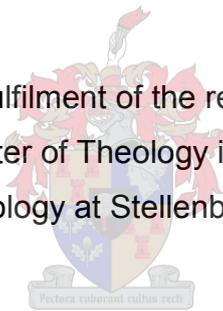


**Crucifixion of masculinity:
A gender critical (re)reading of the narrative of the cross
as portrayed in the Gospel of Luke**

by
Nina Elisabeth Müller van Velden

Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Theology in the
Faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch University



Supervisor: Prof Jeremy Punt

April 2014

DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

The South African society is violently sick to the core regarding gender and sexuality. Shockingly high statistics of gender-based violence and the everyday occurrences of gender injustices and gender discrimination are not unfamiliar to South Africans. All men and women, representing all sexual identities, are affected to a greater or lesser degree. The Christian church, as an influential social institution in the South African context, is often silent on these acts of violence, injustices and discrimination. Some argue that the church is not merely silent, but actively contributes to these injustices and violence by means of its teachings and practices. The church's inadequate response to such a crisis in society is, however, not surprising in light of especially two factors: firstly, the patriarchal and heteronormative roots of the Christian church that still, up to this day, have an enormous influence on the Christian tradition globally; and secondly, the manner in which the Bible is often misused to direct discourses and opinions regarding gender and sexuality. Ahistorical and selective readings of biblical texts serve as validation of contemporary (and very popular) stereotypical and discriminatory views on gender and sexuality, with little or no recognition of the socio-cultural contexts in which texts originated. Central faith narratives, such as the crucifixion narratives and its portrayals of Jesus of Nazareth as a male, has a great influence on the manner in which gender and sexuality is understood within the Christian church. The Lukan crucifixion narrative portrays Jesus of Nazareth as a hypermasculine character who is able to uphold and even increase his socially-constructed male honour and power throughout the most shaming event of antiquity, namely the Roman crucifixion. Often this type of portrayal of Jesus of Nazareth is preferred in the Christian church, at the cost of the less hypermasculine portrayals that can also rightly be found in the Gospel narratives, and misused to validate essentialist notions of gender and sexuality. This study suggests that a queer reading or a reimagining of specifically the Lukan crucifixion narrative is needed in order to put forward alternative interpretations of the maleness of Jesus of Nazareth, and consequently the manner in which gender and sexuality is popularly understood from a Christian perspective. This is possible if the socio-cultural context of the world behind the narrative, namely the 1st century Mediterranean world and Greco-Roman society, is taken seriously. In this manner the crucifixion narrative might become a narrative that blurs the lines of simplistic gender categories, rather than enforcing it as is often still the case. By offering fresh perspectives on such an influential narrative, the church might be able to engage

critically with itself as well as society regarding the disturbingly large amount of injustices, discrimination and violence based on gender and sexuality.

OPSOMMING

Die Suid-Afrikaanse samelewing kan tereg as gewelddadiglik siek beskryf word wanneer daar na gender en seksualiteit verwys word. Suid-Afrikaners is nie onbekend met hemelhoë statistieke van gender-gebaseerde geweld, tesame met die alledaagse voorvalle van gender ongeregtigheid en gender diskriminasie nie. Alle mans en vrouens, verteenwoordigend van alle seksuele identiteite, word tot 'n mindere of meerdere mate hierdeur geraak. Die Christelike kerk, wat steeds gereken word as 'n invloedryke sosiale instelling in die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks, se stem is dikwels stil rakende hierdie dae van geweld, ongeregtigheid en diskriminasie. Sommige is van mening dat die kerk nie bloot net stil is hieroor nie, maar dat dit aktief bydra tot hierdie ongeregtighede en geweld deur middel van leringe en praktyke. Die kerk se onvoldoende respons op hierdie krisis in die samelewing is egter nie verrassend nie. Veral twee faktore dra hiertoe by: eerstens, die patriargale en heteronormatiewe fondasies van die Christelike kerk wat tot vandag toe nog 'n enorme invloed uitoefen op die Christelike tradisie wêreldwyd; en tweedens, die manier waarop die Bybel dikwels misbruik word om diskoerse en opinies rakende gender en seksualiteit op baie spesifieke maniere te rig. Die ahistoriese en selektiewe lees van bybelse tekste dien as gepaste bewyse vir hedendaagse (en baie gewilde) stereotipiese en diskriminerende beskouings van gender en seksualiteit, met min of geen erkenning van die sosio-kulturele kontekste waarin dit ontstaan het nie. Sentrale geloofsverhale, soos die kruisigingsverhale en hul voorstellings van Jesus van Nasaret as 'n man, oefen 'n groot invloed uit op die manier waarop gender en seksualiteit verstaan word binne die Christelike kerk. Die kruisigingsverhaal van die evangelie van Lukas stel Jesus van Nasaret voor as 'n hipermanlike karakter wat sy sosiaal-gekonstrueerde manlike eer en mag kan behou en selfs vermeerder, te midde van een van die meeste beskamende gebeure van die antieke tyd, naamlik die Romeinse kruisiging. Hierdie tipe voorstelling van Jesus van Nasaret geniet dikwels voorkeur in die Christelike kerk, ten koste van minder hipermanlike voorstellings wat met ewe veel reg in die verhale van die Evangelies te vinde is. Hierdie studie stel voor dat 'n "queer" lees of 'n hervoorstelling van die kruisigingsverhaal van spesifiek die evangelie van Lukas nodig is, ten einde alternatiewe interpretasies van die manlikheid van Jesus van Nasaret daar te stel. Dit is moontlik indien erns gemaak word met die sosio-kulturele konteks agter die verhaal, naamlik die 1^{ste} eeuse Mediterreense wêreld en die Grieks-Romeinse samelewing. Gevolglik sou die gewilde, dog stereotipiese interpretasies van gender en seksualiteit vanuit 'n Christelike perspektief uitgedaag kan word. Op hierdie manier kan die kruisigingsverhaal 'n verhaal

word wat simplistiese gender-kategorisering ondermyn, eerder as om dit te bevestig. Deur verskeie interpretasies van hierdie invloedryke verhaal voor te stel, mag die kerk dalk krities kan omgaan met die kerk self sowel as met die samelewing, rakende die ontstellende hoë voorkoms van ongeregtighede, diskriminasië en geweld gebaseer op gender en seksualiteit.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I hereby wish to express my immense gratitude to the Church of Sweden, who has generously contributed to the funding of the programme Master of Theology (Gender, Health and Theology), of which this study forms a part.

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Figure 1 Visual representation of the communication process

1. BASIC ORIENTATION

1.1 Background to the study

With regards to gender and sexuality, the South African society can be labelled as being violently sick to the core. Alarming high rates of sexual abuse, sexual violence and rape are part of our daily reality, of which women and children are in most cases the victims. Although statistics are difficult to obtain due to the low number of cases being reported, Rachel Jewkes (from the South African Medical Research Council) found in a study done in 2009 that a quarter of South African women are raped, but only 1 in 25 cases are reported to the police and approximately 10% of these cases lead to successful prosecution (Men urged to help end rape, 2013). A study in 2002 by Jewkes & Abrahams (2002:1232) concluded as follows: “The most common forms of sexual coercion are most vulnerable to unreporting in South Africa...These occur within marriages, dating relationships, families, or where sex is agreed to after blackmail, threats, trickery or persistent pleading.” Social norms appear to have a large influence on violence between sexual partners, with violence being seen as a manner in which to solve differences, establish gender-identity and keep power-relations in tact. This is framed by social structures in which patriarchy and sexism still have a great influence (Jewkes 2002:1424-1426). According to Du Toit (2005:253), the record high rape statistics in South Africa relegate women and children to second-class citizenship. Haddad (2002:94) is of the opinion that the issue of sexual violence in South Africa cannot be raised without taking up the crisis of the HIV/AIDS pandemic which overwhelms Southern Africa and exists alongside it. Their common denominators are human sexuality and unequal power relations between men and women: “No discussion on violence against women and children in an age of HIV/AIDS is complete without a gender analysis of the linkages between these two issues” (Haddad 2002:94).

Not only women and children find themselves on the receiving end of sexual abuse and sexual violence. The LGBTIQ community¹ in South Africa find themselves continuously being the target of emotional, physical and sexual abuse and violence – both at the hands of strangers as well as family and friends. These experiences range from anything such as sneering comments, degrading “jokes” and rude stares, to downright hate-speech and

¹ This abbreviation serves as the collective term for people who do not fit themselves into the category of heterosexuality or an heterosexual understanding of being male or female. In terms of (oversimplified) categories this includes the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer communities.

violent crimes like corrective rape and even murder. Consequently a life of isolation or secrecy is the only option for many, being forced to violate their own identities rather than being violated by others.

Within this violent sexual reality of the South African society the role of the church as a social institution as well as related major biblical themes should not be underestimated. Most South Africans describe themselves as Christians and consequently the Christian religion and the church plays a big role in the lives of many South Africans. In light of the “illness” of the South African society concerning gender and sexuality, however, the church² appears to struggle to make a positive impact on the manner in which discourse and practices regarding gender and sexuality play out. Rather, as Haddad (2002:93) says, “(t)he church is mostly silent on issues of gender justice, including the violence meted out to women.” Or, perhaps even more concerning: not only is the only response from the church often deafening silence, but it can be argued that it also actively contributes to gender and sexual discrimination, abuse and violence by means of its own teachings and practices. The latter is particularly felt by women and the LGBTIQ community – within and outside the church – making it an issue of abuse across the divides of gender or sexual orientation.

With this as background, I will investigate the role of a central faith narrative in the Christian tradition, namely the Lukan crucifixion narrative, in contributing to the church’s silence and active participation regarding gender and sexual discrimination, abuse and violence in South Africa.

1.2 Problem statement

The church in South Africa, as an authoritative social institution within the South African society, is embedded in the heteronormative³ and patriarchal⁴ roots of the worldwide Christian faith tradition. Thatcher (1993:2) states that throughout most of Christian history

² From hereon further I will use the term “church” to refer to the Christian church in general, as it functions as a social institution in society. I do not imply specific reference to a particular tradition or denomination.

³ Heteronormativity refers to the ideological presupposition that heterosexuality serves as what can be labelled as the “normal” or ideal sexuality and sexual behaviour, at the expense of alternative sexualities or sexual behaviours. Heteronormativity assumes that heterosexuality “is the way we are meant to be”, based on the notion that male and female were created as complete opposite sexes for one another (Thatcher 2011:20).

⁴ Patriarchy can be described as a social, historical, religious and economic system which serves to uphold the domination of male over female. It has its roots in the legal, economic and social system of antiquity which validates and enforces the sovereignty of the male head of the household over its other members, i.e. wives, children and slaves (Ackermann 1993:21-22).

there has been, and still remains, an entrenched set of attitudes which has “systematically discriminated against women, and infected relationships both between men and women, and between men and men.” Not only have women been systematically discriminated against, but all persons who do not comply with heterosexuality in terms of their own sexual identity and their relations to others. Responses from the church globally range from ongoing debates about homosexuality and the ordination of gay and lesbian ministers to outright condemnation and excommunication of all persons who do not fall in the category of heterosexuality. The South African context is no exception.

These roots of inequality within the church itself are extremely problematic in light of the context of gender and sexual inequality, abuse and violence that are suffered by many South Africans, male and female. Not only does the church find itself within a context of injustice; it could rightly be seen as an institution which proclaims, legitimizes and promotes this injustice – be it formally or informally, explicit or implicit. These abusive practices of the church have a particularly complex (and at times even stubborn) source of validation, namely the Bible.

The gender and sexual injustices of the church is, to a very large extent, influenced by the manner in which the Bible as Word of God is read, understood and interpreted, in other words, the manner in which the narratives of the Christian faith are “heard”. Patriarchal, heteronormative and male-dominant language, stories and teachings fill the pages of the Bible. This is due to the patriarchal and heteronormative context within which the books of the Bible came into existence and was canonized as a whole. Literal readings of texts in the Bible, which do not acknowledge the gap between “then” and “now”, has led many Christians throughout history to treat the imagery, metaphors and commandments in the Bible as if they have no historical situatedness and were written for the modern-day reader in the first instance. Pick-pocket quoting of biblical texts serves as proof for understanding society, gender, sexuality and faith in an (oppressive) manner which does not acknowledge the complexities or insights of our modern-day context. In contrast to such a “proof reading approach”, Green (2010:6) suggests that the reading of biblical texts should rather be viewed as exercises in “intercultural communication and understanding”, namely intercultural engagement between the context of the past and the context of the present. This type of engagement allows for diverse historical contexts to become conversation-partners which each needs to be reckoned with, in conversation with the texts and readers themselves.

An ahistorical misuse of biblical texts is particularly problematic regarding the spheres of gender and sexuality. Read on face-value, a particularly strong case could be (and has been) made for the male-gendered portrayal of God Triune in the Bible. Accordingly, the male imagery of God as Father and Jesus of Nazareth as biologically male is appropriated to validate a particular form of male dominance and female subordination, as male is perceived to be closer to the “image of God” than female is. This serves to uphold an oppressive view concerning women, gender-roles and sexuality as a whole. Bowen (2006:191) refers to this as an intersection of women, violence, and the Bible, where violence is caused by the text of the Bible by enforcing subordination and suppressing the feminine. So too the image of God as male Creator and the creation narratives serve to impose and validate a heteronormative understanding of being human. One might broaden Bowen’s reference to women and feminine to include all persons who are not “man enough” (or “women enough”!) according to stereotypical, patriarchal and heteronormative standards.

Within ideology critical biblical scholarship, especially for feminist, womanist, gender critical and queer theologians, this issue of an engendered understanding of God Triune has been given a lot of attention. Although much could be said for the fact that language and imagery for God should be understood metaphorically rather than literally and consequently more gender-inclusive, it is the biological maleness of Jesus of Nazareth that is more difficult to introduce in gender-inclusive understandings of God Triune. The importance thereof within the greater discussion of gender, sexuality and the Christian faith lies in the fact that the biological maleness of the person of Jesus of Nazareth is often appropriated to affirm the maleness of Jesus Christ, and consequently further “proof” for the maleness of God Triune. Corrington (1992:21) puts it as follows: “Because Jesus, a particular male, has been for Christianity not only the sole embodiment of the deity but also the sole redeemer and savior (*sic*) of flawed human existence, the relationship of women to Jesus, as the model of both the savior (*sic*) and saved existence, is problematic.”

Within broader gender critical theology, for example from the perspective of queer theology⁵, it is not only problematic for the relationship of women to Jesus, but to all

⁵ Queer theology has its roots in queer theory. According to Punt (2007:249), queer theory “critically analyses social dynamics and power structures regarding sexual identity and social power, by challenging and deconstructing normality especially as supported by essentialist notions of identity.” Queer theology is a form of liberation theology which

people who do not fit the heteronormative mould of gender and sexuality. Not only was Jesus a male who also fulfils the role of saviour, but he was (supposedly) a stereotypical hypermasculine male who serves as a perfect model of heteronormative masculinity. In this regard, Conway (2008:3-4) refers to the book of Dr. R. Warren Conant that was written in 1915. It was titled “The Virility of Christ: A New View” with the additional note “A Book for Men”. In this book he addresses the problem of the absence of men in the church at this time and ascribed it to the “feminizing of Christianity” in light of feminine, passive and negative expressions of Christ. He conclusively pleads for a Manly Christ and a “muscular Christianity”. This is but one example of popular literature that appeared in the early 20th century in America. A century later, book stores are still flooded with similar types of popular reading in their “Religion” section. Not only are Christian men urged to be “real men”, but Christian women are invited to be “proper women”. “Real” and “proper” are often used interchangeably with the description “godly”. Simply by looking at the covers of these books, one can get quite a good impression of what is expected of “real and godly men” and “proper and godly women”.

Such a heteronormative and hypermasculine understanding of God Triune often forms the framework within which the central faith narratives of the Christian faith, amongst which especially the narratives of the life, crucifixion, death and resurrection of Jesus, are understood. From the word “go” the narratives are interpreted as male-dominant (and female-subordinate) narratives of a male God who, through being male and subsequently powerful, apparently affirms heteronormativity and patriarchy, as well as female and feminine subordination in the tradition of the church and society at large. Such an understanding of God Triune and consequently the church does not leave much room for thoughts on gender-equality, gender-justice or inclusive sexuality, much less for practices and actions which would promote these and critically engage with the opposite. According to Maluleke and Nadar (2002:15-16) deconstructive and counter-strategies from within culture and religion are needed to address issues of gender and sexuality in our society: “For Christians, such strategies and structures would include counter-acting both the abuse and use of the Bible and other Christian teachings and practices in justifying and perpetuating the oppression of women. In doing this it might become necessary to deconstruct certain oppressive texts and teachings” (Maluleke & Nadar 2002:15-16).

engages with and critically reflects on Christian theology and the Bible from the perspective of and for the purpose of the queer community, i.e. those who represent sexual diversity and sexual minorities in society.

Oppressive use of texts and teachings are to the detriment of the entire faith-community and society: both male and female, and for persons of all sexual identities.

This thesis posits that stereotypical and oppressive use of texts and teachings in the church, specifically regarding gender and sexuality, has at its root insufficient contextual understandings of central faith narratives in the Bible.

1.3 Hypothesis

The central faith narratives of the Christian tradition are found primarily in the Bible and other foundational documents of the Christian church. It shapes the manner in which Christians understand and relate to God Triune, to themselves and to each other. These central faith narratives are communicated in many different ways and find concrete expression in the structures, doctrines and practices within the church. Thus, if it is argued that the structures, doctrines and practices within the church need to change or adapt in one way or another, then the starting-point needs to be the manner in which the central faith narratives are read, told and heard; if inclusivity and justice regarding gender and sexuality is to become part of the being of the church, then the starting-point needs to be the manner in which the church imagines, thinks of and speaks of God Triune. Schüssler Fiorenza (1994:107) says that only by dislocating the doctrinal discourses of redemption and salvation, namely the “narrative” of the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, from their preconstructed “common-sense” meanings does it become possible to reconfigure and to transform them.

As a gender critical biblical scholar⁶, I aim to do a critical (re)reading or reimagining of one of the central faith narratives of the Christian faith, namely the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth as portrayed in the Gospel of Luke (Luke 23:26-23:56).⁷ This will be done precisely, as Schüssler Fiorenza noted, to deconstruct the “common-sense” understanding of the masculinity of Jesus of Nazareth. The critical stance of the engagement with the narrative lies therein that I will bring it into conversation with the 1st century Mediterranean understanding of gender and sexuality within a context of honour and shame, and the

⁶ I specifically choose this description rather than ideology critical or feminist critical biblical scholar. The former is too general a category within which to place myself for the purpose of this study. The latter is too narrow a category, as I wish to include all people (not only women) who are being abused and oppressed by patriarchal and heteronormative worldviews.

⁷ This follows on what Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza describes as the practice of ethical-critical readings of biblical texts, as developed in her publication *Rhetoric and Ethic. The Politics of Biblical Studies* (1999).

effect that a scandalous event like the Roman crucifixion would have had on a person's socially-constructed and performed masculinity. The central character in this study is Jesus of Nazareth, as portrayed by the implied author of the Gospel of Luke.

The choice for the crucifixion narrative of specifically the Gospel of Luke is due to the manner in which masculine power and conflict appear as prominent narrative themes throughout the storyline of this particular gospel narrative. In light of Jesus' portrayal as a honourable male in the Lukan narrative who was more often than not able to contend with political and religious leaders on an equal footing, the crucifixion event as a challenge to and even possible destruction of masculinity initially appears completely out of place in the narrative of the Gospel of Luke and is therefore particularly poignant.⁸

By (re)reading and reimagining the crucifixion narrative in light of the manner in which maleness and masculinity was to be socially performed within this context, less weight might be attributed to Jesus of Nazareth as a male and more to Jesus of Nazareth as person, with specific reference to the manner in which Jesus crossed boundaries concerning his own socially-constructed masculinity and maleness. In the words of Japinga (1999:100): "Gender was certainly part of Jesus' identity as a person, as it is for all human beings; however, the essential theological point of the Incarnation was not that he became a male, but that he became fully human." The (re)reading and reimagining that is to take place in this study can be seen as a queer reading⁹ of the crucifixion narrative, as it aims to challenge an oversimplified understanding of oppositional male and female categories and heteronormativity, which is embedded in and maintained through patriarchy.

Within the said context of gender injustices, abuse and violence, particularly also by means of the church, the crucifixion narrative might become a challenge to precisely such a context and practices, in light of the challenge to Jesus' own masculinity on the cross. The crucifixion of Jesus might rather be seen as a deconstructive act of gender-justice and gender-activism than a validation of gender-inequality and oppression. One might

⁸ The portrayal of Jesus as an honourable and hypermasculine male in the Lukan narrative is, of course, not the only portrayal of Jesus that can be identified in the Gospel of Luke. However, this study aims to specifically focus on this portrayal in light of the gender critical approach being followed.

⁹ A "queer reading" or "queering" within biblical interpretation refers to a reading-strategy, often from the position of queer theology, where unusual or even unpopular interpretations of a text is put forward. This is done in order to challenge mainstream interpretations, especially in light of gender and sexuality. For a more detailed description of this reading-strategy, see page 51.

recognize the challenge it posed, in its historical context, to very set understandings of gender and sexuality (specifically masculinity) where inequality and injustice between sexes and within particular gender-categories were a given. Consequently, Jesus of Nazareth, as a crucified male, could pose a challenge to the current dominant heteronormative and patriarchal understanding of God Triune within the church. This in turn could offer alternative versions of the central faith narratives in the church from which to engage with each other within the community of faith and society as a whole.

Therefore, the hypothesis of this thesis is that a queer (re)reading and reimagining of the Lukan crucifixion narrative, which appears to uphold a hypermasculine image of Jesus of Nazareth, may offer the opposite view of the masculinity and maleness of Jesus that can challenge oppressive ideas and practices of gender and sexuality in the church and in society.

1.4 Methodology

In order to offer an alternative reading of the central faith narrative of the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, a three-part conversational approach to the narrative of Luke 23:26-23:56 will be followed. This can be seen as three layers of (re)reading that inform each other to eventually cumulate in a queer reading and reimagining of the crucifixion narrative for the purposes of our current context of (en)gender(ed) violence.

The starting-point is to make use of a methodology of narrative criticism. In the studies of New Testament, narrative criticism is practiced with primary reference to the four Gospels and the Book of Acts (Powell 2010:240). In this study it implies a reading of the narrative of the crucifixion from the perspective of the implied reader, as narrated by the implied author through the narrator of the Gospel of Luke. Within narrative criticism the anticipated response from the implied reader is usually indicated by some clues within the narrative (Powell 1990:19). A selection will be made from the variety of different elements pertaining to narrative criticism, namely character portrayal and thematic focus. Emphasis will be placed on the honourable male character portrayal of Jesus in the Lukan crucifixion narrative. As a narrative theme, male honour and power will be given attention.

Thereafter, in order to be able to approach the narrative more authentically as an implied reader, light will be shed on the socio-cultural context of the narrative by means of social science criticism in light of two aspects: firstly, the understanding of gender, sexuality and

particularly masculinity within the first-century Mediterranean world and Greco-Roman society; and secondly, the understanding of the Roman crucifixion within this context.

The final conversation-partner is that of ideology criticism, specifically gender criticism. In light of the aforementioned character portrayal and narrative theme, as well as the socio-cultural framework of the narrative, this approach will be appropriated in two ways: to engage critically with the type of masculinity portrayed by Jesus in the Lukan crucifixion narrative and its application in the Christian tradition; as well as a proposed queer reading and reimagining of the narrative to challenge stereotypical hypermasculine interpretations of Jesus of Nazareth.

The order in which these methodological conversation-partners will engage with the Lukan crucifixion narrative, is specifically done in order to build bridges between the different worlds pertaining to the text: the world in the text, the world behind the text, and the world in front of the text.

1.5 Demarcation and scope of investigation

This study focuses specifically on the Lukan crucifixion narrative, namely Luke 23:26-56. Although some attention will be given to narrative episodes surrounding this specific narrative episode, it is this literary unit that will form the main text of the study.

As far as possible, I will attempt to fulfil the role of the implied reader of the Lukan crucifixion narrative and to respect the narrative nature of this text. Although I will make use of insights regarding the socio-cultural context behind the narrative, the purpose of the study is not to ascertain in any way the historical reliability of this narrative account or to participate in the ongoing debate regarding the historical Jesus. Information regarding the socio-cultural context behind the narrative serves to be of assistance for contemporary readers to fulfil the role of the implied reader in a responsible manner, by providing contextual insight into the narrative world of the text.

The focus of this study is the person of Jesus – Jesus of Nazareth – rather than on Jesus the Christ as he is portrayed in the Lukan narrative. This choice is made because of the fact that it is precisely the biological maleness of the person of Jesus that has such a shaping influence on the male view of Jesus Christ as Divine and consequently God

Triune. Therefore attention is not given to the meaning of the cross or atonement theology at large. Rather, the focus is on the flesh-and-bone Jesus as portrayed in the Lukan narrative and who engaged with people during his time on earth as the Lukan author presents these narrative accounts.

As a New Testament study on Master's level, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to consequently or conclusively propose at great length any practical suggestions or a practical model based on the (re)reading and reimagining of the crucifixion-narrative for our current crisis concerning gender and sexuality in the South African society. It is, however, precisely this context which serves as the underlying motivation and background for the research topic at hand. Further studies might offer insight on the practical implications of an alternative understanding of the masculinity of Jesus of Nazareth for the church, congregations and/or Christian faith-communities at large.

1.6 Overview of chapters

Chapter 1, "Basic Orientation," serves to provide the outlines of this study in terms of the background to this study; the problem statement and hypothesis which forms the basis of the study; a short description of the methodology and approach which is to be used in the research; an indication of the scope of investigation and demarcation of the study area; and an overview of the content of this study in terms of the appropriated chapter division.

Chapter 2, "The possibilities of biblical narratives: A conversational approach to the Gospels of the New Testament," aims to introduce the conversation-partners in terms of approach for this study, namely narrative criticism, social science criticism and gender criticism. The starting-point for such a conversational approach is the basic hermeneutical model which acknowledges that texts have various worlds that need to be reckoned with. Each conversation-partner represents a different world. They will be defined and described in light of their appropriateness for this study. Conclusively the necessity for interaction between all three these conversation-partners in this study, will be put forward.

Chapter 3, "Narrative within a narrative: The Lukan crucifixion narrative of Jesus of Nazareth," offers an appropriation of the narrative critical approach to the crucifixion account as found in the gospel of Luke (23:26-23:56). A narrative critical reading of this narrative episode is done with a particular focus on the character portrayal of Jesus of

Nazareth as male protagonist. A prominent narrative theme which is the focus of this study is namely male honour and power.

Chapter 4, “More sides to the story? The world behind the Lukan crucifixion narrative,” provides a perspective on the crucifixion narrative of the gospel of Luke which aims to inform the position of the contemporary researcher (and others) as the implied reader of the narrative. The purpose is to shed light on the context in which the narrative of the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth would have originated and been heard by its initial audience, namely the Mediterranean world and Greco-Roman society. This will be done with specific reference to the manner in which gender and sexuality, especially masculinity and maleness, was understood and expressed within an honour and shame worldview, and the meaning and effect of the Roman crucifixion within such a worldview.

Within a context of a constructed masculine identity of an authoritative male figure, as was the case with Jesus of Nazareth, the event of the crucifixion would have been seen as one of the most extreme onslaughts of masculinity and male honour. The audiences of the Lukan narrative of the cross were not merely hearing any crucifixion narrative; they had to deal with the effect of a crucifixion of an authoritative and honourable man who, up to this point in the narrative, was able to hold up to what was regarded as masculine and male-appropriate.

Chapter 5, “In need of reimagining narratives: A queer view of the Lukan crucifixion narrative,” serves to propose a queering and reimagining of the Lukan crucifixion narrative in our contemporary context in light of the world in the text, as well as the world behind the text. I propose that queering and reimagining takes place with regards to two aspects: firstly, the reclaiming of the queer and scandalous nature of the crucifixion, especially from our modern-day perspective; and secondly, a queering of the interpretation of the Lukan crucifixion narrative, against the grain of the honourable, strong male portrayal of Jesus of Nazareth that is proposed by the narrative itself. Rather, I will suggest that the shaming effect of the crucifixion, as experienced within the 1st century context, should be applied to the Lukan crucifixion narrative. In such a manner the Lukan crucifixion narrative might offer a gender-fluid portrayal of Jesus of Nazareth rather than a hypermasculine portrayal.

Chapter 6, “Conclusion,” offers some concluding remarks in light of the arguments put forward in Chapter 2 to Chapter 5.

2. THE POSSIBILITIES OF BIBLICAL NARRATIVES: A CONVERSATIONAL APPROACH TO THE GOSPELS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

2.1 Introduction

When engaging with the task of interpreting New Testament texts as a biblical scholar, one really is currently at no loss of options in terms of method or approach.¹⁰ Long gone are the days when only historical-critical methods were appraised or when one was expected to be an expert in all things literary. In fact, according to Barton (1998:1) biblical studies finds itself in quite a bit of turmoil precisely because of the variety of methods and approaches available, as “(a)lmost everyone who writes about biblical studies today talks in terms of a ‘new paradigm’ for reading the text – a shift from an interest in political history and the historical meaning of the Bible to a social-historical, sociological, literary or postmodern style of reading.” Quite a cynical description, one might say, but it does express a sense of the complexity of New Testament interpretation in our current situation.

To the past belongs too the conviction that a single-method approach is to be given preference above a plural-method approach which draws together a variety of perspectives. Most biblical scholars today would contend that sound biblical hermeneutics¹¹ ask for a variety of methods and approaches. Gooder (2008a:xix) goes as far as to state that more recent interpretations of the New Testament can be defined precisely in terms of its pluriformity, in other words an active interest in combining multiple views and methods so that engagement with the text might take place more fully.

Biblical hermeneutics is not a solo enterprise uninfluenced by changes in broader intellectual development and specifically in philosophical hermeneutics, in which it finds its roots (Oeming 2006:27). The above-mentioned changes in the sphere of biblical hermeneutics form part of changes and tendencies in philosophical hermeneutics in our contemporary situation, namely a growing plurality of methods, a growing plurality of

¹⁰ It is, of course, not only biblical scholars who busy themselves with the task of interpreting the writings of the New Testament. All readers or audiences of the New Testament writings find themselves in the process of interpretation of some sorts. However, for the purpose of this study which finds itself in the academic discipline of New Testament studies, a biblical scholarly process of interpretation is pursued.

¹¹ According to Oeming (2006:1) “(b)iblical hermeneutics is the discipline of understanding biblical writing.” Included in this process of understanding are the academic process of biblical interpretation as well as the understanding and application of the Bible outside of the university. Schökel et al. (1998:13) distinguish between hermeneutics as “the theory of the activity of understanding and interpreting texts” and uses the term “exegetical method” to define the practice of proceeding systematically in the interpretation of a text. According to them, exegesis is “the exercise of comprehension and interpretation.”

meanings, and the loss of the objective (Oeming 2006:26). This, in turn, is part of the greater philosophical framework of so-called postmodern thinking,¹² within which a basic conviction of postmodern hermeneutics is that a single text most probably will produce different meanings in different discursive settings without the possibility of determining the correct meaning (Oeming 2006:25).

As a biblical scholar, I am convinced that a range of methods and approaches allows one to explore the depths and multi-layeredness of biblical texts, guarding against overemphasizing only one aspect and leaving others to trail behind. Such a collective approach to biblical texts acknowledges the complexity of these literary works which should not be approached in a simplistic manner. It also ensures that one is constantly reminded that one's own perspective or viewpoint is not the only possibility, but that it is part of a choir of voices – in the past, present and future.

Therefore it is precisely such a pluriform approach to the exploration of biblical texts that will give shape to the outline and progress of this study. As a researcher I deliberately choose to bring about multi-sided conversation (rather than simply a dialogue) between the Lukan crucifixion narrative on the one hand and three methodological conversation-partners on the other hand. These conversation-partners are namely narrative criticism, social science criticism and gender criticism.

Before having the actual conversation between the narrative and these methodological conversation-partners, it might be helpful to start off by explaining the hermeneutical framework within which the choices for conversation-partners have been made. Thereafter each of the conversation-partners will be introduced on a theoretical level in terms of their purpose for this study.

2.2 Interpreting texts holistically

The starting-point for this study is to understand the reading and studying of biblical texts as an active and ongoing form of communication. In its simplest form, the potential for

¹² According to Harvey (2000:1) there is no consensus about what constitutes postmodernism, besides the rather trivial observation that it represents some kind of reaction to modernity (which is itself a contested term). However, in general terms postmodern thinking may be viewed as a type of thinking that is cautious and suspicious of the classical notions of truth, reason, identity and objectivity, of the idea of universal progress or emancipation, of single frameworks, grand narratives and ultimate grounds of explanation, as described by Terry Eagleton (Harvey 2000:2).

communication exists when an addresser¹³ has a particular message which (s)he wishes to convey to a particular addressee. The actual transmission of the message takes place by means of a particular medium (usually oral or written) and is embedded in a specific context. According to Green (2010:1) this process can be visually represented as follows:



Figure 1 Visual representation of the communication process

Biblical texts, as written forms of communication, follow this pattern. In their written form, a particular author(s) (the addresser/s) attempted to convey a specific written message, namely a text, to a specific audience or reader(s) (the addressee/s). However, this process is never uncomplicated and without the risk of misunderstanding and misinterpretation. The process of creating meaning – as is the case with all forms of communication – is not a clinical, linear or objective process. According to Schökel et al. (1998:77) communication is not only about information. The interaction between the author(s) and the text has a reciprocal influence on each other. The same can be said for the interaction between the text and the reader(s). These interactions do not necessarily have the same outcomes, making it quite possible that the meaning intended by the author(s) might become something completely different through the eyes and ears of its audience or recipients. In most cases the author(s) were also not present when the text was received by the reader(s), opening up further the possibility for misunderstanding and misinterpretation for which no correction was possible.

The greater the distance in time and space between author(s) and reader(s), the greater the chances are for the misunderstanding and misinterpretation of biblical texts. One could assume that the original author(s) would have at least had some familiarity with the context of the intended reader(s) and could therefore make use of imagery, language and descriptions that was shared and collectively understood, at least in part. However, reading those same texts in contemporary times pose the added challenge of attempting to unveil the intended meaning of a message that is located in a context vastly different

¹³ This term is a noun used by Green (2010:1) to refer to the person who attempts to convey a particular message to another person or group of persons.

from our own. Not only language and imagery may appear strange and unfamiliar, but also content, events, persons and the intent being described.

Sound biblical hermeneutics, in my opinion, makes a great effort of understanding the contexts of all participants in the communication process – of the author(s), the text and the intended reader(s) – in order to come as close as possible to the intended meaning of the text and consequently start asking what it might convey to present readers of the text.¹⁴ Schneiders (1999:4) describes such an approach with reference to her own engagement with biblical texts as “an interdisciplinary theory of biblical hermeneutics that can ground a coherent methodological pluralism.”

A helpful framework for understanding these various contexts is to interpret biblical texts by means of an exploration of the so-called different “worlds” pertaining to them: the world behind the text, the world in the text and the world in front of the text. Accordingly the methods and approaches in biblical hermeneutics could be described and grouped as follows:

Behind-the-text approaches place the history of texts under the microscope, be it the history assumed by the text, the history that gave rise to the text, and/or the history to which a text bears witness (Green 2010:10). The purpose of these types of approaches is to ascertain what the *world behind the text* was and how the factors that gave rise to the text stood in relationship to the text itself (Schneiders 1999:127). Gooder (2008b:3) describes these approaches as being concerned with the journey that took place between the actual event and the text. During the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries biblical scholarship was dominated by a concern for historical questions (Schneiders 1999:132). It is especially the historical-critical method that enjoyed preference at the expense of other approaches. Its popularity found itself rooted in the broader scholarly notion that one could and should strive for revealing objective truths in all disciplines, including biblical scholarship.

¹⁴ Not only do the contexts between the present and the past differ. We should also bear in mind that, when dealing with biblical texts, we are not dealing with the original and first copy of the text. A process of rewriting (and possible scribal errors), selective collecting, editing and translating has taken place through centuries. When attempting to understand a biblical text, we need to take cognisance of a number of factors which has influenced the text up to this point. These developments are all the more reason to employ various methods and approaches when engaging with biblical texts.

In recent developments in biblical scholarship such aims of objectivity has, to a large extent, made place for a more realistic recognition of the subjective dimensions of the research process and the research subject itself. Behind-the-text approaches are, however, still a crucial part of the holistic approach to contemporary biblical scholarship and offer unique insights. Besides the historical-critical method these types of approaches include textual criticism, social science criticism, tradition-historical criticism, source criticism, redaction criticism, the use of extracanonical Jewish texts and exploration of Greco-Roman literature and culture.

In-the-text approaches focus on the text at hand, especially concerning literary aspects. The focus is on the perspective contained within and transmitted by the text, viewing the text as a kind of sealed “container” of meaning (Green 2010:10). The text itself and the world of the text, as portrayed in the text, are placed at the forefront (Schneiders 1999:132). These approaches gained popularity in the second half of the twentieth century and have since become a partner to diachronic methods (which focuses on historical development of texts). At the same time a variety of synchronic methods, namely ways of investigating the text as it stands, emerged to complement and challenge older methods. This was part of a broader emergence of interest in language in especially the fields of hermeneutical philosophy and linguistic philosophy (Schneiders 1999:132). In these approaches and methods the literary character of biblical texts enjoy prevalence and the literary artistry of the various types of biblical texts at our disposal are explored. Approaches and methods include literary criticism, genre analysis, rhetorical criticism, discourse analysis, structural criticism, poststructural criticism, canonical criticism and narrative criticism.

In-front-of-the-text approaches places emphasis on the *world in front of the text*, focusing on the manner in which text and reader interact in the experience of the interpretation of biblical texts (Schneiders 1999:157). Gooder (2008c:107) rightly states that many of these approaches are standpoints using the methods of a historical and literary nature, rather than methods in themselves. These approaches offer the perspectives of the various readers and reader communities of the text, and the possible effects which a biblical text (might) have on its readers (Green 2010:10). Reader-response approaches and approaches offering particular standpoints from the perspective of the reader have gained much popularity in recent years. Included in this sphere are feminist criticism, womanist criticism, gender criticism, liberation criticism, socio-political criticism, queer criticism, black

criticism, postcolonial criticism, Asian criticism, African (American) criticism, Latino/a hermeneutics and ecological criticism.

The motivation for practising holistic and responsible biblical hermeneutics lies therein that one is not sold out to simply one method or approach, but rather attempts to explore a variety of methods and approaches which collectively represent all three worlds of biblical texts. That is precisely what I as a researcher have set out to do with this study, especially in light of the weight the crucifixion narrative carries in the church and Christian tradition.

In what follows, I wish to introduce the three methodological conversation-partners representing each of these three worlds in this study: narrative criticism as a world-in-the-text approach; social science criticism as a world-behind-the-text approach; and gender criticism as a world-in-front-of-the-text approach.

2.3 World-in-the-text approach: Narrative criticism

2.3.1 Origin and motivation

Narrative criticism is one of the more recent literary methods and is positioned within the broader framework of literary criticism in biblical studies. In terms of biblical scholarship it is a relatively new approach to biblical interpretation, forming part of the renewed interest in literary studies of biblical texts since the early part of the twentieth century.

This renewed interest first found its way into secular literary studies since the 1930's amidst a growing reaction against the excessive emphasis on the historical aspects of the interpretation of texts. The historical circumstances of both text and author started taking the backseat to the recognition of the independence of the literary work as a work of art (Lawrie 2005:69). This view started influencing the interpretation of biblical texts (up to that point mainly done from historical-critical perspectives) as well (Jonker 2005:95). For a number of biblical scholars it simply was not enough to view the text as a medium through which the original intentions of the author, which lie behind the text, find expression (Lawrie 2005:67). In terms of biblical scholarship and biblical texts as literary entities, the

literary nature and possibilities of biblical texts had to start receiving the same amount of attention as the historical nature thereof.¹⁵

This need was felt by both Old and New Testament scholars and led to the development and appropriation of narrative approaches within biblical scholarship as a whole. In light of this study within the domain of New Testament scholarship, it is fair to agree with Powell (1990:2) who says that the objective, scientific analysis of biblical material by means of historical-critical methods made it difficult for historical-critical methods to take seriously the narrative character of especially the Gospels; hence the development of narrative criticism within New Testament scholarship.¹⁶

2.3.2 Description

In narrative approaches, of which narrative criticism is one, there is a particular sensitivity for the presentation and development of a story itself. Narrative analysts take seriously the various structures at the level of story-telling. There appears to be no standardized narrative approach. Reasons for this might be the relative newness of this approach to textual interpretation, as well as the particular nature of this type of approach (Jonker 2005:96). According to Powell (1990:19) there is not a movement such as narrative criticism in secular literary scholarship. It is a movement that has developed within the field of biblical studies without an exact counterpart in the secular world. Within the context of New Testament studies, Merenlahti & Hakola (1999:13) are of the opinion that narrative criticism can be understood as a peculiar combination of narrative theory and redaction-critical study of the Gospels.

¹⁵ “The relationship between modern literary approaches to the Bible and traditional historical-critical methodology is somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand, the literary approaches may be viewed as logical developments within and extensions of form and redaction criticism. On the other hand, these newer literary approaches incorporate concepts derived from movements in secular literary criticism that repudiate the significance of historical investigation for the interpretation of texts” (Powell 1990:6-7).

¹⁶ According to Knight (1998:21-22), narrative criticism was preceded by two older approaches. In the first part of the twentieth century form criticism was very dominant. This approach recognizes the development of biblical texts in terms of their start as oral traditions. These oral traditions were adapted according to the circumstances which they were to address in the early church. This method is essentially an historical approach, as it sees the text as a product of earlier traditions and attempts at unveiling the different layers of tradition behind it. In terms of the Gospels, this method includes distinguishing between “sayings” and “narratives” (as Bultmann did) and later distinguishing even further between sermons, paradigms, tales, legends, passion story and myth (as Dibelius did). The interest in form criticism was followed by the redaction critical approach towards the Gospels. Conzelmann’s *Luke* and Willi Marxsen’s *Mark the Evangelist* introduced this approach. Redaction criticism aims at analyzing the way in which material is arranged in a particular Gospel and how this arrangement is unique and different from the other Gospels (Knight 1998:22).

Powell (2010:240) describes the focus of narrative criticism as stories in biblical literature that are read with insights drawn from the secular field of modern literary criticism. According to him the goal of this method is to determine the effects that stories are expected to have on their audience. According to Gunn (1993:171) the term “narrative criticism” is a loose one and found more in New Testament than in Hebrew Bible studies. Narrative criticism, as practiced in New Testament studies, is a method still undergoing development, which borrows from a variety of areas such as rhetorical criticism, structuralism, and reader-response criticism (Powell 2010:241).

Merenlahti & Hakola (1999:15) are of the opinion that the true nature of the Gospels, for narrative criticism, is literary. The aim of narrative critics is to investigate the poetic function of the Gospels, in other words how the Gospels work as literature. Their investigation takes place holistically. Therefore narrative critics focus on the narrative of Gospels as a whole and then attempt to create an integrated interpretation of all the elements of the narrative. This assumption of unity is taken to be a general feature of the interpretation of literary texts. Gunn (1993:171) is in agreement with this feature regarding narrative criticism, particularly when compared to historical criticism, stating that the former has often been an exercise in holism, whereas the latter has segmented texts in practice.

For Knight (1998:21) the present form of the text enjoys primacy in narrative criticism. Unlike historical-critical analysis of biblical narratives which tries to understand the text by attempting to reconstruct its sources and editorial history, its original setting and audience, and its author’s or editor’s intention in writing, narrative criticism sees the existing text as complete in meaning in terms of its own story world (Gunn 1993:171). Narrative criticism makes literary rather than historical concerns central to its interpretation (Struthers Malbon 2008:80).

What makes narrative criticism as an approach within New Testament studies particularly unique is the fact that it represents a turning-away from theology in its reading of the Gospels and marks a turn towards interest in the structural mechanics of a text. The narrative nature of the Gospels are acknowledged and taken seriously. In attempting to understand the Gospels, their structure and the manner in which they were told must be considered. This asks for attention to be paid to narrative elements. The stories of the Gospels are not merely vehicles for theology but significant entities in their own right (Knight 1998:23).

2.3.3 Important elements of narrative criticism for the purpose of this study

Narrative criticism takes seriously the various narrative elements of a biblical text that create a holistic view of the literary character of the world in the text. The most common of these elements are implied author, narrator, implied audience or readers, characters, settings, plot and rhetoric, characters and characterization.

For the purpose of this study, which has Luke 23:26-23:56 as its narrative text, the following elements are the most important ones under consideration: Implied reader(s), plot and character portrayal.

2.3.3.1 Implied audience and/or reader(s)

The goal of narrative criticism is to read the text as the implied reader...To read this way, it is necessary to know everything that the text assumes the reader knows and to “forget” everything that the text does not assume the reader knows (Powell 1990:20).

In narrative criticism a distinction is made between the actual audience or reader(s) and the implied audience or reader(s).¹⁷ The implied reader is for narrative critics the reader who is presupposed by the narrative itself. According to Powell (1990:19) the implied reader is distinct from any real, historical reader in the same manner that the implied author is distinct from the real historical author.¹⁸ He argues that actual responses of real readers are unpredictable, but that the narrative offers clues within itself that indicate what the anticipated response from the implied reader should be (Powell 2010:242). These clues are indicative of the fact that the envisaged readers of a text are “written into” the text, just as the author is “written into” the text. The implied author assumes an ideal, implied reader, who cannot necessarily be identified with the empirical reader (Jonker 2005:98-99).

¹⁷ Struthers Malbon (2008:81) notes that the use of the term “implied audience” instead of “implied reader” is based on growing awareness of the fact that biblical materials originated in oral rather than written contexts. When using the term “implied reader(s)” in this study, both aural and reading audiences are included.

¹⁸ Narrative critics try to interpret texts with reference to their implied authors rather than with reference to their actual, historical authors. The implied author represents the perspective from which the work appears to have been written. This perspective must be reconstructed by readers on the basis of the clues they find in the narrative (Powell 2010:241). The implied author is a theoretical construction that is based on the required knowledge and understanding presupposed in a narrative (Struthers Malbon 2008:81).

Narrative criticism aims to determine the expected effects that stories had on their implied readers, without taking into account all possible effects that stories may have on actual readers. The implied reader is the one who actualizes the potential for meaning in a text and whose response to it is consistent with the expectations of the implied author (Powell 2010:242).

One of the ways in which the implied author guides the reader is through the use of a narrator. This is the voice that the implied author uses to tell the story (Powell 1990:25). A narratee is the one to whom the story is being told by the narrator. The narrator and the narratee are not the same as the implied author and the implied reader. They are rhetorical devices created by the implied author. They are part of the narrative itself and therefore part of the discourse through which the story is told (Powell 1990:27).

For Powell (1990:20) the concept of the implied reader moves narrative criticism away from being a purely reader-orientated type of criticism and makes it a more text-orientated approach. As a heuristic construct the concept of the implied reader limits the subjectivity of critics in their analysis by enabling them to distinguish between their own responses to a narrative and those that the text appears to invite (Powell 2010:243). This opinion has received some criticism, as noted by Powell himself. According to him, some reader-response critics argue that the concept of an implied reader does not take into account certain hermeneutical realities:

No actual reader would ever be able to grasp all the complex interrelationships that may occur within a text. Descriptions of ideal implied readers, furthermore, are always offered by actual readers and will inevitably reflect the particular interests or conditioning of the latter (Powell 1990:20).

The notion of an objective approach is thus contentious. Readers influence the manner in which a text is interpreted and “heard”. One might also question whether it is possible for any other reader who is not the actual, initial, historical reader to be able to place themselves in the position of an implied reader. Is it possible to pick up on the clues in the text when these clues are embedded in a radically different context than that of contemporary readers? Is the gap between the past and the present not too great?

In response to these types of questions Powell (1990:21) states that the implied reader is a hypothetical concept that is not dependent on such a person actually existing or not. Therefore the goal of reading a text “as the implied reader would” should not be pushed aside. It might be somewhat unattainable, but still remains a worthy goal nonetheless. For Powell, narrative criticism takes a middle position in relation to historical criticism and reader response criticism. The former defines meaning with reference to the intended effect of the text on one particular set of readers. The latter attempts to define meaning in ways that include all possible effects that a text might have on readers in different contexts or situations. Narrative criticism attempts to define the range of potential meaning for the text’s implied reader (Powell 2010:243).

2.3.3.2 Plot

For any narrative to be a narrative, it has to have a story line or plot. Without this it would not be considered a narrative (Jonker 2005:96).

The Gospels each relate a story that is mediated to the reader by the narrator. This story is referred to as the plot. Gunn (1993:179) is of the opinion that when we are dealing with the plot, we are dealing with the organizing force or design that connects events in some sort of comprehensible pattern or order. Knight (1998:40) is in agreement, stating that a plot serves as an outline or framework of events that happen in a story.

The narrator introduces the plot and explains the conditions under which it operates. The reader is told the meaning of the plot and the motives of the characters as well as what happens in the drama. The plot offers the “what” and “why” of the narrative. Conflict – be it physical, ideational or spiritual – is often a key element of plot (Struthers Malbon 2008:81-82).

The fact that the Gospels have plots, distinguish them from the letters of the New Testament which are not usually seen as narratives (Knight 1998:40). The plot of each Gospel is different (Knight 1998:28) as each is a narrative told from a unique perspective. This is indicative of the difference between “story” and “discourse” within a narrative. Story refers to the content of the narrative, whereas discourse refers to the rhetoric of the narrative, namely how the story is told. Therefore stories regarding the same basic events, characters, and settings can be told in ways that produce very different narratives,

like the Gospels (Powell 1990:23). At the same time the common denominator of the plots of the Gospels are the “cause and effect” device (explaining why the events happen as they do) concerning the reason for the death of Jesus (Knight 1998:40).

For narrative critics the analysis of the plot helps the interpreter in two ways. In the first instance it enables the interpreter of narratives to get to grips with the line of tension in the narrative. In the second instance it provides a way of identifying the changes the narrative wishes to bring about, be it concerning knowledge, values or changes in situation (Jonker 2005:96).

Considering the narrative unity of the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts, it can rightly be said that the Gospel of Luke is only “half” of this version of the story. However, as a Gospel narrative within the framework of the Synoptic Gospels, the Gospel of Luke does have a particular purpose in narrating specifically the story of Jesus of Nazareth, from his birth up to his death and resurrection. For the purpose of this study, the focus will be on a specific narrated event or episode within the broader scope of the plot of the Gospel of Luke, namely the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. One of the narrative themes that is expressed by means of the plot and that bears great weight for this study, is male honour and power.

2.3.3.3 Character portrayal

As a play has actors, so a story has characters that carry out the different activities that comprise the plot. The characters enable the emergence of the plot by means of the descriptions of their relationships with themselves, to other characters and to events (Jonker 2005:97). Characters can include both human and nonhuman entities. Both individuals and a group can function as a single character. In the case of the Gospels this could be the crowds, disciples and religious leaders (Powell 1990:51).

Characters are deliberate constructs of the implied author, with each one fulfilling a particular role in the story. Characterization refers to the process through which the implied author provides the implied reader with the necessary tools to reconstruct a character from the narrative in their own minds. This revelation of characters takes place either by means of telling the reader about the characters or by showing the reader what the characters are like within the story itself (Powell 1990:51-52). The manner in which

characters are presented in a narrative is very significant in determining the expected effect of a narrative on its readers (Powell 2010:246). Readers' perceptions of characters are shaped by comments from the narrator, by the reports of the characters' own words, deeds or perceptions, or by reports of the words, deeds, or perceptions of others (Powell 2010:247).

Different types of characters can be distinguished in a narrative, depending on the manner in which they are presented and developed, or not, as well as the function that they fulfil in the narrative (Jonker 2005:97). Flat characters are predictable and do not undergo much development as the narrative progresses. They act in a purely functional manner and little is said about them (Jonker 2005:97). Round characters, on the other hand, express a wide variety of traits and undergo development in response to what happens as the story progresses (Powell 2010:246-247; Jonker 2005:97). Characters are understood in relation to each other. Major and minor characters may parallel or contrast each other. Flat characters may highlight round characters. The characters may be aligned or opposed to each other and/or the narrator in terms of their various evaluative points of view. All of these aspects of characters affect the implied reader or audience's response – be it in praise, judgement or identification (Struthers Malbon 2008:81).

The role of the actual and/or implied author in the creation and development of characters must not be underestimated. According to Merenlahti (1999:50) the characters in the Gospels are only in the process of becoming who they are. They are constantly being reshaped by distinct ideological dynamics rather than being static elements with merely a literary or rhetorical purpose. Consequently, analysis of ideology should be an integral part of the analysis of formal features of narrative, seeing as there is a connection between ideological dominance and specific forms of representation.

In this study, the character being focused on is Jesus of Nazareth as portrayed in the Lukan crucifixion narrative. He is the protagonist of the narrative.

2.3.4 Criticism and relevance for this study

As an approach, Struthers Malbon (2008:87) notes that some scholars find narrative criticism as a sole mode of interpretation insufficient. Although they are interested in the way in which a narrative creates meaning, there is also a need to look backwards into

history or forward to the current reader for further illumination. Texts need engaged readers to create meaning, which opens the door to other methods of interpretation besides narrative criticism.

For Robbins (1996:55), who finds himself within socio-rhetorical criticism, the limitation of narratological analysis is the manner in which a narrator influences the interpreter, offering their perspective on reality as if it is the only one. The danger of not recognizing the influence a narrator attempts to exert could result in interpreters assuming that the world of the text is to be equated to the actual world behind the text, in which the text is situated and to be read (Robbins 1996:55-56).

As a researcher I share these reservations towards the narrative critical approach as sole method of investigation of a text. However, the strengths it offers in terms of highlighting the narrative nature of a text like the crucifixion narrative of Jesus of Nazareth is convincing enough to make it very useful against the background and purpose of this study. The other two methodological conversation-partners, namely social science criticism and gender criticism, will fill at least some gaps of interpretation which are beyond the scope of narrative criticism.

2.4 World-behind-the-text approach: Exploring the socio-cultural context of a Gospel narrative

The second conversation-partner in this study is a range of approaches known collectively as social science criticism. The choice for social science criticism is precisely to address the “gap” of narrative criticism regarding knowledge of the historical and socio-cultural contexts within which a text was heard, in order to fulfil the role of an implied reader of a biblical text in the 21st century. As the heading indicates, this range of approaches belongs to the sphere of the world behind the text.

Herewith follows an overview of social science criticism as pertaining to this study.

2.4.1 Origin and purpose

Recent social science criticism of the New Testament, in its multiple embodiments, dates from the 1960's and 1970's (Martin 1993:104). Taking seriously the historical context of

biblical texts was nothing new at the time. The new approach, however, was unique in that it represented an attempt in biblical scholarship as a whole to move beyond biblical literature to understand the political and historical development of Palestine from the Bronze Age to the Roman period. The appeal to a wide range of social science disciplines to understand the multi-faceted aspects of biblical societies formed part of the ongoing quest for the social world of the Bible which had already intrigued scholars, travellers and readers since the nineteenth-century (Whitelam 1998:35-36).

Jonker & Arendse (2005:50) describe the relationship between historical criticism and social science criticism by stating that there are both similarities and differences between these two approaches. It is similar in that both acknowledge the strangeness or foreign nature of the biblical world and texts when viewed from our modern perspective. This is because contemporary readers of the Bible do not share the same time, space, customs, values, worldviews, cultural knowledge, language, social structures and systems, political order, economy, and mobility of the original audience or readers. Social science criticism insists that biblical texts are not merely historical ideas, but also products of society and culture (Jonker & Arendse 2005:50). Social science criticism is essentially an approach that helps to make both historical reconstruction and social-cultural reconstruction possible.

2.4.2 Terminology and description

According to Barton (2010:40) the historical nature of New Testament writings open up the door for other disciplines from the human sciences to play a part in interpretation, especially the social sciences. These typically include sociology, social (or cultural) anthropology, and psychology:

The main presupposition that underpins the use of social sciences in NT interpretation (*sic*) is that the text of the NT (*sic*) is a product, not just of historical conditioning, but of social and cultural conditioning as well. To the extent that cultural factors and social forces played a part in the lives of the individuals and groups that produced the NT or to which the NT refers (*sic*), sociological analysis is legitimate and necessary (Barton 2010:41).

Terminology for this sociological analysis is tricky. In selecting literature for this part of the research it was already very clear that a (sometimes confusing) range of terms are used to

describe the input from social sciences for the interpretation of biblical texts. The different nuances of the various terms are not always that apparent, leading to overlapping between supposed different categories and methods. Martin (1993:103) addresses this complexity by stating that some refer to it as a social-historic approach (in continuation with traditional historical criticism but with a focus on social aspects of biblical issues); others as social-scientific or social science criticism (making use of concepts and models from sociology and anthropology and attempting to explain ancient Israelite and early Christian developments by use of those models); and others still as cultural anthropology or ethnography of ancient Israel or early Christianity. The common denominator is that all of these approaches are considered attempts to interpret early Christian literature and history through categories borrowed from the social sciences, sociology and anthropology in particular.

Schneiders (1999:107) distinguishes between social historians and social scientists. According to her social historians use traditional historical-critical methods to explore the “social world” of early Christianity, for example John Gager, Wayne Meeks, William Countryman and Howard Kee. On the other hand, social scientists argue that the task of cross-cultural analysis is a more self-conscious use of anthropological or sociological models that are made explicit at the outset and tested thoroughly by application to the data gathered from historical texts, as done by for example John Elliott, Jerome Neyrey, Bruce Malina and Antoinette Wire.¹⁹ All in all, Schneiders is of the opinion that there is a spectrum of views regarding what can be defined as a social-scientific method and whether any method specifically can be applied so strictly.

From a practical point of view, sociological analysis is referred to as sociological exegesis by some, indicating that interpretation takes place by means of a combined exercise of exegetical and sociological disciplines, principles, theories and techniques (Barton 2010:41). It rests on the premise that it is necessary to understand the social circumstances of the biblical world(s) in order to fully understand biblical authors in their world (Oeming 2006:43).

According to Jonker & Arendse (2005:51) cultural anthropology as a method is especially helpful for contemporary readers to hear and understand the meaning of biblical texts in

¹⁹ More information on these authors, their publications and contributions to the field can be found in Schneiders, S.M. 1999. *The Revelatory Text. Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture. Second Edition.* Minnesota: The Liturgical Press.

light of the cultural contexts in which they were originally proclaimed or written. For Schneiders (1999:119) the use of cultural anthropology as method forms part of a specific type of sociological interpretation which uses sociological categories and/or models from this field. The aim is to scrutinize biblical material that has either been overlooked by interpreters, or that has been assimilated too unassumingly to the sociological patterns and dynamics of the interpreter's own culture:

This type of sociological research is one form of a wider collection of approaches that is sometimes called social world research. It is actually another aspect of historical criticism in that it attempts to discern the social world in which the biblical events took place as well as that within which the text was written and to allow these historical social situations to stand on their own vis-à-vis the modern interpreter (Schneiders 1999:119).

Although Schneiders (1999:119) uses Bruce Malina as an example of an interpreter within social world research, Malina himself uses the term "social science criticism" and describes it as an attempt to understand the writings of the New Testament by means of the perspectives of social history and the methods of social or cultural anthropology (Malina 2008:13).

For Malina (2008:13) the basis of social science criticism is the insight that the people who wrote the biblical documents as well as the people whom they describe, are all foreigners to the modern, Western world. In the second half of the twentieth century scholars started to attempt to understand foreigners on their own terms within the discipline of social and cultural anthropology. The application of Mediterranean anthropology to biblical documents towards the end of the twentieth century resulted in what is known as historical anthropology. The purpose of this historical dimension is to filter out the anachronistic features brought to the text by contemporary readers. The anthropological component attempts to construct a comparative understanding of these ancient foreigners in order to overcome a reader's ethnocentrism.

The reason for the focus on the Mediterranean is because of the fact that the biblical writers and their audiences were all Mediterranean, specifically from the north-eastern shore of the Mediterranean. The Mediterranean people, social systems, cultural values and behaviours and person types differ vastly from contemporary Western readers (Malina 2008:13). In spite of the influence of "modernization" on especially social structures, the

values and behaviours of people traditional to the region are said to have remained fairly stable (Malina 2008:14). Thus, a starting-point for social science criticism is to engage with social systems of modern Mediterranean people and their values. Central themes like honour, envy, patronage, challenge-riposte, need for revenge or satisfaction and ingroup focus are used as lenses to filter out later historical changes, and to come as close as possible to the biblical writers on their own terms (Malina 2008:14).

2.4.3 Criticism and relevance for this study

One of the main lines of criticism towards sociological and/or social world research is that the sociological categories and methods of analysis that are used, were all developed by modern scientists who reflect from the perspective of First World Western societies on cultural dynamics as perceived from such a standpoint. They may or may not be applicable to earlier or very different cultures. The seemingly universalistic claims of some sociological critics seem overstated to some biblical scholars (Schneiders 1999:119)

However, in spite of this criticism, I as a researcher find the aim of exploring the social world within which texts came into existence and were heard or read an irreplaceable part of the hermeneutical process. This is particularly the case when dealing with a narrative, and even more so a narrative as influential as the crucifixion narrative of Jesus of Nazareth. Without acknowledging the world in which it came to be and attempting to understand how it might have been shaped and interpreted within such a context, one is left with only one's own social and cultural traditions and perceptions by which to interpret and engage the narrative.

The use of social science criticism in this study, particularly cultural anthropology, is because of narrative criticism's appeal to take up the position of the implied reader when dealing with the narrative text. The more familiar a contemporary reader is with the social world of the implied reader (although a literary construct), the better one might pick up on the clues in the narrative which are to shape the interpretation and meaning-giving which takes place in interaction with the text.

For Gowler (1991:9) this can be called a socio-narratological approach – an approach which understands the pivotal role played by cultural scripts in any narrative. He describes narratives as socially symbolic acts that assume, utilize or oppose elements of the cultural

milieu in which it was created. In terms of biblical narratives a dialogue between literary analyses and analyses of the cultural contexts in which the narratives were created, is necessary. The cultural scripts that are inherent in any text are an important form of implicit communication between an implied reader and an implied author, and therefore our capabilities as contemporary readers are enhanced whenever these scripts can be recognized. It is especially with regards to the portrayal of characters and their actions that the influence of cultural contexts comes into play. The portrayal of persons in ancient literature differs vastly from our conceptions in contemporary culture. Characters in ancient literature are virtually incomprehensible if one does not have a clear understanding of the cultural processes that influence the text (Gowler 1991:12). The character portrayal of the Lukan Jesus during the event of the crucifixion forms the focus of this study, and therefore this socio-narratological approach which Gowler suggests, is of particular value.

Rather than attempting to reconstruct the precise historical event which lies behind the biblical narrative or the exact situations of the Lukan community and author, the socio-narratological approach makes use of the more general cultural context that existed in the first-century Mediterranean world. The focus is not on a precise dating of the Gospel of Luke or a historical location and description of the author of Luke, or the community or communities to which the Gospel of Luke was directed. Rather, it is about picking up on the more general clues of the 1st century Mediterranean world and Greco-Roman society surrounding the narrative of the Gospel of Luke. In this manner the contemporary reader might understand the biblical narratives better and lessen the possibility of anachronistic and ethnocentric misjudgements²⁰ (Gowler 1991:13-14). This is an attempt at being a considerate reader of ancient documents (containing, amongst others, narratives about Jesus). As a contemporary reader one needs to bring to one's reading a range of scenarios rooted in the social system of the author and audience of the document to be read (Malina 1996:xiii).

For the purpose of this study, the social world behind the crucifixion narrative in the Gospel of Luke will be given specific attention with regards to two aspects: the manner in which gender, and in particular masculinity, was to be performed and maintained as part of the cultural script of honour and shame; and secondly the manner in which Roman crucifixion

²⁰ From the perspective of cultural anthropology and the use of cross-cultural models in exegesis, ethnocentrism and anachronism are seen as the "twin monsters" which threaten responsible engagement with biblical texts. Anachronism is the (mis)representation of something as existing in a time other than its own. Ethnocentrism refers to the interpretation of other cultures from one's own perspective whilst assuming one's own culture to be superior over others (Lawrence 2005:10).

was perceived and understood, and the possible effect it might have had on said gender perceptions and expectations. This will be done by means of the exploration of the 1st century Mediterranean and Greco-Roman context - the geographical, social, cultural and political environment of the origin of the New Testament writings.

The last methodological conversation-partner, namely gender criticism, serves to form a link between the socio-cultural context of the crucifixion narrative of Luke, in light of the gender of Jesus (world behind the text), and the contemporary context within which the crucifixion narrative is retold, interpreted and embodied (world in front of the text).

2.5 World-in-front-of-the-text approach: Reimagining biblical narratives through queer, gender-critical eyes

The third methodological conversation-partner of this study is gender criticism. This choice is motivated by the current context of South Africa and the church regarding gender and sexuality as well as contemporary readers and audiences of the Bible. Gender criticism as an approach in this study will be appropriated by means of a queer reading or reimagining of the Lukan crucifixion narrative. In this way the socially-constructed nature of gender – past and present - will be demonstrated.²¹ The role of the Christian church and tradition in maintaining (and even defending) an essentialist understanding of gender and male and female as binary opposites, will be questioned.²² It is especially the misuse of a particular interpretation of the biological maleness of Jesus of Nazareth in validating and maintaining such understandings that will be scrutinized.

Gender criticism as an approach to the Lukan crucifixion narrative of Jesus of Nazareth is an attempt to draw a link between two realities: firstly, the performative nature of gender in both the narrative world in the text and the socio-cultural context behind the text; and secondly, the ongoing performative nature of gender in our contemporary context.

²¹ “Constructionism is the name given to theories that assume that relations of gender are neither revealed by God nor read off nature, but are historical constructions which are produced by societies and social groups” (Thatcher 2011:20). According to Stuart (1997:3) social constructionism challenges the perception that anything is “natural”, including heterosexuality. Although some men and women may be attracted to one another in all times and cultures, the manner in which this attraction is interpreted and the repercussions thereof are constructed differently in different times and cultures. The same can be said of gender.

²² “In theological discussions of gender, essentialism is the doctrine that God created humanity in two distinct sexes. Each is made for the other. Our created nature is to be either male or female. Our natures cannot change. Our desires are intended to be for the opposite sex. Same-sex desire cannot conform to our created nature” (Thatcher 2011:20).

By drawing this link between past and present the same narrative that has often served the agenda of oppressors and abusers in terms of gender and sexuality might become precisely the opposite: by becoming a narrative of a male who transgressed the strict male and female understandings of gender in his own time, but consequently also the binary categories of male/female and masculine/feminine in our own time. This will be possible by means of a queering and reimagining of the Lukan crucifixion narrative.

In what follows, gender criticism as methodological conversation-partner is introduced by means of the broader range of ideological critical approaches within which it finds itself. Therefore its orientation with regards to feminist criticism, womanist criticism and queer criticism will be indicated, where after gender criticism itself will be put forward as possibility for alternative readings of the Lukan crucifixion narrative.

2.5.1 Ideologically infused narratives

Biblical narratives should not be seen as narratives uninfluenced by human aims, purposes or ideals. Biblical narratives have come to life in the mouths and at the hands of orators and authors who all had their own agenda for sharing the content that they did. The message they carried over, be it orally or written, was coloured by their social location as well as their perspectives and aims. All biblical narratives are subjective narratives created from a specific point of view, with a specific purpose. Schneiders (1999:120) calls this the ideology in the text, as does Robbins (1996:37). Robbins describes ideology in the text as the “(r)eciprocity between the empowerment of the narrator and characters, the verbal signs and the represented world by the implied author and the implied reader” (1996:37).

The same principal applies to the audiences, readers and interpreters of biblical texts – throughout the ages. Biblical interpretation is never an objective exercise by objective readers or interpreters. Each interpreter or interpretative group has a particular social location, point of view and aims that influences the manner in which meaning is created from biblical texts. Interpretation of biblical texts is always done with a particular purpose. This purpose will determine what the outcomes of the interpretative process will be. For Schneiders (1999:120) this refers to the ideology of the interpreters of the text. Robbins (1996:37) describes this simply as the ideology of the text. It is to be understood as the reciprocal process between meanings and meaning effects of the text in its world, on the

one hand, and the meanings and meaning effects in the world of the real reader: “(i)n other words, now the emphasis lies on the arena of the text where the implied reader and the real reader/audience receive and empower the message of the text” (Robbins 1996:37).

The approach within biblical scholarship that is concerned with this subjectivity in and around biblical texts is known as ideology criticism. Robbins (1996:36) defines ideology as the particular ways in which the speech and action of people, within their specific social and cultural location, relates to and interconnects with available resources, structures and institutions of power. Biblical scholars who employ ideology criticism, does so with regards to the authors, texts and readers of the Bible (Stratton 2000:123). Ideology critics attempt to take a critical stance towards the ideologies in, behind and in front of biblical texts, their authors and the various interpretative communities throughout history. This approach creates awareness of the subjective influences pertaining to the origin, development and interpretation of biblical texts through the ages. It does so from a variety of viewpoints, depending on which specific ideological stance is to be scrutinized.

Ideology criticism has been met with quite some resistance within traditional biblical scholarship. Precisely this resistance can be seen as part and parcel of the influence of ideology on biblical texts and biblical interpretation. In this regard Schneiders (1999:120) says the following:

...the Bible, like every other product of human intelligence and sensibility, is not free of ideological bias...the resistance to attempts to expose the ideological bias of the New Testament is perfectly understandable, because much of the ideology in the text is replicated in the mainstream interpreters of the text. Ideology, that is, a thought world generated by and supportive of a particular power agenda, is usually only visible to those excluded from the power system.

Stratton (2000:123) maintains that the ideology of readers is problematic for traditional interpreters, as they often still hold on to the modernistic idea of objective readings or interpretations of biblical texts. However, just because one does not explicitly state one's intentions when engaging with biblical texts (as would for example a feminist scholar, liberation theologian or postcolonial interpreter), it does not mean one is free from one's own influences and social location. All readers, audiences and interpreters are socially

located and consequently located within particular power relations. World-in-front-of-the-text approaches are necessary precisely to remind interpreters of this, time and again.

Ideology criticism attempts to unmask the various possible power agendas that are at play with regards to the various aspects of biblical texts. With regards to the role that biblical texts fulfil within religion, Oeming (2006:43) understands ideology criticism as necessary in light of the ideological function that religion can perform and maintains that biblical texts have a political dimension that needs to be reckoned with:

Any contemporary history of religion must include sociological elements. We thus widen our perception: biblical texts have a political dimension. Religion can function ideologically by either stabilising the status quo or by promoting revolutionary ideas. Exegetes must also perform ideological criticism. They must show that the theology promoted by a certain biblical author is 'relative' because of its ties to certain societal interest. Various theologies can be understood as the result of a societal discourse on how certain historical developments are interpreted from God's point of view and what consequences this interpretation carries (Oeming 2006:43).

A much debated issue surrounding ideology criticism is whether texts can have ideologies, or whether texts should rather be seen as the vehicles of the ideologies of people (Stratton 2000:123). The position one takes in this debate is part of the larger debate pertaining to the role of the reader and meaning: do texts have meaning in themselves, or is meaning that which is created in the engagement process with a text? With regards to this question it is especially the role of the reader that has been given much attention in recent years. Vanhoozer (2010:259) is of the opinion that the reader or interpreter of a biblical text participates in the creation of meaning. Texts contain the potential for meaning. However, "(m)eaning is actualized not by the author at the point of the text's conception but by the reader at the point of the text's reception" (Oeming 2010:259).

For Stratton (2000:125) it is precisely this position, namely that texts do not have ideologies within themselves, but rather that people have ideologies which find expression within and around biblical texts, that makes it possible for ideology criticism to be pursued. From this point of view, investigations into the ideologies of authors, editors, redactors, and the various interpretative communities who have heard and read the biblical texts can be done. More importantly, accountability for particular interpretations are made possible,

especially those interpretations that are oppressive towards certain people. Ideology criticism brings about a call to responsible readings of biblical texts.²³

Accordingly the particular group of voices within ideology criticism that relate to gender and sexuality will be introduced, namely feminist criticism, womanist criticism, queer criticism and gender criticism.

2.5.2 Gender criticism: Challenging the “naturalness” of male/female

Gender criticism, feminist criticism, womanist criticism and queer criticism within biblical interpretation all have a shared concern for the manner in which particular views of gender and sexuality are perceived, maintained and validated within the framework of ideological approaches to biblical texts. This is especially so pertaining to the manner in which biblical texts and traditions are used to uphold patriarchy, heteronormativity, androcentrism²⁴ and domination/subordination with regards to man/woman, male/female and masculine/feminine. However, each of these approaches has their own focus within this broader framework and therefore emphasise different aspects to be considered when engaging in critical biblical interpretation. Accordingly they will be described shortly.²⁵

2.5.2.1 Feminist criticism

González (2005:63) describes feminist theology as a variety of theologies that started gaining recognition during the second half of the twentieth century. Its common characteristic, according to him, is to reflect theologically while giving particular attention to the experiences of women, and specifically so the experience of oppression in male-dominated societies and churches. For Loades (1998:81-82) the identification as a feminist is a commitment towards seeking change for the better in terms of justice for women. This asks for much attention to be given to women's perspectives.

²³ Within especially feminist criticism, a hermeneutics of suspicion (a term coined by Paul Ricoeur) is often applied in order to expose the ideologies that have been included in the traditions of interpretation of biblical texts. Readers are encouraged to approach the Bible with eyes wide open and to recognize the human influence of power (and oppression) – be it in the text itself, or in consequent interpretative traditions (Scott Spencer 2010:305).

²⁴ Androcentrism defines males and their experiences as the norm and females and their experiences as a variation or deviation of the norm (Loades 1998:81).

²⁵ In the following descriptions of each of these approaches, I realise that one always runs the risk of generalizing approaches, as if all who identify with a particular critical stance necessarily share the same opinions or interpretations. Being fully aware of the fact that approaches are as diverse and varied as the individuals who align themselves with it, I attempt to focus on the common and shared characteristics of each approach, well-aware that there are always exceptions to the rule and variations on the theme.

Androcentrism needs to be dislodged. For feminist theologians a crucial aspect is the manner in which the relations between human beings affect their relationship to God, and how God may be mediated to them. Both men and women suffer spiritual and other damage when the symbolism for God is false or mistaken.

With regards to biblical interpretation, feminist criticism concerns itself with the manner in which women are portrayed in biblical texts (or appear absent), the socio-historical contexts of biblical texts, consequent traditions within faith communities and the experiences of women as readers of biblical texts through the ages. It questions the patriarchal nature of the Christian faith tradition from its origins onwards and those religious, institutional and societal practices and strategies that seek to maintain such an oppressive system, rather than attempting to challenge and change it. Scott Spencer (2010:289) states that feminist criticism attempts to promote the interests of women within biblical literature and in scholarship. Also, feminist criticism aims to expose how the Bible has been misused to restrict women to particular roles in the household, church and society, and to affect women's lives in other adverse ways.

The drawback of feminist criticism, according to Nolan Fewell (1993:244), is that the particular focus on women as different from men fits the patriarchal syndrome of defining women as "other" very well. Women are placed in opposition to men, while the being and interest of men still in some way or the other remains the unquestionable standard. The engendered nature of writing has often been met with not much more than simply observation in biblical scholarship.

2.5.2.2 Womanist criticism

Womanist theology is a form of contextual liberation theology which is done from the perspective of African American women. It attempts to serve both the feminist and liberation theologies, from the experience of being oppressed in terms of not only gender, but also race and class. There is a particular awareness of the manner in which theology and Christianity has been used to justify the oppression of both African Americans in general, as well as African American women in particular (González 2005:183).

With regards to biblical interpretation, womanist criticism came into existence as a reaction to feminist criticism which has been perceived to be dominated by middle-class, North

Atlantic, white women. Women's experiences of oppression across the world differ, depending (amongst others) on the race and class within which they find themselves.²⁶

Womanist biblical scholarship uses the experience of black women as central to their interpretative practices. As with womanist theology, womanist interpreters see race, gender, and class as interconnected. They are interested in the personal, communal, ecclesial, and socio-political liberations of females and males alike. Some womanists describe their hermeneutical stance as a hermeneutics of wholeness (Powery 2010:335). For Brown Crawford (2002:xiv) womanist textual analysis applies a method to selected narratives in which the dynamics of multifocal oppression, namely racism, classism and sexism are discerned. Multidimensional oppression, as experienced by African Americans, and the particular experiences of oppression and abuse of African American women, are brought in conversation with one another.

Although womanist criticism is in one sense recognition of the variety and diversity of experiences of being female within a predominantly male-centered world, particularly within the contexts of the Two-Thirds World, it still places much emphasis on the male/female dichotomy. Therefore the same criticism applies to womanist criticism as towards any other form of ideology criticism concerned with gender and sexuality that might position "woman" as the other in relation to "man". In this sense "man" remains the normgiving entity of being in society. By placing so much emphasis on difference in terms of sex and gender, the experience of being a holistic human being is shifted to the background at the cost of being either male or female.

2.5.2.3 Queer criticism

Queers²⁷ find themselves in the company of women and African Americans who struggle with embracing the Bible as the Word of God when it has been used to justify our oppression (Goss & West 2000:3).

²⁶ "Depending on their historical and social locations, women can be as different *from other women* as they are from men; or alternatively, women can have more in common with certain *men* than they have with some women" (Scott Spencer 2010:301).

²⁷ "Queers" or the "queer community" refers to the LGBTIQ community, who represent a range of alternative and minority sexual identities when compared to normative heterosexuality. The term "queer" is not used pejoratively here, but, to the contrary, in the way the term has been reclaimed as a positive description by queer theorists.

Queer criticism is an approach to biblical interpretation that has evolved from various fields: historical critical methods, language studies, feminist hermeneutics and liberation theology. Because of this, it has become a multilayered, multidisciplinary and complex range of approaches to texts. Its unique feature, amidst this variety, is that it uses sexual identity as a standpoint from which to interpret biblical texts. In particular, it is the sexual identity of people whose sexuality may differ from what is regarded as “normal” within dominant culture, namely one man and one woman having intercourse within a religiously sanctioned marriage (Hornsby 2008:144). Moreover, in terms of faith communities, Mollenkott (2000:15) states that most Christian and Jewish congregations still operate under heteronormative and patriarchal assumptions that silence, marginalize, or distort queer experience. Thus, the experiences of the LGBTIQ community (or queer community) within society and in faith communities stands central to queer criticism which engages with biblical interpretations.

Queer criticism is rooted in queer theory. According to Schneider (2000:206) queer theory aims to disrupt modernist notions of fixed sexuality and gender, presenting it rather as a more fluid and changeable aspect of humanness by means of post-structuralist critiques of “natural identities”. Queerness (and consequently sexuality and gender) is seen much more in terms of socially constructed systems of meaning and practice that implicate everyone, rather than a fixed identity of so-called sexual minorities (Schneider 2000:210). Thatcher (2011:139) asserts this as well by describing queer theory as a set of ideas based around the idea that our sexual identities are not fixed and do not determine who we are. For Thatcher (2011:139) it is meaningless to generalize when speaking about “women” or “men”, as identities consist of so many elements. To assume people can be seen collectively based merely on one characteristic is wrong. Stuart (1997:3) states that queer theory rejects the essentialist view that sexuality is a drive that is universal and eternal. Queer theory rather takes on a social constructionist view of sexuality, which implies that erotic desire should always be interpreted within history or culture. Therefore its interpretation or construction is mostly bound up with power-issues, particularly of those who categorize and label and of those who are labelled (Stuart 1997:3). For Punt (2007:251), besides challenging and deconstructing, queer theory offers a new vocabulary with which to consider and discuss all of human sexuality, sexual orientation and sexual practices.

Queer theology and consequently queer criticism, does not see difference as problematic but rather celebrates difference as an insight into truth as opposed to a threat to it (Stuart 1997:4). This does not imply that anything goes. It is rather a recognition of the conviction shared by all reader-orientated and liberative approaches (for example feminist theology and womanist theology) that no interpretation or theology is neutral or objective, but that it is always largely influenced by one's social location and experiences of power and powerlessness (Stuart 1997:4). Therefore one should not imagine a singular queer theology. Rather, as Thatcher (2011:140) puts it, "(q)ueer theologians are a mixed bunch," coming from lesbian and gay, liberationist, feminist and womanist traditions of theology, and some also radically orthodox. The intentions of queer theologians also vary widely. While some aim to deconstruct entirely the God which, according to them, presides over a system of heteronormativity and patriarchy, others want to reclaim the Christian tradition as itself queer. Some use the verb "queering" as describing the activity of overcoming that which they perceive to be heterosexual prejudice in religious language, doctrine and practice (Thatcher 2011:140). The reimagining of the Lukan crucifixion narrative, as done in Chapter 5 of this study, will entail such queering.

Queer criticism is an approach that contributes to the range of interpretative voices of biblical texts, particularly in light of gender and sexuality. It broadens the scope of readers by challenging the categories of either/or heterosexuality/homosexuality and other binaries invoked in gender, sex and sexuality discourses. It scrutinizes, amongst others, the heteronormative influence of the history of biblical interpretation and the Christian faith tradition that keep heteronormative and essentialist understandings of human sexuality and gender intact, and attempts to let the voices of those who have mostly been silenced be heard.

As with any reader-orientated approach, criticism of queer theology and queer readings of biblical texts might rightly be that it focuses very specifically on the experience of a particular group of people (namely the queer community) and moves to the background the experiences of those who do not form part thereof. However, with the range of possible positions within queer theology and the possible interpretations of the word "queer" and "queering", it might be less of a particular approach as it appears from the outset. Moreover, one might rightly argue that such a particular subjectivity is precisely justified in light of the long (and ongoing) history of disregard for the voices of the queer community within the Christian faith and theology. So also it may be said that queer

theory destabilises in general – not only regarding gender and sexuality – and would certainly challenge the rethinking of “queer” as much as other positions.

Although being of help for the purpose of this study in light of the queering and reimagining of the Lukan crucifixion narrative in terms of the maleness of Jesus, I wish to position this queering of the crucifixion narrative within the framework of all people – male and female, across all sexual orientations and identities. Therefore I have made a choice for a gender-critical approach, which does overlap to a certain extent with queer criticism.

2.5.2.4 Gender criticism

Gender criticism finds itself within the broader range of interpretative approaches concerning human sexuality and gender. According to Ehrensperger (2008:136) it is a development within the feminist interpretation of the 1980's and 1990's, where the focus moved to gender issues in general. This gave rise to both gender criticism of the Bible in general and to so-called masculinist criticisms.

As with queer criticism, which questions an essentialist understanding of sexuality, gender criticism questions an essentialist understanding of particularly gender in relation to sex – male and female, and accordingly maleness and femaleness, and masculinity and femininity – as well as the power-relations invested in this typically dominant/subordinate pairing.

Nolan Fewell (1993:242) states that gender should be understood as a social construction. Whereas sex is a biological difference, gender identity is socially defined. People are born male or female, but become men and women by adhering to cultural constructions of what men and women are supposed to be like (Nolan Fewell 1993:242).²⁸ However, the strong distinction between sex as the biological and gender as the socio-cultural has been contested, with the complexity and reflexivity of biological and cultural processes as motivation (West & Zimmermann 1987:126).

²⁸ At least, this categorization of male or female is done according to the outward visible genitalia of a person. In the case of intersex persons this becomes complex, as a decision as to whether the male or female genitalia will be removed is often left to be decided by a family-member or a medical doctor while the person is still a small baby. This in turn determines the sex of the individual, although at a later stage the choice might be regretted.

Thatcher (2011:18) holds the view that there are biological differences between men and women, but that problems arise when these biological differences serve as motivation for assumptions about degrees of greater or less in the interpersonal spheres of value, dignity, worth, capacities of intellect, soul or spirit, or entitlements to the exercise of power, control, and so on.

Tolbert (2000:99) distinguishes between a modernist and a postmodernist view of gender. Gender, when viewed from a modernist perspective, is a set of innate social traits which naturally accompany biological sex. Gender therefore becomes the universal and essential social correlative of binary biological differentiation. Within postmodernist thought this modernist view of universal binary gender relations is contested in various ways, offering the following alternatives: gender is a socially constructed set of behaviours with deep political roots (rather than describing innate natural traits); and gender is enacted in various different ways in each historical and local setting (rather than being universal). Therefore gender criticism poses the notion of a multitude of gender relations, which marks all cultures (both ancient and contemporary), challenging the idea of a fixed maleness/masculinity and femaleness/femininity (Tolbert 2000:102).²⁹

Some postmodern theorists also challenge the naturalness of gender, contending that gender emerges from the pattern of gender identification as a process of performance in which gender-appropriate behaviours are enacted so often that they become “natural” (Tolbert 2000:99). In other words, the socially-constructed nature of gender becomes vague because of the repetition of certain behaviours, which make them seem biologically predetermined in light of being male or female.

One of the main aims of gender criticism within the framework of theology (as is the case with feminist, womanist and queer criticism) is to challenge the manner in which biblical interpretations and concurrent Christian faith traditions and doctrines enforces the notion of a divinely mandated essentialist gendering in society, particularly so then the patriarchal and heteronormative expression thereof in all spheres of interpersonal relations. Furthermore, the engendered understanding of God Triune is challenged. Not only is the maleness of God and Jesus Christ questioned, but also the type of masculinities which they (apparently) express in their divine natures. The aim of this study is to become part

²⁹ “Doing gender involves a complex of socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine ‘natures’” (West & Zimmermann 1987:126).

of these voices, specifically in light of the Lukan crucifixion narrative and the manner in which Jesus of Nazareth's maleness is portrayed.

2.6 Conclusion

In this study a deliberate choice has been made to explore the crucifixion narrative as narrated in the Gospel of Luke. The text of Luke 23:26-23:56 will form the basis of the investigation. Regarding methodology it will be done from three perspectives which will be applied as conversation-partners in a discussion with the text. The first perspective is that of a world-in-the-text approach, namely the narrative criticism. The purpose of this perspective is to highlight the narrative character of the crucifixion narrative and shed some light on the implied reader, character portrayal of Jesus of Nazareth as a male, and the plot of this narrative in correspondence to the narrative theme of male honour and power.

However, in order to explore and appreciate a narrative that stands at a great distance from the present and to identify with the position of the implied reader, one needs some familiarity with the socio-cultural context within which it historically came into existence. This world-behind-the-text approach of social science criticism will be used to build the "bridge" between the implied reader of then and now, making it possible for contextual strangers like ourselves to place ourselves more appropriately in the shoes of the original audience and reader(s). This perspective attempts to clarify the unfamiliar and perhaps not so well-known aspects of the world behind this biblical narrative, especially concerning the manner in which gender and masculinity on the one hand, and the crucifixion event on the other hand, was expressed and perceived within the 1st century Mediterranean area and Greco-Roman society.

The third perspective is that of a world-in-front-of-the-text approach, namely a gender-critical, queer reimagining of the socially-constructed maleness of Jesus of Nazareth in the Lukan crucifixion narrative. In this manner two things might be addressed: firstly, misinterpretations of the maleness of Jesus of Nazareth which do not acknowledge the socially-constructed nature thereof; and secondly, misconceptions about our own socially-gender identities that are much rather socially-constructed than biologically predetermined. Such questioning of "common sense" notions, especially within the church and Christian

tradition, might challenge those teachings and practices that cause great harm in attempting to keep essentialist, heteronormative and patriarchal frameworks in place.

What is thus offered methodologically in this study is a fusion of voices engaging with a biblical text. This is a deliberate choice for a pluriform approach to one of the most prominent and influential narratives of the Christian faith, in light of problematic understandings and practices of gender and sexuality.

Following on the aforementioned theoretical overview of each of the three approaches being implored in this study, they will now be appropriated and brought into conversation with the Lukan narrative of the crucifixion, namely Luke 23:26-23:56.

3. NARRATIVE WITHIN A NARRATIVE: THE LUKAN CRUCIFIXION NARRATIVE OF JESUS OF NAZARETH³⁰

3.1 Introduction

The critical focus of New Testament narrative criticism is the collection of literary units in their entirety and in their present form (Lee 1999:134).³¹ In that sense, this study appears to deviate from one of the main criteria of narrative criticism by making a deliberate choice for a particular narrative episode within the Lukan narrative, namely the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth.³² Adding to that, not all possible literary aspects of the Lukan crucifixion narrative will be considered. However, in each study choices must be made, in spite of possible shortcomings those choices might entail. In light of the pluriform methodological approach of this study towards the Lukan crucifixion narrative I find it appropriate to focus only on the Lukan crucifixion narrative (Luke 23:26-23:56), while employing only certain narrative-critical elements for engaging with it. Smaller narrative episodes within larger narrative units might rightly be analyzed as narratives, in spite of not being the “complete” larger narrative.

The narrative-critical elements that will be brought to light in this chapter are namely the character portrayal of Jesus, and the narrative theme of male honour and power. Both of these narrative-critical elements will be discussed with regards to the narrative episode of the crucifixion and death of Jesus of Nazareth in particular (although some references will be made to the broader narrative of the Gospel of Luke).³³

As is the case with each of the Gospel narratives, the Gospel of Luke contains similarities as well as unique characteristics when compared to the three other Gospel accounts. Although all four gospel accounts portray the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth, each is

³⁰ In referring to the text of this narrative, I will make use of the 27th edition of the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece* (1983, Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft) for Greek references and of the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament (1946, New York: Nelson) for English references.

³¹ Uncritically viewing the Gospel narratives as unified wholes is also the point of much critique aimed towards narrative criticism. However, the tensions, gaps and mysteries of the texts itself are also acknowledged by many narrative critics (Lee 1999:136-137).

³² This title for Jesus is chosen specifically to indicate my interest in the person of Jesus as presented in the narratives of the Gospels, rather than the subsequent Christologies or theologies of Jesus' crucifixion.

³³ In light of the difficulties for contemporary readers to fulfil the role of the implied reader of the Lukan crucifixion narrative without any socio-cultural knowledge of the world behind the text (as stated in Chapters 1 and 2), I will pay more specific attention to the implied reader in Chapter 4.

done from a particular perspective and with a specific purpose.³⁴ Much has been made in biblical scholarship of the similarities and differences between the various Gospel accounts, with a large amount of time and effort being spent on attempting to reconstruct the “original” account³⁵ and also the “historical Jesus”³⁶ underneath the layers of redaction and artistry ascribed to the various authors.

Rather than seeking for a historically verified portrayal of Jesus of Nazareth on the cross, or attempting to unveil the “original” crucifixion narrative of Jesus of Nazareth in comparison to the other Gospel accounts, I aim to focus precisely on some of the narrative elements which appear to be unique in the Lukan version of the crucifixion narrative. According to Perkins (1998:256) this is exactly one of the insights brought about by narrative criticism, namely that the distinctive features of each evangelist might be appreciated. As will be proposed, one of these distinctive features in the Gospel of Luke is the manner in which Jesus is portrayed by the narrator within a framework of male honour and power.³⁷

My choice for focusing on the above-mentioned narrative elements has been made in light of the background and problem statement of this study. The question that is central to this research is: how can alternative readings of the Lukan crucifixion narrative of Jesus of

³⁴ Burrige & Gould (2004:52-53) describe the uniqueness of the various accounts as follows: “The Gospels are not just a window through which we can look at the historical Jesus, nor are they a mirror in which we catch our own reflection. They are like a piece of stained glass. The point about that is the picture in the glass. The artist only has a limited amount of space. The kind of thing they will put in is limited, and everything you see through the window is coloured by the glass. So too, for Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. They have a limited amount of space – one scroll – and in each case they select things because they want to tell you something about their particular understanding of Jesus, what they want you to see. The Gospels are Christology in narrative form – the story of Jesus.”

³⁵ In biblical scholarship it is especially the fields of source criticism, form criticism and redaction criticism that are (in various ways) concerned with revealing the so-called “original” version of texts (cf. Green, 2010 and Gooder, 2008d). Narrative criticism approaches the text in its final and present form, i.e. as it was canonized and consequently translated. Although aware of differences pertaining to translations, the broader focus on the narrative as a whole remains the key focus of this approach.

³⁶ The phrase “historical Jesus” can refer to those things about Jesus that can be proved through rigorous historical research, or to the historical figure of Jesus of Nazareth (González 2005:76). The “historical Jesus” is often contrasted with the “kerygmatic Christ” or the “Christ of faith” (O’Collins & Farrugia 2000:106). The phrase became popular in light of the title of the English translation of a book by Albert Schweitzer, “The Quest of the Historical Jesus”. In this book, Schweitzer reviewed a process that was began by Hermann S. Reimarus (1694-1768), which attempted to discover the Jesus behind the Gospels – specifically by means of newly developed tools of historical research. Schweitzer’s conclusion was that the scholars involved in the quest (which spanned almost two centuries) had discovered a modern image of Jesus, rather than the Jesus of Nazareth as he lived in the first century. The quest for the historical Jesus has not been entirely abandoned. However, more recent historical studies are more minimalist in nature and focus on the bare facts about Jesus that can be affirmed about him and his teachings (González 2005:76-77).

³⁷ I find this quite ironic in light of the manner in which the Gospel of Luke is often described, namely as the gospel which promotes gender equality and liberates women. Ringe (2002:65) offers some critique on this common description. Regarding the notion that the Lukan Gospel favours women, she notes that the appearance of more stories about women does not necessarily imply changed attitudes in terms of gender. She finds the roles that the characters play in the story of Jesus to be very traditional roles for women in the Hellenistic world of the Roman Empire.

Nazareth assist in creating alternative realities of gender-justice, especially in light of the gender-injustices which have been and are done in light of patriarchal and heteronormative interpretations of the crucifixion narrative? Upon a first reading of the Lukan crucifixion narrative, as to be done in this chapter, it seems as if traditional and contemporary patriarchal and heteronormative interpretations of this specific crucifixion narrative are simply following up on the clues that the narrator provides to the reader.

Here follows the first reading of the Lukan crucifixion narrative for the purpose of this study, from the perspective of narrative criticism.

3.2 A narrative-critical approach to the crucifixion narrative

Although a choice has been made for a narrative-critical engagement with specifically the Lukan crucifixion narrative (23:26-23:56), it cannot be read completely in isolation from its larger narrative framework. It forms part of a larger narrative episode, commonly known as the passion narrative (22:1-23:56). And this narrative episode, of course, is again part of the larger Lukan narrative as a whole (1:1-24:53).

Before paying attention to the narrative elements of the character portrayal of Jesus as well as the theme of male honour and power in the Lukan crucifixion narrative (23:26-49), I will start off by giving an overview of the narrative episode of the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth within the broader narrative episode of the passion narrative (22:1-23:56). Thereafter, with specific focus on the crucifixion narrative, the character portrayal of Jesus as well as his apparent participation in the narrative theme of male honour and power will be discussed in an interrelated manner.

3.2.1 The Lukan crucifixion narrative of Jesus of Nazareth

3.2.1.1 Events leading up to the crucifixion narrative: Luke 22:1– 23:25

The Passion narrative starts off in 22:1-6 with the Jewish leaders (specifically the chief priests, scribes and officers) determined to kill Jesus. Judas Iscariot, into whom Satan had entered, agrees to betray Jesus in exchange for money. This betrayal will have to take place in secret, because of the multitude's affinity for Jesus.

According to the division of Senior (1990:47), 22:7-38 recounts Jesus' last meal with and farewell to his disciples, which consists of a few episodes. Firstly, Jesus sends two of the apostles to prepare for the Passover meal (22:7-13). Thereafter follows the celebration of Jesus' last Passover meal in a large upper room in Jerusalem, where Jesus is in the company of his apostles (22:14-20). A series of conversations or brief discourses follow, namely the prediction of Judas' betrayal (22:21-23); an instruction on true discipleship (22:24-30); a special prayer for Simon and the prediction of his denial (22:31-34); and a warning about the impending crisis of his death (22:35-38).

22:39-46 narrates Jesus' time spent at the Mount of Olives, together with his disciples. Here Jesus spends time in intent prayer and instructs the disciples to do the same (22:39-44). But the disciples are asleep upon Jesus' return after spending time in prayer on his own (22:45). While Jesus calls on the disciples for a second time that they may not enter into temptation, a crowd (including Judas, a slave of the high priest, chief priests, officers of the temple and elders) approached Jesus. The betrayal by Judas is followed by a violent reaction of one of his disciples, but Jesus steps in and orders that it be stopped. After healing the slave of the high priest whose right ear had been cut off, Jesus challenges the brutal manner of his arrest before being taken to the house of the High Priest (22:46-53).

Here Peter's denial of Jesus takes place (22:54-62) as well as the first instance of mockery and also hitting by the men who were holding Jesus (22:63-65). Jesus is mocked by his captors for pretending to be a prophet. He is blindfolded and demanded to prophesy (22:64) and name his tormentors (22:64).

With the start of the so-called pre-trial, Jesus' appearance before the Sanhedrin (22:66-71), Jesus is taken from the high priest's house to the full council of Jewish leaders when daylight breaks. They interrogate him about his identity as the Christ (22:67) and as the Son of God (22:69-70), but he refuses to answer their questions directly. Instead, they take his indirect statements to be the testimony they need (22:71). Even though Jesus' testimony is the only one that is heard by the Sanhedrin, they assume their case strong enough to take it to Pilate. In the same way as Jesus predicted of his followers that being brought to trial would provide them with the opportunity to testify (21:12-13), so it is in his own case (Green 1997:796). This confrontation between Jesus and the religious leaders

is confrontation at its highest level, forming the climax of the religious opposition Jesus had endured thus far in the narrative (Tannehill 1986:191).

From the meeting hall of the Sanhedrin the members of the Sanhedrin take Jesus to Pilate the Roman governor (23:1). The Sanhedrin's charges set the stage for much of the Lukan account of Jesus' Roman trial (Neagoe 2002:73). Luke 23:1-25 narrates this Roman trial in three parts: the trial before Pilate (23:1-5), Herod (23:6-12), and the final condemnation by Pilate (23:13-25).

The charges brought against Jesus before Pilate are namely that he perverts their nation, forbidding them to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ and a king (23:2) (Mills & Wilson 1996:xviii). Although Pilate's response to their charges is sceptical, the accusers remain insistent (23:1-5) (Nolland 1993:1117). It is only with the cooperation of Pilate that Jesus can legally be destroyed, namely by delivering Jesus into the hands of the Roman justice system. This episode indicates the fluid world of political power in first-century Palestine (Nolland 1993:1119).

After being charged before Pilate and being declared innocent by him, Jesus is sent to Herod Antipas (23:6-7). He is the tetrarch who has jurisdiction over Jesus in his home region, Galilee. Herod was in Jerusalem at the time for the feast of Passover (Senior 1990:112). He fulfils his longstanding wish to see Jesus (cf. 9:7-9). However, after humiliating the uncooperative Jesus (Neagoe 2002:78), Herod passes the responsibility back to Pilate (23:8-12) (Nolland 1993:1121).

23:13-16 narrates the second scene before Pilate. Pilate attempts to use Herod's claim of the innocence of Jesus as backing for his own conviction of innocence towards the chief priests, the rulers and the people (Neagoe 2002:78-79). He proposes a compromise that would involve the release of Jesus after he had been given a flogging (Nolland 1993:1126).

23:17-25 narrates how Pilate attempts three times to enable Jesus' release, over against the growing effort of the Jewish people and their leaders to have Jesus executed (Green 1997:807). They are, however, adamant and prefer to have the guilty Barabbas (who had been imprisoned in connection with a riot and a murder) released and the innocent Jesus crucified. Eventually Pilate gives in to their demands, thereby siding with Jesus'

opponents. Jesus has been given over to their will (23:25) (Knight 1998:20). The role of Pilate in the trial hardly makes the Romans look good, “for justice that bends to a mob is not justice” (Tannehill 1986:164). However, the refusal to accept the proposal of Pilate to release Jesus makes the leaders and the people look bad (Tannehill 1986:164). They have chosen to side with a person who is guilty of an offence of which Jesus has been accused, but of which he is innocent (Knight 1998:66). For Tannehill (1986:164) the narrative in 23:13-25 places the responsibility for the death of Jesus on the shoulders of both the leaders and the people.

3.2.1.2 The crucifixion event: Luke 23:26-23:56

3.2.1.2.1 23:26-32 Way to the place of crucifixion

The narrator spends quite some time describing what happens during Jesus’ physical movement from the place of decision to that of the crucifixion (Green 1997:813). Three figures or groups of people are a prominent part of Jesus’ journey to the cross: firstly, Simon of Cyrene (23:26) who is ordered to walk behind Jesus and carry his cross; secondly, a great multitude of the people including a group of lamenting and wailing women referred to by Jesus as “daughters of Jerusalem” (23:27-28); and thirdly, two others also, who were criminals, who were also being led to their crucifixions along with Jesus (23:32).

It is not exactly clear who the “they” are that led Jesus away (ἀπήγαγον αὐτόν) (23:26) and required of Simon to carry the cross behind Jesus. On the one hand it appears to be the chief priests, rulers and the people referred to in 23:13 (Matera 1986:181). On the other hand, the execution proceedings are within Pilate’s realm and therefore in Roman hands. Therefore it could just as well refer to Pilate’s soldiers (Nolland 1993:1136). It might even signify the solidarity of Rome, Jewish leaders, and Jewish people in opposition against Jesus. However, immediately thereafter the implied author begins to show the segregation which was caused as people responded differently to the condemned Jesus (Green 1997:811).

The weeping women, referred to by Jesus as “daughters of Jerusalem” (Θυγατέρες Ἰερουσαλήμ) (23:28), form part of the group of people following Jesus. They have already started mourning the death of Jesus. This is because he is performing his death march at

this point (Nolland 1993:1136-1137). It appears as if the people of God, represented by the women, have become distressed about what is about to happen. Jesus confirms their uneasiness, but powerfully suggests in prophetic language that the unhappier plight is theirs rather than his (23:28-31) (Nolland 1993:1135). Jesus had already wept over the city and its destruction (19:41-44). As he now leaves the city, he pronounces his last prophetic word regarding its destruction (Matera 1986:1983). Jesus appears in control – he is not ill prepared for some sort of fate; rather he is acting in obedience to his Father by going to his appointed destiny which will take him through death to glory (Nolland 1993:1139). As Green (1997:817) describes it, Jesus’ words to the daughters of Jerusalem constitute an oracle of judgment which seals the fate of Jerusalem.

The two criminals led away with Jesus to be executed seems to be a fulfilment of Jesus’ words in 22:37, where he predicted that he will be reckoned in the same light as criminals (Nolland 1993:1139).

From here onwards those following Jesus to the place of execution appear to have a change in attitude. First they follow Jesus (23:27), then they stand apart from their leaders (23:35), and finally they join the women in acts of sorrow by beating on their breasts (23:48) (Green 1997:813).

3.2.1.2.2 23:33-56 Crucifixion, death and burial of Jesus

According to Chance (1996:157) this scene has three sections, namely the mocking of Jesus by the Jewish leaders and the soldiers (23:33-38); the two criminals (23:39-43); and the death and burial of Jesus (23:44-56).

i) Mocking of Jesus by Jewish leaders and soldiers (23:33-38)

Without giving any details, the narrator simply states that Jesus was crucified at a place called “Skull” (Κρανίον). On either side of him are the two criminals (23:33). Thereafter Jesus prays to God, his Father, asking for forgiveness for his tormentors, while they are dividing his clothes and casting lots (23:34).

After his crucifixion and Jesus’ prayer, the threefold taunting of Jesus by three groups are described by Luke by means of three different verbs: the rulers “sneered” or “scoffed”

(ἐξεμυκτηρίζον) (23:35), the soldiers “mocked” (ἐνέπαιξαν) (23:36), and one of the criminals “blasphemed” or “reviled” him (ἐβλασφήμει) (23:39). All three taunts refer to the saving significance of Jesus’ death: “He saved others; let him save himself” (Ἄλλους ἔσωσεν, σωσάτω ἑαυτόν) (23:35); “save yourself” (σῶσον σεαυτόν) (23:37); and “save yourself and us” (σῶσον σεαυτόν καὶ ἡμᾶς) (23:39) (Keck et al. 1995:454). Matera (1986:184) and Green (1997:818) note how three strata of society, beginning with the most important, are represented by the mockers: the rulers or Jewish leaders, the soldiers, and an executed criminal. All three imply that he cannot save himself and makes use of specific titles for Jesus, namely the Christ of God, his Chosen One (ὁ Χριστὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ ἐκλεκτός) (23:35); the King of the Jews (ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων) (23:37); and the Christ (ὁ Χριστός) (23:39) (Matera 1986:184). The scoffing and mocking ultimately centers around the supposed spectacle of a man who claims to be the Messiah and King of the Jews, but who is unable to save himself (Chance 1996:157). In all of this “the people” (ὁ λαὸς) are looking on and watching (23:35), but are not participating (Chance 1996:157; Keck et al. 1995:454; Matera 1986:184). The gap between the people and the Jerusalem leaders are illustrated by the manner in which the people are mute and sympathetic witnesses, while the leaders participate in the soldiers’ and one criminal’s mocking of Jesus (Nolland 1993:1144-1145).

The contrast between Jesus and his executioners is highlighted by the actions portrayed by each: Jesus prays for them, while the soldiers cast lots to determine who will get which portion of his clothing (alluding to Ps 22:18) (23:34) (Nolland 1993:1149). Part of their mockery involves giving him vinegar or sour wine (ὄξος) (reminiscent of Ps 69:21) (23:36). Both these actions are all part of an attempt to humiliate and degrade Jesus as much as possible.

The irony (from the perspective of the narratee) is that they refer to him as the “King of Jews” (23:37) while the plaque above his head echoes this title (23:38). This was supposedly an indication of the reason of his death – his claim to be the King of the Jews, which is a lie according to his opponents (Nolland 1993:1149). The plaque highlights the irony of the trial and crucifixion event, as it reminds the narratee what they already know and what the crowds failed to recognize: Jesus is the Messiah and consequently killed for what he is (Knight 1998:143). From a Roman and outsider perspective the inscription

might be false, yet for the narrator and his audience it is an ironic affirmation of the truth of Jesus' identity (Green 1997:821).

ii) The two criminals (23:39-43)

In 23:39-43 the conversation between Jesus and the two criminals executed with him is narrated. Two very opposite reactions to Jesus is portrayed. The one criminal joins the scoffers with the same taunting as the Jewish leaders and the Roman soldiers, challenging Jesus to save himself and them if he is the Christ who he indeed claims to be (23:39). This is the third time Jesus is taunted (Keck et al. 1995:457).

The second criminal starts off by rebuking the other by recognizing the innocence of Jesus (23:40-41) (Keck et al.1995:458; Nolland 1993:1151). Thereafter he implies that he recognizes Jesus as the messiah and requests that Jesus remember him when he comes in his "kingly power" (τὴν βασιλείαν σου) (23:42). As he is dying, Jesus promises him salvation and exceeds his expectations by saying that he will already be in Paradise (ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ) today (23:43) (Chance 1996:158). The first criminal makes a mockery of Jesus' royal pretensions. The second criminal also refers to the royal status of Jesus, but does so in light of his own judgment (Nolland 1993:1151-1152). Although Jesus is not yet established in his royal rule, he already extends royal clemency to the responsive criminal (Nolland 1993:1152). The second criminal is the first to recognize that Jesus' death is a precursor to his kingly rule (Green 1997:823).

According to Matera (1986:186) the narrator portrays Jesus in this scene as the messiah who refuses to save himself, but continues to save others even at the moment of his own death. At this moment in the narrative the narrator has introduced an expansive rift between those scandalized by the cross, and those who are not. The second criminal finds himself with Jesus. The Jewish leaders and the Roman soldiers are on the opposite end, against Jesus. The people find themselves somewhere in between. They are not participating in the scorning, but they are also not yet presented as positive towards Jesus (Green 1997:818).

iii) *The death and burial of Jesus (23:44-56)*

The crucifixion scene reaches its climax while being witnessed by all the gathered crowds, all of Jesus' acquaintances, and the women who had come with Jesus from Galilee (Nolland 1993:1160). According to Keck et al. (1995:460) the significance of Jesus' death is indicated as follows: by a series of numinous events (23:44-45), Jesus' last words (23:46), and the response of those who witnessed Jesus' death (23:47-49)

After darkness came over the whole land (σκότος ἐγένετο ἐφ' ὅλην τὴν γῆν) (23:44) – described as “Satanic darkness” by Nolland (1993:1160) - the curtain of the temple tears through the middle (23:45). In this manner the implied author of Luke provides two dramatic signs at the threshold of Jesus' death (Matera 1986:186). Jesus then prays for a last time (Πάτερ, εἰς χεῖράς σου παρατίθεμαι τὸ πνεῦμά μου) (quoting Ps 31:6) as he dies (23:46), not with a cry of abandonment but with a loud voice full of confidence in the One whom he addressed as “Father” (Keck et al. 1995:461). In this way the death of Jesus in the Lukan narrative is more peaceful than in the Markan narrative. Matera (1986:186) describes this as “a dramatic shift in mood”. Jesus dies not as an abandoned Son of God, but as the suffering righteous one who peacefully entrusts himself to the Father.

Following Jesus' death three figures or groups react in a sympathetic manner towards Jesus, namely the centurion (ὁ ἑκατοντάρχης) (23:47), all the multitudes (καὶ πάντες οἱ συμπαραγενόμενοι ὄχλοι) (23:48) and all his acquaintances (πάντες οἱ γνωστοὶ αὐτῷ) (23:49). Both Gentile and Jewish reactions to the death of Jesus is thus included by the narrator (Green 1997:824). Their responses appear in diminishing order: the centurion sees and speaks, the crowds see and beat their breasts, and the acquaintances merely see without indication of words or actions on their side (Keck et al. 1995:461-462).

The centurion declares Jesus innocent while praising God (23:47). The word δίκαιος is more than a reference to legal innocence, which had already been established in Jesus' trial. The word contains the Old Testament notion of righteousness, implying that the person is in the right relationship with God because they stand within God's covenant practising torah, the Mosaic Law (Matera 1986:187). This pronouncement of innocence by the centurion is the final one in a series of pronouncements which appears in the passion

narrative: firstly by Pilate (23:4, 14, 22); secondly Pilate reporting that Herod found Jesus innocent (23:15); thirdly the criminal on the cross (23:41); and now finally the centurion (Keck 1995:461). The reaction of the centurion is particularly poignant in light of his connection with the mocking soldiers of 23:36 (Chance 1996:158). So too is the fact that the one who first acknowledges Jesus after his death is a Gentile and not a Jew (Matera 1986:186). For this man, who does not share the Jewish faith, it is clear that Jesus and not the religious authorities are standing in the right relationship to God (Nolland 1993:1160).

Not only does the centurion recognize Jesus, but also the people (Matera 1986:188; Nolland 1993:1161). Not only were they present at the trial of Jesus, but also at his crucifixion (23:27, 35, 48) (Tannehill 1986:165). They react in gestures of mourning by beating their breasts upon seeing what has happened (23:48). They return home upon the start of the time for mourning for themselves and their children (cf. 23:27-30) (Chance 1996:158). The acquaintances of Jesus, which included the women who had followed him from Galilee (23:49) stood at a distance while witnessing the events. Even if at a distance, their presence as witnesses of the crucifixion prepares them for their future role as witnesses to the resurrection (Nolland 1993:1156). If they are to be witnesses to the resurrection, then it is important that they can also attest the truth about Jesus' death on the cross (Nolland 1993:1161). However, their distance as witnesses creates a sense of narrative tension that begs to be resolved. What will their response be to the death of Jesus, and what will be the future of God's purpose now that Jesus has died (Green 1997:828)?

After the crucifixion and death of Jesus the burial of Jesus follows (23:50-56). This is seen as the transition to the resurrection episode which is to be narrated in the next chapter (Keck et al. 1995:464; Matera 1986:188).

In 23:50-51 a pious Jew, Joseph of Arimathea, is introduced. He is described as a member of the council, but put in a very positive light: as one who is a "good and righteous man" (ἀνὴρ ἀγαθὸς καὶ δίκαιος) and who was "looking for the kingdom of God" (προσεδέχετο τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ). This reminds the narratee of the descriptions of Zechariah, Elizabeth, Simeon and Anna in the infancy narrative (1:6; 2:25; 2:38) (Matera 1986:189). Kingsbury (1991:105) describes Joseph as a foil for the religious authorities and the counterpart of Zechariah at the beginning. In contrast to the hostile response of

the chief priests and the leaders of the people, pious representatives of the heritage of Israel are involved with the birth of Jesus and the care for his body at his death (Keck et al. 1995:464). Even though he was a member of the council, Joseph did not agree with the decision or actions taken by the Sanhedrin (Green 1997:830). According to Nolland (1993:1164) Joseph is not a disciple, but he is presented as one who is open to the possibility that God might be acting in Jesus.

The narrator does not only speak about Joseph's piety, but also demonstrates it (Green 1997:830). Joseph goes to Pilate to ask for the body of Jesus (23:52). This can be seen as a courageous action (Chance 1996:158). It was not always possible to obtain the body of a condemned criminal for burial, particularly in cases of treason. But Pilate was never quite convinced of Jesus' guilt and the body was going to a respected member of the Sanhedrin. If the body had stayed on the cross overnight, it would have been a violation of Jewish custom. For Pilate this was a convenient way of dealing with the Jewish practice of burying the body of a dead person (Nolland 1993:1166).

Joseph removes Jesus' body from the cross himself (23:53). He covered it in a linen shroud (ἐνετύλιξεν αὐτὸ σινδόνι), thereby providing a simple but dignified shroud which was adequate under the circumstances. The grave hewn out of rock would have been appropriate for someone of Joseph's socio-economic standing. His possession of such a tomb, same as his membership in the Jerusalem council, is evidence of his elite status (Green 1997:830). The mention that it was a grave in which no-one else had been laid before indicates a concern for the appropriate honouring of Jesus for Joseph (Nolland 1993:1166). It may be a subtle allusion to the royal nature of Jesus' burial; Jesus lies in a tomb in which no one else has been laid, just as he made his royal entrance into Jerusalem not too long ago on a colt upon which no one had yet sat (19:30) (Matera 1986:189).

23:54 indicates the time and thus the need to act quickly. It was the day of Preparation (καὶ ἡμέρα ἦν παρασκευῆς) and as soon as the sun sets, the Sabbath would begin. Whatever needed to be done had to be finished before sunset (Nolland 1993:1167). This is in accordance to the law as described in Deuteronomy 21:22-23 which prescribes that a crucified person had to be buried before sunset, otherwise his body will defile the land (Matera 1986:189).

23:55-56 narrates the actions and role of the women who had followed Jesus from Galilee. As they had witnessed the death of Jesus on the cross, so too they now witness his burial (Matera 1986:190). They follow Joseph to the grave and see his body being laid down and dealt with properly. Thereafter they return home and prepare the spices and ointment that will be applied to Jesus' body after the Sabbath, namely on the first day of the week (cf. 24:1). On the Sabbath they rested, according to the law (Nolland 1993:1167).

3.2.2 Narrative elements: Character portrayal of Jesus of Nazareth and the narrative theme of male honour and power

In terms of character portrayals as well as narrative themes, the Gospel of Luke offers quite a range of possible options to the narratee. For the purpose of this study it is specifically the character portrayal of Jesus of Nazareth, the protagonist of the Gospel of Luke (Kingsbury 1991:14), as well as the narrative theme of his male honour and power that will receive attention. The narrative episode in focus is the Lukan crucifixion narrative (23:26-23:56).

Keeping these narrative elements apart is not that simple, as there is a degree of overlapping and reciprocal influence: on the one hand the character portrayal of the Lukan Jesus expresses the theme of his male honour and power; on the other hand the theme of male honour and power inform the manner in which the Lukan Jesus is portrayed as character to the narratee. In what follows these narrative elements will be discussed separately, but at times their interrelatedness will be evident in the manner in which cross-references to one another are made in each section.

3.2.2.1 Character portrayal of Jesus

The narrator does not explicitly specify Jesus' character traits, but rather leaves it to the reader to infer them from the manner in which Jesus speaks and acts (Kingsbury 1991:16). Accordingly, the observations of Jesus' words and deeds in the passion narrative as a whole but particularly so within the Lukan crucifixion narrative, leads to a view of Jesus as being strong, controlled, calm and honourable, in spite of the certain knowledge of his impending criminal-type death on a cross.

Scholars describe this type of portrayal of Jesus during his trial and crucifixion from different angles, although they do seem to steer in the same direction. Here follows a more detailed explanation of some of these descriptions of the Lukan Jesus.

3.2.2.1.1 Ideal martyr and victorious hero

Perkins (1998:249) describes Luke's Jesus as "an exemplary martyr" whose piety and goodness shines through, even in his death. For Barr (1987:223) the Lukan version of the death of Jesus on the cross is that of the ideal martyr, a victor over evil. The group of people and the weeping women following Jesus on the way to his execution coincide with that which is found in martyr texts: the general phenomenon of crowds following a condemned man to his execution, as well as the weeping for someone who is on the way to execution (Nolland 1993:1137).

Even more than an exemplary martyr, Barr (1987:224) is of the opinion that Jesus is portrayed as a hero during and after his death – especially in the light of his ascension:

Luke's Jesus is heroic in a classical sense. He faced many trials but overcame them all; he conquered even death. Like that great classical hero, Hercules, he was exalted on high after performing the works assigned to him. Luke alone portrays the scene of Jesus ascending, describes it twice, in fact (Barr 1987:224).

The resurrection narrative which follows the crucifixion narrative is a crucial aspect of the characterization of Jesus. The Lukan Jesus is more than a dead hero; he is a living Lord whose heavenly presence dominates throughout the Gospel (Knight 1998:58). Such a description is of course only possible for those who are insiders to the narrative and who are familiar with what happened after the crucifixion and death of Jesus of Nazareth.

Matera (1986:151) also contends that Jesus is more than a martyr in light of the titles ascribed to him. Although Jesus suffers innocently, as did many martyrs before him, he endures his passion in his capacity as the son of God (22:29, 42, 70; 23:2, 35, 39), a prophet (22:63-65; 23:29-31), a saviour (23:35), a king (23:2, 37, 38) and the messiah (22:67, 23:2, 35, 39).

3.2.2.1.2 Innocent and blameless

Jesus' innocence (and thus his honourable and moral character) is a central motive in the Lukan passion narrative. For Ringe (2002:77) the narrative makes clear that Jesus is innocent of the charges that will be mounted against him on the long final day. However, the death penalty will be invoked anyway. According to Knight (1998:58) the figure of Jesus appears to be an example of the ideal Christian whose testimony cannot be refuted (cf. 21:15) except by mob violence. Already in Jesus' first appearance before Pilate, it is announced that there is no case for Jesus to answer. None of the charges made by the Jewish leaders – especially the charges of disaffection and insurrection – are found to be proven. Herod is also reported to find no crime in Jesus, despite his mockery of him (23:15). Jesus is thereafter further pronounced innocent by one of his fellow victims (23:41) and also after his death by the Roman centurion (23:47). The implied author of Luke thus stresses repeatedly that Jesus is righteous and innocent (Kingsbury 1991:64); not only in the immediate context of the political charge for which he was made to die, but also in the wider context of the Lukan narrative – having lived all his days in perfect obedience to God (Kingsbury 1991:73).

The Lukan portrayal of Jesus' innocence and moral example is quite often done by means of irony, especially in the trial narrative. Jesus is in control of the situation, even though his opponents perceive themselves to be in control. During the Last Supper, the preface of the trial narrative, Jesus demonstrates his control over the situation by telling the disciples that they will be met by the owner of the upper room (22:7-13). Thereafter, Jesus says that his betrayer is at the table (22:21) – within a context where no hint of betrayal has occurred thus far, but where it is said that Satan enters into Judas to denounce Jesus to the authorities (22:3). The trial itself is filled with irony: Jesus is supposedly the victim, but everything he says (or does not say) proves that he is in control of the situation (Knight 1998:66). Here it is especially the religious authorities who are ironic characters. Their acts of injustice are in direct opposition to their perception of themselves as being righteous in the sight of God and neighbour. There is a discrepancy between what the authorities are and what they perceive themselves to be (Kingsbury 1991:103). Lee (1999:233) is of the opinion that the narrator's characterization of Jesus as the character in control of events becomes increasingly more apparent as Jesus appears to become more powerless.

3.2.2.1.3 Calm and controlled

Jesus' crucifixion and death in the Gospel of Luke portrays him as being part of a divine plan of redemption, arranged by God, his Father. His crucifixion and death was no unforeseen catastrophe (Barr 1987:224). It appears as if Jesus understands his death as consistent with the divine plan, rather than a repudiation of his status and ministry (Green 1997:819). He is participating in a controlled situation. Therefore Jesus can refer to God as his Father from the cross and in that situation still offer forgiveness and the promise of Paradise. Ironically, the crucifixion serves as proof of the identity of Jesus as the Messiah and king who accomplishes the divine purpose precisely as the suffering one (Green 1997:819). This is again from the point of view of an insider – of one who aligns themselves with Jesus.

With close to no hint of resistance, but rather a calm and controlled manner, Jesus participates in the events leading up to and during his death. From chapter 9 onwards Jesus begins to talk seriously about his death. There appears to be a sense of deliberateness about the way in which Jesus submits to what is his destiny (Knight 1998:56). He is not a victim during his crucifixion. Rather, amidst the burden of his death sentence he continues his prophetic role (23:28-31), intercedes on behalf of those who shame and execute him (23:34), promises Paradise to a criminal (23:43), and offers up his life to God with his last breath (23:46) (Green 1997:812). Jesus, not his opponents, controls the situation surrounding his death (Kingsbury 1991:62).

3.2.2.1.4 A man of honour

For Fredriksen (1988:30) the morally exemplary character of Jesus is placed in the forefront during the final stages of his life. He suffers abuse in silence and prays for his tormentors. He weeps for Jerusalem and mourns its impending destruction – the result of him being rejected (19:41-44; cf. 13:34). In spite of the immoral behaviour taking place in the courtyard of the Temple, he continues teaching there daily in an attempt to turn the people to himself (19:45-48; 20:1; 21:37-38). Jesus prays for Peter despite knowing that he will deny him and upon his gaze after the denial he helps Peter to repent (22:32, 62-63). Even though he fears that which lies ahead, he still submits to God's will (22:39-44). He refuses to allow his disciples to defend him with arms and instead heals an enemy

whom his followers had wounded (22:51). Even from the cross he can entreat God's forgiveness for his executioners (23:34).

After his death, during his burial and during his treatment after death, Jesus receives the treatment of an honourable man. This might seem unusual, in light of his punishment and death by crucifixion, but not completely unexpected in light of his presentation in the narrative thus far. The fact that his burial was done according to the Jewish law, is aimed at avoiding any hint that these disciples of Jesus were engaged in Sabbath-breaking (Green 1997:831). For Fredriksen (1988:192) the Lukan Jesus is a traditionally pious Jew. As a child he already engages in dialogue with Jewish teachers and awes them with his insight (2:46). Perhaps it is precisely this example of Jesus which motivates his followers to honour the religious law upon his death.

From these descriptions Jesus' character appears flawless and he is the best possible human moral example imaginable. The repeated acknowledgements of his innocence and righteousness, paired with the controlled and calm manner in which he reacts and speaks in various settings, leaves no room for criticism. Even during his worst humiliation, pain and suffering and eventual death, he is the proverbial cool, calm and collected character. This characterization is the ideal companion for the narrative theme under consideration, namely male honour and power.

3.2.2.2 The narrative theme of male honour and power

The character portrayal in a narrative to a large extent determines which narrative themes are introduced and developed throughout a narrative. At the same time, the narrative themes inform the manner in which characters are portrayed throughout the narrative. The narrative themes find expression within the narrative world created by the narrator by means of the actions, dialogue and conflicts of characters as well as particular events. Each narrative world has its own set of rules, norms and values, and expectations as created by the narrator. Narrative themes support, oppose or undermine this narrative world.

In terms of narrative texts that are also rooted in specific historical contexts, as is the case with the Gospels, one can expect the narrative worlds of the Gospel accounts to reflect in some way or the other the context within which the actual author and the readers found

themselves. An author would make use of language, imagery, norms and values that are familiar to the readers and that they would be able to understand within their specific situation and context. It is precisely this familiarity which could become a crucial element of influencing or persuading readers to adopt particular viewpoints or positions.³⁸

However, a literary reading of a Gospel narrative, as is done in this chapter, is not in the first place interested in this historical or contextual component of the narrative, the actual author or the actual readers. It is rather interested in the narrative's "reality" as portrayed by the narrator within the narrative world, with historicity moved to the background for the present moment. Within this narrative world of the Gospel of Luke the theme of male honour and power is prominent.

Male honour and power is portrayed within both the religious and political spheres of the narrative. D'Angelo (2002:44) contends that attention to gender is far more explicit in the Lukan Gospel than in the other canonical gospels. Although much attention has been given to the portrayal of women in the Gospel of Luke and the ambiguities surrounding it, it appears as if Luke-Acts is rather far more interested in maleness than other early Christian texts. The word *ἀνὴρ*, meaning man as male, husband or hero, appears very frequently in Luke-Acts. Not only does it refer to individuals, but also to angelic beings and apparitions, to Jesus and to crowds in Acts, and as a formal address (Conway 2008:127; D'Angelo 2002:46).

It is especially the theme of elite maleness in light of its coinciding power and authority which occurs prominently in Luke-Acts. In the Lukan narrative Jesus, as the main character, often finds himself central to "ideal man" portrayals, in relation to the elitist context of religious leaders and political figures.

Regarding this portrayal in terms of the broader narrative world of Luke and Acts, Conway (2008:127) observes the following:

With Luke-Acts we enter a narrative world that is completely at home within the masculine power structures of the Roman Empire. Almost anywhere we turn in this world, we find

³⁸ Rhetorical criticism is the approach within biblical scholarship that is concerned with distinguishing this persuasion or influence known as rhetoric. Black (2010:166) describes rhetoric as follows: "those distinctive properties of human discourse, especially its artistry and argument, by which the authors of biblical literature endeavoured to convince others of the truth of their beliefs."

those elements that were necessary for the construction of the ideal man in the Roman world. The heroes that we encounter in this world – Jesus, Stephen, Peter, Paul – are portrayed as educated, articulate, reasonable, self-controlled, pious men, fully capable of holding their own in the upper echelons of the masculine world of the Roman Empire.

Moxnes (2007:155-170), in his discussion on maleness with regards to the place of those who followed Jesus, contends that there are some ambiguities regarding the type of maleness presented as the ideal in the Gospel of Luke. At times the followers find themselves in stereotypical male positions and spaces (for example the farewell discourse at the last supper), and at other times they are dislocated from male positions and spaces (for example the call narratives). However, in spite thereof, Moxnes can still agree that Luke has to a large extent adopted the elite gender ideologies in the Roman world (2007:168).

Conway has devoted a whole chapter in her book, “Behold the Man: Jesus and Graeco-Roman Masculinity” (2008) to the description of the Lukan Jesus within the context of elite power and masculinity.³⁹ Picking up on the clues offered by the Luke-Acts narrative, she indicates how the narrative world of Luke intersects with the imperial structures that promote this elite power and maleness. In this way she attempts to show how maleness in the ancient world did not simply deal with “men”, but rather that it was deeply ingrained in the fabric of the Greco-Roman culture. Central aspects pertaining to this world was education, government, and cult (Conway 2008:128). Within this narrative world, Jesus and his male followers are explicitly portrayed as models of masculinity (Conway 2008:129). Jesus finds his place as a male elite in terms of a few aspects: his literacy and literate audiences; his associations with and mostly positive evaluation by elite members of the Roman Empire; the association with cult practice and cultic “purity” in the Empire; and the centrality of Jerusalem and the temple and his involvement with it (Conway 2008:128-141).

In spite of the narrator’s best efforts to portray Jesus as one with masculine ruling authority, the event of the suffering, crucifixion and death at the hands of the imperial authority presents somewhat of a challenge to the narrative world (Conway 2008:141). At face value, the event itself does not fit the Lukan portrait of Jesus within a framework of elite masculine power and honour at all. For Conway (2008:141-142) the final Passover

³⁹ Chapter 7, “The Lukan Jesus and the Imperial Elite”

meal offers a framework within which these looming events are to be interpreted. The descriptions used by Jesus in this scene - for himself as well as for his disciples - are of a royal and kingly nature. The anticipation and the prescribed memorial of Jesus' suffering and death are framed by confidence in the ruling authority of Jesus and his followers (Conway 2008:142). All in all, according to Conway (2008:142), Luke-Acts provides a narrative illustration of the link between belief in Jesus and the attainment of manly status, and accordingly power that was associated with the elite. Not only are they who follow Jesus linked to persons, institutions and symbols of elite power and masculinity; they who follow Jesus attain their status as ideal and honourable men in the Roman Empire.

What is interesting is that Conway does not consider the crucifixion narrative in detail as part of the examples in her discussion of the elite, authoritative and honourable Lukan Jesus. Her discussion ends with the link made between the Last Supper and Jesus' suffering and death.

In terms of the characterization of Jesus as a exemplary, honourable and controlled man, found throughout the Lukan narrative but especially also during his crucifixion and death, I contend that such an absence is unnecessary. In fact, the "ideal man" portrayal of the Lukan Jesus reaches a climax during the crucifixion, death and burial scenes. The narrator manages to pull through the golden thread of elite male power and male honour from start to finish.

3.3 Conclusion

It is at this point where questions might start arising about the Lukan version of the crucifixion narrative. How did the implied author manage to maintain this theme of male honour and power throughout the Lukan narrative, but particularly so with regards to the crucifixion and death of Jesus of Nazareth? Surely it cannot be taken as a given that an honourable man who receives the death penalty of a criminal would continue to be respected, followed and remembered in a royal manner by all – as the narrator seems to imply? Why is it that the portrayal of Jesus of Nazareth is so vehemently honourable, controlled and masculine? What lies behind the narrative world of this version of the crucifixion and death of Jesus of Nazareth?

From the perspective of the contemporary narratee the cracks of narrative criticism appear more or less here. These are the questions that narrative criticism cannot answer. Another conversation partner is needed. The narrative world and Jesus presented by the narrator only makes sense to a certain extent; thereafter it becomes so foreign and strange that a reading like this might become “unreadable”. The contemporary narratee cannot fully identify with the role of the implied reader, as the gap in time, space and worldview is too large.

In this chapter I have attempted to take seriously the narrative nature of the Lukan crucifixion narrative. Placed within the broader passion narrative, it becomes clear that the Lukan Jesus is characterized in a unique manner. The portrayal of a confident, controlled and righteous man who, although undoubtedly innocent participates in the death meant for criminals, seems to present a spectacular moral example for Jew and Gentile alike. However, as was indicated there is another layer to be considered in this narrative. That is namely the manner in which elite power and male honour is at work in the narrative world of the Gospel of Luke. Jesus’ maleness and his associations with the powerful world of the elite are crucial components of his characterization and thematic involvement in the Lukan narrative.

The questions arising at this point are of a socio-cultural nature. Essentially they are probing regarding the social context and location of the Lukan narrative. What were the values, perceptions and power-relations at play in the world behind the Lukan crucifixion narrative, which may have influenced the narrative world in the Lukan crucifixion narrative? In reply to these questions, the input from social science criticism is of great help.

Social science criticism has made a huge contribution to building bridges between the text and its socio-cultural context in biblical studies. In this manner contemporary readers of biblical narratives are given tools with which to manoeuvre in strange and foreign territory. Even when a text is approached as the narrative it is, its setting within a particular historical context needs to be reckoned with. This is also the case with the Lukan narrative and its presentation of Jesus during his crucifixion and death.

Consequently, Chapter 4 will introduce the next conversation partner of this study, namely social science criticism. Within this next round of conversation the Lukan crucifixion narrative will engage with the Mediterranean and Greco-Roman socio-cultural perceptions

of honour, shame and maleness, as well as the ancient Roman practice of crucifixion as execution for criminals, as it is part of the world behind the Lukan crucifixion narrative.

4. MORE SIDES TO THE STORY? THE WORLD BEHIND THE LUKAN CRUCIFIXION NARRATIVE

4.1 Introduction

In Chapter 3 I aimed to do a narrative-critical reading of the crucifixion narrative as portrayed in the Gospel of Luke, with particular interest in the manner in which Jesus is characterized as an honourable, controlled and exemplary male who was able to “stand his man” within the context of male honour and power. One might have expected that the event of the crucifixion, the Roman punishment of criminals, would present a problem to the narrator – an event seemingly impossible to narrate in congruency with the portrayal of Jesus up to that point. However, it seems as if the crucifixion event in the Gospel of Luke is the ultimate climax of the control, power and honour of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus appears to be an honourable hero rather than a shameful martyr in the Lukan crucifixion narrative, in spite of the excruciating trial, humiliation, punishment and death he had to endure. This portrayal of Jesus in the crucifixion narrative is a unique Lukan approach to the passion narrative.

According to the framework of narrative criticism the reader of the narrative fulfils the role of the implied reader. This is a literary construct built on the premise that readers can fully understand and interpret a narrative within its given narrative world by simply picking up on the various clues offered within the narrative itself. However, with regards to a narrative that is not merely fiction but also has a historical basis, the clues on offer are not universal, timeless clues. They are context-specific and stand in a particular relationship with the historical and socio-cultural environment within which it originated and was received. In the case of the Lukan crucifixion narrative, this is the 1st century world of the Mediterranean and the Greco-Roman society. Therefore, as mentioned in Chapter 2, critics of narrative criticism point out that contemporary readers cannot fulfil the role of the implied reader in biblical narratives in such a simple manner as is expected in terms of the framework of narrative criticism.

On the one hand this New Testament narrative is situated within the multiform 1st century context of Judaism, Hellenism and the Roman Empire and was intended for an audience within the geographical horizon of the Mediterranean world (Legrand 2000:71). On the other hand I, as a contemporary reader of the narrative, find myself at the southernmost tip

of Africa in the equally multiform 21st century context of South Africa. To expect of me to be able to “hear” the narrative in the same manner as would a 1st century Mediterranean listener, is unrealistic and highly unlikely. According to Malina (1996:xv) “(t)o by-pass explicit consideration of the social system of the ancient Mediterranean means to bootleg or smuggle in social-system scenarios from another time and place.” In order for a contemporary reader to embrace a narrative as fully as possible with familiarity and understanding of the narrative world presented in it, certain tools are needed.

Sociological and socio-scientific approaches within New Testament studies, which highlight the contributions from the fields of sociology, cultural anthropology and archaeology, are of great help in assisting New Testament scholars to recognize the so-called cultural scripts and cues which are part of the biblical narratives and texts with which they are engaging.⁴⁰ It is precisely such an approach, namely social science criticism, which will be applied as the second conversation-partner to engage with the crucifixion narrative of the Gospel of Luke. The world behind the text will be explored in greater detail.

In light of the Lukan crucifixion narrative, this chapter will give specific attention to the central cultural script of honour and shame, with a particular focus on gender and sexuality within it. I will focus on the manner in which gender, specifically maleness and masculinity, was to be performed in order to establish and maintain honour (and avoid shame) within the 1st century Mediterranean world. Thereafter, still in line with the cultural script of honour and shame, I will pay attention to the crucifixion as form of Roman execution and the effects such type of a death punishment would have had on a person and their group within a society built on honour and shame.

In closing, I will return to the Lukan crucifixion narrative with a few comments in light of the above-mentioned socio-cultural insights. These will center on the observation of the Lukan crucifixion narrative as a narrative which, seemingly contradictory, emphasises honour, control and masculinity by means of the crucifixion. This stands in contrast to the expected shame, humiliation and onslaught of masculinity of a crucified man within an honour and shame society. This possible contradiction might lead one to ask questions

⁴⁰ In this regard important groundwork has been done by Gerd Theissen, Wayne Meeks, Edwin Judge, John Elliott and Bruce Malina (Gowler 1991:15). In Chapter 2 I have already described this range of approaches in detail and will consequently proceed to appropriating it in this chapter.

regarding the manner in which the Lukan author managed to present the crucifixion narrative of Jesus in such a way.

4.2 Honour and shame: The contours of gender and sexuality in the 1st century Mediterranean world

Honour and shame can be considered the most pivotal cultural script or value of the 1st century Mediterranean world, namely the world surrounding the New Testament (Malina 2001:27; Gowler 1991:16). It frames and guides all behaviour of the individual as well as of the group, irrespective of age, gender or social position. However, different rules for honour and honouring apply to different groups within this society, particularly in light of the male/female dichotomy.

In what follows, I will give a general overview of honour and shame as the golden thread of this social context. Thereafter I will indicate the pivotal role of gender and sexuality within the honour and shame framework, with particular reference to the manner in which maleness and masculinity was to be constantly performed in order for a male person to be acknowledged as an honourable man.

4.2.1 Honour and shame as cultural script

According to DeSilva (2000:23) “(t)he culture of the first century world was built on the foundational social values of honor and dishonor (*sic*).” For Plevnik (1993:106) honour and shame are the core values of the Mediterranean world in general, as well as the world of the Bible. In societies where personal face-to-face relationships determine the position one has in society, honour and shame is a constant preoccupation (Gowler 1991:16). Not only honour in itself, but also association with and enactment of honourable actions, persons and value-systems were to be strived for at all times. This is particularly evident in the rhetorics taught to and applied by public speakers as well as the moral instruction by teachers (DeSilva 2000:23-24). The wealth of literature from the Greek and Roman periods, which includes the New Testament, bears great testimony to honour as the golden thread of the 1st century personhood and group (DeSilva 2000:23).

4.2.1.1 Honour

For Malina (2001:52) there is a distinction between a symbolic and a functionalist point of view on honour. On a symbolic level, honour refers to a person's social standing which is marked off by the boundaries of authority, gender status, and location on the social ladder. On a functionalist level, honour is the value of a person in their own eyes plus the value of that person in the eyes of their social group. In this sense honour is one's claim to worth along with the social acknowledgement of worth.

DeSilva (2000:25) elaborates on the functionalist level of honour by describing it as having two components. One part of honour is that of self-respect, namely the regard an individual has for themselves based on the assumed correlation between their own honourable actions and qualities and that which the group values as honourable. Another part of honour is the recognition of the person's group that they are a valuable member of that group and therefore have their respect. Plevnik (1993:106-107) distinguishes between "having honour" and "being honoured". According to him, to "have honour" means to have publicly acknowledged worth. To "be honoured" is to be ascribed such worth or be acclaimed for it. Honour relates particularly to the areas where power, sexual status and religion intersect (Lawrence 2005:10).

Within the 1st century Mediterranean world honour should be understood as a dynamic and relational concept (DeSilva 2000:25). The purpose of honour, within a social setting, is to serve as a type of social rating. This rating entitles a person to specific ways of interaction with their equals, superiors, and subordinates, according to the prescribed cultural cues of the society (Malina 2001:52). Honour can either be gained or lost in the ongoing struggle for public recognition. Honour comes primarily from group recognition, because of the importance of the group in the identity of a Mediterranean person. As a public matter, the recognition of significant others in society are crucial for the honour of the individual (who, in turn, also represents the honour of a group). When a person's claim to honour is recognized by the group, their honour is confirmed and the result is a new social status. Consequently there follows an expectation of honourable behaviour in line with this status (Moxnes 1996:20).

Different groups had different ways of defining how the honour and shame axis was to be performed within their particular group. Their "honour rules" were used to evaluate both

insiders and outsiders accordingly. Problems arose when the self-respect of the individual and respect from the group did not correspond. However, this discrepancy could be overcome by means of various strategies (DeSilva 2000:25).

4.2.1.2 Ascribed and acquired honour

Honour, fundamentally a public recognition of one's social standing, can come in one of two ways. Firstly, *ascribed honour* refers to one's basic honour level (Moxnes 1996:20). This is the honour of a person on account of accidents of birth or grants bestowed by people of higher status and power. The social standing of one's father and family as well as the race and religion to which one belongs plays a pivotal role in the ascribed honour of a person at their birth (DeSilva 2000:28). Malina (2001:52) describes ascribed honour as the type of honour that befalls or happens to a person passively through birth, family connections, or endowment by notable persons of power. Thus honour can also be ascribed later in life, whether through adoption into a more honourable family, through grants of special citizenship status or through grants of office (DeSilva 2000:28). Ascribed honour is not based on something the individual has done (Moxnes 1996:20).

Secondly, *acquired honour* refers to the honour which one can actively seek and achieve (Malina 2001:52). This type of honour is conferred on the basis of virtuous deeds and can play out in one of two ways (Moxnes 1996:20). In the first instance, this achievement of honour can take place if a person persists in being virtuous in their dealings and accordingly builds up a reputation for being honourable and embodying those virtues which are prized by the group. In the second instance, honour can also be won and lost in so-called challenge and riposte situations (DeSilva 2000:28-29).

4.2.1.3 Challenge and riposte

Within a context of honour and shame, as found in Mediterranean societies, it is understandable that interaction between people will be characterized by competition with others for recognition. There is a constant alertness for the possible defense of individual or family honour. This type of social interaction more often than not takes the form of challenge and riposte (Moxnes 1996:20).

Challenge-riposte situations are public contests or competitions for honour. The challenge, which starts off the contest, can be practically any word, gesture or action that seeks to undermine the honour of another person (Plevnik 1993:111). Usually, however, it is done verbally, although symbolic gestures and even the use of physical force could also be used. There are clear rules for challenge-riposte exchange in traditional societies (Moxnes 1996:20). A challenge must be perceived as such by both the person challenged and by witnesses (Gowler 1991:16). A challenge asks for a response that answers in equal measure or ups the ante, which is seen as a type of challenge in return (Plevnik 1993:111). However, this should not be done to such an extent that the opponent cannot respond, because then the exchange would end (Moxnes 1996:21). A response is always required, whether the challenge was positive (such as gifts or compliments) or negative (for example insults or dares). Not answering to a challenge leads to a serious loss of face, dishonour and disgrace (Plevnik 1993:111; Malina 2001:53). One of three responses are possible with a challenge: a negative refusal (no response) which will lead to dishonour; a positive rejection (for example a scorn) to which the original accuser must react to regain honour; or an acceptance and the offering of a counter-challenge to which the original challenger must respond if they wish to retain their honour (Gowler 1991:16-17). As challenges take place publicly, the bystanders decide whether or not the challenged person has successfully defended their own honour (DeSilva 2000:29).

This contest of challenge-riposte usually takes place among people who are equal or almost equal in honour (Malina 2001:52; Moxnes 1996:20). The reason being is that a challenge implies that one recognizes the honour of the other person. By challenging an inferior or someone without honour, the challenger brings shame and humiliation to themselves. An issued challenge is also only accepted if one considers the challenge worthy of respect. Hence, to accept the challenge of an inferior is considered shameful (Moxnes 1996:20-21). The winner of a competitive exchange has defended their honour, while the loser experiences shame. The loser's standing in the community is also damaged. The competitive spirit of challenge-riposte can rule many aspects of life (Moxnes 1996:21).

Within honour and shame contexts, honour has both collective and individual dimensions. The head of a particular group symbolizes the honour of that group. The head of the group is required to defend the honour of all who are bound up to themselves. So too the members of a group need to speak and act in such a manner that they serve the honour of

the group. Both natural and optional groupings have collective honour that needs to be defended (Malina 2001:53), otherwise the result is shame.

4.2.1.4 Shame

Shame signifies one of two possible notions. Firstly, as a positive symbol, shame can signify a sensitivity to the opinion of the group and sensitivity for one's own reputation, in such a way that one avoids those actions that bring disgrace (DeSilva 2000:25; Malina & Neyrey 1991:44). To "have shame" connotes the positive notion of shame, meaning a concern about one's honour. Within the Mediterranean world, all human beings seek to have shame, but no human being wants to be shamed (Plevnik 1993:107). Having a sense of shame makes it possible to live in a dignified manner, as it implies the acceptance of and respect for the social rules of human interaction (Malina & Neyrey 1991:45).

Secondly, in a negative sense, it indicates that one is seen as less valuable because one's behaviour has run contrary to the values of the group. One then loses face, is disgraced and viewed as a disgrace (DeSilva 2000:25). To "be shamed" is always a negative, meaning the denial or diminishing of honour (Plevnik 1993:107). Being known as a "shameless" person, means that one has a reputation of not recognizing the rules of human interaction and social boundaries. The shameless person has a dishonourable reputation beyond all social doubt and is defined as being outside the boundaries of what is an acceptable moral life. Therefore, honourable people must deny shameless persons the normal social courtesies. If courtesy is shown to a shameless person, one makes oneself a fool. It is considered foolish to show respect for the boundaries of a person who acknowledges no boundaries (Malina & Neyrey 1991:45).

Conclusively, honour and shame always concern people within social settings and should therefore be understood within the larger religious, social and economic context. Honour and shame lies at the heart of all other relations and systems within the 1st century Mediterranean context: kinship and family honour, the public/private division of space (often occurring along gender lines and the appropriate male/female expressions of honour and shame), patronage, slavery, economic practices, purity rules, meal practices,

and even the peculiar Mediterranean sense of identity that derives from group membership must be understood in terms of honour and shame (Moxnes 1996:19-20).⁴¹

4.2.2 Gender and sexuality as an integral part of an honour and shame society

Within an honour and shame society, gender and sexuality play a crucial part. This should be understood within the broader framework of the collectivistic understanding of the self and others as well as kinship. Being male or female is a relational and social concept. Depending on the manner in which it is expressed and portrayed, it can either contribute to or distract from the honour of the individual and their clan.

4.2.2.1 Collectivistic understanding of the self and of others

When considering the role of gender and sexuality within a framework of honour and shame in Mediterranean societies, the social or collectivistic understanding of personhood is central. People knew each other in a social sense, in terms of gender-based roles, the groups in which the person was embedded, and with a constant concern for public awards of respect and honour (Malina 1996:35-36). These roles and concerns are intertwined and cannot easily be separated. Within such societies, kinship is integral to this collectivistic and social understanding of the self.

Within a context of a social or collectivistic understanding of personhood, it makes sense that behavioural controls will also be on a social level. They are derived from a set of social structures in which all persons are expected to participate and to which they are to adhere. Behavioural controls are not within the individual person. This behavioural control lies very much within gender separate social situations. Accordingly, all social space is gender divided (Malina 1996:42).

There is also a heavy emphasis on and concern regarding gender-specific behaviour. This is because almost all social arrangements which circumscribe communal life within the Mediterranean setting are centered on the single issue of preventing the possibility of

⁴¹ Criticism has been brought against Malina et al. regarding their portrayal of honour and shame, particularly in terms of a static idea of challenge-riposte. Critics state that the notion of challenge-riposte is too limited to express the dynamic and complex nature of honour and shame. For a general appraisal of social-scientific criticism, see Martin (1999:125-141).

sexual transgression. The reason for this traditional emphasis on the prevention of sexual transgression is that kinship, with its focal communicative behaviour in cohabitation, is central (Malina 1996:48).

4.2.2.2 Honour and shame, kinship, and gender

Honour is, in the first place, a group value. Individual members of a group share in the honour of the group, and kinship groups inherit honour from their honourable ancestors. This inherited honour must, at all costs, be maintained and defended by the current generation, both males and females (Plevnik 1993:107). These are the conditions under which honour and shame are inclusive regarding gender, namely when reference is made to those areas of social life which cover common humanity. These are the areas of natural grouping in which males and females share a common collective honour and shame, namely the family, village, city, and their collective reputations (Malina & Neyrey 1991:45). Shame in this context refers to the sensitivity a person has for what others say, think and do with regard to their honour and can be applied to both males and females (Malina 2001:53; Moxnes 1996:21). To be shameless is to lack concern for one's honour and to be insensitive to the opinions that others might have (Moxnes 1996:22).

However, one's individual, everyday, concrete conduct – the means by which one establishes reputation and reaffirms one's belonging to a group – is always bound up to the sexual or moral division of labour that is dependent on gender roles. At this individual level, honour and shame are sex-specific, with honour always being symbolized by male and shame always being symbolized by female (Malina & Neyrey 1991:45). Here the male is to defend both the corporate honour as well as any female honour embedded in the corporate honour. The female symbolises the shame aspect of corporate honour, which is the positive sensitivity to the good repute of individuals and groups (Malina 2001:53).

Male honour is symbolized in the testicles and is expressed in typically male behaviour, such as manliness, courage, authority, defending the family's honour, concern for prestige, and social precedence (Malina & Neyrey 1991:45). Honour as a value cluster includes strength, courage, daring, valour, generosity, and wisdom. Weakness, cowardice, and lack of generosity were symptoms of a lack of honour and were despised. Male honour is something to be claimed, gained, and defended before one's peers (Plevnik 1993:107).

Female shame is symbolized in the maidenhead and is likewise expressed in typically female behaviour, such as feelings of shame to reveal nakedness, shyness, blushing, timidity, restraint and sexual exclusiveness (Malina & Neyrey 1991:45). Female shame has a focal concern for honour and such shame is neither won nor claimed. It is presupposed and maintained as a veil of privacy and of personal and sexual integrity. Therefore, female shame is associated with privacy, reserve and purity (Plevnik 1993:107).

However, as Plevnik (1993:108) states, the exact concrete behaviour that is considered honourable or shameful depends on the particular social group or society within which a person finds themselves. The general statement can be made that honour is the highest value and public humiliation is a fate worse than death, but the particular content of “honour” and “shame” will be deduced from actual social behaviour within a given context.

In light of the relationship between kinship and gender within Mediterranean societies, inheritance follows the male line with males representing the family to the public outside. Females are expected to uphold the private inside (Malina 1996:50). Males own everything in the family that goes to the outside, while females are in charge of what stays on the inside. Males have to defend the family from the outside, and females maintain its integrity on the inside (Malina 1996:52).

As soon as babies are born they are immediately evaluated in terms of gender. They are not defined as children, but rather as boys or girls, male babies or female babies. This immediate categorization reflects the engendered worldview of the Mediterranean where not only selves are male and female, but also others, nature, time, space and God(s) (Malina 1996:51). Because kinship is basic in the Mediterranean world, a human being is primarily male or female in terms of kinship terms (for example husband or wife, son or daughter, brother or sister) rather than in economic terms (rich or poor), political terms (powerful or powerless) or religious terms (pious or impious) (Pilch & Malina 1993:xx).

Very quickly, too, male and female babies are made aware of the fact that they are sons and daughters of specific fathers and mothers whose honour they share. Therefore, from a young age, males and females are trained as to how to be part of their group in an honourable manner and with respect to their relatives and elders. This socialisation is done by means of strict censorship of every utterance or deed as exercised by a person's

ingroup orientation. The influences of outgroups are kept to a minimum and therefore extraordinary behaviour is rare (Malina 1996:52).

Ironically enough, in spite of the constant reminder of gender-division and gender-difference, little boys in the traditional Mediterranean context learn quickly that their maleness means not being female, but do not have much more information than that. This is because the boy, for at least the first seven years of his life, is always with women. Later he is informed that he is expected not to be like them. However, adult males are, as a rule, not found around the house during most of the day. Thus the male influence is initially kept to a minimum, with the boy being encouraged to live out a male role which is problematic and largely elusive (Malina 1996:54).

This gender-divided world and worldview of the Mediterranean is firmly rooted within a framework of patriarchy. Although patriarchy is often simplistically defined as the male domination of females, this domination plays out in rather varied and complex ways (Bartchy 2008:166). The patriarchal social system designated the father or husband as the head of the family. He was recognized as such by the law and could therefore be a participating member within the city or state. This privileged status enjoyed by the male as patriarch has its roots in the assumption that the male seed alone provided everything that was needed to form his offspring. The female simply had to provide the place for the seed to grow until birth and nurture and care for the male's offspring after birth. According to this interpretation of human reproduction, an entire societal and universal ordering is maintained within which the male holds a position superior to that of the female (Jacobs-Malina 1993:1).⁴²

Because of his "naturally" superior position, a male was ascribed honour at birth. Being a male, he is considered whole and complete, whereas the female is raised with a sense of shame because her completeness is dependent on the male. She gains completeness through the children, support and honour of a male. In turn, her modesty and strictly controlled behaviour results in a sense of shame that brings honour to the males to whom she is attached (Jacobs-Malina 1993:1).

⁴² "...God is to man as man is to woman; man is to nature what man is to woman; the master is to slave as man is to woman; the emperor is to his people as man is to woman; the teacher is to his pupil as man is to woman, etc. The superiority of the male as well as the unbridgeable distance between the male and female was emphasized continuously through these replications" (Jacobs-Malina 1993:2).

However, within honour and shame societies, patriarchal social codes are enforced beyond the household by means of the actions of men who seek to acquire more honour by dominating as many others, but especially males, as possible. The examples and teaching of such type of domination started in the home. Boys were raised to be aggressive, demonstrate self-mastery, expect to be served by his wife, children and slaves in the future, and to expect deference from other males. By growing up with absolute obedience to their fathers, they anticipated that they too would become patriarchs who could demand the same obedience from everyone in their own families. Not only obedience to their fathers (and other male elders), but also obedience and loyalty to the ruling powers were of utmost importance (Bartchy 2008:166).

Thus, within patriarchal societies as found in the Mediterranean world, and specifically within the political and cultural Greco-Roman context of the first century, male socialization and the power arrangements valued among men form the basis for honour quests among men. It was a systematic quest for honour and influence by means of competition among men, with the result being domination of males by other males (Bartchy 2008:166). Accordingly, all other power arrangements in groups and society were male.

4.2.2.3 Being male and female within honour and shame societies

Gender is socially constructed and culturally defined. In every culture, in every time, a distinct idea of what sorts of behaviour should be expressed by males and females exist. Adults teach and enforce these expectations to children – both explicitly and in more subtle ways. The world of and surrounding the New Testament was no different; it was highly gender-divided. Ancient sources offer us many examples thereof. Within the ancient worldview everything was gender-divided (Bartchy 2008:163).

The engendered honour and shame system finds itself reflecting the power structures of ancient Mediterranean societies. As men held the dominant public position in such societies, it is a male perspective which also dominated public discourse on honour and shame. Because of the private nature of the world of women, public discourse does not give much account of the way the honour and shame system functioned in the women's world. Men competed amongst other men to defend their masculinity. Part of maintaining his honour meant being able to defend the chastity of women under his dominance and protection. If they lost their chastity, it led to shame for the family as a whole.

Consequently, women were always seen as potential sources of shame. However, by expressing the positive meaning of shame (modesty, shyness or deference) a woman could preserve her chastity as well as her obedience to the male head of the family in which she was embedded (Moxnes 1996:21).

Arlandson (1997:156) notes the undeniable links between the values of honour and shame with gender as well as with class hierarchy. Although women made remarkable gains in the first century, the sense of shame that was appropriate for and required of women is still at least one of the major cultural values which differed from that of men. Shamelessness would mean the end of a woman. However, powerful women were not required to show deference to every man, as slaves or peasants had to. But poor and lowly women and men had to defer in the presence of wealthy and powerful men and women (Arlandson 1997:156).

Because of the public and performative nature of being male, men constantly had to publicly assert and defend their masculinity in word and deed. Lawrence (2005:82) states that there is performance excellence involved in being a man within the Mediterranean world. A crucial part of honour and shame is one's public appearance and perception, which is constantly being scrutinized, evaluated and challenged. Lawrence (2005:83) paraphrases Gilmore's description of what it meant to be a man in the Mediterranean world as follows: "Men must operate in the public (male) sphere and occupy the dominating and penetrating role in sex. Men must avoid all things feminine and engage in competitions of manliness, displaying feats of courage, defending and increasing the wealth and status of kin and in-group. Men must also respond to insults; and display virility in word and deed."

For a man, shame was tied to his public honour in the public arena. To be shamed publicly meant loss of honour among his peers, and consequently the gain of shame in its negative sense. Should a woman from a lower class than a man play a role in the man losing face, the shame was all the more worse. Not only would the man then risk irreparable social damage in the eyes of his peers, but also in the eyes of those over whom he had wielded power and respect (Arlandson 1997:156). It is clear, then, that shame had different meanings for men and women. For males, shame equated the loss of honour and is a negative in that they were shamed; for females, shame is the sensitivity to and defence of honour which is a positive value in a woman. However, a woman who is

branded as “shameless” means for a female what being shamed means for a male (Malina & Neyrey 1991:41-42).

The moral division of labour in an honour and shame context is also sexually specific and sexually embedded. In the Mediterranean, females find themselves primarily in the domestic sphere, while males are expected to have their primary location in the public sphere. Male honour looks outward to the public sphere and female honour looks inward to the domestic sphere (Malina & Neyrey 1991:42).

Besides the physical division between persons based on their gender, there was also a distinction between the attributes of men and women. Males were socialized to procreate, be courageous, obedient, protective, and eager to increase the reputation or wealth of the family. Females were virtuous if they remained sexually exclusive, submissive to fathers and husbands and defensive of their own and their family’s reputation. There was a definite sexual double standard in this social world, as males gained respect for sexual aggression, but females’ virtue resided in sexual exclusivity (Bartchy 2008:163).

4.2.3 Gender performativity and the gender gradient

Within the 1st century Mediterranean world honour was to be upheld and gained by means of socially acknowledged performance. Honour, as a male construct, thus had to be performed by means of a particular type of masculinity, namely hypermasculinity. Failure to perform accordingly, led to the diminishing of masculinity and the loss of honour.

4.2.3.1 The defence of hypermasculinity

Within every level of the 1st century Mediterranean societies, honour was a central concern – be it for the family, the tribe, or honourable males. Therefore the maintenance, defence, loss and restoration of honour due to males provided the matrix from which all social values and customs arose. These were to govern the behaviour of both males and females. The centrality of honour ran parallel to the disparity and separation between the genders. Therefore, a man who “acts like a woman”, in other words who does anything that is actually assigned to the role of the female, crossed the strictest of all boundaries. Consequently, such an act would cost a male his honour (Jacobs-Malina 1993:1-2).

“Acting male” and “having honour” can be considered flipsides of the same coin within this context.

Males lived with the constant threat of being considered not masculine enough, unless they could demonstrate otherwise. Individual males have to prove themselves “manly” according to the group expectations of what honourable, male behaviour was. The result is what is known as the Mediterranean hypermasculine syndrome in which a phallogocentric worldview and a dread of the feminine is central. Ironically enough, it appears as if the masculine was simultaneously understood as the powerful self-definer as well as the inherently endangered. Accordingly, males had to constantly defend their maleness and fight against any possible urges towards feminine qualities or behaviour, as well as threats to their maleness by other men or domineering women. In these defences the male genital and phallic assertion becomes almost an obsession (Malina 1996:57-58).

The dominant ideology of hypermasculinity led to a particular understanding of the world, a world that was strictly and unchangeably hierarchical constructed and socially stratified. To be a man in the Greco-Roman society of the 1st century Mediterranean world, meant understanding one’s place in a rationally ordered hierarchical universe in which free, elite men found a place at the top, and all who fell beneath could be classified as “unmen” (Conway 2008:15). However, it was not enough to be born a free Roman male citizen – one also had to act the part of a man. This was at times a role which contained contradictions. On the one hand, active roles had to be played in private sexual practice as well as in one’s public life. At the same time, this active role needed to display control and restraint, with respect to passions as well as treatment of the other (Conway 2008:21-22).

According to Conway (2008:16), ancient masculinity was determined far more by the manner in which one acted than by the shape of one’s body. *Incorporeity* was viewed as the ultimate in masculine achievement. At birth the body did play a foundational role in the antique Greco-Roman construction of gender, as Roman law required classification of babies as male or female. This was done by visual observation of the external genitalia and consequently the baby could be labelled as male or female. However, after this classification, there was no guarantee that said male baby would grow up to be a male adult in the sense of being recognised as such in his community. The boy would have to

live up to the requirements of masculinity to affirm the male gender classification ascribed to him at birth (Conway 2008:16).

4.2.3.2 One sex, two genders

This performative understanding of maleness was based on the conviction that there is only one sex, man, but two genders, male and female. Instead of the modern view of two binary “opposite” sexes, male and female, only one sex was thought to exist (Thatcher 2011:7).⁴³ This links up closely with the ancient ideas about human reproduction. The belief was that both men and women had the same but oppositely constructed set of genitals. The sexual difference was that women held their genitals within their bodies and men displayed them outside (Thatcher 2011:8). Men were thought to have more heat than women, and are therefore more perfect. The fact that they carry their genitals outside their body is an indication of their great heat (Thatcher 2011:9). Along with heat, another key masculine quality was “hardness” (*duritia, robur*). More than a phallic characteristic, it referred to the muscularity of the ideal male body as well as the moral uprightness and self-discipline that men were presumed to embody. The opposite quality was assigned to women, namely “softness” or “delicateness” (*mollitia*) which represented their delicate bodies, love of luxury, emotionality and dissolute morals (Kuefler quoted in Thatcher 2011:29).

Bodies were believed to be filled with four basic substances known as “humours”. The humours governing women were wet and cold, and those governing men hot and dry. The result was that all people were on a scale of male to female, according to the quantity and quality of humours they had (Thatcher 2011:9). A direct link was made between the heat of men and the perfection of men. Women’s bodies, because they are colder, are also less perfect than men’s bodies. Part of this perfection of the male body was the ability to control it and its desires, to be strong and to have discernment, whereas women’s bodies were seen as weaker, uncontrollable, lustful and emotionally unstable (Thatcher 2011:10). Thus, maleness was associated with completion and perfection, whereas “female” was a non-category apart from its definition as an imperfect male (Conway 2008:18). Heat, hardness and perfection were the key marks of masculinity. The one-sex species, man, belonged within a broader social and cosmic hierarchy (Thatcher 2011:30).

⁴³ The so-called one-sex view seems to have been held in the Christian tradition until at least the end of the seventeenth century (Thatcher 2011:6).

Because the male was socially and biologically superior, in this view, he was expected to exercise control over his body. This achievement was more difficult or even impossible for women, whose unruly behaviour and desires required that they should constantly be under male surveillance. Within the one-sex model of men and women, biological sex exists on a single continuum (man), from male to female. Men and women's bodies were thought to have similar sex organs as well as bodily fluids which could turn into one another. Moreover, it was possible for men to become women and for women to become men by sliding down or climbing up the so-called gender gradient (Thatcher 2011:10-11). It is especially gender slippage from male to female which was a disturbing implication of the one-sex model of humanity (Conway 2008:18). The slippery slope from masculinity, through effeminacy, to femininity, was to be avoided by males at all costs (Thatcher 2011:31). With women being simply a lesser, incomplete version of men, there was always the threat that men could slide down the axis into the female realm. Therefore one had to go further than simply being a man rather than a woman. One needed to be a manly man rather than a womanly man. This was to be maintained and proven through recurrent demonstrations of manly deportment (Conway 2008:18).

In the ancient world it was taken for granted that men were capable of erotic response to other men as well as women. The concern was over men who were passive partners in sexual exchanges, as they then failed to remain men. Women were to be penetrated and men were penetrators. Men who behaved in an effeminate manner were in danger of becoming feminized. On the other hand, women who took the active role of initiator in sexual experiences or who enjoyed sex too much, were seen to be taking on masculine roles (Thatcher 2011:11). From an ancient perspective, the body lacked stability, and therefore the spectre of lost manliness (a slide into effeminacy) was frequently highlighted for literate male audiences. From an Aristotelian perspective, a male body was not that much different from a female body. The male body was simply the perfected, more complete body when compared to the female (Conway 2008:17).

The insistence upon performing one's masculinity as a male is visible even in the metaphorical language of ethics in antiquity. The expressions "becoming man" and "woman turned into man" are relatively frequent in early Christian literature, as well as in non-Christian texts. Indications are that this usage comes from the common belief that there is a common scale of values of which masculine and feminine contrast. The term

“becoming male” refers without exception to progress from a lower to a higher state of moral and spiritual perfection (Vogt 2003:49).

4.2.3.3 Physiognomy

In Greek and Roman antiquity a theory and body of literature was developed that dealt with how to understand the nature of human beings in terms of their gender, group and place of origin, and appearance. The theory implies that the way a person looks allows an informed observer to discern and interpret the character of the person in question (Malina & Neyrey 1996:108). Physiognomy, as this type of study was known, was the discipline of discerning a person’s character, disposition, or destiny through the study of external appearances, and the term physiognomics refers to the body of literature that describes it (Conway 2008:18; Malina & Neyrey 1996:108). The four general areas of description used by ancient physiognomists can be categorized as follows: gender types, geography and ethnic types, animal types, and anatomical types (Malina & Neyrey 1996:111). This study of the relationship between the physical and the moral was also widely practiced in late antiquity by philosophers, astrologers and physicians (Parsons 2006:17). In light of this theory of “judging a book by its cover” and gender, there were aspects of the body that could betray a man’s manliness. It follows that if one demonstrated weakness of character, the body would react in turn by becoming more womanly (Conway 2008:18). Therefore, certain mannerisms had to be part of the public portrayal of masculinity.

Physiognomy was more than just a framework for categorizing visual appearance of persons. It did not only determine a person’s identity, but also served as a manual for the formation of male and female bodies and their behaviour in the desired direction. Gender was something to be acquired and proven. This process began even before birth and never ended, although it did take on different shape and meaning as one aged. Body-language was considered an important part of masculinity and femininity, for example the manner in which one moved the eyes, head, hands, and hips. Because body-language could give away one’s “true” nature, it needed to be shaped and regulated in the process of maturation (Penner & Stichele 2009:67).

The constant evaluation of the appearance and behaviour of persons finds itself within the complex interrelated network of gender, sex and sexuality that intersect with other markers of identity such as race, status, class and ethnicity. The greater one’s already present risk

of losing something to begin with, the more this becomes an issue. Ancient literature reflects the idealized values of masculinity and femininity from the perspective of the elite. Elite households were always the ones with the means and expertise to shape the bodies of their members in the necessary direction. Education and physical exercise played an important role here (Penner & Stichele 2009:67-68).

Conway (2008:30-34) describes the educational system on offer for the elite as the primary place where a young boy would begin to learn how to be a man. Pupils would copy and recopy literary maxims which concern virtue. A large portion would also concern women, in other words what not to be as an ideal male. On the contrary, positive examples of stories of men were offered. Boys needed to receive training in rhetoric, as rhetorical skill was needed to be considered manly in elite circles. The training of the discipline of the boy's body would include both physical as well as mental discipline. There was thought to be a link between rhetorical aptness and relation to the divine. The better one's rhetorical abilities, the closer one could come to the gods.

Manliness was to be demonstrated in the practice of particular virtues, of which self-control emerged as one of the most important keys of ideal masculinity by the first century (Conway 2008:24). At the same time, men had to seek opportunities to display courage. This was often done in battle with a formidable opponent (Conway 2008:29).

All in all, the concepts of masculinity and effeminacy were part of a larger system designed to separate so-called true men from everyone else. In such a system binaries were central: masculine/effeminate; moderation/excess; hardness/softness; courage/timidity; strength/weakness; activity/passivity; sexual penetration/being sexually penetrated; and encompassing all of these, domination/submission" (Conway 2008:30).

4.3 Crucifixion within the 1st century Greco-Roman context

Maintaining one's honour and the honour of one's family and groups was of utmost importance in the 1st century Mediterranean world. This ongoing quest for the defence, maintenance and increase of honour in the eyes of one's peers was the driving-force behind life, especially as a male. However, male honour – and consequently maleness – was constantly being threatened by one's own possible weaknesses as well as the words or deeds inflicted upon a person by others. Male honour and maleness could be

diminished in various degrees, depending on the degree to which shame is appropriated to a person.

Within the Mediterranean world of the 1st century, the influence of the Roman Empire is undeniable. On a political, cultural and social level the Empire exerted power and control over all who lived within its territory. In terms of the world of the New Testament in particular it is not only the Roman Empire that had a huge influence; Hellenism, Judaism and Christianity of course formed part of the multi-cultural picture presented to us in biblical and non-biblical texts as well as the historical evidence at our disposal. However, in terms of calling the shots regarding law and the ordering of society, the Roman Empire had the final say.

Within an honour and shame worldview, it makes sense that punishment for crimes not only meant to inflict pain, suffering and even death as penalty on an individual. Part of the punishment (perhaps one could say the greatest part) was to humiliate and shame a person so that they might “know their place” within the hierarchy of power relations and serve as an example to those who might forget theirs in future. Therefore, punishment for lawlessness was a public affair. The greater the transgression, the greater the attempt to publicly humiliate and shame the individual transgressor as well as their family or clan. In terms of the honour and shame values of the 1st century Mediterranean societies, the public spectacle of being subjected to naked humiliation and public crucifixion as a criminal serving a rebellious objective, was the ultimate possible form of shame of a person (Carroll et al. 1995:170).

Although crucifixion as penalty was widespread in the ancient world (Hengel 1977:86), there is not a great amount of ancient literature available on the practice of crucifixion. This is most probably due to the fact that crucifixion, as a brutal and shameful mode of execution, was unpleasant and hardly the kind of topic people wanted to linger on (Hooker 1995:8; Carroll et al. 1995:168). However, there are enough historical interpretations of ancient literature available to be able to provide some sort of a picture regarding crucifixion, particularly in its form as punishment of the Roman Empire.

In what follows, I will focus on a general overview of the Roman crucifixion as the ultimate form of humiliation and shame that could possibly be inflicted on an individual within the honour and shame context of the 1st century Mediterranean world, particularly for a male.

4.3.1 *Who was crucified?*

Although often assumed that Roman citizens were never executed on a cross, but rather only slaves and *peregrine*, there appears to be evidence to the contrary. According to Hengel (1977:39) there was an archaic, ancient Roman punishment of hanging on “the barren tree”, which could be imposed also on Roman citizens in cases of serious crime and high treason. For most of the part, however, crucifixion in the Roman Empire was used to punish slaves, traitors (Romans or non-Romans) as well as rebellious subject people such as the Jews (Hooker 1995:9).

During times of peace, crucifixion was almost always inflicted on the lower class (who made up the majority of the population) rather than the upper class. This was due to the belief that, within such a hierarchical understanding of society, the upper class deserved more humane forms of punishment. This is a typical case of class justice (Hengel 1977:34; Webb 2010:698). However, during times of war, crucifixion was used as means of attack on the enemy and may have included persons from any class (Webb 2010:698).

4.3.2 *What happened during a crucifixion?*

Crucifixion was a form of execution by torture. It can be described as one of the cruellest and most barbaric deterrents invented by humans. The purpose was to prolong the agony of death for all to see and be warned (Nolland 1993:1148). The deterrent value of crucifixion in society was at least as important as its functional purpose to punish a specific perpetrator.

Although there appears to have been some kind of “norm” for the course of the execution by means of crucifixion, this form of execution could still vary considerably (Hengel 1977:25). For most of the time, however, it went as follows: flogging beforehand; the carrying of their own crossbeams to the site of execution by the victims; nailing or binding of victims to the cross with arms extended; being raised up; and sometimes seated on a small wooden peg (Carroll et al. 1995:169). The person being crucified would be naked. According to Neyrey (1993:136-142) it was common for prisoners to be stripped naked during judicial punishment. They suffered as much from the shame of involuntary

nakedness as from any physical pain inflicted on them, as the act of being involuntarily stripped naked by another brings about shame.⁴⁴

The humiliation of a victim sometimes began with a show trial, during which the condemned was disgraced in a public forum. The public flogging and other forms of torture were aimed at disfiguring the body. The place of the crucifixion was usually in public places and on busy roads (Scaer 2005:1-2). This was a way to ensure maximum traffic and therefore maximum deterrent value for people subject to foreign rule (Green 1997:819). Sources suggest that there were many different kinds of ways in which victims were crucified (Nolland 1993:1145). In terms of the more detailed descriptions of variations within the practice of crucifixion, an upright pole was used to which the victim was attached either by tying, nailing, hanging or impaling. Sometimes victims were executed by other means and then crucified, while often the crucifixion included both the torture and execution itself. The results differed – victims impaled on a stake would die quickly or instantly, whereas the victim attached to the stake would experience a slow and lingering death. Sometimes the victim was simply attached to the vertical post, whereas at other times a horizontal crossbeam was used as well (Webb 2010:695-696). Part of the shame of crucifixion was in the disfiguring of the naked body which lost its beauty and dignity in the process of a long, painful death (Scaer 2005:2). Quite often the victims of crucifixion were never buried, which made the public humiliation complete (Hengel 1977:87). For the ancients, there was no shame worse than that of dying on the cross and not being buried (Scaer 2005:2).

The torturous death by crucifixion was the infliction of a two-fold maximum amount of pain. It was not simply a most painful punishment, but was also a public spectacle of humiliation (Scaer 2005:1). On the one hand, it was a lingering and very painful death which could last days; on the other hand, nailing or binding a man up naked – whether dead or alive – was the greatest possible indignity to which one could subject him (Hooker 1995:8; Carroll et al. 1995:168).

⁴⁴ Clothing was more than mere body covering, but rather indicated one's role and status. In this sense, it is best viewed in terms of the values of honour and shame. Clothing indicated gender, nationality, trade and social position. Being known in terms of one's nakedness means being dishonoured (Neyrey 1993:22-23).

4.3.3 What was the purpose and effect of crucifixions?

According to Webb (2010:696-697), although crucifixion practices were quite diverse they served several related functions that were quite simple and clear. Firstly, the process of crucifixion was specifically designed to humiliate and expose the victim and thus bring total shame upon the person. This included the degrading practices before the crucifixion, the public exposure on the cross, as well as the mockery of the crowd. It was a way in which to fix a criminal's honour at the lowest possible end of the spectrum (DeSilva 2000:51). Secondly, if the person was alive at the time of crucifixion, it functioned as a means of capital punishment. Thirdly, it served the public function of being a deterrent to all who observe it. According to Hengel (1977:86-87) the main reason for the use of crucifixion as political and military punishment was its alleged supreme efficacy as a deterrent which was carried out publicly. It was a reminder to observers of the shameful end that awaits one who similarly deviates from the dominant culture's values (DeSilva 2000:51). It contained as much of a shock value as could possibly be publicly displayed (Nolland 1993:1145).

In the ancient world crucifixion symbolized all that was criminal, foreign, servile and lowly. Crucifixion was the punishment of the marginalized in society, including bandits, prisoners of war, revolutionaries, murderers, rebellious slaves and foreigners. The crucifixion, as the supreme punishment of the Roman Empire, represented the complete opposite of all that was considered noble, honourable and praiseworthy in the Greco-Roman world (Scaer 2005:1). The crucified man was regarded as a criminal who was receiving just and necessary punishment, but simultaneously crucifixion satisfied the primitive lust for revenge and the sadistic cruelty of rulers and the masses (Hengel 1977:87).

For all people of the ancient world, particularly men, the cross was not just another kind of death. It was understood as an "utterly offensive affair, 'obscene' in the original sense of the word (Hengel 1977:22).

4.4 Honour, shame, crucifixion, and the Lukan Jesus

Having described the 1st century Mediterranean values of honour and shame, particularly in light of masculinity, as well as the ancient Roman practice of crucifixion, I now turn again to the crucifixion narrative of the Gospel of Luke.

4.4.1 Expect the unexpected

According to Plevnik (1993:113) it is precisely in the passion account that honour and shame, as they relate to Jesus, are best seen. This is highlighted by a cultural framework which views crucifixion as the most humiliating of all possible forms of death. Two supposedly opposite sides of a story – of honour and of (potential) shame - are on offer in the Lukan version of the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. However, it seems as if the narrator manages to merge these opposites into one, unified portrayal of honourable masculinity (with little or no traces of shame).

On the one hand, the honourable ideal male portrayal of the Lukan Jesus amidst his nearing trial and crucifixion fits quite neatly within the broader historical social worldview of honour and masculinity in the 1st century. In a certain sense this does not come as much of a surprise. As the protagonist of the narrative of the Gospel of Luke, one would expect the Lukan author to cast Jesus in a positive light. He manages this by constantly affirming that Jesus was able to uphold and defend his male status in an honourable manner, particularly in relation to the elite members of his society. Concurring from the aforementioned discussion in this chapter, it makes sense that the author would portray his main character in this manner for a 1st century Mediterranean audience who shared the values and worldviews of honour, shame and masculinity. In this sense there is a definite correlation between the world in the text and the world behind the text. The characterization of Jesus fits the cultural script of honour and shame, and consequently ideal masculinity. Jesus is an admirable example of an honourable male who deserves respect and is worth taking seriously by potential followers of the Christian movement.

On the other hand, an enormous paradox plays out in the characterization of Jesus within the trial and crucifixion narrative of the Gospel of Luke. In terms of the world behind the text, the trial and crucifixion of an honourable man should mean his end in the most disgraceful and humiliating sense possible. Death by crucifixion was to be despised and avoided at all possible costs. If a man was honourable, execution by crucifixion was never an option. It would inflict on him the greatest amount of shame possible.

However, in the world of the text, it appears as if the trial and crucifixion narrative of Jesus has precisely the opposite effect. Instead of being a threat to the honour and masculinity of Jesus, it becomes the affirmation and means towards it. The all too familiar system of

honour, masculinity, the crucifixion and the shame it represents, is turned on its head in the Lukan narrative. Jesus is the honourable, ideal man, as a *result of* his trial and crucifixion – not *in spite of* his crucifixion, but *because of* it.

Thus, in some way or the other, the Lukan author managed to reframe the event of Jesus' crucifixion – supposedly the most humiliating and shameful public event of the ancient world – as honourable and affirmative of the honourable masculine status that Jesus has held up to this point in the narrative. In the Lukan version of the crucifixion of Jesus, one finds little sign of the so-called scandal of the cross, “this barbaric death (that) had involved the display of his naked body in the public – the final, utter degradation” (Hooker 1995:9). Rather, the narrator offers to the readers a view of Jesus' crucifixion and death as a noble death.

4.4.2 *The noble death*

From an outsider perspective, the Lukan trial and death of Jesus has humiliated him to the extent that he has lost his identity. On a symbolic level his nakedness on the cross implies that this King, Christ and Saviour is a nobody (Karris 1985:99). The decision of the Roman authorities to crucify Jesus appears to send the message that popular movements among commoners and peasants that had the potential to lead to unrest were not tolerated. By crucifying Jesus, the leader, a message was sent to possible members of the movement as well as to the population at large (Webb 2010:701).

From a narrative-critical point of view, the implied reader is encouraged to accept the portrayal of Jesus as presented by the implied author of the Lukan narrative. Here a different perspective on the crucifixion of Jesus becomes possible, as one now fulfils the role of an insider rather than an outsider. According to DeSilva (2005:52) the outside world might regard the crucifixion of Jesus as a shameful death that proved his opponents defeat of their rival. However, the insider view, the alternative provided by the narrator to his audience, is that Jesus' death was a noble death. This honourable type of death was ascribed to those who died to bring benefit to others or to save others from danger. They were willing to lay down their lives voluntarily to benefit their friends or fellow citizens. Thereby they displayed virtue in death more clearly than most would ever display in life. Conway (2008:29) furthermore describes that noble acts of suicide were seen as displays

of bravery (and consequently honourable masculinity). To be “manly”, or to have courage, meant that one should also bear pain bravely.

It is not difficult to see how the Lukan author picked up on the idea of Jesus’ death as a noble death. Firstly, the voluntariness of Jesus’ death is emphasized. Secondly, it is made clear that Jesus accepted death specifically with a view to benefiting others. In spite of the vehicle of Jesus’ death, the crucifixion, it was an honourable death. The failure on the part of “outsiders” to understand this indicates their ignorance rather than the degradation of Jesus (DeSilva 2005:52-53).

One might speculate about why the Lukan author chose to portray Jesus’ death in such a manner. It is most probable that no member of the Jewish community or Greco-Roman society would have come to faith or joined the Christian movement if an alternative to the popular understanding of honour and shame had not been presented in the characterization of Jesus in his crucifixion. He was, after all, evaluated by both Jewish and Gentile leaders of Jerusalem who decided that his deeds merited a shameful death (DeSilva 2005:51). The scandal of the cross had to be retold and reimagined in such a manner that it could make sense to people that a criminal had been vindicated by God, that an outcast could be a saviour, that one under the curse of God could be a source of blessing for others (Hooker 1995:12).

Scaer (2005:2) explains that the crucifixion carried with it a social stigma, which labelled those crucified as shameful and blameworthy. Therefore it is understandable that Jesus’ death by crucifixion was an offense to the prevailing social values of the Greco-Roman context. Early writers such as Paul and the author of Hebrews write explicitly about the foolishness (1 Cor 1:23), self-humiliation (Phil 2:8) and shame (Heb 12:2) involved in the crucifixion. Justin Martyr, Origen and Lactantius were some of the earliest apologists of the Christian message of “madness” for honouring a crucified man who died a shameful death (Scaer 2005:3). In the same line, it seems as if the Lukan author went to great lengths to add an apologetic thrust for the crucifixion to his narrative. Hereby it seems as if he intended to demonstrate that Jesus’ death was, in fact, honourable and praiseworthy. (Scaer 2005:3)

Scholars have recognized for quite some time that the Lukan passion narrative portrays Jesus as a man who is especially courageous, pious, and willing to die, and that the Lukan

Jesus remains in control of his surroundings and continues to offer his blessings, even in death. In various ways links have consequently been made to the noble death tradition (Scaer 2005:5).⁴⁵

Rather than diving into the debates regarding the noble death tradition or the rhetoric implored by the Lukan author in his portrayal of Jesus as honourable and praiseworthy, I want to call a halt at this point of the second round of conversation and proceed towards the third and final conversation-partner. As a conclusion to this chapter, I will attempt to draw together the first two conversation-partners and suggest how the third round of conversation is to find its place within the present discussion.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I attempted to address the contextual gap between the implied reader of the 1st century and the implied reader of the 21st century with regards to the Lukan version of the crucifixion narrative. In light of the narrative themes of male honour and power and the characterization of Jesus as an honourable, ideal man in the narrative world of the text, I tried to offer a glimpse on the world behind this narrative.

Picking up on the clues already on offer within the world of the text, I chose to focus on the cultural script or values of honour and shame. From the perspective of social science criticism, in particular cultural anthropology, the intricate links between honour, shame and gender within the 1st century Mediterranean world was highlighted. In this context, being male implied a lifelong contest against other males in order to maintain, defend and increase honour. The danger of being evaluated as effeminate or feminine was a constant threat. Very particular physical traits, characteristics and actions had to be displayed (and also avoided) to maintain one's status as a male. Being male, and being a good male, was the ultimate quest for boys and adult males.

Within this framework, the Roman Empire plays an integral role. As the political power of the time, it enforces and appropriates (to a large extent) these societal values on a political

⁴⁵ Burrige & Gould (2004:52-52) point out that the Gospels in general also appear very similar to the ancient biographies known as ancient Lives. These compact renditions of notable persons spoke to a particular interest in the moral character and public understanding of a person. It typically starts off at the person's entry into their career and particular role and ends with the death of the subject. Much space is allotted to describing the person's death, as the manner in which a person died was very significant for understanding their life. In this sense, death was the climax of a person's life and a way of summing up what a person really was.

and cultural level. The values of honour and shame provide fertile ground for the common execution practise of crucifixion. One of the pivotal purposes of the crucifixion is precisely to exert shame and humiliation in the most extreme way possible, namely by means of public disgrace, torture and a painful death.

With this in mind, the Lukan version of the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth becomes particularly interesting. The narrator managed to uphold the honourable, controlled and authoritative portrayal of Jesus of Nazareth up to his trial and crucifixion, but what is more, made it even clearer and more nuanced during the trial and crucifixion episodes. This is the complete opposite of what was “supposed” to happen according to the values of honour and shame (and most likely had happened, according to those who did not form part of the Jesus movement). However, this is the version that the narrator chose to put forward, probably well-knowing that the “folly of the cross” had to be defended and explained in a manner which carried weight and meaning for the early Christians. It appears as if he drew inspiration from the noble death tradition.

What we have, as contemporary readers, is a Lukan Jesus who was able to stand his man, literally, from beginning to end. He could defend and uphold his honour and prove that he was good at being a good male. His trial and crucifixion posed no problem to his honour or masculinity; rather, it served as a means to prove it all the more. The Lukan Jesus is a strong, male hero whose life and death was worth looking up to.

However, as Moxnes (1996:30-31) rightly notes, one finds different portrayals of what it means to be an honourable man – not only in different societies, but also in the New Testament itself and in classical studies of antiquity. The Lukan author made a choice for a specific type of honourable masculinity for his portrayal of Jesus in the trial and crucifixion narrative. But this is not the only possible portrayal of honour or masculinity, and also does not have to be accepted uncritically simply because it finds itself in canonical Scripture. In the history of the Christian tradition, unfortunately, this type of portrayal of Jesus has often been the preferred one, as it appears to fit in so well in the established heterosexist and patriarchal construction of society and the tradition of the Church.

At this point I would like to invite the third conversation-partner to join the discussion, namely gender criticism. As a gender-critical New Testament scholar I aim to approach

the Gospel narratives, particularly those involving key-moments in the life and death of Jesus, with caution and suspicion. This is even more the case when these narratives and key-moments are misused to validate particular views on gender and sexuality.

5. IN NEED OF REIMAGINING NARRATIVES: A QUEER VIEW OF THE LUKAN CRUCIFIXION

5.1 Introduction

The final conversation-partner that will engage with the Lukan crucifixion narrative is a form of ideology criticism known as gender criticism that will address the (contemporary) world in front of the text. As explained in Chapters 1 and 2, this approach aims at questioning and deconstructing the essentialist notions of gender. Therefore it concerns itself with challenging the so-called “natural” link between biological sex and gender performance, namely male equals man equals masculine, and female equals woman equals feminine. Rather, gender criticism contends that gender is socially constructed (instead of biologically determined) and therefore male/man and female/woman cannot be perceived as fixed and universal entities that are simply the result of biology.

This socio-medical defining of the human gender as male or female primarily takes place on the basis of the observation of the genitals and is known as gender defining (Lemmer 2005:122). Accordingly “he” or “she” is influenced to act as a “he” or a “she”, in other words to fulfil a particular gender role (Lemmer 2005:123). Within most societies there are very strict ideas and criteria for the gender roles of males and females. Those who do not act accordingly, are often seen as deviants of the heteronormative and patriarchal norms of male and female, which still characterize most contemporary societies. Thus, being a male or a female is not merely the enactment of a particular gender role-expectation. This gender role-expectation finds itself within specific power-relations or politics. Schüssler Fiorenza (2000:98) describes gender as one of several systems of domination and states that it is therefore necessary to conceptualize the formation of gender in terms of power relations. Regarding gender, the power-relations of societies have, for the greatest part of human history, given preference to white, affluent males who could live up to the ideology of being heterosexual, masculine men.

Social institutions, from micro- to macro-level, play a huge role in gendering. The Christian church as social institution has played a particularly poignant role in gendering in the history of humankind. Not only has it more often than not promoted the essentialist understanding of gender (within a heteronormative and patriarchal framework), but it has also framed and validated this understanding of gender by means of a male-gendered

perception of God Triune. Tolbert (2000:104) says that sex and sexuality should not be seen as eternal products of nature of God's decree. Rather, it is historically specific, politically informed discursive representations of the material body.

With this chapter I will attempt to form a link between the three worlds of the Lukan crucifixion narrative as it pertains to this study, namely the world in the text, the world behind the text, and the (contemporary) world in front of the text. As has been indicated in Chapters 3 and 4, the world in and behind this particular crucifixion narrative is one of male honour, shame and gender performativity. Jesus of Nazareth, as protagonist of the narrative, seems to fulfil a very large role in upholding the ideological male standard of honour within such a context, particularly during the event of the crucifixion. He was able to "act the part" very well according to the Lukan crucifixion narrative.

Regarding the world in front of the text, this type of portrayal of Jesus of Nazareth has been given preference in the Christian tradition, although it is not the only type of portrayal of Jesus of Nazareth. The honourable, strong and victorious portrayal of Jesus is preferred to the wounded, shamed and seemingly defeated Jesus – particularly in terms of the crucifixion narrative. However, for the most part little or no mention is made of the fact that the crucifixion narratives are subjective portrayals by particular authors (rather than historical facts) or that the narratives are situated in very specific contexts which had an immense influence on the type of portrayals we have of Jesus on the cross.

Rather, a hypermasculine portrayal of Jesus of Nazareth, as found in the narrative of the Gospel of Luke, is put forward as an "obvious" choice for the general representation of Jesus. The "obviousness" of this choice mirrors the essentialist perceptions of gender of the Christian tradition, infused with a heteronormative and patriarchal understanding of gender and sexual relations. The socially-constructed nature of the maleness of Jesus of Nazareth (and therefore its temporality and fluidity) is left behind and an anachronistic, essentialist interpretation of the maleness of Jesus is preferred. Thus the manner in which the gender of Jesus is portrayed serves much rather the mainstream and popular ideologies of the contemporary world in front of the text, than reflecting its historical and literary construction and meaning.

These types of interpretations of the portrayals of Jesus of Nazareth are, to a large extent, rooted in the manner in which biblical narratives are read, heard and interpreted within the

Christian tradition. Unfortunately the narratives, like the crucifixion narrative, are more often than not (ab)used to validate particular contemporary opinions without reckoning with the worlds in and behind the narratives. Consequently biblical narratives become carriers of ideologies of all sorts. This is particularly also the case with issues regarding gender and sexuality. In addition, Cheney (1996:3) says that narratives not only describe events. They also urge readers to adopt certain values and perspectives that, when accepted, will affect them and, in turn, influence their communities. Thus, biblical narratives have the potential to direct and construct realities in the Christian tradition – both concerning our relationship to God Triune as well as our relationship with persons - and therefore need to be approached with caution.

With a gender-critical approach I will attempt the following in light of these contextual realities, on the one hand, and the Lukan crucifixion narrative, on the other hand:

Firstly, my argument challenges contemporary essentialist ideas on gender, particularly as it stands within the Christian tradition. Only by recognizing the role of the Christian church as social institution in the process of gendering, can one recognize how popular yet stereotypical ideologies of gender are reflected in both one's deity as well as other persons. With the help of feminist, womanist, and queer voices I will indicate why it is problematic to give uncritical preference to a so-called "obvious" hypermasculine portrayal of Jesus of Nazareth, especially with regards to the crucifixion narrative.⁴⁶

Secondly, I will use the Lukan crucifixion narrative – precisely because of its potentially problematic role in the ideological gendering which takes place within the church – to challenge simplistic connections between sex, gender and God. This challenge will be posed by queering the Lukan crucifixion narrative and proposing that contemporary readers take on the role of outsiders rather than insiders when engaging with this narrative. This entails a reimagining of the Lukan crucifixion narrative as a narrative of shame and the "unmaleness" of Jesus – the opposite of what the Lukan author presents to readers. With such a type of reading, the crucifixion narrative might be understood as the elimination and stripping away of stereotypical maleness and consequently ideological gender roles and expectations, rather than the validation thereof. The cross might become the symbol of a gender-fluid Person rather than that of a hypermasculine Superman. This

⁴⁶ I will not attempt to challenge the biological maleness of Jesus of Nazareth (as some feminist theologians try to do) but rather focus on the misappropriation of the biological maleness of Jesus of Nazareth to validate modernistic ideologies of gender.

goes against the grain of most popular portrayals and perceptions of Jesus within the Christian tradition. However, by not proposing alternative interpretations of this crucifixion narrative, stereotypical gendered perceptions of Jesus of Nazareth will remain central and continue to validate the ideology of gender-hierarchies and hypermasculinity in the church.

5.2 The male, crucified Jesus and gendering in the Christian church

In this section I will focus on the intricate relationship between the Christian church as social institution that mediates gendering; the male sex of Jesus of Nazareth; and the crucifixion of the male Jesus.

5.2.1 The role of social institutions and religion in gendering

For some, the role of religion in gendering is very obvious. According to Goldenberg (1998:193) gender, namely the social practice of dividing human beings into the two categories of male and female and to which everyone is obliged to relate, is rooted in religion. Goldenberg quotes the anthropologist Howard Eilberg-Schwartz who stated that gender is not merely something that intersects with religion, but is central to that which is accomplished by religion. Goldenberg takes it further by saying that religion not only intensifies and produces gendered behaviour, but that gender as a sustained practice results in theism. For Goldenberg (1998:199) the obsessive insistence on difference between men and women in religion (for example inhabiting different spheres distinguished by separate responsibilities, clothing and ritual roles) should raise suspicion.

However, the specific role of religion in gendering is not so clearly discernible for all. Gill (1999:163), who specifically focuses on the study of Christianity and masculinity, views gender from a social constructionist perspective. He warns that the complexities of gender as social construction should not be underplayed. The formation of gender stands within the complex interplay of class, race, sexual orientation and nationality – not only religion. The role of Christianity in sustaining the gendered ordering of the public realm and in providing models of appropriate gender behaviour is less easy to identify than in the past. This is particularly the case within western societies that have become more secular and more pluralist. However, one can contend that in light of the influence of Christianity in the history of humanity over the past 2000 years, it has definitely had at least some influence on the manner in which gender was perceived and to be portrayed in societies.

In terms of the historical development of the still popular understanding of gender in the Christian tradition, namely as an essentialist entity, it has been suggested that a change from the ancient one-sex model (as described in Chapter 4) to a two-sex model has played an immense role. The historian Thomas Laqueur shows in “Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud” that it was only in the anatomical representations and medical and political discourse of the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries that this one sex became two opposite sexes, with different physical and social characteristics. However, this shift in discursive representations of sex was not primarily based on scientific discoveries (this only happened more or less a century later). Rather, it was rooted in the political necessity to find new grounds for female inferiority and domestication in light of the Enlightenment’s toppling of a divinely ordained hierarchical worldview (Tolbert 2000:104-105). Therefore social and political changes brought on by the Enlightenment are the reason for the change from the one-sex to the two-sex model. Consequently the economic, political and cultural lives of women and men, namely their gender roles, are based on these two sexes which are biologically given. “Just as in antiquity the body was seen as reflecting the cosmological order, so in modernity the body and sexuality are seen as representing and legitimating the social-political order” (Schüssler Fiorenza 2000:10).

In contemporary society the assumption of “natural” gender differences still informs a large part of everyday experiences and turns it into so-called common-sense knowledge. It is done in such a manner that gender difference appears natural, commonplace and divinely bestowed. By presenting the oppositional male/female and masculine/feminine system as natural, universal and common sense, the reality of the notion of two sexes as a social-cultural construct is obscured and mystified. This reminds one of the way in which racial and national differences were, and still are, considered by some as natural biological facts or as ordained by God (Schüssler Fiorenza 2001:114).

As mentioned in Chapter 2, both sex and gender are cultural fictions from a postmodern perspective. They are viewed as discursive representations that constitute the power relations and practices of bodies in a variety of specific and local configurations. In opposition to the modernistic view, they have no essential meaning or core nature in and of themselves. Therefore one’s imagined materiality cannot be used to legitimate constructions of the other (Tolbert 2000:105).

The challenge for such postmodern perspectives, however, is that social institutions are to a large extent still modernistic in terms of their gender functioning and expectations. The Christian church finds itself firmly rooted in this modernistic worldview of gender and sexuality. This is evident not only in the manner in which male/female and masculine/feminine are opposed and compartmentalized in light of biological differences, but also in the Christian church's struggle to break free from hegemonic masculinity, patriarchy and heteronormativity.

Hegemonic masculinity – a particular variety of masculinity to which others are subordinated – has been a powerful cultural force in the western tradition for thousands of years (Conway 2008:9, 11). Although alternative masculinities have always existed, it did not or does not mean that hegemonic masculinity is any less of an ideological force. Instead, alternatives have fulfilled the function of clarifying and further strengthening the dominant masculine posture (Conway 2008:11).

The link between hegemonic culture and Jesus must not be underestimated. Cultural productions – religious as well as western – are filled with images of Jesus. The Jesus rhetoric that has been applied in sermons, Bible study, hymns, literature, pictures, and movies correlates the image of Jesus with hegemonic cultural and religious values of gender, race, class and ethnicity. The manner in which one sees Jesus is a window on the values that individuals as well as hegemonic culture consider important (Schüssler Fiorenza 2000:58).

When understanding gender as a social construct, one can become aware of how “normative” gender identities function in a given culture in relation to other marginalized articulations of gender (Conway 2008:9). Not only the essentialist notions of gender need to be questioned in the church as social institution, but so too the supposed “natural” heterosexual bias which underlies it. Tolbert (2000:104) says that gender, anatomical sex, sexual desire and sexual acts are mixed in a variety of disparate ways among the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered communities. Thereby the supposed natural unity of the normative regime is demonstrated to be a cultural fiction.

As a social institution, the past and the present history of the Christian church leaves much to be desired from a gender-critical perspective. It has and still is a key role-player in

maintaining essentialist notions of gender of which the stereotypical strong male/masculine is almost always given preference, embedded in heteronormativity and patriarchy.

This influence of the church is closely connected to its understanding and portrayal of Jesus as a male. What is more, not only was Jesus a male (and, a very particular type of male according to popular assumptions), but Jesus, as such a type of male, was the one who was crucified and consequently established God's salvation for humankind. The image of the male Jesus on the cross is no simple image – rather it represents a myriad of experiences, interpretations and associations, depending on the perspective of the one standing in front of it. The perspectives under consideration in this study are specifically those pertaining to gender and sexuality.

5.2.2 The complexities surrounding the maleness of Jesus of Nazareth

From feminist and womanist perspectives much has been said and done regarding the fact that Jesus was, biologically, a man. In the nineteenth-century women's movement the question of woman's sinfulness and the supposed need for redemption was central. More recent feminist Christological discourses circle quite often around the problem of Jesus' maleness (Schüssler Fiorenza 2000:9). The issue is that, in the Christian tradition, Jesus was not only a historical figure in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, but he also represents Jesus, the Christ – the one who fulfils the role of Saviour for humankind. His human nature is bonded to a divine nature and it is difficult to speak about the one without the other. To have a Christology, one needs to bring these two natures together in some way or the other. This is precisely where the problem comes in for many feminist scholars (Hampson 2003:287-288). Feminist theologians are confronted by the power of the maleness of Jesus which has so often been used to reinforce patriarchal power in the Christian community (Rakoczy 2004:98). The biological maleness of Jesus has had particular influences on the doctrines of the Christian faith (specifically those regarding the Trinity, sin, forgiveness, redemption and salvation) as well as the practices of the Christian church (for example ordination and the priesthood, sacraments and liturgy).

According to Conway (2008:5-6) the way one interprets and portrays the gender identity of Jesus does make a difference. For at least the past one hundred years, gender and Christology have often been viewed as closely related categories. Either the saving power of Christ inextricably linked to his "manliness", or it was totally distinct from it.

Schüssler Fiorenza (2000:57) says that our understanding of Jesus and our worldview generally correlates. Therefore one should be consciously aware and alert of the link between one's understanding of Jesus' maleness and the influence it has on one's understanding of life and oneself.

With regards to the maleness of Jesus and its effects, Greene-McCreight (2000:73) puts it rather strongly by stating that "(t)he maleness of Jesus 'leaks' into the Godhead like an infectious disease, rendering unclean our understanding of God and therefore also our understanding of our own maleness and femaleness." Japinga (1999:94) says that one of the effects of this "leaking" is that the historical reality of the maleness of Jesus cannot be questioned or discussed without it being perceived as a challenge to the wisdom of God's plan. The impression is created that Christians must simply acknowledge that God had good reasons for taking on the shape of a male. One reason often given is that the cultural situation of his time would not allow a Messiah to be female. Another reason offered for the maleness of Jesus is that God the Father naturally and necessarily chose to reveal "himself" in male form, as God is male and because maleness more adequately represents God than femaleness.

From a theological point of view it is still often maintained that women are biologically and intellectually defective and naturally in a state of subjection. Therefore Christ had to take on a male nature because female nature was inadequate, unreasonable and even somewhat revolting (Japinga 1999:94). Women could be seen as the appropriate object of redemption and salvation, but a woman or women could not be seen as the primary or appropriate source of redeeming and saving power. This perception has its roots in the patristic tradition (Corrington 1992:27). The writings of formative Christianity conclude that women can only be saved if they are either obedient (to males, the male saviour, the male God) or if they themselves deny their embodiment as females and "make themselves male" (Corrington 1992:203).

According to Jordan (2007:282-283) it is apparent that it has been important for Christian traditions that Jesus was biologically male. In the first place he needed sex and gender to become fully human, as the Christian tradition claims he did. In the second place, the sex and gender that he had claims particular privileges and powers which fit comfortably in a patriarchal and heteronormative worldview. However, Christian traditions have not often considered what it is that makes Jesus male, namely that God incarnate had genitals of a

certain configuration. Talking about them is considered indecent or provocative or blasphemous. It is acceptable to meditate and imagine any other part of his humanity, as long as it does not involve the most obvious part of his biological maleness.

Therefore, in spite of the persistent insistence on the maleness of Jesus throughout the history of the Christian church and the binary oppositional and essentialist understanding of gender in the Christian tradition, there is an irony involved in that a very strong distinction between the sex of Jesus and the gender of Jesus is made. The common linear reasoning from biological sex to gender for persons is not applied to Jesus, in spite of the fact that it is precisely an essentialist understanding of the maleness of Jesus that is used to validate such a position regarding persons! There is a far greater familiarity with the male gender of Jesus than his male sex. According to Jordon (2008:286) Jesus' masculinity, however, is a bit strange. Firstly, most Christian churches maintain that Jesus had a strictly celibate masculinity, as they take it as obvious that Jesus never engaged in sexual activity. Secondly, Jesus' masculinity is a type of eunuch masculinity; he was male, but seems to have had no male genitals, as male genitals on Jesus and the idea of Jesus having sex quite simply does not sit comfortably with many Christians. Thirdly, the masculinity of male Christian leaders has often itself strained social expectations of masculinity, particularly where celibacy is expected. Thus, although Jesus' masculinity is held up as the standard for the masculinity of Christian ministry, it is also not uncomplicated and might even be seen as problematically masculine. Martin (2009:186) describes Jesus as "a figure of ambiguous sexuality."

Schüssler Fiorenza (2000:59) is of the opinion that any presentation of Jesus, whether it is scientific or otherwise, must own that it is a "reconstruction". In this manner it can be opened up for public reflection and critical enquiry. As such the reconstruction of Jesus can be measured against present textual and archaeological information on the historical Jesus and his socio-political contexts. Reflection and enquiry also assists in recognizing and exposing rhetorical interests and theological functions of historical knowledge productions. In light thereof, we should rightly be able to ask critical questions about both the maleness and especially the type of maleness of Jesus that is presented in the Christian tradition.

Most feminist theologians do not deny that Jesus was a man, as is sometimes assumed. Rather, they refuse to use maleness in ways that are theologically inappropriate (Japinga

1999:101). The same might be said of womanist and queer theologians. Examples appropriate for this study might include the preference given to hypermasculine portrayals of Jesus; the misuse of Jesus' maleness as validation of certain persons' lower status in society based on their gender and sexual identity; the validation of essentialist notions of gender from a religious perspective; and the insistence upon heterosexual identity as the only acceptable sexual identity for persons.

The biological maleness of Jesus needs to be given new meanings – other than power and overpowering - if not to be used as a weapon of oppression regarding the gender, sexuality, class, race or sexual orientation of persons, all of which are interrelated.

5.2.3 The problem of a male Jesus on the cross

As soon as the gender of Jesus and the crucifixion of Jesus are part of the same sentence, one can expect voices of protest to be heard. The cross has been both the symbol of oppression and liberation (however much more of the former rather than the latter) for feminist, womanist and queer theologians.

As Greene-McCreight (2000:73-74) states, both the maleness of Jesus and the very image of his cross poses a problem for feminist christologies and some feminist theologians. The charge is often raised that the insistence on the centrality of the cross in Christian theology is detrimental to women insofar as it seems to promote and glorify violence and abuse. Purvis (1993:83) maintains that the cross is a deeply problematic symbol for contemporary Christian feminists who attempt to shape community in such a way that power is exercised and experienced as life-giving rather than controlling and violent. The cross has come to represent the legitimization and even glorification of suffering, abuse and violence. In this sense it functions as a symbol of death rather than life.

In a broader sense, Green & Baker (2000:19) states that the cross is sometimes deployed as a model for others by those who have power and privilege in particular social contexts. The marginalized persons of society are urged to welcome the decay of their lives and communities. Those who suffer abuse, harassment and ill-treatment are encouraged to submit quietly and "be like Jesus". In this way the suffering of Jesus becomes an oppressive tool in light of, for example, sexual abuse, slavery, unjust wages, racism, torture and political oppression (Green & Baker 2000:174). The misuse of the cross as

well as the maleness of Jesus is not limited only to women and queer persons, but potentially affects all who find themselves on the margins of social settings and societies, for whatever reason.

Bartlett (2001:5) rightly poses questions regarding the “obviousness” of a violent death that works as a form of ultimate resolution. Why is it that the brutal violence inflicted on the protagonist of the Gospels always functions to bring about the desired goal of human redemption? Why does this violence not cause outrage, beyond the possible formal effects that theologians might ascribe to it? For Bartlett (2001:186) part of the problem lies in the fact that generations of readers of the Gospels have ignored the actual story the evangelists were telling, in favour of the theological scheme the story seems to illustrate.

Responses to the cross differ. According to Greene-McCreight (2000:74) it is unlikely that mainline feminist theologies will want to give greater attention to the place of the cross in Scripture and Christian theology. In most feminist circles the cross is not interpreted from within the narrative framework of the Gospel stories. Rather, it is from the very outset, understood as an example of abuse which can only wound further. Consequently, redemption cannot come in the form of the cross and might only come by removing the offense of the cross. However, Greene-McCreight (2000:75) suggests that a more positive response might be possible if a distinction is made between the cross and the crucifixion on the one hand, and the “heretical” atonement theories which have possibly contributed to abuse and violence.

Womanist and queer theologians have raised the same issue, often struggling to view the cross as the symbol of liberation, freedom and hope that it is apparently meant to be in light of the oppression and abuse that has been done “because of” the cross. Consequently, Jesus and the cross are given more meanings than simply that of redemption and atonement. These meanings are rooted in the particular experiences of black women and queer persons. As an example, Stuart (1997:85) says that womanist Christology has generally held on to the belief that Jesus is God, for if Jesus is God it means that powerful people, especially powerful men, are not. It also means that God is real and accessible, someone one can talk to and befriend, and confide in. Christ is a co-sufferer, provider and liberator. The guarantee of his liberation of the oppressed was made possible in his resurrection after his crucifixion. In this sense, the cross is a symbol that points forward to a new reality.

Within queer theology, emphasis is often rather placed on the life of Jesus and his resurrection after his death than on his crucifixion. It is particularly the way in which Jesus identified with the marginalized in society and promised a new reality that is given prominence. His death means that he now lives in solidarity with queer people, who have always been among the non-persons of society, subjected to violence and oppression, and seen as sinners in need of repentance and forgiveness (Stuart 1997:80-85). “Through his resurrection Jesus becomes the queer Christ as he also becomes the black Christ, the Asian Christ, the Native American Christ, the abused Christ, and the female Christ or Christa” (Stuart 1997:83). Once again, the cross itself becomes a symbol that points forward to new possibilities in life in light of what happened after the crucifixion of Jesus.

Green & Baker (2000:173) are not convinced that attempting to extract the cross from Christianity is the most appropriate way of dealing with the misuse of the cross in theology. Rather, the cross should be used to address evil – including the evils caused in part by distorted versions of atonement theology. This can be done by developing alternative images and ideas of the crucifixion which can support individuals and communities in their struggle to confront evil and to renew and sustain healthy relationships.

The language of salvation belongs to the discourse of power. The metaphors used to describe salvation and redemption are derived from social realities that inevitably involve indicators and constructions of power, which include expressions of gender. Experiences of power in the social world inform metaphors that describe salvation. Those who hold power in society, especially the ability to generate or control symbols, are the primary providers and guardians of power in religious discourse. When finding the powerless in society as figures of power in that discourse, their appearance is viewed as an extraordinary situation or even a cosmic reversal (Corrington 1992:46).

In light of this power discourse, Bartlett (2001:1) is of the opinion that those who own the narrative of the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, who identify with it and with its diverse traditional and institutional expressions over those years, have a unique responsibility for the impact it has had and still has. Also those who do not own the story, yet recognize it as part of their cultural account, need to think about it. In this way they can seek to understand its strange, disruptive paradoxes, and even take up a considered response in face of it.

5.2.4 Conclusion

From the above-mentioned it is apparent that there is an intricate relationship between the Christian church as a social institution that influences gendering, the essentialist understanding of gender, the biological maleness of Jesus, and the crucifixion narrative of Jesus of Nazareth. In terms of gender and sexuality and the corresponding ideologies thereof within the heteronormative and patriarchal framework of the Christian tradition, the voices of feminist, womanist and queer theologians provide valuable input. Gender criticism, as an approach which is particularly aware of the socially-constructed nature of gender, gains much from these partners in the critique it can offer towards the Christian church as carrier of (stereotypical) gendering. For the purpose of this study it is especially the link made between modernistic understandings of gender as a “natural” result of biological sex, and the perception of Jesus of Nazareth as a biological male who supposedly always acted male (particularly on the cross), that needs to be scrutinized. This is because the narratives of Jesus of Nazareth, particularly also the crucifixion narrative, act as the “carriers” of these gender ideologies which find expression in every part of the life of the church.

In light of this immense effect that faith narratives, especially the crucifixion narrative, has on the manner in which gender and sexuality is dealt with within the church and Christian tradition, I propose that biblical narratives cannot be read or interpreted uncritically. As the carriers of meaning that extend their intended purposes, as is the case with the link between the crucifixion narrative of Jesus of Nazareth and the essentialist notion of gender, we can apply the practice of queering of biblical narratives – particularly those as influential as the crucifixion narrative of the Gospel of Luke.

5.3 Queering the Lukan crucifixion narrative: Reimagining “shame”

This final part of the study will offer a suggestion towards addressing the conversation that has taken place up to this point. Some sort of a proposal is asked for in order to bring together the three worlds of the Lukan crucifixion narrative, particularly in light of the challenges regarding gender and sexuality posed to the contemporary reader within the Christian tradition.

My suggestion is that the constructed nature of the male gender of Jesus of Nazareth, in and around the Lukan crucifixion narrative, could perform a creative “dance” with the contemporary context gender as social construction. The constructed nature of gender in the past as well as the present opens the door to possibilities of reimagining the Lukan crucifixion narrative in a queer manner. This queering lies on two planes: firstly, one might reclaim the queer nature of the crucifixion event in itself within our present-day context; and secondly, the Lukan crucifixion narrative can be queered towards a different portrayal of Jesus of Nazareth if contemporary readers are willing to take on the position of outsiders – the opposite position of that of the implied reader suggested by the implied author in the narrative. In this sense the historically grounded perspective of the shame and unmaleness of the narrative of Jesus of Nazareth on the cross might be claimed as an alternative and equally important version of the crucifixion narrative, as it highlights the fluidity of gender rather than its fixed nature. Historically speaking, it might even be said that this is the more realistic version of the crucifixion narrative, against the backdrop of honour and shame in the first century!

For contemporary readers this need not be seen as a threat to masculine identity, as was the case for those hearing the narrative against the backdrop of honour and shame in the 1st century audiences, of which an initial implied reader would have been a part. Rather, it might offer a valuable start for conversations within the Christian tradition regarding the manner in which gender and sexuality is understood, perceived and (expected to be) embodied – often at the cost of marginalized and socially vulnerable persons. All this is done against the background of the shaping influence that narratives have within the Christian tradition.

5.3.1 Reimagining narratives within the Christian tradition

A first step in reimagining Jesus is to ask questions about Jesus as presented in the narratives of the Gospels. This is part of the interpretative process of shaping our own identity. According to Meeks (2006:63-64) the characters who encounter Jesus in the Gospel narratives are full of questions regarding the identity of Jesus. These types of questions represent the process of interpersonal transactions by which identity is made. Characters are entryways into those stories for engaged hearers of the gospel. The characters are the hearers’ surrogates for their own questioning. Those asking questions, both in the stories and the ones listening, are asking who they are when asking who Jesus

is. By writing those stories down, the evangelists have put us as readers in the same position. When asking questions about the identity of Jesus we involve ourselves. The different narratives about Jesus intersect with our own complicated life narratives and the long, multiple narratives of our cultural history. At its core, our own identity-shaping is an interpretative process in the light of who we imagine Jesus was and is.

More than simply asking questions about Jesus in the narratives of the Gospels, I want to suggest that some narratives about Jesus invite contemporary readers to be imaginative – particularly in the case of biblical narratives such as the Lukan crucifixion narrative, that has been used in oppressive and abusive ways. Goss & West (2000:3) rightly state that the Bible as the Word of God has been used to justify oppression. This is particularly the case regarding gender and sexuality. However, instead of merely taking on defensive stances towards oppressive interpretations, more positive reading strategies are needed. From a feminist perspective, Greene-McCreight (2000:77) states that the fear of patriarchy bleeding through Jesus onto the church might become precisely the catalyst for creative reconstructions of Christology. Not only Christology, in other words our own theologies, but also the biblical narratives of Jesus, such as the Lukan crucifixion narrative, might be reconstructed in creative ways.

The challenge posed by the Lukan crucifixion narrative is that we, as implied readers, are invited to identify with the protagonist of the narrative, namely Jesus of Nazareth. Feminist biblical scholars have recognized that the gender of the protagonists in biblical narratives is critical. The reader must identify with a particular portrayal of a male protagonist's experiences and views if one wants to follow the plot of the text (Cheney 1996:19). If this should be applied to the Lukan crucifixion narrative, all readers have to identify with the hypermasculine portrayal of Jesus of Nazareth, irrespective of their own gender and sex. An alternative to this, as suggested by Schüssler Fiorenza in "But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation," entails that readers identify with the "invisible", suppressed voices in a text and recreate these voices. For her, this is possible through the use of imagination and historical critical methods that can challenge the particular male-oriented perspective (Cheney 1996:21).

Furthermore, Schüssler Fiorenza (2001:1179) suggests a "hermeneutics of creative imagination" that seeks to imagine and dream of a different world of justice and well-being. Within the space of imagination there is freedom, boundaries can be crossed, possibilities

can be explored and time becomes relative. The imagination is a space of memory and possibility where situations can be re-experienced and desires can be re-embodied. According to her, a hermeneutics of imagination retells biblical stories, re-shapes religious vision, and is able to celebrate those who have brought about change. Methods such as storytelling, role-play, bibliodrama, Midrash, pictorial arts, dance, meditation, prayer, and a ritual for creating a “different” religious imagination are employed (Schüssler Fiorenza 2001:181).

From a gender-critical perspective I want to suggest that the more radical approach of reimagining the Lukan crucifixion narrative, rather than simply searching for the invisible and suppressed voices with which to identify, is necessary. This reimagining will be done by means of a queering of the narrative. However, a first step in that direction is to reclaim the queerness of the cross and the crucifixion – something that has gotten lost along the way of the Christian tradition. For Fredriksen (1988:214-215) this reclaiming is part of the church’s obligation to do history. Doing history means to undertake the reconstruction of the religious, social, political, and cultural context in which Jesus of Nazareth lived and died. In such a manner a simplistic reading of identity-confirming narratives, such as the crucifixion narratives can be avoided. Such readings result in bad history, and bad history for the church results in bad theology.

5.3.2 Reclaiming the queerness of the cross

By reclaiming the queerness and strangeness of the cross, one needs to travel back in time to the first audiences of the crucifixion narrative – those for whom the crucifixion of an honourable, male leader would be a shock and a scandal in various respects. Too often we, as contemporary readers of the crucifixion narrative, battle to recognize the radicality and the profound impact this event and narration thereof would have had, both for insiders as well as outsiders of the early Christian movement. Our theological interpretations of the crucifixion cloud the impact of the actual event, as narrated in the Gospels. Hooker (1995:8) says that “(o)ur problem is simply that we are too used to the Christian story; it is difficult for us to grasp the absurdity – indeed, the sheer madness – of the gospel about a crucified saviour which was proclaimed by the first Christians in a world where the cross was the most barbaric form of punishment which men could devise.”

Green & Baker (2000:12-13) says that the significance of the cross has become for many Christians merely an obvious matter of theological affirmation. The importance or the effect of the death of Jesus on the cross is virtually equated with the meaning of atonement, namely the doctrinal affirmation that Christ died for our sins; this, in spite of the many and diverse metaphors that convey the meaning of the cross in the New Testament, throughout historical theology and both in and outside Christian communities.

At the same time, the image of a shamed, humiliated and suffering Jesus on the cross does not fit well with a contemporary reader who is in a world that sees personal suffering or social tragedy as a discredit to their faith. Many contemporary Christians find the suffering of Christ a bit of an embarrassment, if they had to be honest. The result is that Jesus' crucifixion and death is rarely mentioned. The focus falls rather on the resurrection narratives – those stories that tell of the final victory of Christ over death (Green & Baker 2000:18).

Conway (2008:12) encourages contemporary readers to take seriously the crucifixion narrative as heard in its ancient context. According to her, the root of the Christian myth is not only the story of a fallen and redeemed “mankind”, but also a story of failed and redeemed “masculinity”. Within its ancient context, the story of a tortured and crucified man is the story of his emasculation. She quotes Stephen Moore who said, “Jesus' passivity, his submissiveness, his stripping and whipping, his role as plaything in the rough hands of the soldiers, his...penetration and abject helplessness on the cross would all have conspired, in complicity with the hegemonic gender codes, to throw his masculinity into sharp relief – precisely as a problem.” According to her, one sees that already early in the Christian tradition, for example in the early letters of Paul and in the Gospels (of which the Lukan crucifixion narrative is a prime example) there was a common concern to restore the masculine honour of Jesus Christ in the light of his crucifixion. This was done as to appeal to a wide range of potential adherents. It also resulted in the emergence of a religious tradition that could make its way from the margins to the center of the empire. Contemporary readers should not hold back in peeling the layers of influence on the shaping of the crucifixion narrative, as to expose it again for what it was. We need to reclaim the scandalous meaning of the crucifixion of Jesus, even if it means going against the grain of not only contemporary interpretations thereof, but also longstanding interpretations in the Christian tradition – including those of biblical authors.

When one surveys the New Testament material, a few things are evident. Firstly, the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth cannot be overlooked or swept aside. It is too much a part of the tradition and life of the early Christian movement and later the Christian tradition to be regarded as an “added extra”. Secondly, Jesus’ death is not portrayed in only one manner and has always been interpreted in multiple ways. A scandalous interpretation of the crucifixion is but one of many possibilities. However, through the ages the multiple possibilities of interpretation have become less and less, leaving only one or two popular interpretations to be repeated most of the time (Green & Baker 2000:15-16). Reclaiming the shame and the scandal of the cross, therefore, places us as contemporary readers well within the footsteps of the early Christian movement and traditions, in spite of appearing strange within our own contexts.

Bartlett (2001:2) says that when the Crucified is allowed to speak originally from the cross, in the scene of raw violence, it is a shocking thing. If the cross means what Christians claim it means, it must always again become a question to Christians, and thereby Christianity a question to itself. The cross was never intended to fit comfortably within already existing notions of society, persons, faith and God Triune and to affirm the status quo. Rather, it should raise perplexing questions, be destabilizing, be provocative, and encourage re-creativity. This is precisely what a queer reading of the hypermasculine Jesus on the Lukan cross can do.

5.3.3 Queering the maleness of Jesus of Nazareth on the Lukan cross

Queering the maleness of Jesus of Nazareth in the Lukan version of the crucifixion narrative from a gender-critical perspective entails the subversion and opposition of the socially-constructed, honourable male portrayal of Jesus of Nazareth on the cross. This is done in order to make the socially-constructed nature of his hypermasculine gender in this portrayal as obvious as possible. By recognizing that the maleness of Jesus of Nazareth was socially-constructed, readers might start recognizing the socially-constructed nature of their own gender as well as the influences on it, particularly within the Christian tradition. By breaking down anachronistic essentialist perceptions of the maleness of Jesus of Nazareth on the cross, new possibilities of gender identity-formation based on influential faith narratives such as the crucifixion narrative might arise.

In light of the insights offered regarding the world in the text (Chapter 3) as well as the world behind the text (Chapter 4) a queer reading of the Lukan crucifixion narrative will ask of contemporary readers to imagine the following:

i) A context in which one is classified as man or woman based on the outward appearance of genitalia, but is not automatically reckoned as such unless one can perform accordingly within the expectations set out for male and female. Being considered a “good male” means acting hypermasculine, all the time. To be seen as a proper male one needs to act honourable, strong, and virile and in control. Men must not back down from challenges posed to their honour and must be able to maintain their honour upon being challenged by their peers. One’s maleness is constantly under threat, and others will attempt to reduce one’s male honour as much as possible, in order to increase their own male honour. Public space is a very important part of being male.⁴⁷

ii) Not having honour or losing honour means being shamed – the one thing a man does not want to experience. Shame is meant for females, not for males. Females are considered lesser males. Therefore a threat to one’s honour, as a male, is a threat to one’s gender role in society. Men who are perceived as females are neither here nor there – they are not women, nor men, but rather feminine men or effeminates. The same counts for women. A woman should not act as a male. Thereby she is shamed, as she is crossing the strict boundaries of gender. She is trying to be seen as something that she should not be. She should know her place, keep to the private spaces assigned to women, be submissive to her husband and other men, and act in the appropriate female manner. Men should be male, and women should be female. Not acting in accordance to one’s biological sex goes against the entire structure of society, which is divinely ordained.⁴⁸

iii) Regarding punishment and death, the crucifixion is the most shaming, disgusting and unwanted form of punishment and death any person could imagine. It is the type of death-penalty reserved for the most scandalous criminals of society – those who pose a threat to the Empire and her livelihood. The physical torture involved in crucifixion was immense – a long, painful and torturous death that could last days. However, the most torturous part of crucifixion was the public shame and humiliation with which one died. Naked, in a

⁴⁷ As discussed in 4.2.2.3; 4.2.3; 4.2.3.1; and 4.2.3.3.

⁴⁸ As presented in 4.2.1.4 and 4.2.2.3.

public place, with guards and the public taunting and scorning the criminal, while family and friends looked on with their heads hanging in shame. A proper burial was not allowed for those crucified, adding to the shame and humiliation. The Empire used crucifixion as a very effective deterrent and warning for anyone who might consider following the same route as these types of criminals. Societal and physical death was the aim of crucifixions.⁴⁹

iv) Jesus, a prominent Jewish leader, has been sent to trial – first before the Sanhedrin (Luke 22:63-22:71), and then before Pilate and Herod (Luke 23:1-23:12). In spite of all of Pilate's attempts to convince the crowds of Jesus' innocence, they insist on his crucifixion. Jesus is a criminal who deserves the death penalty of ultimate shame. No-one will be able to stop the Roman officials in their task of leading him to the place of crucifixion, torturing him, removing his clothes, putting him on the cross, and having him die (Luke 23:13-23:25).

v) Watching this event of the crucifixion, onlookers see Jesus changing from a honourable, respected, strong male into a pitiful, shamed, naked and lashed male – or rather, a female (Luke 23:26-23:46). He has been stripped of his maleness in every way possible. He cannot even be described as a feminine male. That would still have been more acceptable. He has become a shamed female – a non-person in the eyes of his society, who has figuratively spat in the face of all gender role expectations. By doing so – by finding himself on the cross – Jesus is biologically a man, but he is definitely not a typical 1st century male. His genitals mean nothing as he hangs on the cross. Fathers show their sons what might happen to them if they dare cross the rules and boundaries of the Empire. “Be warned, lest you would also become a non-person like this man.” He might have been respected and honoured during his life as a man, but now that has all ended. There is no redeeming his honourable male image anymore.⁵⁰ His opponents have been right all along. This can definitely not be the long-awaited Messiah. The King of the Jews would never have been crucified. Just the mere thought is a joke. No man, absolutely no man who finds himself on a cross, deserves to be respected, praised or admired. Hopefully, in time, the real Messiah will come (Luke 23:35-37; 23:39).

⁴⁹ As argued in 4.3.1; 4.3.2 and 4.3.3.

⁵⁰ As argued in 4.3.3.

As disturbing and even blasphemous as this version of the Lukan crucifixion narrative might be to some, it serves the purpose of offering an alternative to an all-familiar portrayal of Jesus of Nazareth on the cross. By imagining that Jesus could have lost his maleness on the cross, while still being biologically a man, the fragile nature of gender – especially maleness – is highlighted. Jesus might have looked the part, but that did not guarantee him the respect and honour that he was expected to have in the eyes of his peers.

5.4 Conclusion

From a gender-critical perspective, I want to propose that this image of Jesus of Nazareth can rightly be claimed and celebrated by contemporary readers – equally as much, or perhaps even more, than the claim and celebration of the strong, honourable, male image of Jesus of Nazareth. Not all who have heard the crucifixion narrative throughout history have accepted the Lukan version of the narrative. For many audiences it would not have and still does not make any sense. A hypermasculine Jesus – supposedly a given in light of his biological sex as a man – does not resonate with everyone. What comfort does the perfect, hypermasculine Jesus on the cross offer, especially to those who have been violated and abused precisely in light of their own gender and sexual identities?

At the heart of this alternative proposal of the portrayal of Jesus of Nazareth lies the search for life-giving, rather than life-threatening theologies which serve the best interests of all who are influenced and affected by the Christian faith. In light of the relationship between gender understandings and theology, Eriksson (1995:145) suggests that a new meaning of gender in God-talk is needed. An exploration of religious language and the promotion of religious metaphors that do not tap into gender dichotomies but rather enforce gender transformation and transgression, can destabilize the frame of meaning and annihilate other dichotomies that may seem theologically significant. When dichotomies are forced to collapse into each other within the frame of meaning, or when “common sense” relations are disrupted, the previous “meaning” of concepts such as God, human, man, woman, good, evil, spirit, flesh, cannot be maintained.

Our gender understandings determine our God understandings, which in turn determine our self-understandings. The queering and reimagining of central faith narratives such as the Lukan crucifixion narrative may be a means by which to disrupt “common sense” relations – precisely the purpose of queering. The “disruption”, for some, may become

exactly the creation of new spaces of meaning for those who have been marginalized by “common sense” in the church and Christian tradition.

6. CONCLUSION

The background of the study is the unjustifiable high statistics regarding gender-based violence, discrimination and injustices that persons in South Africans – both men and women – have to experience on a daily basis. It is especially the silence of the church, and in many cases the seemingly contributing role of the church in such a context, that begs for critical discourse within theological circles.

Within a society in which the church still plays a large role, the use and misuse of the Bible can cause much harm. The link between ahistorical and universalist biblical interpretations and the patriarchal and heteronormative framework of the South African society, is undeniable. Therefore, from the perspective of New Testament biblical studies, the interpretation of a central faith narrative in the church and Christian tradition was my starting-point. This study was an attempt at a conversational approach to the crucifixion narrative as found in the Gospel of Luke. The conversation entailed a three-part engagement with the narrative text found in Luke 23:26-56.

The three conversation-partners each had an area of expertise: narrative criticism, with a focus on the world-in-the-text; social science criticism, with a focus on the world-behind-the-text; and gender criticism, with a focus on the world-in-front-of-the-text. By making use of the insights each one offer regarding this narrative – literary, socio-culturally as well as ideologically – the content, background worldview and popular interpretations of this narrative could be put on the table and critically examined. From a methodological perspective, these three approaches and their relation to one another for the purpose of this study were discussed in Chapter 2.

In Chapter 3 the narrative world of the Lukan crucifixion narrative was explored by focusing on the character portrayal of Jesus of Nazareth, as well as the narrative theme of male honour and power. Chapter 4 shed light on this narrative world, by exploring the 1st century Mediterranean world and Greco-Roman context with regards to the cultural script of male honour and shame, and the practise of Roman crucifixion. Here it was noted that the Lukan author gives a very deliberate portrayal of Jesus of Nazareth as an honourable, powerful male who managed to uphold his socially-constructed maleness, in spite of the most shaming event of the time, namely the crucifixion. The Lukan narrative of Jesus on the cross is the complete opposite of what any person, who was familiar with such male

honour, shame and Roman crucifixion, would have imagined to happen. It seems as if the Lukan cross is the symbol of hypermasculinity and power.

Chapter 5 noted the popularity of such a hypermasculine type of portrayal of Jesus of Nazareth on the cross in the church and Christian tradition. This type of portrayal has been hugely influential on various levels within the church and Christian tradition. I chose to particularly focus on the essentialist assumptions of gender and sexuality in light of Jesus' biological maleness, as well as the misappropriation of the crucifixion narrative from the perspective of those who are marginalized in terms of gender and sexuality. Finally, I suggested a queer reading or reimagining of the Lukan crucifixion narrative by means of reclaiming the "shame" of the cross, especially in light of Jesus' socially-constructed maleness. This is an attempt to not only shed light on the socially-constructed nature of gender in the 1st century Mediterranean world, but also the socially-constructed nature of gender in our contemporary contexts.

Conway (2008:6) is of the opinion that by examining the influence of ancient gender ideologies in antiquity, particularly during the Greco-Roman period within which the New Testament texts originated, we might become even more aware of the multiple ways in which contemporary gender ideologies function in our own lives. Gender role expectations and ideologies are seen throughout history. Although these expectations and ideologies have been based on different understandings of the connection between sex and gender, there is nonetheless a connection that is made between the two in societies. The manner this connection is made, as well as the resultant expectations and ideologies this connection effects, should also be critically viewed from a theological perspective. In this sense, the gender-critical approach can be of great value. Not only does it recognize the socially-constructed nature of gender in antiquity and in narratives from antiquity (with the help of socio-scientific approaches), but particularly also the socially-constructed nature of gender in our own contexts – with the added complexity of an essentialist understanding of gender that is more often than not theologically motivated.

It is especially the manner in which biblical narratives are presented and interpreted that need careful examination. The shaping influence of biblical narratives, and particularly the crucifixion narrative of Jesus of Nazareth, is not a narrative without influence in the Christian tradition. Rather, it is precisely one of the most influential narratives. It is, however, a narrative that is highly gendered and consequently plays a role in the

gendering that takes place within the Christian church as social institution. It is offered as motivation for particular views on maleness and femaleness, the relation between males and females, and the relation between socially-constructed gender and biological sex.

In light of the crucifixion, Green & Baker (2000:171) say that the manner in which the cross “speaks” to specific people is partly dependent on how and what they are able to hear. Sometimes translation is needed so that the good news of the cross might be offered in new conceptual forms. This “translation” is already at work in the New Testament, where Paul takes up and refashions the gospel message that was articulated in a predominantly peasant culture, so that it might be “heard” in predominately urban settings.

Such translation is also needed in our own contexts, where a dangerous relationship between gender and the cross has often caused more harm than good. The queering of the cross, as a symbol of gender-fluidity and gender-deconstruction in light of the maleness of Jesus of Nazareth on the cross, could possibly be the good news yearned for by contemporary readers who battle to see good in popular, hypermasculine portrayals of Jesus of Nazareth.

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