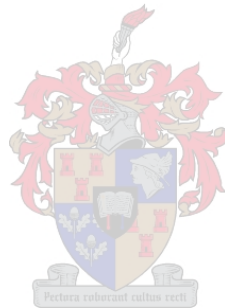


**SOCIO-CULTURAL AND GENDER PERSPECTIVES IN JOHN 7:53-8:11:
EXEGETICAL REFLECTIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF VIOLENCE AGAINST
WOMEN IN ZAMBIA**

**by
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Stellenbosch University**

**Supervisor: Professor Elna Mouton
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Declaration

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the authorship owner thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

Date:

Abstract

Considering the numerous moral dilemmas facing the world of the twenty-first century, gender-based injustice is just one such example, and can be seen in the many occurrences of male violence against women. This has become a daily reality for women across the globe, and in Zambia in particular. This real life concern is on the increase and continues to affect various aspects of women's lives, such as their social, economic, physical, and spiritual well-being – even to the point of death. I began this research project with a brief excerpt of my own personal story and exposure to such violence within my own family and community.

The dilemma of male violence against women is not just a contemporary matter confined to our present age. It can be traced as far back as the first century Jewish context in which Jesus lived and ministered. The Bible – a Christian document written from a predominantly male perspective – has passages that elevate the status of men over that of women, creating a platform conducive to female oppression. Although the focus here has been on gender *inequality*, there are, however, some Scriptures that appear to speak of gender *equality*. In spite of the latter, gender inequality in the Bible is often (over)emphasised and interpreted in a way that a number of scholars have identified as a *literal* approach to biblical interpretation. In this study, I ascribe this one-sided view as the main cause of gender-based violence against women in Zambia.

This study adopted John 7:53-8:11 as the potential text to address the moral dilemma of gender-based violence against women. A multi-dimensional exegetical method of study with three dimensions, namely: literary (cf. chapter 2), socio-cultural and historical (cf. chapter 3), as well as the theological-rhetorical dimension (cf. 4) was adopted in the quest to find a well-balanced method for reading biblical texts that are life-giving in terms of addressing these ethical challenges of gender violence. Upon exegetical reflection, the outcomes of the above-mentioned dimensions were noted in their appropriation within the Zambian context of gender-based violence against women (cf. chapter 5).

The relevance of the study in view of John 7:53-8:11 to both the Johannine and Zambian context is as follows: the scribes and the Pharisees' appeal to the Law of Moses in condemning an adulterous woman in the absence of the man she is accused of committing the act with, opened up discussions on the probable socio-cultural and gender perspectives which facilitated and endorsed their actions. The first century context of the Mediterranean world in which I situate Johannine story viewed people in terms of gender. This often led to men being

advantaged over women in terms of their prescribed roles, duties, as well socio-cultural and gender expectations. Although this seemed to have been the normal way of life, Jesus challenged it through what I regard as two rhetorical strategies, that of his posed silence and re-interpretation of the Law of Moses, which was life giving for the victim who was then set free. The story of the adulterous woman brings relevance to the Zambian context with regards to the abuse of women through gender-based violence, owing to socio-cultural and gender values that advantage men over women. The role Jesus plays in the story restores the human dignity of the victim, bringing hope to both victims and the church in Zambia in their fight against this vice. Most of all, the church is challenged to adopt a balanced method for interpreting the Bible, which – if interpreted incorrectly – remains a potential document for gender abuse.

Opsomming

Wanneer die tallose morele dilemmas van die een-en-twintigste eeu in ag geneem word, is geslagsgebaseerde onreg maar slegs een voorbeeld. Dit word waargeneem in vele voorbeelde van gewelddadige optrede deur mans teenoor vroue. Hierdie werklikheid het 'n daaglikse ervaring vir vroue regoor die wêreld geword, en spesifiek ook in Zambië. Dié werklikheid is aan die toeneem en beïnvloed steeds verskillende aspekte van vroue se lewens soos hulle sosiale, ekonomiese, fisiese en spirituele welwees – selfs op die gevaar van hulle lewens af. Hierdie navorsingsprojek begin met 'n kort oorsig uit my persoonlike verhaal en blootstelling aan sodanige geweld in my eie familie en gemeenskap.

Die dilemma van geweld deur mans teenoor vroue is egter nie 'n saak wat tot ons tyd en konteks beperk is nie. Dit kan so ver terug nagespeur word as die eerste-eeuse Joodse konteks waarin Jesus geleef en gewerk het. Die Bybel – as Christelike dokument wat hoofsaaklik vanuit 'n manlike perspektief geskryf is – bevat gedeeltes wat die status van mans teenoor dié van vroue verhef, wat inderdaad 'n platform skep wat die onderdrukking van vroue kan aanmoedig. Alhoewel die fokus van die studie op *geslagsongelykheid* is, is daar wel Skrifgedeeltes wat blyk van *geslagsgelykheid* te praat. Ten spyte van laasgenoemde, word *geslagsongelykheid* in die Bybel dikwels (oor)beklemtoon en op 'n wyse vertolk wat verskeie kenners aandui as 'n *letterlike* benadering tot Skrifuitleg. In die studie beskou ek hierdie *eensydige* benadering as die primêre oorsaak vir geslagsgebaseerde geweld teenoor vroue in Zambië.

Na aanleiding hiervan is Johannes 7:53-8:11 gekies as teks waardeur die morele dilemma van geslagsgebaseerde geweld teenoor vroue potensieel aangespreek kan word. 'n Multidimensionele eksegetiese metode word gevolg waarin drie dimensies van die teks, naamlik literêre, sosio-kulturele en teologies-retoriese aspekte onderskeidelik in hoofstukke 2, 3 en 4 van die tesis bespreek word. Hierdie benadering is gekies in die soeke na 'n gebalanseerde metode om die Bybel só te lees dat dit in die proses om die etiese dilemma van geslagsgeweld aan te spreek, lewe-gewend sal wees. Die uitkoms van die eksegetiese studie word in hoofstuk 5 bespreek en op die konteks van geslagsgebaseerde geweld in Zambië toegepas.

Die relevansie van die studie oor Johannes 7:53-8:11 vir beide Johannese navorsing en die Zambiese konteks kan soos volg beskryf word. Die skrifgeleerdes en Fariseërs se beroep op die Wet van Moses in die veroordeling van die owerspelige vrou (terwyl die man met wie

die daad gepleeg is kennelik afwesig was), het 'n gesprek oor die waarskynlike sosio-kulturele - en geslagsperspektiewe wat hulle dade gefasiliteer en onderskryf het, ontlok. Die eerste-eeuse Mediterreense konteks waarbinne die Johannese verhaal afspeel, het mense veral in terme van hulle geslag verstaan. Dit het dikwels daartoe gelei dat mans bo vroue bevoordeel is in terme van die rolle en take wat aan hulle toegeken is, sowel as die sosio-kulturele verwagtings wat aan hulle gestel is. Hoewel hierdie die normale manier van lewe blyk te gewees het, het Jesus dit uitgedaag deur middel van wat ek as twee retoriese strategieë beskou – naamlik sy reaksie van stilte, en sy herinterpretasie van die Wet van Moses wat vir die slagoffer wat daarna vrygelaat is, nuwe lewe gebring het. Die verhaal van die owerspelige vrou is toepaslik in die Zambiese konteks van misbruik (geslagsgebaseerde geweld) teenoor vroue, wat eweneens toegeskryf kan word aan sosio-kulturele waardes wat mans bo vroue bevoordeel. Die rol wat Jesus in die storie speel herstel die menswaardigheid van die slagoffer, en bring hoop aan beide slagoffers en die kerk in Zambië in hulle stryd teen hierdie ewel. Bowenal word die kerk uitgedaag om 'n gebalanseerde metode van Skrifuitleg te aanvaar, wat – indien dit op onverantwoorde maniere verstaan word – 'n dokument bly wat potensieel tot geslagsmisbruik kan lei.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my mother Catherine W. Lungu. It is a voice for her silence for all the pain and suffering she has endured for being a woman.

To my grandmother Stayi Lungu, who inspired me to come to the Christian faith through all her prayers and devotion.

To my wife Emelly, and to our child Joel, whom I love so dearly.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Motivation for this study

My interest in this topic arose from my family background and childhood experiences. I saw gender-based violence occurring, not only in my own family, but also in many other families in the Zambian context at large. I was born into a broken family in the Eastern Province of Zambia. My parents divorced shortly after I was born. From my mother's narration, she divorced my father for three reasons, namely: physical violence, womanising and drunkenness. The latter two reasons also contributed to my father's failure to provide for my family's needs. This was a challenging period in my mother's life. The most regrettable aspect of her life is the fact that my grandparents did not give her a formal education because the common perception was that a girl-child only existed for marriage, and therefore, did not need an education.

When I was ten years old, my mother married my stepfather whom she has lived with ever since. As if the experience of violence in her first marriage was not enough, the pattern soon repeated itself and violence became the way of life in her second marriage as well. My stepfather justifies his actions by saying that in his culture a woman is controlled by a man. In addition, the wife is not even supposed to answer back when she is being addressed. The difficult part is that her voice with regards to these experiences has not yielded much hope. This is because of the societal belief that all men are the same, and a good woman is one who simply endures such experiences in order to preserve the marriage.

Growing up and seeing my mother being subjected to such acts of violence was very traumatic for me. Therefore, with this background, I have been asking more questions than I could get answers for. Although my questions were not directly questioning the gender, cultural and religious injustices of violence against my mother (as a woman), I want to appreciate the awareness I gained through the 'Gender and the Bible' module (ONT 2013, 234) taught at the Faculty of Theology, Stellenbosch University, in 2013. It brought to my attention how gender, culture and religious elements converge and contribute to violence against women, particularly when justified from New Testament perspective. This briefly sums up my interest and reasons for wanting to explore these issues further by means of this research project.

1.2 Background to problem statement

Zambia is known to be a 'Christian nation;' it was also indicated as such in the declaration made on the 29th of December 1991 by its second president, (the late) Dr Fredrick T.J. Chiluba (Njovu, 2002:1). Since then, this declaration is enshrined in the Preamble to the Constitution of Zambia. Currently, it is projected that over 80% of the Zambian population is made up of Christians (*Christianity in Zambia Christian Ministries and churches*, 2005:1). However, many debates have been raised through television and radio shows, as well as by individuals in the communities, about the relevance of the 'Christian nation' declaration. This is because of what has been perceived as the country's failure to live up to its Christian values and moral standards (Muwowo and Buitendag, 2010:3). One of the major current moral dilemmas is the occurrence of gender-based violence against both men and women. However, more women have been recorded as victims of gender violence, in comparison to men.

It is worth mentioning that the issue of gender-based violence in Zambia is not new. According to a 1999 publication by Rude (1999:7), 150 cases of killings and alleged killings of women and girls by intimate partners and male family members were registered between 1973 and 1996. The victims of these killings were females from infancy to old age, with half of them being women in their child-bearing years. Rude observed that among some of the reasons which led to the alleged killings of both these women and girls, was suspected adultery by their male partners. Findings from the Zambia Demographic and Health Survey (2007:283) confirmed that domestic violence occurs across all socio-economic and cultural backgrounds in this country. The survey included 5,236 women, aged between fifteen and forty-nine years across the nine provinces of Zambia. They were asked whether they had ever experienced physical violence since the age of fifteen, and whether they had experienced physical violence during the twelve months preceding the survey. Almost half (47 percent) of women who participated in the survey had experienced physical violence since they were fifteen, and one-third of women experienced physical violence during the twelve months preceding the survey (Zambia Demographic Health Survey, 2007:283).

In addition to the above-mentioned cases of gender-based violence, the year 2012 seems to have been a particularly traumatising period for the nation of Zambia. This is due to a number of cases reported in that year, and the manner in which such crimes had been committed that claimed the lives of both women and men. These reports were confirmed by the police inspector

general, Stella Libongani, who reported that 9,612 gender-based violence (GBV) cases had been recorded in 2012 (cf. *Crime wave that rocked Zambia*, 2012:1).¹

Violence against women is, however, not unique to Zambia. It is both an African, as well as a global challenge. Haddad (2002:93) observed that gender violence has become a constant threat in South African societies and is reported daily in the media. She referred to a community-based prevalence study which indicated that 26.8% of women in the Eastern Cape, 28.4% of women in Mpumalanga, and 19.1% of women in the Northern Province have at some point been physically abused in their lifetime by a current or ex-partner (Haddad, 2002:93). Le Roux (2012:50) also commented that violence against women, particularly sexual violence, is not only an African issue but a global challenge, which has not spared countries such as the United States of America, as well as England, to name a few.

What is even more appalling is that gender marginalisation is not only a contemporary issue. It goes back many centuries, even to the first and second centuries in which Jesus, his disciples, and early Christians such as the apostle Paul lived. There seems to be evidence of gender discrimination in the biblical documents as well, which originated from deeply patriarchal contexts. In passages such as 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, 1 Peter 3:1-7 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15, reference is made to the role of men and women in an unequal way. Women are

¹The events reported include: a cruel killing of Ruth Mbandu on 18 July 2012, a 19 year-old student of the National Institute for Public Administration (NIPA) in what was assumed to have been a 'ritual killing'. "Ruth's body was found naked with her facial skin ripped off, eyes gouged and ears removed in a killing that left many Zambians stunned and wondering as to what the motive was" (*Crime Wave that rocked Zambia*, 2012:1).

Just after Ruth's murder, while the Zambia Police Service was carrying out further investigations, another cruel murder caught the nation by surprise. This time it was a 27 year old hairdresser by the name of Sharon Tembo, "gravely wounded and left dead" on 28 July 2012 in Lusaka at Matero Township (which is a township near Emmasdele), where Ruth Mbandu was murdered after having been attacked by unidentified men on a Saturday night on her way home (*Crime Wave that rocked Zambia*, 2012:1).

As if the July killings were not enough, again, on 7 August 2012, the body of Mazuba Kapembwa, a 23 year-old woman of Woodlands Township, a mother of three, was found near Namakau house in Chilenje Township along Chilumbulu Road. It was suspected that she had been raped before being murdered by her attacker. Behind her murder, as reported, is her boyfriend Chipo Kafwamba Dindi who has since been arrested in connection with the crime (*Crime Wave that rocked Zambia*, 2012:1).

Such constant killings continued, and we are told that at this stage the Police had "mounted and intensified foot patrols to try and curb the seemingly increasing cases of brutal murders involving mostly women" (*Crime Wave that rocked Zambia*, 2012:1). Again, the nation was disturbed when the police disclosed that they picked up yet another body, of the 30 year-old Thandiwe Longwe, a former Barclays Bank employee, who was found with head injuries, lying unconscious in a ditch in Ng'ombe Township. She died on her way to Levy Mwanawasa Hospital.

These killings went on throughout the year with police efforts being unable to stop them. Just before entering the New Year of 2013, "on December 18, 2012 a Chisamba elderly woman and two of her granddaughters were hacked to death and set ablaze in Chipembi by unknown killers" (*Crime Wave that rocked Zambia*, 2012:1). This inhumane killing of Hildah Kapandula, 57, and two children, Lute, aged 10, and 2 year old Chunga Chanda.

Another case was reported just about a month after another woman, known as Sharon Kaseba, had her limbs chopped off and teeth removed before being burnt to ashes in the same area (*Crime Wave that rocked Zambia*, 2012).

required to be quiet in public places of worship and to learn from their husbands in submission, as part of fulfilling their duties. Men, however, are regarded as public speakers who are supposed to represent women both in worship and in their homes as the head of their families. Although these scriptures may have functioned well for the initial audience, and to address particular issues in these faith communities, the reception of these texts throughout the ages until today seems to have caused much more harm than good. This is because some clergy and lay people have interpreted these scriptures ‘literally,’ with little regard for the context in which these texts originated. This may have contributed to the marginalisation of women in leadership positions, which is even now a practice upheld in some churches today. Women are still considered unworthy to be the clergy, or lay preachers, or elders, when compared to the men. However, even in some churches where women are ordained as ministers or allowed to take up leadership positions, the reception by members of the congregations in which they have been put in charge still seems to be a challenge in terms of being given due respect and a hearing. The other area in which the church seems to apply scriptures literally is in marriage counselling. Men are often advantaged as the head over their female partners in ways that give them much power, which is likely to be abused.

Nevertheless, there are other passages from the scriptures that have been life-giving across gender barriers. One such example is Galatians 3:28. This passage seems to challenge gender and racial marginalisation which often leads to inequality. According to the writer of Galatians 3:28 (NIV), “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus”.

Taking these problems into account, the challenges encountered by churches in Zambia when it comes to addressing issues of gender-based violence seem to be owing to the ways in which the Bible is read and interpreted. It is a major challenge for the churches in Zambia where the majority of preachers apply the Bible literally, that is, without taking its socio-cultural context into account. This, in my view, has rendered the churches in Zambia invisible and even less prophetic on issues such as the injustice of gender-based violence. The challenge is even more significant when one takes into account Chitando and Togarasei’s (2008:4) remark that “the Bible has deeply influenced African societies and cultures, and that whether open or closed, the Bible has meaning”. Research conducted by the three Christian Church ‘mother bodies’ in Zambia [i.e. the Zambia Episcopal Conference (ZEC), the Council of Churches in Zambia (CCZ), and the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia (EFZ)] has shown that gender violence is still prevalent in churches due to misinterpretation of the scriptures, as well

as the lack of knowledge regarding ‘gender’ (*Zambian Churches Declare War on GBV*, 2011:1).

1.3 Focus of the study

In order to counter the above-mentioned problems, this study adopts John 7:53-8:11 as a potential (ancient) text for addressing (present-day) gender-based violence. Reasons for the choice of this text include the following:

First, it seems that Jesus is acting against the socio-cultural grain of his time when re-interpreting the Law of Moses with respect to a woman who had been caught in adultery. I would like to reflect on Jesus’ interpretation, which resulted in a life-giving act towards the woman who – according to the scribes and Pharisees broke the Law – and was therefore deserving of death.

Second, despite the originality and authenticity of John 7:53-8:11 (or its current position in John’s Gospel) being doubted by many scholars, it is a text that many women who are victims of gender violence often seem to identify with, particularly in Zambia.

1.3.1 Research Questions

In view of the above-mentioned challenges (heading 1.2) and choice of a New Testament text to be explored (heading 1.3), four major (sets of) questions will be addressed in this study.

These are:

- a) Does the textual dynamic of John 7:53-8:11, particularly Jesus’ role, hold the potential to respond constructively to the above-mentioned problems of gender violence in the 21st century Zambia? And how can this dynamic be accessed and analysed?
- b) How did the probable socio-cultural and historical worldview in terms of moral values look like from which John 7:53-8:11 originated, particularly with regards to power relations?
- c) What is the perspective of John 7:53-8:11 on the inherited traditions and societal values referred to in the previous question? And what was the implied rhetorical function of this narrative? From where to where did John wish to persuade his audience in telling such a story?
- d) And finally, how could the Johannine story be appropriated in a context such as Zambia today? Can this story be life-giving to both the victims and perpetrators of gender-based

violence, and to the church in Zambia, considering the ways in which Jesus handled the situation?

1.3.2 Research on John 7:53-8:11

This section briefly covers selected debates on both the positive and negative perceptions of John 7:53-8:11 in terms of its authenticity in both John's Gospel and in the New Testament canon. At the end of this section I give my opinion for engaging with such an uncertain text in this study.

Keith (2008:377) notes that the academic discussion on John 7:53-8:11 – until 2008 – was primarily reflected in articles and appendices, not in textbooks and monographs. He observed that there were only three book-length writings on John 7:53-8:11: a doctoral dissertation (addressing various textual issues) published by Becker in 1963, and two unpublished dissertations, one by A. Johnson in 1964, and the other by Toensing in 1998.

Toensing (2003:59-160) observes that the traditional approach to John 7:53-8:11 focused more on debates surrounding its canonical legitimacy in John's Gospel. In the process, some scholars suggested that the text be removed from John's Gospel; others prefer placing it within a footnote, while still others situate it in the other Gospels. Some scholars do not comment on the passage at all (cf. Johnson, 1999:544-545; Carson, 1991; Punch, 2013:1; Mare, 2004:117; Ridderbos, 1997:285).

Therefore, with all the debates surrounding the originality and authenticity of John 7:53-8:11 in John's Gospel, the question is, why study a text with such an uncertain critical history? My first motivation for choosing this text for my research project is that, irrespective of such criticism, some authors affirm its position, both in John's Gospel and in the New Testament canon (cf. Keith, 2008). Kiambi (2012:14) remarked that the greatest strength of this story is "the fact that that John chose to tell it as it is and probably having the full knowledge of the inequalities embedded therein". Ridderbos (1997:286) questions those who doubt the inclusion of a given story by asking why then did it find a place in the Gospel of John? In view of all these debates it should, however, be noted that I do not intend to elaborate on the details of these owing to the limitation of my study.

Second, the story of John 7:53-8:11 reminds me of similar or analogous predicaments faced by Zambian women. It is a reality that in Zambia the *women* are the ones who are accused of committing adultery in an event where both have been caught in such an act, and not the men. This practice is even justifiable in the Bemba language as is evident in the following statement: *Ubuchende ubwamwaume tauonaula ichupo*. It literally means, 'when a man

commits adultery, a house cannot be destroyed, compared to a woman'. The man may even have the liberty to marry more than one wife, which is a common trend in some cultures. However, it will not be tolerated should a woman wish to marry several men! With such realities in mind, it is impossible (for me) to ignore John 7:53-8:11. It is part and parcel of the Bible which we inherited, and which is often read by 'ordinary' men and women in the church who themselves may be victims or perpetrators of such activities.

By focusing on gender violence against *women* in this study I do not mean to ignore the problem of men facing violence perpetrated by women or other men. The reasons for this choice of focus is that it is the most prevalent in Zambia, and also well aligned with John 7:53-8:11 as my research text.

1.4 Hypothesis

Taking into account the above stated challenges on gender violence against women, I am of the opinion that a one-sided approach to reading the scriptures has often led to the marginalization of women by men in both the church setting and within our communities. The Bible being written from a patriarchal cultural context consists of scriptures that are often read literally by laymen and women, as well as some clergy, leading to the marginalisation of women, and even gender-based violence. Finding an ideal approach to interpret Scripture has been a quest for many scholars throughout the ages, within their various contexts.

In this study I argue that a well-balanced method of reading biblical texts can be life-giving in terms of ethical challenges, such as gender-based violence against women. Therefore, a multi-dimensional exegetical method of interpretation is adopted, which includes three steps, namely, an analysis of the literary, socio-cultural-historical and theological-rhetorical dimensions of textual communication.²

To appropriate the proposed methodology, John 7:53-8:11 has been adopted as the primary text for this study. In my final chapter, reflections will be done on various perspectives of this text, which appeal to the identified challenges of gender-based violence against women in Zambia.

²The importance of an ethical reading of a biblical text should not be compromised. Green (1995:1, 2) regarded the act of reading as a way of participating in communication which consists of the following stages: the addressor to a particular context; then we have the message itself; and finally a medium (or means of sending the message) to the addressee. These skills are often applied differently in everyday life through the language and means used to communicate to a child, an adult, a friend, parents, an institution and a company. The same should be thought about biblical authors in terms of the messages that they intended to communicate to the implied readers, which might not be the same if they were to write to the readers of the present age.

1.5. Methodology

The ambit of this study is primarily within the field of New Testament studies. It is also interdisciplinary, with a focus on gender, health and theology.³ For this reason, I will make use of a multi-dimensional exegetical method of study exploring the main aspects of John 7:53-8:11, namely, its literary, socio-cultural and theological-rhetorical dimensions. Many scholars have come to emphasize this method of interpreting biblical texts because it challenges a one-sided approach, which often results in the marginalisation of other people (cf. Blount, 1995:6, 8,16; Green, 1995:1-485; Mouton, 2002:4; Thiselton, 1992:596-602; Malina, 2001:xi).⁴ The literary, socio-cultural and historical dimensions will be discussed in chapters 2 and 3, respectively, using approaches by selected authors. These two dimensions will be brought into dialogue with the theological-rhetorical dimension in chapter 4. The aim of chapters 2 to 4 is to find out how the message of John 7:53-8:11 was supposed to be understood by its intended audience. In chapter 5, a hermeneutical approach will be engaged in application of the Johannine message to the Zambian context. Reflections will be made on realised perspectives of the Johannine text, which could be applicable to victims of gender violence, and the church in Zambia.⁵

1.5.1 Literary dimension

I will first analyse the *genre* and purpose of John 7:53-8:11 as a narrative. Mark Allan Powell's (1990) approach to narrative criticism mainly informs the discussion in chapter 2. Some

³ It should be noted that in this study gender, health and theology will not be discussed separately since they seem to complement each other. For instance, one of the causes of gender-based violence as suggested above is based on how the Bible is often interpreted *literally* – an approach which does not account for the many facets of a given (biblical) text, such as its literary, socio-cultural-historical, and theological-rhetorical dimensions. On the other hand, the health aspect automatically comes into play when one discusses the effects of gender-based violence on women's well-being. The World Health Organization (WHO) defined the concept of 'health' as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (World Health Organization, 2003). This affirms that gender-based violence is a crucial factor affecting women's health – be it physically, mentally, or socially.

⁴The strength of this method is based on its broader analysis of a given passage of Scripture before giving its meaning. Blount (1995:178) used the term rainbow in place of a multi-dimensional approach to reading biblical texts. He suggested that a biblical text can be imagined as a rainbow which has possible meanings whose colour may be visible to one interpreter or community, while invisible to many others (Blount, 1995:178).

⁵Why make use of exegesis in chapter 2-4 and hermeneutics in chapter 5 as part of my methodology? According to Wolvaardt (2005:26-27), the term exegesis means "understanding of the message" given in a passage of Scripture as understood by the implied audience, i.e. John's implied audience in John 7:53-8:11, as this study suggests (Wolvaardt, 2005:27-27). This is different from hermeneutics, which has to do with an 'application of the message' to the present day audience,' i.e. Zambia in particular, as suggested by this study (Wolvaardt, 2005:27).

characteristics of this approach include an analysis of events, characters and settings of the given text.

1.5.2 Socio-cultural and historical dimension

Here, I intend to inspect the socio-cultural and historical perspectives of John 7:53-8:11, with the hope of discovering the everyday world and frame of reference (traditions and values) from which this text grew, and how it could have affected people's lives in terms of their gender. The work by Jesse N. Mugambi and Johannes Smit (2004) will serve as a major resource in this section. They argue that all writings (including the Bible) are contextual, written from a particular cultural background.

1.5.3 Theological-rhetorical dimension

Here, I will be analysing theological-rhetorical aspects of John 7:53-8:11. I will first ask how this text was supposed to be received by its intended audience, and then look at how it was indeed received and interpreted throughout the ages.

In the final chapter of the thesis, I will explore how this text may be appropriated to victims/ perpetrators of gender violence, as well as in the church in Zambia today.⁶

1.6 Study Limitations

Limitations can be described as influencing factors that are out of the researcher's control. Thus, the identified limitations of the current study are as follows:

A literature study provides information, but this may also be limiting, for instance, in comparison to empirical research. First of all, the discussions and reflections on the Johannine story for victims/perpetrators of gender-based violence, as well as for the church in Zambia, will be based on my very own presuppositions as the researcher of this study (cf. chapter 5). This could have been different if I had a chance to interview the victims of gender violence, as well as the churches in terms of their position on gender-based violence. Secondly, I am also totally dependent on the available written literature within this field of study, as I did not conduct my own empirical research.

⁶ It should be noted that, where necessary, some phrases and statements will be repeated in the study – sometimes for the sake of emphasis, other times to express the continuity and interdependence among chapters.

Another limitation, is that the debates over the authenticity of John 7:53-8:11 may not be fully exhausted in this study, considering the fact that both the woman in the given story and the author of John's Gospel lived centuries ago and are now long gone, we are therefore not provided with any more information directly from them regarding the events of the story, and what is included or excluded. All we are left with is the Fourth Gospel itself, which contains the written story of an adulterous woman, as well as literature from different eras all holding various viewpoints and opinions.

Lastly, another relevant point to mention is the limitation of time I experienced during the year of 2015; which brought its own set of challenges, which I did not anticipate. This included doing probation in preparation for ordination as a minister at a new congregation. Therefore, I can only thank God for having completed this research project.

1.7 Outline of chapters

The urgent call to do research on moral issues that affect God's intended purpose for humanity as equally dignified beings created in his own image and likeness cannot be ignored. This study joins many voices of men and women across the globe who have embarked on such a noble cause, particularly in the area of gender based violence.

Below is the outline of the chapters to follow:

Chapter 1: Here I introduce the research topic and indicate what I anticipate to research.

Chapter 2: Is about the analysis of John 7:53-8:11 from the literary dimension. The literary narrative genre of a given story will play a vital role for the entire study. Mark Allan Powell's (1990) approach to narrative criticism through an analysis of events, characters and settings of the given text will inform the discussions in this chapter.

Chapter 3: The probable socio-cultural and historical perspectives of John 7:53-8:11 will be discussed so as to realise what enabled the unfolding of the given story to its implied audience. Therefore, the work of Jesse N. Mugambi and Johannes Smit (2004) will serve as a major resource in this section. These authors argue that all writings (including the Bible) are

contextual, written from a particular cultural background.⁷ Note that the discussions in this chapter are dependent on the outcomes of chapter 2, which analyses the literary aspects of the Johannine text.

Chapter 4: Here, I will be analysing theological-rhetorical aspects of John 7:53-8:11. I will first ask how this text was supposed to be received by its intended audience, and then look at how it was indeed received and interpreted throughout the ages.⁸ The outcome of both chapters 2 and 3 will guide the discussions in this chapter.

Chapter 5: In this chapter I explore how this text may be appropriated to victims/perpetrators of gender violence, as well as in the church in Zambia today.⁹ Here, the outcome of the discussions in chapters 2 to 4, with particular focus on chapter 4, will be considered, so as to enable dialogue between both the Johannine and Zambian contexts.

Chapter 6: This is the concluding chapter, which makes recommendations based on the outcome of the study.

⁷ Chapter 3 is anticipated to respond to research question (b) which is: 'How did the probable socio-cultural and historical worldview in terms of moral values look like from which John 7:53-8:11 originated, particularly with regards to power relations?' (cf. chapter 1.3.1).

⁸ Chapter 4 may respond to research question (c) which reads: 'What is the perspective of John 7:53-8:11 on the inherited traditions and societal values referred to in the previous question?' 'What was the implied rhetorical function of this narrative?' 'From where to where did John wish to persuade his audience in telling such a story?' (cf. chapter 1, heading 1.3.1).

⁹ Whereas chapter 5 is hoped to respond to research question (d) which reads: 'How could the Johannine story be appropriated in a context such as Zambia today?' 'Can this story be life-giving to both the victims and perpetrators of gender violence, and to the church in Zambia, considering the ways in which Jesus handled the situation?' (cf. chapter 1, heading 1.3.1).

Chapter 5 is also anticipated to respond to research questions (a) which reads: 'Does the textual dynamic of John 7:53-8:11, particularly Jesus' role, hold the potential to respond constructively to the problems of gender violence in the 21st century Zambia?' 'How can this dynamic be accessed and analysed?'

CHAPTER 2

LITERARY DIMENSION OF JOHN 7:53-8:11

2.1 Introduction

To discuss the literary aspects of John 7:53-8:11, I will make use of the narrative criticism approach by Mark A. Powell (1990). This approach examines a story by means of three perspectives, i.e. events, characters and settings, in order to understand what its proposed message was for its intended readers (Powell, 1990:35-75). Powell argues that without these three elements, a story cannot be a story.¹⁰ An example of the narrative genre in the New Testament is the four gospels, which includes John's Gospel, from where I have selected John 7:53-8:11 as the main text for my study. While there are many debates on the authenticity of this text as pointed out in chapter 1.3, which has led to its marginalisation, I found the literary approach by Powell (1990:7) quite helpful, especially his remark that emphasises that the primary objective of a literary-critical analysis should not be to discover the process through which a text has come into being (although this could mean well for a thorough understanding), *but to carefully study the text that now exists*.¹¹ This is important because the finalised biblical canon is what most (ordinary) Christians have today, and not the documents concerning the debates of whether John 7:53-8:11 is original or not. This includes many clergy (men and women) who have not undergone theological training and who are unaware of these debates. Therefore, I am confident that this Johannine text not only addressed a vital challenge in its own time and by re-reading it today, it is given back its life and power to address a critical issue of injustice in this present age.

The importance of the literary interpretation of any biblical text cannot be over emphasised. Pregeant (2009:15) remarked that the literary aspect of a biblical text implies being aware that these writings appeal to the readers' imaginative powers to enter into a different and unique world; the world in which the text first existed. It is not simply a matter of allowing readers' rational capacities to give meaning to a given text (Pregeant, 2009:15). Further illustrations about the relevance of a literary approach is that it is more like what it may

¹⁰ In a broader sense, Powell (1990:19-21) noted that the significance of narrative criticism – compared to a literary approach – is its features that takes into account the implied author, reader, the narrator, the characters, events and the settings, in which the story is narrated.

¹¹ The significance of literary aspects in narrative discussions was also affirmed by Brooks (1992:4) who noted that such “seems to hold a special place among literary forms”.

take for one to understand a story (Pregeant, 2009:15). This involves ‘grasping certain ideas’ and ‘entering the world’ created by the story, as well as being called to participate in what happens (Pregeant, 2009:15).¹²

The comments by both Powell (1990:7) and Pregeant (2009:15) on the importance of considering the literary aspect of biblical interpretation is based on the notion to respect the world of the text. They both agree that the implied audience should be respected by investigating what enabled the existence of the text to its audience. In that regard the world of the text is to be perceived as unique to today’s context. Therefore these and more principles will be used to analyse John 7:53-8:11.

2.2. Structural analysis of John 7:53-8:11 (Greek text; English translation)

I have analysed the structure of John 7:53-8:11 below in a way that shows the movement of the story around the characters, events, settings, and a narrator whom the text introduces as the story unfolds.¹³

The Johanne text is analysed in both Greek and English. At the end of the Greek text, I provide an English translation, which is more literal so as to explicate the exact phrases or words of the Johannine story.¹⁴ This is a single narrative with three identified scenes:

2.2.1 The opening scene (7:53-8:2)

a. Καὶ ἐπορεύθησαν ἕκαστος εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ, (7:53)

- i. ἕκαστος
- ii. ἐπορεύθησαν
- iii. τὸν οἶκον

a’ Ἰησοῦς δὲ ἐπορεύθη εἰς τὸ ὄρος τῶν ἐλαιῶν. (8:1)

- i. Ἰησοῦς
- ii. ἐπορεύθη
- iii. ὄρος τῶν ἐλαιῶν

¹²To sum up what a ‘literary approach’ to a biblical text implies, three ways were noted by Pregnant (2009:15): 1) focus on the author, by imagining on behalf of the author the meaning he/she intended for the text to its audience; 2) focus on the writing itself by asking what the written text means, without reference to the author’s intention; 3) focus on the reader, considering how what is written seems to be selected and brought forth as specific responses from the reader.

¹³ Some characters, events and settings will be placed in brackets to signify that they have already been mentioned with regards to the same scene.

¹⁴However, in my discussions I will use the New International Version (NIV) translation, unless otherwise stipulated.

a'b. Ὁρθρου δὲ πάλιν παρεγένετο εἰς τὸ ἱερόν (8:2a)

a b'. καὶ πᾶς ὁ λαὸς ἦρχετο πρὸς αὐτόν, (8:2b)

c. καὶ καθίσας ἐδίδασκε αὐτούς. (8:2c)

i'. παρεγένετο καὶ ὁ λαὸς

ii. καὶ καθίσας ἐδίδασκεν αὐτούς. (8:2)

iii. τὸ ἱερόν

(Greek-English direct translation)

a. And went each to his house (7:53)

i. each (characters)

ii. went (event)

iii. his/ her house (settings)

a'. But Jesus went to Mount Olives (8:1).

i. Jesus (character)

ii. went (event)

iii. Mount Olives (setting)

a'b. and at daybreak again he came into the temple (8:2a)

a b'. and all the people came to him, (8:2b)

c. and having sat he taught them. (8:2c)

i. both Jesus and the people gathered

ii. the gathering purpose is to be taught by Jesus (8:2)

iii. this gathering is in the temple setting

2.2.2 The second scene (8:3-9)

A. Ἄγουσιν δὲ οἱ γραμματεῖς καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι γυναῖκα ἐπὶ μοιχείᾳ

κατελιημμένην καὶ στήσαντες αὐτὴν ἐν μέσῳ (8:3)

i. οἱ γραμματεῖς, γυναῖκα, καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι

ii. μοιχεία κατελιημμένην (γυναῖκα)

iii. (τὸ ἱερόν)

B. λέγουσιν αὐτῷ· διδάσκαλε, αὕτη ἡ γυνὴ κατελίηπται ἐπ' αὐτοφώρῳ
μοιχευομένη (8:4)

i. λέγουσιν αὐτῷ, διδάσκαλε, ἡ γυνὴ

- ii. αὐτοφώρῳ μοιγευομένη
- iii. (τὸ ἱερόν)

C. ἐν δὲ τῷ νόμῳ ἡμῖν Μωϋσῆς ἐνετείλατο τὰς τοιαύτας
λιθάζειν. σὺ οὖν τί λέγεις; (8:5)

- i. Μωϋσῆς,
- ii. τῷ νόμῳ
- iii. (τὸ ἱερόν)

D. τοῦτο δὲ ἔλεγον πειράζοντες αὐτόν, ἵνα ἔχωσιν
κατηγορεῖ αὐτοῦ (8:6a)

- i. ἔλεγον, αὐτόν, αὐτοῦ
- ii. πειράζοντες, αὐτόν
- iii. .(τὸ ἱερόν)

E. ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς κάτω κύψας τῷ δακτύλῳ
κατέγραφεν εἰς τὴν γῆν. (8:6b)

- i. ὁ Ἰησοῦς
- ii. κατέγραφεν
- iii. .(τὸ ἱερόν)

C'. ὡς δὲ ἐπέμενον ἐρωτῶντες αὐτόν, ἀνέκυψεν καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς. ὁ
ἀναμάρτητος ὑμῶν πρῶτος ἐπ' αὐτὴν βαλέτω λίθον. (8:7)

- i. εἶπεν αὐτοῖς
- ii. (κατέγραφεν)
- iii. (τὸ ἱερόν)

E'. καὶ πάλιν κατακύψας ἔγραφεν εἰς τὴν γῆν. (8:8)

- i. ἔγραφεν
- ii. (κατέγραφεν)
- iii. .(τὸ ἱερόν)

B'. οἱ δὲ ἀκούσαντες... (8:9a)

- i. οἱ ἀκούσαντες

ii. (κατέγραφεν)

.....
iii. (τὸ ἱερόν)

A' ἐξήρχοντο εἰς καθ' εἷς ἀρξάμενοι ἀπὸ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων καὶ
κατελείφθη μόνος καὶ ἡ γυνὴ ἐν μέσῳ οὖσα. (8:9b)

i. ...πρεσβυτέρων, γυνή

ii. ἐξήρχοντο

iii. (τὸ ἱερόν)

(Greek-English direct translation)

A. And led along scribes and Pharisees a woman adulterous having been seized and stood her in front. (8:3).

i. the scribes, the Pharisees, and the woman

ii. committing adultery

iii. (the temple).

B. they spoke to him (Jesus), teacher! this woman we seized upon in the act (of) adultery (8:4).

i. they said to him, teacher, this woman

ii. Committing of adulterous

iii. (the temple).

C. And in our law Moses gave charge for such to be stoned. You then what do you say? (8:5)

i. Moses

ii. the Law

iii. (the temple)

D. 'But this they said testing him so that they should have a charge against him. (8:6a)

i. they said , to him

ii. testing him (Jesus)

iii. (the temple)

E. But Jesus bent downward with his finger he wrote on the ground. (8:6b).

- i. Jesus
- ii. he wrote
- iii.(the temple)

C'. And as they continued asking him, he straightened up and said to them, the one sinless among you (should be) first at

her cast stone. (8:7)

- i. ...he (Jesus) said to them (scribes and Pharisees)
- ii. (he wrote)
- iii.(the temple)

E'. And again bending down he wrote on the ground. (8:8)

- i. he (Jesus) wrote
- ii. (he wrote)
- iii. (the temple)

B'. And they having heard (Jesus response), (8:9a)

- i. having heard
- ii. (he wrote)
- iii. (the temple)

A'. left one by one beginning from the older and was left behind alone (Jesus) and the woman in the middle. (8:9b)

- i. the older (ones), woman
- ii. Went forth
- iii...(from the temple)

2.2.3 The third scene (8:10-11)

F. ἀνακύψας δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτῇ. (8:10a)

- i. ὁ Ἰησοῦς, εἶπεν αὐτῇ
- ii. (ἐξήρχοντο)
- iii. (τὸ ἱερόν)

G. γύναι, ποῦ εἶσιν; οὐδεὶς σε κατέκρινεν; (8:10b)

- i. γύναι, ποῦ

- ii. (ἐξήρχοντο)
- iii. (τὸ ἱερόν)

F'. ἡ δὲ εἶπεν· οὐδεὶς, κύριε (8:11a)

- i. ἡ, κύριε
- ii. (ἐξήρχοντο)
- iii. (τὸ ἱερόν)

G'. εἶπεν δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς· οὐδὲ ἐγὼ σε κατακρίνω· πορεύου, (8:11b)

- i. ὁ Ἰησοῦς
- ii. (ἐξήρχοντο)
- iii. (τὸ ἱερόν)

H. [καὶ] ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν μηκέτι ἀμάρτανε.(8:11c)

- i. ἀπὸ
- ii. (ἐξήρχοντο)
- iii. (τὸ ἱερόν)

(Greek-English direct translation)

F. and straightening up Jesus said to her, (8:10a)

- i. Jesus, said to her (scribes and the Pharisees)
- ii. went forth
- iii. (the temple)

G. woman, where are they, is there anyone one to condemn you? (8:10b)

- i. woman, anyone (to condemn you?)
- ii. (went forth)
- iii. (temple)

F'. and she said no one, O Lord (8:11a)

- i. She (woman), Lord
- ii. (went forth)
- iii. (the temple)

G'. And Jesus said neither do I condemn you, (8:11b)

- i. Jesus
- ii. (went forth)
-iii. (the temple)

H. go and from now no more sin. (8:11c)

- i. Go (implying the woman)
- ii. (went forth)
-iii. (the temple)

2.2.4. Demarcation of John 7:53-8:11 into three scenes

The significance of the suggested movement of characters, events and settings in the outlined chiasm of the Johannine text above, implies the following: First, through these movements a typical everyday interaction between the temple (as a religious circle) and the community (a socio-cultural life circle) of the Johannine faith community is depicted. Second, the additional movements of new characters in the event of Jesus' teachings, as well as the temple setting in scene two (where Jesus and his audience are interrupted), give an idea of possible variations in groupings of believers, upholding different religious leaders as their model. A third aspect is that in scene three, characters such as the scribes and Pharisees, together with their audience, left the woman behind whom they brought for a verdict against an act of adultery. It so happened that while Jesus remained with his initial audience in the final stage of a story, the victim of condemnation become part of his audience. By this she seemed to have encountered Jesus in a way she would never have expected.

It is my hope that the rhetorical question, *'from where to where did the author intend to take his audience,'* may be answered through the analysis of these scenes, especially when discussing the probable theological-rhetorical effect of the text in chapter 4 of the study. Below is a detailed elaboration of the above-mentioned three scenes of the Johannine text:

2.2.4.1 Scene (I) 7:53-8:2

Characters

Here we have two sets of the same characters in two settings and events. The first set consists of the characters described by the Greek word ἕκαστος, a singular personal pronoun for 'each' (Jn 8:53) which reads, "then each went to his own home." Then we have Ἰησοῦς (Jn 8:1) for 'Jesus,' who is described as having left the temple for Mount Olives. These events are taking

place in a typical temple set-up. Therefore, considering the temple's feast gathering in the event of Jesus' teachings to his audience in Jn 7:25-52, one can assume that the movements of these characters are from the temple to their homes and the Mount of Olives, respectively, as well as back to the temple.

The above-mentioned characters seem to be the same as those who went to their homes in John 8:53 and the Mount of Olives in Jesus' case (Jn 8:1), but now they are back in the temple. Jesus is the one who returns to the temple first (Jn 8:2a), described by the verb *παρεγένετο* which means 'he came,' followed by the other characters who are called *πᾶς ὄλαος* – 'all the people,' in the plural (Jn 8:2b).

Events

The following aspects are noted in the depiction of the events of scene one:

A first aspect is about the movement of people from the temple to their homes (Jn 7:53). The activities attended to by Jesus' audience in this event are not mentioned in the story.

Similarly, Jesus left for Mount Olives (Jn 8:1), not his home. The passage does not tell what He went to do in the mountain. One can only guess that Jesus was doing his usual prayers as often reported in the gospels.

Besides the movement of characters to their homes and Mount Olives, Jesus' teachings in the temple depict the main events of scene one.

Settings

The following settings can be identified in this scene:

The temple is the main setting in scene one, while other settings include people's homes and Mount Olives. I include the latter as part of the settings due to its significant interaction with the temple. The homes of people from Jesus' audience represent the communities where they came from, while Mount Olives represents a place where Jesus devoted himself to God.

Key perspectives in scene (I)

In scene one above, people's homes, Mount Olives and the temple all play a vital role. This can also be seen in the identified chiasm below, as well as discussions in preceding chapters.

Identified chiasm in scene (I)

In Jn 7:53 (a) Jesus' audience makes a movement from the temple to their homes, whereas in Jn 8:1 (a') Jesus makes a similar movement away from the temple but instead of going home

he went to the Mount of Olives. The two verbs used to describe these movements are ἐπορεύθησαν in the plural and ἐπορεύθη in the singular. In general, a chiasm could mean the realised matches in wording, phrases and sentences of a particular text or passage. In the case of scene one and the scenes which precede the identified chiasm, these are based on the movement of characters, events, and settings in the identified phrases of the text as noted above.

The other chiasm in scene one is that of (a'b) in the first part of Jn 8:2 which reads, "and at day break again he came into the temple," and that of (a b') in the second part of Jn 8:2 which reads, "and all the people came to him." Again, what qualifies this to be a chiasm, are the phrases indicating the movement of Jesus and his audience into the temple.

Therefore, what makes John 7:53 (a) and 8:1 (a') to qualify as a chiasm are the phrases indicating the parallel movement of characters from the temple to their homes in the case of Jesus' audience, as well as Jesus to Mount Olives. On the other hand, the phrases in (a'b) of the first part of John 8:2 and (a b') of the second part indicate the movement of characters from outside into the temple.

2.2.4.2 Scene (II) 8:3-9

Characters¹⁵

The new characters in this scene (II) include: οἱ γραμματεῖς, γυναῖκα καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι, namely, the scribes, the woman (accused of committing adultery), and the Pharisees (Jn 8:3). Another character mentioned in the story as a reference to the accuser's argument with regards to the Law is Μωϋσῆς (Moses) – John 8:5.

Events

The event is about an adulterous act of a woman whom the scribes and the Pharisees seized and brought into the temple (Jn 8:3,4). This is regarded as the main event at this stage since all the attention of Jesus' teachings seems to have been drawn to this particular case.

In John 8:5 the event is that of the quest for the interpretation of the law of Moses by the scribes and the Pharisees against the victim of adultery. They want Jesus to intervene in permitting them to stone this woman as mandated by the Law of Moses.

However, in the first part of John 8:6 the event depicted is that of the scribes' and the Pharisees' intentions to test Jesus so that they could accuse him. At this stage the story is not

¹⁵ It should be noted that there is a shift in the descriptions given of characters in scene two. I will try to pick up each character at each stage of a particular verse, for the sake of identifying the movements in the story.

only about stoning a victim of adultery but also about using her situation as a trap to accuse Jesus.

In the second part of John 8:6 and verses 7,8 as well as the first part of verse 9, Jesus does not respond to the questions posed by the scribes and the Pharisees against the victim of adultery. Instead, He bends down and begins to write on the ground. He then responds to the questions after being persuaded for a while in John 8:7, and thereafter bends down to continue with his writing. I regard this as another event since it draws new attention to the story.

The final event in scene two is that of the last part of John 8:9. Here we have a situation where the accusers of the victim flee the scene, leaving the woman behind with Jesus and his initial audience. At this stage, the story seems to depict another event which equally needs attention.

Settings

The setting in scene two remains ‘the temple’ where Jesus is found teaching his audience. However, in the last part of John 8:9, the movement of characters from the temple to (perhaps) their homes or communities as indicated at the beginning of scene one, seems to be depicted.

The Narrator

In Jn 8:6 (D), the narrator interrupts the story by interpreting the actions of the accusers of the adulterous woman as a trap against Jesus. This exposes their intentions, leading to what could be regarded as the apex of the story, which could be regarded as a **plot**. Why regard it as a plot? Brooks describes a plot as a “design and intention of narrative, what shapes a story and gives it a certain direction or intent of meaning” (1992: xi). Therefore, with a focus on this definition it seems like many scholars when interpreting this story focus more on the narrator’s comment in that ‘the scribes and the Pharisees were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing Jesus’. But why would the scribes and the Pharisees choose to use a woman as bait to trap Jesus? Out of all the sinners, why would the accuser spot out a woman? Was she an easy target? These questions play a significant role in the Johannine story, which requires further exploration.

Key perspectives in scene (II) 8:3-9

The issue of ‘τῶν ὁμωμήμῃν Μωϋσῆς’ meaning ‘the Law of Moses’ plays an important role in John 8:5. This seems to be crucial in the Johannine story given that the victim is accused of breaking the Law of Moses through her act of adultery, hence the scribes and the Pharisees

appeal to Jesus' authorisation to have her stoned to death. Jesus responds to their request but without directly addressing the Law of Moses.

Identified chiasm in scene (II)

John 8:3 (A) describes the setting of Jesus teaching his audience at the temple, while John 8:9 (A') depicts Jesus and his audience within the same setting, interjected by the scribes, the Pharisees, and the crowd who brought along a woman caught in an adulterous act.

In John 8:4 (B) the accusers spoke to Jesus about the adulterous act of the victim whom they had seized, while in John 8:9 (B') Jesus responds by addressing the raised concerns, but not in a direct way as requested.

Furthermore, in John 8:5 (C) the accusers cite the Law of Moses as their justification to have the victim stoned, whereas in John 8:7 (C') Jesus responds to the claim of the law by asking them to go ahead and stone her but on the condition that those who throw the first stone should be without sin.

The other chiasm identified is that of the second part of John 8:6 (E) which reads, "But Jesus bent down, with his finger he wrote on it" as well as John 8:8 (E') which reads, "and again bending down he wrote on the ground."

It is vital to note that the above-mentioned breakdown of scenes is based on the movement of characters, events and settings as suggested earlier. These movements appear in a parallelism of both words and phrases.

2.2.4.3 Scene (III) 8:10-11

Characters

The characters here in this scene, are not new. They include the woman and Jesus (with Jesus' audience). The Pharisees, the scribes, as well as the crowd left after their failed attempt to have her stoned (Jn 11a), in addition to their own guilt and sin, as was challenged by Jesus' statement.

Events

The main event in John 8:10,11 and 12 is the action of leaving the temple premises by the scribes and the Pharisees together with their audience after their failed attempt to convince Jesus about stoning the victim of adultery. The story brings forth the intended theological-rhetorical effect of Jesus dealing with 'the Law of Moses'.

Settings

The temple setting continues in this section. The woman is told to ‘go’ (Jn 8:11c) without condemnation. This could mean going back to her home, to her community, to her own family, or to her husband without being condemned by the people in these societal structures. She is also told to go and leave her life of sin.

Notable perspectives of scene (III) 8:10-11

Jesus’ teachings about the Law of Moses and the accusers’ perception of the Law represent a key aspect in the entire study. The socio-cultural norms and values attached to the Law, that allowed the accusers’ to foster such an attitude towards the woman caught in adultery, will be explored in chapters 3 and 4.

Identified chiasm in scene (III)

Here, the identified chiasm is in John 8:10 (F) where Jesus talks to an accused woman who in turn reciprocates in John 8:11 (F’), by breaking her silence. At this stage her accusers are no more. Again, it all centres on the movement around the events, settings and characters.

Another chiasm is that of the second part of John 8:10 (G) which reads, “woman, where are they, is there not anyone to condemn you?” Jesus is the one who asked this question to the victim, who responds in 8:11 that no one has condemned her.

2.3 John 7:53-8:11 within the Book of Signs

According to Achtemeier et al. (2001), the text of John 7:53-8:11 has been placed in the section of John 1:19-12:50, known as ‘the book of signs’. The significance of this categorisation (of the book of signs) is how Jesus makes the confession of who he is. He is said to be the one who gives life as a gift from God, as well as the one who performs signs that manifest his life-giving capacities (Achtemeier et al., 2001). While Jesus brings forth constructive responses by calling and building up his disciples, the book of signs closes with an outline that emphasises unconstructive Jewish criticisms of his ministry (12:37-40).¹⁶ Therefore, Jesus had to call for

¹⁶“Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in Him...” (John 12:37-40).

a renewal of faith in him by those who wished to believe in him (12:44-48).¹⁷ By this, he reassures his audience that his ministry was not his own doing but that it was based on the words of God from above (12:50).¹⁸

The above remarks and categorisation of John 1:19-12:53 as ‘the book of signs’ (as indicated by Achtemeier et al., 2001) are vital and most helpful when dealing with the details of how Jesus handles the story of the ‘adulterous women’ accused by the scribes and Pharisees.

2.4 John 7:53-8:11 within the narrative context of John 7 and 8

Here, I will briefly discuss Jn 7:53-8:11 and its close connection to the long controversies of Jn 7:1-52 and Jn 8:12-59. This might be helpful in discerning the legitimacy of this text within John’s Gospel. The two sections before and after Jn 7:53-8:11 seem to give an indication of the long line of controversial debates between Jesus and the Jewish leaders (which include the Pharisees), and also the debates among the Jewish leaders themselves and Jesus’ followers, which is continued through the story of the adulterous woman. These controversies are also prominent in the chapters leading to Jesus’ crucifixion.

I start with the debate and tension between Jesus, the Jewish leaders and their followers in Jn 7:1-52. In Jn 6:22-77, we are told that Jesus, upon addressing his disciples regarding his death, received criticism from among his disciples. Hence, in Jn 7:1, Jesus decided to travel around Galilee so that he could be away from Judea; a place where the Jewish leaders were contemplating to kill him.

In Jn 7:2-9, Jesus is being persuaded by his brothers to attend a Jewish festival in Judea, which he refuses to do, knowing full well that they would kill him if he goes before ‘his time/hour’ (cf. Jn 13:1). In Jn 7:5, the narrator points out the unbelief of Jesus’ brothers, as if they want him to go to Judea to get exposed to the Jewish leaders who were looking for ways to get hold of him.

However, in Jn 7:10-13 Jesus decides to go to the festival, though secretly. He does not show up as he is being pursued by the Ἰουδαῖοι (the ‘Jews’ – Jn 7:11). While he is hiding in the crowd, the narrator gives an indication of the divided crowd, i.e. those who were for and against him.

¹⁷ . “Then Jesus cried out, ‘When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only but in the one who sent me’... ‘As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world but to save it’...” (John 12:44-48).

¹⁸ “I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say” (John 12:50).

In Jn 7: 14, to everyone's surprise, halfway through the festival Jesus got on the stage and immediately began to teach (ἐδίδασκεν – he taught). In Jn 7:37 Jesus' teachings continued until the last and greatest day of the feast. Jesus was appealing to the crowds to come to him and drink from him. In Jn 7:38 the core of Jesus' message is that those who choose to believe in him by the conviction of what the scriptures declare, 'streams of living water will flow from within them'

In Jn 7:19, Jesus gives the example of Moses and the Law given to the Jews. They did not obey it, yet they were accusing Jesus of the same disobedience of the Law (Οὐ Μωϋσῆς δέδωκεν ὑμῖν τὸν νόμον; has not Moses given you the Law? καὶ οὐδεὶς ἐξ ὑμῶν ποιεῖ τὸν νόμον- and yet none of you practice the Law. τί με ζητεῖτε ἀποκτεῖναι; why then do you seek to kill me?) By this, Jesus strongly appeals to them using the language of the Law (which seemed to be the pillar of their faith) as a rhetorical strategy to convey his teaching, once again leaving the crowd divided. Some of their negative responses to Jesus' teachings are depicted in Jn 7:20, in their accusations that he is demon-possessed. Then in Jn 7: 31 we read that many among the crowd came to put their faith in Jesus, having been convinced by the miraculous signs which he performed.

Furthermore, John 7:32 reads as follows: ἤκουσαν οἱ Φαρισαῖοι τοῦ ὄχλου γογγύζοντος περὶ αὐτοῦ ταῦτα, καὶ ἀπέστειλαν οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι ὑπηρέτας ἵνα πιάσωσιν αὐτόν, the Pharisees heard the crowd whispering this about him, and the scribes and Pharisees sent officers so that they should lay hold of him. Here, one encounters the scribes and Pharisees who are contemplating ways of finding fault with Jesus. In addition, in John 7: 45; 47 and 48, we have the Jewish rulers (who are described as the Chief Priests and the Pharisees) trying to spearhead the killing of Jesus by sending guards. To their surprise, as is noted in John 7:46, even the guards failed to kill Jesus; instead, they too were persuaded that his teachings were true.

Therefore, from John 7 and its selected verses as indicated above, there are notable perspectives that show the continuous flow with John 7:53-8:11. A good example would be the presence of the Jewish rulers (such as the scribes and the Pharisees) who are part and parcel of Jn 7:53-8:11, as is pointed out in scenes II and III of my narrative analysis. At the same time, the debate over the Law of Moses in Jn 7:19 seems to continue in Jn 8:5. Again, in Jn 7:19 Jesus exposes the plot of the Jewish rulers wanting to kill him over what they regarded as Jesus' disobedience of the Law of Moses. This is similar to John 8:5 and 6, where the narrator interjects the conversation between Jesus and the Jewish rulers to illuminate that they were looking for a way to trap Jesus by using this situation of the adulterous woman, as the Law of

Moses commanded them to stone such a woman. In my view, these are indications that John 7:53-8:11 is part and parcel of John's Gospel.

The pericope of John 8:50-52, which comes after Jn 8:1-11, seem to indicate further how vital it is to consider the story of the adulterous woman as part of John's Gospel, especially when we take into account the continuation of the debates between Jesus and the Jewish leaders, and their followers. For instance, in John 8:12, Jesus spoke (ἐλάλησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς) again to the people, telling them that he is the light of the world; emphasising that anyone who follows him will never walk in darkness, but have the light of life.

In John 8:13 (εἶπον οὖν αὐτῷ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι- said then to him the Pharisees), we have the Pharisees again challenging Jesus' teaching, which claimed that he came from his Father. And so they demanded a second or third person to witness his testimony, in line with the Jewish law. Failure to having a third person testify meant that his teachings and claims about God were vague. Therefore, to meet their demands in John 8:14 to 19, Jesus responds to the Pharisees by pointing out his relationship with the Father, whom he describes as a witness to his teaching and the light of the world. He therefore appeals to their own Law given (by Moses) which validates a testimony of one or two witnesses.

The issue of Jesus not coming to judge/or condemn appears again in John 8:15, “ὕμεῖς κατὰ τὴν σάρκα κρίνετε, ἐγὼ οὐ κρίνω οὐδένα, You judge/condemn according to the flesh, I did not come to judge/condemn anyone,” which is similar to John 8:10 (G) and 8:11 (G') in scene III of my narrative analysis, where Jesus tells the woman that he does not condemn her after everyone else failed to do so, by leaving the scene without stoning her.

In John 8:20, at the time of these debates, Jesus is situated again in the temple teaching (διδάσκων ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ - he was teaching in the temple). His audience is both the ordinary Jews and Jewish leaders. This is a setting and event similar to that of John 8:2a and 8:2c, as pointed out in my narrative analysis of John 7:53-8:11. In John 8:25, Jesus challenges his audience to choose to believe in him, instead of dying to sin.

Bearing in mind the discussion regarding John 7:1-52 above, John 8:26 to 59 can be summed up as Jesus' intensification of describing his relationship with the Father. This relationship is beyond the Jews' treasured relationship with Abraham, whom they held in high esteem as their father. Instead, Jesus is first the eternally existing Son of the Father. Therefore, before Abraham was born, Jesus was there. Hearing this disturbed Jesus' audience to the point of wanting to stone him (Jn 8:59). Taking into account the text before and after John 7:53-8:11, the two sections shed more light on the golden thread of the controversies between Jesus and his opponents.

2.5 Conclusion

The significance of a literary aspect of any biblical text cannot be ignored. It is one thing to ignore John 7:53-8:11 based on the debates surrounding its authenticity and yet on the other hand miss out the intended purpose of its inclusion by either the implied author or editor. Powell (1990:7) may be right by stating that the primary objective of a literary-critical analysis should not be to discover the process through which a text has come into being (although this could mean well for a thorough understanding), *but to carefully study the text that now exists.*

To discuss the literary aspects of a story on an adulterous woman in John 7:53-8:11, the narrative criticism approach by Mark A. Powell (1990) has been adopted. This approach examines a story by means of three perspectives, i.e. events, characters and settings, in order to understand what its proposed message was for its intended readers (Powell, 1990:35-75). Powell argues that without these three elements, a story cannot be a story.

Achtemeier et al. (2001) remarked that the text of John 7:53-8:11 has been placed in the section of John 1:19-12:50, known as 'the book of signs'. The significance of this categorisation (of the book of signs) is how Jesus makes the confession of who he is. He is said to be the one who gives life as a gift from God, as well as the one who performs signs that manifest his life-giving capacities (Achtemeier et al., 2001). It is within the book of the signs that I also discuss John 7:53-8:11 from the angle of the pericope before and after chapter 7 and 8. These scriptures are presented in a way, which seem to indicate the authors intended continuation of his message with that of an adulterous story. Below are notable perspectives realised from the above discussions, which will be engaged in my next chapter.

Perspectives for further discussion

Scene (I):

Here, there are movements to and from the temple made by both Jesus and his audience. I would therefore like to find out more about the role of the home, temple, and the Mount of Olives for both Jesus and his audience in the Johannine text.

Scene (II)

The issue of 'the Law of Moses' in John 8:5 is another vital aspect that must not be ignored. Within this scene I have also identified 8:6a, which seems to be the apex of the story in the author's opinion.

Scene (III)

What are the socio-cultural and gender values attached to the 'Law,' which permitted the accusers' actions of wanting to stone the woman caught in adultery? These points will be explored further in chapters 3 and 4.

CHAPTER 3

SOCIO-CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL DIMENSION

OF JOHN 7:53-8:11

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will make use of a ‘contextual approach,’ as discussed by Mugambi and Smit (2004:22-50), which I regard as relevant to this study. When Mugambi and Smit discuss the importance of taking the context of biblical texts seriously, they note that this is because the Bible is a cultural document in itself (Mugambi & Smit, 2004:15). The Bible itself is a cultural document that was created culturally and remains “the most treasured cultural achievement in every culture where it has become part of the literary repertoire” (Mugambi & Smit, 2004:15). Therefore, Mugambi and Smit are convinced that in general all literature is contextual, which implies that it is written within a specific cultural, social and historical context (Mugambi & Smit, 2004:24). The passage of John 7:53-8:11 is part and parcel of a contextual literature, which is what this chapter, and the study as a whole, seeks to explore. Two aspects that affirm that all literature is contextual are the following:

The first aspect is that all literature is understood against the backdrop of the receivers’ ideological presuppositions. This means, according to Mugambi and Smit (2004:24), that identity aspects, as well as social constructions of people in particular places play a significant role in the process of reception. The construction of identity often includes racial-ethnic identity, worldview, gender, belief systems, religious affiliation, and the biases arising from all these. In addition, “Social location components include positions in the social, economic and political ladder education, and factors that are historical, geographical, psychological and sociological” (Mugambi & Smit, 2004:26). Some of these perspectives will be explored further in discussions on the theological-rhetorical dimension of John 7:53-8:11, in chapter 4.

The second aspect is that, to say that all literature is contextual implies that people often import their own context when reading these literatures, either with or without full consciousness or understanding that they are doing so (Mugambi & Smit, 2004:27). This is vital when it comes to addressing the challenge of discounting the context of a biblical text when appropriating it in the present context.

Therefore, with these two important aspects in place, I will now enter into the discussion of the Johannine context in which John 7:53-8:11 is situated.

When Lacost (2005:818) situates the Johannine Gospel in history, he notes that it is a gospel that has a long and complex history of composition. It can probably be traced in terms of two major stages, namely, in Palestine before 70 CE, and outside Palestine in the Greco-Roman environment of Asia Minor.

In my discussion on the literary aspects of John 7:53-8:11 and the sub-sections of chapter 2, I have taken note of the characters, events and settings pertaining to the story of the woman caught in adultery. These include the temple events of the Jewish festival, Jesus' teachings in the temple, and interpretations of the Law of Moses as claimed by the scribes, chief priests and Pharisees (Jewish leaders). Based on these identifiable features (in favour of the temple practices) found in the story, I would like to locate the Fourth Gospel's origin, and probable first stage of production in Palestine before the destruction of the second Jerusalem temple in A.D 70, as suggested by Lacost (2005:818). It is from this angle that I will discuss the socio-cultural-historical aspects of the text, particularly in terms of gender perspectives.

Why deal with socio-cultural and historical dimensions of John 7:53-8:11?¹⁹

In a remarkable description of the role and relevance of historical studies, Barr (2002:8) notes that a historical understanding of a given text enables the situating of a text in the context of its composition. This may help one to identify the author of the text, the time in which it was written, as well as the issues it intended to address (Barr, 2002:8). Part of the role of history, according to Barr, is to try to create or construct an account of the past using some guiding principles with the anticipation of giving a solution to the 'crime' committed (Barr, 2002:8).

Barr (2002:8) identifies two challenging perspectives with regards to historical studies. These are:

...collecting and correlating all the available data from the time and place being investigated, giving preference to data that can be validated in some way, recognizing that all sources have their biases. On the other hand the historian attempts to be objective and let the past speak for itself; on the other hand the historian aims to understand the past by analogy to the present.

I recognize the importance of both these perspectives. However, due to limitations of the study, I will focus more on the latter historical perspective, namely, understanding the context of John

¹⁹ Mickelsen and Mickelsen (1993:53) argue that no event occurs in a vacuum. They explain that every human being lives in a cultural and historical situation which strongly influences him or her. In a similar way, "Every biblical event and teaching arose from and was part and parcel of a particular history and culture" (Mickelsen & Mickelsen, 1993:53).

7:53-8:11 by analogy to the Zambian context of violence against women. I will specifically look at socio-cultural and historical perspectives related to families (in terms of clans and communities) and city settings of the first century Mediterranean world within which the Johannine community was situated. At the same time, these socio-cultural and gender perspectives were embedded within religious convictions and practices, which is particularly relevant to this study. Barr (2002:29) rightly notes that in the Mediterranean world, culture and religion could not be separated by its influence on social realities. The family and city formed the two main autonomous social institutions, which encompassed all other organizations. Thus, family and city settings directly influenced the lives of people.

Taking into account the importance attached to understanding any literature, i.e. biblical texts within its historical-contexts, the identified literary perspectives realised at the end of chapter 2 will be taken into account when discussing this chapter. These include:

- I. The role of a home, temple and the Mount of Olives to the Johannine audience
- II. The issues of the ‘Law of Moses’ in Jn 8:5 in scene (II).
- III. The other aspect attached to the issue of the Law is the question of the socio-cultural and gender values attached to the Law, which permitted the actions of those who were accusing the woman caught in the act of adultery and them wanting to stone her.

3.2 Definitions of terms

3.2.1 Culture

I begin defining the term ‘culture’ because it encompasses other terms such as ‘social identity’ and ‘gender,’ which are applicable both historically and to the present. Meleche and Day (2011:2) defined culture as “...the shared way of living of a group of people, including their accumulated knowledge and understandings, skills and values, and which is perceived by them to be unique and meaningful”. A catchy phrase here is, ‘shared way of living of a group of people’. This seems to be the strength of any culture across the globe. However, it can at times be a weakness if it happens that some shared values infringe upon the dignity of certain people, or if it exhorts the skills of certain people over against others. In this chapter, the given definition of culture will be helpful to fine-tune an understanding of the world of the Johannine text in terms of its strengths and weakness.²⁰

²⁰ Horalambos and Holborn (2008:2) note that to “a large degree culture determines how members of society think and feel: it directs their actions and defines their outlook on life”. By this, culture would prescribe ideal ways of expected behaviour for its members in a particular society (Horalambos & Holborn, 2008:2).

3.2.2 Social

The term ‘social’ is the root word of other terms such as socialization, which is defined as a “process by which individuals learn the culture of their society” (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:3). Therefore, people’s way of socializing is in one way or another influenced by their cultural backgrounds. Culture seems to be a foundational term for the way of life in societies. It was further noted that culture and sub-cultures are the fundamental basis of social identity, which entails people’s understanding of who they are, as well as that of other people (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:3).²¹

3.2.3 Gender

Haddad (2011:258) defines gender as “a culture-specific construct indicating varying patterns in gender relations within different cultures”. In a similar discussion on gender and its link to culture, Andersen (2003:307) explains that anyone who wishes to understand gender from a cultural angle needs to place it within a sociological context. He carefully argues that gender is systematically structured in social institutions, which in turn, are deeply embedded in social structures such as individual relationships, families, schools, religion, the economy and the state (such as the government and other organized systems of authority).

From the above discussion, the term gender is much more than simply a biological term of being male or female. Throughout both my primary and high school years, gender was perceived as a binary opposite of being male or female. However, such definitions have resulted in the marginalization of those who are neither male nor female, for instance, individuals with both male and female sex organs, as well as those falling in the LGBTI categories.²² Yet despite the underlying focus of this study being on the definition of gender as male and female, I am very much aware of the variation of definitions attached to the term gender. My choice for this definition is in line with the selected Johannine text in which both a man and a woman are addressed in terms of their gender. Three notable aspects of gender as defined by Haddad (2011:258) and Andersen (2003:307) are crucial: i) the close link between

²¹ The significance of people’s social identity in keeping up with one another cannot be taken lightly in terms of both its strengths and weaknesses. Meeks (1983) discussed the first urban Christians in the New Testament from the social aspect, as his point of departure. In his discussion, he noted that it was the social identity that kept the early church in solidarity with one another as a new sect of Judaism (Meeks, 1983:1). This became their source of strength during the time of persecution but at the same time a weakness in terms of disregarding those who were not part of them as the ‘other.’ This is vital in terms of drawing a key principle of understanding the probable social principles of John 7:53-8:11, which the implied audience might have upheld in terms of gender.

²² LGBTI stands for Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and intersexual.

gender and culture; ii) gender as a complex issue that varies from context to context; iii) gender as a social construct.

3.3 The role of social, culture and gender in John 7:53-8:11

In this section, the defined terms ‘culture, social and gender’ will be expounded below, each under their own sub-headings. These sub-headings are shaped by some of the literary perspectives that were identified in chapter 2. However, since these terms overlap, they will not be engaged in any specific order.

3.3.1 The Law (of Moses) and gender

The use of the Law in Jn 8:5 as a justification for stoning the woman caught in the act of adultery seems to play a pivotal role in the text. In my textual analysis of John 7 and 8 in chapter 2, as well as the rest of the Johannine narrative, I have taken note of the Jewish leaders’ continuous appeal to the Law of Moses. Their first appeal to the Law of Moses is noted in John 7 when they try to get hold of Jesus as the lawbreaker. Jesus then rebuked them in Jn 7:19 for their hypocrisy of not practising the Law themselves, while enforcing it upon him. Their second appeal to the Law is when they bring the adulterous woman to Jesus so that he can give them the go ahead to stone her as a lawbreaker (John 8:5).

The question is: *In what ways did the Law of Moses function in the Mediterranean world, and in the Johannine community in particular?*

In her discussion of John 7:53-8:11, Schottroff (1995:182) notes that according to the patriarchal Law of the Jewish tradition, an act of adultery was regarded as an injury to the husband’s right of possession of his wife’s sexuality. Therefore, both a woman and an adulterous man were to face punishment for the act by being stoned to death. It is said that it was worse in the Roman law, which permitted fathers, husbands, as well as a third party to immediately murder a woman caught in an adulterous act (Schottroff, 1995:182). Although the Roman rule might not directly apply to Jn 7:53-8:11 which I situated in the first century, it is possible that it in one way or another had an impact on the Jewish tradition. This may be so considering that other traditions such as that of the Greeks, Romans and Hellenists had an immediate influence on the Mediterranean world within which the Johannine community was located (Barr, 2002:28-29).

The issue of probable gender bias in terms of the Pharisees and scribes who appealed to the Law of Moses in Jn.8:5 seems problematic if we take into account that it needed to be applied to both men and women (cf. Bruner, 2012:504, 505). From a literary point of view, there are no indications that both a woman and a man needed to be stoned. Instead, it seems that because she was a woman she was brought to Jesus for breaking the Law of Moses. We can only get hold of what the Law of Moses stipulated when we read the Law itself. It is for this reason that Bailey (2008) appropriated the Law of Moses quoted in John 8:5 as referring to Leviticus 20:10, which permitted the killing of both an adulterous man and woman.

As the situation stands in John 7:53-8:11, finding out what the Law of Moses stipulated for both an adulterer and adulteress is not enough. Hence, the need is to investigate the actions of the scribes and the Pharisees who seem to have applied the Law to a woman in the absence of the man she committed the act with, as far as the literary text portrays. Therefore, how was the Law of Moses supposed to be interpreted by the scribes and the Pharisees? And why did they choose to interpret it in a manner that seems to be in contrast with Leviticus 20:10? In discussing the roles assigned to the scribes and Pharisees with regards to the Law of Moses, I will also look at the roles assigned to the high priest. This is because they are also mentioned in John 7, which is the text I have also commented on in line with the Law of Moses in chapter 2.

The Pharisees

The Pharisees, according to Just (2001:1), were an influential Jewish group who were active in Palestine from the first to the second century. Part of their role and duty was to enforce strict measures of keeping the Sabbath rest, as well as “purity rituals, tithing, and food restrictions based on the Hebrew Scriptures and on later traditions” (Just, 2001:1). Furthermore, Davies (1992:301) notes the Gospels’ depictions of the discussions between Jesus and the Jews, i.e. the Pharisees indicate the understanding of various Jewish beliefs. These beliefs include the Jews’ perception of themselves as children of Abraham, disciples of Moses, as well as sons of God who gave them the Scriptures so that they would be guided on how to live (Davies, 1992:301).

Therefore, if we consider the above stated roles of the Pharisees, particularly of enforcing strict measures on keeping purity rituals, then their actions against an adulterous woman in Jn 8:5 would be justifiable. They also understood the beliefs of the Jewish traditions on moral values, which the community needed to uphold. This is perhaps what led to their acquiring of massive support from the crowd of people who accompanied them. The mention

of Moses as the source of their Law also entails how much the forefathers were held in high esteem. However, it remains a challenge as to why the Pharisees who were perceived to be experts of the Law applied the Law of Moses on adultery (Lev 20:10) in an incomplete way by condemning a woman alone in the absence of an equally guilty man.

The scribes

The scribes are regarded as men who were particularly trained in writing. This skill earned them respect as influential leaders who were able to interpret and teach the Law on behalf of the rulers who entrusted them with such tasks (Just, 2001:1). It is further mentioned that the scribes in the Jewish context did not exist independently but instead they belonged to other groups such as the scribes of the Pharisees (Just, 2001:1). It would then make sense why the Pharisees are in the company of the scribes as they approach Jesus at the temple bringing along with them a woman seized in an adulterous act.

The significant role of the scribes is the fact that they needed to interpret and teach the Law on behalf of the rulers. These rulers are governors of the people who would want to see to it that people understand and obey the Law. In the Johannine text it would mean the Law of Moses, which needed to be interpreted and taught to the Jewish faith communities. However, just like the Pharisees, how possible is it then that the scribes as experts in interpretation and the teaching of the Law of Moses missed an application of the Law on an adulterous man, and enforced it on the woman alone who they brought to Jesus?

The chief priests

Davies (1992:292) notes that as part of their duty, priests regularly offered sacrifices on behalf of people for their well-being, as was mandated by Scripture. Davies (1992:2) notes that historically through the gospel, powers were assigned to chief priests, mainly in Jerusalem before the destruction of the temple, which enabled them to offer sacrifices. The people responded to their duties by giving tithes and offering. However, Davies (1992) observes that these chief priests were often put in power by the Romans who determined who should be among the chief priests by taking care of the robes of the ones they favoured. He also remarked that the main duty given to the chief priests were to ensure that the religious and social interests of the people were protected without wronging the Roman governor (Davies, 1992).

The above-mentioned description of the roles played by the Pharisees, scribes and chief priests indicates the extent to which they were acquainted with in the Law of Moses.²³ In short, this meant that the Jewish leaders knew exactly how the Law was to be interpreted.²⁴ This then invokes the quest to seek other possible reasons for why the scribes and Pharisees targeted the woman alone.

3.3.2 The accusers' readiness to stone the adulterous woman

The readiness of the Pharisees, the scribes and the crowd to stone the woman raises the question regarding the norms and values that shaped both individual and communal identity (Jn 8:5 and Jn 8:9b above). Bruce Malina's (2010) discussion on collectivism in the culture of the first century Mediterranean world helped me get an idea of what gave these men the courage and determination to have a woman stoned to death.

According to Malina (2010:18), collectivism defined the social structures of communities in the Mediterranean world. It places one in a social structure or hierarchical order defined by the society in terms of class, role, economic power and gender, to name a few. People are often placed in their groups, not by their own choice, but by that of the group (Malina, 2010:20).

3.3.3 The woman's silence

The other gender-related aspect of the Johannine narrative is the issue of the victim not being given a voice to either admit or disagree to the offence (Jn 8.3). According to her accusers, she is guilty and deserving of death. They have already passed the judgment of the death penalty on her in their appeal to the Law.

In this regard, I found the discussions by both Osiek and Balch (1997:54) on honour and shame very helpful. In their remarks, both men and women in the ancient Mediterranean world had specific places where they could speak out on issues (of justice) affecting them.

²³These were the roles and duties expected of them in terms of enforcing the Law during the period before the temple's destruction in A.D 70.

²⁴ Further discussions on how the Law was supposed to have functioned in a Jewish faith community includes that of Cromhout (2006) and Benner (2014). Cromhout used the term 'Law' interchangeably with a Hebrew term 'Torah' (2006:794). In his opinion, the 'Law' has to do with 'religious elements,' which can be understood as the 'constitution' or a 'charter' of Judean ethnic identity when placed in its historical context (Cromhout, 2006:794). However, Benner (2014) argues that the term 'Torah' was complex and so a direct translation to 'Law' might not be appropriate. In his understanding, a Hebrew definition of Torah is more of 'a set of instructions, from a father to his children' (Benner, 2014) which are to be used to train them for obedience. In my observation, both Cromhout (2006) and Benner (2014) point out ways in which the Law or Torah functioned as a guide to morality, which seems to be the case with the application of the Law by the scribes and the Pharisees in the Johannine story.

Women's voices were only heard in private spaces such as their homes. They could only talk to their husbands or fathers, whereas men could speak in public places in debates and discussions (Osiek and Balch, 1997:54). This implies that, since the woman in John 8 was brought into a public space by the Pharisees and scribes (well respected and honoured as spiritual leaders), she simply had no say in the matter.

Reinhartz (2003:14) argues that the portrayal of women in the Gospel of John says much about the situation of women in the Johannine community. It probably gives an indication of how women were perceived within the wider religious and cultural context of the late first century. This implies that the woman in the Johannine story represent a general picture of women who might have encountered similar or other gender-related issues. I now continue with a discussion of the core values of honour and shame below.

3.4 Socio-cultural and gender hierarchy in the Mediterranean world

3.4.1 Honour and shame

Bailey (2008:230) perceived the issue of honour as a relevant aspect when discussing John 7:53-8:11. In his opinion, at various times in different eras, cultural tradition in the Middle East (Mediterranean world) understood the honour of a family through the prescribed sexual conduct of its women (Bailey, 2008). As a result, women in conservative traditional rural communities who violated the sexual code of conduct were sometimes killed by their families (Bailey, 2008). Giving this some imaginative thought, it then makes sense why the woman seems to stand condemned by herself in John 7:53-8:1. This is because her family would not want to associate with her due to the shame she brought on them, and the same for the community.

In addition to the relevance of honour noted by Bailey (2008), Osiek and Balch (1997:36) discussed both honour and shame to be at the heart of understanding the social structures of the ancient families in the Mediterranean world. They noted that anyone who enters into a dialogue with the social pattern of honour, shame and gender roles from the perspective of cultural anthropology enters a space of cultural shock. By this, Osiek and Balch (1997:38) deduced that it was a general cultural tradition in Mediterranean societies to have social relationships structured through sex and gender roles. These structures of honour and shame would be upheld as part and parcel of the fundamental values of these societies.

The concept of honour and shame for both males and females portrayed systems that are particularly different, and yet entwined with each other. The most significant was male

honour, which was regarded as that which upholds the status, power and reputation of male members of a kinship group from threats and attacks from outsiders (Osiek and Balch, 1997:38). Furthermore, we are told that inside the kinship groups, total loyalty and deference of each male member was expected. This was in accordance with his proper role in the hierarchy of authority within the family. This led to a situation where ‘aggressiveness,’ ‘virility,’ ‘sexual prowess,’ and the producing of sons were important components for families and community cycles (Osiek and Balch, 1997:38).

It should be further noted that the perception of females in terms of their roles and duties, differed from that of males. Malina (1993:71) remarked that procreation and taking care of children was the main task attached to female positions in the family. Moreover, the gender of children born from women as either male or female also played a role. For these reasons, females were accorded honour upon giving birth to male children (Malina, 1993:84). Besides procreation, females needed to protect their sexuality so as to uphold the honour attributed to them (Osiek and Balch, 1997:39).²⁵

According to Barr (2002:28-29), the discussion of honour and shame in John 7:53-8:11 could be perceived beyond the Johannine faith community. In his opinion, there are possibilities of other traditional influences on the Johannine faith community, i.e. the Greeks, Romans and Hellenists, which could have been made possible through cultural interactions (Barr, 2002:28). It is for this reason that here I would like to discuss the Greek tradition and their viewpoint of male and female anatomy. I will also consider the work of two Greek philosophers, Aristotle and Plato.

In the book titled, *The concept of Woman: The Aristotelian Revolution 750 BC-AD 1250*, Allen (1985) shares some very interesting insights on how both women and men have been perceived differently throughout history, with men always being the more advantaged gender. Allen (1985) pointed out that Aristotle understood women or females as people who were made of matter (the body), while a man was made of form (the soul). In that regard, any child who was born in either category was the influence of either their mother or father who provided them with such substances (Allen, 1985:98). Females were regarded as inferior, while males were superior; women as passive, while men were active; women were perceived as

²⁵Thus, from the male perspective, women are a mysterious entrance of birth and death (Osiek and Balch, 1997). This way of perceiving women in the society meant that women only had the ultimate powers which enabled genuine offspring, and so by all means, they were to be protected from male intruders who could have controlled them (Osiek and Balch, 1997). Women were to be regarded as weak members of their families whose sexuality was “irresistible and sex drive indescribable” (Osiek and Balch, 1997:39).

people made of matter from the lowest elements, while men were identified with a higher status form (Allen, 1985). By doing so, Aristotle and Plato applied the concept of dualism in the existence of all things, which they could also identify with a man and a woman (Allen, 1985). For instance, they believed that the earth (and female) at the bottom of the universe consisted of two pairs of primary opposites such as ‘hot and cold,’ as well as ‘moist and dry’ (Allen, 1985). Therefore, a man was regarded as hot, while a woman as cold; men as being dry, while women were moist (Allen, 1985). Most of all, women were perceived as infertile, imperfect and deformed males (Allen, 1985). These perceptions of what it meant to be male and female led to the ordering of families and societies in terms of norms and values being attached to one’s sex (Allen, 1985). In terms of leadership, it was conceived that women were naturally created to obey, while men ruled in order to fulfil their virtue (Allen, 1985:112).

Allen’s (1985) discussion on what it meant to be male or female by Aristotle and Plato cannot be exhausted in this New Testament study. Therefore, the following notable perspectives have been pinpointed:

- a) The treatment given to men and women in their families and societies was dependant on their sex.
- b) Female bodies were perceived as being different from that of the males, with the men being advantaged.

The above-mentioned perspectives give an indication of how influential culture has been with regards to the different perceptions of men and women. When Isherwood and Stuart (1998:10) discussed the ‘human body’ from a theological point of view, they noted that the “body is deeply symbolic in human culture; the means by which and through which the person and the community express themselves”. It is therefore pertinent to take cognizance of the influential role of culture in the Johannine story.

3.5 Household code and relations (of family, community, city, temple and power)

What I find enlightening from the discussions on honour and shame by Bailey (2008) and Osiek and Balch (1997), is how these perspectives influenced social structures of the ancient Mediterranean world such as families, societies, cities, schools, politics and economic organizations. I will discuss some of these in brief below.

3.5.1 Families in the ancient Mediterranean world

It seems that families in the ancient Mediterranean world had attached unequal importance to fathers, mothers, sons and daughters (Malina, 1993:2, 5). For instance, he noted that kinship was part and parcel of the social institution in the Mediterranean world. In such settings the status of fathers was a social ladder, which was regarded as a God given status. Therefore, this meant that the father held the power over the entire family, which could be extended to the community and the city. Although sons were required to submit to their fathers as a way of honouring them, by virtue of being male, they had power over the other family members, including their mothers. It is said that oldest sons often played a major role in bringing back honour to their families in cases where a family member brought disgrace (Malina, 1993:5). Malina (1993) also noted that fathers were mandated to make decisions with regards to their daughter's marriages. This meant that daughters could not freely decide on what they wanted. As wives, women had to do house work and provide all services to the family as their ideal duties. The emphasis was on an ideal woman, as Proverbs 31:10-30 defined the role of women in the ancient Mediterranean world (Malina, 1993:76-77).

3.5.2 Communities in the ancient Mediterranean world

When Malina (1993) discusses families in the ancient Mediterranean world, he notes that fathers in these communities had a higher social status when compared to women, which distinguished them in terms of the roles they played and the places to which they belonged. Such perception of males and females were sustained by systems upheld by the communities. It is said that the entire system of families and communities in the ancient Mediterranean world promoted men's honour by virtue of them being male, unlike that of females. Such honour (which was either acquired automatically by birth or through public recognition in philosophical debates) mandated men to play the role of representing and safeguarding their families, communities and women, particularly from strangers. In this regard, gender played an important role in putting and keeping males and females in their place.

This system of gender differentiation between males and females was part and parcel of people's way of life to the extent of governing their norms and values. For this reason Malina (1993:72) made a general remark that the Judeans, like many other Mediterranean people, viewed the world in terms of gender. This could mean that the ancient Mediterranean world normalised what is today seen as 'gender marginalisation'.

3.5.3 Cities, provinces and empire in the ancient Mediterranean world

Hierarchical settings of families and communities in terms of socio-cultural, religious, economic and political settings in line with gender divisions were maintained in cities, provinces and empires (Malina, 1993:72). Beyond the influence of Judaism as a religious sect, gender perceptions in the Mediterranean world were also shaped by other groupings such as the Greeks, Romans and Hellenists (Thurston, 1998:18-29; Carter, 2008; Malina, 2010). Barr (2002:27, 28) notes that the Greeks and Romans conquered several groups in the Mediterranean world, which resulted in them rising up as dominant groups, and ultimately leading to the formation of the Greco-Roman world. However, through their interactions with the conquered groups, the Hellenistic culture was formed (Barr, 2002:28). Since this study focuses on the Johannine community in John 7:53-8:11, I will not venture into a detailed discussion of these organisations. Instead, I will briefly mention the gender aspects that could have shaped the Jewish faith communities from these groups within the Mediterranean world.

Starting with Hellenistic women, Thurston (1998:19) notes that the position of women in this group was not static. It changed from time to time due to the deferent cultures it consisted of. For instance, in a setting of Hellenistic Athenians of the classical period, it is said that women could hardly contribute to public affairs or politics. They were instead confined to their houses so that they could raise the children on behalf of their husbands (Thurston, 1998:19). On the contrary, to the Athenians, aristocratic women were time and again honoured in public for their service and even given citizenship and political rights.

Concerning Roman women, Thurston (1998:21) notes that the “Roman matron lived a life very different from that of her lower class contemporaries”. It is said that for one to participate in the Roman world, there was a need to be a Roman citizen and not only to have wealth (Thurston, 1998). In this regard, women could become citizens through birth, or by earning or buying it, as well as by means of favours granted to them by Roman or a local Roman jurisdiction, otherwise through marriage to a Roman citizen (Thurston, 1998:21). This enabled them to make contributions towards social, economic, political and religious developments in the Roman world (Thurston, 1998:21). Most of all, Thurston (1998:21) mentioned that “Roman legal theory regarding women rested on *infirmitas sexus*, the weakness of the sex, and mandated that women be under the custody and /or control of males”.

Despite diversity and uniqueness in the socio-cultural, economic and political organisation of males and females in Jewish, Hellenistic and Greco-Roman traditions of the ancient Mediterranean world, it remains clear that women have always been perceived as the ‘other’. For them, this was the normal way of life among families, communities, cities,

provinces and within empires. However, in the discussion on the contemporary era, this ‘otherness’ in the circles of justice and gender equality will be explored further. This will be explicated further in chapters 4 and 5.

3.5.4 Temples and gender in the ancient Mediterranean world

In his discussion on the function of gender in the temple setting of the ancient Mediterranean world, Thurston (1998:15) observes that Jewish women were often treated as inferior to their husband. This resulted in a situation where only men were entrusted with the task of reading and teaching the Torah (Thurston, 1998:15). It is said that the exclusion of women from handling the Torah in temples attracted other duties which they could carry out in ‘rabbinic tradition’ such as: the ‘lighting of Sabbath candles,’ ‘making of bread,’ as well as ‘the keeping of Niddah, laws of menstrual purity’ (Thurston, 1998).

With regards to duties, women were not permitted into the ‘Jewish priesthood,’ which was specifically reserved for men (Thurston, 1998). Thurston (1998:17) notes that, in general, women were excluded from studying the Torah or from being in the inner circle of the temple. They were restricted to an outer court designated for them. He is of the opinion that this seemed to have been the case because women were perceived as ‘sexual objects’ and a source of danger, and could easily lead others into temptation and social confusion. These conditions made it difficult, if not impossible, for women to bear witness to the Torah in the temples. Women were categorized with slaves and children, who were regarded as people of lesser status (Thurston, 1998:15).

Therefore, in consideration of the above, the actions of the scribes and Pharisees when condemning the adulterous woman in John 7:53-8:11 seems justifiable. Since this woman is a sexual ‘object’ who may have actually enticed the man whom she committed the adulterous act with.

3.5.5 Issue of power relations in the hierarchies

Schottroff (1995:182) described the power fathers and husbands had over their daughters and wives, which enabled them to kill and possess their sexuality. The power owned by men was a result of different perceptions of women and men. An example is the idea that male honour meant maintaining the status, power and reputation of the male members of a kinship group, while women only had ultimate powers, which enabled them to produce offspring. These and the other views of men and women given in the previous sections might have determined the

place and role of both men and women within the social organization in the Mediterranean world.

3.6 Conclusion

From the discussion on the ‘socio-cultural and historical dimensions’ in John 7:53-8:11 above, the following observations have been made:

First, it has been realised that history and context play a significant role in terms of how literature is written, read and understood. The passage of John 7:53-8:11 is therefore identified as a document written in the specific historical context of the first century, before AD 70.

Second, the concepts ‘social, culture and gender’ were defined. Through their definition it seems that culture is an umbrella term for both social identity and gender.

Third, a discussion on the role of social norms, culture and gender was done in terms of: a) the Law of Moses, which seems to have been interpreted in an incomplete way by the scribes and the Pharisees (the Law experts). They applied the Law to a woman while the man whom she committed an adulterous act with, was absent. This seems to contradict what was stipulated in the Law of Moses in Leviticus 20:10, which permitted the stoning of both the man and the woman; b) the accusers’ readiness to stone the woman; c) The woman’s silence.

Fourth, the socio-cultural and gender hierarchy in the Mediterranean world has been investigated briefly. Here, the role of honour and shame has been clarified.

Fifth, a brief discussion occurred on household codes and relations in families, communities, cities, the temple and power.

CHAPTER 4

THEOLOGICAL-RHETORICAL DIMENSION OF JOHN 7:53-8:11

4.1 Introduction

The significance of paying attention to the literary, socio-cultural and historical aspects of biblical texts cannot be ignored. This has been realised through the above discussion in chapters 2 and 3. Now that we are aware of what the world within John 7:53-8:11 looks like – through a literary discussion in chapter 2, and through a socio-cultural and historical discussion in chapter 3, it would be important to look at the world “beyond” the given text – through an analysis of its theological-rhetorical perspectives. This world is informed by the outcomes of chapters 2 and 3. The influence of biblical interpretation in terms of realising its theological and rhetorical implication on the meaning given to a particular text has been sought throughout history, from one era to another. In their quest for the theological-rhetorical meaning, Dyrness and Karkkainen (2008:379-380) illustrate how the Torah, Talmud and Midrashim shaped the Jewish interpretation. This was critical in the Jewish Christians attempt to understand these documents, and similarly, their encounter with Jesus Christ. It was through this encounter with Jesus Christ that the New Testament writings came about which were known as the hermeneutics of the apostolic writers (Dyrness & Karkkainen, 2008:379-380). These writers are said to have followed the hermeneutical footsteps of Jesus who had presented them with a revolutionary interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures demonstrated in his own life and ministry (Dyrness and Karkkainen, 2008).

Nonetheless, we are told that the Jewish hermeneutics had given the first Christian interpreters some major difficulties, which questioned whether Scripture ought to be interpreted literally or allegorically (Dyrness and Karkkainen, 2008). An example of one difficult text to interpret is John 7:53-8:11 (Toensing, 2003:159-160). In chapter 1 the debates over the authenticity of this Johannine text was pointed out with some scholars doubting its legality in both the Fourth Gospel and the New Testament as a whole. Thus, the following research questions raised in chapter 1 will guide this chapter:

- I. What is the theological-rhetorical function of the inherited traditions and societal values in John 7:53-8:11, referred to in chapter 3 above?²⁶
- II. From where to where did John wish to persuade his audience in telling such a story?
- III. What was the implied rhetorical function of this narrative?

4.2 Socio-cultural and historical perspectives of John 7:53-8:11

In light of the discussions on the probable socio-cultural and historical perspectives in John 7:53-8:11 of chapter 3, the desired outcome of this section is to uncover the possible theological-rhetorical functions of some of the noted perspectives.

4.2.1. The Law (of Moses) and gender

It has been established in chapter 3.3.1 that the scribes and the Pharisees, despite being the experts of the Law, did not interpret the Law as stipulated in Leviticus 20:10. Instead, they chose to condemn the woman on her own in the absence of the man even though the Law condemned both of them to death. Whether the man was in the crowd or away from the incident we are not told, the text remains silent in that regard. My assumption here, regarding the absence of a man is based on what the literary text presents. How then was the Law supposed to have functioned in the Jewish faith community?

Cromhout (2006) and Benner (2014) indicate possible ways in which the Jewish Law could have functioned. For instance, Cromhout (2006:794) used the term ‘Law’ interchangeably with the Hebrew term ‘Torah’. In his opinion, the ‘Law’ has to do with ‘religious elements,’ which can be understood as the ‘constitution’ or a ‘charter’ of Judean ethnic identity when placed in its historical context (Cromhout, 2006:794). Whereas, Benner (2014) argued that the term ‘Torah’ was complex, and therefore, a direct translation to ‘Law’ might not be appropriate. He instead noted a Hebrew definition of the Torah to be more of ‘a set of instructions, from a father to his children’ (Benner, 2014), which was to be used to train them for obedience. Thus, despite the different views of the Law and the Torah, both Cromhout (2006) and Benner (2014) point out vital ways in which the Law of Moses might have functioned in the Johannine story. If the Law was to be regarded as a ‘constitution,’ the implication was that it might have provided guidance on what was permissible and what was

²⁶ Here noted perspectives on traditional and societal values realised in the Johannine text at the end of chapter 3 will be engaged.

not in terms of the way of life for the people. The constitution is often made with the aim of bringing peace, order, direction, guidance and unity to all communities, as well as to the nation at large. In this regard, adultery would have been prohibited by the constitution. On the other hand, if the Law was to be understood as a Torah, which is a set of instructions from a father to his children, it would imply that the woman caught in the act of adultery lived in disobedience to what God had instructed.

In brief, a general view is that the Law seemed to have functioned as a spiritual document that needed to be treasured by the Jewish faith community as a way of keeping God's covenant. In Exodus 19, Moses is seen climbing the mountain up and down so that he could meet God in order to receive the Law as a symbol of God's covenant with Israel. By going back and forth, Moses facilitated consultations with God and the people so that they could all come to a consensus in terms of their commitment to each other. God makes a commitment to bless the Israelites as his own chosen people, and in return the Israelites are to obey the Law of God given to Moses. In turn, with such importance attached to the Law of Moses, and being so highly treasured by the Jewish faith community, it is unimaginable that the scribes and Pharisees would have misinterpreted it in the Johannine story. The following aspects are noted considering the ways in which the Law of Moses is interpreted in the Johannine story:

First of all, both the Jewish leaders and Jesus acknowledged adultery as a sin, based on the Law of Moses. It was viewed as breaking the Law and was raised as a concern by the scribes and the Pharisees, who were supported by a crowd that had accompanied them. Jesus also affirmed adultery as a sin in his statement '...if anyone is without sin...' as well as by the statement he made when sending her away '...go and leave your life of sin...'

Secondly, although adultery is pointed out as sin (breaking the Law) in the story, Jesus seems to have challenged the people's limited view of sin beyond adultery. This he did by asking them to stone the woman if they were without sin. By leaving without stoning her, it is implied that they realised their own sins, which were not necessarily in the form of adultery. Here, Jesus declares all forms of sin as breaking the Law.

Thirdly, the fact that John does not point out whether the Law of Moses was interpreted correctly or not by the Jewish leaders, it could be perceived as his rhetorical approach of persuading his audience to interpret the situation by themselves in line with their own social-cultural and gender values against Jesus' new interpretation.

4.2.2 The accusers' readiness to stone an adulterous woman

The reasons for the accusers' readiness to stone the woman in John 8:5 and John 8:9 as discussed in chapter 3.3.2 includes the idea of living out life collectively within the community, which was upheld in the Mediterranean world. This way of life enabled the sharing of values, which guided people with regards to right and wrong behaviours in families and within communities.

In such settings it would be easy for the Law of Moses to be used as a measuring stick in terms of its theological interpretation of people's behaviour. This is perhaps what made the scribes and the Pharisees draw such a crowd, so that they could together condemn a woman caught in an act of adultery. It is not clear whether those in the crowd actually understood what was stipulated in the Law, that both a man and a woman needed to be condemned. All we are told is that both old and young people were ready to stone this woman. When analysing the portrayal of the woman in the Johannine story, Kiambi (2012:14) remarked that it is often such unhealthy depictions of women that affect them in their various contexts in terms of discriminating situations in which they are often found.

4.2.3 The woman's silence

The woman in the Johannine story is silent right from the beginning. Her accusers, who are the Jewish leaders, are the interpreters of the offense she has committed. The woman is not given a chance to respond to their accusation. It is therefore difficult to tell if she really committed the offence, more especially because that the man she might have committed the act with seems to be absent in the story. But why is the woman silent? Does her silence mean that she admits her wrong? This, however, does not seem to be the case because no one asks her a question to say yes or no. The only time she said something was when Jesus asked her where her accusers were.

As explicated in chapter 3.3.3, it becomes evident that the reason for her silence is owing to the place of women within the Mediterranean world, particularly in terms of gender. Women belonged to private places, i.e. their homes where they could deliberate over issues of concern with their husbands whereas, men belonged to public places. Therefore, since the Johannine story is taking place within the temple setting, which is a public space the woman was not permitted to talk, despite being the one accused.

The issues of being silent as a woman in the Johannine text becomes more serious when we consider the fact that being in both private and public places for women and men respectively meant living a life of honour, and not shame. It then meant that if the victim in

John's Gospel was to speak out in the temple setting she would double her shame. In the first place it is already a shame that she has been accused of committing adultery and by speaking in a public place would be an additional crime.

From a theological point of view, the temple settings would have been considered appropriate for the scribes and the Pharisees who were regarded as providers of spiritual guidance to both families and communities. Therefore, it would have been difficult if not an impossible task for the victim to challenge the so-called experts of the Law.

While addressing the silence of a woman in John 7:53-8:11 the proposed silence of Jesus in between the conversations in the story needs to be discussed. I will discuss this below when addressing the rhetorical strategies employed by Jesus in conveying his message to his audience.²⁷

4.3 The role of Jesus in the Johannine story

Upon reflection, the reason why John chose to tell the story of the adulterous woman has not been fully established, as well as the question 'from where to where' did he intend to take his audience in telling the story. In the discussions above, the focus was more on characters such as the scribes, the Pharisees and a woman. However, in this section the focus will be on Jesus in reference to the same characters. In the given story, I assume that Jesus went against the norms and values of the stated audience. This seems to be the case considering that the probable social-cultural and gender values stated in the discussion above could have permitted a death sentence by means of stoning. Yet Jesus ends the story in a complete opposite way by setting the condemned woman free.

The Johannine story is told in quite a dramatic way. Jesus was in the temple teaching the Word of God, then the scribes and the Pharisees interrupted his teaching by presenting their case of a woman they seized in an adulterous act. The scribes and the Pharisees immediately passed the death sentence on her in terms of what the Law of Moses stipulated, and then asked Jesus for his input on the matter. Surprisingly, Jesus bends down and remains quiet while writing on the ground, he did not respond until after the accusers made several attempts to question him. Upon rising, he does not give an answer based on the Law of Moses as asked; instead, he grants them permission to go ahead and stone the victim, but only if they themselves

²⁷Note that the other perspectives discussed in chapter 3, which may be considered in chapter 5, include: Socio-cultural and gender hierarchy in the Mediterranean world (cf. 3.4), as well as the household code and relations of families, communities, cities and temples (cf. 3.5).

are without sin. He bends down again and continues writing. At this stage the accusers left one by one without asking any further questions. In the first place, they arrived with a woman, whom they brought to Jesus but this time they departed, leaving her behind with him. Jesus questions the woman regarding the whereabouts of her accusers and whether she had been condemned by any of them. She responded by saying that no one had condemned her. Jesus then set her free by not condemning her either, telling her to go and leave her life of sin.

In my analysis of the Johannine story, my suggestion is to discuss this section in the following ways: Firstly, by briefly describing the role that Jesus played from a broader angle of the entire Gospel of John. It is my hope that by so doing the reasons for John's writings to his implied audience may be discerned even through the story of the adulterous woman. Secondly, I will discuss the role of Jesus with a focus on the given story.

Viewed more broadly, Jesus played a very important role in the entire Gospel of John. Right from the beginning he is regarded as the eternal Word of God who became flesh and came to live in the world (Jn 1:1-2, 14). Jesus is described as the reason for the existence of everything created in the world, which God loved so much (Jn 1:3; Jn 3:16). He is regarded as 'the life' (Jn 1:4); 'the light of the world' (Jn 1:4-9; Jn 8:12); 'the living water' (Jn 4:10); 'the bread of life' (Jn 6:35); 'the good shepherd' (Jn 10:11); 'the way, the truth and the life' (Jn 5:24; Jn 14:6); and in Jn 20:31 John sums up his gospel by stating the purpose of his writing to the implied readers, which has to do with them believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing they may have life in his name. It is, therefore, from this brief background depicting Jesus' life giving mission towards humanity, that the story of the adulterous woman also finds its place in John's Gospel.

The Johannine story has two dynamics, namely, life and death. A death sentence is first passed on a woman in Jn 8:5 by her accuser's, i.e. the scribes and the Pharisees. This death sentence is anticipated by both the victim and her accusers, who know what the implication is for breaking the Law of Moses. Unexpectedly, Jesus turns down the death sentence so as to enable life through what I regard as two rhetorical strategies:

4.3.1 Choosing to keep 'silent'

In silence, Jesus bends down twice to write on the ground (Jn 8:6b and Jn 8:8) before giving an answer to the victim's accusers. The silence of Jesus has attracted several interpretations, therefore, no one can make a full claim of what was going on in Jesus' mind or knowing exactly what he was writing on the ground. I am also tempted to make assumptions concerning Jesus' action. In my opinion, by keeping silent Jesus is perhaps reflecting on his earthly mission as a

life giver but at the same time thinking of how he will respond to what was taught concerning the Law of Moses. Jesus previously said that he did not come to abolish the Law but instead to uphold it. He finds himself in a dilemma, that of either being seen as a lawbreaker if he ignores the Law, or if he applies it by allowing them to stone the victim, and then his teachings as the forgiver of sins will also be challenged. Moreover, in John 3:17, Jesus had just made the statement saying that God did not send him into the world to condemn the world but to save it. The other statements to consider are the ones I have identified above in terms of the roles ascribed to him in John's Gospel.

The other thought I would give concerning Jesus' silence is that in this act he is perhaps listening for God's voice on how to deal with the situation at hand. In John's Gospel, Jesus emphasises his oneness with the Father. Frequently, he would emphasize that whatever he spoke and did was what the Father had permitted him to. Therefore, even in this situation it could be possible that he is silent in consultation with the Father (cf. Jn 14:10-11).

Last but not the least, regarding his silence, Jesus seems to identify with the victim who was in the first place not given a chance to either admit or reject the accusation imposed on her due to cultural values that denied women to have a voice in public places. Nonetheless, whichever way one chooses to think about Jesus' action in this story, his life-giving response to the victim is very profound.

4.3.2 Re-interpretation of the Law of Moses (the Torah)

In the Johannine story, it is very clear that the Law considered adultery as a sin. In his rhetorical strategy Jesus does not comment on the Law as being either bad or good, but instead, he challenged what the Law regarded as 'sin' and 'not sin' in the accusers' interpretation. This is reflected in Jesus statement "...if any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her" (cf. Jn 8:7). It is very clear when we consider the socio-cultural and historical discussion in chapter 3, that sexual sin was regarded as one of the 'BIG SINS,' mainly committed by women. Therefore, if adultery is sin, then other sins are equally considered as breaking the Law.

The accusers' failure to take action and stone the victim should be regarded as a great achievement for Jesus' mission as the Giver of Life, The Light of the World, the Living Water, the Bread of Life and the Good Shepherd. It is at the same time a challenge posed to Jewish leaders, families and communities to reflect on their cultural values in terms of what the

breaking of the Law entails. Lewis (2005:47) is of the opinion that the accusers' action was the result of an awareness of their own inner darkness.

Jesus does not condemn the woman but instead the sin of adultery. His interest is in restoring the dignity of a victim contrary to her accusers who condemned both the human aspect and the sin in her. For instance, in John 8:11 Jesus tells the woman that since none of her accusers have condemned her, then even he does not. However, he tells her to go and leave behind her life of sin.

The woman breaks her silence when Jesus asked her where the accusers are and whether they had condemned her. She responded by saying that no one had condemned her. At this stage Jesus sacrificed his male honour by talking to this woman in public, according to the cultural context of that time. In addition, the woman's shame is doubled by talking to Jesus as a man, besides her adulterous act. This is yet another rhetorical strategy which challenged the cultural values of both Jesus' time and the implied readers of John's Gospel. The implication is that the victim can now speak in public because Jesus has elevated her to an equal status with men.

By re-interpreting the Law of Moses, Jesus levels the ground for what is to be regarded as sin. He deconstructs the patriarchal perception of sin. In a context where men enjoyed all the privileges of being treated as better human beings than women, Jesus opened up the possibility of human equality through his action of liberating the woman. The accusers are challenged to rethink what they understood as justice and injustice in their cultural context.

4.4 Conclusion

In the above discussions, the Law of Moses plays a central role in terms of the message, which both John and Jesus intended to convey to the implied audience. John core message for the entire Gospel described in John 20:31 seems to have been achieved in the telling the story of the adulterous woman. This is because, through this story, Jesus is indeed presented as a preserver of life. Jesus' mission as the Messiah and the Son of God through whom the world is to be saved is also well represented.

The two rhetorical strategies employed by Jesus, namely, the posed 'silence' and the 're-interpretation of the Law,' challenged the existing traditions and cultural values of both Jesus and the Johannine audience, which treated people in an equal way based on their gender. Therefore, by setting a condemned woman free from the bounds of her socio-cultural and

gender values (in the absence of a man she committed an act with) Jesus declares salvation for all human beings regardless of their socio-cultural and gender status.

From the discussions above the following perspectives that have been noted from chapters 3 and 4 will be engaged with in my reflection on the Zambian context:

In the discussions above, the Law of Moses played a central role in terms of the message, which both John and Jesus conveyed to their respective audiences. The core message of John's Gospel, described in 20:31, seems to have been fulfilled in the story of the adulterous woman. Through this story, Jesus is indeed presented as a preserver of life. Jesus' mission as the Messiah and the Son of God through whom the world is to be saved is also well represented.

The two rhetorical strategies employed by Jesus, namely, the posed 'silence' and the 're-interpretation of the Law,' challenged the existing traditions and cultural values of both Jesus and the Johannine audience. By setting the condemned woman free from the bounds of her socio-cultural and gender values (in the absence of the man she committed the act with), Jesus declares salvation for all human beings regardless of their socio-cultural and gender status.

From the discussions above the following perspectives that have been noted from chapters 3 and 4 will be engaged with in my reflection on the Zambian context:

To start with, the Johannine author managed to convey the message to his implied audience that adultery is a sin. This is clear when one considers the references made by the scribes and the Pharisees to the Law, as well as when Jesus tells the victim to go and sin no more. However, Jesus broadens the perspective of sin as breaking the Law by challenging the accusers to reflect on their own sins before stoning the victim.

Second, it is also clear that the scribes and the Pharisees' citation of the Law of Moses according to Leviticus 20:10 was incomplete, by not applying it to both the woman and the man she committed the act with.

Third, this has also been established by the fact that the scribes and the Pharisees were Law experts in terms of both writings and interpretation. Their misinterpretation could have been influenced by their socio-cultural values, which favoured men above women.

Fourth, the families, communities, cities, provinces and empires in the Mediterranean world from within which John's Gospel originated implemented systems that interpreted life in terms of gender. Men had a higher status, which enabled them to be in public places so as to

acquire honour besides that which had been ascribed to them by birth, whereas for women, honour was achieved by being in their homes and through procreation.

Fifth Jesus ends the story in a life-giving way. This He did by employing rhetorical strategies such as ‘silence’ and the ‘re-interpretation’ of the Law of Moses with regards to sin. At the end of the story the victim is set free from condemnation. Her dignity is restored. She is given back her voice – not only in her home, but in public as well.

CHAPTER 5

APPROPRIATING THEOLOGICAL-RHETORICAL PERSPECTIVES IN JOHN 7:53-8:11 TO VICTIMS/PERPETRATORS OF GENDER VIOLENCE AND THE CHURCH IN ZAMBIA

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I reflect on the exegetical outcomes of John 7:53-8:11 as was discussed in chapters 2 to 4, and its application to gender violence against women in the Zambian context. However, much focus will be placed on the noted perspectives indicated at the end of chapter 4.4. In chapter 1, gender violence was described as a real life challenge in Zambia. Therefore, through these reflections it may be possible to realise the life-giving elements for both victims/perpetrators of gender violence and the church in Zambia. The following aspects will guide the sections that will be discussed in this chapter, i.e. sections 5.2 and 5.3 below will engage with the realised perspectives from chapter 4.4, as well as the conclusion in 5.4.

5.2 The implication of John 7:53-8:11 to victims/perpetrators of gender violence in Zambia

Here I have to first establish who the victims of gender violence are in both the Johannine and Zambian contexts. To start with, the woman in the Johannine story is not a victim of gender violence. As discussed in chapter 4, despite some elements that seem to indicate gender violence against the adulteress in the above story, John's implied audience might not have perceived it in that regard. This is because women were viewed differently from men in terms of their position in the family, communities, cities, provinces and empires; men enjoyed a higher social status. Women were associated with weaknesses in terms of controlling their sexuality compared to men. They were not allowed to speak in public but instead only in their homes under the authority of their male partners. Therefore, considering such a society of gender differentiation, I am of the opinion that the accusers' action (i.e. the scribes and the Pharisees, together with the implied audience of both Jesus and John) towards the victim of adultery was justifiable. In their view, she is a victim of adultery, which was regarded as either sin or the breaking of the Law. Taking into account the idea of honour and shame attributed to

men and women in the Johannine context of the first century, sin could also mean going against the cultural values and systems in a society which keeps it in order.

However, in the Zambia context I will discuss victims of gender violence as women who are found in all circles of life. These are girls/women who have suffered gender violence in various forms, i.e. physical, psychological, socio-cultural, economic, sexual and spiritual (Musonda, 1995:3-8), perpetrated by males. In Zambia, the reasons for abuse of girls/women may not necessarily be a result of suspected adultery, but as it is often the case, any form of abuse comes with its own justification by the perpetrators. Some of the reasons could be: 'I raped her because she did not cover up well'. 'I have beaten her because I did not find her home after work'. 'I defiled her under the influence of alcohol'. 'It was the devil who led me into raping her'.

If the Johannine story is not a story of gender violence as perceived by the implied audience, then what does this imply in relation to victims of gender violence in Zambia? In my opinion, I suggest reflecting on the principles of this story, which could be regarded as potential aspects leading to gender-based violence today. One such aspect is the idea of the 'otherness' of the Johannine context where men enjoyed a higher social status than that of women.²⁸ That is men looking at women as the 'other' at the expense of human dignity. Zambia in this 21st century has people who have become aware of practices in various contexts, which creates the 'otherness' and often resorts to gender violence. The idea of realising the need for gender equality, human dignity, and justice for all comes as a result of traumatizing moments, which the world has experienced. Some examples include the apartheid policies in South Africa, which led to viewing the fellow human beings as the 'other' (cf. Mouton, 2002:15; Burrige, 2007:1). There is also a situation of a Holocaust in Germany, in which it is estimated that 6 million Jews were killed during the holocaust under the principle of the 'otherness.' The genocide in Rwanda is yet another example of a tragedy on tribalism which has promoted the 'otherness'. And not to forget the on-going war between Israel and Palestine, which is also sustained by the principle of the 'otherness.' Therefore, gender-based violence against women has also been realised as a vice, which needs to be resisted if the dignity of women is to be upheld and made equal in status to that of men.

²⁸ It is in the language of the 'other' that allowed men to be a priest but not 'women,' and that men could speak in public but not women, who instead needed to speak to their husbands in their homes over any matter. Therefore, I have adopted the term "other" based on gender inequality exhibited by the systems which governed life in the first century, where I locate the Johannine story.

In my first perspective at the end of chapter 4.4, I do take note that the author in the Johannine story seems to have managed to convey the message to his implied audience that adultery was regarded as a sin. This is clear when one considers the reference made to the law by the scribes and the Pharisees that adultery is a sin, as well as when Jesus tells the victim to go and leave her life of sin.

I find this perspective challenging due to two aspects: the first one is that Jesus had just challenged the accusers of the victim of adultery to stone her if they were without sin and after they all left without stoning her he sent her away but with a charge that she should leave her life of sin. In my opinion, Jesus had joined the team in condemning adultery as a sin but not the person because he saw the need for the community to uphold a moral life. Throughout his teachings, Jesus always emphasised the need for people to live a life that is right before God. This is reflected in John 3:16, whereby Jesus declares God's love for the world with the hope that through faith in him no one may perish but instead have life. It is not the first time that Jesus mentions people's sin after an encounter with them. In Jn 5:14 Jesus made a similar statement about the man he healed after laying on his mat for 38 years at the pool of Bethesda. When Jesus met the same man he healed in a temple he told him to stop sinning or else something worse might happen to him (cf. Jn 5:14). However, there is much more than just sin in the Johannine story, which I will point out below.

According to the discussion in chapter 4 on the Jewish context of John's Gospel, adultery was attached to sexual sin, which infringed the moral standards of both families and communities. Gender wise, women are regarded as being more inclined to commit such sexual acts, than men. Women would be perceived as the ones more likely to entice men in such an act. Therefore, even when the victim is brought before Jesus for condemnation due to a sin of adultery her accusers seem to have these preconceived ideas at the back of their minds. What message then does the story have for victims of gender violence in Zambia?

In chapter 1 of the study, reference was made to Rude (1999:7) who notes that suspected adultery was one of the main reasons for the alleged killings of women and girls in Zambia between 1973 and 1996. The idea of ascribing adultery to women has continued to this day. For a victim of adultery in the Zambian context, the Johannine story is one they can easily relate to. I have time and again witnessed situations where people have chased after a woman in a mob, suspecting her of going out with another woman's husband. In all these instances the man was absent. Women are often viewed as people who cannot easily control their sexual feelings. Recently, I witnessed two incidents in my community, one in February 2015 and the other in June 2015, where some women got undressed in a crowd of both men and women, and

which was perceived as ‘indecent.’ This would hardly happen to men whose dress code is never questioned.

Sexual sin is a big issue in terms of expected moral standards in the Zambian context, more especially in the present era, in light of the HIV and AIDS pandemic. Despite the high expectations placed on women as the key player in doing away with such sins, men have also been affected by the very standards which are set. The victims have been discriminated against and judged as the worst sinners. It is commonly heard, ‘you are reaping what you were sowing’. As a result, many victims would avoid going to the clinic for their medication, as well as disclosing their status, some have even ended up committing suicide. In this regard, the Johannine story is not only a story for women in adultery but also victims of HIV/AIDS, both men and women who have been condemned because of attaching sin to a disease. Despite the many reasons of how HIV/AIDS may be contracted, the majority of people associate it with adultery, fornication, prostitution, and any other sexual or abusive act.

This brings me to reflect on Jesus’ response to the accusers of the victim in John 8:7. Jesus said that if anyone of them was without sin he should be the first one to cast a stone at her. Upon hearing this, everyone left without condemning the victim. Jesus’ response challenges the accusers to change their limited view of sin by reflecting on their own moral life in relation to both God and their fellow human beings. The important key aspect here is that Jesus condemns sin but not the human being, and therefore, not the victim. This is evident when he tells the woman that he does not condemn her, and that she should go but leave her life of sin. However, this is a very difficult fine line to draw here, especially in societies where moral standards have been set against the ‘otherness’. In relation to victims of HIV/AIDS, the Johannine story shows that Jesus has the power to restore their life and enable them begin life anew, as he did for the woman in the story. The society is challenged over the prejudices leading to discrimination and judging the victims of adultery and HIV/AIDS as the ‘other.’

Perspective four (cf. 4.4) describes systems that sustained families, communities, cities, provinces and empires in the Mediterranean world in terms of gender. Men had a higher status, which enabled them to be in public places so as to acquire honour besides the one ascribed to them by birth; whereas women achieved honour by being in their homes and through procreation. This discussion on the systems that enabled life in view of gender indicates how the social status for men elevated them from the family to the empire. The woman in John’s story might have been picked up from a home setting by the community and taken to the temple. In all these systems, men were dominant figures. In the Zambian context, victims are also found

in all circles of life where male dominance controls the systems. The following are examples of such systems in the Zambian context:

5.2.1 Gender-based violence against girls/women in school settings

Bowman and Brundige (2013) carried out a case study where they conducted interviews with 105 schoolgirls in seven different schools. These interviews investigated the girls' experiences of sexism within and outside the classroom, as well as sexual violence. The research focused on the following three aspects:

The 'discriminatory treatment that reflects the persistence of sexist ideas about the position and capabilities of girls'.

The 'sexual abuse of schoolgirls, including constant harassment by boy pupils and request for sex by male teachers'. As well as issues concerning sexuality, i.e. involving teen pregnancy and societal attitudes toward sexual activity (Bowman and Brundige, 2013:38).

The findings from Bowman and Brundige's (2013) case study indicated that the adolescent girls in the Zambian schools encountered many obstacles. The evidence exhibited various types of sexual abuse of schoolgirls, which includes persistent harassment by both boy pupils and male teachers who would pressurise them for sex (Bowman and Brundige, 2013). The researchers also learnt about the high rate of teen pregnancies, which acts as a barrier to completing school, as well as the attitude of the society towards sexuality (Bowman and Brundige, 2013:38).

5.2.2 Gender-based violence against girls/women in community settings

In addition, Bowman and Brundige (2013:62) also pointed out that some of the girls that were interviewed were victims of sexual abuse, which was perpetrated by community members. For instance, one of the girls narrated that in her village two girls had been raped by a stranger and another by a boy, plus there was an attempted rape by an uncle (Bowman & Brundige, 2013). Not only is gender violence on girls/women present in primary and secondary schools but also in universities and colleges (cf. Menon et al., 2009:84; Shakafuswa, 2007:24).

Therefore, from the above research two aspects are notable, the first one is that violence against girls/women is prevalent in both schools and communities. The second one is that not much seems to have been done to counteract these vices. One possible reason for this could be due to entrenched systems that have helped shape the male perception of females as sexual objects. This comes from the ideology of the 'otherness.'

5.2.3 Female and male representation in public service

Mshanga (2007:2) discussed the impact of gender policy on women representation in decision-making positions in the Zambian public service. In his research, the findings from his case study on government Ministerial/Institutional Headquarters indicated that despite the government effort to strengthen policies for women representation in public service, they were, however, still in the minority with their numbers still declining, when compared to the men (Mshanga 2007:8).

Part of Mshanga's findings explained why women remain a minority in public service, these include: inadequate funding for gender programs by the government; the perception of females as being less qualified; lack of self-motivation and support from other women. These aspects have in one way or another enabled continuous discrimination of women through company policies and practices (Mshanga, 2007:39). This is another issue of gender systems. A man's influence begins already at the family level as the head, and later on extends to the work place. I have heard several comments made by both men and woman stating that politically, Zambia is not ready for a female president. In addition, women in senior positions in some companies and also in churches often experience the challenge of being accepted by male colleagues.

In Perspective five (cf. 4.4) Jesus ends the story in a life-giving way. This he did by employing some rhetorical strategies such as '**silence**' and '**re-interpretation of the Law of Moses**' with regards to sin. At the end of the story the victim is set free from condemnation. Her dignity is then restored. She is given back her voice, not only in her home but in public as well.

There is a common saying that goes: 'It is not about how the story starts but also how it ends' which is what matters. Most often when I am watching a movie with a touching story there is a time when I identify with a victim but as the story draws to an end and the victim is given back his/her life, I find myself doing the same. Indeed, my emotions may have been observed in my discussion depicting just that. Is the Johannine story a life-giving story to victims of gender violence in Zambia? In my opinion, the probable answer is both a yes and a no.

I would say yes, because the Johannine story makes victims aware of their dignity despite their experience as a victim of abuse. To know that Jesus cares for them more than the people's prejudices is liberating on its own. Jesus sends the victim away without condemning her. This sends the message that God values a healthy relationship with both Him and our fellow human beings, without delighting in our sin. Most of all, she is given back a voice which

she lost due to cultural values. She can now speak both in her home and in public. To a Zambian victim, Jesus empowers them with the hope of new life through the Johannine story.

On the other hand, I would say no it might not be a life-giving story to the victim. Here, I anticipate being a victim of some of the things I care about: Will my family be willing to accept me both as their own and as a transformed human being in hope for life? What about my community, will they recognise my new beginning in Christ as a person whose dignity has been restored? Are the Law/Bible experts willing to re-interpret these documents in life-giving ways to enable me continue or start enjoying fellowship with the believers? What if they once again came after her but this time in the absence of Jesus, will her life be spared? The fact that the story does not elaborate in detail what happens to the victim these are questions to reckon with in terms of the issue of gender violence as addressed in this study.

5.3 Implications of John 7:53-8:11 for the church in Zambia?

Before discussing this section I would like to give a brief background of the church in Zambia. As it was stated in chapter 1, over 80% of the population is made up of Christians. These Christians often gather in various church denominations every Sunday or Saturday and during the week to hear a message from the Bible.

Historically, Christianity in Zambia was likely introduced as far back as the eighteenth century upon the arrival of the Portuguese Catholics (Zambia Spiritual State - History of Christianity: Catholics and Protestant, 2010:1). Muwowo and Buitendag (2010:2) argued that Christianity became part of the religion in Zambia even before gaining its independence from Britain. Dr David Livingstone, a well-known missionary pioneer, is said to have arrived in Zambia in the nineteenth century, and is regarded as someone who played a major role in the establishment of the early Protestant Churches (Muwowo and Buitendag, 2010:2). The impact of European missionaries on the establishment of the Church in Zambia can be felt even in the present era. Muwowo and Buitendag (2010:2) noted that the division of the Zambian Churches alongside tribal lines are symbols that point back to the work of the missionaries in various locations. These divisions regarding church development in Zambia have led to the establishment of Three Christian Church Mother Bodies such as the Council of Christian Churches (CCZ), the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia (EFZ), and the Zambia Episcopal Conference (ZEC), to which I refer when I talk of the Church in Zambia. However, it should be noted that there could be other churches that do not belong to these Church bodies which this study also addresses.

During the twentieth century, Protestant churches which include the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches had united to form the United Church in Zambia (Zambia Spiritual State - History of Christianity: Catholics and Protestant, 2010:1). Muwowo and Buitendag (2010:2) perceive this unification of several Church denominations to have been the result of growth in the mine industry of the CopperBelt area, where people from various tribes and cultural backgrounds assembled for employment. This led to the motto of ‘one Zambia one nation,’ which the first President Dr. Kenneth Kaunda affirmed (Muwowo and Buitendag, 2010).

Christian development in Zambia took a formal shape when the second republican President Dr. Fredrick Chiluba declared Zambia a Christian nation in 1991, prior to his election as national president (Njovu 2002:1). Muwowo and Buitendag (2010:2) stated that the first three presidents of Zambia – Dr. Kenneth Kaunda (1964-1991), Dr. Fredrick Chiluba (1991-2001) and Levy Mwanawasa (2001-2008) – are part and parcel of those who were influenced by missionary work in the country. This, in my opinion, helps to explain the declaration by Dr. Chiluba.

The church in Zambia has come to acknowledge gender violence against women as a vice, which needs urgent attention. This was realized in a combined research project conducted by the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia (EFZ), the Council of Churches in Zambia (CCZ), and the Zambia Episcopal Conference (ZEC) (*Zambian Churches declare war on GBV*, 2011:1). Through research that was done the church took note of the various reasons, which condoned gender violence both within and outside the church circles and thereafter registered their commitment which includes:

- a) The church member’s lack of adequate knowledge about the term ‘gender’.
- b) The Scriptural misinterpretation due to a lack of knowledge regarding ‘gender’.
- c) A lack of unity by the church as the body of Christ due to the failure of other denominations to come on board to fight gender-based violence. This has resulted in the continuity of certain cultural practices, which promotes gender violence in some churches (*Zambian Churches Declare War on GBV*, 2011).²⁹

²⁹These three were among the fifteen aspects which the church raised as part of its commitment in fighting gender violence:

- i. Providing a vision on gender equity and equality in the church.
- ii. Reflect on the challenges of any form of injustice existing in the church and take appropriate actions for transformation.
- iii. Formulate a clear church gender policy framework accompanied by strategies, with allocation of responsibilities.
- iv. Mainstreaming of gender in strategic plans, monitoring and evaluation of programs and projects.
- v. Adopt Biblical based approaches in addressing GBV and any form of gender inequality.
- vi. Be involved in advocacy activities related to GBV, equity and equality.

The background of the church in Zambia as stated above has the potential of playing either a positive or a negative role in terms of dealing with issues of gender violence against women. As the research by the three church mother bodies suggests, the church is already a potential perpetrator of gender violence due to the member's lack of knowledge of gender issues, which often results in scriptural misinterpretations. The lack of unity by the church in fighting gender violence is another weakness. Therefore, once these weaknesses are worked on, addressing the gender violence can be enabled given that the church is made up of people from all sectors of life that are often preached to on Sundays and during the week.

The church should not only partner with other churches in the fight against gender violence, but should also bring on board both the government and other independent organisations who key role players in terms of the formation of policies which could promote gender equality. The issue of gender violence is very diverse and a complex one, which has made it difficult for the church to combat it on their own. For instance, there are some cases that are more complex requiring the involvement of the law, which fall outside the church's structures, such as cases of child defilement and even incidences where a victim of gender abuse gets killed. This calls for the church to operate both inside and outside the box by getting involved with the other sectors. It is, however, important that the church in Zambia should first do its homework in making a positive influence in the lives of its own church members through preaching and teaching about gender equality before operating outside the box. As long as the church members do not live by example in their own families, communities and work places there is a less chance that the church will be effective in working with the other sectors. To my observation it is the same people who are found in the church on Sundays who are often perpetrators of gender inequality in their work place. Perhaps this could be due to the same idea of separating the church from the other sectors as they are regarded as unspiritual.

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- vii. Be able to influence policy documents and procedures in the church to be gender sensitive.
 - viii. Ensure that activities contribute to the empowerment of women and change in equitable gender relations.
 - ix. Allocate adequate financial resources for the implementation of the gender policy framework and earmarking funds explicitly for gender related activities.
 - x. Ensuring ownership of gender policy at all levels by all members, especially leaders.
 - xi. Training leaders in gender and GBV-related matters at all levels in the church.
 - xii. Ensuring that data in our documents are gender disaggregated.
 - xiii. Ensure that affirmative action is used with special measures aimed at creating a state of equity and equality between females and males.
 - xiv. Economically empower women so that they are able to make informed and independent decisions, and
 - xv. Ensure that the current constitution making process includes the economic, social and cultural rights in the Bill of Rights of the new constitution among other commitments (Zambian Churches Declare War on GBV, 2011).

The church has often focused on the spirituality of its members and paid less attention to the socio-cultural, physical and economic challenges of its members. The story of the adulterous woman in John 7:53-8:11 is a good example of how Jesus had to challenge the dualistic thinking of his audience in order to reach the needs of the condemned woman who represents the realities of believers in her context. In this story, the Pharisees and scribes are very concerned about the spiritual element of the woman as ‘she has broken the law and so she deserves death’. Whereas Jesus is focusing not only on the spiritual element but also the socio-cultural and physical estrangement she has suffered from both her family and the community. The other example where Jesus addresses both the spiritual and socio-cultural, physical, as well as economic needs of a person is in the story of ‘the Samaritan woman’ (John 4). In a similar way, the church in Zambia is invited to make a positive impact in addressing both the spiritual and the socio-cultural and gender issues of the believers.

Nonetheless, the levels of church engagement with the other sectors on the issue of gender injustice needs to be kept in check. The relationship between the church and the government has often been a challenge in many parts of the world and Zambia is no exception (Zwanyika, 2013:6). There is always tension regarding who is to influence whom without losing their self-autonomy. It is for this reason that the Church in Zambia has remained divided in terms of how far it can positively contribute towards other sectors of life. A good example is the ‘Jehovah’s Witness Church’ in Zambia, which do not allow its members to participate in national elections (Hills, 2011:12).

In my opinion, the church in general can engage with other sectors by addressing key policies in decision making on issues that may include gender injustice. I therefore agree with the recommendation made in number xv above, which aimed at ensuring that “the current constitution making process includes the economic, social and cultural rights in the Bill of Rights of the new constitution among other commitments” (Zambian Churches Declare War on GBV, 2011). This means that the church should first of all be well informed concerning the policies of various sectors such as education, health, and the legal system already in existence so as to identify the gaps in terms of gender equality, which needs to be dealt with. The church has members who are found in other sectors of life who can be used in advocacy against gender violence and the need for equality (cf. recommendation vi; Zambian Churches Declare War on GBV, 2011). This can only be possible when the church’s separation of the spiritual from the non-spiritual is dealt with.

In Perspective two (cf. 4.4) it is clear that the scribes and Pharisees' quote from the Law of Moses according to Leviticus 20:10 was incomplete, by not applying it to both the woman and the man who committed the act.

In the Zambian context the document that is accorded as much importance as the Law of Moses seems to be the Bible. Not that the Law is in a direct way the Bible. Instead, both the Law and the Bible have overlapping commonalities, establishing them as moral documents. Adultery is a moral issue in the Johannine context, as well as gender violence against women in the Zambian context. As stated in chapters 1 and 2, the Bible is a cultural document written from a male-dominant culture; therefore, some of the scriptures need an ethical re-reading. There are churches that frequently read and interpret scriptures literally with the effects thereof felt in the church leadership structures. For instance, in some of these views pastoral and eldership positions in the church are reserved for males only, while caring for the sick, sweeping and cooking roles are ascribed to females. These are some of the challenges that Hazemba (2000) addressed when analysing women's roles in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in the Monze District of Zambia. For instance, he noted that since 1921 up to early 1990 women were never elected in eldership as leaders (Hazemba, 2000:52). In addition, he also said that the church was reluctant to ordain women as pastors but rather preferred creating alternative ministries for them in which they could serve (Hazemba, 2000:73). In my opinion these forms of gender stereotyping often experienced by church members are likely to have informed their day to day living in their families and communities. Such influences may create a permissive environment leading to gender violence against women.

In Perspective three (cf. 4.4) it was established that the scribes and the Pharisees were experts in the Law in terms of both writings and interpretation. In that regard, one can only assume that their misinterpretation was influenced by their socio-cultural values, which favoured men above women.

The socio-cultural values discussed in chapters 3 and 4 enabled the elevation of men against women in the Mediterranean world of the Johannine context. In a world where people are viewed in terms of gender these values might not have been perceived as a problem. Zambia, not only far removed from the Mediterranean world geographically, but also in terms of an era from the Johannine context, seem to have cultural ideologies that complement this context.

As was indicated by Rude (1999:7) and a 2007 Zambian Demographic Health Survey (ZDHS, 2007:283) in chapter 1, violence against women happens in all socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. It was observed that violence against women is sustained within family

structures and is perpetrated by intimate partners, i.e. a husband, fiancé and even male family members. These structures were reinforced by ideologies that differentiated men from women in terms of their socio-economic and cultural status with men being advantaged over women. Routledge (2009:4) discussed these ideologies as being patriarchal in nature.³⁰ A similar influence of patriarchy (as a male rule) might have enabled a sustainability of structural ideologies of gender biases in giving positions of leadership, as was pointed out by Hazemba (2000:52).

The other area influenced by socio-cultural values in terms of gender is in marriage counselling. Ngulube (2007:3) in his research noted the unwillingness of the Catholic Church in Zambia to review their teaching on marriage, which has often advantaged men over their wives, to a point of gender violence. He deduced that a number of priests teach women obedience and submission to their husbands who in turn are expected to love their wives from a biblical point of view, according to texts such as Ephesians 5:22, 1 Peter 3:1-7 (Ngulube, 2007:3). In his view, this resulted in husbands taking advantage of women to the point of abusing them (Ngulube, 2007:3). There are many socio-cultural factors that coincidentally link up with this demand for obedience and submission (by women in marriage) for both Christians and non-Christians in Zambia. I will discuss six of these factors below:

The first one has to do with the issue of dowry as was practiced, which is both socially and culturally sustained. For instance, in most, if not all Zambian family traditions a man is expected to pay a dowry in order to be given a wife in marriage. The payment differs from family to family and has often been an excuse for women to be abused by some men. Women are expected to endure such abuse, fearing that if she goes back to her parents or chooses to divorce her husband he might demand that the dowry be refunded. This becomes a challenge especially if a woman comes from a poor family who cannot afford to pay back the money.

The second aspect concerns education. Not long ago, education was given as a first priority to boys and not girls due to the belief that a woman would easily get married. This dilemma has often led to the devaluation of a girl child compared to boys by being denied equal opportunity to education. Although this is no longer a dominant practice, it is still a belief that is being held by many families, particularly in rural communities.

The third factor has to do with the roles attached to a male and female character. Chilala (2006:5) noticed how various roles and tasks that are allocated to children as they grow up are

³⁰ In her definition “patriarchy is a hierarchical system of social organization whereby men hold positions of power over women” (Routledge, 2009:4).

differentiated along gender lines. Females are regarded as better cooks than males, they are expected to keep the house clean and ensure that all that concerns the house is in order. This reminds me of my marriage counsellor's remarks that 'a home belongs to a woman' she is the one to take care of it. The man, on the other hand, is expected to provide for his family whether it is through hunting, farming or working, as part of his role as a provider.

The fourth factor calling for women obedience and submission is embedded in the day-to-day use of language in terms of stories, poems, drama and talking. In my 'Tumbuka' language there is a common saying, 'mwanalume ndiyo wakuzenga nyumba,' which means a man is the one who builds a house. It could literally mean that a house or family cannot be without a man as its leader, which may be similar to the biblical notion of the headship of the husband over his wife. It is for this reason that I agree with Routledge's statement (2009:4), "Patriarchal ideology is particularly powerful because through conditioning men usually secure the apparent consent of the very women they oppress".

The fifth aspect has to do with the different ways in which men and women acquire respect. For instance, women are often respected if they are able to give birth. Barrenness is always if not in rare cases attached to women. Giving birth to male children is a double respect for a woman. Women who cannot bear children are often discriminated against and either gets divorced or their husband would marry a second wife with or without her consent.

The sixth aspect concerns Health. Sikwibele (2013:176-177) noted that women are more vulnerable to infections such as HIV/AIDS than men due to cultural practices, social relations and the other gender dynamics that dictate the behaviour and responses of women to men. Some of the risk factors for women include the practice of polygamy and the cultural perception of sex (Sikwibele, 2013:177). The key factors recognized for the transmission of HIV in Zambia are the socio-cultural beliefs and practices affecting women in larger numbers than men, is due to the perception that women are of lesser importance in society (Sikwibele, 2013:177).³¹ These practices have often resulted in women finding themselves in situations where they cannot negotiate for safer sex to protect themselves against infections, since the socio-cultural values require their full submission to their husbands. This is often the case even when they know their partners are cheating on them. Many times they are obliged to return to an unhealthy relationship out of submission and obedience to their husbands. In chapter 1 of this thesis, I gave the example of my mother's own experience of physical abuse. Whenever

³¹ The sad part is that these socio-cultural beliefs and practices have not spared children. For instance, in Zambia some people believe that when an HIV/AIDS person sleeps with a virgin child they will be cured from the disease. This has led to an increase in the number of children being raped (The impact of HIV in Zambia, 2014:1).

she had to leave the house to seek solace elsewhere, she was told to return home since ‘marriage is not easy’. All she needed to do was to submit and obey her abusive husband. The other reason for being sent back to an abusive relationship was that she already had children with my dad, so leaving home would cause her children to suffer. There are many risks factors that are involved in gender-based violence; one of them includes the loss of life for the victim.³²

The United Nations Millennium Development Goals (We can end Poverty, Millennium Development Goals and Beyond 2015, 2014:1), in particular Goal 4 and Goal 5, which are about the reduction of child and mother mortality rates, demonstrate the continuous global challenges which women still encounter in the twenty-first century. Ellsberg (2006:325) remarked, “Violence against women has a devastating effect on women’s sexual and reproductive health, as well as the health of their children, and is rooted in gender inequality”. This implies that conquering gender violence against women is a key strategy for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (Ellsberg, 2006:325). Mtonga (2007:16) observed that the United Nations (UN) had already condemned violence against women through its declaration in 1993, which was endorsed by Zambia. On the other hand, Zambia is also a UN signatory on matters of gender-based violence. However, despite the global commitment Zambia as a country is still faced with an increasing number of cases of gender violence.

The main challenge for the church has been a lack of adequate readiness to address such issues of gender-based violence. One of the examples is a lack of extra rehabilitation facilities by the church to attend to victims who have been sexually or physically abused. Yerkes (2007) confirms this by indicating that such women are often isolated by friends, and even the clergy. With reference to some women who shared their experiences at my local congregation in Zambia, most of the marriage counselling sessions in which women reported cases of abuse or infidelity by their husbands had not been very helpful. Pastors have sometimes rushed into calling for reconciliation rather than addressing the physical abuse of the victim. This has resulted in a number of women dying of HIV/AIDs and physical injuries simply because no one addressed their physical well-being. Faith based organizations (FBO’s) need to be commended for creating a tolerant environment where victims of violence can be attended to both spiritually and physically. This includes the Church Health Association in Zambia

³² The negative impact of gender-based violence on women cannot be over-emphasized. Its effects on the victims often lead to spiritual, physical, emotional and economical vulnerability. The World Health Organization (WHO) defined the concept of ‘health’ as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (World Health Organization, 2003). Odia (2014) notes that the World Health Organization regarded violence against women as a major health issue. The definition by WHO may help create yet another lens of awareness when it comes to analysing the story of the adulterous woman in John’s Gospel.

(CHAZ), which is well known for its provision of health services to the country (Mutashala, 2007:10). CHAZ facilitates health service programmes, which often benefit churches that are open to learn and to implement such advice in their congregations (Mutashala, 2007:10). As Mutashala (2007:11) rightly affirmed, the church is not only called to preach the word of God to its members but also to tackle issues of health and their entire well-being. According to Mutashala (2007:2), over 35% of health care is offered by church organizations within an African context. This means that the more the church gets involved in providing health care services the lesser the current crisis will be since the government is simply not able to (and meant to) meet the needs of all people.

Therefore, the socio-cultural ordering of families, communities and the church in terms of gender expectations in the discussions above hold the potential of infiltrating gender stereotyping in various sectors of life such as schools, work places, and institutions (cf. chapter 3). Chilala (2006:9) might have been right to say that, “Every society has norms and social systems which to a large extent not only determine but also influence the behaviour of the people that are part of it, individually and collectively”. It is therefore the responsibility of the church to evaluate these values in terms of gender perceptions and women abuse, in order to make a positive impact on its members. The church is a privileged organization, which has people who belong to all sectors of life even at a national level. Therefore, a balanced teaching of the scriptures, which are both gender oppressive and liberating, is needed.

In Perspective five (cf. 4.4), Jesus ends the story in a life-giving way. This he did by employing some rhetorical strategies such as ‘silence’ and re-interpretation of the Law of Moses with regards to sin. At the end of a story the victim is set free from condemnation. Her dignity is then restored. She is given back her voice not only in her home but in public as well.

The two rhetorical strategies that of Jesus’ posed ‘silence’ and re-interpretation of the Law of Moses can be helpful in finding a way forward to address the challenges of gender violence in Zambia. The use of ‘silence’ by Jesus in the Johannine story can help the Zambian church in various ways. The posture of ‘silence’ used by Jesus as suggested in chapter 4 is one of the ways in which he thinks deeper over the issue at hand. Perhaps he was in consultation with his father in heaven before responding to the situation. In quietness it does not mean Jesus has failed or is too weak to respond. This is, therefore, an act of active silence and not a passive one. The Zambian church is challenged to give serious and adequate attention to the issue of gender violence before it speaks out. It requires a lot of brainstorming. I am therefore certain that the idea of the three, ‘church mother bodies’ strategizing over the matter of gender violence

is the way to go.³³ The voice of the church should always impact situations to produce change by bringing about hope and life where there is none. The ministry of Jesus Christ is a good example. In many hopeless situations, he brought hope to the victims. However, this can only be possible if the church remains in God's presence in terms of seeking his wisdom and guidance.

In silence, Jesus also identifies with the victim. The story indicates that the woman was robbed of her voice by virtue of being female, according to the cultural context at that time, which did not allow women to speak in public. It meant shame for a woman to speak in public but honour for a man. Men were not even supposed to speak to women in public, which would be a shameful act for them. What this could mean is that Jesus sacrificed his honour for the victim who is a woman. Herzog (2000:208) perceived Jesus' action of identifying with the people of a lower class or the marginalised in his time as one of ways of enabling God's restorative justice and his reign. The lesson for the church in this respect is that the church can only be relevant if it stands up for the marginalised by becoming their voices and at the same time empowering them to speak out.

The second rhetorical strategy is that of re-interpreting the Law of Moses. Although Jesus does not re-interpret the Law directly, he did so in an indirect way seen in the way the story ends, from a death sentence (as the Law permitted) to giving life. The sin of adultery is still pointed out as a sinful act when Jesus tells her to go and leave her life of sin upon being set free. The lesson from the Johannine story to the church in Zambia is that it is not for the church to condemn the humanness of victims of gender violence but instead they should be loved first before pointing out their wrong. It is also important that the church should be helped to have a broader understanding of sin. The idea of pointing out certain sins as the 'BIG SINS' should be discouraged at all cost. Most often the sin, which is perceived as sin in the church, is that of adultery and fornication. This kind of sin is not even treated in an equal way in terms of gender. A man who is suspected of committing adultery may not be punished if the woman he or she is going out with has not fallen pregnant. If a woman is found pregnant before marriage she will be suspended with immediate effect for a minimum period of six months. In this case, the sin of the man is more concealed than it is for the woman.

³³ Merry (2009:3) suggested that gender-based violence has to be analysed in a situated context so that its effects on the social context of gender performances is well understood in accordance with the various forms it takes in different contexts. This may be helpful for the Zambian Church in terms of understanding the different forms of gender violence and how to tackle them.

How then does the Johannine story help strengthen the church in fighting gender violence against women in line with the Bible as a moral document? In my opinion, the church needs to double-check its methods of biblical interpretation. In chapter 2, I argue that the main challenge in the Johannine story is not what the author projects when he says that the actions of the scribes and the Pharisees of condemning the woman was based on them wanting to trap Jesus in Jn 8:6. Instead, the issue at hand is that of the interpretation of Law of Moses, which the victim had gone against in their view. It is the issue of the Law, which has unfolded the story of my study. Therefore, the Zambian church is challenged through the Johannine story to allow Christ to transform socio-cultural values, which favour one gender against the other. This can be done through a balanced approach in reading biblical scriptures. A multi-dimensional approach has been adopted as an ideal method in this study. Nonetheless, this process can only be helpful if the church is willing to admit to its ways of reading scriptures which have not been life giving. The church should engage its faith community to discern the life giving ways of biblical interpretation. In addition, the church should also be ready to bring on board other stakeholders such as the government and non-governmental organisations.

5.4 Conclusion

In my final remarks on this section I would like to consider Verhey's (1986:6-33) depiction of the ethics of Jesus' ministry on earth. In his observation, a number of people understand Jesus' teachings as offering 'moral rules' for a new Law that commends appropriate conduct to the new covenant. In that regard, many interpret Jesus ethics as providing ideas or goals to be sought - and perhaps achieved - rather than rules to be obeyed (Verhey, 1986:6). In this regard, I view the Johannine story as a story that calls for a striking balance between ethics against injustices, which degrade human dignity. This is possible through seeking God's guidance by re-interpreting moral documents. In the case of the Zambian context, seeking God's guidance would mean a responsible approach to the interpretation of Scripture. This study proposes a multi-dimensional approach, which takes into account the world within the text (i.e. the literary aspect), the world behind the text (i.e. its historical background) and the world in front of the text (i.e. theological-rhetorical aspect).³⁴

³⁴The reason for this approach is that one cannot take for granted the capability of people in giving meaning to biblical texts. Upon discussing the literary usage of the Bible, Loughlin (1995:334) noted that a text is often given active meaning by people when read, unlike a text having an active meaning on its own. Here, Loughlin (1995:334) projected that the reader might even give the meaning, which is different from what was intended by the author of a given text. By this I appeal to the church in Zambia to take seriously the need for giving a guide to

In a broader description of the theology of John's Gospel, O'Day (1998:381) observes that despite the Gospels' common effort to bring the good news of Jesus' life story in response to the particular needs of the early faith community, each of them struggle to understand Jesus' identity and mission in their own unique way. Coetzee (1993:40, 41) further elaborates on Jesus' missional identity through a discussion on two profound elements which governed John's core message, namely: the portrayal of Jesus as both the Messiah and the Son of God, as well as John's challenge to his readers to come to the true faith. This seems to be the case with the Johannine story (of an adulterous woman), which we do not read about in any of the other Gospels. The bigger picture of Jesus' mission of salvation for all humans beyond gender divisions centres on his identity. This should help shape the mission of the Zambian church. Jesus demonstrates his mission of salvation to all humans by treating the adulterous woman in the Johannine story as equal to the scribes and the Pharisees, both socially and as a human being (O'Day, 1998:385).³⁵ This answers the question of how relevant the story of an adulterous woman is today despite the negatives attached to its legality in both John's Gospel and the New Testament canon. The bigger picture of this Johannine story is not the textual criticism or grammatical errors in it. Yes, these may be important aspects to reckon with, yet the story itself is about human dignity, which is at stake here. It is possible to extract from this story in John's Gospel but not from the realities of the victims themselves, which is evident in various forms of marginalization across the world, particularly in Zambia.

people on how to read gender sensitive biblical texts before they apply the meaning, which suits their cultural values.

³⁵Similarly, Kostenberger (2004:13) noted that in upholding the Gospel genre, John's narrative had focused on Jesus and his Messianic mission.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

6.1. Conclusion

My anticipation for this study was to research the ‘socio-cultural and gender perspectives in John 7:53-8:11,’ and thereafter, to do an exegetical reflection on the context of violence against women in Zambia. This was identified as a major challenge in Zambia, as well as across the globe. The Johannine text above was chosen as the main text of this study because Jesus’ actions in the given story seem to be contrary to the socio-cultural norms of his time, yet life giving in the way the story ended. My second reason for researching the Johannine story is that despite its originality and authenticity, as well as its position in John’s Gospel being doubted by many scholars, it is a text that many women who are victims of gender violence seem to identify with, particularly in Zambia.³⁶ In my hypothesis I pointed out that a one-sided literary approach is frequently used to interpret biblical scriptures, and is the main reason for perpetual gender violence both in the church, as well as community. Therefore, a multi-dimensional approach for reading biblical texts (with the following three steps, namely: literary, socio-cultural and historical) was adopted in this study as an ideal methodology to challenge the unethical reading of Scripture.

In this concluding chapter, I would like to reflect on whether the research expectations have been adequately met, or not? In my view, the study managed to bring forth the literary, social-cultural and gender perspectives of John 7:53-8:11 using the proposed methodology (as indicated in chapter 1.4). The two rhetorical strategies, Jesus’ posed silence and his re-interpretations of the Law of Moses were identified as life giving, enabling the restoration of

³⁶ Four research questions were noted in view of the possible interpretation of John 7:53-8:11, which include the following:

1. Does the textual dynamic of John 7:53-8:11, and particularly Jesus’ role, hold the potential to respond constructively to the abovementioned problems of gender violence in Zambia in the 21st century? And how could this dynamic be accessed and analyzed?
2. How did the probable socio-cultural and historical worldview in terms of moral values look like from which this text originated, particularly with regards to power relations?
3. What is the perspective of John 7:53-8:11 on the inherited traditions and societal values referred to in the previous question? And what was the implied rhetorical function of this narrative? From where to where did John wish to persuade his audience in telling such a story?
4. Finally, how could the Johannine story be applied in a context such as Zambia today? Can this story be life-giving to both the victims of gender violence and the church in Zambia, considering the ways in which Jesus handled the situation?

the human dignity of a condemned woman accused of committing adultery. Through these rhetorical strategies Jesus challenged the socio-cultural and gender values of his implied audience which seems to have advantaged men over women, leading to what may be perceived as gender inequality.

Thus, does this study address gender-based violence in the Zambian context as anticipated? My answer would categorically be ‘yes, it does,’ particularly when reflecting on the outcomes of chapters 2 to 4, as discussed in chapter 5. Despite the two contexts - the Johannine and Zambian context - being far removed from one another, both geographically and in terms of time, the commonly shared perception of women as the ‘other’ facilitated by existing socio-cultural systems and gender values hold the potential to perpetuate gender violence.

6.2. Recommendation

Zambian churches are encouraged to embark on (more) life-giving ways of interpreting the Bible by adopting a multi-dimensional exegetical approach, which takes into account the literary, socio-cultural and historical, as well as theological-rhetorical dimensions of biblical texts.

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