





## Abstract

A biblical truth tends to function in the politics of meaning formation, where cultural norms and values of society direct a biblical reading, which in turn further affirms and constructs social ideals. Specific to this study is the problem of the patriarchal framework that has shaped the prophetic reading of the *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-55). Feminist scholars problematize patriarchal characteristics of the text and question religious formulations of gender norms that create unequal gender relations in society. This study presents a *prophetic-critical* reading of the *Magnificat* in light of the rhetorical functions of the text. To this end, chapter two evaluates Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's theories of feminist praxis to sharpen a reading lens for the exegetical chapter which follows. In chapter three, it illustrates a propagandistic character of the text, intended by the implied author, in order to free the text from a patriarchal reading. Chapter four illustrates the rhetorical functions of the text in a new contemporary context of HIV/AIDS in South Africa. This is accomplished by means of a variety of social, political, economic and religious systems of meaning formation, in the form of a letter, hypothetically addressed to a contemporary benefactor, Queen Elizabeth II.

## Opsomming

Bybelse waarheid is geneig om te funksioneer in die politiek van meningsvorming, waar kulturele norme en sosiale waardes die lees van die Bybel lei, wat op sy beurt sosiale ideale verder bevestig en vorm. Hierdie studie fokus spesifiek op die probleem van die patriargale raamwerk wat die profetiese lees van die Loflied van Maria (Luke 1:46-55) tot op hede gevorm het. Feminsitiese teoloë problematiseer die patriargale karaktertrekke van die teks en bevraagteken godsdienstige formuleringe van gender wat ongelyke geslagsverhoudings in die samelewing skep. Hierdie studie bied 'n profeties-kritiese lees van die Loflied van Maria in die lig van die retoriese funksies van die teks. Gevolglik evalueer hoofstuk twee Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza se teorie van feministiese praxis, om sodoende die lens vir die volgende eksegetiese hoofstuk te verskerp. Hoofstuk drie illustreer die propagandistiese karakter van die teks, soos bedoel deur die geïmpliseerde skrywer, om sodoende die teks te bevry van patriarchal, profetiese lees. Die laaste hoofstuk illustreer die retoriese funksies van die teks via lae van sosiale, politiese, ekonomiese en godsdienste sisteme van betekenisvorming, in 'n nuwe kontemporêre konteks van MIV/VIGS in Suid-Afrika, in die vorm van 'n brief, gerig aan 'n hipotetiese, kontemporêre weldoener, Koningin Elizabeth.

## Acknowledgement

To G\*d

My provider

To Jesus

My intercessor

To the Holy Spirit

My comforter

To my mother

Esther Jung Mi Kim

To my pastor

Yong Taek Oh

To my professor

Elna Mouton

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

Truth tends to function in the politics of meaning formation, yet traditional biblical scholarship has not adequately addressed the complexities of text reception by presenting a means of doing an ethical biblical praxis. In the late 1980s and the early 1990s, the Apartheid system, which was a social regime of government control run by the white people of South Africa systematically exploited and violently oppressed the non-white people. What troubles a biblical scholar is the fact that it gained a generous support from the Dutch Reformed church in South Africa, while the bible was being received quite favourably by the non-European population and the European missionary and evangelical movement was thriving in the rest of the country. Bishop Tutu, a retired, black, South African, Anglican bishop and a Nobel Peace Prize winner says, “When the missionaries arrived, they had the Bible and we had the land. Now we have the Bible, and they have the land” (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1999:37).<sup>1</sup> Clearly, this was an outcome of the bible being misread in many ways in the midst of different political interests by various groups in South Africa.

In 1987, a prominent, contemporary, feminist, biblical scholar, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, in her presidential address to the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL), challenged the traditional biblical scholarship and questioned the methodology (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1999:1).<sup>2</sup> In 1996, at the Twenty-Fifth Annual Meeting of the Korean Association of Christian Studies, she was again extremely distressed with the state of the biblical scholarship and expressed her disappointment in the lack of progress of making any substantial institutional changes to respond to the ethical practice in biblical scholarship (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1999:31).<sup>3</sup> In response to her

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<sup>1</sup> Living in the town of Stellenbosch, it was initially difficult to see that such a horrendous event could have happened in a fairly recent past in such a beautiful town. It was quite surreal to see the traces of the Apartheid in the form of social inequalities still present to this day as my research gradually opened my eyes to see them.

<sup>2</sup> Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza identifies four major paradigms in biblical scholarship: the doctrinal-fundamentalist paradigm, the scientific, positivist paradigm, the post-modern, cultural paradigm, and the rhetorical-emancipatory paradigm (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1995:80).

<sup>3</sup> Personally, I am challenged that Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza spoke about the lack of institutional change in biblical scholarship in my home country, South Korea. It reminds me that although our new

concern, this research develops a critical, ethical, feminist reading of the New Testament based on the foundation of her feminist the\*logy and praxis. Furthermore, it engages in a contemporary discussion on the global health problem of HIV/AIDS in South Africa. The selected New Testament text for this research is from Luke 1:46-55 and it examines the rhetorical functions of the text behind and in front of the text to explore the ethics of biblical reading in the South African context of HIV/AIDS.

## 1.1 Research Problem

The scientific rationalism in traditional biblical scholarship can be best explained as a western, dualistic rationalism that separates body from the spirit and the biblical from the socio-political. The separation of biblical study from social, economic, and political issues results in a rift between theory and practice and renders biblical interpretations irrelevant to real problems of our world and as a consequence the bible loses its transformative power to influence people. Hence, a feminist, critical reading that connects theory to practice would require an interpreter to critically examine not only the text and the historical context behind the text but analyze the present socio-political context in front of the text.

For this particular reading, the socio-political context of HIV/AIDS in South Africa will be analyzed to seek an appropriate response from the faith community. South Africa is currently not meeting the United Nations Millennium Development Goal to reduce mother-child mortality rate. HIV/AIDS is a major contributing factor to this failure and it continues to thrive as one of the main causes of death of many women and children and the rate of HIV/AIDS transmission in South Africa remains the highest in the world. However, what is extremely disconcerting to a biblical scholar is that many Christians in South Africa still continue to believe that HIV/AIDS is G\*d's<sup>4</sup>

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elected president is a woman (Park Geun-hye), there is still a lot of progress to be made, in terms of undergoing institutional changes to recognize women. For instance, the mainline churches in Korea still refuse to ordain women and give them full recognition and as a result, many Presbyterian women pastors are made to go to sub-denominations within the main Presbyterian denomination to be ordained.

<sup>4</sup> A replacement of the letter o with a star in G\*d is to indicate that G\*d is neither just a man nor a woman, but exists as someone who is totally other and only known through partial human understanding.

punishment for sexual sin. This is clearly an oversimplified statement that undermines the complex array of social and political issues around HIV/AIDS.

Another aspect of reading, which causes a major problem in biblical interpretations, is having gender-biased preconceptions and essentialist ideas about women. The selected text from Luke 1:46-55 contains a prophetic message that conveys hope to the Israelites and people belonging to G\*d. However, the false projections of Mary as fairy-tale like, innocent, docile, white virgin girl unjustly influences one's reading of the text to spiritualize it and undermine its meaning. Hence, what is required in feminist discourse is a reinterpretation of Mary from women's perspective. The misconception about women projected through Mary's image sets a false, unreachable, ideal standard for women to reach and it functions as a means of socially controlling women. It divides the ideal woman from the real woman and presents a dualistic explanation about women and it is detrimental to how women perceive themselves in real life. This concern was voiced by a prominent Catholic theologian, Karl Rahner,

Such concrete descriptions of women's religious existence are based often and hastily on characteristics which really do not belong to the external, authentic nature of women, but are historically, culturally, and sociologically conditioned (Rahner, 1983:216).

Although Karl Rahner's essentialist phrase "authentic nature of women" is an outdated term since there is no single description to describe women, he does however raise an important point to say that these religious images are merely cultural and historical projections.

To encourage ethical practice, the focus of our biblical interpretation relating to Mary explores the implicit meaning behind her character. Feminist scholars emphasize the social meaning and attempt to redirect our attention from patriarchal, essentialist notions about the nature of women to a wider social meaning behind Mary's character. Rosemary Ruether compares Mary to the church of Jesus Christ and in a metaphorical sense, calls her the bride of Jesus Christ and the Queen of Heaven.

The doctrine of the Assumption of Mary symbolizes the Church triumphant, ascended to Heaven and seated at the right hand of Christ. Christ receives Mary

(the Church) as his bride and crowns her as Queen of Heaven. To her, too, every knee shall bend in Heaven and on earth (Ruether, 1983:144).

Furthermore, she argues that Mary symbolically represents the liberated Israel. Another more recent feminist scholar, Jane Schberg, further confirms Mary as a symbolic representation of the liberated Israel based on the Lucan *Magnificat's* identification of Mary and draws a parallel between her miraculous pregnancy through G\*d's intervention and the liberation of the Israelites through G\*d's salvific act (Schberg, 1995:198).

If we look closer at the selected text for this research, the *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-55), the text contains several ambiguous aspects, which might be perilous to reading the text ethically. First, if the text is not read against the patriarchal aspect of using a gendered pronoun he throughout the text, it may reinforce the hierarchical relationship between men and women and support structural violence of men. Second, the juxtaposition of Mary's praise in the *Magnificat* with Hannah's praise in 1 Samuel 2:1-10 tend to suggest that the focus of this text is to merely celebrate a woman's joy over conceiving a child miraculously, as it was seen in Hannah's case. However, the main message in this text is a celebration of G\*d's salvific act through Jesus Christ, the saviour, who through the miraculous conception has been brought into the human realm by the Holy Spirit. These two aspects of the text misguide readers to overlook the problem of the socio-economic concerns of the Lucan community evident in the text and fail to do justice to the text.

## 1.2 Previous Studies

The interpretations of the *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-55) by two influential male scholars demonstrate these problems. A sixteenth century protestant revolutionary scholar, Martin Luther, dedicated a fair portion of his volume in *Luther's Works*, which he compiled himself, to the exegesis of the *Magnificat*. However, the objective, middle-class, academic, patriarchal view of Mary he projects fails to recognize the grave concern of poverty and oppression amongst the Jesus believers and devalues the Mary as a favoured disciple of Jesus. His dualistic explanation is extremely patriarchal in nature. He contrasts G\*d's greatness to Mary's low status and

depreciates her to merely portray her as a humble maidservant (Pelikan, 1956:315). Luther's whole analysis revolves around how G\*d regarded the humility of Mary. What he provides is a psychological critique of how a person should remain humble before G\*d and resist being proud, and it dwells on the internal process of faith keeping. It completely fails to notice the grave concern of poverty and oppression from which G\*d wishes to deliver G\*d's people.

Another interpretation by a male scholar, Raymond E. Brown, presents this same problem. Brown is a contemporary biblical scholar, renowned for his extensive work on the birth narrative has included an interpretation of the *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-55) in his book, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke* (1993). Although Brown acknowledges the existence of the physically poor amongst the early Christians, he does not emphasize enough the grave issue of poverty and hunger of the oppressed people amongst the Lucan community. He argues that, "...poverty and hunger of the oppressed in the *Magnificat* are primarily spiritual, but we should not forget the physical realities faced by early Christians" (Brown, 1993:363). He interprets the poor in verses 52 and 53 in terms of spiritual poverty rather than physical poverty. In addition, he considers Luke's rhetoric in 6:24-26; 12:19-20; 16:25; 21:1-4, "peculiar and emphatic castigation of wealth" (Brown, 1993:264). It is clear that Brown does not consider the social implications of Luke's rhetoric of rebuke and the *Magnificat* and as a result he presents a Eurocentric, middle-class perspective.

### 1.3 Background of Luke-Acts Study

Before beginning our interpretation of the text in Luke 1:46-55, this section provides a brief background study of Luke-Acts and demonstrates how Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's feminist the\*logy<sup>5</sup> contributes to the study of Luke-Acts on the whole. From the early twentieth century, the study of Luke-Acts has been gaining a greater interest from the biblical scholarship. A renowned Lucan scholar, Van Unnik, describes the field of Lucan study as "a storm centre in contemporary scholarship"

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<sup>5</sup> The motive behind using a star in replacement of the letter o in the\*logy is to indicate that any talk about G\*d is merely an attempt to express a rhetorical enquiry about G\*d, who is totally other and partially revealed to human beings.

(in Parsons and Pervo, 1993:1). Among the influential European Lucan scholars are Hans Conzelmann, Robert C. Tannehill, Henry Cadbury and Ernst Haenchen. The two German scholars that brought Luke-Acts to the spotlight in the 1950s were Hans Conzelmann with his *Theology of St Luke* and Ernst Haenchen with his commentary on Acts, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (Van Unnik, 1968:16).

However, it was an American scholar, called Henry Cadbury, whose book title first featured the hyphenated term, Luke-Acts, in 1927 (*The Making of Luke-Acts*). Since then, others have continued to use this term to show that the two books are composed by the same author and that there is a close connection between them. Whilst this excitement regarding the unity of Luke-Acts dominated the Lucan discourse in the early twentieth century, the theme of fulfilment became another popular subject matter and Robert Karris and Paul Schubert's proof-from-prophecy perspective further linked the two books as a compilation of the same work by one author (Talbert, 1984:92). Furthermore, Charles H. Talbert discovered not one, but several unifying themes in Luke-Acts (Talbert, 1984:102).

The inevitable question that follows is, "How do we decide on the central theme in Luke-Acts?". To answer this question, this research paper employs Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's theory of rhetoric as an appropriate framework of reference to create a space for a democratic Lucan discourse and allows for plurality of theories to exist. Feminist Lucan scholarship invites all scholars to interact with one another and stand in solidarity with women and the marginalized people to form a transforming vision. In other words, the key question to ask in a task of interpretation is not to ask which theory or theme is the central one, but what is the transforming vision necessary to instigate an institutional change that has a practical value in Lucan biblical scholarship.

## 1.4 Hypothesis

In finding this transforming vision, the hypothesis proposed in this research paper is that the text from Luke 1:46-55 is a religious propaganda for Lucan evangelical movement, which incorporates apologetic activities of helping the poor and the

oppressed as part of evangelism. The textual evidence shows the employment of Jewish and Hellenistic traditions, which point to a propagandistic goal to effectively reach the textualized audience for a faith response from both the Jewish and the Hellenistic audience. Furthermore, this study will demonstrate that this Lucan the\*logy of responding to a situation of poverty and oppression especially amongst the persecuted Jews in Jerusalem after the destruction of the temple in the ancient Mediterranean Palestine under the imperial Roman rule can penetrate to have relevance for the present and attempt to advance a discussion on the problem of HIV/AIDS in South Africa to encourage a transforming vision among the people in the faith community.

## 1.5 Methodology

The methodology for the task of interpretation in this research is a *prophetic-critical* reading, which is a multi-dimensional and inter-disciplinary analysis of the different aspects of the text that function behind and in front of the text. In order to salvage back the idea of a prophetic reading from a mere spiritualized concept, it is necessary to rename the task of reading a prophetic text as a *prophetic-critical* reading. This study wishes to present a feminist praxis by connecting theory with practice by joining the\*logical-pastoral paradigm and hermeneutical paradigm (see Figure 1.1 below). It weaves together three main sections: Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's feminist the\*logy, exegesis of the *Magnificat* and practical the\*logy regarding HIV/AIDS in South Africa.

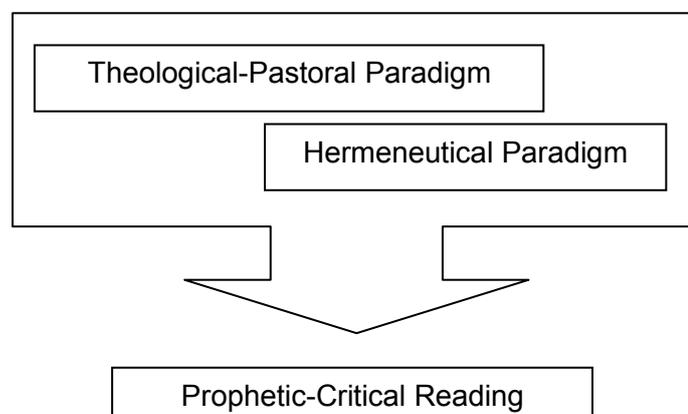


Figure 1.1

To refine the technical aspects of a *prophetic-critical* reading, the review of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's feminist the\*logy in chapter two evaluates the various aspects of her theoretical framework, which is the foundation of this methodology. Then it critically utilizes those technical aspects from feminist the\*logy in our exegesis.

The technical aspects used in our prophetic critical reading includes perspectival, metaphorical, historical, practical and textual interpretation. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza argues that a text is not one dimensional and self-evident but rather perspectival, metaphorical, and constructive (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1999:136). First, the interpretation of the selected text is from the feminist perspective and that means it is critical of the patriarchal aspects of a text and symbolic languages that promotes patriarchal-cultural practices in society. A postmodern literary-cultural criticism argues that symbolic language in a text shapes the reality in front of the text and promotes certain values. Unfortunately, the Bible cannot be changed and nor can the presence of women disciples be written in, where they are absent (Cheney, 1996:1-2). Therefore, to promote a feminist experience of reading a text, a *prophetic-critical* reading utilizes external reading strategies, such as the hermeneutic of suspicion, defragmentation of patriarchal symbolic language, historical-critical reading, literary analysis and a vision of liberation and transformation.

According to Schüssler Fiorenza, when an interpreter is undergoing a historical-critical and rhetorical investigation, one should not only ask, "What the text meant?" but ask, "What kind of reading can do justice to the text in its historical context (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1999:28)?" Since a text functions in a medium of social, political, economic, and religious meaning formation, a *prophetic-critical* reading presents an interpretation in rhetorical situation in history. In addition, it differentiates the actual historical (A) author from the implied author (IA), and the actual historical audience (R) from the inscribed or textualized historical audience (IR) and the actual interpreter (I) from a textualized or inscribed interpreter (TI) using a literary analysis as demonstrated in Figure 1.2 below (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1999:124):

$$I - TI \leftrightarrow A - IA \leftrightarrow \text{Text} \leftrightarrow IR-R \leftarrow \rightarrow IR - R$$

actual historical author (A), implied textual author (IA), actual historical audience (R), inscribed or textualized historical recipients (IR), and also between interpreter (I) and textualized or inscribed interpreter (TI)

Figure 1.2

The actual author (A) of Luke's gospel is historically unknown and there is not enough evidence to point to an actual historical person. Hence, the writer of the gospel will be referred to as the implied author (IA). Based on the literary evidence of Jewish and Hellenistic traditions utilized in the text, our *prophetic-critical* reading explores the rhetorical situation of the two main groups; the Hellenistic and the Jewish audience as the textualized historical recipients (IR), as well as keeping in mind the textualized or inscribed Hellenistic interpreter (TI), Theophilus.

The goal of a *prophetic-critical* reading is to promote ethical, feminist, biblical praxis that enables people to come together in solidarity with women and the marginalized to advance a discussion of socio-political issues in contemporary society and encourage a transforming vision for change. For this, an ethical biblical reading must attempt to interweave theoretical aspects in biblical scholarship with practicality. Chapter four of this research paper is the final stage of a prophetic-critical reading and it utilizes a hermeneutic of creative actualization to advance a discussion on the serious issue of HIV/AIDS in South Africa. The chapter demonstrates a parallel between the rhetorical situation of Lucan time and the situation in post-Apartheid South Africa. Furthermore, it explores the political implications of sending a letter to a highly respected benefactor with great social power in a modern context of HIV/AIDS in South Africa and explores the transforming potential of the text (Luke 1:46-55) in the context in this regard.

Another reading strategy used to assist in a feminist experience of reading is an analogous reading in chapter four. According to Wolfgang Iser, a reader's experience can help determine a reading experience and the result (Iser, 1978:37). A feminist theologian, Emily Cheney, argues that analogous reading is a strategy to recognize and suppress such patriarchal aspects of a text that promote a male

experience of reading and recreate a feminist experience of reading a biblical text (Cheney, 1998:67-68). In addition, the chapter presents an in-depth investigation of HIV/AIDS in South Africa through intersectionality to keep in focus the substance of materiality when creating a transforming vision and prevent falling into the trap of romanticism. According to Paul Farmer, a social-health ethnographer, it is crucial to identify the winners and losers in a social health problem. He calls this the “materiality of the social” (Farmer, 2004:307-308).

## 1.6 Foreseen Problems

A major foreseen problem in this methodology is weaving the otherness of the\*logy, exegesis and practice together. The solution is to find a golden thread that can weave together the three different disciplinary areas: feminist the\*logy, exegesis and practice (see Figure 1.3 below). With respect to this challenge, a prophetic critical reading deals sufficiently with each of these areas through substantial investigation. In addition, a continuous testing and bridging of the gaps between feminist theol\*gy, biblical exegesis and practice throughout this research will further ensure coherency.

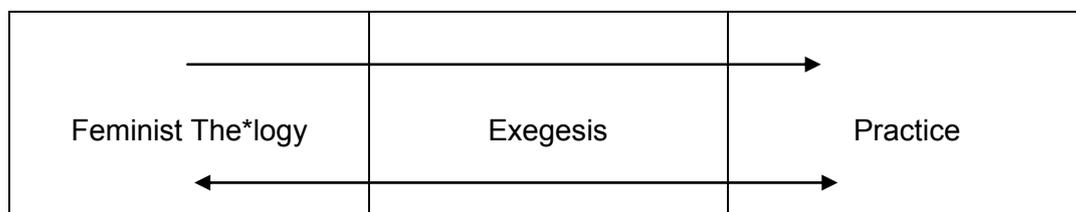


Figure 1.3

Furthermore, the academic context of this interpretation becomes an underlying weakness in attempting to engage in a socio-political issue of HIV/AIDS at a practical level. However to reduce the gap between the theoretical aspect of this study and the practical relevance, Mark Hunter’s ethnography on the situation of HIV/AIDS in South Africa put together from living for long periods of time in an informal settlement in Sundumbili Township will provide a good groundwork for our evaluation on the matter. Hunter’s work is internationally recognized and appraised for its well documented reports, which recognize the problem of HIV/AIDS as a social health issue.

Although an outsider's perspective on the South African situation may prevent presenting an interpretation with a geo-political interest in favour of a certain group in South Africa and helps to promote an egalitarian vision of well-being for all, the issue of intentional fallacy exists in any interpretation and my long commitment to the faith community, my faith convictions and beliefs, ideologies and religious presuppositions is prone to influence my interpretation. To stand accountable for this, a critical assessment of my own presuppositions and beliefs will be provided before beginning our interpretation. According to Lategan (1984:13-14), a continuous external assessment of self-tendency regarding certain views can only be constructive.<sup>6</sup>

## 1.7 My Own Assessment

To show accountability for this interpretation, this part of the first chapter will explain my own presuppositions, beliefs, interests, socio-political location, ideologies, gender and nationality. This thesis is a part of the requirement for Master of Theology in New Testament at Stellenbosch University and it is done in the interest of presenting an academic goal of presenting a feminist, marginal perspective and a pastoral vision of promoting the well-being of all people. The main underlying theoretical assumption is that all forms of enquiry are rhetorical and there is no value-neutral interpretation, detached from the inquirer's ideologies, socio-political location, presuppositions and interests, and it combines various perspectives that emanate from my Korean, New Zealander, middle-class, feminist, Protestant background.<sup>7</sup>

A significant text from Luke's gospel that has a great influence in my life in Luke 4:18-19. Before my commitment to serve in G\*d's ministry, there was a time of personal reflection on my life and amidst all my troubles, I experienced the kingdom of G\*d in my heart, and from the words spoken from Luke 4:18-19, I received

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<sup>6</sup> Contrary to traditional biblical scholarship that monopolizes the ideology of dominant, male, patriarchal culture with a rationale of presenting a value-neutral study, an ethical biblical practice requires an introspection that examines one's own beliefs, socio-political location, ideologies and intention to maintain accountability throughout the process of interpretation (Thiselton, 1992:559).

<sup>7</sup> Brian K. Blount's research demonstrates that an interpreter's cultural context ultimately directs and determines one's interpretation (Blount 1995:177-179). Therefore, an interpreter cannot by her or his human nature maintain an objective frame of mind.

strength and hope in Jesus Christ. Since then, these two verses have been quite important in my walk with Jesus and they have directed me to look to the poor and the marginalized in society.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour (Luke 4: 18-19 NRSV).

With this faith conviction, I was compelled to take on the challenge of presenting a biblical study from a marginalized perspective in the context of HIV/AIDS in South Africa. I strongly believe that this serious health and gender problem requires a wider, social investigation from the faith community. It is my intention to undertake this study in solidarity with all those subjects of struggle suffering from HIV/AIDS. Furthermore, as a former immigrant in New Zealand, I bring to the table my own insight of the life of a marginalized group. In addition, my experience of working with migrant workers in my church ministry in Korea, has given me further insight. During my research, the many academic discussions with my colleagues and professors, the first and second hand testimonies of rape and violence, the coffee talk with a friend of mine who teaches at a school, where about 80% of the kids are infected by HIV/AIDS, all have sensitized me to the complexities of the problem of HIV/AIDS.

## **1.8 Potential Impact**

The potential impact of this research is a wider, more socially critical, and relevant interpretation of the *Magnificat*. In 1995, a prominent Protestant, North-American feminist scholar, Beverly Roberts Gaventa, wrote a brilliant book called *Mary: Glimpses of the Mother of Jesus*. Through an investigation of Mary in Matthew, John, Luke-Acts, and the Protevangelium of James, she provides an interesting description of Mary as a vulnerable, responsive woman, who through faith becomes an eyewitness of the salvation history. Another renowned, North-American feminist scholar, Elizabeth A. Johnson, published a comprehensive book about Mary from the Catholic tradition, and provided a pneumatic view of Mary in the communion of saints among the living and the dead. While it is not possible to free the text from a faith or spiritualized view such as these great works of Mary, this research has a potential to

free the text into a world of *creative actualization* and provide a practical means of reading the text (Luke 1:46-55) from a social, feminist perspective.

## Chapter 2

### Revisiting Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's Feminist The\*logy

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's feminist the\*logy is appropriate to the complex, multifaceted, global context of our religious world and it makes a good foundation for developing a *prophetic-critical* reading. She is a celebrated German/North-American scholar who has produced a vast number of leading books in the New Testament studies and she is well-known for her critical insight into the centuries-long politics of biblical scholarship. Her work of feminist the\*logy is most helpful for rethinking biblical scholarship as ethical, feminist praxis and it provides the basis for our *prophetic-critical* reading. This chapter evaluates theories of feminist praxis in Schüssler Fiorenza's *Rhetoric and Ethic: the Politics of Biblical Studies*<sup>8</sup> and her most recent publication *Transforming Vision: Explorations in Feminist The\*logy*.<sup>9</sup> It is a great honour for me to revisit her work in this chapter.

#### 2.1 Theories are Rhetorical

Feminist the\*logy renders a democratic space, where all voices are welcome to engage with one another. Since all theories are not value-neutral, but are influenced by presuppositions and socio-political background of an interpreter, theories are rhetorical. Schüssler Fiorenza argues,

... language and texts shape reality and promotes values amidst the sociohistorical discourses and patriarchal societies. Social science texts and models are not one dimensional and self-evident but rather perspectival, metaphorical, and constructive. If one defines a social context as one (Mediterranean society) one forcefully closes other layers of meaning (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1999:136).

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<sup>8</sup> *Rhetoric and ethic: the politics of biblical studies* was published by Fortress Press in Minneapolis in 1999. Pp. xi + 220. The prices of the paperback editions range from R483 to R622 in South Africa.

<sup>9</sup> *Transforming Vision: Explorations in Feminist The\*logy*, was published by Fortress Press in Minneapolis in 2011. Page numbers include pp. x + 256. The prices of the paperback editions range from R482 to R755 in South Africa.

The Greek meaning for theory is “looking at, viewing, beholding,” but Schüssler Fiorenza argues that a theory is a *topoi* or rhetoric, because it employs various discursive strategies for making a point. Since theories are rhetorical, the goal of rhetoric is persuasion. Hence, there is no value-neutral theory that can be justified as a scientific theory in biblical scholarship. In a more recent publication, *Transforming Vision: Explorations in Feminist The\*logy*, she explicitly uses the word, theory, in place of a rhetorical enquiry. This is yet another clever way to decentre biblical scholarship from using the word to refer to a value-neutral, objective study.

Unlike Aristotle’s objective view of rhetoric, in feminist the\*logy a rhetoric is subjective matter and it is considered as an individual’s perception of something. In other words, there is no value-neutral interpretation that is detached from the interpreter’s ideologies and social and cultural background. Until a task of interpretation is viewed through the framework of rhetorical enquiry, it is not qualified to undergo an ethical praxis. Hence, Schüssler Fiorenza asserts a paradigm shift from a scientific, positivist, orthodox, apolitical, patriarchal, dualistic study to a rhetorical study, creating an ethos of enquiry that understands meaning as not a given fact but a constructed norm which is appropriated for a specific rhetorical situation.

It is unethical to view a theory as objective in biblical scholarship because it disregards the influence of an interpreter’s presuppositions and social and cultural background. Contrary to the claim that only liberal theologians are guilty of reading into a text, a *prima facie* case exists, where intentional fallacy exists in all interpretations. A liberal theologian and a prominent, African-American New Testament scholar, Brian K. Blount’s sociolinguistic and cultural study of hermeneutics demonstrates that all interpretations are influenced by the interpreter’s social and cultural context.<sup>10</sup> His study shows that meaning is not fixed, but it has

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<sup>10</sup> Brian K. Blount’s book, *Cultural Interpretation: Reorienting New Testament Criticism* points to a paradigm shift from the mainline, Eurocentric, middle-class, traditional approach to a more inclusive biblical scholarship, which gives voice to the marginalized in society. Blount is currently teaching at Union Theological Seminary and he has moved from teaching at Princeton Seminary, which is an institution for students who mainly belong to a white, upper-class group to Union Theological Seminary, a smaller and less traditional institution known for being the birthplace for Black liberation the\*logy. This shows his willingness to further participate in Black liberation the\*logy.

multiple possibilities, depending on the presuppositions and the cultural background of an interpreter and there is interpenetration between the interpreter's background and the constructed meaning of the text. Therefore, he argues that traditional biblical scholarship, which is led by the European, middle-class scholars, does not have practical relevance for the experience of the African-American audience.

Likewise, a commitment to feminist perspective requires one to critically consider the patriarchal characteristic of the Bible and incorporate women's voice in biblical scholarship. In order to equalize power relations that are unequally distributed amongst people of different gender, race, and class in the global faith community, . An interpretation that employs only a patriarchal perspective fosters an unethical, power-driven, hierarchical biblical discourse.

A feminist interpretation means a fundamental change in methodology and keeps in focus an ethical biblical practice to raise ethical, political and religious questions and envision hope and freedom and intertwines a feminine characteristic of persuasion and vision with a masculine characteristic of reason and hard data. Schüssler Fiorenza (1999:176) argues that:

... theology is best understood not as a system but as a rhetorical practice that does not conceive of language merely as signification and transmission, but rather as a form of action and power that affects actual people and situations.

A scientific, value-neutral study based on hard data and rationality insists on a detached study and keeps a social vision of liberation separate from an interpretation. This restricts the biblical study to text investigation and data collection and prohibits it from influencing people in the community to declare G\*d's justice and speak against injustice in society. Schüssler Fiorenza argues it is unethical for biblical scholarship to ignore exploitation and oppression of people in suffering.

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza is not the first biblical scholar to be concerned with the ethical dimension of biblical scholarship. In 1919, James Montgomery criticized the biblical scholarship for its lack of responsibility towards society and challenged the methodology. A day before World War Two, Henry Cadbury of Harvard University protested against the lack of response from scholarship while witnessing the

outrageous church teachings and practices of Nazi Germany. After World War Two, Leroy Waterman accused the scholarship of taking for granted the potential influence it could have on the people in the West (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1999:25-26).

What is significant in Schüssler Fiorenza's theory of rhetoric is the ethical dimension of knowledge production. By making every interpreter accountable for one's own interpretation through declaring one's own presuppositions and socio-political background that influence an interpretation, it makes known the intentions and aspects that direct an interpretation. Furthermore, it confirms that an interpretation is a construction that is specific to a rhetorical situation.

Since the sociohistorical location of rhetoric is the public of the polis, the rhetorical paradigm shift situates biblical scholarship in such a way that its public character and political responsibility become an integral part of our literary readings and historical reconstructions of the biblical world. "The turn to rhetoric" that has engendered critical theory in literary, historical, political, and social studies fashions a theoretical context for such a paradigm shift in biblical studies (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1999:18).

## **2.2 What about the Credibility of a Theory?**

With this in mind, the inevitable question to ask is, "How can one assess the credibility of a theory if the standard framework for biblical study is no longer value-neutral and scientific?" If an interpretation is influenced by an interpreter's rhetorical situation and it remains relative depending on the interpreter's ideologies, socio-historical location, presuppositions and beliefs, how does one measure the integrity of such interpretation? Schüssler Fiorenza's theory of rhetoric reminds us that perspectives and experiences are relative and there is room for all theories and interpretations converse together, but how does one decide on the validation of a theory or interpretation? Surely, declaring one's own presuppositions and socio-political background does not ensure the reliability of an interpretation.

To answer this question, Paul Ricoeur, a renowned French philosopher of the twentieth century, integrates phenomenology in hermeneutic and asserts that validation of a theory lies in assessing the probability and possibility of a theory

rather than relying solely on scientific evidence (Ricoeur, 2003:332).<sup>11</sup> It requires an interpreter to have practicality of contemplating one's own relative realism, which corroborates a reality in relation to his or her socio-historical context. A relative realism is contrary to theoretical realism that instigates the validation of a theory until proven wrong (Somers, 1998:727). It is an interpretation of a phenomena perceived by human understanding. Therefore a biblical interpretation is a mere attempt to make sense of one's own existence and remains relative (Lategan, 1984:2). What this means is that a validation of a theory involves a synchronization of theory and practice. The credibility of a theory depends on the balance between relative realism and theological-pastoral hermeneutic.

### **2.3 Feminist The\*logy - Re-Visioning the Divine**

To implement the idea of feminist praxis, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza draws a connection between women's experience and Wisdom spirituality using feminine symbolic language. First, she problematizes the notion of monotheism and asserts that one should not express who G\*d is but who G\*d is not. For example, G\*d is not a woman or a man nor is he white or black. G\*d is not a G\*d of patriarchy and G\*d is not a G\*d of matriarchy. G\*d is not fully expressed in a masculine or feminist language. In this sense, monotheism is not so much a talk of who G\*d is but it is a merely a rhetorical way of describing G\*d and she accuses the traditional the\*logy of restricting the way of describing G\*d. Then, to reconstruct a symbolic language for women to relate, she combines the spirituality of *Shekhinah* from the feminist Jewish tradition and Wisdom-*Chokmah*-Sophia-*Sapientia* from the feminist Catholic tradition and invites women to make sense of their experiences with the help of the feminine Wisdom spirituality of the resurrected Jesus.

### **2.4 The ἐκκλησία of Wo/men**

Furthermore, Schüssler Fiorenza employs a technical aspect of using a slash between *wo* and *men* to make a gender inclusive symbolic language and signify an

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<sup>11</sup> Refer to Leonardo, Z., Interpretation and the Problem of Domination: Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutics, *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 22: 329–350, 2003.

egalitarian concept of the *ἐκκλησία of wo/men*. She quotes Galatians 3:28 to argue that the early Christians envisioned equality of all human beings amongst the believers of Jesus Christ, regardless of sex, gender, class, ethnicity or race.

There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

This egalitarian notion is countercultural to the context of the first-century Mediterranean Palestine, where a patriarchal social order and systematic exploitation of people by the elites under the imperial Roman rule was the norm. Taking side with this egalitarian notion of the *ἐκκλησία of wo/men* amongst the early believers of Christ, feminist the\*logy sees all status difference as being eradicated in the formation of a new *ἐκκλησία of wo/men* through the Christ event thereafter. Paul's idea of new creation through baptism into Christ claims that the former self becomes a new person through Christ and further supports this notion. This means that ontological explanations of men and women to verify patriarchal is nullified through becoming new creations in the baptism into Christ.

## 2.5 Socio-historical and Ideological Criticism

Schüssler Fiorenza's feminist the\*logy maintains a balance of keeping science and rhetoric in the loop. It does not only concern itself with feminine quality of linguistic rhetoric, but it also concerns itself with masculine quality of scientific investigation. Unlike other scientific investigations that use reason and rationalism to render a rigid form of investigation, her methodology maintains is the fluidity and dynamic movement of the\*logy that renders historiography not as a goal of an investigation but as a means of seeking a rhetorical enquiry. It employs a rational evaluation of social, political and historical data to uncover rhetorical situations in the past and explore rhetorical functions of meaning. A question that an interpreter should ask at the starting point of an interpretation is not, "What did the text mean?" but "What kind of reading can do justice to the text in its historical context?" (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1999:28).

Contrary to the effect of how reason and rationalism in scientific biblical studies have rendered rigid forms of investigations,<sup>12</sup> a historical-critical study places the weight of an interpretation in the affirmation that it becomes a good possibility in a wider, gender-inclusive, historical context. Hence, feminist historiography uses other classical and sacred texts and attempts to uncover the voices of different groups of people in history and attempts to equalize them. It explores to seek a wider world perspective of the first-century Mediterranean Palestine by bringing back the voices of the marginalized people and women who have been silenced in biblical scholarship. Not only does an in-depth study of the people of the oppressed helps us to better understand the history of G\*d's salvation of G\*d's people, it helps us to better understand the vision of emancipation given to us in many of the prophetic texts. Feminist historiography

With this in mind, an ideological critique in feminist biblical scholarship is crucial to recover the ideology of the first-century faith community in the context of the Hellenistic and Jewish traditions and transport it to the even more complex world of our contemporary time. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's ideological critique of a Pauline text in the first letter to the Corinthian through a historical-critical investigation uses both scientific and rhetorical evaluation. She argues that Paul's intention to lessen the tensions and to prevent divisions and bring back order amidst disorder and chaos amongst the Corinthian faith community is from his own patriarchal ideology (4:15). Paul appoints power, domination and subordination into the social relationships of the Pauline congregation and establishes a hierarchal order, which places G\*d in the first place, then Christ, Paul, Apollos, Timothy, Stephanas, followed by other leaders. Furthermore, he belittles the Corinthian congregation to exercise patriarchal authority (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1999:119). Schüssler Fiorenza argues this is not congruent to the egalitarian vision or culture upheld by the rest of the Corinthian faith community, enunciated in Galatians 3:28. Demonstratively, her historical-critical interpretation separates Paul's patriarchal

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<sup>12</sup> The price that was paid for using rigid forms of scientific, biblical investigation was clearly evident in the quest for historical Jesus. However, this is a challenging aspect that all biblical scholars must seriously consider when making judgements of what scientific data to include and exclude. It is also a challenge for me when my own scientific thinking comes in conflict with my faith seeking understanding. Hence, if I were to identify myself in terms of how I would utilize scientific investigation, I would consider myself a centrist.

ideological response to his historical-rhetorical situation from the egalitarian ideology upheld by the Corinthian faith community (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1999:138).

In addition to an ideological critique, feminist the\*logy employs a deconstructive reading that break down any destructive symbolic meaning that otherwise go unnoticed and reinterprets them using a non-patriarchal, symbolic language. Since patriarchal language has power in a patriarchal society to reaffirm patriarchal relationships of domination and subordination, without changing those languages of power, it is difficult to communicate the essence of the message from an ancient text. For instance, a continuous referral of the Gentiles, to indicate those who do not belong to the Jewish origin, is a language that separates the Jewish believers from the non-Jewish believers. In addition, Paul's appointment of the Jewish orthodox people, who cause confusion amongst the believers, as the opponents is a language of intimidation that causes conflict. Hence, Schüssler Fiorenza appoints a new term to refer to the community of believers, where all status difference is abolished in Christ. She uses the term ἐκκλησία of wo/men to refer to a public assembly of free and equal citizens who live in guidance of the power of the Holy Spirit.

Schüssler Fiorenza's feminist historical-critical investigation is not without flaws. Although her explanation of the Pauline the\*logy reflected in the first Corinthians is highly satisfying in terms of a historical-critical investigation, it lacks a kerygmatic element of faith. The over-emphasis on Paul's historical-rhetorical situation leaves no space for giving attention to the justification of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which was a central message of the Pauline the\*logy. Hence, her interpretation of the first Corinthians does not emphasis enough the essential message of the texts and shows the intention to assert a feminist perspective at the price of losing the central message of Paul's the\*logy — an endeavour to show her feminist concerns of valorising women's voices at the price of losing Paul's soteriological concern for the Corinthian community.<sup>13</sup> It is not an easy task to pursue a historical-critical investigation when what we are dealing with involves a kerygmatic element of faith.

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<sup>13</sup> For instance, Schüssler Fiorenza's use of historiography that distinguishes the the\*logy of the Pauline community from Paul's androcentric theology in chapter seven contains limitations of not being able to see beyond Paul's rhetoric and fails to take account of the crucial aspect of Pauline theology, which is the justification of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

So the real question is, “how can one achieve a critical biblical study whilst dealing with the element of kerygma?” Furthermore, just as Schüssler Fiorenza demonstrates her own feminist interests, an interpreter can assign new presuppositions, beliefs and socio-political interests in the process of interpretation, even after an ideological critique and deconstruction of destructive symbolic language, which distort the salvation history. Nevertheless, her methodology remains significant in feminist biblical scholarship because it uses a historical-critical and rhetorical investigation to uncover rhetorical situations and transports the essential message of a text to our contemporary time using feminist language.

## 2.6 A Christian Conscience of Reading?

In Schüssler Fiorenza’s historical-critical reading, she introduces a new Christian conscience of reading to examine the rhetorical nature of a text and question any historical knowledge. Her methodology keeps in focus the question of what really happens during a process of meaning formation in a patriarchal tradition, rather than taking a meaning directly from a text. She separates the process of meaning formation from finding the meaning of a text. The challenge of constructing any historical account is in splitting these two aspects. Hence, to read against the grains of damaging ideologies and symbols in patriarchal tradition, she utilizes a hermeneutic of suspicion. As demonstrated in her historical-critical analysis of the Pauline the\*logy in the first Corinthians, she differentiates Paul’s intention to exercise patriarchal control and authority from the actual vision and ideology of the wider faith community. Since the result of what we construct is mere *topoi* of what the gospel narrates, Schüssler Fiorenza’s notion of historical-critical provides more reliable *topoi*. It is precisely for this reason that her rhetorical criticism is highly recognized.

Another aspect of reading that is brought to our awareness is the inability to fully understand the historical distance between a writer and a reader, which always leaves a room for assumptions and imagination in the process of interpretation. This historical distance makes it difficult for readers to appreciate a text for what it really is and it is further widened by the interpreter’s own ideologies, beliefs and presuppositions actively participate in understanding the meaning of a text. This is

referred to as a historical effect (*Wirkungsgeschichte*). Not only is it impossible to do a purely descriptive reading due to preconceptions of interpreters, where the *Sachkritik* is in operation, reception theory tells us that communication between a writer and a reader is inaccurate due to the unforeseen historical distance.<sup>14</sup> A historiography becomes irrelevant to the nature of the\*logy if one does not consider the dynamic and fluid nature of the\*logy,<sup>15</sup> and an objective, historical enquiry renders a detached and rigid interpretation, as in the case of the quest for historical Jesus. The implication of this is that readers must use her/his assumptions and imaginations responsibly. Joel Green, whose preoccupation with neuroscience, which has influenced his multi-dimensional approach, argues that readers can responsibly participate in the process of meaning formation by carefully selecting discursive reading strategies.<sup>16</sup>

Even a Harvard professor of history of religion, Dieter Georgi, is guilty of using his own assumptions to fill the gap, where there is no textual reference. His innovative, historical interpretation of the collection (*Remembering the Poor*, 1992) illustrates how he interprets the world around the movement of Paul's collection with a goal of reconciliation of the two conflicting parties: the Jewish and Gentile believers in the Pauline congregation. The role of the collection is depicted as a political means of resolving a problem rather than appreciating it as a means to help the poor. As a result, his study on the collection takes the emphasis away from the genuine need to help the poor. Georgi's work on the collection reflects the hostility between the Jews

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<sup>14</sup> See chapter eight of *The Contribution of Reception History to a Theology of the New Testament in Nature of Theology*, where Ulrich Luz discusses reception history for arguing against the naive understanding of text reception.

<sup>15</sup> This objective, historical enquiry originates from the philosophy of rationalism and the European Enlightenment. The major scholars that have come to interpret the New Testament in the light of reason and rationalism after the Enlightenment period are G. B. Niebuhr, a Prussian diplomat, who emphasizes the value of evidence; D. F. Strauss, who proposes a controversial idea of myth to fill the gaps in historical Jesus; F. C. Baur, who was influenced by the philosophy of Hegel. He reconstructed the Christian origin from the epistle of Paul. Hence, the new scientific method of biblical study argues for a critical and historical study that must be purely empirical and assumptions need to be kept to the minimum. See *The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861-1986* (1988), which provides an excellent illustration of how the intellectual world of science has influenced the history of theology and biblical interpretation from the Eurocentric perspective.

<sup>16</sup> Reading out the Bible in a church or reading a Bible verse off somebody's car window all seem like simple tasks, but according to Joel Green in his *Hearing of the New Testament. Strategies for Interpretation*, it is a complicated and impure task. People do not simply receive information from reading, but they actively participate in understanding the meaning of the text. Through various interpretative strategies, readers can do a responsible and ethical reading.

and Germans of his time his own time and his experience of witnessing a traumatic event of the killing of many people by bombing and seeing Jews disappearing from his own town (Georgi, 1995:36).

With this illustration of the *Wirkungsgeschichte* in mind, we turn our attention to what is really the goal of our ethical interpretation. In order to do an ethical reading, an interpreter is required to keep in focus the process of interpretation rather than the result. Before beginning an interpretation, an interpreter should critically evaluate one's own ideologies, beliefs and presuppositions that direct one's reading and declare them. Since every interpreter is under the influence of *Wirkungsgeschichte*, historical distance and is prone to fill the gaps in history with assumptions and imagination, an interpreter must carefully select the reading strategies to assist in an interpretation.

## 2.7 Intersectionality as a Marginalised Approach

In communicating a message appropriately for our contemporary time, what is necessary is not only a reconstruction of symbolic language, but an evaluation of the systems of meaning formation in society is necessary to ensure the meaning is not lost in the process of receiving the message. Hence, Schüssler Fiorenza utilizes intersectionality in her methodology and evaluates the systems of power relations in society that intersect to add multiple layers of oppression on a suffering individual.<sup>17</sup> By better understanding the context an interpreter is reading from, the interpreter can conscientiously select appropriate ways of presenting a textual meaning. This new way of analyzing the socio-political context of our present time appears for the first time in her latest book called *Transforming Vision: Explorations in Feminist The\*logy*.<sup>18</sup> Although the meaning of the term is vague and lacks accuracy, there is a general understanding that the term denotes that identity is formed by interlocking and reinforcing sectors of race, gender, class, and sexuality (Nash, 2008:3). In other

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<sup>17</sup> The term intersectionality became popular in the late 1980s and early 1990s in the movement to question the validity of legal decisions, taking account of the various social issues amidst the racial segregation and discrimination in legal practice.

<sup>18</sup> The book begins introducing various inter-disciplinary and inter-religious feminist scholarships to assemble different feminist voices to project a greater voice and a grander impact — powerful attempt to shift her feminist discourse from the margins to the centre.

words, intersectionality refers to a complex, socio-political analysis of power relations.

In addition, Schüssler Fiorenza considers three ethical criteria in her feminist intersectional gender analysis, articulated by a black feminist scholar, Patricia Hill Collins. An intersectional analysis must promote a redistribution of power in society, there must be an appreciation of cultural difference that leads to cultural exchange, and there must be voices from different regions of the world to make a democratic space to present an international politics of representation. This means the voices that were previously ignored and placed in the margins in the mainline biblical scholarship must be shifted from the margins to the centre of biblical discourse.

The use of intersectionality in our methodology shows a commitment to presenting a wider socio-political enquiry. Although the interest of feminist the\*logy is at first in presenting a biblical discourse that abolishes gender power relations, intersectionality is a progressive way forward to abolishing all kinds of power relations to promote a well-being for all citizens of our international community. Since gender power relations intersect with other structures of power, such as race, class, ethnicity, age, culture and religion, it is necessary to extend our analysis to a broader investigation. This involves a movement away from a detached, scientific, evidence-based study to listening to the voices of the marginalized people and taking them seriously.

Nevertheless, not every feminist has a positive outlook on the method of intersectionality. A third wave feminist, Naomi Zach, argues that intersectionality has further fragmented the commonality in feminist theory and sees it as yet another attempt to universalize the struggles of the oppressed people from the white, middle-class perspective. She concludes that it is not a bottom-up approach. What Zach desires instead is an empowering approach with an emphasis on the future that would allow women to take responsibility through hope of what could happen (in Nash, 2008:3). However, it is important to differentiate postmodern thinking that has a tendency to fragment, split and categorize according to difference from

intersectionality that aims to highlight the voices of the silenced ones through uncovering the layers of structural oppression.

## **2.8 Catholicism as a Site of Feminist Struggles**

To speak from her own experience, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza sees Catholicism as a site of feminist struggles. She accuses the Catholic Church for being involved in facilitating patriarchal systems of colonialism, globalization and capitalism. She argues that the Church is responsible for promoting monoculture through imposing Eurocentric views on people in other parts of the world and disregarding cultural difference. It has been in the frontline of facilitating globalization through capitalist values. In addition, she accuses the Church of following a crude form of Greco-Roman democracy and the imperial Roman style of monarchic and aristocratic social structure. Even the early church was named after the *Pax Romana* and the Pope was referred to as the *pater partum* and *pontifex maximus*.

The greatest concern for all feminists is the patriarchal aspect of the Bible, which identifies women as inferior to men. In many situations, this patriarchal aspect leads many Christian women to feel worthless and internalize guilt when they should not. Although, Karl Rahner has in the past raised the problem of Eurocentric biblical scholarship in the Catholic Church, he did not raise the issue of the marginalization of women in the Church. However, on the positive side, the Bible has provided Christian women with comfort of believing G\*d, and therefore, many women still wishes to remain in the Church. Even Schüssler Fiorenza admits that it is not wise to disregard the Bible altogether and even though she disapproves of the Catholic Church for the things she criticizes, she intends to stay within the church and speak out about an institutional change from within the church.

## **2.9 A Transforming Vision**

From her own site of Feminist struggles, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza looks forward to a transforming vision of the oppressed subjects and stands in solidarity with all those subjects of struggles. She argues that neither traditional biblical scholarship

nor liberation the\*logy can produce such a vision, because traditional biblical scholarship is oblivious of the voices of women and the marginalized, and liberation the\*logy does not adequately emphasize the problem of gender inequality and the oppression of women.

Vision equally has something to do with seeing and looking. I understand feminist theory to enable us to see full circle where otherwise we would see only a segment. Hence, I understand feminist theology and studies in religion as a vision quest, seeking to articulate the dream of justice as well as searching for transformative theories and practices of well-being in an unjust and violent world. Hence, the analysis of domination and struggle must be central to a critical feminist political theology of liberation (Schüssler Fiorenza, 2011:2).

A transforming vision involves envisioning justice and the well-being of suffering people beyond the “socially constructed frameworks, patterns and material conditions that frame our collective lives and that can be understood only in relation to ‘agency’ or a human being’s socio-culturally mediated capacity to act” (Schüssler Fiorenza, 2011:8). The crucial role of a transforming vision in feminist theol\*gy is that it fills the gap between theory with practice. It directs and guides multiple theories towards a transforming vision and renders theories more relevant to practice, maintaining the element of fluidity in how theories can interact to transform a wider, social community.

## **2.10 A Creative Actualization**

A transforming vision is actualized in Schüssler Fiorenza’s creative approach in Chapter Nine, *An Open Letter to Miryam IV, Successor of Peter and Mary of Magdala* of her latest publication. The entire chapter is dedicated to a letter addressed to the next pope, whom Schüssler Fiorenza imagines would be a female called Miryam IV. The letter urges the Pope to embrace the feminist vision of emancipation through various tones of prophetic voice. It encourages a paradigm shift from the structure of domination and power that Dominus Jesus signifies to the humble servanthood that Jesus represents. Schüssler Fiorenza’s rhetorical sense truly shows her artistic flair as she quotes her own dreams to convey her message. In the first dream, a messenger of divine Wisdom appears and invites her to “walk in

the ways of wisdom” (Schüssler Fiorenza 2011:186). The second dream takes her back to her university years when Pope John VIII was elected and he said:

*Aggiornamento!* Open the windows and doors and transform the church into the open house of divine Wisdom, into a cosmic cosmopolitan temple without any walls and fortifications, so that the Spirit of G\*d can blow through it with new life-giving power! (Schüssler Fiorenza, 2011:187).

At this stage, a turning point occurs in Schüssler Fiorenza’s view of the Catholic Church. She reinterprets the term *catholicity* in order to reclaim its potential for feminist the\*logy while envisioning a radical, democratic, feminist praxis and vision. Through prophetic words spoken in her dreams she calls on the Pope to mediate a new horizon of the ἐκκλησία of wo/men. The most prophetic part of the chapter is the spiritual vision of the three Miryams. It is as if Schüssler Fiorenza is calling women leaders to produce the next Pope Miryam IV: “Comfort, o comfort my people! Lead them out of bondage, hunger, and despair ... Rescue, rescue my people from those who exploit and dehumanize them, from those who ravage the earth...” (Schüssler Fiorenza, 2011:190). She finally refers to the new leader as the *Keeper of the Rainbow Covenant*.

## 2.11 Conclusion

Unrestricted to a theoretical boundary, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza’s epistemological approach has made a revolutionary breakthrough for feminist the\*logians to engage in a life-giving feminist praxis. For me as an Asian feminist the\*logian from Korean, New Zealand and South African academic backgrounds, her work is of on-going value precisely because it scrutinizes the current state of mainline, middle-class, Western, patriarchal biblical scholarship to broaden the space for a more democratic biblical scholarship. Her feminist the\*logy is specifically valuable for this research as it provides a good foundation for developing a *prophetic-critical* reading. Her historical-critical analysis in particular is of the greatest value and it makes a modern the\*logian question, “Would not both historical and biblical studies be served better if their framework was liberated from the compulsion of objectivity and a directness of revelation?”

In our next chapter, a *prophetic-critical* reading of the *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-55) will utilize various aspects of Schüssler Fiorenza's feminist the\*logy to present a feminist interpretation of the text. Using a symbolic language of feminist the\*logy, it will redirect detrimental patriarchal language to promoting egalitarian values. The term ἐκκλησία of wo/men will be used to signify a democratic, non-hierarchical, gender-inclusive, liberating community of believers in the Lucan community. Furthermore, a historical-critical investigation will be employed to present a feminist historiography that is inclusive of the voices of women and the marginalized and a creative actualization in chapter four will reinterpret the text to speak to our contemporary time.

Most importantly, Schüssler Fiorenza's concept of a transforming vision of the ἐκκλησία of wo/men will be kept in focus throughout the process of our interpretation to guide and direct the multiple theories that have been selected for this reading. A transforming vision of the oppressed people amongst the Lucan community in the first century will be transported to find help us find a transforming vision in the context of HIV/AIDS in South Africa. Furthermore, in order to encourage a transforming vision from below, chapter four will highlight a marginalized perspective using the method of intersectionality and it will critically evaluate the various aspects involved in a social problem like HIV/AIDS.

A weak aspect of Schüssler Fiorenza's methodology, which could be improved for our *prophetic-critical* reading, is keeping a balance to include both an outsider's wider social perspective, as well as the perspective of the insider, who is experiencing multiple layers of oppression. In her discussion on the topic of domestic violence, she draws a conclusion too soon to say that the concept of Christ's suffering renders many Christian women to remain in abusive relationships. It is not enough to merely argue that patriarchal ideology in the Bible renders Christian women to internalize guilt and inferiority to the extent that they end up institutionalizing themselves into abusive marriage relations. There is no doubt that it is unethical for an outsider to tell a victim of domestic violence to endure the pain and suffering because Christ suffered for us, however, such a complex problem of why women stay in these relationships requires a wider investigation as it may be

linked to other social, economic, and psychological factors. For our investigation of people with HIV/AIDS in South Africa, we will keep the balance in check to seek a wider social perspective, along with an insider's perspective on the matter.

## Chapter 3

### **The *Magnificat* as Genealogy**

Utilizing the various aspects of feminist the\*logy discussed in the previous chapter, this chapter will present the first part of a *prophetic-critical* reading of the *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-55) and explore the rhetorical functions behind the text. The *Magnificat* is a celebrated text in feminist biblical scholarship because of its message of liberation and justice, however it has not been fully tapped into its transformative power to influence the wider community. Unfortunately, it has even become a spiritualized song to be sung in many churches as a memoir of the Virgin Mary. Hence, in order to guide readers to take a deeper insight into the concerns and the\*logies of the Lucan community, our *prophetic-critical* reading of the *Magnificat* will show that the text has practical implications. Using various reading tools in feminist the\*logy, it will evaluate the important rhetorical functions of the text, which were carefully planned by the implied author of Luke-Acts. First it will deconstruct patriarchal symbolic languages that are damaging for constructing an ethical interpretation and then reassign them with feminist languages that promote egalitarian values. Then it will explore the literary strategies employed by the implied author.

#### **3.1 Marian Teaching**

Before rereading the *Magnificat* from a feminist perspective, it is first necessary to problematize the patriarchal symbolic language in Marian teaching, which sees Mary as a divinized, mythical, passive, white, virgin girl. This image of Mary is a patriarchal perspective of an ideal woman in society and it remains as a mere historical projection, which has no textual or historical basis. Elizabeth Castelli argues that Hellenistic philosophy, which regards the spirit highly over and against the body, has influenced such a distorted, Marian teaching (Castelli, 1986:65), whilst Jane Schaberg (1995:198) refers to this Marian teaching as a silent tradition and sees Mary as the silenced one. Elizabeth A. Johnson argues that this patriarchal Marian teaching is a contingency in the history of Christianity, which has arisen out of the

uncertainty about Mary due to the little textual evidence provided in the New Testament. She argues that it is a destructive, symbolic, historical trajectory because it functions as a patriarchal language that controls women's sexuality as a space for subordination and domination (Johnson, 2006:96).<sup>19</sup> Hence, Marian teaching is a the\*logical quest gone seriously wrong in a traditional biblical scholarship.

Schüssler Fiorenza (2011:198-199) identifies four distorted images of women in Marian teaching: an emphasis on Mary's virginity which undermines women's sexuality, an association of full womanhood with motherhood, a social construct of an ideal woman as submissive, passive and docile, and an establishment of an unrealistic, social standard for women that can never be met. The price that women had to pay because of this Marian teaching was grave. For instance, in Latin America the dualistic concept of the good Guadalupe and the bad Malnche still functions to undermine women's sexuality as a space for sinful conducts and this has a further connection to Eve and the belief that the fall of human beings was caused by her sin (Schüssler Fiorenza, 2011:201).

The problem is that these patriarchal ideas become preconceptions, which influence our reading of the *Magnificat* that has a strong association with Mary, and where such Sachkritik operates, it is difficult to present an interpretation that promotes an evkkhlhsi,a of wo/men. Therefore, it is imperative for us to reorient this detrimental symbolic language before we take a closer look at the text in Luke 1:46-55 in order to appropriately our guide readers.<sup>20</sup> In doing so, a *prophetic-critical* reading will first bring to awareness any patriarchal presuppositions that reinforce gender inequalities in the process of reading.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Since 1963, when the Second Vatican Council won votes for continuing with the Marian teaching by only forty votes (1, 114 votes vs. 1, 074), the Catholic scholars have been astonished at how Mary could become such a controversial subject in biblical scholarship and ecumenical circles (Johnson, 2006:137).

<sup>20</sup> Patriarchal ideas become preconceptions that influence an interpretation, and where such Sachkritik operates, it is difficult to present an interpretation that promotes an ἐκκλησία of wo/men.

<sup>21</sup> Elizabeth Johnson strongly asserts that what is really needed is an alternative Mariology based on Luke's identification of Mary as the liberated Israel in the *Magnificat*.

### 3.2 A Gender-inclusive Reading

To redirect detrimental patriarchal, symbolic languages and promote a vision of an egalitarian society of wo/men, what is required is a reinterpretation of how we understand women in biblical scholarship. Contrary to the theory that women are partial creations of the image of G\*d, Rosemary Ruether, one of the greatest feminist scholars of the twenty-first century, argues that both men and women are wholly created in the *imago Dei* (Ruether, 1983:54). Furthermore, the role of assisting Adam and bearing children designated to Eve in Genesis does not qualify her as less valuable nor subordinate to Adam (Sawyer, 2002:23-24).<sup>22</sup> It does not imply that all women should permanently remain in a subordinate position to men. Instead, the value of difference between the two genders must be appreciated in their relational aspect, which is a reflection of the triune G\*d, who is non-hierarchical, non-patriarchal, non-oppressive, self-giving and receiving (LaCugna, 1993:106).<sup>23</sup>

In considering this relational aspect of men and women, a prominent, South African, New Testament scholar and a former Dean of the theological faculty at Stellenbosch University, Elna Mouton, develops a captivating theory of the *imago Dei*, extending on Ellen van Wolde's argument of the qualification of humankind found in Genesis. Since, humankind splits into two gender categories only after Eve was created (Genesis 2:22), the qualification of being a human is inclusive of both Adam and Eve (Mouton & Van Wolde, 2012:592). Before Eve was created, Adam was referred to as humankind and only after Eve was created that humankind splits into man and woman. In other words, since the image of G\*d is vested in humankind, is equally found in women and that image is complete in the relational aspect of men and women.

Furthermore, there is no gender hierarchy in the ἐκκλησία of wo/men. In the Lucan birth narrative, a different social order is suggested in the overturn of patriarchal

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<sup>22</sup> Schüssler Fiorenza (1994:39-40) argues that this biased reading is influenced by the patriarchal symbolic language of associating God-Christ-husband-male against soul-bride-female and European, educated, man's ideal that classifies women as "other".

<sup>23</sup> The roles of G\*d, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are distinctly different, yet the relationships are based on mutual giving and receiving. In John 15:26, Jesus says he will send the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Holy Spirit will testify on his behalf, and the Holy Spirit would come only after Jesus ascends to heaven (John 15:26; 16:7).

order. A gender reversal of order between Elizabeth and Zachariah is seen when Zachariah, who is the head of the household is silenced (Luke 1:20) during the nine months of Elizabeth's pregnancy because of his lack of faith (Luke 1:25, 42) and voice is given to a woman, Mary (vv.34, 38, 46-55). This overturn of patriarchal order is a challenge against the first-century Mediterranean culture (Levine & Blickenstaff, 2002:79). In the first-century Mediterranean Palestine culture, anyone who engages with another person outside of the home is seen to initiate a challenge-riposte, where honour can be ascribed or obtained (Neyrey, 1993:29).<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, since Luke's gospel is designed for public hearing, the implied author becomes dishonourable in the eyes of the public audience.

Nevertheless, the birth narrative is a significant moment for the Lucan community as it signifies the birth of the ἐκκλησία of wo/men, where the presence of Jesus Christ is physically present with and among his people inside Mary's womb. A modern interpretation of this event is a birth of a new church. In such significant moment, both Elizabeth and Mary together become models of good disciples of Jesus Christ through having a firm faith in what Jesus is doing through his people and coming together as one people to testify and confirm each other's faith. They both praise G\*d, prophesy and participate in the proclaiming of the gospel. Mary even displays leadership by declaring G\*d's word of justice and salvation for G\*d's people in the *Magnificat* (Johnson, 2006:263). Furthermore, in a society where honour is ascribed or obtained through a concrete concept of gender, kinship and social position of authority (Neyrey, 1993:28), the implied author ascribes honour to Elizabeth and Mary in the eyes of the Christ believers. First, they both gain honour through a new kinship formed to Jesus, who is the Messiah. Elizabeth gains more honour from being recognized as a righteous follower of G\*d (Luke 1:6) and Mary further gains honour because Elizabeth who is a righteous woman gives her a recognition and because she is the mother of Jesus.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> In Matthew's gospel, Mary is silenced and the story of Jesus' birth unfolds from Joseph's point of view (Schottroff, 1995:195).

<sup>25</sup> Elizabeth means the house of the gift of the Lord and the name foreshadows Jesus' arrival as a saviour (Dornisch, 1997:13).

It is not only the Lucan community that have showed appreciation for women in the birth narrative, but there are traces of feminine language used in the Bible to express the goodness of G\*d, which demonstrates a further appreciation of women amongst G\*d's people. In the Old Testament, there is a metaphorical reference to G\*d as Wisdom Sophia (Proverbs 1:20). This is also commonly found in many of the early Jewish literatures, such as apocalyptic literature and the Qumran writings (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1985:162). The Wisdom Sophia tradition is also seen in the New Testament, where Paul uses the Wisdom of G\*d to refer to the crucified Jesus in 1 Corinthians 1:23-24 (Ruether, 1983:58). Furthermore, developed from the concept of Sophia God in Q (QLk 7:37), the gospel of Matthew (11:19) refers to Jesus as the Divine Sophia (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1994:151).<sup>26</sup> To highlight the feminine characteristic of G\*d, Schüssler Fiorenza combines the spirituality of *Shekhinah* from the feminist Jewish tradition and Wisdom-*Chokmah*-Sophia-*Sapientia* from the feminist Catholic tradition and constructs a feminine, symbolic language of *Chokmah*-Sophia-Wisdom as a personification of G\*d's saving act in the world to invite women to identify themselves as human beings created in the image of G\*d and find strength in the Wisdom spirituality of the resurrected Jesus (1985:162-163).

However, there are still aspects of biblical texts that require external reading strategies to undergo a gender-inclusive reading. For instance, the presence of the gendered pronoun *he* throughout in Luke 1:46-55 may reinforce a structural domination of men over women. To deal with this problem, it is necessary to note the difference between a reference to an individual person from a structural reference to all men. Since the aorist verbs reinforce the prophetic nature (Brown, 1993:355), and points the text to the Christ event (Gaventa, 1999:58),<sup>27</sup> the pronoun *he* refers to Jesus. By making a deliberate change in the text to say that *he* refers to Jesus and not to all men in general, we can clearly guide readers to focus on Jesus and the

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<sup>26</sup> In 1993, a conference was held in Minneapolis by feminist scholars to raise the feminine aspect of G\*d through wisdom Sophia tradition. However, the Protestant church became hysterical and expressed extreme dissatisfaction towards it. Schüssler Fiorenza (1985:162-163) describes this event as "the most controversial ecumenical event in decades".

<sup>27</sup> Beverly Gaventa identifies three roles by Mary in Luke-Acts; a disciple, who being chosen by G\*d, participates in discipleship, a prophet, in the *Magnificat*, speaking of the salvific event and a mother, who is shown favour by G\*d (Gaventa, 1999:58).

Christ event on the individual level. The text below illustrates a modification of the *Magnificat* to assist readers in a gender-inclusive reading,<sup>28</sup>

<sup>46</sup> And Mary said: “My soul glorifies the Lord  
<sup>47</sup> and my spirit rejoices in Jesus my Savior,  
<sup>48</sup> for Jesus has been mindful  
of the humble state of Jesus’ disciple.  
From now on all generations will call me blessed,  
<sup>49</sup> for the Mighty One has done great things for me—  
holy is Jesus’ name.  
<sup>50</sup> Jesus’ mercy extends to those who fear him,  
from generation to generation.  
<sup>51</sup> Jesus has performed mighty deeds with his arm;  
Jesus has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.  
<sup>52</sup> Jesus has brought down rulers from their thrones  
but has lifted up the humble.  
<sup>53</sup> Jesus has filled the hungry with good things  
but has sent the rich away empty.  
<sup>54</sup> Jesus has helped his servant Israel,  
remembering to be merciful  
<sup>55</sup> to Abraham and his descendants forever,  
just as Jesus promised our ancestors” (Luke 1:46-55).

### 3.3 A Religious Propaganda?

Now that our *prophetic-critical* reading has critically evaluated the detrimental patriarchal symbolic languages and ideologies and reassigned them with feminist languages that promote egalitarian values of the ἐκκλησία of wo/men, the next part of our reading will evaluate the rhetorical functions of the *Magnificat* using a historical-critical and literary analysis to explore the possibility of it being a religious propaganda.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> The modification of the text in Luke 1:46-55 was made using the New Revised Standard Version of the New Testament. This is not an attempt to change the canonical text, but it is merely to provide a supplementary note to assist readers in reading the text.

<sup>29</sup> Schüssler Fiorenza (1999:124) employs literary reader-response criticism, speech-act theory and historical analysis to distinguish the actual author from the implied author. The actual authorship of Luke’s gospel is unknown; hence, the writer of the book is referred to as the implied author. There are

### 3.3.1 History as Genealogy

First of all, the implied author of Luke-Acts uses the form of an ancient biography, often used to keep a historical account of a famous person. There were two types of ancient biographies; one that gives a true account of a person over and against other competing ones and one that tells deeds and teachings of a person who is set as an example for others to follow (Evans, 1990:46). Furthermore, the preface in both Luke and Acts demonstrates the writer's intention to pass on an important knowledge. The first preface (1:1-4) in Luke's gospel begins with an assurance of giving a true account, the second preface (Acts 1:1) refers back to the previous book (Luke's gospel) regarding Jesus' deeds and teachings and the phrase, "of the things which have been accomplished" that parallels the phrase "of which things I am making a narrative" in a historical narrative of Halicarnassus, Roman Antiquities, 17.4 (Evans, 1990:45).

In addition, the implied author uses Greco-Roman historical references, such as the warning of the destruction of Jerusalem (Luke 21:20-34), the prophecy about a world-wide famine during the time of Claudius (Acts 11:27), the reference to Christians as opposing the world order (Acts 17:6; 19:27; 24:5) and the mentioning of Paul's relation to the Roman authority (Acts 18:12,21-28) that affirm Luke-Acts is an ancient historical story (Evans, 1990:45). Hence, the wider narrative in Luke's gospel and Acts is considered to be a historical account of the Lucan community.

However, for this prophetic-critical reading, we will consider the historical account in Luke-Acts as a *genealogy*. In feminist the\*logy, a theory of rhetorical enquiry tell us that all theories are rhetorical, which leads us to understand that even historical

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several competing views on the identity of the author of Luke's gospel. Many scholars believe Luke was the author and understand him to be a physician based on the style of language and the technicality of illnesses described. However, H. J. Cadbury argues that the language used in Luke's gospel is no different from that of an intellectual and does not necessarily mean that it is the language of a physician. In 1912 H. J. Cadbury used the LXX and in cultivated Hellenistic non-medical writers such as Josephus, Lucian and Plutarch found no greater evidence in the writings of those with medical training and interest than in the writings of those of non-medical professionals. He used *Corpus hippiatricorum graecorum*. In Colossians 4:14, Paul refers to someone as the "beloved physician." But, it is not all that clear that Paul is referring to the writer of Luke's gospel (Hendrikson, 1978:3-5).

knowledge is rhetorical. In other words, history is constructed in the memory retained by a community of people in a certain place and time. Whether that memory is accurate is another matter. Foucault's term, *genealogy*, best describes the Lucan historical knowledge,

the union of erudite knowledge and local memories which allows us to establish a historical knowledge of struggles and to make use of this knowledge tactically today (Foucault, 1980:83).

The multiple literary traditions in Luke-Acts illustrate the implied author's strategic use of the historical knowledge to effectively reach a wider Jewish and Hellenistic audience. Luke-Acts, believed to be written by the same writer, contains classical, Semitic and Greek styles of historical writing, which reveals a manipulation of historical knowledge. The preface of Luke's gospel is classical, the next section (1:5-2:52) is Semitic and the rest reflects the Greek language of the Septuagint with variations (Hendrickson, 1978:33).

### **3.3.2 Kerygma**

Another rhetorical strategy that the implied author employs in the Lucan historical account of Jesus is the element of kerygma, which is crucial for persuading people. The various kerygmatic elements include the miraculous conception of Jesus by a virgin woman through the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:26-35), the coming down of a Divine G\*d in human form (1:30, 42), the death (23:44-45) and the resurrection of Jesus (24:7, 15) and the divine ascension into heaven (25:51) all convey supernatural events that requires listeners to use their imagination. Although contemporary audience may find it difficult to accept kerygmatic stories, this would not have been a problem for the first-century audience whose belief in the existence of the supernatural world (demons, spirits and genius) was as real as the natural world. The people of the first-century Mediterranean world were anti-introspective and they believed that their feelings and major events were caused when the supernatural world interacted with the natural world (Rohrbaugh, 1996:47).

For a modern reader, it may take more effort to believe in the supernatural events told in Luke-Acts. If it is not read from the faith perspective, it may be misinterpreted

as a story that confirms misogyny against women.<sup>30</sup> Jane Schaberg argues that Mary's story implicates rape (Schaberg, 1995:138). She argues that as seen in many other fairy tales, such as *Sleeping Beauty*, the story of Mary parallels a patriarchal attempt to silence a woman who was raped. For example, the story of *Sleeping Beauty* was originally developed from a horrifying rape story, *Perceforest* (1528). The story is about a princess called Zellandine, who is raped in her sleep by a man called Troylus. Despite the seriousness of this crime, the writer puts a sour twist to the story, where Zellandine marries Troylus after giving birth to his child.<sup>31</sup> Without a little imagination, it is impossible to interpret the story of Jesus. For instance, a European scholar, Catharina Halkes uses a little imagination to reinterpret Mary's virginity as "an attitude of being open and available to the divine mystery to the voice and power of the spirit in us..."

### 3.3.3 Lucan Exigency

To an ancient audience of Luke-Acts, there was a different kind of challenge, which was more serious. The evangelical nature of Luke-Acts would have posed a threat to the imperial and Jewish authorities and anyone participating in the Jesus movement may have had to face terrible persecution (Luke 1:33, 71, 79) (Tannehill, 1996:53). Furthermore, since Luke-Acts is designed to be read orally to a wider audience (Kroeger, Evans & Storkey, 1995:112), the readers of Luke-Acts and their supporters are highly likely to be facing hostility from the wider community. Hence, a decision to follow a new set of religious order would have required a lot of courage.

A possible place where Luke-Acts was written is in the regions around Achaea. The probable time of the composition was roughly the late first century, after the destruction of the temple in 70 C.E. There are two reasons why some scholars think that it was written after the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. The textual

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<sup>30</sup> There were even traces of misogynist development of women's bodies in the early days of Christianity. For example, Pope Siricius argued that Jesus would have rejected his mother if she had conceived other children. This is the very example of patriarchal attempt to describe women's sexuality and restrict women from claiming power through speaking out about their sexuality as part of their full humanity and dignity. A South African women's activist and ex-prisoner of the Apartheid regime, Sister Bernard Mncube, argues that women must speak against not only the cult of virginity, but the whole mystified notion of sexuality and the silence around it to reclaim their full humanity (Johnson, 2006:31).

<sup>31</sup> See Jack Zipes' *The Great Fairy Tale Tradition: From Straparola and Basile to the Brothers Grimm*.

evidence in Luke 21:20-24 which gives a prophetic description of the fall of Jerusalem reveals a second prophetic source besides Mark 13 (Evans, 1990:15). Comparatively, the text is very descriptive and the aorist verbs ἴδητε, γινώτε and ἤγγικεν speak of the event as if it had already happened. These cannot be prophetic verbs because, oddly enough, other verbs in verses 21 to 24 are in the present or future form.

<sup>20</sup> Ὄταν δὲ ἴδητε κυκλουμένην ὑπὸ στρατοπέδων Ἱερουσαλήμ, τότε γινώτε ὅτι ἤγγικεν ἡ ἐρήμωσις αὐτῆς.

<sup>21</sup> τότε οἱ ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ φευγέτωσαν εἰς τὰ ὄρη καὶ οἱ ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῆς ἐκχωρείτωσαν καὶ οἱ ἐν ταῖς χώραις μὴ εἰσερχέσθωσαν εἰς αὐτήν,

<sup>22</sup> ὅτι ἡμέραι ἐκδικήσεως αὐταὶ εἰσιν τοῦ πλησθῆναι πάντα τὰ γεγραμμένα.

<sup>23</sup> οὐαὶ ταῖς ἐν γαστρὶ ἐχούσαις καὶ ταῖς θηλαζούσαις ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις· ἔσται γὰρ ἀνάγκη μεγάλη ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ ὀργὴ τῷ λαῷ τούτῳ,

<sup>24</sup> καὶ πεσοῦνται στόματι μαχαίρης καὶ αἰχμαλωτισθήσονται εἰς τὰ ἔθνη πάντα, καὶ Ἱερουσαλήμ ἔσται πατουμένη ὑπὸ ἐθνῶν, ἄχρι οὗ πληρωθῶσιν καιροὶ ἐθνῶν (Luke 21:20-24 NA27).

There were several religious movements around this time, and it was difficult for the Roman authority to distinguish the Jesus movement from other Jewish movements. The survival of the Lucan community depended on their ability to distinguish themselves from other Jewish movements that posed a threat to the Roman authority. David Bosch identifies four other religious groups that existed at that time. The first group was the Sadducees, who, as a result of extreme accommodation with the Romans lost favour with the Jews and soon disappeared. The second group was the Zealots, who were revolutionary activists. They believed the kingdom of G\*d would restore David's kingdom on earth. A man known as Judas of Galilee who led a revolution against the Romans (Acts 5:37) supposedly belonged to this group. There was a four-year war from the year 66 C.E. to the final destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. The Zealots were finally defeated in 73 C.E. at Masada (Bosch, 1993:4). The author of Luke-Acts writes that, "After him Judas the Galilean rose up at the time of the census and got people to follow him; he also perished, and all who followed him were scattered" (Acts 5:37 NRSV).

The two other groups were the Essenes and the Pharisees. The Essenes, in their absolute adherence to the law, separated themselves from the rest of the Jews. They considered urban cities to be impure and escaped to the Desert of Judea and lived in caves. In their firm belief that the kingdom of G\*d would come immediately after the war, they gave all they could and stood against Rome in the four-year war that began in 66 C.E., but they were utterly defeated in the end. Of the four groups, the only surviving group was the Pharisees. Their clever means of organizing themselves around the synagogues outside Jerusalem was the main reason for their survival (Bosch, 1993:6-7).

### 3.3.4 Diplomacy

With a goal to sustain the life of the Lucan community, the implied author demonstrates a skill of diplomacy by addressing the letter to an insider who probably belongs to their rival group, a person of high social standing and power or even an elite person from the imperial Roman Empire. The meaning of the Greek name, Theophilus, which means loved by G\*d suggests that this may be an insider who already has a great interest in the Lucan community's missionary works. There is even a good possibility that Theophilus is the implied author's patron and benefactor, since the first-century Mediterranean Palestine society functioned through patron-client relations where the patron was the protector and benefactor of the client acted in return for service and loyalty.<sup>32</sup> By providing a true account of the matter (Luke 1:4), the implied author wishes to ensure providing a reliable source and by politely addressing the person with a formal address (1:3) "the most excellent Theophilus," the implied author proves him/herself to be complying to the imperial culture.

However, if we take a closer look at the *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-55), the use of a Jewish literary tradition reveals the implied author's intention to communicate to the Jews. It is more than likely that the *Magnificat* is probably first addressed to the Jews. Just as Jewish prophetic hymns that typically contain a message of the coming of

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<sup>32</sup> A highly unlikely reason why the implied author writes to Theophilus is that it is from the concern for the spiritual well-being of Theophilus (Hendrikson, 1978:15). This is an anachronistic analysis derived from an introspective thinking in a contemporary world. Malina's study of the Mediterranean people shows that the first-century Palestinians were a collective people, whose social actions and discourses were motivated by the interests of their collective group.

the Messiah, who rescues G\*d's people from the hands of their enemies, the *Magnificat* is a song that celebrates G\*d's saving of Israel in accordance with the promise made to Abraham. Like other Jewish hymns that praise Yahweh for the divine deliverance, expressing the joy and relief (Gunkel, 1967:2), the *Magnificat* expresses extreme joy and gladness.

Furthermore, the *gattungen* closely adheres to hymns of Jewish women's praise: Miriam (Exodus 1:2-21), Deborah (Judges 5:1-31), Hannah (1 Samuel 2:1-10), and Judith (Judith 16:1-7). It particularly resembles Hannah's song of praise in 2 Samuel 2:1-10 (Johnson, 2006:263-265) and Jewish hymns of thanksgiving in the Old Testament (Exodus 15:21; Psalm 105:1; Psalm 33:1; Zephaniah 3:14; Zechariah 2:10;9:9; Psalm 47:1; 66:1; 100:1; 98:4;103:3-4).<sup>33</sup> Although the text does not follow a strict rule of classifying a Jewish hymn of praise, the general structure adheres to it.<sup>34</sup> The introduction of the *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-55) contains a praise of G\*d (v.46a-47), followed by a body of motives in two strophes, describing G\*d's attributes and deeds in strophe one (vv.48-50) and two (vv.51-53) and a concluding section with G\*d's blessing and promise to Abraham (vv.54-55) (Brown, 1993:356).

#### Introduction

<sup>46</sup> Καὶ εἶπεν Μαριάμ· Μεγαλύνει ἡ ψυχὴ μου τὸν κύριον,

<sup>47</sup> καὶ ἠγαλλίασεν τὸ πνεῦμά μου ἐπὶ τῷ θεῷ τῷ σωτήρῳ μου,

#### Strophe One

<sup>48a</sup> ὅτι ἐπέβλεψεν ἐπὶ τὴν ταπείνωσιν τῆς δούλης αὐτοῦ.

<sup>48b</sup> Ἰδοὺ γὰρ ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν μακαριοῦσίν με πᾶσαι αἱ γενεαί,

<sup>49a</sup> ὅτι ἐποίησέν μοι μεγάλα ὁ δυνατός.

<sup>49b</sup> καὶ ἅγιον τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ,

<sup>50</sup> καὶ τὸ ἔλεος αὐτοῦ εἰς γενεὰς καὶ γενεὰς τοῖς φοβουμένοις αὐτόν.

#### Strophe Two

<sup>51a</sup> Ἐποίησεν κράτος ἐν βραχίονι αὐτοῦ,

<sup>33</sup> H.J. Jansen's study of Jewish psalms shows that the classical types of psalms had dissolved and were mixed during this period.

<sup>34</sup> In the Psalter, the hymns of praise are found in Psalms 8, 19, 29, 33, 100, 103, 104, 111, 113, 114, 117, 135, 136, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, and 150.

<sup>51b</sup> διεσκόρπισεν ὑπερηφάνους διανοία καρδίας αὐτῶν·

<sup>52a</sup> καθείλεν δυνάστας ἀπὸ θρόνων

<sup>52b</sup> καὶ ὕψωσεν ταπεινοὺς,

<sup>53a</sup> πεινῶντας ἐνέπλησεν ἀγαθῶν

<sup>53b</sup> καὶ πλουτοῦντας ἐξαπέστειλεν κενούς.

### *Conclusion*

<sup>54</sup> ἀντελάβετο Ἰσραὴλ παιδὸς αὐτοῦ, μνησθῆναι ἐλέους,

<sup>55a</sup> αθῶς ἐλάλησεν πρὸς τοὺς πατέρας ἡμῶν,

<sup>55b</sup> τῷ Ἀβραάμ καὶ τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα (Luke 1.46-55 NA27).

It is even suggestive that the implied author merely slotted in an existing Jewish text with some modification. The verbs describe military actions and parallel the verbs used in the Maccabees hymns of victory in the Qumran War Scroll (show strength, scatter, pull down, lift up, and send away), which were sung during the period of political resistance against the Romans (Johnson, 2006:268). The non-specific character of the text and the martial tone used in songs of victory in the Maccabean wars contribute to this argument. Gunkel argues that the text conforms to late Jewish poetry and it could not have been composed by Luke who is a Gentile (Farris 1985:16). However, the decisive evidence that the implied author of Luke-Acts did write the *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-55) is a cluster of three expressions in verse 48, ἰδοὺ γὰρ, ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν,... γενεαί, all grouped together in one verse (Farris, 1985:25). In addition, Harnack's deductive study reveals that there are 14 Lucan words and phrases in the text and strongly suggests that the implied author did write it (Farris 1985:25):

1. Μεγαλύνει (v.46) appears 3x in Acts, 2x in Luke and 1x in Matthew (23:58).

In the LXX, it appears 1x in Psalm (69:21) and 3x in parallel with ἀγαλλιάω (Psalm 35:27; 40:16; 70:4).

2. ἠγαλλίασεν (v.47) appears 1x in Psalm 34:9 and 1x in Habakkuk 3:18.

3. σωτηρί (v.47) appears 1x in Habakkuk 3:18.

4. ἐπέβλεψεν ἐπι (v.48) appears 1x in Luke 9:38, James 2:3 and 1 Samuel 1:11.

5. ἰδοὺ γὰρ (v.48b) appears 6x in Luke-Acts.

6. ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν (v.48b) 6x in Luke-Acts.

7. γενεαί (v.48b).
8. μεγάλη (v.49a) appears in Acts 2:11 and Deuteronomy 10:20.
9. δυνατός (v.49a) appears in Luke 24:19 and Zephaniah 3:17.
10. κράτος (v.51) appears 1x in Acts 19:20.
11. διανοία καρδίας (v.51).
12. καθέλειν (v.52a) appears 5x in Luke-Acts and 3x times elsewhere in the New Testament.
13. ἐξαπέστειλεν κενούς (v.53) appears 10x in Luke and 1x elsewhere the in New Testament.
14. ἐλάλησεν πρὸς (v.55) appears 15x in Luke-Acts.

Furthermore, the *Magnificat* closely follows after Hannah's song of praise in 1 Samuel 2:1-10. According to Justo L. Gonzalez, the *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-55) is a typology which foreshadows the Christ event.<sup>35</sup> Just as the Christ event was foreshadowed in the Old Testament through children (Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Samson, Samuel) who were born of women who could not initially conceive before G\*d's intervention, he argues the *Magnificat* also foreshadows G\*d's salvific act in the Christ event. (Gonzalez, 2010:25). In this sense, he claims there are, "parallelisms between Hannah and Mary, and particularly between Samuel and Jesus", and Luke present Samuel as one of many "types" pointing to Jesus. Gonzalez argues that this is a recurring theme in the Old Testament (Gonzalez, 2010:25). Refer to Appendix 1 to see the similarities between Hannah's praise (1 Samuel 2:1-10) and the *Magnificat*.

### 3.3.5 Mary's Individual Praise

<sup>46α</sup> Καὶ εἶπεν Μαριάμ·

<sup>46β</sup> Μεγαλύνει ἡ ψυχὴ μου τὸν κύριον,

<sup>47</sup> καὶ ἠγαλλίασεν τὸ πνεῦμά μου ἐπὶ τῷ θεῷ τῷ σωτηρὶ μου,

Even the individual aspect of the *Magnificat* suggests that it is at first addressed to the Jews. Not only is the song sung by a Jewish woman who praises G\*d for saving

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<sup>35</sup> Regarding the function of a typology, Justin Martyr argues, "Sometimes, by action of the Holy Spirit, something took place that was clearly a type of the future. But at other times the Spirit spoke in words about what was to happen, as if it were present or past" (translated by Gonzalez, 2010:24).

her people, Mary becomes a symbolic figure that represents the rest of the suffering Jews in their hope for liberation and justice. The use of an individual praise in the first person singular of “my soul” (v.46b) and “my spirit” (v.47) is a rhetorical strategy to highlight the existential situation in which the Lucan community encounters G\*d’s salvation. This individual aspect is not found in any other hymn in the Lucan birth narrative. Both the *Benedictus* and *Nunc Dimittis* are communal praises (Brown, 1993:357).

To the Jewish audience, Mary is a reflection of themselves who are being exploited and persecuted by the Roman and Jewish authorities. Jews who are daily reminded of their utter defeat. The *Judea Capta* coin engraves the figure of a Jewish woman in shackles, sitting and mourning under a Roman soldier (Figure 3.1), which illustrates the Roman victory over Jews and the capturing of Jerusalem after the four year war of 66-70 C.E. (Schottroff, 1995:190-191). However, now the singing figure of Mary, which can be clearly vivified in their minds, becomes a symbolic figure that contests Roman propaganda. The divine favour upon Mary in the birth event reminds the suffering Jews of their Deutero-Isaiah G\*d. No longer are they to remain defeated by their enemies, but their prayers have been heard and their hope revealed, and they can now sing a joyful song again. Their spirit, which was once destroyed by the Romans has been restored in the birth event, and the *Magnificat* reveals a moment of celebration for all G\*d’s people. Furthermore, in an oral tradition, where most people are illiterate, a liberation song is a powerful means of counter-propaganda.



Figure 3.1

Another powerful association with Mary that the implied author brings into focus is the daughter of Zion. Mary metaphorically speaks of the Jewish hope of eschatological deliverance seen in the Zion tradition. In the book of Isaiah, Jews are referred to as the captive Jerusalem and the captive daughter of Zion (Isaiah 52:2). However, although Jerusalem and the temple had a close connection in Jewish thinking (Davies, 1974:153), the Zion tradition after A.D. 70 had become more of a language of eschatological hope and order with the notion of the “heavenly Jerusalem” as reflected in 4 Ezra (Davies, 1974:145):

Shake yourself from the dust, rise up, O captive Jerusalem; loose the bonds from your neck, O captive daughter Zion! (Isaiah 52:2 NRSV).

For behold the days come, and it shall be when  
The signs which I have foretold  
unto thee shall come to pass,  
[Then shall the city that now is invisible  
appear, and the land which is now concealed  
be seen;]... (4 Ezra 7:26; in Davies, 1974:145-146).

The implicit association with the daughter of Zion reminds the Jews of their identity as G\*d's children, which gives reassurance of G\*d's continuous, loving care and protection. It reminds them of Deutero-Isaiah G\*d who has not failed to come to their rescue. Juliana M. Claassens argues that the significance of referring to G\*d's people as the daughter of Zion does not only imply restoration, but a knowing of G\*d's continuous care, comfort and nurturing. In Isaiah 66:10-13, God is compared to a mother in her intimate moment of breast-feeding her child. In Lamentation 1:1-3, Zion mourns for losing her children, but in Isaiah 54:5-8, she celebrates as a daughter of G\*d, as nations bring gifts to her (Claassens, 2012:45).<sup>36</sup>

Only this time that deliverance is done through Jesus in the Christ event, where there will be a cosmic salvation. The aorist verb ἠγαλλίασεν in verse 47 expresses the joy of G\*d's people being delivered from captivity and oppression through the Christ

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<sup>36</sup> G\*d's constant care and protection of G\*d's children are further illustrated in Exodus 15:22-25; 17:1-7; Numbers 20:2-13; Deuteronomy 8:15; Isaiah 43:20; 35:7 and Isaiah 49:9-10 (Claassens, 2012:52).

event. The meaning of ἠγαλλίασεν (v.47) is not a simple joy but an extreme, ecstatic joy. This joy is different from the aorist passive of joy (ὕψωθη) in Hannah's praise (1 Samuel 2:1), which means Hannah cheered up because she was delivered from her long distress of being barren. In addition, the aorist tense of the verb shows a prophetic characteristic and points to the Christ event as being the cause of this joy.

### 3.3.6 The ἀφέσει of the Poor

<sup>48a</sup> ὅτι ἐπέβλεψεν ἐπὶ τὴν ταπείνωσιν τῆς δούλης αὐτοῦ.

From verse 48, the implied author uses the concept of ἀφέσει of the poor to bring together both Jewish and Greek audience for reconciliation. On the one hand, the concept of ἀφέσει of the poor redirects Theophilus' attention from participating in evangelism to an apologetic activity of helping to relieve some of the oppression and poverty amongst the poor Jews. On the other hand, the continuous use of the Jewish literary tradition and the idea of Jewish liberation suggest that this is a renewal movement to envision a wider community within the Jewish tradition. Hence, a transforming vision of the Lucan community includes reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles through the ἀφέσει of the poor.

The ἀφέσει of the poor is a central concept in Lucan evangelism.<sup>37</sup> In the context of Luke's wider narrative, Jesus declares his mission to the poor in his first public hearing. After he was tempted by the devil in the desert for forty days, he was again filled with the power of the Spirit and was lead to return back to Galilee, where he taught in the synagogues. When he gets to Nazareth, he goes into a synagogue and in accordance with his Jewish custom, he stands up and reads the scroll of the prophet Isaiah (Luke 4:18) and says it is fulfilled in their hearing (v. 21).

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, (Luke 4:18 NRSV).

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<sup>37</sup> The word, poor (πτωχός) appears x34 in the New Testament and x10 in Luke's gospel (Bosch, 1993:35-36).

Furthermore, unlike Matthew's beatitude that refers to the spiritually poor (Matthew 5:3-6), Luke's beatitude makes an explicit reference to the physically poor (Luke 6:20-21; Casidy, 1978:23).

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled  
(Matthew 5:3-6 NRSV).

Then he looked up at his disciples and said:

Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled.

Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh (Luke 6:20-21 NRSV).

Therefore, considering the semantic domain of poverty in Luke-Acts and the low status-honour connected to poverty in the Mediterranean culture, the meaning of the word τὴν ταπείνωσιν (v.48) is the socio-economically disadvantaged state of Mary and her people (Green, 1997:101). A parallel meaning of τὴν ταπείνωσιν is also found in Acts 8:33 (τῆ ταπεινώσει), where the term extends to a socially and politically oppressed state (Marshall, 1978:82). Therefore, the aorist verb ἐπέβλεψεν (v.48) refers to G\*d's deliverance and loving care of Mary and her people in a socio-economically deprived state.

The expression τὴν ταπείνωσιν does not refer to a woman's barrenness as seen in Hannah's (1 Samuel 1:11), which rules out any patriarchal interpretations of associating a woman's status with an ability to bear children. Steven Farris implies that Mary's ability to bear a child makes her a good mother and compares her to Hannah and Leah. Based on the allusion of verse 48a to Hannah's praise, "ἐπιβλέπων ἐπιβλέψης ἐπὶ τὴν ταπείνωσιν τῆς δούλης σου," in 1 Samuel 1:11 and Leah's words, "καὶ εἶπεν Λεὶα μακαρία ἐγὼ ὅτι μακαρίζουσίν με αἱ γυναῖκες" in Genesis 30:13 (Farris, 1985:24), he draws a close connection between the three ideal mothers whose ability to bear children makes them good mothers. A feminist interpretation of these

connections looks somewhat different. Elizabeth A. Johnson explains that both Mary and Hannah are similar because they are faithful women who praise G\*d for G\*d's grace and mercy, as the writers of the Psalmist's songs of deliverance illustrates (Psalm 35:9; Isaiah 25:9; Psalm 66:1) (Johnson, 2006:263-265).

The rhetorical function of “ὅτι ἐπέβλεψεν ἐπὶ τὴν ταπείνωσιν τῆς δούλης αὐτοῦ” in the ancient Mediterranean Palestine culture has a practical implication. It is not, τὴν ταπείνωσιν, in the isolated form, that is significant, but the implication of the whole clause. Such a statement has tremendous authority and implies a status change for Mary and her people. Since honour can be ascribed by G\*d (Neyrey, 1991:28), Mary gains honour because G\*d attended to her situation. To think that G\*d, who is a supreme being, the highest authority over all creation, attended to Mary in her poverty and oppression shows that she is precious in the sight of G\*d, and this sanctions a new social status for her and her people. The implication of this is that the Lucan evangelical mission extends beyond merely delivering the good news to the poor, but it means a practical helping hand that would place the poor in their rightful place of care and love, as honoured by G\*d through social, economic and political means.

In addition, a structural inconsistency in the *Magnificat* shows the implied author's deliberate attempt to highlight G\*d's deliverance of the poor through highlighting Mary's low status. Strophe one of this prophetic, Jewish hymn begins in verse 48. It generally describes G\*d's attributes of being mighty (v. 49a), holy (v. 49b), merciful (v. 50), and G\*d's deeds. However, a structural inconsistency occurs in verses 48 and 49 when it abruptly speaks of G\*d's deed for Mary. By doing so, the implied author dramatically elevates Mary. The implied author refers to her as the blessed one through generations in verse 48b. Moreover, verses 48 and 49 stand out from the rest of the verses that use poetic parallelism: 46b/47, 51a/51b, 52a/52b, 53a/53b, 55a/55b. A separate parallelism is found in the corresponding verses of 48a and 49a and they both begin with ὅτι, revealing the deeds of God for Mary. There is another parallelism in 49b and 50. Raymond E. Brown argues that both 48a and 48b are Lucan insertions (Brown, 1993:356). Adolf van Harnack argues that a cluster of three

expressions, ἰδοὺ γὰρ ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν ... γενεαι, all in one verse, shows a strong Lucan trait (Farris, 1985:24).

### 3.3.7 Discipleship

The implied author of Luke's gospel uses the concept of discipleship with a socio-economic focus. This is a rhetorical strategy to persuade followers of Jesus to participate in the apologetic activity of helping the poor. The Lucan notion of discipleship keeps in focus the social and economic implications of becoming a disciple of Jesus. It sometimes means a renouncement (ἀποτάσσειται) of everything that one owns (Luke 14:33) and this includes all desires of social status and power, even a commitment to one's own family (v.26). Compared to Luke's version of a disciple, Matthew emphasizes more on the works (ἔργα) (Matthew 5:16) and Mark emphasizes more on being at peace with others (εἰρηνεύετε ἐν ἀλλήλοις) (Mark 9:50).

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To the poor Jews, τῆς δούλης αὐτοῦ (v. 48) signifies a suffering disciple connected to the Deutero-Isaiah Jewish tradition, where a female imagery is used to refer to a servant of G\*d's justice (Isaiah 42:1-7; 49:1-6). Here, the Deutero-Isaiah receives a special favour and a mission to deliver G\*d's justice (42:1, 4), to shine the light to the nations (v. 6), to open the eyes of the blind and to set the captives free (v.7). However, it acknowledges that her mission is not without burdens and compares a suffering servant to a bruised reed and a dimly burning wick (v.3), though G\*d will be there to give her strength throughout her journey (Isaiah 49:1-6; Claassens, 2012:57). Evidently, Mary is a disciple of G\*d, precisely, because she is given a voice to reveal G\*d's will and mission, which parallels the Jesus' mission to proclaim the gospel to the poor (Luke 4:18). It is G\*d's divine appointment (Gaventa, 1999:54) that Mary claims the honourable title of τῆς δούλης αὐτοῦ (v. 48). The *Magnificat* expresses her own conviction of obeying G\*d's will as a disciple. It is her self-interpretation that verifies her faith and total dependence on G\*d.

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<sup>38</sup> In the New Testament, a disciple is metaphorically compared to salt, and the role of a disciple is compared to the saltiness of salt in Luke 14:25-35, Matthew 5:13-16 and Mark 9:50. However in Matthew's gospel (5:14-16), it is compared to light, in continuity with the Jewish tradition (Isaiah 42:6).

To a contemporary reader of the gospel, there is a sense of antagonism against the term “female slave” due to a history of slavery that gave witness to a system of cruelty and dehumanization against other human beings. Even in the ancient Mediterranean Palestine, the title, τῆς δούλης, was readily used to refer to slaves who were powerless to defend themselves from being forced to render services, and who were sold as commodities to barter for other economic goods. It was also used to refer to paid working peasants (Rohrbaugh, 1996:130). Therefore, the word slave denotes a person’s powerlessness in the face of humiliation and exploitation.

In a patriarchal society, there is a symbolic association of slaves and servants with femininity, subordination, inferiority, service and dependence (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1994:37).<sup>39</sup> Hence, Jacquelyn Grant, a contemporary black American scholar, prefers to use the word *disciple* to refer to a follower of Jesus. She is strongly against the use of the word *slave* and says it is a cruel joke amongst a privileged group of white people (Grant, 1989:196).<sup>40</sup> Grant claims that, even after the abolishment of the legal institution of slavery, it still functions in today’s society through social and racial inequalities between the whites and blacks, ultimately depicting the blacks as people who are there to serve the whites (Grant, 1989:196). She argues that one does not need to look further for structural violence when you see that the majority of domestic service workers are black women (Grant, 1999:127). Grant makes a valid point and this is a sensitive issue that must be considered in feminist theology.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Elizabeth A. Johnson shows that the image of Mary as a servant associates a woman’s virtue with obeying the authority of a male figure (Johnson, 2006:27).

<sup>40</sup> Jacquelyn Grant argues that feminist the\*logy is white and racist, because most feminist theologians are white and they speak from their own experience. She explains that black women’s experience is different from white women’s experience or the\*logy (Grant, 1989:195). She agrees with Joel Kovel’s definition of racism as the “tendency of a society to degrade and do violence to people on the basis of race, and by whatever mediations may exist for this purpose (in Grant, 1989:199).” Grant views feminist the\*logy as oppressive, because it defines rules and expects others to follow those rules (Grant, 1989:200).

<sup>41</sup> To add to her argument, it is necessary to widen the definition of slavery as any form of service requested through coercion, threat, manipulation and exploitation. According to Merriam Webster’s dictionary, a slave is “a person held in servitude as the chattel of another, and refers to one that is completely subservient to a dominating influence.” Hence, slavery must include other terrible experiences in history, such as white, European slavery in Spain in the early Middle Ages (Glick, 1979:132).

Thus it seems fair to construct a feminist language of referring to τῆς δούλης αὐτοῦ (v. 48) as G\*d's disciple. According to Schüssler Fiorenza, a disciple is a follower of a great leader and stands at equal dignity with other men or women followers regardless of difference in sex, gender, race or ethnicity (Schüssler Fiorenza, 2011:197). She argues that a discipleship of equals is “a critical lens and frame of reference” for understanding what discipleship of Jesus entails.<sup>42</sup> Although Schüssler Fiorenza's description of discipleship of equals emphasizes the egalitarian vision, it is necessary to stress that Mary is a disciple, specifically of Jesus. Furthermore, Allen Verhey describes a disciple of Jesus as a person who follows after Jesus in his works, and studies him against the “egotistical calculations and comfortable old securities” (Luke 14:26-33; Verhey, 1986:27).

Furthermore, a disciple of Jesus in the ἐκκλησία of wo/men experience G\*d's transcendent power, which unbinds the oppressive powers of this world. Such power is an experienced in G\*d's humbling of G\*dself and G\*d's self-giving act in the Christ event. Through this power, a new ἐκκλησία of wo/men is born among G\*d's disciples. A commitment to the new ἐκκλησία of wo/men requires all followers of Jesus Christ to humble themselves “to serve Jesus in the reign of G\*d.” In the ἐκκλησία of wo/men, where G\*d's justice reigns, there is rebuking of the rich who use unjust measures to grow in riches (Luke 12:16-21; 16:19-31), condemning of usury (Luke 6:34,35), remittance of debts (Luke 6:37; Matthew:18:23-34) and relief of poverty (Mark 14:3-7). Furthermore, there is repentance of cities (Matthew 11:20-24), generations (Matthew 12:38-42) and nations (Matthew 25:32), as well as individuals (Verhey, 1986:32).

### 3.3.8 A Communal Song

<sup>52b</sup> καὶ ὑψώσεν ταπεινοὺς,

<sup>53a</sup> πεινῶντας ἐνέπλησεν ἀγαθῶν

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<sup>42</sup> See Schüssler Fiorenza's book, *Discipleship of Equals: A Critical Feminist Ekklesia-logy of Liberation* (1993).

Up to this point, the concern for the community of suffering Jews in poverty were implicitly shown through Mary's low status. From verse 52b, the concern for the community is explicitly shown through the communal terminology  $\tau\alpha\pi\epsilon\lambda\upsilon\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  (v.52b). Without an extensive explanation, the seriousness of poverty and persecution amongst the Jews is well understood by both the Jewish and the Hellenistic audience. The word  $\tau\alpha\pi\epsilon\lambda\upsilon\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  (v.52b) refers to the socio-economic condition of the Jewish community which was caused by religious and political struggles. The social destitute of this time was the result of the exploitative system of advanced agrarian society. About 5-10% of the mostly Roman elites living in cities of antiquity controlled and exploited the rest of the non-elite groups. People in the non-elite groups made up of about 90% of the population and they lived in rural cities (Robrbaugh, 1996:111). The elite group controlled the economic and political scenes and they extracted from the non-elite groups large taxes using social and religious institutions (Neyrey, 1993:133). Cities and villages were assigned social, political, and religious functions. Robrbaugh's diagram in Figure 3.2 below illustrates the means of control through segregation of the different groups within this social setting. The elites associated with the non-elites only when necessary; in cases of extracting resources or services for favours as in a patron-client relationship (Neyrey, 1993:135).

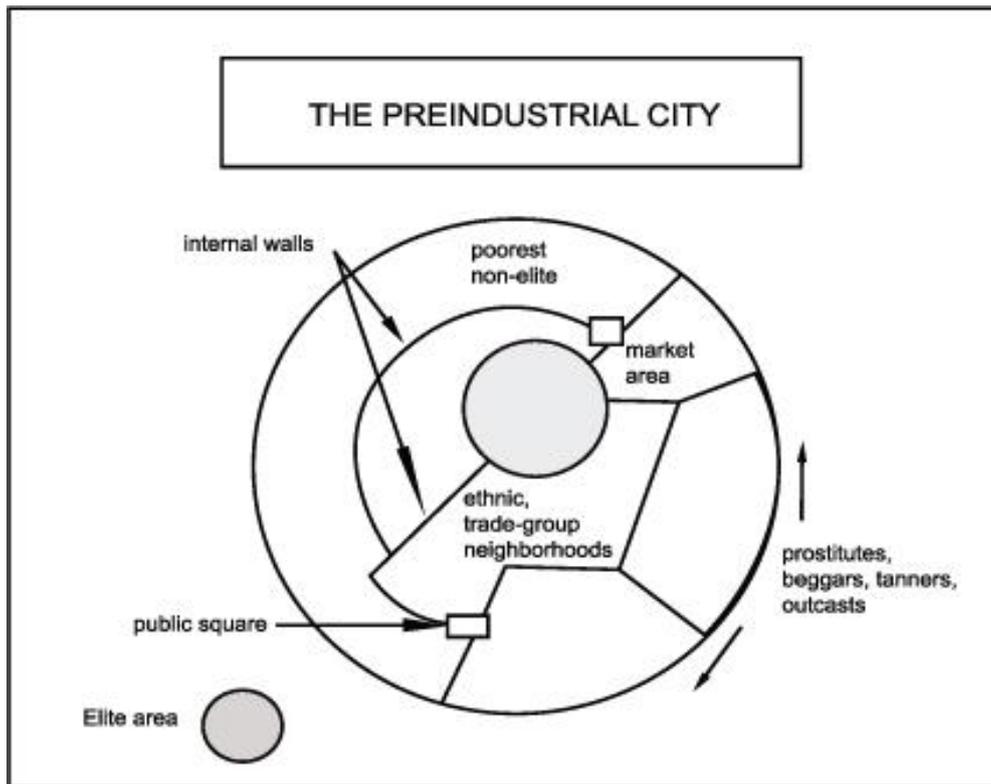


Figure 3.2

The religious wars of 66-70 C.E. created extreme poverty amongst the Jews, especially in Jerusalem. Schottroff's reading of Josephus highlights the cruel reality of the war. She notes that in Josephus, there is a record of one thousand Roman soldiers, who attacked the Jews in the town of Gishala. The Jews led by a commander named John, a son of Levi, came to utter defeat and ordered the men to abandon the women and children whilst fleeing from their enemies, leaving them to die at the hands of the enemy. The text describes it as "a miserable destruction made of the women and children (in Schottroff, 1995:163).

... famine was too hard for all other passions, and it is destructive to nothing so much as to modesty; for what was otherwise worthy of reverence, was in this case despised; insomuch that children pulled the very morsels that their fathers were eating, out of their very mouths, and what was still more to be pitied, so did the mothers do as to their infants (in Schottroff, 1995:164).

The severe famine at that time was not only caused by the devastation of war,

but starvation was a deliberate means of wiping out the Jews from Jerusalem.<sup>43</sup> Josephus clearly illustrates the cruelty against the elderly, women and children. During the war, even their own fellow Jewish men came to plunder their houses and interrogated them for food, stripping them off their basic needs to survive. Roman and Jewish soldiers daily ransacked houses for food. In such extreme poverty, men and women were known to kill their own children and commit cannibalism. Josephus contains the story of one Mary, the daughter of Elezar, who killed her own child for food. She then roasted and served the child to the Roman soldiers. The incident is quoted by Schottroff (1995:165) thus: "Come on; be thou my food, and be thou a fury to these seditious varlets and a byword to the world, which is all that is now wanting to complete the calamities of us Jews (6.3.4)".

<sup>53b</sup> καὶ πλουτοῦντας ἐξαπέστειλεν κενούς.

The πλουτοῦντας (v.53b) refers to the persecutors, exploiters, the oppressors and the winners of the imperial Roman system. A good example is a group of wealthy farm owners who exploit the poor even in a time of famine. In order to maximize their profit, they raise the price of the grain and minimize the wage of farm workers. Schottroff (1995:164) notes that this adds to the harshness of life for the poor who are now even more unable to afford their daily staple as recorded in Revelation:

When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature call out, "Come!" I looked, and there was a black horse! Its rider held a pair of scales in his hand, and I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a day's pay, and three quarts of barley for a day's pay, but do not damage the olive oil and the wine!" (Revelation 6:5-6 NRSV).

### 3.3.9 Eschatological Reversal Theme

<sup>51a</sup> Ἐποίησεν κράτος ἐν βραχίονι αὐτοῦ,

<sup>51b</sup> διεσκόρπισεν ὑπερηφάνους διανοία καρδίας αὐτῶν·

<sup>52a</sup> καθεῖλεν δυνάστας ἀπὸ θρόνων

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<sup>43</sup> The close connection between land and temple is particularly important to note in terms of how the Jews formed their identity. Jerusalem was symbolically significant for reminding the Jews of their covenant with Yahweh and reminds them of the covenant regarding the Promised Land.

52b καὶ ὑψώσεν ταπεινούς,

53a πεινῶντας ἐνέπλησεν ἀγαθῶν

53b καὶ πλουτοῦντας ἐξαπέστειλεν κενούς.

The theme of the rich and the poor, in strophe two, keeps in focus the socio-economic aspect of the text and the use of the eschatological reversal theme effectively builds up a dramatic tone to convince the rich to help the poor in consideration of the eschatological judgement that is to come. Not only that, it expresses G\*d's great power to deliver the poor and encourages them to have an eschatological hope of G\*d's final deliverance. The use of a chiasmic structure to confirm the relationship between 52a and 53b and 53a and 52b (Figure 3.3) and the use of action verbs in short phrases, repeatedly, one after the other creates this dramatic effect (Green, 1997:99).<sup>44</sup>

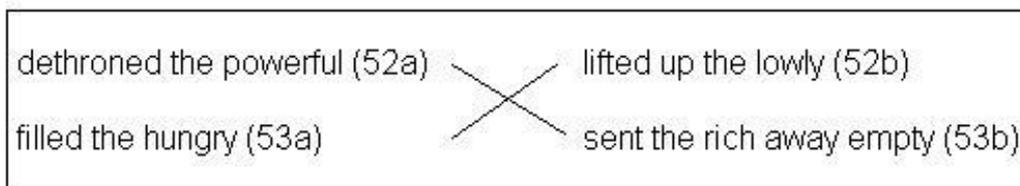


Figure 3.3

The implied author even goes onto reprimand the rich in other parts of Luke's gospel (Luke 1:51-53; 6:24-26; 12:19-20; 16:25; 21:1-4). However, the intention of the author should not be mistaken as hatred towards the rich because in the second book of Acts, the implied author continues on this note by pointing out that there was redistribution of goods amongst the Jesus believers (Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-35; 5:1-2.),

<sup>44</sup> Joel Green goes on to argue against the subverting of the world order and says, "This is not to obliterate the powerful so that the lowly can achieve the positions of honour and privilege to which they previously had no access. Rather, God is at work in individual lives (like Mary) and in the social order as a whole in order to subvert the very structure of society that supports and perpetuates such distinctions (Green, 1997:105)." He is strongly against the idea that Mary's Song is a revolutionary call to human action and argues that G\*d's salvific act is against all those who take matter into their own hands (Green, 1997:100). I disagree with this and understand the *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-55) to be a revolutionary call and an invitation to all people (the rich and the poor) to help relieve poverty and oppression by equalizing the inequalities embedded in society and changing structural systems that disadvantage the poor.

implying that one can do something about poverty.<sup>45</sup> Acts 4:34 records that, “There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold” (NRSV).

Although the *Magnificat* is well-known for its prophetic character, there is a more direct social implication. It does not rest on the explanation that it is a proclamation of the kingdom of G\*d as Conzealmann (1982:122) suggests. Having regard for the poor is not a spiritualized notion. It prompts a physical help for the poor. This concern is in continuity with the Jewish tradition (Psalms 107:9, 22:26, 104:28, 34:10, Jeremiah 31:14, 1 Samuel 2:5). The expression, “... sent the rich away empty” (v.53b, echoes the concern in Genesis 31:42, Deuteronomy 15:13, 1 Samuel 6:3 and Job 22: 9 (Nolland, 1989:72).

Allen Verhey provides an excellent explanation of the eschatological reversal theme with a story in Luke 16:19-31. He argues that the reversal theme was important for the moral teaching of the Lucan audience (Verhey, 1974:94). The story of the rich man and Lazarus centres on a rich man who neglects the poor Nazarus who lies at his gate, dying in pain (v.20). When the rich man dies, he finds himself suffering in hell and sees Nazarus in heaven, next to Abraham. The rich man then requests two things. He asks Abraham to tell Nazarus to go and dip his finger in cold water and cool him and then go and warn his five brothers so they would not end up in hell. Abraham replies, “If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.”

### 3.3.10 Authority in Antiquity

<sup>54</sup> ἀντελάβετο Ἰσραὴλ παιδὸς αὐτοῦ, μνησθῆναι ἐλέους,

<sup>55α</sup> αθῶς ἐλάλησεν πρὸς τοὺς πατέρας ἡμῶν,

<sup>55β</sup> τῷ Ἀβραάμ καὶ τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.

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<sup>45</sup> Since, the implied recipient, Theophilus is believed to belong to a group of rich people, Brigitte Kahl questions the idea that Theophilus is an insider because of the harsh tone towards the rich in the second strophe (in Levine & Blickenstaff, 2002:74-75).

Mary's song of liberation ends with a promise made to Abraham (v.55), her father of faith. This establishes authority in antiquity, in which the Jewish audience are given assurance that Mary words are from a reliable source. It is not a single commandment handed down by the Jewish ancestors that give authority to the words, but the law that functions as a *character indelebilis* of Israel and the verification of their identity (Jervell, 1972:141).<sup>46</sup> G\*d's remembrance of the covenant with Abraham is an important theme in Exodus (2:24; 32:13; Deuteronomy 9:27; and Psalm 105:8-11, 42; Nolland, 1987:73).

### 3.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the *Magnificat* is an example of Lucan *genealogy*. At first, the wider narrative of Luke-Acts is an *avant-garde* against other religious beliefs and practices,<sup>47</sup> though it is not limited to merely defending the position of the Lucan faith community. Second, it expresses the Lucan concern for the poor and the marginalized and attempts to influence both Jewish and Hellenistic audience to participate in Lucan evangelism and apologetic activities. Hence, instead of P.W. Walaskay's term, *apology* (Esler, 1987:205), the term, *religious propaganda* is the most appropriate term for describing the purpose of the text. The purpose of the text is not to simply pass on historical information, but to tactically use this knowledge for Lucan evangelism and apologetic activity in a time of famine and persecution.

Our *prophetic-critical* reading illustrates various rhetorical functions of the *Magnificat*. It sings of Jewish liberation and G\*d's caring of the poor. It implies that anyone who believes in Jesus and the cosmic salvation through the Christ event should respond by helping the poor. Using diplomatic skills of addressing the letter to a person, who is probably a Greek benefactor and directing implied recipient's attention to the needs of the poor, who are most likely to be Jews, the implied author demonstrates an attempt to bring the two opposing parties together for the greater cause of evangelism, which includes helping the poor. Other rhetorical strategies include:

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<sup>46</sup> This leads to Jacob Jervell argument that G\*d's promise to Abraham was first relevant to the Jews and then the Gentiles (Luke 1.68-75; Acts 3.25; 7.1, 8; Jervell, 1972:141).

<sup>47</sup> I have borrowed the term, *avant-garde*, from Foucault's expression, *theoretical avant-garde*, which he uses to explain a historical knowledge that remains the most acceptable one in a community, over against other accounts (Foucault, 1980:83).

egalitarian values in the evkkhlsa of wo/men, kerygma as a concrete element, counter-propaganda to Roman propaganda, association of discipleship with socio-economic responsibility of helping the poor, eschatological judgement and authority in antiquity.

## Chapter 4

### A Transforming Vision of ἀφελος in the Time of HIV/AIDS

Where a biblical text enters a new domain of dynamic knowledge production, a *prophetic-critical* reading analyzes the socio-political context using intersectionality, keeping a balance between an insider's perspective and a wider, social perspective.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, it uses Schüssler Fiorenza's seven hermeneutical strategies namely women's experience, analytics of domination, hermeneutics of suspicion, critical evaluation, imagination, memory, and reconstruction to interpret the *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-55) in the context of HIV/AIDS. Rather than giving a solution to the problem, our *prophetic-critical* transports various rhetorical strategies employed in the *Magnificat* to advance a discussion on the problem of HIV/AIDS and invite the faith community stand in solidarity with those in suffering. The entire chapter is presented as a letter addressed to a possible present-day, benefactor, Queen Elizabeth II. However, this is not an attempt to point our solution to an outsider, but it is to highlight the seriousness of the matter. Hence, this letter wishes to persuade not only the queen, but a wider audience of listeners to form a transforming vision of ἀφελος in the time of HIV/AIDS.

#### 4.1 A Letter to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

Your Majesty Queen Elizabeth, my fellow disciple of Jesus, when I thought of an influential, powerful, Christian woman of the twenty-first century, to whom I could address this letter, I thought of you. Although far and distant you seem, your presence has been known to me all along. Growing up in New Zealand from the age of ten, I recall seeing an emblem (Figure 4.1 below) on the front cover of my school notebook with your figure, standing alongside a Maori Chief. I became familiar with your presence as I coloured your white dress with my crayons. It was not your political status or the name of royalty that intrigued a little girl back then, but it was

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<sup>48</sup> The term genealogy, taken from Foucault's definition is used to refer to the synergy effect that occurs when a text meets a new set of systems of knowledge production in a society. According to Foucault (1980:83), it is "the union of erudite knowledge and local memories which allows us to establish a historical knowledge of struggles and to make use of this knowledge tactically today".

the figure of a beautiful, brave woman standing tall next to a Maori chief that bedazzled a little girl's imagination.



Figure 4.1

Now as a mature woman in my thirties, I have come to know and experience the complexities of politics and religion and realize that you are a political figure of the British colonization and Empire that parallels the Roman male figure on the *Judea Capta* coin. Although camouflaged by the equal standing and the locked-in gaze at each another, the centre piece of a British crown and the English script of New Zealand cause the same effect as the *Judea Capta* coin. Hence, it puzzles me to find an appropriate term to address you, but with a tint of imagination and wit, I have settled on calling you my brave and mighty fellow disciple of Jesus, a lover of peace and justice and a friend of Miriam our fellow disciple of Jesus. Therefore I write to you, also as a friend of Mary/Miriam.

## 4.2 A New Image of Mary in the Context of HIV/AIDS

Your Majesty, the Bible has been misused in the hands of men and women for many years. Hence, in seeking an insoluble biblical truth, I propose a rereading of the *Magnificat* from the feminist perspective in the context of HIV/AIDS. A renowned, German, biblical scholar, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza argues that an ethical reading must consider both hermeneutical and theoretical-pastoral paradigm. First of

all, let us deconstruct an unrealistic image of Mary as fairy-tale like, innocent, docile, white virgin mother and construct a more realistic image of her in the context of HIV/AIDS. Let us imagine Mary as a poor, South African, black woman with HIV/AIDS.

Using this new image of Mary, let me provide a feminist analogous reading of the *Magnificat* to assist you with. This will give us an external reading assistance to gain marginalized perspective on the text. A scriptural illustration is shown below to show a replacement of the pronoun *he* with Jesus is to prevent men from misinterpreting it to refer to men in general. There are two analogous readings below; one in English and one in Xhosa.<sup>49</sup> The English text is a modification of the New Revised Standard Version but the Xhosa text is from the 1962 Xhosa Bible, which was printed in Great Britain, during the early period of your reign, Your Majesty. I have underlined the parts, in which changes were made for your convenience.

Both readings situate Mary's praise in a context of HIV/AIDS and analogously present the text as Themba's praise. Just as Mary represented the Jews who gained hope of liberation in the midst of famine and persecution, Themba represents the victims of HIV/AIDS in South Africa who gains hope of finding a cure and dreams of escaping poverty. Themba was a poor South African black woman with HIV/AIDS, who committed suicide by drinking a large amount of bleach while she was pregnant, because she did not want to pass HIV/AIDS to her unborn child. Although it is ironic to use Themba's name for this analogous reading since she is no longer with us, her name was chosen for this reading to include a transcending hope of G\*d's justice.

And Themba said, "my soul magnifies the Lord,"

and my spirit rejoices in G\*d my saviour,

For Jesus has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

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<sup>49</sup> There is such a rich, yet complex, multi-cultural and multi-lingual context in South Africa, and the Xhosa analogous reading of the *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-55) is to encourage a wider audience of this letter. In fact, twelve official languages are spoken in South Africa namely Afrikaans, English, Ndebele, Northern Sotho, Sotho, Swazi, Tswana, Tsonga, Venda, Xhosa and Zulu.

For the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is Jesus' name.

Jesus' mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.

Jesus has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

Jesus has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly;

Jesus has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.

Jesus helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy.

According to the promise he made to ancestors, to Abraham and Sarah's and to their descendants forever.<sup>50</sup>

(Luke 1:46-55 based on NRSV)

Wathi uThemba: Umphefumlo wam uyenza nkulu iNkosi,

Nomoya wam ugcobile ngoThixo uMsindisi wam;

Ngokuba wakukhangela ukuthobeka komkhonzazana wakhe;

Kuba, uYesu uyabona, ziya kuqala kwangoku ukuthi ndingonoyolo zonke izizukulwana;

Ngokuba wandenzela izinto ezinkulu uSoMandla; lingcwele igama lakhe.

Yaye inceba kaYesu ikwizizukulwana ngezizukulwana kwabo bamoyikayo uYesu.

UYesu wenze amandla ngengalo yakhe, wabachithachitha abanekratshi ekucingeni

kweentliziyo zabo.

Wabawisa abanamandla ezitroneni zabo, Wabaphakamisa abathobekileyo.

Wahluthisa abalambileyo ngezinto ezilungileyo; Wabandulula abazizityebi belambatha.

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<sup>50</sup> In order to direct a gender inclusive reading, I have taken Thembas as a spiritual offspring of Abraham and Sarah and referred to God speaking to her fathers and mothers.

Wasiza uSirayeli, umkhonzi wakhe, ngokukhumbula inceba kaYesu;

Njengoko wathethayo koobawo bethu, nakwimbewu kaAbraham noSarah  
ngonaphakade.

(Luke 1:46-55 based on the 1962 Xhosa translation)

### 4.3 HIV/AIDS, Sexuality and Sin

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) increased absenteeism due to HIV/AIDS is exacting an enormous toll in the workplace (Cape Times, October 11, 1999). The ILO estimates that 15% of our civil service is HIV+. The South African Teachers Union has conducted its own research. According to its statistics, ten teachers are dying a month. Soon we will have close to half a million AIDS orphans to care for, while the United Nations estimates that a possible forty million children worldwide will be orphans by 2010, largely due to AIDS. We are, in the words the General Secretary of the United Nations Kofi Annan, facing “a tragedy on a biblical scale” (Ackermann, 2008:108).

Your Majesty Queen Elizabeth, my fellow disciple of Jesus, the problem of HIV/AIDS in South Africa which has the highest prevalence of HIV/AIDS transmission in the world demands your immediate attention. From 1990 to 2009, the life expectancy of women dropped from 68 years of age to 55 (13%) (World Health Organization, Female Life Expectancy at Birth, 2009). The UNAIDS estimated that 310 000 deaths in 2009 were due to HIV/AIDS, while HIV/AIDS related symptoms such as diarrhoea, gastroenteritis infections, TB, herpes zoster all contribute to the deaths caused by HIV/AIDS (World Health Organization, Geneva, 2011:5). In 2005, it was estimated that 18 million children would be AIDS orphans. Three-quarters of people living with HIV/AIDS were found in Southern Africa which is the region with the fastest growing rate of transmission. Out of 17 million women living with HIV/AIDS globally, 13.1 million live in this region. Moreover, out of 2.1 million children (0-14 years) living with HIV/AIDS, 1.9 million live in this area. It is expected that 70% of the death of children less than 5 years of age is due to HIV/AIDS (Nian *et al* 2006:424). Amongst the affected women, the 15-24 age group is 8 times more likely to have HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS Fact Sheet, 2011).

In South Africa, HIV/AIDS is a bleak and obvious institutional failure. The disastrous rate of three deaths a week from HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) amongst the youths below the age of 19 in the KwaZulu-Natal Province is evidential.<sup>51</sup> In an article in *Drum* magazine in 1997, KwaZulu-Natal was named *Death City* because of the alarming rate of death amongst those living with HIV/AIDS. The author of the article claims that the church, doctors, social workers and teachers have all failed. He says children have no authority or role model and they have a new attitude of arrogance and disrespect for elders:

“Almost 53 percent of youngsters under the age of 19 in Sundubili are HIV-positive,” says Dennis Bailey of the Planned Parenthood Association of South Africa. Other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are also running wild, with about 80 per cent of schoolchildren in standards six, seven and eight having some form of STD. Some of the badly affected young men’s penises are actually dropping off (Mitchell, *Drum* 1997:8).

First, it is helpful to problematize any religious assumptions about HIV/AIDS that solely rely on the explanation of promiscuity and sexual deviance. Stereotyping a racial group as sexually promiscuous will certainly not improve the situation of HIV/AIDS. Such narrow assumptions can misguide researchers to search solely for factors that support certain stigmas and myths. Metaphors around HIV/AIDS such as punishment of homosexuality, promiscuity, sin and shame are destructive and dehumanizing. They can even drive others to eliminate a person with HIV/AIDS from the community, as was the case with Gugu Dlamini, who was stoned to death in her village as a punishment for her sin (Ackermann, 2006:231). Erving Goffman defines stigma as,

an attribute that significantly discredits a person and that in the eyes of society, reduces the dignity of the person and that in the eyes of society reduces the dignity of the person who possesses it. Such a person lives with an “undesirable difference,” one that is often understood as “deviance” or what Goffman describes as a spoiled identity (in Ackermann, 2006:228).

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<sup>51</sup> KwaZulu and Natal merged in 1994. Twenty years after the British defeated the Zulu Kingdom in 1879, Zululand became part of the colony of Natal. In 1904, 40% of Zululand’s most fertile land was designated to white settlers by the Delimitation Commission. Then in 1910, Natal became part of the Union of South Africa. Until 1994, the racial categories determined where a person would live; 95 % of the Mandeni’s residents were black, 2.5% Indian, 2% white and 5% coloured.

Furthermore, the silence around sex and sexuality in the church, caused by the belief that explicit talks on the subject may encourage promiscuity and sex outside of marriage, is detrimental to taking preventive measures against HIV/AIDS. Research shows that educating young people about safe sex helps to reduce adolescent sex, unplanned pregnancies and STIs (AIDS ACTION, 2000:6).

Moreover, a South African theologian, Beverley Haddad believes that there is still hope and the church still maintains moral authority to transform the cultural and social practices of sexuality to relieve the spread of HIV/AIDS pandemic in South Africa. Although the church has been known to reinforce stigmatization and discrimination against people with HIV/AIDS, it continues to be one of the key stakeholders in providing health services and counselling to people with HIV/AIDS (Haddad, 2005:32). It is noteworthy that in the 2001 South African Census, 76% of the population identified themselves as Christians (Hunter, 2010:44).<sup>52</sup> In this respect, Daniël Louw, a South African practical theologian, rearticulates a better way of dealing with HIV/AIDS as opposed to the one that is constructed from fear of death and sin. He argues,

The only basis for a sexual morality is the quality of people's maturity and the degree and quality of their choices and commitments. Ethics based on the durable, binding and covenantal character of faithful love, creates a more constructive basis for a sexual morality (Louw, 2005:444).

Although Gerald West argues for an inter-faith discourse and wishes to explore the text function within an internal belief system and what this means for individuals in society (in Haddad, 2011:159), it is my opinion that a biblical text does not solely function in a religious medium but functions specifically in relation to certain cultural, social, economic, and political contexts. Furthermore, HIV/AIDS is a wider social problem and I stand in solidarity with Musa W. Dube's statement that HIV/AIDS is "a social injustice driven epidemic" (Dube, 2004:4).

A South African feminist theologian, Anneka Meerkotter has proposed a human rights approach and the use of campaigns in the absence of government efforts to implement the Constitution and enforce women's equal rights to "services, housing,

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<sup>52</sup> Even in the early twentieth century, there was a particularly high prevalence of premarital pregnancy amongst Christians in South Africa (Bhabha, 1984:313).

land, food and social security” (in Gouws, 2005:170). However, according to Mark Hunter, AIDS campaigns have failed to interconnect housing, production with social reproduction, and economy with health in South Africa. Inequalities amongst racial groups are clearly evident. Unemployment is 4.6% among whites and 42.5% among Africans (Hunter, 2010:14). In the first ten years of the country’s democracy, unemployment rose by up to 47% among women, and 31% among men (Hunter, 2010:14).

HIV/AIDS implies more than an individual control of sexual desire and sin. Michel Foucault’s work on human sexuality gives us a better insight into the historical constructs of sexuality in relation to binary ideas of what is acceptable and unacceptable. There is a close relationship between sexuality and power. Power functions in the process of defining sexuality. It requires a serious consideration of the driving forces of sex and the complex social mechanisms that produce the meaning of sexuality. Foucault (1980:188) argues that, “Power is constructed and functions on the basis of particular powers, myriad issues, myriad effects of power. It is this complex domain that must be studied”.

In other words, without investigating the processes of dynamic knowledge production regarding human sexuality through political, social, and political mechanisms, it is difficult to understand the power relations around sexuality. The implication of this is that an individual’s competence to exercise power cannot be the church’s only preoccupation when it comes to defining sexuality and sin. Hence, a sexuality related pandemic such as HIV/AIDS takes place in the myriads of institutional, cultural, and political mediums of power structure, and a wider social investigation is absolutely necessary. Politics of sex takes place in a medium of various social influences that organize power relations and provides a reference point from which one draws power (Foucault, 1980:189).

The western notion of sexuality originates from the first millennium, when sex reticently became a law of all pleasures. Foucault argues that the systematization of sexual pleasure in Churches arises out of the history of state control and stoic philosophy; sexuality was a code of conduct to exercise power over members of the church. In AD 309, Christianity was officially made a national religion through the

Constantine settlement and about half of the Elvira Synod canons contained rules relating to sexuality. These rules were extremely sexist, and women were blamed if they were violated (Foucault, 1980:191).<sup>53</sup> This occasioned a space for the liberation of body and sexuality, and the body became the subject of objectification and mystification.

Human sexuality became a form of commodity in a modern time. From the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, love and sexuality further underwent changes. With the industrial revolution and patterns of production and consumption, love and sexuality became transactional and commercialized. This is made evident in the famous case of Hugh Hefner, the founder of the Playboy magazine. He first published his magazine in December 1953, featuring a nude picture of Marilyn Monroe. Hefner soon became a cultural icon of male sexuality for many men in the twentieth century. He could get away with having multiple sexual partners and sold millions of these pornographic magazines. Women, who were generations younger than him lined up at his Hollywood Playboy mansion to become one of his multiple sexual partners, and they jumped at the thought of becoming famous and rich in exchange for their sexuality. This is a classic case of what Karl Marx would describe as, “I am ugly, but I can buy for myself the most beautiful of women. Therefore I am not ugly” (in Hunter, 2010:46).

#### **4.4 The Western Influence on African Sexuality**

Your Majesty, the Western influence on African sexuality and love has completely changed the notion of sexuality in South Africa today. In a context of extreme poverty, capitalist modern love has rendered human sexuality as a space for exploitation and a means of desperate survival. Hunter recalls the death of an intelligent young woman, who after being infected with HIV/AIDS by her “sugar daddy” committed suicide for fear of passing it onto her baby while she was pregnant. Below is an

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<sup>53</sup> The western history of sexuality shows its development from various influences such as Greek ethos, Judaism, and Jesus’ teachings on adultery (Matthew 5:28) and celebration of fertility (Matthew 19:12). See *Desire: A History of European Sexuality* by Anna Clark (2008) for more information on the history of European sexuality.

excerpt from the letter sent to Themba before she found out she was infected with HIV/AIDS by her pursuer, who was much older than her:

I am happy if you are still alive. I am not well, and you know my problem: that the mother of my children left me. I tried to tell you everything but ignore me. I do not intend to play with you but I love you with all my heart... Don't worry, as my penis is still working, I am not that old. Your food, you'll find it still full, it is yours only, I don't give it to anyone (Hunter, 2010:188).

The concept of love in traditional African culture is less unpredictable compared to a capitalist transactional love. With African tradition of *ilobolo* (life-giving goods transferred to a bride's family in appreciation for her life-giving qualities), a woman obtains a status of *umakoti* (wife) and relies on her husband to look after her from the moment her father transfers *ilobolo* to her husband's family. This transferral ensures the position of a woman in her marital relation (Hunter, 2010:42). Below is Mark Hunter's interview with an African woman about love and *ilobolo*:

Mark Hunter (MK): Why did you like him?

Mrs Ndlovu: I don't know, love just arrived.

MK: Were there other people who were *shela*-ing you?

Mrs: Yes

MK: When women started to *qoma* a man, what were the promises he would make, like "maybe I will marry you?"

Mrs: I could not love someone if I did not know what they were going to do with me [taking account the rest of the interview, she is clearly referring to paying<sup>54</sup> *ilobolo*]...

If a boy would come to me and tell me that he loves me, I would ask him what he can do for me, since he says that he loves me. Some would tell me that they would respond some other day, and then they would never return.

Hunter: What would happen if a man had to choose between a hardworking and a beautiful girl?

Mrs: Everyone would notice a girl who worked hard at home, and the boys would place great value on a hardworking girl who respected her parents (Hunter, 2010:43-44).

The above interview illustrates that African custom requires both the man and the woman to keep to their end of the bargain in a marriage; the husband is to provide for his family and the wife to work hard at home and care for the family.

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<sup>54</sup> Although Mark Hunter refers to *ilobolo* as a payment, the concept of *ilobolo* is different from the capitalist idea of transaction. It encompasses a person and goods that are life-giving. As a woman is valued and appreciated for her life-giving qualities, the husband's family also transfers life-giving goods to the bride's family.

## 4.5 HIV/AIDS and Poverty

Your Majesty Queen Elizabeth, my fellow disciple of Jesus, structural violence in South Africa takes shape in the form of capitalism, globalization, post-colonialism, post-Apartheid syndrome, religious nationalism and post-modernity. The inequalities oppress the subjects of struggles especially those diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. There is a parallel between the situation of poverty in the first century Mediterranean Palestine and in South African. An exploitative system of advanced agrarian societies that advantaged 5-10% of the Roman elites living in cities of antiquity parallels the structural inequalities caused by post-colonialism, post-Apartheid struggle, capitalism, globalisation and post-modernity in South Africa. Just as the Roman cities and villages were assigned unequal social, political, and religious roles for unequal distribution of goods and power, the structural inequalities in townships and cities in South Africa illustrate this point. Just as the 5% of the Roman elites exploited and extracted resources and services from the rest of the non-elite population, South Africa also has been using human resources from the rural areas in exchange for unreasonable returns.

The government, NGOs and health organizations have failed to address the issue of poverty at large and consequently have not made much progress in combating HIV/AIDS. Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois argue that the concept of structural violence often fails to move from a political-economic context into everyday worlds to capture “how victims become victimizers and how that hides local understandings of structural power relations” (in Hunter, 2010:10). For instance, gender inequality embedded in cultural practices has a detrimental effect on women’s likelihood of being infected with HIV/AIDS. In Sub-Saharan Africa, women in the age group of 15-24 years are 8 times more likely to be infected with HIV/AIDS than men in the same age-group (UNAIDS, 2012:2).

In a time of globalization, HIV/AIDS is one of the global health effects that relate to economic policy changes in the global market. International organizations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Trade Organization (WTO) are found to influence the poorest parts of the world (Kim, 2000:6). Hence, there has been much interest in poverty and illness and HIV/AIDS

from the wider international community. The 'golden age of global health' is what the former Director of the US Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, Bill Foege, calls the present time, when a great public interest in the welfare of the poor is noted. This golden age is projected to last until 2025. Billions of dollars have been spent to fight HIV/AIDS. Between 2003 and 2005 alone, US\$8.3 billion dollars was spent to fight HIV/AIDS.

Jim Yong Kim, the former president of Global Health Organization and a professor of medical anthropology at Harvard University, highlights the close connection between poverty and illness and argues that unless there is a structural change, real progress in preventing HIV/AIDS transmission is difficult. Although efforts to develop health services through biomedical interventions such as the antiretroviral treatment have helped improve and prolong the lives of patients with HIV/AIDS, Kim argues that AIDS campaigns have not paid attention to the socio-structural inequalities (Kim, 2007:20).

#### **4.6 Social Inequalities**

Your Majesty, to attend only to the present figures of HIV/AIDS is to further confirm the structural inequalities as normal. Likewise, to attend only to the past mistakes will also fail to see the web of living connection between the past, present and future influences on HIV/AIDS. Reflecting on the subjects of struggles requires an investigation of intersectional forces of oppression at different periods. To avoid reading for or against the oppressed, a top-down approach is necessary for listening to the voices of the marginalized. In addition, keeping the materiality in focus and naming the losers and winners of structural violence prevents any unnecessary romanticism (Farmer, 2004:308). Paul Farmer, a professor of medical anthropology in the Department of Social Medicine of Harvard Medical School, argues that:

Those who look only to the past to explain the ethnographically visible will miss the webs of living power that enmesh witnessed misery. Some of the links that must be made visible are living links... Those who look only to powerful present-day actors to explain misery will fail to see how inequality is structured and legitimated over time (Farmer, 2004:309).

The constitution of HIV/AIDS requires a social and historical investigation into the social patterns that drive harmful sexual practices, which lead to HIV/AIDS. The colonial structural violence featured racial segregation and discrimination, unfair housing policies, job reservation for whites, exploitation of workers, separation of family members, and cultural confusion about the notion of love. The Apartheid system of segregation that created a division between whites and blacks continues to create inequality between those who know and have and those who do not, even in the post-Apartheid era. This inequality is clear from the geographical evidence, which shows that the highest HIV rates are prevalent in informal shack settlements, where the poorest South Africans are found (Hunter, 2010:14).

Without attending to the problem of poverty and structural inequalities, it is impossible to understand HIV/AIDS in South Africa. It is not enough to discuss the fragments of reality in the lives of people suffering from HIV/AIDS. Poverty in South Africa has a close link to the past mistakes of the colonial era and the Apartheid. Even after the Apartheid, structural inequalities between the racial groups continue to have disparaging effects on the lives of people living with HIV/AIDS. A steady decline of marriage among Africans by 24% from 1951 to 2001 questions the social dynamics of marriage (Hunter, 2010:99). A stark contrast in unemployment rate between whites (4.6%) and Africans (42.5%) also poses a predicament (Hunter, 2010:13). Although poverty is not the sole cause of HIV/AIDS, the highest prevalence of HIV/AIDS transmission is in informal settlements, where the poorest people in South Africa live. This is strongly suggestive of the close connection between poverty and HIV/AIDS (Hunter, 2010:4).

The term informal settlement became increasingly popular during the urban Apartheid in the 1980s to refer to a residential area for non-white people. The term was used to differentiate those unwanted shack areas which were to be demolished from those areas the government permitted. It is a racist and contentious term because it denotes that although such a residential area is less ideal compared to a European, white settlement, it is still tolerable. Mark Hunter notes that this is a, "... vivid sign of how racialized labels can be employed in the name of development" (Hunter, 2010:101). After the Apartheid, the term slum took over the term unwanted

shack area to validate their removal (Hunter, 2010:101). The World Health Organization figures show a decrease in the slum population in urban areas since 1990 by 17.3% (World Health Organization, Slum Population in Urban Areas, 2005).

Even the housing policy that was drawn up during the Apartheid era to favour the interests of white people in South Africa remains very much intact to further reinforce gender and racial discrimination. During the Apartheid, the government built matchbox houses for the so-called coloured and black people of South Africa. They were designed to provide temporary residence to people who came from rural areas to work in the mines and farms. Mark Hunter, an ethnographer, who lived in an informal settlement for long periods of time, describes the household structures.<sup>55</sup> He notes that these matchbox houses have two bedrooms, a living room, a kitchen and a toilet. The size is 51.2 square meters. It was supposed to be for a modern nuclear family. They were only given to married men who were employed (Hunter, 2010:100). Benefits such as education and employment saw many coloured or black people fleeing from rural areas to settle in these houses (Hunter, 2010:66-67). This new housing policy resulted in many marriages of convenience. A 1983 study showed that 65% of the Mandeni township residents had a second home, but only 25% of that figure showed any indication of returning to their home after their employment contract ended (Hunter, 2010: 72).

In 2002, an amendment was made to the 1991 Aliens Controls Act that originally came out of controlling migration of men seeking opportunities in the gold and diamond mines (Crush & Dodson, 2004:96). The act is still largely relevant to men coming to find work in the mines. However, the new 2002 Immigration Act remains highly contentious as it contains hints of gender discrimination. The most contentious part of the act is section 14(1) which states that migrant workers must enter without any other associated members of the family, except on short-term visiting permits. In other words, women are not permitted to accompany their husbands since the majority of the migrant workers are men (Crush & Dodson, 2004:109).

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<sup>55</sup> He himself lived in an *umjondolo* next to his host family. His *umjondolo* was a one room structure, which was similar to *imijondolo* that are about 3 by 4.6 meters in size, normally built in long rows. Hunter recalls many nights waking up because it was extremely hot in his room, which he describes as a slow cooking oven (Hunter, 2010:100).

Mark Hunter's interview with a migrant woman called Mrs Mngadi from the northern KwaZulu-Natal in 2003 further illustrates this point. Mrs Mngadi was forced to leave her rural home after her father left (*bhunguka'd*) to find work in an urban area. She initially stayed with her sister who was living (*kipita*) with her boyfriend, who worked for SAPPI (Hunter, 2010:73). Mrs. Mngadi soon became intimately involved with a man called Siyanda who was also from the Northern KwaZulu and a migrant worker in a company of building contractors. They lived (*kipita'd*) together until she found out he had a wife. Although he offered to make her his second wife and provide for her, she refused and left him.

Soon after, Mrs. Mngadi found work at Isithebe Industrial Park. There, she had many intimate relations with other men, many of them SAPPI men who had wives in their rural homes (Hunter 2010:74). When she became a Christian, she ended her polygamous relationships. In the early 1990s, she fell in love and married a man who worked for the electric company, Eskom. However, the relationship came to an end after he left her for another woman. Towards the end of the interview, Mark Hunter notes that Mrs. Mngadi's regretted not marrying her first boyfriend and sees a motive of economic benefits in her love. She laments, "Really, I regret it, I wish that I had carried on with Siyanda, the one I was in love with, because he said he was going to build me a home" (Hunter 2010:74). However, from a feminist perspective, Mrs. Mngadi's longing for her first boyfriend is not purely linked to economic benefits. She is a subject of many struggles and she longs for a loving home, support, economic stability, a faithful husband and human dignity.

#### **4.7 The Ambivalence of Servanthood in the Time of HIV/AIDS**

Your Majesty Queen Elizabeth, my fellow disciple of Jesus, the ambivalence of the word servant (Luke 1:48) arises out of the political context of HIV/AIDS in South Africa that is rooted in the post-Apartheid era, post-colonialism, capitalism and globalisation. The grand epoch of Western civilization, of production and of European ideals followed after the Kantian idea of ethics with his famous saying, "virtue is knowledge". Those who have western knowledge rule those who are

subjects and need to acquire more of the western knowledge while the West continues to have authority over subjects of Western civilization.

Homi Bhabha in his article *Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse*, describes this as a comical turn "...from high ideals of the colonial imagination to its low mimetic literary effects... as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge" (Bhabha, 1984:126). He describes mimicry in the context of the post-colonial era as repeating the partial presence of the ideal subject. There is no appreciation of difference in mimicry. Mimicry takes on its meaning from modern thinking, which emphasizes sameness. The Aristotelian notion of *Tertium comparationis* that "equals should be treated the same and the unequals treated differently" (Schüssler Fiorenza, 2011:43) is embedded in this concept of mimicry. Schüssler Fiorenza would call this "modernity in antiquity". Following Bhabha's psychoanalysis, women with HIV/AIDS are perceived as partial representatives of the European ideal man.

In this fashion, HIV/AIDS becomes another criterion for classifying a subject as inferior compared to an ideal European man, along with other categories of classification (race, gender, ethnicity, religion, and poverty). Hence, to refer to a woman with HIV/AIDS as a servant is to further oppress the person through alienation and subjugation. The form of classification falls under structural violence against the subjects of struggles. Paul Farmer, a renowned medical anthropologist, defines structural violence as:

violence exerted systematically — that is, indirectly — by everyone who belongs to a certain social order: hence the discomfort these ideas provoke in a moral economy still geared to pinning praise or blame on individual actors. In short, the concept of structural violence is intended to inform the study of the social machinery of oppression. Oppression is a result of many conditions, not the least of which resides in consciousness of structural violence (Farmer, 2004:307).

According to Bhabha, classification is a desperate means of normalizing the disturbances that do not meet the ideal man:

If, for a while, the ruse of desire is calculable for the uses of discipline soon the repetition of guilt, justification, pseudoscientific theories, superstition, spurious authorities, and classifications can be seen as the desperate effort to 'normalize' formally the disturbances of a discourse of splitting that violates the rational,

enlightened claims of its denunciatory modality. The ambivalence of colonial authority repeatedly turns from *mimicry* — a difference that is almost nothing but not quite — to *menace* — difference that is almost total but not quite (Bhabha, 1984: 132).

A classification of gender, race, and ethnicity is most profoundly visible in South Africa. On arrival in South Africa for my postgraduate studies, I was perplexed when asked to fill out forms and tick boxes with classification as white, black or coloured. Obviously, I understand that with the Affirmative Action policy, disclosing one's racial background is important in South Africa. However, racial inequalities remain profoundly visible here and personally I do not see much progress in the abolishment of racial discrimination and segregation.

This is further made obvious in social patterns, especially in Stellenbosch. In the mornings, on my way to the university, I usually see a group of coloured or black men and women in the age range of about twenty to fifty, walking in the opposite direction from me, heading towards the European houses. Most of them are probably from the outskirts of Stellenbosch, and go to work as housemaids or gardeners. Another group of people I see are white Afrikaners, going for runs and walking their dogs. Even my host family, white Afrikaners, have a maid, who is a coloured woman. She comes to the house to clean and iron once or twice a week. Although slavery is no longer legal, the subjugation of people based on race and gender still functions in a new framework of capitalism. In this context, the term maid or servant becomes political, economic and gendered.

Feminist scholars see in structural violence patriarchal systems of oppression. Schüssler Fiorenza defines patriarchy as “a social structure of dominance and the androcentric ideologies that have permitted men to subordinate women over the course of history and to rule over them” (Schüssler Fiorenza, 2011:85). Furthermore, she sees the need to replace patriarchy with kyriarchy<sup>56</sup> which covers the various forms of wo/men's oppression. According to Luise Schottroff, patriarchy in,

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<sup>56</sup> The term, *kyriarchy*, was created by Schüssler Fiorenza. She defines it as “a socio-political and cultural-religious system of domination that structures the identity slots open to members of society in terms of race, gender, nation, age, economy, and sexuality, and configures them in terms of pyramidal relations of domination and submission, profit and exploitation (Schüssler Fiorenza, 2011:8).

the first sense refers to men's domination of women; in the second sense, it is the encompassing description of societies that are structured by the joint forces of racism, classism, sexism, militarism, the exploitation of nature, and other structural dimensions of violence (Schottroff, 1995:21).

To add to the joint forces of patriarchy in society, it is crucial to specifically mention exploitation through globalisation, capitalism, post-colonialism, post-Apartheid conditions, religious nationalism, modernity and post-modernity.

#### **4.8 Gender Inequality**

Your Majesty, gender inequality is another major form of structural violence that contributes to the HIV/AIDS transmission in South Africa. At least 80% of women in long-term relationships are infected by their partners and it is mostly a cultural issue of women being bound to stay in marriages, in which their husbands are sexually promiscuous outside marriage (Dube, 2004:9). Women's subordination to patriarchal authority in social and religious settings makes them more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. Certainly, even before Western influence, there was evidence of patriarchal structural violence against women in African culture. For instance, the payment of *ilobolo* in African culture dates from pre-colonial times and it is goods given to the family members of the wife before the marriage is formally accepted. It appears to be a means to control women by men. The whole exchange of goods or money for a woman in marriage places women in subordinate position of power. Tholakale's case explains this point. When Tholakale's boyfriend tried to force her to have sex, she refused saying, "the law doesn't allow it." Nonetheless, he further threatened her with the unlikely chance of marriage saying, "if you are refusing like this, I wonder whether you can marry me or not" (in Hunter, 2010:50).

Gender-based violence is a major cause of HIV/AIDS transmission in South Africa. The UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women defines violence against women as "... any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women." Some common characteristics are intimate partner violence, child sexual abuse, and rape (Watts & Zimmerman, 2002:1232). Intimate partner violence "includes sexual,

physical and psychological abuse by male intimate partners and it often exhibits from dissolution of masculinity caused by social factors, such as poverty and in circumstances where the male head is unable to take on the provider role” (Jewkes *et al*, 2010:1423). Rape is a serious form of gender-based violence. It is a terrible means of displaying a man’s masculinity, which is under threat, and it is often driven by power struggle among men. Rape is another major contributing factor to the prevalence of HIV/AIDS transmission. Especially, women living in poor district areas, who have limited resources and more exposure to crime, are more vulnerable to such atrocious crimes (Dube, 2004:35). A story of a woman who was dismissed after her boss found out she had HIV/AIDS illustrates this point well:

When I was pregnant my partner left me. Perhaps he was afraid that I was HIV (*sic*) because he was. I only found out just before my baby was born. I was given Nevirapine. I have lost two jobs. First I was a domestic worker and then I worked in a laundry. The laundry boss forced all the staff to be tested. I knew it was against my constitutional rights, but what could I do? So I was dismissed unfairly. Last week I was walking home after looking for a job. Three youths attacked me. They pulled off my clothes. They wanted to rape me. The one said: “A man’s got have a woman when it is raining.” I fought with them. They left me because a car came. They did not kill me because I said that I did not see their faces. But today I am so, so happy. I have just heard that my baby is negative. My child will have a life. God is good” (Thembisa, a 26 year old Xhosa woman, in Dube, 2004:28).

According to Du Toit, rape is “the forceful penetration of a vagina by a penis” (Du Toit, 2005:269). The law of South Africa states in Sexual Offences and Related Matters Amendment Act., No. 32 of 2007 that rape is:

Rape is an act of Sexual Penetration of a victim, without their consent. Rape occurs when:

Someone inserts their genital organs into the mouth, anus or genital organs of a victim

Any part of someone’s body, such as a finger, goes into the anus or genital organs of the victim

Any object, like a stick or a bottle is put into the anus or genital organs of the victim

The genital organs of an animal are put into the mouth of the victim (The Definition of Rape and Consent, 2007).

The 2010/2011 annual report from Rape Crisis Cape Town indicates that violence against women has increased dramatically. The report shows 197 877 cases of women 18 years or older were reported and 56 539 were children below the age of 18. A large number of these cases were of sexual violence. According to Rape Crisis Cape Town only between 1 in 5 and 1 in 9 cases of rape are reported, due to stigma, myths and stereotypes (Annual Report 2010/2011:7). A more disturbing report is that in a study conducted by Lloyd Vogelmann of the University of the Witwatersrand, which estimates that the rate of women being raped in South Africa is 1 out of 2 two women.

In response to this gender-based violence, Karen Buckenham argues that there needs to be a change in societal beliefs and cultural norms regarding gender in order to prevent rape. She protests against the silencing of rape victims by society and institutions, including the church (Jewkes *et al*, 2010:80). Furthermore, the study by Charlotte Watts and Cathy Zimmerman finds that 40% of women in South Africa have experienced forced intercourse in their life time (Watts & Zimmerman, 2002:1235). There is no doubt that the situation in the country is a critical one.

#### 4.9 A Transforming Vision of ἄφρασις

Your Majesty Queen Elizabeth, my fellow disciple of Jesus, in view of the particular genealogy that exists in South Africa, I will present a *prophetic-critical* reading<sup>57</sup> of Luke 1:46-55 that is appropriate to the situation of HIV/AIDS in South Africa. If the text is not read against the structural violence of gender equality, it can further reinforce social ideals and inequalities that contribute to the rapid increase of HIV/AIDS transmission. Therefore, we will keep in mind the focus of the Christ event and specifically refer to the pronoun *he* in the text as Jesus. The post-colonial and post-Apartheid context in South Africa is particularly unfavourable for understanding the notion of servanthood in the *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-55). The phrase τῆς δούλης αὐτοῦ (v.48) can even reinforce the past experience of slavery in colonialism with the

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<sup>57</sup> A *prophetic-critical* reading requires the defragmentation of an existing symbolic world of language in order to release a text from systems of knowledge production in a society to shape holistic reality towards a transforming vision and well-being of all peoples. Furthermore, it includes a theological-pastoral as well as a hermeneutical paradigm.

current forces of oppression through post-colonialism, post-Apartheid conditions, post-modernity, capitalism and globalization.<sup>58</sup>

Therefore, in the context of HIV/AIDS in South Africa, we will interpret τῆς δούλης αὐτοῦ (v. 48) as a disciple of Jesus in discipleship of equals, which is antithetical to the meaning of servanthood that associates with subordination and oppression. This will be our language of resistance in the face of structural violence. A discipleship of equals invites all people to become spiritual warriors and stand in solidarity with those who suffer under poverty and chronic illness, such as HIV/AIDS. The inversion of the meaning against the patriarchal meaning of the term servanthood can have a tremendous power to improve the ascetic quality of life for a disciple of Jesus.

In a discipleship of equals, an important lesson we can learn from the poor and the suffering subjects of HIV/AIDS in South Africa, is a transforming vision of ἄφρασις (Luke 4:18). This essential element enables us to undergo an effective feminist praxis that inter-connects the myriads of social, political and economic factors and that would effectively direct a pastoral-theological and hermeneutical discourse. With this in mind, I propose a redistribution programme to help the poor as demonstrated by the early Jesus believers (Luke 19:1-10; 12:22-34; Acts 3:1-10; 10:1-4; 11:27-30; 12:25; 24:17; 2:44, 45; 4:32-35; 20:35).

It is not a coincidence that both our names are taken after a faithful Christian woman and mother of John, Elizabeth, which means house of the gift of G\*d. Although the church in the past has failed to connect with various institutions in society, it can still come together to collaborate with the government, international faith community and non-government organizations to fight against the structural inequalities. By working to improve housing policies, transportation, infrastructure and gender inequalities, we can all participate in the kingdom of G\*d.

Your Majesty Queen Elizabeth, my fellow disciple of Jesus, there are various areas of funding that urgently require your attention. For instance, education and teaching

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<sup>58</sup> Michel Foucault explains that the power of truth lies in the relationship between public right of knowledge and the “polymorphous disciplinary mechanism.” For instance, the development of medical knowledge takes place between the public right and hegemonic language, and practices of medical knowledge” (Foucault, 1980:106).

professions in South Africa require greater financial support to increase resources. Although as an international student, I am privileged to learn in the medium of English, with which I am comfortable, there are many people in South Africa, who find the language difficult to grasp and consider the university a strange place. I believe promoting the differences in cultures and languages and incorporating indigenous means of learning such as dancing, singing and oral learning will help to equalize the effects of the hegemonic powers of the European education system. There has been a rise in unemployment and job scarcity is a major problem. In order to create more jobs, the implementation of training programmes and collaborative community support are necessary. Most of all, I sincerely ask as a matter of urgency that a separate trust account with a large fund be made available to accommodate the growing number of HIV/AIDS orphans in South Africa.

Your Majesty Queen Elizabeth, a friend of Miriam, I would like to close this letter with a sincere appreciation of your attention. It has been a pleasure to journey with you in giving voice to the voiceless. This letter has enabled me to create a democratic space that respects the dignity of all persons. Glory be to G\*d and G\*d's son. I leave with one final word that I have come to understand in the course of my research - liberation may be a trivial matter to those who have it, but to those who do not, it is a desperate hope.

Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth Min Hee Kim

*(A friend of Miriam)*

30th June 2013

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion

The search of an insoluble truth has guided this *prophetic-critical* reading. From critically evaluating the aspects of feminist the\*logy, which are used in the exegesis of our selected text to finding a relevance of the text in our contemporary world, the golden thread that penetrates from behind the text to in front of the text is a transforming vision of the poor and the sick. The insoluble truth is not a set of rules or guidelines, but it is a transforming vision of the ἐκκλησία of wo/men, which started with in the reign of G\*d through the coming of Jesus Christ. A transforming vision is an open-ended solution to a problem that helps us to advance a discussion on serious socio-political issues in our contemporary world and engage in life-giving feminist praxis.

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## Appendix

### Similarities between Hannah's Praise and the Magnificat

Hannah's Praise	The Magnificat
<p><b>Introduction</b></p> <p>1 καὶ εἶπεν ἑσπερεώθη ἡ καρδία μου ἐν κυρίῳ ὑψώθη κέρασ μου ἐν θεῷ μου ἐπλατύνθη ἐπὶ ἐχθροῦς τὸ στόμα μου εὐφράνθη ἐν σωτηρίᾳ σου</p> <p><b>introductory praise</b></p>	<p><b>Introduction</b></p> <p>46 Καὶ εἶπεν Μαριάμ· Μεγαλύνει ἡ ψυχὴ μου τὸν κύριον, 47 καὶ ἠγαλλίασεν τὸ πνεῦμά μου ἐπὶ τῷ θεῷ τῷ σωτήρῳ μου,</p>
<p><b>Strophe One</b></p> <p>2 ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἅγιος ὡς κύριος καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν δίκαιος ὡς ὁ θεός ἡμῶν οὐκ ἔστιν ἅγιος πλὴν σου</p> <p>3 μὴ καυχᾶσθε καὶ μὴ λαλεῖτε ὑψηλά μὴ ἐξεληθάτω μεγαλορρημοσύνη ἐκ τοῦ στόματος ὑμῶν ὅτι θεὸς γνώσων κύριος καὶ θεὸς ἐπιτηδεύματα αὐτοῦ</p> <p><b>attributes of G*d</b></p> <p><b>holy</b>      <b>righteous</b>      <b>mighty</b></p>	<p><b>Strophe One</b></p> <p>48a ὅτι ἐπέβλεψεν ἐπὶ τὴν ταπείνωσιν τῆς δούλης αὐτοῦ. 48b ἰδοὺ γὰρ ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν μακαριοῦσίν με πᾶσαι αἱ γενεαί, 49a ὅτι ἐποίησέν μοι μεγάλα ὁ δυνατός. 49b καὶ ἅγιον τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ, <b>powerful</b> 50 καὶ τὸ ἔλεος αὐτοῦ εἰς γενεὰς καὶ γενεὰς τοῖς φοβουμένοις αὐτόν.</p>
<p><b>Strophe Two</b></p> <p>4 τῶσόν δυνατῶν ἠσθένησεν καὶ ἀσθενοῦντες περιεζώσαντο δυνάμει 5 πλήρεις ἄρτων ἠλαττώθησαν καὶ οἱ πεινῶντες παρήκαν γῆν ὅτι στείρα ἔτεκεν ἐπ' αὐτῆς καὶ ἡ πολλὴ ἐν τέκνοις ἠσθένησεν</p> <p>6 κύριος θανατοῖ καὶ ζωογονεῖ κατάγει εἰς ἄδου καὶ ἀνάγει</p> <p>7 κύριος πτωχίζει καὶ πλουτίζει ταπεινοὺς καὶ ἀνυψοὺς</p> <p>8 ἀνίστα ἀπὸ γῆς πένητα καὶ ἀπὸ κοπρίας ἐγείρει πτωχὸν καθισαί</p> <p>9 μετὰ δυναστῶν λαῶν καὶ θρόνον δόξης κατακληρονομησάτω αὐτοῖς</p> <p><b>reversal theme</b>      <b>motif of the poor</b></p>	<p><b>Strophe Two</b></p> <p>51a Ἐποίησεν κράτος ἐν βραχίονι αὐτοῦ, 51b διεσκόρπισεν ὑπερηφάνους διανοίᾳ καρδίας αὐτῶν 52a καθεῖλεν δυνάστας ἀπὸ θρόνων 52b καὶ ὑψώσεν ταπεινοὺς, 53a πεινῶντας ἐνέπλησεν ἀγαθῶν 53b καὶ πλουτοῦντας ἐξαπέστειλεν κενούς.</p>
<p><b>Conclusion</b></p> <p>9 διδοὺς εὐχὴν τῷ εὐχομένῳ καὶ εὐλόγησεν ἔτη δικαίου ὅτι οὐκ ἐν ἰσχύι δυνατὸς ἀνήρ 10 κύριος ἀσθενῆ ποιήσει ἀντίδικον αὐτοῦ κύριος ἅγιος μὴ καυχάσθω ὁ φρόνιμος ἐν τῇ φρονήσει αὐτοῦ καὶ μὴ καυχάσθω ὁ δυνατὸς ἐν τῇ δυνάμει αὐτοῦ καὶ μὴ καυχάσθω ὁ πλούσιος ἐν τῷ πλούτῳ αὐτοῦ ἀλλ' ἢ ἐν τούτῳ καυχάσθω ὁ καυχώμενος συνίεν καὶ γινώσκειν τὸν κύριον καὶ ποιεῖν κρίμα καὶ δικαιοσύνην ἐν μέσῳ τῆς γῆς κύριος ἀνέβη εἰς οὐρανοὺς καὶ ἐβρόντησεν αὐτὸς κρινεῖ ἄκρα γῆς καὶ δίδωσιν ἰσχύν τοῖς βασιλεῦσιν ἡμῶν καὶ ὑψώσει κέρασ χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ</p> <p><b>God's promise to the faithful one</b></p> <p>(1 Samuel 2:1-10 LXX)</p>	<p><b>Conclusion</b></p> <p>54 αὐτελάβετο Ἰσραὴλ παιδὸς αὐτοῦ, μιησθῆναι ἐλέους, 55a ἀθῶς ἐλάλησεν πρὸς τοὺς πατέρας ἡμῶν, 55b τῷ Ἀβραάμ καὶ τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.</p> <p>(Luke 1.46-55 NA27)</p>