

**THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN THE DIACONAL CARE OF ORPHANS: A
PASTORAL STUDY WITH FOCUS ON THE ORPHANS IN THE LIMPOPO
PROVINCE- VHEMBE DISTRICT**

By

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THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN THE DIACONAL CARE OF ORPHANS: A PASTORAL STUDY WITH FOCUS ON THE ORPHANS IN THE LIMPOPO PROVINCE – VHEMBE DISTRICT

Key Words: diaconal care, deacons, fellowship, pastoral, Limpopo, Vhembe and orphans

Stelutelwoorde: diakonale sorg, diakens, koinonia, pastoraal, Limpopo, Vhembe en weeskinders

1. Introduction

1.1 *Background and problem statement*

1.1.1 Background

1.1.1.1 Historical implementation of $\delta\iota\alpha\kappa\omicron\nu\iota\alpha$ in Church history

Boeckler (1999:830) defines $\delta\iota\alpha\kappa\omicron\nu\iota\alpha$ as the responsible service of the Gospel by deeds and by words performed by Christians in response to the needs of the people. Diaconal ministries have been primarily forms of social ministry, including a strong concern for the care of the poor and those in need.

He argues that $\delta\iota\alpha\kappa\omicron\nu\iota\alpha$ has to start in the local congregation and indeed may be defined as the social presence of the local worshipping community. However, diaconal work of the church happened to take many forms in both Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches. There are now many institutions like hospitals, facilities for the handicapped, maternity homes, to mention a few. Besides the institutions which take care of orphans, some people make use of their homes to provide care and education for the neglected children. There are also homes for the senior citizens, the elderly (old age homes).

The church has been, and still remains, involved in many of these institutions. The hospital of Siloam in Limpopo province (Venda) is such an example.

Nevertheless, I agree with what Boeckler (1999:831) states when he mentions that many churches are not yet equal to the demands, especially in the cities, where the social structures are breaking down. (It should, however, be added here that this is equally true of the rural areas, as will be discussed below.) They prefer to leave such tasks to the city missions instead of taking the initiative and setting up the group services that could be the catalyst for the new social integration.

The *διακονία* of the church has been commissioned by Jesus Christ, whose life embodied *διακονεῖν*. Jesus identified Himself with the underprivileged (Matthews 25:31-46). These underprivileged people are described in the Old Testament way as the hungry, the thirsty, the strangers, the naked, the ill and the prisoners. In his identification with them he suffers with them (Van Klinken, 1989:32).

This was not only a biblical or ancient problem. Due to the fact that South Africa is also vulnerable to orphans and widows it is necessary to look into the situation of South Africa, especially with emphasis on the Reformed Churches in South Africa.

1.1.1.2 The care of the orphans in Reformed Churches in South Africa

Throughout history, Christian missionaries have led the way in establishing orphanages and childcare centres on every continent. This Christian concern for children is seeded in the Old Testament view that children are gifts from God, rather than the mere biological descendants (Psalms 127:3). It is also clear that care of the fatherless is commanded again and again throughout the Pentateuch (Ex 22).

Despite the fact that caring for the fatherless is a biblical command, looking at the situation in South Africa, many organisations and different denominations take part in the caring of orphans. As a member of the Reformed Churches, it

is very difficult to point out congregations of the Reformed Churches that take specific care of the orphans. This might take place in bypassing or perhaps there might be one or two congregations involved in the caring of orphans, yet there is still a great lack regarding the diaconal care of the orphans. From the three different synods of the Reformed Churches in South Africa the Diaconal deputies should be working together in the care of the poor, particularly the orphans in and outside orphanage homes, including the street children.

Why do Reformed Churches in particular pay little attention to the care of orphans? Is it a lack of biblical information regarding this, or is it a matter of ignorance, or is the matter simply left aside as the task and responsibility of the state, as indicated by Berghoef & De Koster (1980:76)?

As it can further be shown with childcare centres existing in South Africa today, for example Amaphelo and Hospice in Potchefstroom; Thohoyandou Place of Safety, and Takalani Children's Home (the two based in Venda) to mention but a few, concerned Christians are provided not only with the opportunity of caring for the physical needs of deprived children, but also with the privilege of sharing in a positive way the good news of Jesus at the time and in the manner that makes the Christian message highly effective. These children do not need material care only; if we come closer to them we can see that they need to be loved. Hepker (2000:1), when narrating about her visit to one of the orphanage homes, was convinced of this need:

"The 12 little girls at the orphanage had almost nothing, few changes of clothing each and a small box of toys for all of them. They all lived together in two rooms, neither one as large as my bedroom at home. Their meals were sparse, and none of them had any extra pounds on their skinny bodies. But their poverty wasn't what struck me hardest. What truly blew me away was their trust, their openness and their willingness to love and be loved."

In their everyday lives the orphans face more hardship in a short period of time than a child whose parents are alive until he or she reaches the maturity age.

1.1.1.3 Orphanage situation in the Limpopo Province

In the Vhembe district of the Limpopo Province, as example of country-wide problem in rural areas, there is a great number of orphans based on the fact that their parents had passed away and because of the fact that the primary cause of family stress, disfunction and disintegration is poverty. According to Van Niekerk (1998:1) the most vulnerable are children in single parent households of which the mother is the head as well as those living below the poverty line.

In Limpopo Province there are many orphans, especially in the rural areas. There are some children who have been identified and are staying in the orphanage homes, and the government is trying its best in support of these homes, but is not giving 100% support. But there are still many who are lingering around and they are without any help from the government, or from the church. That is where the church can grab the opportunity in helping the children who are in need, through support and identifying them for social services.

One can focus on all the rural areas in the country, for example in the Western/ Eastern/ Northern Cape, Mpumalanga, Kwazulu Natal, Gauteng and North West, but for practical reasons the research will be limited to the rural areas in the Limpopo Province and in particular to the Vhembe district which comprises Makhado, Thulamela, Mutale and Musina Municipalities, where the researcher has been exposed to the issue. All the Reformed Churches under the Soutpansberg Synod and few in the Synod Potchefstroom (Bosveld) are situated in the Vhembe district of Limpopo Province. The largest portion of this district can be classified as rural area. Many of the middle-aged parents are dying and most of the children whose parents have passed away (orphans) are cared for by the grandmothers using their pension grants to look after them. As it is evident, there are no specific statistics available, but when one views the situation with an open eye one can analyse the situation.

Since this is a country-wide problem, Mbhense and Vilakazi (2005: 8) quote the speech of Jacob Zuma, the ex Deputy President of South Africa, on his visit to few orphans who experienced the loss of their parents, in the Kwazulu Natal Province when he said, "The hunger situation in the country is a massive challenge for the government. The high level of unemployment compounded the situation. There are people who die because of hunger. The government will continue with the distribution of food parcels to those families who are needy." This does not mean that the church no longer has responsibility with regard to the care of the orphans.

1.1.2 Problem statement

The research question of this study is:

What pastoral and strategic guidelines can be given to the Reformed Churches in the Vhembe district concerning their role in the diaconal care of the orphans?

In an attempt to answer this question it would be necessary to pay attention to the following questions:

- ❖ What is the Biblical teaching regarding the care of orphans?
- ❖ What are the views of the office bearers and some few members of the Reformed Churches in the Vhembe district regarding the diaconal care of orphans?
- ❖ What practical and strategic guidelines can the Reformed Churches utilise towards taking care of the orphans?
- ❖ How should the Reformed Churches work together with the NGOs and government in solving the problems encountered by orphans today?

1.2 Definition of terminology

1.2.1 Diaconal care

"Διακονία" is the Greek word meaning "service" or "ministry". According to Louw & Nida (1989:549) διακονία is to render assistance or help by performing certain duties, often of a humble or menial nature. Diaconal work, according to Vorster (2003:47), is the ministry of Christ to the poor. This is partly the duty of the deacons, but when one reads carefully from the book of Acts, the other duties of deacons include the promotion of fellowship among the believers. In Acts 2:42 Luke says, "They spent their time in learning from the apostles, taking part in the **fellowship**, and **sharing in the fellowship** meals and the prayers." From these words the diaconal work was introduced. It is clear that the meaning of διακονία has a character of help or service. A service in the sense of giving something to share with others or to sacrifice something to assist others. There are voluntary givers or helpers and there are receivers. Διακονία requires zeal and sacrifice.

1.2.2 Deacon / διακονος

The word *deacon* (Gk. *διακονος*) is the common word that means "minister" or "servant" and is used with this connotation in Matthew 20:26 and Mark 9:35. A deacon is a minister of mercy. Deacons have the duty of showing generosity toward fellow believers. In Romans 12:13 Paul says, "share your belongings with your needy fellow-Christians, and open your homes to strangers." Due to the fact that people are ignoring the office of the deacons, Berghoef & De Koster (1980:76) point out, "Assuming that the welfare state now provides for the material needs of everyone, some churches have phased out the office of deacon as no longer required." The implication of De Koster's argument is that the churches that do away with the office of deacons replaced their responsibility with that of the Department of Health and Welfare. This study thus intends to plead for a balance between the calling of the Church and the task of the Department of Health and Welfare as well as other NGOs.

1.2.3 Fellowship/ Κοινωνία

The word *fellowship* (Gk. *κοινωνία*) means “sharing” and emphasises the unity and oneness of the church. Fellowship takes place in a variety of ways. The early church met for the fellowship of breaking bread and prayer (Acts 2:42). The breaking of bread consisted of eating a fellowship meal, called the love feast, which was followed by the Lord’s Supper. The early church placed great emphasis on the fellowship of prayer (see Acts 4:24–31; 12:5, 12; Phil. 1:3–4). Fellowship may also involve material means in helping spread the gospel (Rom. 15:26; 2 Cor. 9:13; Phil. 1:5) or sharing rejection through identification with Christ (Phil 3:10).

Fellowship also emphasises the fact that believers belong together. Paul stresses this through his use of “one another.” Because of their fellowship in Christ, Paul instructs believers to accept one another (Rom. 15:7), love one another (Eph. 4:2, 15, 16; 5:2), refrain from judging one another (Rom. 14:3, 13), edify one another (Rom. 14:19), be unified (Rom. 15:5), and admonish one another (Rom. 15:14). This relationship with one another is important in keeping the unity of the faith for which Christ prayed (John 17) and Paul pleaded (Phil. 2:1–4). The office of deacons is of more importance in this regard. This emphasises the necessity of this study.

1.2.4 Orphans

The Greek word for orphan is “ὀρφανός”, and the Latin word thereof is “orbus”. This word may connote to be “bereaved,” “without parents or children”. It is mostly used in classical Greek in the literal sense of “orphaned,” “orphan.” In the LXX ὀρφανός (Ὀΐτη) is usually associated with χήρα, which means a widow (Kittel, G *et al.*, 1976).

According to Louw and Nida (1993:117) orphan is an offspring whose parents either are no longer alive or no longer function as parents (as the result of having abandoned their offspring).

An orphan is a person who has been deprived, through death, of both parents, or the person bereft, with no one to take care of him or her. Childress (1986: 445) defines orphans as children who have lost or have been deserted by both parents. They are also regarded as fatherless children or children who need special care. In other words an orphan is a child whose parents, one or both, have died. Orphan can also mean the abandoned child. This word is used figuratively by our Lord Jesus Christ in the book of John 14:18. In this passage the Lord assures His disciples in His final words that even though He is going from them He is not really leaving them. We are not to suppose that Jesus is here representing Himself as a father and His disciples as children who will be orphaned when He leaves them. ὀρφανός is simply used in a figurative sense for "abandoned." There is also, perhaps, a hint of the defenselessness of the orphan: "I will not leave you unprotected."

Orphans, like all men, are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27; 5:1). The Biblical definition of 'orphan,' by implication, seems to be broader than some would allow today and should include those children who are neglected, abused, abandoned and/or exploited (Malachi 3:5; Ex 22:21-23; Deut 24:17; James 1:27).

2. Aim and Objectives

2.1 Aim

The aim of the suggested research is to contribute and to get better strategic guidelines on the role of the Reformed Churches in the Vhembe district in the diaconal care of the orphans.

2.2 Objectives

- ❖ To find out what perspectives the Bible has on orphans and the role of the church in the diaconal care of the orphans.

- ❖ To determine the views of the office bearers and some of the members of the Reformed Churches in the Vhembe district regarding the diaconal care of the orphans
- ❖ To find practical and strategic guidelines for the churches with regard to how they can involve themselves in the diaconal care of the orphans.
- ❖ To determine a strategy of how the Reformed Churches can cooperate with the NGOs and government in solving the problems encountered by orphans.

3. Central theoretical argument

The central theoretical argument of this study is to show that Scriptural, practical and strategic guidelines will help the Reformed Churches in the Vhembe district in the realisation of the diaconal care they should give to the orphans.

4. Method of research

The model that deals with the basis theory, meta theory and praxis theory as defined for Practical theology by Zerfass, will be used in this regard (Heyns & Pieterse, 1990:35-36).

4.1 Basis theory

In order to determine what the Bible says about the care of orphans, an exegetical study from both Old and New Testament will be done. The grammatical-historical method will be used. This is the method of interpretation that emphasises the need to take into account the original languages and the historical context of Scripture (Kaiser & Silva, 1994:285)

4.2 *Meta-theory*

A literature study with a focus on sociology will be done. This study will concentrate on the role of the NGOs and the government in their care of the orphans.

4.2.1 Empirical study

Qualitative interviews will be done among the church leaders and some of the members in the Vhembe district. Three local congregations will be visited and from each local congregation three office bearers (minister, elder and a deacon) and one ordinary member (senior citizen, middle-aged or youth) from different genders will be interviewed. Interviews will also be done with three care-givers or managers from some of the Orphanage Homes that are in existence in the Vhembe district of Limpopo Province.

4.3 *Practice theory*

The practical-theoretical guidelines will be established by interaction between basis-theory and meta-theory. In this practical study pastoral and strategic guidelines will be formulated on how the Reformed Churches in the Vhembe district can become involved in the diaconal care of orphans in our country.

5. Systematic Presentation of 1.2.2, 2 and 5

<i>Problem Statement</i>	<i>Aims and Objectives</i>	<i>Method of Research</i>
The main problem statement of this study is: what pastoral and strategic guidelines can be given to the Reformed Churches in the Vhembe district concerning their role in the diaconal care of the orphans.	The aim of the suggested research is to contribute and to get better strategic guidelines on the role of the Reformed Churches in the Vhembe district concerning their role in the diaconal care of the orphans.	The model that deals with the basis-theory, meta-theory and praxis-theory as defined for Practical theology by Zerfass will be used in this regard.(Heyns & Pieterse, 1990:35-36)
Questions What God says and what is the biblical teaching towards the care for the orphans in the Scripture?	Objectives To find out what the Bible says about the care of the orphans	Basis theory In order to determine what the Bible says about the care of orphans, an exegetical study from both Old and New Testament will be done. The grammatical-historical method will be used. This is the method of interpretation that emphasises the need to take into account the original languages and the historical context of Scripture (Kaiser & Silva, 1994:285)

<p>What are the views of the office bearers and some few members of the Reformed Churches in the Vhembe district regarding the diaconal care of the orphans? What are the views of the caregivers or managers in the orphanages regarding the role of the church in the care of orphans</p>	<p>To determine the views of the office bearers and some of the members of the Reformed Churches and the views of caregivers or managers of the orphanages in the Vhembe district regarding the diaconal care of the orphans</p>	<p>Empirical Study A quantitative interview will be done among the church leaders and some of the members in the Vhembe district. In each local congregation three office bearers (minister, elder and a deacon) and one ordinary member (senior citizen, woman or youth) from different genders will be interviewed. Interviews will also be done with the caregivers or managers of the existing orphanage homes in the Vhembe district.</p>
<p>How should the Reformed Churches work together with the NGOs and the government in solving the problems encountered by orphans?</p>	<p>To determine a strategy or how the Reformed churches can cooperate with the NGOs and government in solving the problems encountered by orphans.</p>	<p>Meta-theory: A literature study with a focus on sociology will be done. This study will concentrate on the role of the NGOs and the government in their care of the orphans.</p>
<p>What pastoral and strategic guidelines can the Reformed Churches utilise towards diaconal care for the orphans?</p>	<p>To find pastoral and strategic guidelines for the churches with regard to how they can involve themselves in the diaconal care of the orphans</p>	<p>Practice theory The practical-theoretical guidelines will be established by interaction between basis-theory and meta-theory. In this practical study strategic guidelines will be formulated on how the Reformed Churches in the Vhembe district can become involved in the diaconal care of orphans in our country</p>

Chapter 2: BASIS THEORY

2.1 *Old Testament teaching regarding the care of orphans*

2.1.1 Introduction

2.1.1.1 Problem Statement

The problem statement is in the form of a question: "What is the Biblical teaching regarding the care of the orphans?" There are many passages that show that the needy must be taken care of. In many instances it refers to the care of the poor or needy as an individual responsibility. In most cases it refers to the material support, it might be money, food or something else. There are a few passages, which will be taken into consideration, that refer to the care of the orphans, and how God Himself takes care of the orphans.

2.1.1.2 Method

The formation of basis-theory on the care of orphans will be determined according to the grammatical-historical exegetical method. In analysing the Old Testament, word analysis of the semantic domain will be done according to the model of Van Gemeren 1997. Word analysis of a semantic domain in the New Testament will be done according to the model of Louw and Nida 1989.

2.1.1.3 Texts that will be used for case study

An exegetical analysis of the following Scriptural portions from the following passages:

In the Old Testament study, the following texts/pericopes will be dealt with: Exodus 22:21-24; Deuteronomy 14:22-29, 24:19-22, Esther 2:7; Psalm 94:6; Psalms 146:9; Proverbs 22: 9; Isaiah 10:1-4; Jeremiah 22:3; Zechariah 7:10. In the New Testament, exegesis will be done in Matthew 25: 31-46 and

James 1:27. In addition to the focus on the OT and the NT, attention will also be paid to the office of the deacons.

2.2 An exegetical study with regard to the care of orphans

2.2.1 The Exegesis of Exodus 22:21-24

2.2.1.1 Purpose and message of the book Exodus

According to (Hill *et al.*, 2000:88) the message of Exodus is summarised in two passages: the commission of Moses (6:2-9) and the preface to the covenant ceremony at Sinai (19: 1-6). The three basic components of the message include the judgment of the oppressor nation Egypt, the deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt by the mighty arm of Yahweh and the establishment of Israel as God's special possession among all peoples.

The didactic purpose of the book includes instruction on the importance of maintaining covenant relationship with Yahweh and the importance of the law as an instrument for shaping and preserving Israel's identity as Yahweh's people(23:20-23). Only through obedience to the covenant stipulations can Israel be a kingdom of priests to Yahweh and a holy nation, fulfilling her divine destiny among all the nations (19:5-6).

The following themes appear in the book of Exodus: Yahweh, the Ten plagues, the Passover, the Ten Commandments, and the presence of God.

2.2.1.2 The grammatical analysis of the Passage

Parsing the verbs from verses 21-24

Verse 21

Piel imperfect, second person masculine plural of עָנָה

The meaning of the verb ענה is to afflict. Verbs in piel are always active; their passive can be expressed by pual, nifal, or hitpael, which varies from verb to verb. A number of verbs that occur in piel seem to function as simple actives, much like qal (see Putnam 2002)

2.2.1.3 Word Study on verses 21-24

Orphans יתום

Overwhelmingly the orphan is listed along with the widow and the alien as a compositional triad and points to the weak and helpless segments of society, the ones who are most vulnerable to injury and abuse. In almost every case an orphan is the one who has lost his/her father. It is difficult, if not impossible, to isolate an instance in the Old Testament where an orphan has lost both his/her parents (Van Gemeren 1997:570).

From the definitions above, it may be concluded thus that an orphan is a person who has been deprived, through death, of either parents; or a person bereft, with no one to take care of him or her. Childress (1986: 445) defines orphans as children who have lost or have been deserted by both parents. They are also regarded as fatherless children or children who need special care. In other words, an orphan is a child whose parents, one or both, have died. Orphan can also mean the abandoned child. This word is used figuratively by our Lord Jesus Christ in the book of John 14:18. In this passage the Lord assures His disciples in His final words that even though He is going from them He is not really leaving them. We are not to suppose that Jesus is here representing Himself as a father and His disciples as children who will be orphaned when He leaves them. ὀρφανός is simply used in a figurative sense for “abandoned.” There is also, perhaps, a hint of the defenselessness of the orphan: “I will not leave you unprotected.”

Orphans, like all human beings, are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27; 5:1). The Biblical definition of 'orphan,' by implication, seems to be

broader than some would allow today and should include those children who are neglected, abused, abandoned and/or exploited (Malachi 3:5; Ex 22:21-23; Deut 24:17; James 1:27). The Hebrew law code is noted for its fairness and social responsibility toward the poor. God insisted that the poor and powerless be well treated and given the chance to restore their fortunes. The two definitions are of more importance in this regard. This means that even if the child is taken into the orphanage home, where there are child care workers, such a child is still an orphan. Therefore he/she has to be taken care of. Even a child who has been adopted and is taken care of can be said to be an orphan, because he/she does not have his/her biological parents.

2.2.1.4 Comparing Exodus 22:21-24 with other Scriptures

Verse 21 speaks about the oppression of the aliens, and this was repeated in chapter 23:9. In Leviticus 19:33-34 Moses continues to remind the Israelites how they should treat the aliens, by reminding them that they were aliens in Egypt, so they have to treat the aliens with respect. In support of what God says in Exodus, as a point of showing that He cares for the aliens, there is yet another reference in Deuteronomy 10:19 where He says that those who are aliens must be loved. In Malachi 3:5 He says the aliens must not be deprived. The aliens were to be treated in a way that even in the time of rest or Sabbath they also had to be given a chance of rest. In Deuteronomy 5:14-15 in the Ten Commandments it is clear that even the aliens must rest on Sabbath. Even prophet Jeremiah in chapter 7:6 says the alien must not be oppressed. When the prophet Ezekiel mentions the sins that the Israelites had committed he also mentioned the sin of oppressing the alien in chapter 22:7

Verse 22 warns that advantage should not be taken of the widow and the orphan. In Deuteronomy 24:17 it is said the orphans or fatherless must not be deprived of justice. There is a warning of curse to those who withhold justice from the fatherless; this is said in Deuteronomy 27:19.

From the earliest times the care of the fatherless was a concern of the Israelites, as of the surrounding nations. The Covenant Code (Exodus 22:22), and the Deuteronomic Code particularly, were most solicitous for the welfare of such (Deuteronomy. 16:11, 14; 24:17), protecting their rights of inheritance.

2.2.1.5 A Synthesis of Exodus 22:21-24

This passage reminds the readers about the way they must treat each other as a community of God. It may happen that those who are disadvantaged in life, because of their status, can be oppressed materially or physically. God is warning the Israelites that not one of the disadvantaged people should be oppressed in the community. This applies especially to the alien, the fatherless and the widows, because the end results of oppressing or withholding justice from them, would be a curse.

If the Israelites support the orphans and take care of them, they would be blessed by God Himself. One of the saddest things that would happen to those who oppress the fatherless is that God would be angry and would kill them with the sword and their wives would be widows and their children would become fatherless.

This command protects widows and orphans, those in the community who have lost their breadwinners and protectors and so are exposed to endless social threat. This command alludes to the exodus, for it knows that oppressed widows and orphans will cry out as Israel in slavery cried out. When the orphans cry out in need, God will destroy husbands and fathers, leaving Israel as helpless and vulnerable ones.

2.2.1.6 Findings and principles

- God cares for the poor; therefore those who believe in him also have to care for the poor and the orphans.

- The poor and the orphans also have dignity and status like the rest of other people.
- It is the responsibility of the believers to adopt orphans who are without care.
- No suffering has to be inflicted upon the orphans by society.
- The poor and orphans have to be given a chance to restore their belongings and they are not to be downtrodden and so oppressed to remain in such a condition forever.
- To ignore giving care to the orphans is to call upon God's anger and curse.

2.2.2 The Exegesis of Deuteronomy 14:28-29

According to Makungo (2004:20) God gave the Israelites the right laws for proper worship. Deuteronomy 14:28-29 falls under the code of specific laws in the outline of Deuteronomy. This category begins with Deuteronomy 12:1-26:15. This category forms the second theme in the book of Deuteronomy, that is, about principles for Covenant obligations, which is about the code of specific laws. It may also be referred to as Moses' second address. The structure of the book of Deuteronomy starts with the following headings and sub-headings:

Introduction: The Historical Setting of Moses' Speeches (1:1-4)

- A. The speaker, audience, and location (1:1)
- B. The date (1:2-4)
- II. The First Address by Moses: Historical Prologue (1:5-4:43)
 - A. The review of God's mighty acts between Horeb and Beth Peor (1:5-3:29)
 - B. An exhortation to obey the Law and resist idolatry (4:1-43)
- III. The Second Address by Moses: Covenant Obligations (4:44-26:19)

- A. Recapitulation of the Law at Horeb (4:44-5:33)
 - B. The great commands and warnings (6-11)
 - C. **The code of specific laws (12:1-26:15)**
 - D. A declaration of commitment (26:16-19)
- IV. The Third Address of Moses: Covenant Renewal Commanded and the Declaration of Blessings and Curses (27:1-29:1)
- A. Covenant renewal commanded (27)
 - B. The blessings and the curses (28)
 - C. Conclusion to Moses' third address (29:1)
- V. The Fourth Address by Moses: A Summary of the Covenant Demands (29:2-30:20)
- A. An appeal for covenantal obedience (29:2-29)
 - B. Promised blessings after Israel's repentance (30:1-10)
 - C. A concluding charge to choose life (30:11-20)
- VI. The Transition from Moses to Joshua (31-34)
- A. The appointment of Joshua and the depositing of the Law (31:1-29)
 - B. The Song of Moses (31:30-32:43)
 - C. Preparation for Moses' death (32:44-52)
 - D. The blessing of Moses (33)
 - E. The death of Moses (34) (See Walvoord 1985)

If one looks further into the scope of Deuteronomy 14: 28-29, this pericope in this outline belongs to the second address by Moses which starts from chapter 4:44 to 26:19. The section is all about the covenant obligations and under subheading: the code of specific Laws: 12:1-26:15

2.2.2.1 The purpose and message of the book Deuteronomy

The book Deuteronomy has received its title from a Greek word meaning second law. In a sense the title is misleading. One should not think that this book contains a second law distinct from that recorded in the preceding books of the Pentateuch. We should therefore rather translate this title as the repeated law. The book Deuteronomy claims to consist almost entirely of the farewell speeches of Moses addressed to Israel immediately prior to the entry into the Promised Land. The style is hortatory, that of an orator encouraging his congregation to obey the Lord of the covenant (Anon 1999:192). The message of the book is that God loves his chosen people. He has saved and blessed them. They are called upon to remember this and to love and obey God. Then they will have life and experience continued blessing.

This passage is based on the laws of proper worship and laws of human relationships. This is because it speaks of the way the Israelites must give help to the needy. Through their tithing they must help the Levites, the fatherless and the widows, including the aliens.

2.2.2.2 Grammatical analysis

תוציא hifil imperfect second person masculine singular of
יצא which means to bring forth. This is in a causative sense.
Because hifil is the causative form of a qal
בא qal perfect 3rd person masculine singular of בא to go or come
אכלו qal perfect 3rd person common plural of אכל to eat
יברך piel imperfect 3rd mas, singular with 2nd mas singular suffix
of ברך meaning to bless

2.2.2.3 Word Study

מַעֲשֵׂר 1 tithe, tenth part. 1A tenth part. 1B tithe, payment of a tenth part.

(See Strong 1996)

“The Hebrew term maser occurs 32 times in the OT, 29 times referring to the tithe that the sons of Israel were to give to the Levites, and the levitical tithe to the priests, once referring to Abram’s tithe to Melchizedek. The tithe was holy to the Lord. Hezekiah certainly treated both the first fruits and the tithe (2 Chronicles 31:5) as obligatory, the goal being to provide for the priests and Levites so that they could devote themselves to the Law of the Lord rather than pursue other means of providing for their families” (Van Gemeren, 1997:1043).

2.2.2.4 Comparing Deuteronomy 14:28-29 with other scriptures

In Deuteronomy 26:12-13 the tenth part of each produce in the third year must be for the Levite, alien, fatherless and the widow. The sole reason for that is that they must enjoy life like other people in the community. There is a point of sharing with those in need. In Numbers 18:21 in reference to the Levite, they must be given the tithe as their inheritance. This is because they have nothing to inherit, so they must get food from their work in the temple. In Luke 14:13 the Bible says those who are rich in their banquets must invite those in need, the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind and because of that they will be blessed by God.

2.2.2.5 Synthesis of Deuteronomy 14:28-29

The tithe (**14:22–29**) is an act of gratitude or devotion (see Gen. 14:20; 28:22), not so much a legal demand. It is a recognition that all possessions are gifts of God (8:18). Every third year, the Israelites are to bring a second tithe to the storehouses of the Levitical cities (v. 28). As an expression of love to God and to neighbour, this tithe supplies the needs of the Levites

themselves, as well as the resident aliens, the poor, the widows, and the orphans. God promises rich blessings to those who give bountifully and cheerfully.

The Israelite tithe was a dedication of the produce of the land. In an agricultural society, crops were the immediate token of God's goodness, and they were thus an inevitable part of worship. It is not easy to say how much of an Israelite's wealth the tithe actually amounted to (even though it means literally 'a tenth'); it was, moreover, only one among a number of offerings which Israelites were expected to bring. An understanding of it is further complicated by the different laws about it in the Pentateuch. In Numbers 18:21–29 it appears as an offering for the benefit of the Levites (who needed such offerings to live). Here, it is a feast in which the offerers and their households participate, though the Levites are not forgotten (v. 27).

The family feast at the place of worship would have left large amounts over for the Levites' dues. The tithe of the third year, however (28–29), seems to have been put to special use, being collected in the towns rather than taken to the place of worship, and used for the disadvantaged (as well as the Levites, who lived in all parts of the land; Numbers. 35:1–8). The tithe as presented here is typical of Deuteronomy, however. It is celebrated by all Israel at the central place of worship. It is marked by joy in worship of the one God, and symbolises the oneness of the people by stressing the fact that all share in it. And it shows a people that were at the same time obedient (in bringing its tithes) and blessed with abundance of the land (in the feast which the offering itself affords them).

2.2.2.6 Findings and principles

- The contribution we make in the Church is of more importance even for the life of the orphans.
- Our worship to God must also be through what we have, not only through our mouth.

- The hand that gives is more blessed than the hand that receives.

2.2.3 The Exegesis of Deuteronomy 24:19-21

2.2.3.1 The Purpose and message

Look at 2.2.2.1

2.2.3.2 The Grammatical Analysis of Deuteronomy 24:19-21

- **Parsing the important verbs**

תִּקְצַר qal imperfect 2nd masculine singular of קָצַר to cut or to reap

שָׁכַח qal perfect 2nd masculine singular, consecutive of שָׁכַח to forget or overlook

תָּשׁוּב qal imperfect 2nd masculine singular of שׁוּב meaning return or go back.

There is a verb in the purpose clause. The end results of what you do will be the blessings from God Almighty. יְבָרְכֶךָ piel imperfect 3rd masculine singular with 2nd masculine singular suffix of בָּרַךְ meaning to bless

יָהִי qal, imperfect, 3rd masculine singular of הָיָה meaning come to pass or go, or leave

2.2.3.3 Word Study

זַיִת (*zayit*) *olive tree, olive*

Van Gemeren says, “Olives are significant in the OT because they were one of the three primary staples of life in the Promised Land. They figure prominently in blessing and curse formulas. Disobedience could lead to discipline in the form of devoured olive trees (Amos 4:9). Failure to keep the covenant would result in failed olive crops. Fear of God result in the blessing of children compared to olive branches (Psalm 128:3).” The olive was and is

a common and valuable tree in the Near East, famous for its fruit, oil and wood. The oil especially was a staple, being used in diet as shortening (Leviticus 2:4–6), in lamps for light (Exodus 27:20) and in ritual for anointing (Exodus 29:7). Kings and priests were anointed with olive oil. Elijah anointed Elisha to succeed him as a prophet. Oil was used also medicinally and as a perfume (Psalm 104:15; Ezekiel 16:9). The practice of anointing kings is rarely attested outside of Israel. Anointing of kings is rather clearly a symbol of endowment with the Spirit of God (1 Samuel 10:1, 10; 16:13).

The seven-branched lamp stand with its oil-fed lamps is also interpreted as symbolising the Spirit of God (Zechariah 4:2–6). It is possible that the symbolism of oil for spirit was not difficult for the ancient Hebrew because daily he observed the oil of his lamps disappearing into the air of his room. And the Hebrew word for “wind” and “spirit” is the same. It is obvious that the NT word Messiah—Christ derives from the OT word for the anointed king, also messiah.

But it should be noted that the OT uses the word “messiah” for the expected Figure quite sparingly. Instead, it speaks of him usually as the Shoot of David, the Son of David, the Tabernacle of David, the Branch of David, the Branch, or just David (Ezekiel 34:23; 37:24). But in Psalm 2:2 and Daniel 9:25, 26 and possibly in a few other passages the royal title becomes a title of great David’s greater Son which the NT and some other pre-Christian literature pick up and use extensively (See Harris et al 1999). This means that an olive was of more importance in such a way that those who were rich would have thought that the poor, the widow, the alien and the fatherless did not deserve to get the olives. But God is saying that some should be left for the needy. In verse 22 He gives the reason, because they were slaves in Egypt.

2.2.3.4 Comparing Deuteronomy 24:19-21 with other Scriptural readings

Leviticus 19:9-10 presents the same view that when the Israelites glean in their fields they must leave some for the poor. In other words they must not

reap to the very end of the field, or they must not go for the second time to harvest but give the chance for the poor or open the gates of their field for the poor and the alien.

According to Anon (1991:312) God's people were instructed to leave some of their harvest in the fields so travellers and the poor could gather it. This second gathering, called gleaning, was a way for them to provide for themselves. Years later, Ruth obtained food for herself and Naomi by gleaning behind the reapers in Boaz's field, picking up the leftovers (Ruth 2:2).

This law to leave some grain (barley and wheat), olives, and grapes made it possible for aliens, the fatherless, and widows to glean during harvest time (cf. Leviticus 23:22). In this way the needy were not reduced to the humiliation of begging or seeking welfare. They could still work for their food. Also farmers were given opportunity to express their gratitude to the Lord for His abundant provision and His love for poorer members in the covenant community.

The grain, pulled up by the roots or cut down with a sickle, was laid in loose sheaves; and the fruit of the olive was obtained by striking the branches with long poles; and the grape clusters, severed by a hook, were gathered in the hands of the vintager. Here is a beneficent provision for the poor. Every forgotten sheaf in the harvest-field was to lie; the olive tree was not to be beaten a second time; nor were grapes to be gathered, in order that, in collecting what remained, the hearts of the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow might be gladdened by the bounty of Providence.

2.2.3.5 The final synthesis and Summary

The law of loving one's neighbour is exhibited in the social concern for the alien, the fatherless, and the widow. The motive for the care of the destitute and helpless is the gracious redemption experienced at the exodus. In the

same spirit, the law of love is exemplified by leaving what is not harvested for the sake of the orphan and widow (cf. Leviticus 19:9–10; 23:22; Ruth 2). The governing principle in the theocratic life of the people of God must be a love for the Lord exhibited in love for others. In Deuteronomy 24:19-22 the spirit of charity, negatively required in the Tenth Commandment, was to be the governing spirit of theocratic life. Once again the poor were to be the beneficiaries. In Leviticus 19:9, 10 and 23:22 the Lord God says “when you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the Lord your God.”

2.2.3.6 Findings and principles

- We must share what we have with the needy.
- We must give what is best to us also to the needy.
- God will bless us if we take care of the needy.
- We must remember how God loved us.

2.2.4 Esther 2:7

2.2.4.1 Purpose and message

Anon (1999:551) says, “The Book of Esther tells how Esther, a Jewish heroine, became the wife of a Persian king, and was able to save the Jewish race from being exterminated by their enemies. The absence of the name God in this book does not mean the absence of the hand of God. The whole book tells us how the right person was in the right place at the right moment.” The whole story exhibits the providence of God which preserves his people from annihilation. His providence operates by means of human plans and actions. The primary purpose of the book is to record the origin and meaning of the Jewish festival of Purim.

2.2.4.2 Grammatical Analysis

אמן qal participle, masculine, singular absolute of אמן which mean nurture, foster or take care of.

2.2.4.3 Word Study

Adopt אָמַן (*aman*) **nurture**, care for, foster, raise a child (Esther 2:7); (qal passive.) **be nurtured** (Lamentation 4:5) (nifal) **be kept**, be attended to (Isaiah 60:4), NIV translates “carried” as one of the many acts of care of a child; note: for qal participle. As noun masculine (See Swanson. J. 1997)

2.2.4.4 Comparing Esther 2:7 with other Scriptures

There are many instances of adoption. Instances of Joseph’s sons, Genesis 48:5, 14, 16, 22, Moses, Exodus 2:5–10; Acts 7:21; Hebrews. 11:24. It is not only a matter of adopting a child or a person maybe only for material benefit, but even spiritually the child must gain. There are few passages that include the spiritual adoption of a child. Exodus 4:22, 23; Numbers 6:27 Deuteronomy 28:10; 2 Chronicles 7:14; Isaiah 43:7. Deuteronomy 14:1; 26:18; 27:9; 32:5, 6; 2 Samuel 7:14; 1 Chronicles. 22:10, 28:6, Proverbs 14:26; Isaiah 8:18; 43:6; 63:16; Jeremiah 3:19; 31:9, 20; Hosea 1:9, 10; 11:1; Matthew 5:9, 45; 13:43; Luke 6:35; John 1:12, 13; 11:52; Acts 15:17; Romans 8:14–17, 19, 21, 29; 9:8; 2 Sam. 7:14; Heb. 1:5. 2 Corinthians 6:17, 18; Galatians 3:26, 29; 4:5–7; Ephesians 1:5; 2:19; 3:6, 15; Philippians 2:15; Hebrews 2:10, 11, 13; 12:6, 7, 9; 1 John 3:1, 2, 10; 4:4; and Revelation 21:7.

2.2.4.5 The final synthesis and summary

This passage, with the support of the above mentioned passages, places emphasis on the adoption of a child. Mordecai took it as his responsibility to raise up Esther because she did not have parents. Her parents passed away. Orphans need to be adopted (Gen. 15:3). The adopted child in that sense must accept and look at his/her foster parent/s in a positive way. As long as

his/her parents are treating him/her with respect, he/she must be responsible in such a way that whatever they want, not abusive, he/she must do. If we look at the life of Esther, she was of help to her uncle Mordecai in the time of crisis. She listened to the advice of her uncle who adopted her. For that reason the adopted children must listen to their parents and have respect and dignity towards them.

2.2.4.6 Findings and Principles

It is evident from this passage that, due to what we hear in the life of Mordecai who adopted Esther, his cousin, adoption is another option of caring for the orphans or the fatherless.

- It is essential not to leave abundant children on their own without taking them into one's care.
- Families also have a responsibility and task to adopt their family's children when necessary.
- Orphans also have the task to be responsible over those who take/took care of them.

2.2.5 The Exegesis of Psalm 94:6

2.2.5.1 The purpose and message

The book of Psalms comprises a collection of religious poems. There are 150 psalms which are divided into 5 books, and each book is arranged to close with a doxology. If the narrative materials of the Bible record what God has done, and the prophetic literature recounts what God has said, the psalms present the response of the people to the words and acts of God. The psalms are not systematic theological treatises, but they bear testimony to the strength of the covenant bond between God and His people. Yahweh is conceived as a God of power and the saviour of Israel.

2.2.5.2 Grammatical analysis

יִרְצָחוּ, piel, imperfect, 3rd masculine plural of רָצַח meaning shatter or murder

2.2.5.3 Comparing with other Scriptural passages

Isaiah 1:23 has reference to the way the orphans were treated. They were not defended, and in 10:2 the fatherless were robbed. One of the things that would make the Israelites live in the Promised Land as God spoke through the mouth of Jeremiah was for them not to oppress the fatherless (Jeremiah 7:6). In Psalm 10:18 the fatherless must be defended and must not be oppressed.

2.2.5.4 The final synthesis and summary

Verses 1-7 record a prayer that God would avenge the jubilant wicked. In verses 1-3 the psalmist affirmed that vengeance belongs to the Lord. Because God is the Judge of the earth, it is He who must repay the wicked. Here again a psalmist asked, "How long?" The continuing joy of the wicked seems out of place since they oppose God (see Psalm 73:3-12).

In Psalm 94:4-7 to justify his request, the psalmist lamented the oppression that the proud insolently inflict on the righteous. The speech of the wicked is arrogant. They oppress God's people, His inheritance (see verse 14 and comments on 28:9; Deuteronomy 4:20). The wicked do all this because they are convinced that the Lord pays no attention to them (Psalm 73:11).

2.2.5.5 Findings and principles

- It does not please God if the needy are oppressed or if the fatherless are murdered.
- God takes vengeance on those who oppress the orphans/needy.
- The needy may bring their grievances to the Lord; He would take care of them.

- The people who take care of the orphans may also pray for the orphans so that God may take vengeance on their oppressors.

2.2.6 The Exegesis of Psalm 146:9

2.2.6.1 Purpose and message

See 2.2.5.1

2.2.6.2 Grammatical Analysis

יְעוֹדֵד Polel imperfect 3rd masculine singular of עוֹד meaning return, relieve

2.2.6.3 Comparing Psalm 146:9 with other passages

This passage gives us a clue of how God sees the needy and the poor. This is an indication that reminds us of what God always does for His people. In chapter 10:16-18 when the psalmist shows the Kingship of God, he says God defends the fatherless and the oppressed. In Deuteronomy 10:18 the Bible says, "He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing."

2.2.6.4 The final synthesis and summary

Psalm 146:9 tells us more about the view of God towards the oppressed. God is the one who sustains them. In other words, the psalmist is calling the people to trust in God, in such a way that they must think of an orphan who does not have anyone to trust in or to depend on. He is the one who protects the orphans. In this Christians have a challenge of seeing orphans in the way God sees them.

Widows and fatherless children that have lost the head of the family, who used to take care of the affairs, often fall into the hands of those that make a prey of them, that will not do them justice, nay, that will do them injustice; but

the Lord relieved them, and raised up friends for them. Our Lord Jesus came into the world to help the helpless, to receive Gentiles, strangers, into his kingdom, and that with him poor sinners that are as fatherless, may find mercy. Hosea 14:3 says that Assyria will not save us, nor shall we rely on horses, what we have made with our own hands we shall never again call gods; for in you the fatherless find compassion.

2.2.6.5 Findings and principles

- God protects and takes care of the orphans.
- God relieves the orphans from oppression.
- God cares for the orphans by making use of people.
- God also cares for those who care for the orphans and the needy.

2.2.7 Exegesis of Proverbs 22:9

2.2.7.1 The purpose and Message

This book consists of short sayings regarding practical everyday concerns. It is considered part of the wisdom literature. A prominent feature of the sayings within the book of Proverbs seems to be comparison. Brief proverbial sayings set one image over against another, making an explicit or implicit comparison. This book treats such themes as wealth, poverty, wisdom, folly, sin, goodness, pride, humility, justice, vengeance, love, lust, gluttony, respect for the poor, loyalty to friends and many more. It begins with the reminder, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." (Proverbs 1:7)

2.2.7.2 Grammatical Analysis

נתן qal perfect 3rd person, masculine singular of נתן

2.2.7.3 Word Study

טוב עין

A generous man is literally, “a good eye.” (In Proverbs 23:6 and 28:22 “a stingy man” is, literally, “an evil eye.”). Willingness to share food with the poor shows that a person is genuine; he looks at others with the desire to help them, not to take advantage of them (cf. generosity to the poor in Deuteronomy 15:10; Proverbs 14:21, 31; 28:27) (Walvoord & Zuck, 1985). One can say that figurative language was used in the book of proverbs. A generous man is said to be a good eye. Proverbs 22:9 says, “He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth his bread to the poor (KJV).” The phrase “the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him” is indicative of God’s watchful care.

In contrast with the generous man, another figurative use of the eye is a stingy man, literally, an evil eye, meaning, a man who does not want to help others, is stingy, one who does not want to give bread to the poor. He does not have a watchful care for the poor; he does not provide or meet the demands of the poor. That is, a stingy man is an egocentric man, a man who thinks only of himself, and he is self-centred. God spoke out against the stingy men in the nation of Israel. They were to live in accordance with His Laws and Commands; they were to help the poor people by giving them what they needed.

2.2.7.4 Comparison with other Scriptures

In Proverbs chapter 14:21 the author speaks of happiness to him who has mercy on the poor. In the same chapter verse 31 it is evident that to oppress the poor is to reproach God and if one honours God, he will show mercy to the poor or the needy. In 19:17 God promises the rewards to those who have pity for the poor. In chapter 31:20 one of the characteristics of the virtuous

lady is that she extends her hand to the poor and she reaches out her hand to the needy.

2.2.7.5 The final synthesis and summary

In the book of Proverbs God wanted His people to share what they have with those who do not have. Man was not to be stingy, but he was supposed to have a good eye and look after the needy. God was against self-centred persons, as He wanted people to share what they have with those who do not have. They were to meet the demands of the needy people to show the true love of God. They were to live in accordance with His Laws and Commands; they were to help the poor people by giving them what they needed.

2.2.7.6 Findings and Principles

- God is against turning a blind eye against the needy.
- God wants His children to be looking for the needy in order to be of assistance to them.
- God wants us to share with those who do not have.
- God wants His children to live according to His Law and Commandments.
- God brings happiness to the one who has mercy upon the poor.

2.2.8 The Exegesis of Isaiah 10:1-4

2.2.8.1 The purpose and message

According to Anon (1999:762) nothing is known of the life of Isaiah except what is read in the book of Isaiah. Isaiah lived in Jerusalem and his prophetic activity extended at least from 742-701 B.C. He was the son of Amoz, and was married. The occasion of the book of Isaiah was the Assyrian crisis, which would bring about destruction of Northern Israel and threaten the existence of Southern Judah.

Throughout the book, Yahweh is depicted as the Holy One of Israel. He is supreme and the Lord of the whole earth. Other key concepts in this book are justice, righteousness, salvation, faith and peace. God's greatness and love in respect to human need are clearly stated.

2.2.8.2 Grammatical analysis of verse 2d

יָבִיזָ qal, imperfect, 3rd masculine plural of יָבַז to rob or to take by force. We can think of the time of war.

2.2.8.3 Word Study

מִשְׁפָּט (*mishpat*): According to Swanson, 1997, the word מִשְׁפָּט has nine different categories of usage

1. **judgment**, the act of deciding a legal dispute or case (Deut. 1:17);
2. **court**, a place where a legal case is decided (Deut. 25:1; Job 9:32);
3. **case**, lawsuit, i.e., a legal action taken in court (2Sa. 15:4);
4. **decision**, sentence, i.e., an official proclamation in a legal verdict (1Kings 20:40);
5. **justice**, i.e., a state or condition of fairness in disputes (Exodus 23:6);
6. **law**, regulation, prescription, specification, i.e., a spoken or written command which is to be obeyed, often with penalties for non-compliance (Exodus 21:1);
7. **plan**, formally, prescription, i.e., a graphic or verbal description of how to build something (Exodus 26:30; 1Kings 6:38), see also domain

8. **share**, what is a just amount of a whole (Deuteronomy 18:3; 1Kings 5:8;
9. **custom**, practice, a behaviour which is more or less fixed and accepted as a normal practice (1Samuel 2:13) (See Swanson 1997)

The laws given to the Israelites through Moses in Exodus 21-23 are introduced as *hammispatim* (21:1). These are commands from God for the regulation of Israelite civil cases. The decisions on these cases became regulatory and normative for Israel's conduct. The fifth meaning of this word can fit the context of the passage. It happens that sometimes the status of a person determines how he is treated in the society.

2.2.8.5 Comparing Isaiah 10:1-4 with other scriptures

In Isaiah 1:17 and 3:15 God warns His people to do justice to all including the poor. In chapter 59:15 of Isaiah God looked from above and was displeased because there was no justice. In 11:4 when he prophesied on what will happen, and referring to the king who will come and rule in Israel he says, "but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor on earth..." The character of God among the needy is of being a refuge when the needy are in distress (Isaiah 25:4).

2.2.8.6 The final synthesis and summary

The corrupt leaders in Israel were perverting the cause of justice and righteousness, in contrast with the Messiah's justice and righteousness (9:6-7). So Isaiah pronounced woe (see Isaiah 3:9) on those people. The readers should have realised that this woe would befall them if they followed their leaders' wicked ways. Israel's leaders were guilty of six things: They were (a) making unjust laws and (b) issuing oppressive decrees. These actions were repulsive because the Israelites were supposed to care for each other as members of God's people redeemed from Egyptian slavery by their God. Also they were (c) depriving the poor (feeble, weak, helpless) of their rights, (d) taking away justice, (e) hurting widows, and (f) robbing the fatherless. These

actions, which involved taking advantage of people who could not defend their rights, violated God's Law (Exodus 22:22; 23:6; Deuteronomy 15:7-8; 24:17-18; Isaiah 1:17). Because of this behaviour, the nation would go into captivity (10:3-4). In disaster... from afar (i.e. from Assyria) no one would help them, as they had refused to help those in need. In anger God's judgment would fall (see comments on 9:12). (See Walvoord *et al.*, 1985)

2.2.8.7 Findings and principles

- God is always calling for justice which is to be done even among the poor.
- Justice is an ethical issue and it implies that all people must be treated with respect; this includes even those who are in need.

2.2.9 The Exegesis of Jeremiah 22:3

2.2.9.1 The purpose and message

Jeremiah was still a child when he was called to the prophetic office. He did not marry as a sign that children would not survive (16:1-4). His prophetic ministry aroused much hostility. Throughout this book we find prophecies of judgment that insist that Jerusalem be destroyed. But there are also words of hope of a new future beyond disaster. Jeremiah also teaches that individual responsibility is the foundation of spiritual life, and that individuals are to be punished for their own sins, not for those of their fathers.

2.2.9.2 Grammatical Analysis

תִּקְרָאוּ qal, imperfect, 2nd masculine plural and jussive in meaning from קָרָא meaning treat violently or wrong

2.2.9.3 Word Study

This is an adverb of negation in Hebrew לֹא *not, no, nor, neither*

This particle expresses the negative as either a wish (Genesis 13:8; Jude 19:23) or a preference (Proverbs 17:12), thus indicating its more reserved intent than the very adamant לֹא־. Consistent with this concept, whenever it is used with a verb, the verb is in the jussive (which often is indistinguishable from the imperfect). It can also be used in a command (II Kings 9:15) but never with an imperative. The negative command is usually לֹא־ with the indicative as in the Ten Commandments. Finally, inasmuch as it expresses preference, it often occurs in prayers to God (Daniel 9:19; Psalm 31:1), where it introduces a plea—"let me never. ..." (See Harris, *et al.*, 1999)

In this context Jahweh Himself is saying oppression, wrongs and violence must not be done to the widows, fatherless or stranger. God is giving a command.

2.2.9.4 Comparing with other scriptures

In Jeremiah 7:6 one of the conditions that can make the Israelites to live in the Promised Land is for them to do justice to others, including the poor and needy. In Jeremiah 21:12 the prophet says Justice must be administered at all the times. The king of Judah who was in the throne of David had been warned of their injustice. They are reminded of how David lived in his kingship, from chapter 22:16 it is said, "He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well." Blessings are to those who maintain justice (Psalm 106:3)

2.2.9.5 The final synthesis and summary

They must take care of the following:

(1.) That they do all the good they can with the power they have. They must do justice in defence of those that were injured, and must deliver the spoiled out of the hand of their oppressors. This was the duty of their place, Psalm 82:3. Herein they must be ministers of God for good.

(2.) That no hurt, no wrong and no violence accompany their deeds. It is one of the greatest wrongs to allow violence to occur under the pretence of law and justice, and by those whose business it is to punish and protect from wrong and violence. They must do no wrong to the stranger, fatherless, and widow; for these God does in a particular matter patronise and take under his tuition, (Exodus 22:21, 22.)

2.2.9.6 Findings and principles

- The orphans and the poor must be treated with justice.
- Those who mistreat the fatherless are calling for God's anger.
- God blesses those who take care of the poor.
- Taking care of the poor is not conditional. It has to occur regularly.
- The feelings of the poor have to be respected, they are not to be hurt, and no violence has to be done to them.

2.2.10 The Exegesis of Zechariah 7:10

2.2.10.1 The purpose and message

The book Zechariah is concerned with the rebuilding of the temple. Zechariah urges the people to listen to God's message through the prophets. Messianism is a dominant theme in this book. The prophet says that the time of messianic salvation is near. The rebuilding of the temple is a sign of its coming. Zechariah is regarded as the prophet of comfort, hope and glory.

2.2.10.2 Grammatical analysis

תַּעֲשֶׂקוּ qal imperfect 2nd masculine plural but jussive in meaning from עֲשָׂק and the verb means oppress, wrong or extort)

2.2.10.3 Word Study

A Hebrew name **לֵב** which means **heart**, mind, soul, spirit, self, i.e., the source of the life of the inner person in various aspects, with a focus on feelings, thoughts, volition, and other areas of inner life (Deuteronomy 2:30); or **middle**, centre, midst, formally, heart, i.e., a position among or in the middle, relatively to other points of space or **conscience**, i.e., the psychological faculty to distinguish right and wrong (Genesis 20:5) (See Swanson 1997). Van Gemeren (1997:748) says that in the OT, the words have a dominant metaphorical use in reference to the centre of human physical and spiritual life, to the entire inner life of a person.

2.2.10.4 Comparing with other scriptures

The same reference is in Proverbs 22:22-23 and Exodus 22:22-24, where we are warned not to exploit the poor, because of their status and not to crush the needy in court. The passage also reminds us to take note of what God always does to the oppressed. In Jeremiah 5:28-29 God says He will punish all those who do not plead the case of the fatherless, and those who do not defend the rights of the poor.

2.2.10.5 The final synthesis and summary

The second message from the Lord centred on the conduct of the earlier generation that resulted in the Exile. In preexilic times, as in Zechariah's own day, God desired inner spiritual reality rather than external formalism. True justice (Isaiah 1:17; Amos 5:24) along with mercy and compassion (cf. Zechariah 8:16-17; Micah 6:8) should be demonstrated toward all, but especially toward the widow, the fatherless, the alien, and the poor (cf. Deuteronomy 15:7-11; 24:14-15, 19-21; 26:12-13), who were in no position to stand up for themselves, and so are often mentioned in the Bible as objects of God's care. In addition God's people were not even to think evil of each other.

2.2.10.6 Findings and principles

- Orphans must not be treated wrongly.
- They must not be looked down upon because of their status.
- If they have no one to fight for them or someone to defend them before the authorities, it becomes the task of God's children to stand up for them.
- Caring for the poor must come from the heart. It should be a matter of love and not merely an act of pleasing the outside world.

2.2.11 Basis theoretical principles

From the principles above, one realised a few categories:

There is a legal/ethical aspect, a social aspect as well as a religious aspect if one should try to find a fine distinction.

2.2.11.1 From the legal/ethical aspect the following principles are found:

- The poor have rights.
- They have to be treated with justice.
- They have to be defended in court.
- They must have legal support in civil proceedings affecting them.
- They have to be helped to regain their property if they have lost anything by any wrong means.
- They have to be granted the opportunity to uplift themselves .

2.2.11.2 The social aspect

- They are part of the community and hence are also children of God.
- They have to be adopted by society and be cared for.

- They have to be protected and given the necessary warmth and love.
- They have to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse, or degradation.
- They must have family care, parental care, or appropriate alternative care.

2.2.11.3 The religious aspect

- God is also on their side.
- God cares for them and those who take care of them.
- God blesses and has mercy upon them and those who take care of them.
- God wants them to be protected out of a heart filled with love.
- God makes use of us for the task of taking care of the orphans and the needy.

2.2.12 Picture of the OT teaching regarding orphans

It is evident from the findings of the OT that:

Orphans have a special place in the sight of God. It is not a curse or a punishment. It is rather the will of God that the poor, including the orphans, should live in peace and happiness and also take care of one another. This means that the Israelites or the people of God have to take care of the orphans. They must treat the orphans with justice and with respect. Socially they must share their belongings with the orphans and they must adopt the orphans where necessary. Ethically the orphans must be treated with justice; they are to be seen like any other individuals who are part of the society.

Religiously, we must know that from the Old Testament perspective God is always on the side of orphans. He does want them to be treated with love

from the heart. He promises blessings to all those who take care of the orphans. He promises curses to all those who neglect the orphans.

2.3 The Exegesis from the New Testament

2.3.1 The Exegesis of Matthew 25: 31-46

2.3.1.1 The Purpose and Message

Matthew's main purpose is to prove to his Jewish readers that Jesus is the Messiah, the eternal King. The whole Gospel is woven around five great discourses: the Sermon on the Mount (5-7); instructions to the disciples (10); parables about the kingdom of God (13); teaching on the meaning of discipleship (18); and teaching about the end of the present age (24-25).

2.3.1.2 Grammatical Analysis of Matthew 25:31-46

ἐποιήσατε is the Aorist indicative active 2nd person plural of ποιέω meaning to do or to perform.

2.3.1.3 Word study from Verse 40

ποιέω

a do: 90.45

b perform: 42.7

c cause to be: 13.9

d work: 42.41 (See Louw and Nida 1996 volume 2)

ποιέω^a: a marker of an agent relation with a numerable event—'to do, to perform, to practise, to make.' It seems as if the first meaning may fit the context of the passage in Matthew 25:40, because it is all about the good deeds which were performed among those who were in need. This parable

has an implication of doing things as if we are doing them to Christ Himself. It shows the great separation during the time of judgement, *ie.* the separation which will be determined by what we did during our earthly life. The following outline reflects the parallel structure within the passage:

- I. Introduction of the King (1:1-4:11)
 - A. Presentation by ancestry (1:1-17)
 - B. Presentation by advent (1:18-2:23)
 - C. Presentation by an ambassador (3:1-12)
 - D. Presentation through approval (3:13-4:11)
- II. Communications from the King (4:12-7:29)
 - A. Beginning proclamations (4:12-25)
 - B. Continuing pronouncements (5-7)
- III. Credentials of the King (8:1-11:1)
 - A. His power over disease (8:1-15)
 - B. His power over demonic forces (8:16-17, 28-34)
 - C. His power over men (8:18-22; 9:9)
 - D. His power over nature (8:23-27)
 - E. His power to forgive (9:1-8)
 - F. His power over traditions (9:10-17)
 - G. His power over death (9:18-26)
 - H. His power over darkness (9:27-31)
 - I. His power over dumbness (9:32-34)
 - J. His power to delegate authority (9:35-11:1)
- IV. Challenge to the King's Authority (11:2-16:12)
 - A. Seen in the rejection of John the Baptist (11:2-19)

- B. Seen in the condemnation of the cities (11:20-30)
 - C. Seen in the controversies over His authority (12)
 - D. Seen in the change in the kingdom programme (13:1-52)
 - E. Seen in various rejections (13:53-16:12)
- V. Cultivation of the King's Disciples (16:13-20:34)
- A. The revelation in view of rejection (16:13-17:13)
 - B. The instruction in view of rejection (17:14-20:34)
- VI. Climax of the King's Offer (21-27)
- A. The official presentation of the King (21:1-22)
 - B. The religious confrontation with the King (21:23-22:46)
 - C. The national rejection of the King (23)
 - D. **The prophetic anticipation of the King (24-25)**
 - E. The national rejection of the King (26-27)
- VII. Confirmation of the King's Life (28)
- A. The empty tomb (28:1-8)
 - B. The personal appearance (28:9-10)
 - C. The "official" explanation (28:11-15)
 - D. The official commissioning (28:16-20) (see Walvoord *et al.*, 1985)

The passage falls under the sixth section of the book, and its heading refers to the climax of the King's offer, from chapter 21 to 27. Its subheading refers to the prophetic anticipation of the King.

The most striking structural feature of the passage is the list of six needs, which occurs no less than four times. In all four of the lists the words and their order do not change: hungry, thirsty, stranger, naked, sick, in prison. The first repetition of the initial list, in the mouths of the righteous (vv 37-39), occurs as three questions, each pair being introduced by, "ποτε σε ειδομεν" when did

we see you (Hagner, 1995:740)?” Matthew does stress the importance of righteousness as good deeds, but as a part of a larger context in which God acts graciously for the salvation of His people. The deeds of mercy in the present passage are symbolic of a deeper reality, the main points of the parable being the acceptance or the rejection of the Christian faith (Hagner, 1995:746-747).

2.3.1.4 Comparison with other Scriptures

The overall reference to judgment is found also in 2 Corinthians 5:10 where Paul says we will all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due to him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. In Jude 14b-15 it is said, “See the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones, to judge everyone...”

With reference to Matthew 25: 40, in Proverbs 19:17 it is said that he who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will reward him for what he has done.

2.3.1.5 The final synthesis and summary

As we have seen in the Old Testament, it is clear that God gave His children abundantly so that they may share with others who have needs. When one looks in the New Testament in Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus Christ was telling His disciples and all His listeners about the Final Judgement. In this pericope, He speaks about God’s judgement and the separation of the obedient followers from the pretenders and unbelievers. People must treat others, as they would like others to treat them. When one stretches his hand to help other people, he or she must do it as if he is doing it to the Lord. What people do to others demonstrates the way they think about Jesus.

Jesus gave a command to all believers to feed the hungry, give the homeless a place to stay, look after the sick. The parable gives one a clear picture of actions that should be done by all Christians every day of their lives.

The final section of the eschatological discourse ends fittingly in a great judgement scene. This pericope ends the formal teaching of Jesus in the Gospel according to Matthew. The passage is concerned with the return of the Son of Man (v. 31), and the immediate subsequent judgment, with the blessing of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked (Hagner, 1995:740). When Jesus refers to Himself as the Son of man, this is the only place in the Gospels where He speaks of the Son of Man as the King (Tasker, 1983:240).

2.3.1.6 Findings and Principles

- Christ will be the judge, and He will also judge us on what we do to the needy (juridical aspect).
- We will be accountable before God on how we treat other people, especially the needy.
- When we do good to others, especially those in need, God is pleased.
- It is imperative for a church to take care of the needy.

2.3.2 The Exegesis of James 1:27

2.3.2.1 Purpose and message

James is writing to Christians under pressure, not facing impending martyrdom but discrimination and economic persecution. He then addresses the significance of trials in the Christian life. He also gives practical advice about the distinctive character of the Christian lifestyle. He warns his readers against mere lip-service, explaining what is meant by true faith. Therefore this book has been called the epistle of holy living, of practical Christianity and of Christian ethics (Anon 1999:1364).

2.3.2.2 Grammatical Analysis of James 1:27

ἐπισκεπτεσθαι this is the Present Passive Infinitive of ἐπισκέπτομαι

2.3.2.3 Word Study

ἐπισκέπτομαι

- a select carefully: 30.102
- b visit: 34.50
- c take care of: 35.39
- d be present: 85.11(see Louw and Nida)

The word falls under four different semantic domains. The third domain best defines the context of James 1:27, because there is a call for the care of the orphans. According to Louw and Nida (1996) the concept of “taking care of the orphans” is Biblically viewed as a continuous responsibility. Therefore the Church has an all time responsibility to take care of the orphans as long as they are still in the society.

2.3.2.4 Comparison with other Scriptures

In John 6:27(NIV) when Christ was referring to Himself as food, He said, on Him God the Father has placed His seal of approval. In Deuteronomy 16:14 it is said that in their feast of Tabernacles the fatherless and the widows also must be part of their joy. In Psalm 10:14 and 18 God is said to be the Helper and the Defender of the fatherless.

2.3.2.5 The final synthesis and summary

The letter of James was possibly the first New Testament letter to be written. It seems to have been addressed mainly to Jewish Christians in general. The Christians were scattered among the nations (James 1:1). There is reference to the Christian meeting as a synagogue in the book of James (James 2:2),

and his references to Moses' law (James 1:18; 2:8-11; 5:4) (Fleming, 1994:570).

Compassion and charity to the poor and distressed form a very great and necessary part of true religion which is all about visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction. "Visiting" is here put for all manner of relief which we are capable of giving to others; and "fatherless and widows" are here particularly mentioned, because they are generally most apt to be neglected or oppressed: but by them we are to understand all who are proper objects of charity, all who are in affliction. It is very remarkable that if the sum of religion be drawn up to two articles this is one - to be charitable and to relieve the afflicted.

After we have seen ourselves and Christ in the mirror of the Word, we must see others and their needs. Isaiah first saw the Lord, then himself, and then the people to whom he would minister (Isaiah 6:1-8). Words are no substitute for deeds of love (James 2:14-18; 1 John 3:11-18).

2.3.2.4 Findings and principles

- God is pleased when we give the necessary care to the needy.
- The Church has an all time responsibility to look after orphans, to take care of the orphans all the time.
- Our service before God is regarded as pure, especially when we care for the orphans.

2.3.3 Deacons

2.3.3.1 Introduction

For the care of the needy, including the care of the orphans, to be accomplished in the life of the Church in history and today, the office of the Deacons is of major importance. In the apostolic time there was a crying need

among the Christians in Judea and especially in Jerusalem. This was caused first by famine and later by persecutions. But our days have something in common with this period in the history of the Church. Though we do not have the problems of persecution or famine, we do have economic problems and also the problem of moral degeneration. The office of Deacons is of utmost importance in this regard, as it has always been of importance in the history of the Church.

2.3.3.2 Background of the office of the Deacon from the New Testament perspective.

The word "deacon" is a transliteration of the Greek word "διακονος" which translates "servant or helper." Can you see the spelling similarities between our word "deacon" and the Greek word? The pronunciation is also similar; the Greek word is pronounced: /dee-ak'-on-os/. The Greek word for "deacon" was just as common in the first century as our word "serve" is today.

This common use of the word is important because it points out that the word had an everyday use before it came to refer to the Office of Deacon in the early church. An example of this in our language today is: Social Worker. The words "social" and "worker" were everyday words until they were combined to refer to an official job title in the field of sociology. Today when we look at the responsibility of a social worker, it is to make sure that, in the case of the orphans, they are taken care of. It may be in the sense of referring them to the orphanage home or by giving some of the child's relatives special responsibilities of taking care of the child.

In article 25 of the Reformed Church Polity the following is stated:

"The essence of the office of deacon is conscientiously to collect the money and goods given to the poor as gifts of love and to distribute these gifts diligently, after joint deliberation, according to the needs of both the needy and other church members. It is also their duty to visit and comfort those in need and to ensure that the gifts are not wrongly applied. The deacons must

report to the church council about their activities and, if so desired, to the congregation as well when the church council considers it appropriate” (Vorster, 2003: 45).

From the meaning above one can assume that the word "deacon" has to do with giving some type of service, relief, care, aid, help, or support to another person or group of people. Also, the word has to do with ministry, mercy, and moving toward Christlikeness. After all, Jesus Christ did tell us over and over to have mercy on and to care for the poor. So then, out of a desire and a determination to do the right thing, we obey and serve. Therefore, we may conclude that deacons were always evangelistic in their service and ministry.

The word "deacon," before it became an office in the church, simply referred to serving in a way that provided some type of aid or support to another person. But, after the word had been implemented as referring to an office in the early church, deacons became ministers serving the church by providing support and relief through gifts collected and distributed by the deacons themselves. The Office of Deacon was essential to the early church, and it should be essential in the church today. The existence and growth of Christian love and charity in a congregation is largely dependent on the effectiveness of the diaconal office.

2.3.3.2 The findings and Principles

- It is evident that the work of deacon was clearly seen as mutual care for believers in the early church.
- Their task was not limited to material matters only, but also included spiritual matters.
- They act communally to prevent injustices and disorderliness.
- They do house visitation with the sole purpose of comforting those in need with the Word of God and to inspire Christians to take care of the needy.
- They work not only in the congregation but for all in need.

2.3.4 Basis Theoretical Principles

From the principles above, one realises a few categories:

There is a juridical aspect as well as a social aspect if one should try to find a fine distinction.

Juridical Aspect:

- We will stand before the judgment of Christ, and will be judged according to what we did to the needy.

Social Aspect:

- The orphans must be cared for.
- They must be given food.
- They must be clothed.
- They must be visited.

In the New Testament

Though there are not as many passages in which orphans are mentioned in the New Testament as in the Old Testament, it is evident that from all the passages on which we did exegesis, Christ is always for the needy and He wants His people to take care of the orphans and the needy. We can see this through the office of the deacons which is more clearly described in the New Testament. The office of deacons is of more importance in the charity lifestyle of the church. God does not want the poor, including the orphans, to be mistreated and He wants justice to be done to them.

2.3.5 Picture of the New Testament teaching regarding orphans

The NT picture we have is that God wants us to give care to the needy. When we do it we must identify the needy with Christ, because Christ identifies

himself with the needy. When we give care we must do it as if we are doing it to Christ Himself. We have to remain blameless and spotless even in the matter regarding the care of the orphans.

2.3.6 The Basis Theoretical Principles in the Old Testament and in the New Testament

- 2.3.6.1 God is revealed as God who cares for the fatherless. He relieves and defends them and works through people to take care of the orphans.
- 2.3.6.2 God exhorts the state to do justice to the orphans and to protect them.
- 2.3.6.3 God commands his society to treat orphans fairly and with respect.
- 2.3.6.4 God instructs families to adopt orphans and treat them like their own children.
- 2.3.6.5 God bids the church to get involved in the needs of the orphans, by taking responsibility of giving care to the orphans and by seeing to it that they are cared for.
- 2.3.6.6 God promises judgement before Christ to all who mistreat orphans and poor people and blessings to all who take care of them.

2.3.7 Biblical Picture on the care of the Orphans

Orphans have a special place in the sight of God. He demands that they be treated with love from the heart. It is not a curse or a punishment to be an orphan. It is rather the will of God that the poor, including the orphans, should live in peace and happiness and also take care of one another. This means that the people of God have to take care of the orphans. Socially they must share their belongings with the orphans and they must adopt the orphans where necessary. Ethically the orphans must be treated with justice; they are to be seen like any other individuals who are part of the society. God promises blessings to all those who take care of the orphans and curses to all those who neglect the orphans. The basis of all our activity towards the

orphans must be based on our love for Christ. Treating orphans well becomes a sign of pure religion.

CHAPTER 3: META-THEORY

3.1 A LITERATURE STUDY ON THE CARE OF THE ORPHANS IN SOUTH AFRICA

3.1.1 INTRODUCTION

For us to have a clear understanding on the literary study of the care of the orphans in South Africa, we have to look more on the Child Care Act 74 of 1983, as amended. It has been amended by Child Care Amendment act 86 of 1991, Abolition of Restrictions on the Jurisdiction on Courts Act 88 of 1996 and Child Care Amendment Act 96 of 1996.

According to Van Niekerk (1998:15) the Act makes provision for the establishment of children's courts and the appointment of commissioners of child welfare; for the protection and welfare of certain children; for the adoption of children; for the establishment of certain institutions for the reception of children and for the treatment of children after such reception; and for contribution by certain persons towards the maintenance of certain children; and to provide for incidental matters. This Act has two things which we must look at, these are, the Philosophy of the Act and the Primary objectives of the child care legislation.

3.1.1.1 Philosophy of the Act

The main thrust in the philosophy of the Act, which came into effect on 1 February 1987, was and remains the care and protection of children and the promoting of their well-being. The unfitness and inability of the parent to have custody of a child were the criteria justifying statutory intervention under the Act. In the Child Care Act Amendment Act 96 of 1996, however, the focus once again shifts to the child as being a child 'in need of care.' As a result of this change in focus, much more attention will be directed at the child's functioning and quality of life rather than the inadequacies of the parents.

ANON (1998:1) says that high priority is accordingly placed on the effective rendering of preventive services in order to avoid the removal of a child from his or her parents. There is therefore a moral obligation on social workers to assist parents to prevent such a situation and to ensure that the best interests of the child are served.

According to Mostert (1998:13) South Africa has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, but sadly we are in breach of several articles in the Convention. To remedy this will take several years, and the co-operation of all role players, both in government and in civil society will be needed.

3.1.1.2 Primary Objectives of the Child Care Legislation

ANON (1998: 2) says, "The primary objectives of the Act, as amended, and its regulations, are to provide adequate legal mechanisms to facilitate the practical application of the fundamental requirements such as the Convention and the Constitution of the well-being of all children in this country." This legal process is achieved, *inter alia*, by the creation of courts, procedures and structures for the best possible care and protection of children by the State, including their safe accommodation in appropriate alternative caring environments, the adoption of children and the prevention of certain offences which may be committed in respect of children. The main focus is shifted by a change in the law to identify a child in need of care rather than the previous criteria identifying a parent who is unfit or unable to have custody of the child.

When viewed holistically, the Act and the regulations should be seen as being designed to acknowledge that the family is the fundamental unit of society which represents the ideal environment in which the child should grow up, with the necessary assistance given to maintain continuity for the child.

Due respect for the rights and duties of the parent or guardian who has the primary responsibility of caring for the child, should be free from unlawful interference with his or her privacy, family or home. Separation from the

parent should therefore only be considered when the interest of the child will be best served thereby and then only by competent welfare authorities whose actions are subject to judicial review by the Courts. According to Niewoudt (2001:5) "Many group care programmes are primarily child centred and conform to what is known as the Traditional model of group child care (TGCC). Historically the model is linked to child rescue movements that supported the separation of children from their parents." There is a new model which has been proposed and this model is referred to as a Family Centred Group Care (FCGC) and parents are viewed as partners in the care process.

Johan Mostert (1998:11) says, "It is not going well with the children of South Africa. The majority of our children live in unhealthy, unsafe, overcrowded and unhygienic conditions. Too many live below the poverty line and do not receive sufficient nutritious meals to help them grow to their full potential. Single parent families (usually run by women) are the worst affected." Guest (2003: 86) says, "The South African government wants to keep AIDS orphans in their own communities rather than dumped in expensive institutions".

The poor housing circumstances and economic pressures which many families experience contribute to other family problems.

Niewoudt 2001:1 says the following:

- ❖ "Community-based group homes are today widely accepted as a resource for the care and treatment of homeless, psychologically traumatised and socially maladjusted children. Although the placement procedures or criteria vary from one residential agency to another, residential child care programmes usually have clearly stated goals which include: building on children's strengths, helping them overcome problems and helping them live in better conditions than they were when they came in".

There are some individuals in this country who are doing their best through the help of the government in caring for the orphans and the neglected children. For example in the North West Province Ms Mpho Sebabyoni-Motlhasedi left her job as a nurse and started Moretele Sunrise Hospice which currently caters for 69 villages. In these villages the hospice looks after the

terminally-ill as well as AIDS orphans. Mpho said, "although it is good to help the community, people have to be sincere, to start a hospice, one must not expect money, you must be versatile, flexible and compassionate. All that is needed is a good heart. We can all listen, talk, smell, see and touch. With these senses, we can do wonders." (Kaunda 2005:14)

In the Vhembe district, particularly in the Makhado Municipality, we have a good example of Mr Amie Chhaya from the Muslim community who used to donate blankets, food and clothes to the orphans and those who are needy. When he was presenting the donations to some of the orphans in Dzingahe, in one of the Secondary Schools, north of Thohoyandou, he said, "It is the collective responsibility of all community members to eradicate poverty and hunger." He said he would continue to offer assistance to the poor so that they may enjoy life like other people (Mandiwana, 2005:3).

3.1.1.3 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Section 28)

Anon 1998:100 (ANNEXURE A) on section 28 of the rights of children says the following:

(1) Every child has the right:

- To a name and nationality from birth
- To family care, parental care, or appropriate alternative care when removed from the family environment
- To basic nutrition, shelter, basic health care services, and social services
- To be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse, or degradation
- To be protected from exploitative labour practices
- Not to be required or permitted to perform work or provide services that:
 - i. Are inappropriate for a person of that child's age or

- ii. Place at risk the child's well-being, education, physical or mental health, or spiritual, moral or social development.
 - Not to be detained except as a measure of last resort, in which case, in addition to the right a child enjoys under section 12 and 35, the child may be detained only for the shortest appropriate period of time, and has the right to be:
 - i. Kept separately from detained persons over the age of 18 years, and
 - ii. Treated in a manner, and kept in conditions, that takes account of the child's age.
 - to have a legal practitioner assigned to the child by the state, and at state expense, in civil proceedings affecting the child, if substantial injustice would otherwise result, and
 - not to be used directly in armed conflict, and to be protected in times of armed conflict
- (2) A child's best interest is of paramount importance in every matter concerning the child
- (3) In this section, "child" means a person under the age of 18 years.

In South Africa, children's rights are entrenched in the constitution. In addition to the Bill of Rights for Children is legislation that provides guidelines for the care and protection of children under certain circumstances. When the parents, the extended family and the community are unable to fulfil the child's needs, the state as the upper guardian of the child is responsible to ensure that the child's basic needs and rights are met. The state fulfils its responsibility through supportive services to the parents and family. When supportive strategies of the state do not have the desired effect, namely to fulfil in the child's basic needs, the last resort is statutory intervention through provisions made in the Child Care Act. The Child Care Act defines the circumstances under which a child's welfare is harmed or threatened and spells out the provisions made for children in need of care.

3.1.1.5 Adoption

The government supports adoption as another remedy for the life of a vulnerable child. According to Grabe in Van Niekerk (1998:116) adoption is the legal procedure in which an adult and a child enter into the relationship of parent-child. Thereby the adult acquires the rights to and responsibilities for that child.

Adoption is the most cost-effective form of permanency planning in South Africa and it provides the permanence of a home and a family to a child whose biological parents are not able to care and provide for him or her. According to Van Niekerk 1998:116 child welfare practitioners must take cognisance of the following key concepts:

- Children who are adopted need to grieve their loss of their natural family
- Adoptive families are like all families yet different in that there is no biological relatedness that ensures similarity in the background and similarity in genetically transmitted characteristics
- Children who have been exposed to multiple placements have significant issues to work through that cannot be ignored
- All child welfare services that assist special needs children must work together, a multi-disciplinary approach is vital to helping children and families make it together
- In removing children from their families, society has taken on the responsibility of their total care of the child

3.1.1.6 Placement of children in the foster homes

To provide for children in need of care the state makes provision for places of safety, children's homes and places of care that are controlled and regulated. Child care legislation makes provision for transfer of parental rights to alternative care providers, estimating a child's age, financial support for

alternative care providers and penalties regarding offences under the Child Care Act.

Van Niekerk (1998:161) says, “according to section 1 of Child Care Act a place of safety means any place suitable for the reception of a child, into which the owner, occupier or a person in charge thereof is to receive a child.” Children’s home means any residence or home maintained for the reception, protection, care and bringing up of more than six children apart from their parents.

Section 1 of the Act defines a place of care as being any building or premises maintained or used, whether for profit or otherwise, for the reception, protection and temporary or partial care of more than six children apart from their parents, but does not include any boarding school, school hostel or any establishment which is maintained or used mainly for tuition or training of children and which is controlled by or which has been registered or approved by the State, including provincial administration.

All the children’s homes in South Africa are funded and subsidised by the State. However, not all children’s homes are government children’s homes. Some of the children’s homes are maintained and controlled by the church, but are registered in terms of section 30 of the Act of Child Care as private children’s homes.

3.1.1.7 Project-go

The State, as a means of reuniting the children with their families because some of the children in the orphanage homes have parents and relatives, introduced the “project-go” system. This system is applicable to all care centres, whether started by the government or individuals.

The aims of this project include the following:

- Placing children in need of care in the least restrictive and most empowering environment.

- To ensure that children do not move deeper into the child and youth care system, specifically in the residential care system.
- To reunite children with their families and communities.
- To ensure that space is available for children who are in need of appropriate residential care.
- To initiate the process of right-sizing residential care facilities within the framework of the transformation of the child and youth care system.

3.1.1.8 Findings and Principles

Positive aspects

- Government put some laws in writing regarding children including orphans, in such a way that no one can mistreat them.
- There are some individuals in the community who have pity for the orphans.
- Non-Governmental Organisations have been established to house the orphans.
- The State supports children's homes and places of safety.
- The State allows the NGOs¹ and the churches to start children's homes.
- Government supports the reunion between a child and his/her relatives.
- Government supports adoption of children.

Negative Aspects

- The big number of unregistered NGOs and the Community Based Organisations dealing with child welfare is the greatest problem in this regard.
- Children being placed back with families are at risk of abuse or molestation.

¹ Non Governmental Organisation

3.2 EMPIRICAL STUDY CONCERNING THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN CARE OF THE ORPHANS IN THE VHEMBE DISTRICT

3.2.1 Method of the empirical study

The empirical study is based on the findings from interviews with members of the Reformed Churches in the rural areas of Vhembe district in the Limpopo Province. The pattern followed for the interview was a qualitative method. Questions were clarified, not with the view to channel the interviewed person, but with the view to make the participants understand the questions (Makhuvha, 2003:42).

The aim of this empirical study was to generate knowledge that would enable people to change the current situation into a more desirable situation in our country. Heitink (1999:221) says that empiricism is derived from the Greek Word *emperia*, meaning "experience". The empirical perspective joins the basis theory to the practice theory (Makhuvha, 2003:42). It is an active research where the attitude of the Reformed Churches with regard to the caring of the orphans is very important.

According to Heitink, (1999:229) there are different methods of doing empirical research, namely descriptive, explorative and testing hypotheses. Mchunu (2002:24) says that a qualitative researcher collects a large amount of information on one or few cases, goes into greater depth and gets more details on the cases being examined, and may use a case study approach.

The qualitative researcher becomes immersed during data collection and gains better understanding of people's lives. He looks for patterns in their lives, actions and words in the context of the complete case. The researcher has noted these when he listened to the words expressed by the participants during the interview session.

The researcher became engaged and gained better understanding of how the church involved itself in community developments, in helping orphans, widows, street children, and the homeless. Heitink (1999:229) defines descriptive research as the method that focuses on a systematic description of a topic on the basis of the empirical data or information, while explorative research is a mixture of both research that seeks to describe and that which seeks to test a hypothesis, although this may have its own place when the researcher does not wish to explore the broader field or to register certain phenomenon, but attempts to explain these with a view of developing hypotheses on the basis of the findings. Explorative studies place the focus on explanation and interpretation.

In this research explorative research was done to find out what the view of Christians in the Reformed Churches of the Vhembe district of the Limpopo Province would be.

In this empirical study, individuals were interviewed while the author was writing down all the necessary information. A qualitative interview was done among the church leaders and some of the members in the Vhembe district. Three local congregations were visited and from each local congregation three office bearers (minister, elder and a deacon) and one member (senior citizen, middle-aged or youth) from different genders were interviewed. Interviews were also being done with three care-givers or managers from some of the Orphanage Homes that are in existence in the Vhembe district of Limpopo Province.

3.2.2 Work plan

The information gathered from the interviews was first written down as it had been received. After this a summary, basically consisting of the findings, was made. These findings were divided into positive and negative findings. Positive findings refer to things that are already being done positively with regard to the care of orphans, while the negative findings indicate things that

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were used in the exegetical study in chapter 2. He refers to Exodus 22:22-24, Deuteronomy 26:12, Esther 2:7, and Job 24:9.

AE says that the Bible tells us to take care of the orphans and it tells that God our Creator is concerned about orphans, that is, He fights for the orphans and widows, as we read from Deuteronomy 10:18. According to him this implies that God wants us to fight for the orphans on His behalf. By fighting for the orphans he means to take care by providing them with primary needs such as food, clothing, shelter, education and so on.

AD says that although God has his ways of taking care of the orphans, He involves the Church in His plan of taking care of the orphans. Taking care of the orphans is the manifestation of love and grace in action. In His command to the Israelites, there is an address on how they should look after the orphans. In Deuteronomy 14:29 "part of the tithe was to be given to the orphans." This means that the Israelites were to set aside a share from the tithe that would go to the orphans. This share was to be put at the gate so that the orphans would come and have a share. In addition to this the Israelites were to welcome the orphans in their homes, showing them respect, care and love. This helped the orphans to feel part of the family of God.

M1 says that the Bible teaches us to care for the orphans, aliens and the widows (see Deuteronomy 24:17-21). The Lord will bless people who care for them and He will curse people who do not treat them well.

Congregation B

BM has the same view as AM on the biblical view of the care of orphans. He says people should care for the homeless and fatherless. He says God has a special concern for the fatherless or child without one parent. He also refers to Exodus 22:22-24, Deuteronomy 10:18, Psalm 10:14; 18, Psalm 146:9, Isaiah 1:17 and Hosea 14:3

BE, in support of the fact that the Bible teaches us something regarding the care of the orphans, quoted the words from Leviticus 19:10 where God instructed the Israelites not to pick all the grapes during harvest but also to leave some to the orphans and the poor. He also refers to Deuteronomy 15:11 where God says there will be always needy people in the land, so the Israelites were commanded to give freely. Also from the words in Matthews 26:10 there is an element of taking care of the needy. In Luke 14:13 when Christ talked about the rewards of blessings he advised His followers to feast with the needy.

BD did not specify the specific passages from the Scripture on what the Bible says regarding the care of the orphans, but he says that we must respect the orphans and love them. We have to give them special treatment. He is aware of the fact that God is concerned about the care of the orphans and whoever ignores them will be punished.

BM2 says that the Bible teaches us that it is the responsibility of the church to take care of the orphans. In instances where the church does not take care of the orphans, God promises us punishment (Amos 2:1-16 especially verses 6-7).

Congregation C

CM says that the Bible teaches us that we must give them food.

CE says that the Bible teaches us to take care, to love, to give and to give comfort to the orphans. He refers to the words of our Lord Jesus from Matthews 25:31-46.

CD says that the Bible teaches us to love one another and this includes the orphans. Orphans are part of our community and we have a duty to care for them if we practise the love as set out in the Bible.

CM3 did not say anything about the Biblical view regarding the care of the Orphans.

From the Care-givers' point of view

Caregiver 1 says that the Bible teaches us to love them and to accept them.

Caregiver 2 says that the Bible teaches us that as Christians we must take care of our orphans.

Caregiver 3 says that the Bible teaches us that we must take care of the orphans. She uses a passage from 2 Corinthians 9 which speaks of giving to the needy.

- **What the Church should do in taking care of the Orphans**

Congregation A

AM says that the Church must carry this responsibility very seriously as a way of demonstrating love to the fellow-children of God. The church must care for them regardless of where they come from.

AE says that the church as a representative of God in the world should take care of orphans. The church should be a house for the orphans, provide counselling and pastoral care to the orphans, collect money and food from Christians for orphanage care, provide academic education to orphans and provide job opportunities wherever possible.

The Deacons, first through AD, mentioned that the Word of God has to be ministered to the members of church, so that they will understand the grace of God to his church and by that they will also apply it to the orphans. In doing this the church must be made to understand the concepts of tithing and giving. The church must appoint suitable people who will serve in the office of elders and deacons. The deacons should then identify the needy people within the community. They should try to identify the strategies of how to provide for their needs. The money and the gifts collected from the church should be distributed to the needy, including the orphans.

In the case of the orphans extra care should be given as they may not only need material care, but also emotional care. The church should encourage

church members to adopt the orphans, as most of them will need parental care and love. It is not enough to provide them with material assistance, they also need security or protection, and therefore foster parenting should be encouraged. In the case of orphans not being adopted by church members, the church should develop an orphanage home where some of the church members may be employed to give a close parental care to the orphans. Then the church will support the home very closely. The church should find better strategies of involving its members in supporting the home.

Those orphans who may not be taken to the orphanage home may be provided for by the churches in their respective communities. This may include provision of shelter, food, clothes and other material needs. Another responsibility of the church is to ensure security of the children, and then the relatives of the orphans may also be involved. Another aspect that has to be taken into account is that the church may also ensure that the orphans get the same education as other children. This might be through securing bursaries and any other assistance for them.

In this regard AM1 says that the church should be the first institute to take care of the orphans. In this way the church will show the love of Christ.

Congregation B

BM says the church should encourage Christian families to adopt orphans and support the families raising the orphans. This should be done by the deacon's office. BE, although he does not give a clear explanation, mentions that the church should contribute even financially or through donating food parcel. BD says the church must take the responsibility with regard to the orphans. He mentions the donation of some material needs, and making sure that the orphans receive a proper education like any other children. BM2 says the church must start establishing more homes to take care of the orphans. Elders and Deacons should visit the existing orphanage homes regularly. The sermons in the church should also focus on taking care of the orphans.

Congregation C

According to CM the Church should collect money in order to take care of the orphans. The money should be divided by special people, the deacons, according to the needs of the orphans. The church can also donate other things like clothes and groceries. Finally the church can also build homes for the orphans. CE says that the Church must provide emotional and moral support to the orphans. Church members must visit the orphans in their respective places. They can also provide them with basic needs.

CD says the duty of the church, amongst other things, is to care for the needy, for example, the poor and in this case the orphans. The church is like a social entity with members who are responsible for the well-being of orphans. The congregation should contribute financially and otherwise to maintain orphans. He is also of the view that the church should build or establish a home where the orphans are kept and looked after. Financial contribution can then be channelled to such a home. This will ensure that the contributions will not get wasted. He also points out that another important thing is that the church should have a look at the spiritual well-being of these orphans. This means that they should be brought up in the word of God. They should be encouraged to attend church services and all other activities which are church related. He also puts emphasis on the point of their education, that is, the church must see to it that they go to school.

CM says the church should do what the Bible says concerning the care of the orphans. He is of the opinion that the church should see to it that each and every orphan identified has food to eat on an ordinary regular basis, clothes to wear and a place to stay.

Care-givers' views on what the Church should do

Care-giver 1 says the church must pray for them, must buy goods for them and must look after them.

Caregiver 2 says the church must collect money and clothes as well as provide shelter to the orphans.

Caregiver 3 has the same view as the 2nd one.

- **To the question as to how the church is at present contributing to assist in caring for orphans the following responses could be summarised:**

Congregation A

AM says that at this moment their church is busy contributing by giving money to the needy children in their congregation. They give school fees and bursaries to those who want to go on with their studies. He says that in their Synod Soutpansberg of the Reformed Churches they have established an institution for the homeless, namely, Takalani Children's Home, where they are giving financial support. AE says that the church is providing care for the orphans. They are receiving help like food, education fees and clothes from deacons. But the church is doing very little as far as giving counselling to orphans is concerned.

AD says that their church is doing the following:

- Identifying the orphans from different residential areas. The deacons do house visitations in order to identify them.
- They also collect freewill offering which is distributed to the poor.
- Part of the tithe is allocated to the poor.
- There is an orphanage home which is under their church. As part of Synod Soutpansberg that supports the orphanage home, they have a portion in their budget which is allocated for the orphanage home.
- Children from the orphanage home are allocated to different congregations including theirs.
- In their year plan they have Sundays that are set aside for the orphans; they collect money for them and pray for them.

- He also says that in their church they have organised a youth day providing the children from all the local orphanage homes with an opportunity to play games together. This is coupled with a fundraising for these orphanage homes.

AM1 says that her church contributes little to an orphanage far away in Pretoria. In the area where she stays some members of her church help some people who care for orphans by giving them food and some clothes. Most members of her church are not interested in the care of the orphans.

Congregation B

BM refers to the support which they are giving to Takalani Children's Home from his congregation. BE speaks of the little help they are giving as a church. Their support is more based on material support than anything else. BD says that donations are given and the special prayers for them are done. The church also organises some "piece jobs" for them, even those who are not members of the church. BM2 says the church is encouraging Christians to give offerings, and as members they are also encouraged to donate clothes and groceries. Women have organised themselves in such a way that they contribute packages for the orphans once per year.

Congregation C

CM says that their church is contributing to the orphans and poor every Sunday. Deacons are responsible for that. They are also collecting clothes for the orphans. In their synod Soutpansberg they have an orphanage home. CE also says that they support Takalani Children's Home² and they have a specific support to some of the children in the said orphanage home.

² Orphanage home at Siloam

CD says at the present moment his church, the Reformed Church Mutale³, contributes financially to Takalani Children's Home. The congregation is requested to make a special contribution on a particular Sunday and it is handed over to Takalani Hayani. CM3 says that his church is not doing much in taking care of the orphans, this means that as a church they are not taking care of orphans every time.

Care-givers' point of view

Care-giver 1 says that her church is contributing food and is teaching them God's Word. Care-giver 2 says that in his church they collect money for the orphans. Care-giver 3 says that her church gives food to the orphans every month and they are building houses for them. They also provide them with other necessities and clothes.

- **Views on what the church should do regarding street kids**

Congregation A

AM says that the church should look after the street kids and make sure that it builds a place of safety for them. AE says, the church should take care of the street kids. The church should provide counselling programmes focusing on street kids and should implement methods of action to eliminate the presence of street kids as it leads to different types of crimes in their areas. AD says he believes that the church should be the answer to people's needs. The church should bring hope to the street kids by planning to visit them as individual members or as a church in group. The church should have counselling office, where children who have problems can get comfort and help. Through this office reconciliation between a child and a parent may be made possible. He also says that the church may establish a place of safety where these children may be accommodated and would receive counselling. He suggests a place

³ One of the churches under Synod Soutpansberg

where their needs can be addressed and where they can experience love and care. AM1 says that the church should try to help street kids and try to find a solution for this problem.

Congregation B

BM says that the church should come closer to them and have a ministry programme to help them. BE says that the church must have close contact with their families. BD says that the church must embark on prayers so that the number of street kids may be limited. Family conferences must be organised to teach parents about the importance of children, and they must be alerted to the fact that a child is a gift from God. The church can build special camps for them so that they can provide food and clothing and encourage them to go to school. BM2 says that the church can preach and give counselling to them so that some may go back to their respective homes. Some may be taken to the children's homes willingly.

Congregation C

CM is of the opinion that the church should also take care of the street kids. CE says that the church should give advice to them and encourage them to think about their future. CD says that the issue of street kids proves to be a rather difficult matter. In most cases the conditions under which they prevail are self-inflicted, that is, they bring it on themselves. However, he thinks these kids need someone or congregants to visit their places and draw their attention to the Lord and His unfailing love. They have to be taught about salvation. The church must not think only of dishing out food parcels and warm blankets for the winter cold but must go out to them and teach the word of God. Some could even repent and desert their evil ways. CM3 is of the opinion that these children must be taken to the children's homes and looked after by the church. Where possible they must be adopted.

Caregivers' view

Caregiver 1 says the church must feel pity for them and should protect them. Caregiver 2 says the church should provide shelter and food for them. Caregiver 3 says that the church should try to find their relatives and must also teach them the Word of God. Where necessary the church should work together with police and social workers to find places for them to stay or to find their next of kin.

3.2.2.1.2 Deduced findings

1. Positive

- Christians are aware of the fact that the Bible teaches about the care of the orphans.
- It is evident that Christians are aware of what the churches should do for and about the orphans.
- Few Christians are contributing to the care of the orphans.
- Christians are of the view that street kids are to be cared for.

2. Negative

- Some members are contributing little to the church for the care of the orphans.
- Helping the orphans is not up to standard.
- Street kids are not taken care of at all.

3.2.2.1.3 The attitude: love and compassion

- **Differentiation between street kids and orphans**

Congregation A

There are people who think that street kids are kids who are homeless, like AM and he is of the view that orphans are children who are already in the

orphanage homes. AE says that an orphan is a child whose parent(s) have died. In simple terms a child without parents (even guardian) whereas a street kid is a child who may have parents or not have parents, but who has decided to leave the home and start living on the streets. AD says that being street kids may develop due to choice or challenges (problems) that children are unable to bear. This is where children may admire the life that other street kids are living and choose to join them. It may also be because of the home problems that children are unable to cope with, e.g. family violence and abuse. All these may discourage them from staying at home and reinforce their option to live in the streets. They tend to lose hope and trust.

Orphans are not in their situation by choice. They may have been abandoned by their parents or their parents might have passed away. Therefore they will be left with no choice but to live without their real parents. AM1 says that street kids are children from a poor background. The relatives do not care enough for them, whereas orphans are children without parents.

Congregation B

BM says that a street kid is a child who has made a street his or her home, while an orphan is a child without one or both parents. In particular street kids are orphans in the sense that they are not staying with their parents. Ministers C and D. BE says sometimes it is difficult to differentiate between the two groups of children, but a street kid is a child who ran away from home and made a street home. Orphans are children without parents. BD is of the opinion that street kids are children whose parents have decided to leave them alone, maybe because of various reasons like poverty. But in some cases children may decide to be street kids with everything at home. They may decide to live in streets, begging for food, sleeping around corners of the streets. They are not interested in staying at home. They are used to that lifestyle. Orphans are children without parents. They are not in the streets, but are living with some relatives or they are in the orphanage home and being cared for by the government or churches. BM2 says that street kids are children who are found mainly in the streets due to carelessness of their

parents, poverty, seeking for freedom and released of pressure caused by parents, whereas orphans are children whose parents have passed away or are incapable of raising their children.

Congregation C

CM says that street kids are children who ran away from homes due to some family problems, for example, child abuse. On the other hand an orphan always stays with foster parents or at an orphanage home. Orphans' biological parents have passed away when they were still young. CE says street kids are children whose parents do not look after them; this means that they neglected them. CD says that street kids are children who, in most cases, have fled from home due to:

- Family abuse at home, that is, lack of food, alcoholic parents and lack of a decent or proper home.
- Substance abuse at a very young age: smoking, sniffing glue, consuming alcohol and a desire for life controlled by himself.
- Independence and peer pressure. These children are desirous of independence, reject parents and want to take care of themselves where no one will reprimand them when they are at fault. Peer pressure is when the friends of the same age decide to leave home and go and live on the streets, just for the fun of it. Then when it becomes difficult they think of home.
- Orphans are children whose parent or parents have passed away at an early age or at the birth of a child. The child may be adopted or accepted by relatives for bringing up. Even in these cases such children go through considerable abuse.

CM3 says that street kids do not have a place to stay, they do not have parents to take care of them, whereas orphans have a place to stay and they have foster parents or guardians to look after them to some extent.

Care-givers' views

Child-care worker 1 says that orphans do not have parents, whereas street kids have parents, but they decided to run away from home because they started to smoke dagga and drink alcohol.

Child-care worker 2 says that street kids are rejected children and orphans are children who do not have parents.

Child-care worker 3 views street kids as children who left their homes and live in the street. They do not have a place to stay and they go up and down looking for food and shelter.

- **Attitude towards orphans**

Congregation A

AM says that they should love and be of help to the orphans. God loved us and gave His Son and made us His own. AE says that he is concerned about the orphans and he feels that he should take care of the orphans in any possible way. AD says that he believes, since orphans do not have any choice or anywhere to go, they should have their comfort and care from the Church and its members as individuals. He believes that it is his responsibility as a Christian to deliver a message of hope to the orphans through taking care of them. AM1 says that she feels pity for them, because it will be difficult for them to grow up as children who can take care of a family. They do not know what family life is.

Congregation B

BM says that he views and sees them as images of God and they must be treated with care and respect. BE is of the opinion that orphans need care.

BD says that he feels pity. He feels that they need special care. BM2 says he is not sure.

Congregation C

CM's attitude is that the Church should take care of them. He says that we believe in the gospel of love. So Christians should take full responsibility of taking care of the orphans. CE is of the same view that the church must have sound programmes to help orphans. CD says that his attitude towards orphans is that he always assists when asked to do so by the Church. CM3 says that she sees them as God's creatures like herself. She says that because she always experiences a wonderful relationship with a few of them whom she teaches in her class. She thinks that they are to be treated with love and care.

Care-givers' views

Care-givers 1 and 2 say that they view orphans as the potential children and who can face challenges if they are to be given a chance. But they need guidance. Care-giver 3 says her attitude is to sympathise with them, because they did not choose to be orphans. They need love and care from her.

- **The support church members give to the church in taking care of the orphans**

AM says that they engage in the church's programme and they take care of the orphans God places before them. AE says that he is part of a church which has been given the task by God on his behalf to take care of the orphans. He provides orphans with money to buy food, clothes, shelter and education. AD says that he donates everything that the church is expecting of him to help with the orphans. He sometimes presents special sermons regarding the orphans. He gives advice to members of the church to visit the orphans in their respective places and give support to them. AM1 says that she has contact with a friend who cares for 26 orphans. She writes letters in the church bulletin about this lady and asks people to donate clothes. Although she does not get a positive response, some members care for the orphans.

Congregation B

BM says that he contributes in the love offerings, of which a certain percentage goes for the care of the orphans in and outside orphanage homes. BE says he identifies them and goes to the Deacons of the Church, so that they may communicate with the church council for the care of orphans. BD says that he contributes through tithing, where part of his tithing is taken to the orphanage home. During the special Sundays set aside for orphanage homes he offers his free will contribution. At times he receives letters requesting for donations, and he responds wholeheartedly. He prays for them and as a lay preacher he also prepares sermons that bring awareness to the church and encourage church members to take care of the orphans and the needy. BM2 says that he does contribute money to the church for the orphans. He is also paying for his cousin's studies as his cousin is an orphan.

Congregation C

CM says that he teaches and preaches to the members of the responsibility they have towards the care of the orphans. CE says he contributes money and clothes to the orphans. CD says that he supports the church by financial contributions for the orphans. CM3 says that he only supports the church on Sunday collections.

Care-givers' views

Care-givers 1, 2 and 3 say that they support the Church only through Sunday collection, freewill offerings and tithing.

3.2.2.1.4 Findings deduced

❖ Positive

- To many of the members, the attitude towards the orphans is that of caring.
- Some are able to make a distinction between street kids and orphans.
- Church members are supportive financially and materially towards the care of the poor including the orphans.

❖ Negative

- The support is not enough because the churches are focusing only on one orphanage home in the whole district.

3.3 The responsibility of the leaders of the church, e.g. deacons and elders

- How the deacons are taking care of the orphans.

Congregation A

AM says that Deacons have programmes for the orphans. Their programme includes emergency need, that is, diaconal fund and developmental needs, that is, job creation and placement. AE says Deacons collect money and materials for food, shelter, clothes and education of the orphans. AD says that deacons do house visitation. After identifying them they then recommend them to the church council. They collect Sunday collection and freewill offerings. They distribute the money according to the needs, but the challenges they are faced with are that not much is done in order to find more ways of helping orphans. It is only in the form of giving money that they experience some kind of assistance and sometimes this does not even happen regularly. Not many people have realised that it is their responsibility

to take care of orphans. Sometimes in the deacons' financial reports they will report a huge sum of money that is in the bank whereas orphans are not being given their care. AM1 says that she does not know well because the work of deacons in their church is quite confidential. She has an impression that they give attention only to problems or cases inside the church.

Congregation B

BM says the deacons are supporting Takalani Children's Home by giving 25% of their collection and encouraging Christians to take care of children allocated to them by the Takalani Children's Home. They also give 10% of their collection to the SCDO for caring for people outside the church, orphans included. BE says that the deacons are doing nothing at all. BD says that deacons always encourage members of the church to give to the orphans. Sometimes they visit the orphanage home. BM2 says that she knows that Sunday collections which deacons supervise also help the orphans.

Congregation C

CM says that deacons collect money on Sundays and distribute it to the orphans and the poor. The deacons buy clothes and groceries and distribute these among the orphans and the poor and they also facilitate in the building of the orphanage home. CE says that the deacons donated for building of the houses for the needy families at Tshiendeulu, Mavhode, and Gogogo villages. They also contribute to the Takalani Children's Home. CD says that deacons are doing nothing to take care of the orphans. CM3 says he is not sure of what deacons are doing.

Care-givers' views

Care-givers 1 and 2 say that the deacons of the churches always visit the orphanage home. They come with gifts from the Church members. Caregiver 3 says that deacons distribute food and clothes among the orphans.

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The views of the care-givers

The care-givers also experience the same problem. They are of the opinion that more could be done, by deacons from respective congregations as well, with regard to equipping members of the Church towards the enhancement of the care of which orphans are in need. The state of affairs is that very little, if anything, is being done in this respect.

- **The contribution of the Church to a local orphanage home**

Congregation A

AM says that they pray and collect money for the support of Takalani Children's Home. AE says that their local church is supporting Takalani Children's Home. In the 10% of the tithing they take some percentages and distribute these among the needy, and the orphans have a share in the distribution. CD says that their church is contributing to Takalani Children's Home which is far away from where their congregation is situated and they are doing little to Thohoyandou Place of Safety⁴ which is within their resort. AM1 says that only some of the members care for the orphanage. In general the Church is quite selfish and prefers to care for its own people.

Congregation B

BM says that their church is making contributions to the local orphanage home, which is based at Siloam. Since their church is divided into wards, they share responsibilities according to different wards. Each ward has its own children to take care of. Members from each ward buy some clothes, and school uniforms for children and they contribute some money for paying school fees for the children. BE says that the church is contributing a certain percentage to the orphanage home annually. They contribute money so that the children may go to school like any other children. Member M says that

⁴ An orphanage home at Thohoyandou

their church is doing something to care for the orphanage. They have a special collection once per year for the orphanage home of Takalani. Member N says that she always hear about the collection for Takalani Children's Home, but there is another orphanage home in their locality which does not get any support from their Church. According to the caregivers the churches are giving support to the orphanage home.

3.3.1 Deduced findings

❖ Positive aspects regarding Ministers

Ministers know what the Bible says regarding the care of orphans.
They give individual support to the church.

❖ Negative aspects regarding Ministers

They are not teaching their members the biblical principles of caring.
They are not helping the deacons with equipping members.

❖ Positive aspects regarding Elders

They are giving their little of their financial support to the church.

❖ Negative aspects regarding Elders

Some elders are totally ignorant about the situation of the poor and the conditions to which orphans fall victim.

❖ Positive aspects regarding deacons

- Some of the deacons are always willing to give a helping hand to the orphans and the poor.
- Some deacons are doing house visits especially to the needy families.
- Some are able to identify the orphans, even those who are outside the orphanage home.

❖ Negative aspects regarding deacons

- Some of the deacons do not know much about their responsibility.
- Some of the deacons are doing nothing to equip members to take care of the orphans.

❖ **Positive aspects regarding members**

- Some of them give support to the orphans outside orphanage homes, based on their individual care.
- They are giving little to the local orphanage home at Siloam.

❖ **Negative aspects regarding members**

- They are only focusing on the one orphanage home situated at Siloam, whereas there are many orphans outside the orphanage homes.
- Some of the members, including office bearers, are quite selfish.

❖ **Positive aspects regarding child care workers**

- They are taking care of orphans, especially those who are Christians are contributing at their local church.

❖ **Negative aspects regarding child care workers**

- Some are not doing it with passion, but they are doing it for the sake of getting money.

3.4 *Final conclusion on meta-theory*

3.4.1 Positive aspects

- Bible teaches about the care of the orphans.
- The State is positive with regard to the care of the orphans.
- Church members are motivated to have love and compassion for the orphans.
- The State supports adoption of children.

3.4.2 Negative aspects

- Some churches are doing little about the care of orphans.
- In some churches the helping of orphans is not up to standard.
- Street children are not being cared for.
- Deacons are not aware of their responsibility.
- The deacons are doing nothing to equip the members to take care of the orphans.

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but rather to formulate guidelines that could be used by the churches in the diaconal role of taking care of the orphans.

4.3 *Modus operandi/work-plan*

This will be done through the integration of all the information obtained. Heyns and Pieterse (1990:35) refer to this method as hermeneutical interaction. Hermeneutical interaction is a process of communication between the basis and the meta-theories. The final basic and meta-theories as found in the materials of chapters 2 and 3 will be linked so that a critical hermeneutical interaction may be developed in order to formulate these guidelines to help the churches.

4.4 *The hermeneutical interaction*

4.4.1 Final basis theories

- God is revealed as God who cares for the fatherless.
- God relieves and defends the orphans and works through people to take care of the orphans.
- God exhorts the state to do justice to the orphans and to protect them.
- God commands his society to treat orphans fairly and with respect.
- God instructs families to adopt orphans and treat them like their own children.
- God bids the church to get involved in the needs of the orphans, by taking responsibility of giving care to the orphans and to see to it that they are cared for.
- God promises judgment before Christ to all who mistreat orphans and poor people and blessings to all who take care of them.

4.4.2 Final meta-theory inferrals

Positive aspects

- Members do believe that the Bible teaches about the care of the orphans.
- The State does much to support and to take care of the orphans, through grants and institutions.
- Church members are motivated to have love for and compassion with the orphans.
- The State supports adoption of children.
- The State is administering Child Support Grant.

❖ Negative aspects

- Some churches are doing nothing or very little with regard to the care of orphans.
- Where there is help for orphans in certain churches, the administration and impact is not up to standard.
- Most deacons are not aware of their responsibility in the church.
- Deacons are doing nothing or little to equip church members to take care of the orphans.
- The State is not giving enough care to the orphans and poor children.
- The State is not monitoring the grants they give to institutions for supporting the needy children.

4.5 *Critical hermeneutical interaction*

As it has been determined in the interviews, it is evident that members acknowledge that the Bible does contain teachings regarding the care of orphans and that it addresses the situation of orphans. Yet it is also evident from the interviews that the same people or the majority of them are ignorant about the orphans and do little to care for them especially as a church. Hence it would be important that ministers who are called in a church must have a vision and must address all current issues regarding poverty, unemployment

and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Churches in this regard have to stop withdrawing into a cocoon and have to extend a hand of care.

A number of other churches and institutions are dealing with the issues and some individuals also take part. Hence, the church has to learn from this and try to change focus and place the care of orphans among other things on their priority lists.

The Word of God teaches that the state should see to it that justice be done to orphans. Orphans and needy people must share in the wealth of the country. The fact that our country is multi-religious does not imply that as Christians we no longer have a say over the government. This is actually the time when the church can still raise its voice to the government. It must be mentioned here that the state still has an ear for the church. The state is still there to protect the church and its needs because the state respects the fact that it supports and protects non-Christian organisations and institutions, and would therefore do the same for the church or church-related institutions.

The churches in the Vhembe district are not in isolation, due to the fact that there are a number of NGOs although the church might not necessarily form its own NGO it might give a hand to the existing NGO for this matter.

God's word also teaches that it is everyone's responsibility to take care of the orphans. There are individuals who are using all their efforts to care for the orphans. Orphanage centres are established by NGOs and orphans are cared for. The positive findings from the interviews indicate that God is always caring for the orphans and the needy. God makes use of human beings to carry out his mission here on earth. Hence it is our calling to respond positively to the Word of God. Everyone has to make the interests of the orphans his/her responsibility. Due to the high rate of poverty, there are a number of people who daily suffer financially and emotionally. On the other hand so many children become orphans because of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. What will happen if people, as members of a society and as individuals, do not care to get involved, do not respond positively to the needs of orphans?on

helping the orphans. Orphans are not capable of continuing on their own and they are indeed in dire need of all the assistance they can get. As a society we may as well hold hands and together co-operate in helping the poor. Society is not supposed to hand over all responsibility to the state and government while sitting back and relaxing. As much as the church may not play an individual role, but should give a hand to the society/community and in a joint effort fight against mistreating the orphans and those abandoned, society also has to knock at the door of the church to ask for ways to help and get involved. Circumstances necessitate team efforts.

4.6 Suggestions for practical new guidelines pertaining to diaconal care of orphans for the Reformed Churches in the Vhembe district of the Limpopo Province

In our country, South Africa, the bulk of child protection services are provided by private welfare organisations who receive a subsidy from the Department of Welfare to provide these services to the public. Some of the organisations are formed by the churches. Reformed Churches in the Vhembe district of Limpopo Province may also apply for subsidies in aid of orphans after having organised themselves locally or in their minor assemblies.

The findings derived from the interviews showed that, although the churches are not doing enough for the orphans, they are doing little for the needy in their congregations.

It is high time that the Reformed Churches in the Vhembe district change their view and focus more and more on caring for the orphans. They can start a working relationship in the diaconal service as churches. This is because the number of orphans is growing, especially in the rural areas.

In summary the following guidelines can be followed:

- ❖ Churches should work together with the social workers, child care workers or officers for Child Protection Unit.
- ❖ Churches should facilitate counselling sessions for the needy children in and outside orphanage homes.
- ❖ The church must play a major role in civil society.
- ❖ Where necessary churches can establish their own local orphanage homes, wherein they can have a close look into the behavioural problems of the children.
- ❖ Churches should encourage Christians to adopt children where necessary.
- ❖ Churches should see to it that street kids are cared for.
- ❖ Churches should begin ministry to street children.
- ❖ Churches should work with individuals who are interested in caring for the orphans, especially those who are not doing it for their own gain.
- ❖ Churches should make it happen that relationships between parents and children are restored.
- ❖ This means that those children with relatives must come together with their relatives.
- ❖ Churches should introduce a one-week Vacation Bible School programme for children, not for the orphans only, but also for other children.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

The main problem statement that was researched in this mini-dissertation was, "What practical and strategic guidelines can be given to the Reformed Churches concerning their role in the diaconal care of the orphans?" The aim of the suggested research was to compile strategic guidelines on the role of the Reformed Churches in the Vhembe district in the diaconal care of the orphans that may be used by other Reformed Churches in South Africa as well as many other churches.

The model that deals with the basis theory, meta - theory and praxis theory, as defined for Practical Theology by Zerfass, was used in this regard (Heyns & Pieterse, 1990:35-36).

5.2 Modus operandi

The basis theoretical principles from Scripture were elucidated by means of a historical-grammatical method of exegesis. A literature study was conducted to gain information on the topic. The empirical research findings were based on the responses of the members of the Reformed Churches in the Vhembe district of Limpopo Province. Practical theoretical principles were singled out by means of critical hermeneutical interactions between the basis theoretical guidelines and meta-theoretical findings, leading to the practical findings.

5.2.1 The following conclusions could be formulated (chapter 2) on basis theoretical principles

- God is revealed as a God who cares for the fatherless.
- He relieves and defends them and works through people to take care of the orphans.

- God exhorts the state to do justice to the orphans and to protect them.
- God commands his society to treat orphans fairly and with respect.
- God instructs families to adopt orphans and treat them like their own children.
- God bids the church to get involved in the needs of the orphans, by taking responsibility of giving care to the orphans and by seeing to it that they are cared for.
- God promises judgment before Christ to all who mistreat orphans and poor people and blessings to all who take care of them.

5.3 *The following conclusions were reached according to discussions contained in chapter 3:*

5.3.1 Positive aspects

- The Bible teaches people about the care of the orphans.
- The State is positive with regard to the care of the orphans.
- Church members are motivated to have love for and compassion with the orphans.
- The State supports adoption of children.

5.3.2 Negative aspects

- Some churches are doing little with regard to the care of orphans.
- In some churches the assistance to orphans is not up to standard.
- Street children are not cared for.
- Deacons are not aware of their responsibility.
- The deacons are doing nothing to equip the members to take care of the orphans.

5.4 The practical theoretical guidelines were given in chapter 4

- ❖ Churches should work together with the social workers, child care workers or officers for Child Protection Unit

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Church leaders and the State could bring about a drastic change and improvement by joining hands in caring for the orphans.

5.6 *Recommendations for further study*

- An investigation could be launched to learn more about care-takers working with the children in the orphanage homes, and accompanying research could be conducted with regard to the psychological needs and eventual psychological well-being of the orphans, especially as approached from a pastoral point of view.
- Reconciliation between the children and their parents could serve as an objective for further studies, and at the same time attention could be paid to the possible abuse of children by parents themselves.

Abstract

Because of HIV/AIDS and many related diseases, parents are dying and leaving their children in trouble and without care. This is a stark reality that certainly applies to rural areas, including the area of Vhembe district in the Limpopo Province. In this region many children and families are living along or below the poverty line. Some children are not so privileged as to be provided with basic necessities such as food, clothing and proper education. The contribution of the church is of paramount importance in this regard.

Chapter 2 includes reference to the following principles: Firstly, God is revealed as a God who cares for the fatherless. He relieves and defends them and works through people to take care of the orphans. Secondly, God exhorts the state to do justice to the orphans and to protect them. Thirdly, God commands his society to treat orphans fairly and with respect. Fourthly, God instructs families to adopt orphans and treat them like their own children. Fifthly, God bids the church to get involved in the needs of the orphans, by taking responsibility of giving care to the orphans and seeing to it that they are cared for. Finally, God promises judgment before Christ to all who mistreat orphans and poor people, and blessings to all who take care of them. The principles were identified after studying the Scriptural portions in the Old Testament (Exodus 22:21-24; Deuteronomy 14:22-29, 24:19-22, Esther 2:7; Psalm 94:6; Psalms 146:9; Proverbs 22: 9; Isaiah 10:1-4; Jeremiah 22:3; Zechariah 7:10.) and in the New Testament (Matthew 25:31-46, James 1:27).

Chapter 3 reflects information gained by a literature study in conjunction with the empirical study. The State, together with other NGOs and some individuals are concerned about the orphans' plight. There is also a need for the church to extend a hand, because the number of orphans is growing and growing.

Chapter 4 gives the practical guidelines on how the Reformed Churches in the Vhembe district can take part regarding the care of orphans.

In chapter 5 concluding remarks and recommendations are summarised.

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