respectable and acceptable, 'correct' in value terms. An older widow who wants to move her family closer to town or into an informal settlement can often obtain a tenure

right in the name of her son or grandson (Meer 1997:30). These families are also not necessarily poor. Although the families of widows have been considered the most exposed to impoverishment since colonial times, this situation has now changed to a degree.

7.2.1.5 Younger Widows with Young Children

The second ranking category of female-headed households, in relation to land access, is that of younger widows or abandoned wives with young, pre-adolescent children. When such women have already settled on their own landholding before losing their husbands, their chances of keeping their land are usually good. At the same time, their claim seems to be more precarious than that of older families, and poverty is also a factor.

7.2.2 Questionnaire for Widows in the Independent Methodist Church of Africa

The empirical research for widows has been conducted mainly in isiZulu society in the Pietermaritzburg area. In addition, research included widows from 1) Bulwer; 2) Sizananjane; 3) Klipwal - Piet Retief; 4) Soweto; and 5) Springs. The main focus was to determine the plight of widows, how they function in society and how the church - as one institution among others - may contribute to the quality of life of widows. In the process, the researcher also attempted to uncover some of the norms and values in Zulu culture as they impact on widowhood.

The target group were mostly older widows. Only one was still of marriageable age. They all belong to the above mentioned church. Some have been widows for a period of more than 10 years and some for less. One woman has been a widow for just less than a year. 52 widows were interviewed.

As part of the qualitative research, the full extent of the discussions - which have all been conducted in groups can not be provided. This allowed the women to interactively share experiences but also ideas. As the information was gathered, the researcher also shared some of it with widows from other places. Even so, the researcher attempts to provide some indication of some of the responses to the questions.

The Questionnaire and responses

1. Did you have a husband?

Yes.

2. Were you married?

Yes.

3. If you were married, did you have a Zulu marriage or before the law?

41 widows had married before the law of this country and 11 had been married according to custom.

4. If you still had a husband or if your husband was still alive, what would your life be like?

This question affected the widows emotionally - they cried. Some said later that it was the first time they cried since the death of their husbands. They shared their feelings with one another as well as the actual difficulties they have faced while their husbands were still alive and since the death of their husbands. Some of these husbands passed away due to sickness such as arthritis, heart failure, alcoholism, with the majority, due to the political violence in our country.

For some widows, their husbands were 'troublesome', abused them physically, were alcoholics, verbally and physically abused the children,

misused funds and allowed the family to suffer. Children were not supported sufficiently for schooling. They felt that, as wives and mothers, they totally despaired and their lives were miserable.

Two of the widows interviewed indicated that before their husbands passed away, they were both sick with the possibility of either one dying. In this situation they tried their best to stay alive for the sake of children and grandchildren. Others experienced more difficulties as they were left with young children. The absence of an authoritative figure in the family also left widows with the new experience of loneliness in child-rearing. This sense of continuous loneliness every moment of the day seems to be one of the overriding feelings of the widows.

The sense of loneliness reminded some of the jokes as well as serious discussion of family matters they shared with their husbands. For others, the death of their husbands came as a relief because they were abused so much.

Lastly, they indicated that they were affected spiritually, some experienced mental disturbance and others, continuous illness. This, they ascribed to the fact that the responsibilities they had to take on themselves were too heavy. On their own, they could not manage life socially and they were continuously plagued by the fact that they are unable to give their children a quality education.

5. When you have a husband, do people treat you better than they are treating you now?

Generally, they felt that there is a change in the sense that when the husbands were alive, they had security and dignity in society. After the death, there is a vacuum in their lives. If this is not enough, people also treat them as part of a shameful group in society.

6. How are they treating you now?

They felt that they were treated and approached as human beings. The stigma of widowhood, however, make some people to not treat them in a dignified manner. One widow pointed out that she has lost her dignity, status, discipline, that she felt shameful, ignored, and vulnerable to any external attack. Another major difficulty she encountered was the misbehaviour of children who did not comply with the authority of herself as mother.

They also felt that children do neglect their mothers in terms of supporting them financially and otherwise. One has mentally disturbed children; another has disabled children. In this situation, they would have liked to get help from the government or be allowed to send them to homes where they care for such children. Most also support grandchildren. Another key issue is that the daughters of some of the widows experienced difficulties in marriage and returned home. The widows now have to continue to support these daughters - through their own work or through their pensions. They could ask working children to support them, but often, these children do not have a very good education and they too suffer to survive.

7. Are there people who do not treat you well because you are a widow?

They discussed numerous incidents where people do not treat them well - on a daily basis.

8. Who treat you well and who treat you badly?

They felt that local pastors provide transport to and from church services, show concern for health conditions and basic needs in life. The house visitation by the pastor also means much to them - especially because it motivates them to continue with life and make life better for those who come after them.

Many have good relations with other church members. They feel that fellow church members show understanding and provide help wherever possible. Ultimately, members of society are sometimes not treating them well -especially when they use public transport. Due to the African belief in bad omens, widows are expected to sit at the back of taxis and busses. This is so to prevent the bad omen to be cast on passengers. If sometimes a widow is unable to sit at the back, passengers would quarrel with her. A fellow passenger can say whatever he or she likes and the widow is expected to remain silent.

There was a strong feeling amongst the widows that they were treated very badly by their own children (who fail to understand their situation). Not all children are so stubborn. The behaviour of children perturb them emotionally and cause insomnia. Such behaviour makes them feeling disgraced in the eyes of society. This is common to widows even if children behaved similarly in the presence of their father but now the widow interprets it differently because she is left alone. In this case, widows expect their children to behave as if the father was still alive - but this is virtually impossible.

9. What are the things they say, because you are a widow.?

In the African context, widows are blamed for the death of their husbands - even if that is not true. Sometimes the widow remains with the stigma of being involved one way or another. When the researcher interviewed them, they affirmed the fact that they were blamed for terminating the lives of their husbands.

This cultural belief is still deep-rooted in the minds of African people - that, sometimes, a widow bewitches her husband for some reasons known to her alone. Generally, it has shown to be true that some widows in South Africa have terminated the lives of their husbands for financial reasons. This,

however, cannot be generalised. Many die because of addictive habits such as smoking, alcohol, etc. whereas others die because of car- accidents, strokes, suicide as well as the violence in the country.

When a widow is blamed for the death of a husband, such blame usually comes from the family of the deceased husband and close relatives. Such actions are extremely destructive to the well-being of widows. This takes place even where it is evident that the widow could not have had anything to do with the husband's death. The researcher has discovered that some of the interviewed widows were blamed even for a normal sickness which caused the death of her husband. She became the cause of death. One of the widows - a widow of an ex-pastor of the local church, pointed out that even she was being treated badly by church members. One would have expected differently, especially because she served the local community together with her husband. As continuing member of the church, she is not allowed to make recommendations or speak publicly.

10. Would it be better or worse when you had a husband?

All felt it would have been better generally speaking.

11. Why do you say so?

It would have been better, especially where the widow and the husband had meaningful relationship.

Some widows felt the best for having the husband but also the most problematic, was in issues concerning family matters. Here, the widow cannot assert the interests of her own household within the larger family anymore.

In addition, the widow has to stand in alone where, previously they would be two to take responsibility for children and their daily needs.

One widow reflected negatively on the presence of the husband,

because he suffered a stroke and she had to care for him for years, putting an extra burden on her and the household.

In the context of loneliness, there is greater spiritual dependence on God.

12. Do you belong to a church? Which one?

Yes. As stated already, they belong to the Independent Methodist Church of Africa.

13. If you do belong to a church, how do people in the church treat you?

In general, people in the church treat them very well. The same is true of the pastoral care received from ministers. Even so, because of reasons stated already, the researcher discovered that in some cases, the widows formed a small prayer group where they take care of each other, share their current problems and teach each other the skills of living in their situations. In these prayer meetings, they also function as church intercessors.

The groups also have leaders who structure the meetings. The core secret of the prayer group seems to be to help each to resolve current problems, to pray for church leaders, political leaders, the present government, child abusers, serial killers, the raging violence in our country etc. When coming to financial contributions to the church, they feel very inadequate - due to their particular predicament. Those not receiving pensions are the poorest.

14. What school level did you complete? Which qualifications do you have?

Due to the restrictions in South African society, the widows did not have adequate quality education. Some are illiterate. They never went to school and had to work for their parents on the farms. One pointed out that one of her parents died while she was still young. The other could not afford the

high expenses of education. Others ascribed the fact that they did not attend school because they grew up in polygamist families and that the father could not afford educational expenses for all. Others recognised that they had opportunities but did not use them.

Another main reason is that of early pregnancies. The highest schooling achieved amongst the widows interviewed was Standard 8. One widow continued to become a nursing professional.

15. How many and which jobs have you had?

They do handiwork and practice agriculture for food. One third of the widows can speak English and work in cafes, at dry cleaners, in factories, as domestic workers, as unskilled labourers and cleaners at schools, at child-care centres, at a butchery and some do piece-jobs.

16 What work are you doing now?

Due to their age, most of the widows have stopped working. Some are still involved in agricultural schemes.

17. Do you enjoy the work?

They enjoy what they have been doing but because life is difficult, they suffer. A quarter expressed the desire to start small businesses - which is virtually impossible as they are either financially not viable or they do not have the capital to start up the businesses.

18. Do you get paid well?

No. They mostly cannot pay for the most basic needs.

19. Why do you say so?

They get very low salaries. One the one hand, they are not trained and

qualified for the work they do. On the other hand, they do the work in any case. So it seems unfair that they are not receiving the remuneration they would be entitled to if they had the qualifications.

20. Do you think that the church can do something to improve your life?

Yes.

21 What do you think can the church do to improve your life?

They expect the church to assist widows to deal with the past and their emotions. What is most important for them is to be healed spiritually. They feel that the experience they acquired through life made them more mature and that the church played an important role in helping them to face the realities of life. They also feel that pastoral care can help them to deal with anger, hatred, guilt, grudges, depression, low self-esteem and loneliness.

Other areas where the church may assist are: food provisions; love and acceptance; transport. Those who receive no salary from the pension scheme, were eager to be financially supported by the church. At the same time, some identified branches of the Independent Methodist Church that are currently providing the following items: clothes; groceries for Christmas; caring for childrens' needs; transporting them to and from church services. One widow pointed out that for her, it is difficult to expect support from the church because the local pastor is not well supported financially.

22. Are you happy?

Some feel happy for getting what they want in order to live and others are not happy due to loneliness and financial problems as well as physical weaknesses.

23. Why do you say so?

Responses were mixed. Some were happy in the sense that life continues and they have to make the best of it. At the same time, some expressed their unhappiness due to the problems caused by children as well as the difficulties in life. The most crucial is that they are not in a position to meet needs due to inflation.

24. What would you say is your greatest need?

They see faith as the corner stone of christian living. It motivates them in times of need. Another need was to see themselves educating their children and assisting in church schemes.

25. What would you say of the following is your greatest need? Food, clothing, housing, health, sanitation, fuel, education, transport, employment, participation in community activities

The widows have serious needs in all these areas. One did not have a house/permanent residence. (Nutritional) Food, clothing, transport and access to health services were other extremely important elements.

26. Do you think the people in society must change in their behaviour towards widows?

Yes. People in society must change their behaviour towards widows. They felt that if people empathize with them, they can be made to feel that they are part of society rather than to be isolated. Widows expect the members of the society to show ubuntu to them as they are also expected to do the same to all others. It is unjust for widows alone to be compelled to comply with all the cultural norms and values whereas society does not take their needs and feelings into consideration. People of society can change their approach to

them by removing the stigma attached to them. They must be approached as human beings who belong to society on the same footing with everyone else. Furthermore, they must be fully accepted in the activities of society. Cultural rituals which prevent them from being isolated must be changed and people educated concerning the suffering of widows.

27. How should society change in their behaviour?

The people in society should change their attitudes. They must empathize with widows, especially when they are still in the mourning period and when still wearing their garments, 'Inzilo'. Furthermore, they felt that the tradition of mourning garments must be done away with, because the laws which should be kept during this time of mourning puts additional stress on widows - stress which they especially do not need in the time of mourning. Society must also be made aware of the sensitivities of widows and that taken into consideration when they interact with widows. Society must show respect to their condition, especially in verbal communication, because some strong words are often used against widows.

28. Do you think a widow must marry? How?

Yes. This is part of culture and custom. Especially young widows must remarry. Culturally, the family of the deceased husband provides a substitute for him in order to fulfill the leviratic union requirements.

29. Why do you say so?

Though they know about the existence of the leviratic union, the widows reject this custom. Since they lost their original husbands - to whom they dedicated themselves out of love - they do not want to be joined in a new relationship with a relative of the husband. It would be very difficult to develop a similar relationship in such a situation. One widow felt very

strongly against remarriage, because she was severely abused by her deceased husband.

30. How do you think about God being a widow?

Some thought of God as 'the husband of widows', a reliable source of life, that challenges her to continue with life as best they can. Furthermore, where they do not receive respect from members in society and are treated badly, before God, they are equal with all others and is valuable as a person.

31. Do you have any children?

Yes. The average number of children for the widows is three. Most of them already left home. Some have pointed out that they have been left alone and had to care for grandchildren.

32. From how many husbands are your children from?

Most conceived their children from the original fathers in marriage. Out of all widows interviewed, there was only one who had a child before marriage and another one who got a child through the leviratic union. Furthermore, one was unhappy in marriage and conceived two children out of marriage.

33. Do you still have contact with some of them?

Yes.

34. How does your family treat you?

In most cases, the families treat the widows well and there are still links with relatives. In some cases, they lost all family. Few felt the loss of sisters as a severe problem - seeing that the sisters shared in their suffering. A few have responsibility for their deceased brothers' children. In general, however, there was a strong sense that much more can be done by family and relatives

to improve the quality of life for widows.

35. Are you active in society?

Yes.

36 What do you do for other people?

Some teach in pre-school; serve as a chairperson of the pensioners' committee; some experience people coming to them for wisdom and guidance in life and to deal with problems; some are involved in burial clubs; a few contribute to the pensioners' coffers for the care of other pensioners; another act as a spiritual leader in a grandmothers club, doing handiwork, attending prayer meetings; some are involved in feeding schemes; learn to make small gardens; work as part of a sewing team.

37. Are other people doing things for you? What?

The response was mixed. Some said yes while others said no. External help depends on each situation at a particular day and time.

38. Are you active in the church?

Yes.

39. What do you do in the church?

Some have assisted in the building of the church; others have initiated cleaning team projects, bought chairs for the church, folded tables, etc. Some are active in organizing chain prayers. On the other hand, some are not utilized in the church for reasons of cultural restrictions.

40. With how many people do you live in a house?

They live with 2,4,5,6,7,8,9,10. The lowest number is 2 and the highest

number is 10. Most of the household members are grandchildren whose mother has conceived them within or outside marriage. The children are now living with the widow.

41. What do you think about reading and writing?

The literate do read the bible. Others see the singing of hymns as important in their lives - e.g. together with grandchildren.

42. Do your children go to school?

Yes.

43. Do you think that you are a good mother?

Yes. They all felt they did their utmost in whatever they did/do for them.

44. Why do you say so?

The younger children still recognize their presence and listen to them. The older one's, however do not - especially where some of them have become alcoholics. They see themselves as dignified mothers in society and attempt to relate as effectively as possible to their children and grandchildren. They try to conduct themselves very organised and exercise very clean behaviour - especially before the family members of the ex-husband. Others were reminded of their behaviour while still young, and regretted their stubbornness. One widow commented that today, she regard herself as a well-nurtured spiritual person. She also broke with the ancestral rituals because of her spirituality. Another pointed out that she wants to live an exemplary life before the children and grandchildren so that they may have greater opportunities - than the widows had - and that they may make use of these opportunities and not squander them.

45. What do you think about men?

Some are reminded of their husbands in different forms. Some husbands were miserable. Some were genuinely responsible for the family. Some were reminded of the jokes they shared with their husbands, his tender care, love expressions, as well as gestures, communication concerning the upbringing of children. Some at the same time, were reminded of the way in which their husbands were noisy, and always fighting. This disturbed them greatly. Ultimately, they would really love to see, that in terms of the opportunities which have opened up in the new democratic dispensation in South Africa, that husbands become more responsible husbands and fathers taking care of their families.

46. What do you think can you do to improve your circumstances?

Most felt that they must continue as they are.

47. What do you think can the church do to improve the quality of life of widows?

They felt that they need more information on how to live an acceptable, quality life before God as widows. They would like to develop spiritually, worship and trust God alone. They would like to learn more skills so that they can accumulate funds for their needs. They also felt strongly that they need more information on the stages of life a woman goes through - especially as adults. They feel they would have more control over their lives if they had this information. Ultimately, those who do not get any pension, suggest that it can be improved by church feeding schemes for them. One other contribution these widows made was that they could improve the quality of life by not underrating others. Again, the transportation needs were raised as one area in which the quality of their lives could be improved, i.e. to go shopping, visiting children or the sick, and also for going to the church.

48. Which organisations exist in your community?

Burial clubs, stokvels, old age group meetings, the pensioners' crisis committee.

49. Do you belong to any of these?

Yes.

50. In what capacity do you participate in these organisations?

They are members.

51. Do you think there are organisations that you would like to join?

Yes.

52. Why do you say so?

They felt that the organisations - as do the church - provide opportunities to learn more about life but also about their present condition, in being widows.

53. Do you know what the Bible says about widows?

Some said yes, others, no.

54. What in this passage in 1 Timothy do you think is important for the life of widows?

After the reading and discussion of 1 Timothy 5:1-16, the following contains some of the responses:

1. That I should be supported by my own children or grandchildren. If they fail to support me then I can ask the church to take care of me as a full members

2. I feel grateful and recognised because this passage is relating to widows directly and challenges me to know what is in the mind of God concerning my life condition.

3. I appreciate the value of teaching about the real widows who can rely entirely on God and the church, separating them from those who can be supported by their own children and relatives.

4. I feel accepted before God who is the source of our life. The Scripture reading of this passage before me has opened and widened my understanding of who I am in the church and also in the kingdom of God.

55. How old are you?

33yrs, 40yrs, 47yrs, 51yrs, 52yrs, 53yrs, 55yrs, 56yrs, 57yrs, 58yrs, 59yrs, 66yrs, 68yrs, 72yrs(2), 76yrs, and 77yrs. The lowest age was 33 and the oldest of them all was 77yrs. 80% are over the age of 50yrs.

56. Are the people in your church mostly men or women?

Most are women.

57. What is the average number of people in church?

In one local church the average was 60, in another, 80 people, another one had 140 people.

58. Why is it important for you to belong to the church?

They felt that they sense the presence of God in church community. One stated that the experience of the message of Jesus changed her from a hard and stubborn person to someone who equally share love and care in society. Others mentioned the following reasons: 1) I belong to the church because I

married my husband in the church; 2) my husband was promoted to become a pastor, that is why I am still clinging to the church; 3) the gospel which saves people and change their lives is proclaimed.

59. How do you think people must change their behaviour towards widows?

To acknowledge them as normal people of society, accept them, to know how painful it is to be a neglected widow.

60. What happens immediately after the burial or funeral?

Culturally, a widow is taken to the nearest river for a bath, where the blanket is taken off. At the same time, she has to put on the black mourners garment. Only then is she allowed to go home.

61. What are the cultural rules and principles a widow has to abide with in your community?

By keeping all the rules set forth for widows culturally:

1. The widow is prohibited from visiting fellow members of society because she is regarded as an unclean member. Once she visits another, she is regarded as a failure and someone who does not respect the mourning period.
2. She is not allowed to ask anything from any house - even food or anything else. Such restrictions show how a widow is constrained, her movement limited and she herself ostracised.
3. She is required to show respect to all people in society and to herself. A widow who respects members of society, affirms to them the painful untimely loss of her husband. Theoretically, she must continue to show respect even to

her husband.

4. She is not allowed to go into the middle of a herd of cows or flock of sheep or goats - on behalf of others in society. If she does, this is seen as a calamity, because there is a belief that the livestock will then die.

5. She should not allowed to punish naughty children. If she has an unruly child or children, this must be reported to the father, uncle or brother of her husband and one of them must then resolve the problem amicably.

6. Culturally, it is a disgrace to hear a widow speak with a high voice in community, church or wherever. She is always expected to be silent or to speak softly and steadily as a sign of self-respect.

7. She is not allowed to eat sour milk. When she eats sour milk, the belief is that the livestock will die.

8. She is also forbidden to eat the intestines of cows. If she would, the belief is that goats will die.

9. Widows should not run.

10. She should not be eating while standing.

11. She is supposed to be back at home before sunset.

12. If a widow is working, she should not undress her mourning garment but sometimes the working condition forces her to exchange her garment. She is obliged to remain in the mourner's garment for one year. After one year, the

cleansing ceremony is organised for her. New clothes are bought for her and she is bound to comply with the cultural cleansing rituals before wearing the new clothes. The mourner's garments are then burnt. That day, a goat is slaughtered, 'kuthathwa inyongo', the bile is taken, 'nomswane' 'kuthelwe', 'uBulawu obumhlophe', and traditional medicine taken for special cleansing 'ageze abese eqgoka izingubo ezintsha ngoba usehlanjululiwe, ususiwe ubumnyama kuye. Kube usehlanzekile njalo'.

62 What are the meanings that the colour "black" has for widows?

The colour 'black' has the meaning of expressing the painful and shameful situation a widow goes through.

63 When and why do you wear the garment?

Before going to the cemetery, the widow is hidden under a blanket. She is in this condition until the funeral is over. The widow wears the garment to show respect to the deceased husband as well as to show society that she undergoes a painful situation.

7.2.3 Summary of the Qualitative Interactive Empirical Research

From the research on widows in Africa and the interactive research conducted according to the questionnaire above, it is evident that, just as the status of widows was determined by social stratification and anthropological conventions related to kingroup formations in first century Mediterranean society, the same is true for African cultures and customs to various degrees. Closely related is the fact that institutions which these societies developed - e.g. the levirate - in order to cater and care for widows are not sufficient. In this context, the tradition to which 1 Timothy 5:1-16 belongs, is that of the liberatory acts of God. Theologically, this is represented in 1 Timothy as the theology of 'God our Saviour'. In this context, 1 Timothy's recommendations

- that 1) relatives had to take care of them; 2) older widows had to serve in the church; 3) younger widows had to be married off; 4) a relation, woman (or man) of means had to take care for widows - as well as his prescriptions concerning 'godliness' has liberatory effects in society concerning the plight of widows. As such, in the current situation in which widows find themselves in, there are a number of challenges facing the widow as well as the church. These are as follows and can be effected in society through empirical interactive research.

7.2.4 Challenges Facing Widows

The qualitative interactive empirical research for widows had as aim to allow them to interact in terms of their own situation and experiences. The questionnaire above was used to facilitate such interaction. The researcher has tried, for the purposes of this dissertation, to provide an overview of the interactions above. In the discussions, a number of challenges facing widows - i.e. to improve the quality of their lives - were identified. They are stated here, because this is part of the widows' knowledge which they themselves have and developed.

Firstly, widows who belong to the Independent Methodist Church of Africa feel indignified, shameful, rejected and isolated in church and society. This is due to their state widowhood. They feel they have lost their former status, that people treat them with suspicion - they caused the death of the husband or their presence could cause death - and that people make them to feel rejected. They experience isolation and loneliness - even in the church community. As the church is one of the most important social groups where such issues must be addressed, a place of refuge and renewal in times of hardship especially, the widows must be helped to articulate their feelings and experiences in dialogic facilitations with other church members. This will hopefully assist them to improve their quality of life and the quality of their

interaction with others both in church and in society.

Secondly, from the moment of receiving the message of death, widows are not properly cared for pastorally. Such lack of Pastoral care cause them to fail to face and deal with the crisis and with their grief. Therefore, critical issues such as shock, numbness, denial, anger, guilt, confusion, depression and catharsis are not dealt with. Failure to attend to such needs causes them to value themselves as useless, empty, unworthy, unaccepted, unwanted, and leave them with overwhelming feelings of loneliness. This situation has lead to suicides. Here, preventative action must be taken. Church members must be educated concerning these feelings and they must be assisted by widows. Widows who went through such experiences, can assist in educating the rest of the congregation, because everyone will have to face the death of a loved one sooner or later.

Thirdly, during the period of mourning, widows are not allowed to take part in church services, because they are regarded as ceremonially unclean. They are expected to go through the cleansing rituals before they can participate fully in the activities of the church. This hindrance has to do with cultural norms and values. This is a serious issue, because they cannot be changed over night or if one would like to change them, it could meet with serious resistance. In this situation, widows can play an important role in addressing the issue and provide guidelines concerning what must be done.

Fourthly, young widows have sexual passion and have the tendency to engage themselves in love affairs - to quench passion. The researcher has discovered that this situation is aggravated because they do not understand the reason for such passion - that their husbands are not there to have sexual relations with her. Widows themselves, who can understand this, must explain it to church members but also to widows themselves. Here, one needs to draw up a code of conduct - and widows can be instrumental in this. This will also prevent a widow from becoming involved in secret affairs, thereby

bringing disgrace to the church and aggravating her own situation with regard to the church but also to society.

Fifthly, most widows find it difficult to comply with the leviratic union because they consider the death of their husbands as the end of the relationship between them and their husbands' families. They feel that they should be allowed to take their own decisions in terms of remarriage rather than to be compelled to fall in with wishes of the larger kin group. This is even more important in situations where there is a tradition of abuse in a family. Widows, together with other women, must intervene in such situations.

Sixthly, in the rural areas, widows are suffering from lack of food, transportation, water, etc. Though they have plots to till in some cases, they often do not have the financial means to initiate agricultural projects. Where they do not have land, widows, together with other women must work out ways and means - through women's organizations or through government structures - to acquire sufficient land for cultivation. The Church can also play an important role in this regard.

Seventh, for the unemployed widows, life is miserable, in the sense that there is no direct income for them. In this, the family of the deceased family must support her, and other women and widows - especially in the church - can see to it that this happens.

Eighth, widows have a heavy responsibility in terms of relating properly to their own children. Due to the lack of authority in the family and the hardships widows themselves encounter, children must be educated and widows assisted in dealing with this problem.

Ninth, widows feel unable to meet all the demands of running the family: small children, shopping, the paying of bills, taking children to and from school, cooking, cleaning the yard etc. are all things which were shared with the deceased husband before to various degrees. Widows and women

can assist one another by combining some of these actions and to do it collectively.

Tenth, older widows are weak and need somebody to take care of them on a daily basis. Systems must be created which will attend to their needs such as cooking, paying rent, visiting the doctor, reminding her to take medication, transport to the pension point. One important fact mentioned, was that often, older widows feel neglected because nobody talks to them. People should be made more generally aware of the need for someone to just talk with widows.

Eleventh, widows find it very difficult to accept and fully deal with cultural values and rituals which are imposed on them. Within a moment, with the death of their husbands, they change from an ordinary married wife, to something impure. The area of culture and custom is very precarious. But, how can society tolerate the effective ostracising of widows under a modern democratic constitution in which universal human rights are enshrined?

7.2.5 Possibilities for Pastoral Care

Among the different institutions in South Africa - ranging from government to locally grown organizations and NGO's - the church can also constructively contribute towards the pastoral care for widows. The pastoral care programme of the Independent Methodist Church of Africa can also in this regard make a constructive contribution. These institutions should aim to redress the difficult conditions in which widows find themselves. In this section, the researcher provides at least some possibilities for the proper pastoral care for widows - pastoral care which can be practiced in an acceptable way and in the particular situations which widows find themselves in, both generally and more particularly. Proper pastoral care should deal with not only the psychological and spiritual implications of death but also the emotional turmoil widows go through after the death of a husband - in terms

of the social, cultural and customary pressures they are exposed to - and the financial predicaments they have to face. (For this reason, this section also deals with the cultural approach inclusive of the various taboos.) The main purpose should not only be to nurture their 'hope' in a better future and life, but also put systems and measures in place which will change the plight of widows for the better in real terms.

Firstly, the cultural approach to the pastoral care for widows is necessary because it brings it in contact with the grassroots predicament widows find themselves in. Pastoral care must meet widows in the actual and concrete situations they find themselves in. For this reason, the pastor must be close to the people, understand the restrictions on their lives - both in terms of custom and economically. The pastor must be able to analyse the conditions and institutions which determine people's lives. It is only when the pastor can analyse these, that he or she can effectively intervene on behalf of the destitute and oppressed.

Secondly, such interventions - as 1 Timothy points out - must not be merely in terms of proclaiming a gospel of the hereafter but a gospel which 1) musters institutions on behalf of the destitute and suffering; 2) effect changes for the benefit of those alienated from living quality lives and living it to the full.

Thirdly, the researcher has had the privilege of experiencing the delicate position of the pastor who visits a widow in the African context. In this context, ... aspects to pastoral care are important. Firstly, the pastor must facilitate a conversational situation - with more than one widow present if possible - where the issue of grief can be addressed collectively. The healing effects concerning grief must start among the people most seriously affected by it and who can share its experience. In facing death, grief and sadness are common to all people and not culture- or creed-specific. Grief can be defined as an important and normal response to the loss of any

significant person or valuable object, whether through the death of someone, divorce, or retirement from one's job. This feeling of loss can bring about grief because the person has lost a daily experience of being appreciated and valued. This is so not only in terms of the appreciation significant others express, but also in terms of the expression of appreciation by those who are suffering. In the case of death, it happens to everyone. As such, it is not only for mourners to grieve. Those closest to the one who died is faced with the vacuum the death of this person left in society and in meaningful relationships. The living person is left to deal with this vacuum. More importantly, the living person is faced with death as such - that experience before the infinite unknown, mysterious and incomprehensible. In African cultural contexts, grief is experienced as a time of silence and wonder. People often indulge in thinking about how death happens/happened, what happened to the loved one, and how to relate to him/her. If the pastor facilitates a situation where widows can share what they think in this context, the sharing of grief can be important for the bereaved person because they will not feel utterly left to the whims of their own ideas and fearful images.

In this context, the 'normal pattern of grief' in the African context can be addressed collectively and interactively. This is as follows. For the first few weeks after the death of a loved one, widows experience shock and disbelief. Grieving is a reaction to this shock - i.e. after receiving the message of the accident or cause of death for the loved one in the family. Shock affects the widow psychologically, emotionally and physically. It is a form of disbelief and consternation. The latter is the effect of failing to imagine the fact that the deceased person was alive recently or an hour ago and is not there anymore. The image and actions of the person is still vividly part of the imagination. The bereaved may still vividly remember his/her last words. In most cases, even the funeral takes place while the widow and family are still strongly affected by these reactions. During this period, it is

advisable for the pastor to play an important role: to bring widows to talk about and share what they feel and not to remain silent. The pastor may also take some of the pressures off the family by assisting - wherever possible - in the arrangements of the funeral.

Fourthly, the pastor must be sensitive to the fact that, in African context, non-members are excluded from family matters - especially matters of this magnitude. Even so, more often than not, a pastor is accepted even in times of death. The availability of the Pastor gives hope to the widow and the family - especially where many others would turn their backs on widows or the family. In this situation and even more importantly after the funeral, the pastor must continue with visiting the widow. The widow may experience various detrimental psychological or physical pressures and feelings of loss and numbness. It is especially in this situation where the widow is continuing with her silence, that the pastor must facilitate situations in which she can talk and voice her feelings - to him/her or to other widows. If there is a catharsis - many widows literally cry for the whole day long - this may help her too. The fact that everyone coming to visit for purposes of condolences would expect her to cry must be discouraged. This custom is aimed at proving the fact that the widow was not responsible for the death of her husband. In customary context, this may still be important, but it may also just be one more way to oppress widows. For this reason, relatives and other members of society must be educated so that they do not harbour such irrational suspicions.

Fifthly, it is natural, across cultures, that the next reaction is guilt and feelings of anger. The guilt-feeling is caused by the reflection, arguments, words used directly to the person before he passed away. The worst part of it is that the widow is left with these reflections and self-communication arguments while her husband is no longer able to respond to her and dispel them. Anger, again, causes the widow to question God or the fact that the husband died. This untimely death in his family brings her to question live as

such and how she must continue living. Both these feelings should be attended to by allowing the widow to express her feelings. This will help her to relieve herself of irrational fears.

Sixthly, the researcher discovered that physical symptoms accompanied feelings of guilt and anger. The widows did not know that psychological experiences can make one ill physically. All the widows interviewed confirmed symptoms of insomnia, loss of appetite, physical pain and certain elements of fear when thinking about the present and possible future scenarios of life and survival. They experienced emotional breakdowns, stress, depression, and some started coughing incessantly. They started to use medication, but often, this did not directly help them. The pastor must point out to widows that these are regular symptoms of people suffering grief and that it is not due to their particular circumstances, possible 'wrongdoing' or culture-specific.

Seventh, after the first three weeks to approximately one year or so after the death of the loved one, the widow as well as family members often relive the death and vacuum left by the deceased in their lives. At this point, they can become obsessed with searching and finding the actual cause of death or the meaning of the death of the loved one. This is a very difficult problem because if the culture on various points induce such irrational beliefs, it is difficult for the pastor to intervene in this situation. The most important strategy for the pastor in this situation is to facilitate a situation where the widow can talk openly about her fears and to work through irrational fears in conversation and in terms of her own cultural perceptions than be plagued by these images. Other widows may assist in the conversations situation by pointing to alternative views than those that the widow is caught up in.

Eighth, the widow as well as other family members (especially older children) may be visualising the presence of the husband in all the activities

of the family: seeing his face, hearing the voice, seeing him driving the car, hearing his footsteps, or waiting to welcome him after working hours, etc. This is normal. Widows and family members should be encouraged to talk about this and not keep silent. All these elements form part of memory and can remain important for each and everyone in live generally speaking.

Ninth, after a year or two after death, the widow may begin to take part socially in the activities of the society, seeing people and resuming her normal interest in life. This process shows that the widow is healing. They experience self-acceptance and renew their activities in society. What must be taken into consideration, is that the widow's personality may have changed too. She has been in contact with death and may think differently about live because of this experience.

Tenth, after going through all these difficult stages in life after death, pastors should be cautioned that widows are now more vulnerable than ever before and needs to be approached and care for sensitively. They need attentive listeners and a feeling that the pastor understands what is going on underneath the outward activity and words. Emotions such as hostility or irritability may show after the widow has repressed so much of her feelings. This is because he may not have accompanied the widow in her spiritual journey or because she still suffers from her grief and is still unable to face the challenges of her life. Widows experience a very deep loneliness in their lives which cannot be replaced by the presence of children or anyone else. Loneliness and depression are very sensitive issues which need to be redressed accurately as they may bring a widow to commit suicide. In this situation, at least two issues about grief are important. *Firstly*, grief is accompanied by turmoil and emotional pain. Religious beliefs play a major role in this situation. Often, there are periods of doubt, confusion, and even anger against God. It is true that such feelings are healed in time. Important, is, however, one's faith. One's religion gives support, meaning, comfort and

hope for the future. Christians believe that the Holy Spirit who lives within each believer, gives supernatural comfort and peace in times of mourning. *Secondly*, grievors differ in their personal needs, closeness to the deceased and the typical way of handling feelings, their willingness and ability to face the reality of the loss, their closeness to others who can give support, their personal views about life after death, and their flexibility and ability to cope with crisis. In this situation, the pastor must attempt to facilitate a situation which will allow the widow to draw on these as resources for her own well-being.

These are at least ten issues which can be of assistance to the pastor. Pastoral ministry should recognize and redress the plight of widows in their difficult situations. This can be properly achieved through the training of existing pastors who are responsible for shepherding the flocks. They must demonstrate the holistic ministry of the Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ and how it developed into the organization and ministry of the Pastorals. Apart from redressing the psychological, emotional and physical affections, practical ministry also play a key role in the lives of widows and their children. Pastoral ministry for widows is critical in the sense that they are human beings who have various needs as we have seen above. One of these, however, are sexual needs. In this context, pastors should be cautioned - i.e. concerning the high risk of sexual temptation. Pastors should be accompanied by an elder or whoever, when visiting widows. Culturally, men are not expected to visit a widow in society. A pastor, due to his (if he is male) status, is allowed to do this. It may, however, to his and the gospel's detriment. Many widows, especially when they are illiterate, do not understand their sexual appetite when in mourning and without a husband. If a pastor is alone with her, she may make sexual advances towards him. If he falls for such advances, he would not be helping her but become part of her repression.

Currently, the ministry to widows is one of the neglected areas in this church. I hope that this research made some contribution towards addressing this challenge.

7.2.6 Summary

This chapter overviewed the status of widows in Africa as well as the qualitative interactive empirical research which was done for and with widows in the Independent Methodist Church of Africa. It concluded with the challenges facing widows and the possibilities for pastoral care.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

8.0 Introduction

The *problem* for this dissertation was formulated as follows: to research the plight of widows in a particular African Christian society but also in late first century Mediterranean society and the incentives to create a better situation for such persons. This chapter will provide an overview of the results of the research and how these results address this problem.

8.1 Symbolic Interactionism and Textual Interpretation

The overview of the theory and methods of symbolic interactionism in chapter two was condensed into a model and used in chapter four. This model answered question one of the research problem - how can symbolic interactionism be described theoretically and what is the criticism against such an approach? How can it be developed for textual interpretation, hermeneutically? The model was developed as follows.

Symbolic interactionism's main tenet is that 'individuals as well as human groups or society exist in action and must be seen in terms of action'. Here, Blumer's premises are important. They are: 1) 'human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them'; 2) the 'source of meaning' is neither 'intrinsic to the thing that has it' nor a 'psychical accretion brought to the thing by the person for whom the thing has meaning' but 'the process of interaction between people'; 3) 'the use of meaning' is not merely an 'application' of meaning derived from social interaction but is itself 'a process of interpretation'.

Firstly, *the nature of the action and interaction in the text*. This is analysed with attention to 'motion', to 'action', or the 'act'. The assumption is that such action represented in the text is empirical, and as such, representative of a wider phenomenon to various degrees. As such, the

human being acts in terms of what he or she wants, an objective, and lines or plans of action which he or she has identified through self-communication. Here, the question is whether the actor complies with a situation confronting her, or act creatively, especially with regard to the fact that she is not merely something which is acted upon - e.g. by 'physiological stimulations, organic drives, needs, feelings, unconscious motives, conscious motives, sentiments, ideas, attitudes, norms, values, role requirements, status demands, cultural prescriptions, institutional pressures, or social system requirements' - but someone who can act creatively. Even so, responses in the text are also important. In addition, the question is whether there self and alter switch in the interaction, whether there is repetitive action, interaction or joint action present in the text.

Secondly, *the meanings ascribed to things mentioned in the interaction*. Closely related to the 'act', is that of the meaning of the 'object'. These are physical objects but also specific individual human beings, categories of human beings, institutions, guiding ideals, activities of oneself or others, and such situations as an individual encounters in daily life.

Thirdly, *the process of interaction as the source of meaning*. This element raises the question as to the kind of the *process* of action, interaction and conversation or dialogue especially with regard to how action, interaction as well as things are redescribed and redefined. What is the start and what the end of the process, how does role-taking switches to and fro in the process, how are symbols coined, used, etc. How are actors' positions in relation to others adjusted in their interaction? What are the role-making processes? Are there tentative elements?

Fourthly, *the process of interpretation in the interaction*. This raises the question of pre-understanding and how it changes but also as to how characters in the text interpret the situation, action, interaction, objects, etc. Important here, is how they interpret their positions and roles in society and

how they interpret existing things, what is the context in terms of which the meaning of things change and what the interpretation is when things change. What is the role of norms, significant others and the actor's own resources (self-conceptions, role-playing skills and styles of interaction) brought to the interaction and which influence this process of interpretation? How does the folk norm of consistency, including role verification function interpretively? In terms of change, what is the different 'world' in terms of which things are defined and interpreted differently?

8.2 Mediterranean Society and Widows

Chapter three sought to answer three interrelated questions:

8.2.1 How is status in the late first century Mediterranean World as it relates to social stratification and anthropological conventions related to kingroup formations to be defined and described social-scientifically?

8.2.2 What was the status of women and especially widows in terms of a generalised first century Mediterranean socially stratified society and anthropological conventions?

8.2.3 How do institutions determine the status of women and especially widows?

The results of the research was as follows.

Politically, women (including widows) were used for procreation and the means for spreading Hellenistic culture. Their status was inferior to men. Young widows were encouraged to remarry while older widows were denied such opportunity. Barren widows were more privileged than other widows in the same society - indicating some inequality in how widows were treated. It

appears as if barren widows could function more like men because they had to fend for themselves. Widows who married again, however, remained in the subjected position of women generally speaking. Women were prevented from being educated as well as from partaking in education activities. After the death of Alexander, they were more free to play a more important role in society - i.e. in leadership capacities as well as in religious ritual and ceremony.

The Roman state had so much control on the lives of widows that the subsidy widows received for the first year after the death of their husbands, basically functioned as a form of blackmail. We may infer that this measure kept women in the position of being useful only in so far as procreation is concerned. Legally, women were regarded as inferior to men, as a piece of property and as children before the law. Finally, philosophers classified them with both the weak and light-minded.

Widows in Jewish society were challenged to remarry. A woman could find identity, as well as dignity in her home. Legally, she had fewer rights than her husband. Educationally, women did not have access to systems of education in society.

This chapter sought to position women and more particularly widows within the historico-systemic structures of Greek, Roman and Jewish societies. Within this broadly-mapped historico-systemic structure, one must understand how women and especially widows were positioned as regards the socio-anthropological codes which functioned within society.

The broad map of the historico-systemic and socio-anthropological issues which determined the Mediterranean world provides the general framework within which one can situate the social functioning of women and more particularly widows. For this reason, general descriptions provide information on how widows were positioned and defined within the broad structure. This information is important if one is to understand how these

broader structural elements determined women but especially widows in their interaction with others in society. In terms of Ralph H. Turner's views, these structural elements required of people to be consistent with regard to their actions and interactions.

In this context, it was found that it is especially the codes of honour and shame and how they were determined by the sources of honour, gender, the dyadic personality and the perception of limited good, which determined the status of widows.

8.3 A Symbolic Interactionist Interpretation of 'Widow' in the Old Testament and the New Testament

In chapter four, question five of the research problem was addressed: what is the tradition in which 1 Timothy 5:1-16 must be understood? Six main points to this tradition was identified:

8.3.1 Widows as Part of a Marginalised Category

Together with orphans and aliens, widows form the stock-category within Old Testament and New Testament concerning the socially, economically and legally marginalised (4.2.1 - 4.2.3; 4.2.5; 4.2.14 - 4.2.22; 4.4.2; 4.4.3; 4.4.7; 4.4.8). This was mainly due to the patriarchal nature of Mediterranean culture. The main principle was that only men could represent a household socially, economically and legally - women not. Men had honour and had to act honourably and women not. Due to this kind of socio-cultural system in the Mediterranean, someone who had no representation in social interaction was fatally disadvantaged. This mainly included widows, orphans and aliens.

Widows did not have a husband; orphans did not have a father; aliens did not have a family or extended system through which they could network in society. This means that the fact of being a widow, an orphan or alien in itself, disadvantaged such a person. They were - due to the state in which

they found themselves - already disadvantaged. This state cut them off from the resources society provided in real terms. Apart from their being socially disadvantaged, they could not interact with others economically. They could not form part of the productive system in society (4.4.9). This meant poverty and hunger. The two incidents where Babylon (4.2.18) and Rome (4.4.11) are said to claim invulnerability, this is done in contrast to and with scorn of the most vulnerable position one could find oneself in: that of widowhood.

8.3.2 Culture-specific Institutions of Care

Given this particular socio-cultural system, it developed mechanisms through which to care for such people and also counter the possibility that widows, orphans and aliens be exploited. The most obvious mechanisms were that of the 1) *levirate* (4.2.1); 2) focused categorical legal pronouncements (4.2.2; 4.2.5); 3) the ruling on vows, harvesting and festivals (4.2.4; 4.2.6; 4.2.7); 4) the fact of the Lord's care for widows (4.2.16; 4.2.19); 5) the education of Israel concerning the socially disadvantaged (4.2.17; 4.4.10); 6) and the threat of judgment (4.2.20; 4.2.21). These social mechanisms had to ensure that justice be done but also that this category of people are not further exploited.

The *levirate* had to provide a male boy to continue the husband's bloodline but also a male representative for the widow and her household in social, economic and legal interaction. The *legal pronouncements* were made in the context of God's covenant with Israel: that he saved/liberated Israel from Egypt and slavery in order to both remain true to his promises to Israel's ancestors and have a nation through whom he could have his will proclaimed in the world. The complement of this covenant was that Israel had to be and remain God's people. This was to be achieved through their obedient practice of the law. Such obedience would result in life and stability for Israel. The ruling on *vows* ensured that widows - who did not have legal

representation and therefore - did not exploit the system by not keeping their vows. The rulings concerning *harvesting*, ensured a system whereby widows and other socially disadvantaged people could benefit from crop cultivation. The fact that widows were not excluded from *festivals* ensured that they were treated with the same respect and dignity as any other Israelite household. The fact of *the Lord's care for widows* links every Israelite's faithfulness to God, to his or her care for the socially disadvantaged. On the *education of Israel* concerning the socially disadvantaged, every text and mechanism discussed in this chapter has such an aim - through narratives, legal pronouncements, etc. The *threat of judgment* ensured that every Israelite care for the socially disadvantaged.

It is in this context that these mechanisms concerning the marginalised in society would not only cater and care for the marginalised but also ensure that Israelites would be able, in symbolic interactionist terms, to put self in the position of alter. This is especially exemplified in God's and also Jesus' acts of compassion.

8.3.3 Narratives on the Creative Action of Widows in Situations of Injustice

Tamar (4.2.1), Abigail (4.2.8) and the wise woman from Tekoa (4.2.9) acted creatively and intervened in three different contexts. Tamar acted within the context of male inaction on her own behalf; Abigail acted in the context of her husband's inaction concerning reciprocal care for David's soldiers and in order to save face for her husband - on behalf of his honour; the wise woman of Tekoa acted as a widow in the interests of king David who wanted to reverse his decision concerning Absalom but would lose face if he did do so. All three these women actors intervened in these contexts: Tamar on her own behalf; Abigail on behalf of her husband and the wise woman from Tekoa on behalf of king David.

The Widow from Zarephath (4.2.12) acted in faith on behalf of Elijah. She intervened on behalf of Elijah in the context of famine. Due to her faith of putting the prophet before her own and her son's possible starvation, her food-supply does not stop. In the New Testament, this incident is referred to in the context of Jesus' first public appearance (in Luke) in his home-town, Nazareth (4.4.5). More importantly, the context is that of healing. Related to all the statements of healing, this woman's faith intervenes in the context of the sick society which Israel was at the time of both Elijah and Jesus. These societies were sick because the leaders did not represent the Lord's will concerning the caring of the people. They rather exploited them. Healing, here, and the faith of the widow concerning God's prophet (who pronounced judgement on the leaders) are related in order to communicate the fact that Jesus is the ultimate cure for marginalised others - especially in the context where societal systems did not care for such people..

In the parable of the widow and the unjust judge (4.4.7), we have a widow acting on her own behalf. Centrally important to the perspective of widows acting in their own interest and in the face of cultural as well as pragmatic exploitation and non-care, this widow repeatedly challenges a judge - a person who is supposed to uphold the justice. It is this parable - as all the other narratives - which brings to the fore the strategies widows can follow when justice is not done to them.

The strategies which women can follow when they are not cared for - which means that such women can learn from these incidents - are five-fold. The *first* strategy, that of Tamar, was very risky and tentative. She posed and acted as prostitute. In this context, she was actually risking her life on at least two counts. Firstly, if Judah found out who she were when he had intercourse with her, he could have her killed. Secondly, if Judah would not accept her argument, she could have been killed equally. Nevertheless, in a patriarchal society of male oppression, this would remain one option for a widow. The

second strategy, that of Abigail, was also risky. Even though she acted in the interests of her husband and his honour, she still had to face his wrath. Her strategy was to not consult her husband when he was still alive but just to go ahead and to act justly and honourably in accordance with the socio-cultural requirements of the time. As the narrative shows, this eventually paid off because she became one of the wives of king David. The *third* strategy is that of the wise woman from Tekoa. Even though not actually a widow, it is through deception and on instructions of Joab that she intervenes on behalf of the honour of king David and provides an avenue for him to change his pronouncement on Absalom. The *fourth* strategy, that of the widow of Zarephath, directly relates to trust and faith in the face of disaster. Indirectly, it also means that this woman's faith - as strategy - stands critically over and against that of the leaders of Israel - all male.

The *fifth* strategy is that of the continuous challenging of a judge. This continuity of challenge is one strategy to get such an important person as the judge to give way and to pronounce justice.

In each of these five cases, it is especially in patriarchal context that all these strategies/plans/lines of action and the actual actions all have risk to them or have some inbuilt tentativity. This risk is that of the power of patriarchy. Even where a woman's intervening actions uphold patriarchy - as in the case of Abigail - it is still in such manner that it deconstructs and refracts the patriarchal attitude, inclination and actions.

In summary, then, there are three main elements to these strategies. Firstly, *deception* on behalf of one's own advantage, on behalf of an indiscrete husband or on behalf of someone who is equally caught up within the dictates of socio-cultural or folk norms, can bring about justice. Secondly, *faith* in the face of disaster, brings about justice. Thirdly, the *continuous challenging of injustice or inaction* will eventually let the walls of patriarchal injustice and inaction crumble.

8.3.4 Creative Action on Behalf of Widows

Legal statements concerning the care for the socially disadvantaged (4.2.5; 4.2.6); Job's defense of his integrity by claiming never to have done anything bad towards the socially disadvantaged (4.2.14); and God's care for the socially disadvantaged (4.2.2; 4.2.16; 4.2.17; 4.2.19; 4.4.4; 4.4.10) are all general pronouncements which call for specific creative action towards the widows, orphans and strangers. Each Israelite or believer had to give specific expression in terms of which the general statements were made concrete in concrete situations and concrete interactions. However, there are also more specific events where creative actions were taken on behalf of widows.

These specific actions comprise that of David towards Abigail after her husband's death - he took her as one of his wives (4.2.8). In the narration concerning the artisan of king Solomon, Solomon acts creatively by not taking an Israelite but someone of mixed blood and a widow's son on top of that as his artisan (4.2.10). In the narration concerning Jerobeam - a widow's son - Jerobeam have concretely witnessed the exploitation of workers by the royal system and this made him acceptable as rival king to Rehabeam (4.2.11). When the widow's son dies, Elijah intervenes and raises him from the dead (4.2.13; 4.4.6). Quite important is Jesus' intervention on behalf of widows and by implication all socially disadvantaged - by criticising the systems and institutions which exploited such people (4.4.2; 4.4.3). In Mark, this is an event which stands as the high point just before the apocalyptic discourse, indicating that it can be seen as a summary statement of Jesus' whole ministry.

Whether as the concretising of general legal pronouncements or as explicit events, concrete exploitation calls for creative action.

8.3.5 Honourable and Dishonourable Action Concerning Widows

In the explicit narratives and references to ways in which widows were

exploited, *dishonourable action* comprise that of Judah (4.2.1); the priestly positioning of widows together with prostitutes (4.4.6); Abigail's husband, Nabal (4.2.8); Israel's leaders (4.2.20); Babylon's (and Rome's) boasting (4.2.18; 4.4.11); the Pharisees' and temple institution's exploitation of widows (4.4.2; 4.4.3); the unjust judge (4.4.7).

Judah did not act to see that the levirate is adhered to. The priestly positioning of widows together with prostitutes in the context of purity ratings is negative in so far as it did not put active mechanisms in place to care for widows. Abigail's husband, Nabal, did not act honourably towards David's men. Israel's leaders - by not seeing that justice is done but actually and explicitly exploiting people calls forth God's judgement. Babylon's (and Rome's) boasting of invulnerability stands in stark contrast to how they perceive widows and orphans. They do not intervene in such situations. The Pharisees' and temple institution's exploitation of widows is severely criticised by Jesus. Finally, the unjust judge's inaction becomes the target of the widow's actions in seeking justice.

Honourable action comprise that of concretely giving expression to the general statements on care for widows (4.2.5; 4.2.6; 4.2.14; 4.2.2; 4.2.16; 4.2.17; 4.2.19; 4.4.4; 4.4.10) but also the more concrete creative actions taken by actors: David's action towards Abigail (4.2.8); Solomon's action concerning the artisan who was a widow's son (4.2.10); the fact that Jerobeam - a widow's son became king (4.2.11); Elijah's intervention on behalf of the widow by raising her son from the dead (4.2.13; 4.4.6); Jesus' intervention on behalf of widows and by implication all socially disadvantaged - by criticising the systems and institutions which exploited such people (4.4.2; 4.4.3). To this may be added the fact that Anna, the widow but also prophet in the temple is positioned to be the one who recognises Jesus as Messiah (4.4.4). Structurally or organisationally, a system is created to care for the widows of the Hellenists concerning the

daily distribution of food (4.4.8).

Primarily, all these incidents deal with either the inaction of people on behalf of widows, with actual and concrete acts of exploitation or with socio-cultural and systemic or institutional systems which did not cater for the continuous exploitation of widows and the socially disadvantaged. Whether as the concretising of general legal pronouncements or as explicit events, concrete exploitation calls for creative action. Within the Bible, the dishonourable as well as the honourable actions are examples of how not to act or how to act in concrete situations towards widows and the socially disadvantaged.

8.3.6 Norms Concerning Action Towards Widows

Each of the texts researched are saturated with normative elements. From this summary alone, we can identify norms concerning the ensuring that widows must be enabled to act and interact socially, economically and legally and not be marginalised in society (4.6.1). The levirate, focused categorical legal pronouncements, the ruling on vows, harvesting and festivals; the fact of the Lord's care for widows; the education of Israel concerning the socially disadvantaged; and the threat of judgment (4.6.2) all comprise of rules to be followed and norms. Similarly, the creative action by and on behalf of widows all provide mechanisms with rules and norms which can be followed in particular adhered to (4.6.3; 4.6.4). The same is true concerning the concretising of honourable and dishonourable action in general and in particular situations (4.6.5).

However, three additional normative elements must be highlighted: that of justice; salvation or liberation; and resurrection.

Justice - in social, economic and legal contexts - is one of the most central norms which permeates the Old Testament as well as the New Testament. It is especially the norm of just action and interaction in these

spheres for which the actions towards the widow, orphan and alien forms the stock category. In terms of symbolic interactionism, the main requirement is that one who acts and interacts with people in this category must be able to position themselves in that of the other - self must position itself in the place of alter, and then act towards alter in terms of how one would have liked alter to act towards self. This requirement prevents social chaos and makes sure that society is closely knit without excluding anyone.

The *salvation or liberation norm*, similarly functions to facilitate self and alter switches. In this context, God is the warrior who liberates from oppression. Israel's liberation from Egypt forms the stock event in terms of which Israelites are called upon to remember that they themselves were in a position of exploitation. Their remembrance has three functions. *Firstly*, it must prevent them from acting in a discriminatory way towards anyone who is socially, economically and politically disadvantaged - because they have experienced such marginalisation themselves. *Secondly*, they must be able to trade places with the disadvantaged and then act towards alter as if it is self. *Thirdly*, if they do this, society will prosper and will receive the blessings of the Lord. If they do not do it, then Israel itself becomes God's enemy and open to judgement.

Finally, concerning *the relating of widows with the resurrection* (and healing), is normative in so far as the widow has not only experienced the death of a loved one - thereby knowing about death - but also is metaphorically dead in society since she does not have the means to participate fully in society. As the most disadvantaged in society the widow knows death. As such, the widow is also one who must know about life after death. The extreme - death - is related to the other extreme - the belief in life after death. The faith of the widow which gives food to Elijah in the face famine is related in Luke to healing and cure. As such, healing and cure is related to the belief in the resurrection and in this context, is normative:

actions of faith-healing-resurrection.

In summary: widows had virtually no status in Mediterranean society. Society, however, did develop some measures to care for widows. Since these measures were often not practiced, the creative action of widows in their own interest or of others on behalf of their well-fare made for a body of literature which was to continuously conscientise people about care for widows.

8.4 A Symbolic Interactionist Interpretation of 1 Timothy 5:1-16

Chapter five addressed two main questions:

8.4.1 What are the recommendations of 1 Timothy and how do these relate to the symbolic world functioning as symbolically-structured background for these recommendations?

8.4.2 What is the result of the interaction of the symbolically-backed recommendations of 1 Timothy with the symbolically-structured kingroup formation determined by social stratification and anthropological conventions?

The fact that the largest portion of text in 1 Timothy is devoted to the topic of widows, shows that this was a serious problem the Early Church had to deal with. This is stated explicitly in 1 Timothy 5:16: 'let the church not be burdened, so that it can assist those who are really widows'. On the one hand, the church was - in terms of the Biblical tradition of caring for widows as part of the category of the destitute, the alien and the orphan - committed to assist and help widows. On the other hand, this text explores four additional strategies of how to care for widows and how to lessen the burden on the church. These are that 1) relatives had to take care of them; 2) older

widows had to serve in the church; 3) younger widows had to be married off; 4) a woman (or man) of means had to take care for widows.

These are 1 Timothy's recommendations. This section of the research answered question 1. Question 2 was answered as follows.

In symbolic interactionist terms, we saw that the situation the church had to deal with was that widows were not cared for properly and that they put a burden on the church. This burden was not only that fellow believers did not adequately treat and respect widows (1 Tm 5:1f), but also that they did not care for them financially (1 Tm 5:3f,8). The processes at work in the text throughout is that - in this context - different plans had to be made and lines of action developed. This was done in the contexts of both the traditional Biblical requirement for caring for widows as the destitute and current institutional structures. It is especially concerning the pragmatics of the current situation that the author developed lines of action to be followed. *Firstly*, children and grandchildren had to be educated in the household to reciprocally care for their parents and widows when they are older and independent. *Secondly*, older widows had to meet requirements similar to that laid down for presbyters, deacons and elders and serve in the church. *Thirdly*, younger widows were to be married off. *Fourthly*, a woman (or man) of means had to take care for widows. Here we find that the institutions of the 1) household; 2) church service or ministry; 3) marriage; and 4) persons of means are used to care for widows. This is in addition to the church taking responsibility for widows according to the Biblical tradition for caring for widows as part of the category of the destitute. These are five contexts in terms of which positive action was called for concerning widows.

In each context, the author gives reasons or requirements for the rulings. The most general - and applicable throughout - is that of action and interaction with 'absolute purity' (1 Tm 1:2). This must be understood in terms of actions of care and compassion towards the destitute - which for

James too, means 'religion'. Pure action and interaction was thus the main requirement in each of the institutional contexts of 1) household; 2) church service or ministry; 3) marriage; and 4) care by persons of means. Such action would put widows as well as the church 'above reproach' and will prevent members to 'deny the faith' through acts of non-care.

Since all these actions are grounded in the Biblical tradition of care for the destitute, the widow, orphan, the stranger and the poor - people who do not have sufficient social means to have representation in social, economic and legal situations - the main context of this Biblical tradition had to be researched. This was done in the terms of the contextualising of 'widows' in the theology of 'God the Saviour'.

8.5 Contextualising 'Widows' in the Theology of 'God the Saviour'

The main question which was answered in chapter six was two-fold: 1) what is the theological argument underlying the argument/ recommendations in 1 Timothy?; and 2) how do the results of the exegesis relate to existing research on 1 Timothy?

The main theological argument can be formulated as follows: Since God has saved people (first Israel but later to include all people) from materially oppressive situations and has done so through Jesus' ministry too, the task of the church is to continue this tradition in its ministry and organisation, i.e. to act and interact in liberatory ways and to organise the church in such a way that it brings about not further repression, but effects freedom.

Throughout the texts surveyed, some of the main elements related to this argument and the notion of the 'Saviour God' were: 1) liberation from slavery, oppression and suffering in Egypt; 2) the law and covenant; 3) the breaking of the covenant relationship with God as Saviour in particular historical circumstances through specific acts; 4) the cry to God for help; 5)

the call to remember the liberation from Egypt and the covenant; 6) Israel's hope for God's liberatory and restorative intervention in an eschatological future; 7) the result of liberation, salvation and restoration depended on Israel returning to God and to bring their own actions in line with his actions.

Analogically, when this theology is compared with the New Testament, we find that there are especially two elements which fell away: that of God as warrior God, and the focus on Israel as ethnic entity. Christianity acquires a universal scope - more in line with the universalist ideas present in Isaiah.

One primary element which is added more strongly than in the Old Testament, is that acts of liberation or salvation in the New Testament are practiced by believers concerning the suffering of others.

In this context, the actual conduct, actions and interactions of believers - whether they be presbyters, deacons, elders but also ordinary believers like widows - had to continue the actions which were related to the 'God the Saviour' theology. On the one hand, widows formed part of the category of people who were exploited most in society. On the other hand, if they were not 'real widows' - suffering especially financially - then they were asked to practice godliness - which stands in the tradition of God's saving, liberating and compassionate actions towards all.

This research also answered question two above: different from Guthrie, and others who did not see the notion of 'God our Saviour' as central to 1 Timothy, it has been proven to be absolutely essential.

8.6 Qualitative Interactive Empirical Research for Widows

Chapter seven overviewed the status of widows in Africa as well as the qualitative interactive empirical research which was done for and with widows in the Independent Methodist Church of Africa. It concluded with the challenges facing widows and the possibilities for pastoral care. As such, it sought to answer the research questions:

8.6.1 what is the result of a comparative study of the result of research on questions 1-8 in terms of the current situation of women/widows in Africa and South Africa, especially as it impacts on or can improve the situation of widows in Zulu society and the Independent Methodist Church of Africa.

8.6.2 how can empirical research assist in redressing the situation of widows?

It was found, that, just as the status of widows was determined by social stratification and anthropological conventions related to kingroup formations in first century Mediterranean society, the same is true for African cultures and customs to various degrees. Closely related is the fact that institutions which these societies developed - e.g. the levirate - in order to cater and care for widows are not sufficient. In this context, the tradition to which 1 Timothy 5:1-16 belongs, is that of the liberatory acts of God. Theologically, this is represented in 1 Timothy as the theology of 'God our Saviour'. In this context, 1 Timothy's recommendations - that 1) relatives had to take care of them; 2) older widows had to serve in the church; 3) younger widows had to be married off; 4) a relation, woman (or man) of means had to take care for widows - as well as his prescriptions concerning 'godliness' has liberatory effects in society concerning the plight of widows. As such, in the situations in which widows find themselves in, there are a number of challenges facing the widow as well as the church. These can be summarised as follows and can be effected in society through empirical interactive research.

The challenges facing widows, are: 1) to articulate their feelings and experiences in dialogic facilitations with other church members; 2) to take preventative action and educate other church members concerning widowhood; 3) to provide guidelines concerning the purity practices which exclude widows from society; 4) to educate fellow widows - especially young

illiterate ones - concerning 'sexual passion' after a husband's death; 5) to intervene on behalf of a fellow widow in abusive levirate unions; 6) to put strategies in place through which widows in the rural areas can acquire sufficient land for cultivation; 7) to see to it that where (real) widows are not cared for financially by relatives, that it happens; 8) to assist in the education of children, especially as this asks for authority; 9) to put strategies in place which will assist widows in their daily chores; 10) to put strategies in place which will care for especially older widows; and 11) to develop strategies - together with other stake-holders in society - to deal with cultural values which continue to oppress widows.

Possibilities for Pastoral Care, are: 1) to focus on the grassroots level and to deal with oppressive and exploitative general social institutional but also cultural custom; 2) to proclaim a gospel of liberatory actions concerning those suffering in society; 3) to interact with widows in a conversational situation - collectively and interactively if possible - to address issues of grief; 4) to be sensitive of the fact that, in African context, non-members are excluded from family matters; 5) to be able to let the widow verbalise feelings of grief, guilt and anger; 6) to be able to explain to the widow what the symptoms of grief are; 7) to be able to interactively allow the widow to deal with the vacuum in her life and irrational beliefs; 8) to educate concerning the visualising of the presence of the loved one who died; 9) to educate concerning the fact that the widow's personality may change due to her experience of loss; 10) to approach widows with care for sensitively.

These are at least ten issues which can be of assistance to the pastor. Pastoral ministry should recognize and redress the plight of widows in their difficult situations. This can be properly achieved through the training of existing pastors who are responsible for shepherding the flocks.

Currently, the ministry to widows is one of the neglected areas in the Independent Methodist Church in Africa as well as in wider society. I hope that this research made some contribution towards addressing this challenge.

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SUMMARY

The interest for this dissertation arose in an empirical context where the researcher was confronted with some problems widows experienced. Primarily, the research has been done for these widows. This was research into especially the socio-cultural conventions of first century Palestine (Chapter 3); the notion of widow in the Old Testament (Chapter 4); an interpretation of 1 Timothy 5:1-16 (Chapter 5); and the interpretation of widows in the context of the theology of 'God the Saviour'. For this purpose and in these contexts, a theory of 'symbolic interactionism' within the larger ambit of social-scientific research has been developed and illustrated and used to various degrees. This was to meet the challenge to contribute to theory development in our current theological context of transformation.