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The Extended Family in Spouse Selection

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The Extended Family in Spouse Selection

A critical study and theological evaluation of the patterns of Christian family life in India (especially in the churches of South India)

MPhil. Thesis, Peter S. C. Pothan, 1992

Abstract

The importance of the family has been stressed in both Christian and secular circles in recent years. Unfortunately, most Western sociologists and theologians emphasise only the "nuclear family" and some insist that "it is a universal human social grouping" and "a basic unit from which more complex familial forms are compounded". This view has been accepted by most Western theologians, either consciously or subconsciously, and so interpretation of the Biblical teaching of family tends to be presented in terms of the nuclear family *only*.

This thesis argues against this assumption and endeavours to show that the non-residential extended family model of modern urban India is a viable and acceptable model. It is different from the nuclear family model and also more closely resembles the Biblical extended family model, for which the teaching was originally intended. This thesis further explores this model's role in the marriage of its members and shows that such a role is vital, both as a part of spouse selection and as a support group in times of marital stress and difficulties. The thesis therefore looks at the Biblical concept of the covenant of marriage and uses it to evaluate the various processes of marriage and the involvement of the family.

The thesis consequently covers new areas in the understanding of the non-residential extended family and its role in spouse selection. Equally it evaluates various marriage processes, besides the marriage-by-choice process which underlies many of the assumptions of Western theologians.