

Men in the pulpit, Women in the pew?

Addressing gender inequality in Africa

EDITORS

H Jurgens Hendriks

Elna Mouton

Len Hansen

Elisabet le Roux

EFSA

INSTITUTE FOR THEOLOGICAL &
INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH

MEN IN THE PULPIT WOMEN IN THE PEW?

Addressing gender inequality in Africa

EDITORS

H Jurgens Hendriks

Elna Mouton

Len Hansen

Elisabet le Roux

Series Editor

Renier Koegelenberg

First edition

June 2012



SUN PRESS



Men in the pulpit, Women in the pew? Addressing gender inequality in Africa

Copyright © 2012 EFSA or individual authors

All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any electronic, photographic or mechanical means, including photocopying and recording on record, tape or laser disk, on microfilm, via the Internet, by e-mail, or by any other information storage and retrieval system, without prior written permission by the publisher.

Views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher.

First edition 2012

ISBN 978-1-920338-77-0 (Print)

ISBN 978-1-920338-78-7 (PDF)

Set in 9.5/13 Schneidler BT

Cover concept: Nico Simpson/claripics.com

Cover art: Out of the Blue Creative Communication Solutions

Typesetting: Johannes Richter

SUN PRESS is an imprint of SUN MeDIA Stellenbosch. Academic, professional and reference works are published under this imprint in print and electronic format. This publication may be ordered directly from www.sun-e-shop.co.za.

Printed and bound by SUN MeDIA Stellenbosch, Ryneveld Street, Stellenbosch, 7600.

www.africansunmedia.co.za

www.sun-e-shop.co.za

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

EFSA gratefully acknowledges the following institutions for their sponsorship of the conference and this publication:

- Die Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD)
- Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst (EED)



EFS A

INSTITUTE FOR THEOLOGICAL &
INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH

Ecumenical Foundation of Southern Africa (EFS A)

The EFS A Institute, founded in 1990, is an independent ecumenical institute that functions as a division of the non-profitable “Cape Development and Dialogue Centre Trust”. It consists of a unique network of participating institutions: representatives of the Faculties of Theology and the Departments of Religious Studies of the Universities of the Western Cape (UWC), Cape Town (UCT) and Stellenbosch (US), as well as of the South African Council of Churches Western Cape (SACCWC), are represented on the Board and Executive of the EFS A Institute.

Generally speaking, the EFS A Institute attempts to promote consensus between different sectors, interest groups and stakeholders on the challenges and problems facing our society. It strives to play a facilitating role by providing a platform for public debate, even of controversial issues.

Both in its structure and function there is a dialectic tension between an academic (research-based) approach and the need to address specific needs of the church and other religious communities. This tension is embedded in the main issues facing the churches in our society. In a general sense the EFS A Institute tries to focus public attention (and the attention of the church or academic institutions) on specific problems in society.

Currently, the focus is on the following priorities.

Firstly, the *development role of the church* and other religious communities: the eradication of poverty in South Africa; the role of religious networks in community development, in social and welfare services; and the development of community and youth leadership.

Secondly, the *healing and reconciliatory role of the church* and other religious communities: this includes a project on the role of women in the healing of our violent society; the mobilisation of the church and religious communities against crime and violence; and the breaking down of stereotypes (racism) in our society.

Thirdly, the *formation of values in the strengthening of a moral society by the church* and other religious communities: the promotion of moral values such as honesty; support for the weak; respect for life and human rights.

Fourthly, the *development of youth and community leadership*: special courses for the development of leadership skills among our youth have been developed and are presented to support the building of a new society.

It is also significant that the EFS A Institute acts as Secretariat to the National Religious Association for Social Development (NRASD), which is a Principal Recipient of the South African 2009 grant of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

These priorities cannot be separated from one another, since many of the complex social issues are interrelated.

Dr Renier A Koegelenberg

Executive Director

Executive Chairperson, Prof. H. Russel Botman

Executive Director, Dr Renier A. Koegelenberg

Postal address: P.O. Box 3103, Matieland, Stellenbosch,
7602, South Africa

Office of the Executive Director

Phone: +27 (0)21 880-1734

Fax: +27 (0)21 880-1735

Mobile: +27 (0)83 625-1047

E-mail: efsa@iafrica.com

Website: <http://www.efsa-institute.org.za>

TABLE OF CONTENTS



	Abbreviations	9
	Tables	10
	Foreword	11
Chapter 1	Introduction. A journey	13
	<i>Jurgens Hendriks</i>	
PART I THE CONTEXT AND ITS CHALLENGES		
Chapter 2	Churches, seminaries and gender statistics	25
	<i>Jurgens Hendriks</i>	
Chapter 3	HIV&AIDS, curricula and gender realities	33
	<i>Jurgens Hendriks</i>	
Chapter 4	Why sexual violence? The social reality of an absent church	49
	<i>Elisabet le Roux</i>	
Chapter 5	Widowhood. A story of pain, a need for healing	61
	<i>Gertrude Kapuma</i>	
Chapter 6	Religion and masculinities in Africa. Their impact on HIV infection and gender-based violence	71
	<i>Ezra Chitando</i>	
PART II THE BIBLE AND GENDER		
Chapter 7	Inspired and gendered. The hermeneutical challenge of teaching gender in Kenya	85
	<i>Hazel Ayanga</i>	
Chapter 8	Combating gender-based violence. The Bible's teaching on gender complementarity	93
	<i>Simon Gillham</i>	
Chapter 9	The Bible, gender equality and teaching theology in Malawi	105
	<i>Chimwemwe Harawa-Katumbi</i>	
Chapter 10	Reading a pastoral 'text of terror' in Africa today? 1 Timothy 2:8-15 as a context-specific appropriation of the creation story	115
	<i>Elna Mouton</i>	

PART III TEACHING GENDER

Chapter 11	Considerations for teaching gender in theological seminaries	131
	<i>Florence Matsveru</i>	
Chapter 12	Teaching gender at Stellenbosch University	147
	<i>Juliana Claassens</i>	
Chapter 13	Gender transformation and leadership: on teaching gender in Shona culture	159
	<i>Ester Rutoro</i>	
Chapter 14	Teaching gender and theology in the Reformed Institute for Theological Training (RITT) in Eldoret, Kenya	171
	<i>Dorcas Chebet and Beatrice Cherop</i>	
Chapter 15	From the pew to the pulpit. Engendering the pulpit through teaching “African Women’s Theologies”	183
	<i>Esther Mombo and Heleen Joziassse</i>	
	Further Reading	195
	Index	199

ABBREVIATIONS

ABC	African Bible College (Lilongwe, Malawi)
AIDS	Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome. A disease of the human immune system that is caused by infection with HIV that is characterised cytologically especially by severe reduction in the numbers of helper T cells. It is commonly transmitted in blood and bodily secretions (such as semen), and renders the subject highly vulnerable to life-threatening conditions (as <i>Pneumocystis carinii</i> pneumonia) and to some that become life-threatening (such as Kaposi's sarcoma). ¹
AWT	African Women's Theologies
BRT	Bloom's revised taxonomy
CCAP	Church of Central Africa Presbyterian
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women
DRC	Dutch Reformed Church (South Africa)
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
GBV	Gender-based violence
Hefsiba	Hefsiba Christian Institute for Higher Education (Vila Ulongue, Mozambique)
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus. (A group of retroviruses and especially HIV-1 that infect and destroy helper T cells of the immune system, causing a marked reduction in their numbers that is diagnostic of AIDS). ²
IERA	Igreja Evangelica Reformada de Angola
IRM	Igreja Reformada em Mozambique (The Reformed Church in Mozambique)
ISEU	Instituto Superior Emanuel Unido (Huambo, Angola)
ISTEL	Instituto Superior de Teologia Evangelica no Lubango (Lubango, Angola)
JMTI	Josophat Mwale Theological Institute (Nkhoma, Malawi)
JMTUC	Justo Mwale Theological University College (Lusaka, Zambia)
MThC	Murray Theological College (Masvingo, Zimbabwe)
NetACT	Network for African Congregational Theology
NETS	Namibia Evangelical Theological Seminary (Windhoek, Namibia)
NIV	New International Version
NKST	Nongo Kristy Sundan Tiv (The Reformed Church among the Tiv in Nigeria)
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
PLWHA	People living with HIV&AIDS
RCEA	Reformed Church in East Africa (Kenya)
RCZ	Reformed Church in Zimbabwe
RITT	Reformed Institute for Theological Training (Eldoret, Kenia)
RTS	Reformed Theological Seminary (Mkar, Nigeria)
STI	Sexual transmitted infection
SU	Stellenbosch University (Stellenbosch, South Africa)
SV	Sexual violence
SVAW	Sexual violence against women
UN	United Nations
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women (from the French <i>Fonds de développement des Nations unies pour la femme</i>)
ZTC	Zomba Theological College (Zomba, Malawi)

¹ Based on *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. 10th ed. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 1996, c1993.

² Based on *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. 10th ed. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 1996, c1993.

TABLES

Table 1	Gender and Church Offices	28
Table 2	Men and Women Serving as Pastors	29
Table 3	Full-Time and Part-Time Lecturers	30
Table 4	Staff Qualifications	31
Table 5	Number of Students	32
Table 6	Implementation of the NetACT HIV&AIDS Curriculum	40
Table 7	HIV&AIDS Programmes and Credits	41
Table 8	Effectiveness of Curriculum	42
Table 9	HIV-positive Students in Seminaries	43
Table 10	The Impact of HIV&AIDS on Seminaries	44
Table 11	Most Affected: Women or Men?	45
Table 12	About Faithfulness and Poverty	46
Table 13	Women's Experience of Gender Bias (Or Not)	48
Table 14	Different Versions on 1 Corinthians 14:33-34	136
Table 15	Mayers's Matrix	140
Table 16	Structure of the Knowledge Dimension of BRT	142
Table 17	Structure of the Cognitive Process Dimension of BRT	142
Table 18	Taxonomy table	143
Table 19	NETS's taxonomy	144
Table 20	Example of Taxonomy for Gender Studies	145

FOREWORD

That EFSA Institute has supported research focusing on gender, culture and the interpretation of the Bible over several years, since these factors directly affect human dignity and human behaviour. In the case of the HIV and AIDS pandemic in Africa, it has been proved empirically that gender inequality is one of the key factors why it is so difficult to change high-risk sexual behaviour – especially in contexts where unequal power relations make women more vulnerable than men.

This publication is a contribution towards the reflection and debate in Africa on gender inequality, and on the role of women and men in our churches, in our society. Prof. Elna Mouton highlights in her contribution that “not only [have] the human dignity and prophetic contribution of women not always been acknowledged, [but] the essence of the Christian gospel is at stake...”

Renier Koegelenberg
Executive Director: EFSA

In the South African film *Sarafina* the supporting actor to the main actor, Miss Masambuka, exclaims at one point, “I cannot sit down and wait for others to die for me. I too must join in the fight for our freedom.” Similarly, we at NetACT cannot wait, but have to join others worldwide in the struggle to make the world a better place for everyone. The theologian Letty Russell speaks of such a world as place where men and women work as participants in a common journey to discover the meaning of life and ministry in Christ. This is what she calls a paradigm shift from one of authority over community to authority in community.

This book is a product of hard work from the women and men, from the institutions that make up NetACT or associate with us. These women and men have not only done work on this book. Other work ranges from workshops on HIV&AIDS to curriculum development and gender equality. NetACT’s quest is for a contextual and holistic theological education that truly wrestles with the issues we are confronted with in Africa.

We are grateful to EFSA for carrying all the publication costs of this book as well as to the other institutions that helped us to hold these workshops: PCUSA, CRWM, GZB and the FONDATION POUR L’AIDE AU PROTESTANTISME REFORME.

Rev. Dr J.A. Thipa (MA, DTh)
Chairperson: NetACT

Chapter 1

Introduction

A journey

*H. Jurgens Hendriks*¹



A church without a roof

In many African countries one finds the local market by following cyclists whose bicycles are loaded with bulking bags of charcoal. Big cities such as Lusaka have a charcoal market that is supplied by people on bicycles or pickups stacked with charcoal bags. The Garden congregation of the Reformed Church in Zambia (RCZ) has little green left, since black charcoal dust permeates everything. “Charcoal market congregation” would actually be a more fitting description. Large areas of this congregation consist of informal housing.

The RCZ Garden congregation’s church premise is in a compound with a rectangular street plan. A two-metre wall surrounds it. Huge iron gates with a peephole allow buses to enter. It has adequate parking, a borehole, a manse, the necessary toilets and a church building. The roof was quite dilapidated. The church board was aware of the story in Luke 13:4 about the tower in Siloam that came down and killed 18 people and therefore, as a precautionary measure, removed the roof. When we visited the church only a small section still had a roof over it. The congregation added sections when money was available to buy steel girders and corrugated iron roofing.

On a cool day under a clear sky the local pastor, Rev. Morris Mwale introduces Esther Kajombo, who explained the “Circles of Hope” concept to an audience of about 80 people. She introduced herself by telling how her parents gave her (“sold” may be a better description) as a 14-year-old from a rural village to a rich old man as his second wife. The next ten years of her life were a horrifying ordeal. Eventually she was tested HIV positive when she developed AIDS. Through the grace of God she was one of the lucky ones who was able to get ARVs. Her mother’s faith and Esther’s conversion to Jesus Christ paved the way to a ministry in the RCZ, where she is doing remarkable work.²

¹ Jurgens Hendriks is Professor Emeritus in Practical Theology and Missiology at Stellenbosch University, South Africa. He is a founding member of NetACT and serves as the network’s Executive Director. E-mail: hjh@sun.ac.za

² Japhet Ndhlovu’s doctoral dissertation tells the story of the “Circles of Hope” and the enormous role that the church in Zambia played to develop a unified strategy to deal with AIDS. Esther eventually worked with the Christian Council of Zambia, where Dr Ndhlovu was the General Secretary. Ndhlovu, Japhet. 2008. *Combating HIV: A Ministerial Strategy for Zambian Churches*. Unpublished doctoral Dissertation, Stellenbosch University. Online at: <http://scholar.sun.ac.za/handle/10019.1/5492> [Accessed: February 6, 2012].

The people whom met in the church were divided in seven small groups. On the church walls signs indicated where the choirs were seated. The groups were “posted” to their positions using these signs. The most frequent notice painted on the walls was the request to put cell phones on silent. In this part of the world a cell phone was something to live and die for, more important than an identity document.

Justo Mwale Theological College, a founding member institution of NetACT, was hosting a conference³ called Mission to Western Culture. Dr D.T. Banda, the principal, and Rev. Moses Mwale, the moderator of the Reformed Church of Zambia were our guides. The visitors were the leadership in the Missional Church movement brought together by NetACT and the Allelon group led by Alan Roxburgh.⁴ There were representatives from each continent. The local people were those whom Rev. Mwale and Esther had invited, all being members of “Circles of Hope,” all HIV positive. About 30 plus of the 40 local people were women.

All we did was to listen to one another’s stories. Lunch was served in the vestry. The verse from Luke 10, “eat what is set before you”, was applied and we all enjoyed a local meal, conscious of the fact that merely having a meal was a privilege. I asked the pastor about the bags with corn flour and beans in the vestry. It turned out that the congregation with its 540 members in this low-income area was helping about 150 families to survive. In most cases these families were unemployed HIV-infected people. Repairing a roof was not a priority.

We were seated in circles. Suddenly the devastating trail of pain and suffering left by the pandemic was recounted by someone you could see and hear in front of you. When the worst and most degrading details were told, the simple act of holding someone’s hand was comforting to narrator and listener.

There were five women in the small group of which I was part. After the meeting I took them home by car.

Several impressions remain with me from that journey. There was no real road. We simply followed the path around large rocks, trees and even houses that were built in the middle of what seemed to be the road. Taxis drop people where the official road ends. This was indeed an informal housing area. Luckily the visit did not take place in the rainy season. The bad-smelling heaps of uncollected waste, typical of all squatter camps, reminded me of the inequalities in life and the harsh reality of living here.

However, around each house the ground was regularly swept and the premises kept clean. Children were everywhere, running, playing, shouting. The paths were full of people. At strategic points vendors were selling their goods. Sites near the communal water points were popular. Notwithstanding the sand and dust, the vendor sites were clean and neat. Among the merchandise were supermarket bags filled with charcoal alongside cooking oil, bananas, soap, batteries, freshly baked buns, candles – the essential

³ The occasion was Allelon International’s “Mission to Western Culture” project meeting in Lusaka, Zambia 3-8 August 2008. The topic of the conference was “Missional Churches in Dialogue: Discerning Missional Calling in Mutuality”.

⁴ For more information on Allelon and the Missional church movement, see online at: <http://allelon.org/> [Accessed: February 9, 2012].

stuff the people need. Entrepreneurial cell-phone shops are everywhere! It seemed like a happy community.

We arrived at someone's house and were invited in. A house tells a story. All the houses were small, neat and tidy, very full and radiating warmth. The hoard of inquisitive children was ordered to stay outside. Photos and memorabilia were shown and related to what was told in the church. I asked to be introduced to the children. This was special to them. I then prayed for the children and their mother, asking God's blessings on the house. This was a solemn ritual at every house. While visiting a house, the remaining women waited quietly in the car. To be taken by car to your house by a pastor was a way of having your human dignity acknowledged. Being listened to and prayed for obviously meant a great deal to them. The whole neighbourhood came out, waved, smiled, watched – and somehow, though this may sound pretentious, was blessed. Someone cared.

Nolipher was a cashier and then an accountant in a commercial bank. She was well educated, but when she became infected with HIV&AIDS, she lost her job and her husband left her with their children. Esther helped her to get to a hospital and to get ARVs. She survived. Regaining one's health is a long road; physically, psychologically and spiritually. Being HIV positive and contracting AIDS is like falling from grace. Unemployed, without a husband and left with the responsibility of caring for the children, women bear a terrible burden. But with the support of the faith community and her Circle's meetings, Nolipher was on the road to rebuilding her life. She showed me her sewing machine and the clothes she makes to earn a living. She was an educated and very capable woman. This was the case with every one of the women whom I took home.

At each home I enquired about the children and took photos. There was not a single house without orphans who were taken in and cared for. The church building might not have had a roof, but the faith community was providing a safe haven and roof for the destitute. The charcoal congregation was indeed a garden in its very own way.

Three streams

Three events led to the formation of the Network for African Congregational Theology. NetACT's vision and mission put the quest for gender equality on the cards, even though this was not thus formulated at the very beginning of the network's activities.

The first stream of NetACT's origins was an "African Safari" in 1997, when three staff members of Stellenbosch University and one from the University of the Western Cape visited 37 theological schools in Namibia, Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Zambia. Ever since the establishment of South Africa's first democratic dispensation in 1994, these institutions were receiving postgraduate students from the churches founded by the mission work of the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa. Others soon joined. The aim of the safari was to get to know the theological schools to our North in a more personal way, to strengthen ties, to further ecumenical cooperation, to give some oral exams to those students who were studying through Stellenbosch University, and to put an important question to the 37 theological schools: What are the main challenges and

problems that theology and theological institutions face in our sub-continent? We were personally changed by this visit and so were our institutions.⁵

The source of the second stream, also in 1997, was in Amsterdam in the Netherlands, when the International Society for the Study of Reformed Communities met at the Free University for their triennial meeting. The Society studied the influence of secularisation on Reformed communities and a pretty negative scenario unfolded. The writer and our colleague, Prof. Russel Botman, represented the Reformed Church in South Africa and told the conference that the Society's research gave a pretty one-sided picture. We then explained what was happening in southern Africa. We challenged them to listen to other voices than just those from the West. The outcome was that the next meeting was held in Stellenbosch, South Africa in 2000. Ten of the 19 papers were from sub-Saharan Africa, that is from the countries visited during the 1997 Safari. They were presented by people we met on that Safari. This meeting between "North and South" left nobody untouched and eventually turned out to be much more than a typical scientific research-based event.⁶ A lot of trust was built between the southern African contingent during the three years in which we worked on our papers and presented them. Our papers had a remarkable impact on the academics of Europe and North America. This meant a lot to all of us.

The third stream of our origins came from Karin, Nairobi, Kenya 2-5 February 2000.⁷ A consultation was organised by the Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa (ACTEA)⁸ and the Nairobi Evangelical School of Theology (NEGST).⁹ It was attended by 350 delegates from all parts of Africa and dealt with seminaries as theological institutions of higher education and their relationship with the church. "Serving the church: partnership in Africa" was the theme, and Prof. Tite Tienou, the previous president and dean of the Faculty of Theology in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, and currently professor in Missiology at the Trinity International University, Deerfield, Illinois, was the main speaker. The challenges, shortcomings and tensions in theological education in Africa were debated. The emphasis was on the importance of the church's financial support of seminaries and on the responsibility of seminaries to cooperate with the church in training future ministers.

⁵ The Stellenbosch Theological Library has a 37-page report: Conradie, Ernst, Jurgens Hendriks, Daniël Louw and Martin Pauw. 1997. Verslag van die Afrika-navorsingstoer van die Universiteit van Stellenbosch: Fakulteit Teologie en die Universiteit van Wes-Kaapland: Fakulteit van Godsdiens en Teologie. 4 Junie-1 Julie 1997 (Report of the Africa research safari of Stellenbosch University: Faculty of Theology and the University of the Western Cape: Faculty of Religion and Theology. 4 June-1 July 1997).

⁶ Hendriks, H. Jurgens, Donald A. Luidens, Roger J. Nemeth, Corwin E. Smidt and Hijme C. Stoffels (eds.). 2001. *Reformed Encounters with Modernity: Perspectives from Three Continents*. Cape Town: Nasionale Pers.

⁷ For a more detailed report, see: Hendriks, H. Jurgens. 2006. Multiplying Resources and Research in Africa – The NetACT Story. *Dutch Reformed Theological Journal* 47(3/4):489-505. Also available online at: <http://academic.sun.ac.za/theology/netact/story2006.pdf> [Accessed: February 6, 2012].

⁸ ACTEA. See online at: <http://www.theoleafrica.org/ACTEA> [Accessed: February 9, 2012].

⁹ NEGST subsequently became the Africa International University – see online at: <http://www.africainternational.edu/> [Accessed: February 9, 2012].

In this atmosphere the representatives of Justo Mwale Theological College (Lusaka, Zambia), Zomba Theological College (Malawi), the Reformed Institute for Theological Training and Stellenbosch University met and decided to form NetACT. The following institutions were not present, but indicated their willingness to be part of such a network: Murray Theological College (Zimbabwe), Nifcott (Malawi) and Hefsiba (Mozambique).¹⁰ The very first objective was to work together to produce theological textbooks and to commence by writing *Studying congregations in Africa*.¹¹ The emphasis on “congregational theology” should be understood in the light of the conference’s theme and with the conviction that nothing will change in Africa if change does not start on a congregational level.

NetACT’s second meeting was in Lusaka, 18-25 April 2001. We put our dream in writing in the form of a mission, goals and a constitution, and we started working on our first book. The NetACT website has all the minutes and reports of this and subsequent meetings as well as the network’s mission, goals and constitution.¹²

What makes it work?

The NetACT story highlights several principles that explain what makes such projects work. Adhering to and understanding these principles will be important to the Gender Equality project.

The first of these undoubtedly is leadership and commitment. From 2001 to 2011 we had two chairpersons, Dr Amon Kasambala and Dr Devison Banda. Both were from Justo Mwale Theological University College (JMTUC), an anchor institution that was committed to the goals we set. Stellenbosch University provided the necessary administrative infrastructure and the Executive Director, the writer of this introduction, kept the flow of communication alive. However, one can only fully realise the level of commitment if the names of the board members and staff members of the NetACT institutions themselves are scrutinised and one discovers how many staff members of these institutions undertook postgraduate studies and received doctoral degrees dealing with the very issues outlined in NetACT’s goals. A movement got underway as leaders were intellectually empowered through studies and research to dream and to envisage a Reformed church and society informed by a sense of mission. In this quest we are still lacking the indispensable input that only women can contribute.

The second principle is that of trust. In the beginning there was something like layers of trust. On the upper level everyone was friendly with typically African sense of hospitality, but on deeper levels there clearly was a “wait and see” attitude. Stellenbosch University with its apartheid legacy and many resources seemed an unequal partner that was not so much distrusted as “put on hold.” We were fortunate that this “elephant in the room” was spoken about and addressed by name ever since the second meeting in Lusaka (2001). Honest communication helped. Trust can only be built over time

¹⁰ NetACT: Minutes of the Constituting Meeting of NetACT, 2000. Online at: <http://academic.sun.ac.za/theology/netact.html> [Accessed: February 6, 2012].

¹¹ Hendriks, H. Jurgens. 2004. *Studying Congregations in Africa*. Wellington: Lux-Verbi-BM.

¹² <http://academic.sun.ac.za/theology/netact.html>

and through the development of deep and personal relationships. The HIV&AIDS programme that Christo and Liezl Greyling presented to the whole Board and local church leaders in Lilongwe, Malawi in 2002 was a deep spiritual experience that brought us together in a remarkable way. The testimony of a local CCAP pastor dying of AIDS forced us to realise the reality of what we are dealing with. It was the first time that a local pastor shared his status and the terrible journey of pain and spiritual suffering that he experienced. In the long run it was clear that all the institutions were benefiting and that Stellenbosch University really did put its money where its mouth is. Personal friendship, knowing one another's families and homes, working together on various projects, are the indispensable prerequisites for building trust.

The third point may not be a "principle" in the strict sense of the word. By God's grace we were put in touch with the Hartgerink family in the USA and especially Dr Ron Hartgerink, a chemical engineer, whose father founded the Elmer E Hartgerink Trust. This Trust "paid our expenses" until 2006 and Dr Hartgerink with his business background as well as his knowledge of theological institutions (he was president of the Board of Western Theological Seminary in Michigan, USA) played an indispensable leadership role in establishing the network. So did people such as the well-known Dutch professor of the sociology of religion, Gerard Dekker. With Prof. Martin Pauw, missiologist from South Africa, they and others acted like father figures to get us on track. From 2006 we were challenged to be financially "independent." Thus the NetACT institutions established a network of funding agencies or partners that believed in us and funded our endeavours. With our proven track record, this transition was less painful than we had envisaged – it actually led to expanding the network with associate members that wanted to join us in pursuing the goals we set.

The fourth principle is a confession. The NetACT Board and the institutions they represented shared a vocation. One "discovers" vocation in strange places! I can remember drinking Kenyan tea at Karen, Nairobi in April 2000 in deep conversation with the fellow pastors from the theological schools that later constituted NetACT. At one point our conversation stopped because we were all sharing the same ideas. We were looking at one another, surprised by our mutual conviction about the importance of local congregational leadership shared by men and women and the youth. That was the birth of a movement. For us it was a vocation, similar to Luther's 95 theses nailed to the door of the church in Wittenberg in 1517. We were invited by the triune God on a missional journey to be a missional church in Africa.

From HIV&AIDS programmes and curriculum development to gender equality

Focusing on gender was the result of a journey in discernment. When the network met in Lusaka in April 2001 to write its mission, vision and constitution, the topic most discussed was that of HIV&AIDS.¹³ A typical remark was "If we want to address the

¹³ NetACT Minutes 18-25 April 2001. The minutes of all the NetACT meetings to 9 February 2012 can be downloaded from <http://academic.sun.ac.za/theology/netact.html>.

issue of HIV&AIDS effectively and faithfully, we will have to move from denial to truth-telling.”¹⁴ The network’s first formulation of its identity read:¹⁵

NetACT is the Network for African Congregational Theology, a network of theological institutions in the Presbyterian and Reformed tradition in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Congregational Theology is theology as practised in the Christian Congregation as the body of Christ, discerning the will of God in the process of interpreting the Scriptures and its own specific context, empowering the Congregation to address its multiple problems, challenges and sufferings, in Sub-Saharan Africa manifest in the pandemic of HIV&AIDS, abuse of power, corruption and economic injustice (among others).

NetACT aims at assisting the participating institutions to develop congregational theology and leadership. It seeks to achieve this aim through:

- contextually relevant training of congregational leadership
- upgrading of academic standards and institutional capacity building
- developing research programmes at the participating institutions
- developing continuous education programmes
- lecturer exchange between its participating institutions
- conferences and publications in the field of theology in Africa
- addressing the HIV&AIDS problem, especially by providing the theological, moral and spiritual undergirding to curb this pandemic.

Before the next NetACT meeting in Lilongwe, Malawi, 5-9 August 2002, the HIV&AIDS programme got underway with Rev. Christo Greyling¹⁶ visiting the seminaries in Zimbabwe and Zambia in preparation for conducting their first HIV&AIDS programmes. A programme was developed and then taught at these schools. At the Board meeting in Malawi Greyling and his wife presented the programme to the Board and senior CCAP pastors. It was a remarkable event. At first we were quite perplexed because we were not used to talking about sex, condoms and all there is to address in this “new world.” The testimony of a local CCAP pastor, dying of AIDS, touched us in a way that is difficult to put into words. Not even the fact that Greyling’s research at two seminaries disclosed that between 60% and 70% of the male theology students were sexually active shocked us as much as the story of our brother. Dr Kasambala’s leadership through these events really brought us together. The board then became a team. We visited a prayer house in the Nkhoma congregation, where we found 200 plus orphans who were taken care of

¹⁴ NetACT Minutes 2000, 11.

¹⁵ NetACT Minutes 2000, 18-19.

¹⁶ Read the remarkable testimony and story of Christo Greyling online at: <http://www.redribbon.co.za/living-openly-profile.php?show=mymenu2&profileID=Christo-Greyling>. Greyling is a senior World Vision employee dealing with HIV&AIDS; cf. <http://www.worldvision.org/content.nsf/about/press-development-aids> [February 9, 2012].

by older people in that specific ward. Ever since these experiences, the fight against the AIDS pandemic was no longer an academic pursuit but something very real.¹⁷

At all the NetACT institutions people were identified and trained to present such programmes. The bad news was that all our trained facilitators were given better-paid jobs by governments or NGOs. The minutes of the subsequent NetACT Board meetings as well as the Administrative Reports that were tabled at these meetings tell the story than can best be described as a journey in discernment. A second module was developed and a book, *Our church has AIDS. Preaching about HIV & AIDS in Africa today*,¹⁸ was published.

At the 2006 Board meeting in Windhoek Rev. Janet Guyer,¹⁹ regional AIDS consultant for Southern Africa for the Presbyterian Church (USA) facilitated the discussion, which led to a number of decisions being taken. Amongst other things, it became clear that we had to concentrate on curriculum development. The problem was that a “once-off” module on HIV&AIDS, often presented by par-time lecturers, does not lead to a change in attitudes and deeply ingrained cultural assumptions. We realised that our curricula were not contextualised and as such did not address the issue holistically. As long as AIDS was seen as being “someone else’s responsibility to teach” and addressed by a specific module, deep cultural transformation would not take place. During the period 2006 to 2009 a new module was developed and the above-mentioned book was completed and published.²⁰

The 2009 Board meeting coincided with the 150th anniversary celebrations of the Theological School at Stellenbosch. A three-day workshop on curriculum development was held for Old and New Testament lecturers as well as for lecturers teaching HIV&AIDS modules. Those attending testified that this interactive workshop was probably the most constructive one that NetACT had ever run. It was during this workshop that Prof. Elna Mouton tabled the following motion, which was unanimously accepted:²¹

Gender equality: Every institution to write a 10-12 page article about Gender Equality in its context. This should include consultation of women voices. Check existing research. To be ready for agenda of 2010 AGM.

Between 2009 and 2012 two initiatives gained considerable momentum. The NetACT institutions realised the value of curriculum development. The Namibian Evangelical Theological Seminary (NETS) and Murray Theological College (MThC) took the lead and literally revised every aspect related to curriculum in a process that involved staff and board members. NETS was subsequently the first Namibian tertiary institution to

¹⁷ This led one of the local lecturers, Janet Brown, doing her doctoral degree on AIDS issues: Brown, Janet L. 2004. *HIV/AIDS Alienation: Between Prejudice and Acceptance*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Stellenbosch University. Online at <http://scholar.sun.ac.za/handle/10019.1/5491> [Accessed: March 16, 2012].

¹⁸ Mash, Rachel, Johan Cilliers, Keith Griffiths, Edith Chemorion and Archwells Katani (eds.). 2009. *Our Church has AIDS. Preaching about HIV&AIDS in Africa Today*. Stellenbosch: NetACT. Copies are available from NetACT.

¹⁹ On Janet Guyer see online at: <http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/missionconnections/guyer-janet/> [Accessed: February 9, 2012]. NetACT Minutes 2006, 10-11.

²⁰ Read the HIV&AIDS report in the NetACT Administrative Report 2009, 19-20.

²¹ NetACT Minutes 2009, 8.

receive national accreditation from the country's National Qualifications Agency. This inspired the rest of the NetACT family and Rev. Kruger du Preez, who was requested by NetACT to do a doctoral dissertation on the status of curriculum development in the network, to hold workshops in Kenya, Malawi, Angola and Nigeria, where all NetACT seminaries attended as well as others who requested to participate.

At these meetings it became clear that the request by the 2009 Board to deal with gender equality was a wise decision. Because of the curriculum workshops we did not have the capacity or money to start addressing this challenge in 2010. It also needed more planning and budgeting. It was at this stage that Stellenbosch University's HOPE in AFRICA initiative²² asked to participate in our venture and financed our 2011 meeting. Several partners came forward to support this venture.

This section of the introduction has outlined our journey in discernment, highlighting the relationship between HIV&AIDS, the development of a holistic curriculum to address the AIDS issue and the importance of addressing gender equality. Very little in the African AIDS scenario will change if gender equality is not attained. The 2011 and 2012 meetings of the NetACT Board were gender equality workshops, where the principals and/or board members of the NetACT institutions attend with a woman staff member or church member. The goal of this exercise is to intellectually and theologically empower at least one woman from each constituency to be the standard bearer in that church and seminary with regard to gender issues. For this we have the wholehearted support of the principals and board members who will see to it that they receive the necessary backing to pursue their research and writing.

On the equator

We were driving in a Toyota Hi-Ace mini-van from Limuru near Nairobi, Kenya, to Eldoret in the Kenyan highlands, enjoying the scenery of the Rift Valley. Along the way we passed the camps where displaced people were given shelter after the ethnic violence following Kenya's last election. It was a sad and moving sight, the rows and rows of tents, and seemingly irresolute people sitting around doing nothing, while small children played soccer with a ball made from plastic bags.

As we crossed the equator, I asked the group of male Kenyan pastors if we could stop to take a photo of the billboard that marks the symbolic boundary line between North and South. I looked around at the rich and fertile land and noticed a woman who was weeding a crop of maize with a pick-axe. It was hard work. Suddenly a cell phone rang. She put the pick-axe down and from her apron produced the phone. While stretching her back, one arm in the air, the other holding the phone to her ear, she laughed out loud, greeted her conversation partner in a clear, warm welcoming voice and talked away with gusto, her free arm waving around to form part of the conversation.

This is Africa, our continent. We are to cross several boundaries on a journey where we believe God wants to guide us to be a missional church.

²² More about this can be found online at: http://www.sun.ac.za/university/Management/rektor/docs/botman_talloires.pdf [Accessed: February 9, 2012]. A comment from the report: "Building the engaged university; moving beyond the ivory tower."

PART I

The context and its challenges



PART 1 outlines the context for these chapters.

CHAPTERS 2 and 3 cover the compilation and discussion of a questionnaire that was sent to the twelve NetACT member institutions.

CHAPTER 2 is quantitative in character as it deals mostly with statistical data about the churches involved and their seminaries.

CHAPTER 3 is qualitative in character and depicts the situation at the twelve seminaries with regards to HIV&AIDS and attitudes to gender.

CHAPTER 4 highlights the problem of sexual violence and is based on empirical research done in Africa. It thus draws attention to the wider scenario and culture that have such a devastating effect on women, men and children, and calls on the church to address this problem at seminary level.

CHAPTER 5 focuses on the plight of women, illustrating it by looking at the situation that women find themselves in when they lose their husbands. These chapters begin to address HIV&AIDS and gender issues.

The first section of CHAPTER 6 outlines the significance of male dominance in the study of religion in Africa. The second section describes the discourse on gender in the study of religion in Africa. The third section briefly explains the factors that have given rise to a focus on masculinities in Africa, with particular emphasis on the impact of the HIV epidemic. The fourth section examines how the theme of religion and masculinity offers a valuable opportunity to African scholars to chart a new path in religious studies in Africa by addressing views on masculinity that lead to HIV infection and gender-based violence.

Chapter 2

Churches, seminaries and gender statistics

*H. Jurgens Hendriks*¹



Introduction: methodology

This chapter focuses on mostly quantitative data related to the twelve seminaries that form the NetACT network.

First, some remarks about the methodology followed to get the information. In March 2010 a letter was sent to the NetACT Board members explaining how the NetACT Executive planned the workshop to be held in August 2011. The letter stated:

Each NetACT institution nominates two representatives, the principal/board member and a woman. The principal or his representative has the responsibility to create the institutional initiative, support and supervision that are needed for the research that has to be done by the female representative. At the first workshop in August 2011 each institution will present a report/evaluation of the gender equality situation at their institution, church and society indicating to what extent their curriculum deals with it (a structured questionnaire accompanies this letter). Our first academic publication will be a compilation of these reports. At the first workshop we will have papers on our research topic. A call for papers accompanies this letter and we encourage you to submit a proposal. We hope to get leading (women) theologians to give papers. However, our main objective will be to jointly decide on how to structure the research on “Teaching Gender Equality in Africa”.

Although all the institutions were represented at the workshop and all except ISTELE had a women representative present (the ISTELE representative had a baby), the last questionnaires were returned in February 2012. Three schools are Portuguese speaking. They received and responded to their questionnaires in Portuguese. This researcher communicated with institutions to clarify uncertainties and to make the data as trustworthy as possible.

¹ Jurgens Hendriks is Professor Emeritus in Practical Theology and Missiology at Stellenbosch University, South Africa. He is a founding member of NetACT and serves as the network’s Executive Director. E-mail: hjh@sun.ac.za

Gender representation in church offices and seminaries

The first table summarises the extent to which 25 Protestant-Reformed churches that send their members to the 12 seminaries allow women to take up the offices of deacon, elder and pastor. The following remarks point to the trends in this table.

- All but the Reformed Church in Nigeria allow women to be deacons. As far as dates were provided, it seems that the first to do so was the Presbyterian Church in Zambia in 1897! Second was the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (in Namibia), which did so in 1934, followed by the CCAP Livingstonia Synod in Malawi in 1936. The last church to allow women as deacons was the CCAP Nkhoma Synod in November 2009.
- The first church to allow women to be pastors was the Presbyterian Church in Zambia in 1919, followed by the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (in Namibia), which did so in 1934.
- All but four churches allow women to be elders.
- Five of the 25 churches do not allow women to be pastors. Four of these churches were founded by Dutch Reformed missionaries from South Africa: CCAP Nkhoma Synod in Malawi, IRM in Mozambique, the RCEA in Kenya and the NKST (the Reformed Church in Nigeria).
- In two countries, Angola and South Africa, all the constituent churches allow women to take up all the offices.

The second table is a list that indicates the total number of pastors in the 25 churches as well as the number of women serving as pastors.

- The 25 churches have in total 5 835 pastors, of whom 274 are women.
- Thus 4,7% of the pastors in these churches are women.
- The number of members to a congregation differs considerably from church to church. The average membership of the about 1 600 South African DRC congregations is 1 000.² The CCAP Nkhoma synod has 171 pastors serving a membership of over one million people in 141 congregations.³ The implication is that the average congregation has more than 7 000 members. In these congregations the pastor actually serves the prayer houses and the elders do most of the preaching and pastoral work.⁴ Elders are seldom allowed to serve the sacraments, hence the minister travels every Sunday from one prayer house to another serving sacraments and confirming new members. The main church building or service sees the pastor in many of these “mega churches” only about four times in a year. In other countries congregations are much smaller. In Namibia the 44 DRC congregations have on average 481 members⁵ and the Uniting Reformed Church far less. When this researcher visited Angola in 2004, shortly

² See the 2011 *Jaarboek van die NG Kerk*. Wellington: Tydskriftemaatskappy, 413.

³ Msangaambe, CEJ. 2011. Laity empowerment with regard to the missional task of the CCAP in Malawi. DTh dissertation Stellenbosch University: <http://scholar.sun.ac.za/handle/10019.1/6750>.

⁴ Taking Malawi as an example, one is reminded that very few people have any form of transport. Ministers walked, then got bicycles and now are “rich” if they have a motorbike. Very few have cars.

⁵ 2011 *Jaarboek*, 416 as well correspondence with their General Secretary, Rev. Clem Marais (clem@ngkn.org.na).

after the war, the secretaries of churches did not have any idea of the number of congregations and members. All they knew was that the church was growing at a rate that they could not keep track of. This is also true of Mozambique – that the church is growing is the only absolute certainty when it comes to statistics!

- Although this was not asked in the questionnaire, it is common knowledge that the number of women at church services and in membership total roughly 70% of the total membership.

The third table tells us about the staff situation.

- The 12 schools have a total of 116 full time lecturers of which 21 (18%) are women and 85 part time lecturers of which 19 (22%) are women.
- Three schools, JMTI, MThC and RTS, have no women on their staff.
- The question explicitly excluded women who were only teaching the wives of pastors, but were not allowed to teach theology students.

The fourth table looked at staff qualifications.

- 80% of full-time male lecturers have either a masters or a doctoral degree.
- 70% of full-time women lecturers have either a masters or a doctoral degree.
- The percentages for the male and women part-time lecturers are 53% and 26%.

NetACT institutions indeed did well. The percentages were certainly not this high 10 years ago. With a bit of additional research one can establish how many of these degrees were awarded during the last ten years – and where they were rewarded.

Table five summarises the number of students.

- The 12 schools have 948 students in total, of whom 218 or 23% are women.
- The average number of BTh students per school is 79.
- At two schools, JMTI and RTS, there are no women students.
- ABC has the highest percentage of women students: 42%.
- The three schools with the highest number of theological students are ABC (267), RTS (200) and SU (143).

A few concluding deductions from the statistics:

- The average number of students per full-time lecturer is just 8. From a financial point of view our schools are thus very expensive as student fees cannot cover the cost of the salaries of the lecturers.
- Women lecturers form 20% of staff, while women students constitute 23% of the student body.
- One can expect that the number and percentage of women in the pulpit will grow. At present the 25 churches mentioned in the questionnaires have on average 4,7% women pastors. The percentage of women in theological training is 23% of the total number of students. This indicates that their numbers and percentage will increase. Cultural changes are taking place. The trend is clear if one looks at the dates that the churches accepted women in the church offices, one after the other (Table 1). The percentage of women pastors is set to increase.

TABLE 1 Gender and Church Offices

QUESTION: Do the following churches in your country accept women to be called / serve as 1] pastors; 2] elders; 3] deacons? If known, mention dates allowed.			
NETACT INSTITUTIONS & SUPPORTING CHURCHES	PASTORS	ELDERS	DEACONS
ABC: Lilongwe, Malawi; JMTI: Nkhoma, Malawi; ZTC: Zomba, Malawi			
CCAP: Livingstonia Synod	Yes 2000	Yes 1936	Yes 1936
CCAP: Nkhoma Synod	No	Nov 2009	Nov 2009
CCAP: Blantyre Synod	2000	In 1980s	In 1980s
Hefsiba: Vila Ulongue, Mozambique			
IRM = Reformed Church in Mozambique	No	No	1990
ISEU: Huambo, Angola ; ISTE: Lubango, Angola			
IERA: Reformed Church in Angola	Yes	Yes	Yes
Presbyterian Church	Yes	Yes	Yes
Methodist Church	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lutheran Church	Yes	Yes	Yes
JMTUC: Lusaka, Zambia			
CCAP Zambia Synod	2002	1918	1918
Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa	1919	1897	1897
Reformed Church in Zambia	1999	1999	1999
MThC: Masvingo, Zimbabwe			
Reformed Church of Zimbabwe	2004	1984	1984
NETS: Windhoek, Namibia			
United Congr. Church of Southern Africa	1934	n.a.	1934
Evangelical Baptist Church	No	No	Yes always
Calvin Protestant Church	Yes	Yes	Yes
Uniting Reformed Church	1991	1986	1986
Dutch Reformed Church	1990	1990	1982
RITT: Eldoret, Kenya			
RCEA	No	No	Nov 1998
Presbyterian Church	Yes	Yes	Yes
RTS: Nigeria			
The Reformed Church	No	No	No
The Presbyterian Church	1981	1954	Yes
SU: South Africa			
Dutch Reformed Church	1990	1990	1982
Uniting Reformed Church	1982	1978	1978
Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa	1975	1975	1975
Anglican Church	1992	1992	1992
Moravian Church	Dec 1989	Yes	Yes

TABLE 2 Men and Women Serving as Pastors

QUESTION: How many pastors are serving in congregations in the churches named below in your country? How many of them are female?		
NETACT INSTITUTIONS & SUPPORTING CHURCHES	TOTAL NUMBER OF PASTORS	NUMBER WHO ARE WOMEN
ABC: Lilongwe, Malawi; JMTI: Nkhoma, Malawi; ZTC: Zomba, Malawi		
Church of Central Africa Presbyterian: Livingstonia Synod	172	5
CCAP: Nkhoma Synod.	171	0
CCAP: Blantyre Synod	200	12
Hefsiba: Mozambique		
IRM = Reformed Church in Mozambique	90	0
ISEU: Huambo, Angola & ISTE: Lubango, Angola		
IERA: Reformed Church in Angola	121	2
Presbyterian Church	145	4
Methodist Church	517	59
(?)	83	3
JMTUC: Lusaka, Zambia		
CCAP Zambia Synod	55	3
Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (Zambia)	32	3
Reformed Church in Zambia	113	10
MThC: Masvingo, Zimbabwe		
Reformed Church of Zimbabwe	62	5
NETS: Windhoek, Namibia		
Evangelical Baptist Church	37	0
Calvin Protestant Church	1	0
Uniting Reformed Church	18	1
United Congregational Church of Southern Africa	7	1
Dutch Reformed Church	52	0
RITT: Eldoret, Kenya		
RCEA	112	0
Presbyterian Church in East Africa	?	?
RTS: Nigeria		
Reformed Church	636	0
Presbyterian Church in Nigeria (Eastern Synod)	80	8
SU: South Africa		
Dutch Reformed Church	1602	70
Uniting Reformed Church	788	10
Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa	439	22
Anglican Church (The three Cape diocese only)	256	45
Moravian Church	48	11
TOTAL	5835	274

TABLE 3 Full-Time & Part-Time Lecturers

QUESTION: How many of the following persons do you have at the seminary? [Do not count as lecturers women or pastors teaching pastors' wives how to do parish ministries. If these women lecture theology students studying to be evangelists or pastors, do count them in.]				
NETACT INSTITUTIONS & SUPPORTING CHURCHES	FULL TIME/ PART TIME	MEN ON STAFF	WOMEN ON STAFF	STAFF TOTAL
ABC: Lilongwe, Malawi	Full time	11	6	17
	Part time	8	3	11
Hefsiba: Mozambique	Full time	6	1	7
	Part time	7	2	9
ISEU: Huambo, Angola	Full time	5	0	5
	Part time	4	1	5
ISTEL: Lubango, Angola	Full time	4	3	7
	Part time	4	0	4
JMTI: Nkhoma, Malawi	Full time	5	0	5
	Part time	2	0	2
JMTUC: Lusaka, Zambia	Full time	8	1	9
	Part time	12	6	18
MThC: Masvingo, Zimbabwe	Full time	4	0	4
	Part time	2	0	2
NETS: Windhoek, Namibia	Full time	5	1	6
	Part time	9	3	12
RITT: Eldoret, Kenya	Full time	4	2	6
	Part time	2	1	3
RTS: Nigeria	Full time	20	0	20
	Part time	8	0	8
SU: South Africa	Full time	13	6	19
	Part time	4	1	5
ZTC: Zomba, Malawi	Full time	10	1	11
	Part time	4	2	6
TOTAL	Full time	95	21	116
	Part time	66	19	85
		161	40	201

TABLE 4 Staff Qualifications

QUESTION: How many lecturers have as their highest degree a master's and how many have as their highest degree a PhD / DTh? (The number after > is the total number of lecturers from previous section)

NETACT INSTITUTIONS & SUPPORTING CHURCHES	FULL TIME/ PART TIME	M + D > TOTAL MEN	M + D > TOTAL WOMEN	TOTAL STAFF
ABC: Lilongwe, Malawi	Full time	7+4 >17	4 + 0 > 6	17
	Part time	1 + 1 > 8	1 + 0 > 3	11
Hefsiba: Mozambique	Full time	2 + 0 > 6	0 + 1 > 1	7
	Part time	1 + 0 > 7	0 + 0 > 2	9
ISEU: Huambo, Angola	Full time	3 + 0 > 5	0	5
	Part time	0 + 0 > 4	0 + 0 > 1	5
ISTEL: Lubango, Angola	Full time	3 + 1 > 4	3 + 0 > 3	7
	Part time	4 + 0 > 4	0	4
JM TI: Nkhoma, Malawi	Full time	3 + 0 > 5	0	5
	Part time	0 + 0 > 2	0	2
JM TUC: Lusaka, Zambia	Full time	0 + 8 > 8	1	9
	Part time	4 + 4 >12	0 + 0 > 6	18
MThC: Masvingo, Zimbabwe	Full time	1 + 1 > 4	0	4
	Part time	0 + 2 >2	0	2
NETS: Windhoek, Namibia	Full time	3 + 1 > 5	0 + 0 > 1	6
	Part time	1 + 3 > 9	2 + 1 > 3	12
RITT: Eldoret, Kenya	Full time	2 + 1 > 4	0 + 0 > 2	6
	Part time	0 + 0 > 2	0+ 0 > 2	3
RTS: Nigeria	Full time	12 +3 > 20	0	20
	Part time	3 + 5 > 8	0	8
SU: South Africa	Full time	0 + 13 > 13	1 + 4 > 6	19
	Part time	0 + 4 > 4	0 + 1 > 1	5
ZTC: Malawi	Full time	5 + 3 > 10	1 + 0 > 1	11
	Part time	1 + 1 > 6	0 + 0 > 2	6
TOTAL	Full time	41+35 >95	9+5 >21	116
	Part time	15 +20 >66	3+2 >19	85

TABLE 5 Number of Students

QUESTION: How many theology students do you have enrolled in your seminary?											
NETACT INSTITUTIONS & SUPPORTING CHURCHES	1 M	1 W	2 M	2 W	3 M	3 W	4 M	4 W	T M	T W	T ALL
ABC: Lilongwe, Malawi	44	37	41	28	36	38	34	9	155	112	267
Hefsiba: Mozambique	6	1	9	0	5	0	3	0	23	1	24
ISEU: Huambo, Angola ⁶	0	0	1	0	1	0	4	2	6	2	8
ISTEL: Lubango, Angola	9	1	7	2	5	4	10	1	31	8	39
JMTI: Nkhoma, Malawi ⁷	8						8		16		16
JMTUC: Lusaka, Zambia	6	3	10	2	18	1	11	2	45	8	53
MThC: Masvingo, Zimbabwe	7	3	6	1	6	1	6	0	25	5	30
NETS: Windhoek, Namibia	7	4	3	1	4	3	4	0	18	8	26
RITT: Eldoret, Kenya	11	1	12	3	11	2	0	0	34	6	40
RTS: Nigeria	61		34		60		45		200		200
SU: South Africa ⁸	31	15	23	17	16	8	18	10	88	50	143
ZTC: Zomba, Malawi	23	4	22	2	23	5	21	7	89	18	107
TOTAL	213	69	168	56	185	62	166	31	730	218	948

⁶ ISEU experienced internal problems, which were sorted out during 2011. The school will quickly regain a strong and vibrant student population.

⁷ JMTI is the post-BTh ministry training school of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod, where the theological candidates who have completed their training at ZTC are prepared for ministry in the Nkhoma Synod. ZTC cannot house and train enough theological candidates for the CCAP Nkhoma Synod. JMTI has previously and is now again using the ZTC curriculum to train first-year students, who will most probably do their subsequent BTh years at Nkhoma. The exams and degree are those of ZTC.

⁸ Stellenbosch University's Faculty of Theology focuses predominantly on postgraduate students and research. In 2011 it had about 500 students, of whom 352 (71%) were postgraduate students. 20% (71) of the postgraduate students were women. 51% (36) of the postgraduate women were White; 49% (35) were other than White. 60 of these postgraduate students are from other African countries (excluding South Africa). Those from South Africa total 234 and those from other continents 58.

Chapter 3

HIV&AIDS, curricula and gender realities

H. Jurgens Hendriks¹



Introduction

This chapter reports on three research questions.

1. We wanted to know whether or not the seminaries implemented the HIV&AIDS programmes that their project team developed.
2. We wanted to know about the influence and place of these programmes in their curricula.
3. We wanted to get some understanding of the gender equity situation and attitudes to gender equality at our seminaries.

We developed a hypothesis that motivated these research questions. When the network was founded in 2000 and its vision and goals were formulated in 2001, it announced as one of its goals:

To address the HIV&AIDS problem, especially by providing the theological, moral and spiritual undergirding to curb this pandemic.

We wrote HIV&AIDS programmes, but then realised that even though the programmes or modules dealing with HIV&AIDS were taught by someone who was trained to do so, they were often “outsiders” in a course that does not integrate the content with the rest of the theological programme. It was pretty much an “add-on” about something shrouded in silence and stigma. In other words: there was little coherence with the rest of the curriculum of the institution.

In order to effectively and faithfully address the contextual reality of this terrible pandemic, everybody teaching in an institution should deal with it purposefully in every sub-discipline of theology with the type of input unique to that sub-discipline. To achieve this, the students, staff and board of theological institutions should be familiar with the basic principles of constructing and teaching a contextualised curriculum. The basic elements of curriculum development should be known and applied. This was certainly not the case in the Network schools. Thus, in 2006 in Windhoek the Board decided to ask Rev. Kruger du Preez to do a doctoral dissertation in which his research examined the curriculum (development) situation at the schools. In 2009 we started with curriculum development workshops, which led to the realisation that this should

¹ Jurgens Hendriks is Professor Emeritus in Practical Theology and Missiology at Stellenbosch University, South Africa. He is a founding member of NetACT and serves as the network’s Executive Director. E-mail: hjh@sun.ac.za

be done with all staff and board members of an institution present. These workshops were very well received and helped the seminaries in many ways.² They were motivated to contextualise the HIV&AIDS modules and address the pandemic holistically. It also helped the seminaries to work towards getting national and international accreditation.

It was during this process that we realised that our goal to address the HIV&AIDS pandemic would never be successful without addressing the cultural bias that existed in a patriarchal system, in other words, the gender issue. Thus the central hypothesis of the research questions that we are now discussing is that the reality of the HIV&AIDS pandemic will not be eradicated without addressing the gender issue in our culture and thus in our theological curricula.

The logic of this hypothesis and the importance of explaining it also had to be made clear to those churches and NGOs that had supported our work and research over the past ten years; we had to explain why we moved from simply writing HIV&AIDS programmes to engaging with issues of curriculum development and then gender equality work. The original goal is still being pursued, but we are addressing it on a much more fundamental level.

A few remarks about methodology are necessary. Chapter 2 quoted from the covering letter and the instructions on how the questionnaire should be completed. When the questions pertaining to HIV&AIDS and gender were asked, specific reference was made to the HIV&AIDS modules developed by the institutions through NetACT's mediation as well as to the curriculum development workshops. The setting thus was clearly indicated in order that the answers should be directed towards responding to our research goals.

The questions from the second part of the questionnaire are extremely sensitive within our African cultural setting. They deal with a topic whose default response is silence. Instead of silence, the questions boldly expect to initiate a conversation about the elephant in the room, an elephant that cultural expectations demand should not be mentioned. Notwithstanding the cultural constraints, the answers conveyed an openness and trust that endorse the statement made in Chapter 1 about the high levels of mutual trust between the institutions in this network.

In August 2011 the NetACT Board and the women delegates from the seminaries openly and directly addressed the gender issue for the first time. During the evaluation session several of the principals requested that we handle this issue with the utmost care. If we really want to serve the gender cause, we should be culturally sensitive. The attitude with which we approach the issue holds the key to the success or failure with which it is addressed. In the evaluation of the workshop it was evident that the delegates picked up the smallest of signs of any arrogance about these issues. On the other side of the equation, it was equally clear that the men and the women who attended the workshop (in equal numbers) were more than willing to set out on this most challenging of cultural and spiritual journeys.

² The reports of some of these workshops are available at <http://academic.sun.ac.za/theology/netact/2011-Malawi.html> and <http://academic.sun.ac.za/theology/netact/2011-Angola.html>.

The key to this journey was a spiritual one: the firm conviction that the answers to our quest should be sought in the Bible. Part 2 of the book will deal with this challenge.

Let us return to the methodology issue. In the light of the above-mentioned sensitivities, the questions about how women experience gender issues in their seminaries and churches were highly sensitive. They were working with and under the “protection” of their principal. The answers to the last two series of questions that tried to assess the degree of gender discrimination could have put them in an awkward position if, for instance, the principal got hold of them and could trace the answers to an individual staff member. Thus the following guidelines were set:

Questions 30 and 31 should be duplicated for each woman staff member. Their answers should be treated as anonymous and confidential. The delegate woman researcher should be solely responsible for this part and either e-mail or post this section in such a way that anonymity and confidentiality are guaranteed.

To the credit of the principals, it should be said that they respected this request and gave women staff members the freedom they needed to answer the questions anonymously and without fear.

In the compilation of the data the researcher’s first choice was to use the exact words of the respondents. However, in most cases the responses has to be edited and abbreviated to what can now be read in the tables below. Because the researcher is familiar with the institutions and the respondents as well as the cultural setting, it was possible to grasp what the respondents were trying to convey in a second and often third language.

Discussion of the questionnaire results

TABLE 6 Implementation of the NetACT HIV&AIDS Curriculum

The first remark to make regarding the table is that, in comparison to the situation in 2000, when none of the institutions had a module on HIV&AIDS, all the institutions now have programmes in place. Nine use the material developed by their lecturers in collaboration with other experts that NetACT invited to help them write contextualised modules. The three institutions that are not using the exact modules which they helped to create obviously continued to create programmes that satisfied their needs.

Some remarks

- Janet Brown attended the now legendary NetACT meeting in 2002 at ABC in Lilongwe, Malawi, where she initiated ABC’s HIV programme. She was a fully qualified intensive care nurse. The plight of people in townships and squatter camps led her to start ministering to those people together with ABC students. She did her doctoral degree on this topic.³ She later died of cancer, after which Rev. Maggie Madimbo, another ABC staff member, continued with the programme and work. She is at present completing her doctoral degree in the USA.

³ Brown, Janet L. 2004. HIV/AIDS Alienation: Between Prejudice and Acceptance. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Stellenbosch University. Online at <http://scholar.sun.ac.za/handle/10019.1/5491> [Accessed: March 16, 2012].

- NetACT developed its own publication on the process of HIV&AIDS curriculum development: Mash, Rachel, Cilliers, Johan, Griffiths, Keith, Chemorion, Edith & Katani, Archwells (Eds). 2009. *Our church has AIDS. Preaching about HIV & AIDS in Africa today*. Stellenbosch: NetACT. Copies can be ordered from the NetACT office (e-mail netact@sun.ac.za).
- The MTh programme in Clinical Pastoral Care and Counselling (HIV&AIDS) is training eight students per year as specialised professional counsellors. Four African universities present this programme in collaboration with the Swedish government. For more information contact the NetACT office at netact@sun.ac.za or the secretary of the Department of Practical Theology (brobyn@sun.ac.za).
- The books mentioned in the answers are:
Van Dyk, Alta. 2008. *HIVAIDS Care & Counselling: a multidisciplinary approach*. Cape Town: Pearson Education. 4th edition.

Musa W. Dube was mentioned. Some of her books are:

- Dube, Musa W. 2003. *HIV/AIDS and the curriculum: methods of integrating HIV&AIDS in theological programmes*. Geneva: World Council of Churches.
- Dube, Musa W. & Kanyoro, R.A. 2004. *Grant me justice! HIV/AIDS & gender readings of the Bible*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster.
- Dube, Musa W. & Phiri, Isabel A. 2003. *Africa praying: a handbook on HIV/AIDS sensitive sermon guidelines and liturgy*. Geneva: World Council of Churches.

The realities with which the network has to cope can be illustrated by two answers to the question: “If you have not implemented the (NetACT) HIV&AIDS curriculum, why not?”

- Hefsiba answered the question in the following way: *The proposed curriculum by the workgroup of NetACT was never officially sent to us. There was no follow-up as to how to implement it. We did not receive any information on which books to use.*

The writer of this chapter can explain what happened: Rev. Venancio Patrique was the Hefsiba lecturer whom NetACT trained. He helped to develop and translated all the material into Portuguese. However, after his training and as a result of his training he took up a much better paid appointment. This and the irritating lack of good e-mail and telephone communication with Hefsiba in those years explain how the problem arose (H. Jurgens Hendriks, editor).

Hefsiba is now using the following Portuguese books:

- Van Zyl, Daniel, Murray, Logy. 2003. *Edificando a vossa habilidade para lidar com SIDA*. Wellington: Instituto Biblico de Neemias; N7/3E. (In English: Building your ability to lead in AIDS).
- Welbourn, Alice, Williams, G. and Williams, A. 2003. *Caminhando de maos dados. Manual de Formacao sobre HIV/SIDA. Tecnicas de Comunicacao e de Gestao de Relacoes Humanas*. London: Strategies of Hope and ActionAid Mocambique. (In English: *Walking together. Training manual on HIV/AIDS. Communication techniques and the issue of human relations.*)
- RTS Nigeria (which joined NetACT in 2010) reported: “We are yet to have a professional or expert in the field to handle the course. Also owing to

stigmatisation of the pandemic (HIV), most people are reluctant to teach the course or even to receive training in order to teach it”.

TABLE 7 HIV&AIDS Programmes and Credits

The table confirms that the HIV&AIDS modules taught are getting due recognition in the curricula of the schools. There are only two schools that seem not to be on standard at the moment. ABC in Lilongwe, Malawi, has stopped teaching them because their designated lecturer is on sabbatical. She has in the meantime been informed of the situation and will certainly rectify it! RTS in Nigeria joined the network in 2010 and as such they have not been part of the campaign to address the pandemic in the way all the schools decided on. This difference highlights the influence of a network that addresses contextual issues.

TABLE 8 Effectiveness of Curriculum

What a joy to read the answers in this table! They show the spectrum of motivations that makes the overwhelming Yes so interesting, as it highlights the influence and effect of the programme.

TABLE 9 HIV-positive Students in the Seminary?

Six of the schools reported that they are not aware of any HIV-positive students living openly with HIV&AIDS and six schools do report known cases. The culture of silence – that is, not openly speaking out on these issues – can be illustrated by an observation. This researcher was teaching and staying at one of the schools where the woman who answered the questionnaire left this question open. One night I was awakened by someone crying out loud – obviously in grief. When I enquired the next day I was told that someone died that night and that she had AIDS. The principal of the school told me that several of their students died of AIDS-related deaths.

When the question “Do you have lecturers who are openly living with HIV?” was asked, all institutions replied that there are no lecturers living openly living with HIV&AIDS.

TABLE 10 The Impact of HIV&AIDS on Seminaries

The data of this table are really interesting and an eye-opener to the reality that theological schools face. The impact of HIV&AIDS is acknowledged by all. The disease has an impact on all the schools, and the illustrations of how and why this occurs reveal the devastating influence of the HIV&AIDS scourge. It is the openness of discussions like this that prove that by addressing the issue forcefully ever since 2000 the NetACT network has decidedly changed the culture of silence and stigmatisation prevalent in the surrounding society.

TABLE 11 Most Affected: Women or Men?

The question was asked: “Who are most affected *in your seminary?*” Four respondents did not answer the question; one said that they could not really see any *visible* impact on campus (which was most probably the case in most schools). One mentions the reality of orphans. There must be very few households in Africa without orphans. Three

respondents point out that, though one cannot really discern this on campus, women in general are most affected as a result of cultural, economic and societal factors.

TABLE 12 Regarding Faithfulness and Poverty

It is important to remember that this question was put to the two respondents (the principal and the woman delegate) to give their view on the public opinion about the question. Eleven of the twelve responses agreed that in the public opinion the unfaithfulness of women was a more serious matter than that of men. Ten of the twelve were certain that women suffer more than men.

The reasons why women are more affected by poverty were explained. Most often mentioned was the fact that they are not economically empowered (seven times). Indirectly all the answers give their precarious economic situation as the root cause. They referred to having to take care of the household, children, orphans and the vulnerable people of society (three times). Lack of education / illiteracy was mentioned three times. The impact of patriarchy is clear in all the answers. Women do not have access to land and cattle, and do not inherit. When a husband dies or when they are divorced, they often lose the basic necessities to life.

TABLE 13 Women’s Experience of Gender Bias (Or Not)

The methodology discussion explained how the 14 questions of this section were asked and how the respondents’ anonymity was protected. Since there were ten respondents for SU, their combined response was mentioned in the first line of the table and those of the 20 respondents of eleven schools were mentioned in the second line. There is enough safety in numbers to refer to the SU group as an entity. This is not the case with other schools. It is therefore ethically correct not to mention how a specific school voted when there are only one or two respondents from that school. Where the totals of the first and second lines agree, they will be treated as a whole, i.e. a response out of 30 (n=30). Where they differed significantly, this will be mentioned and discussed.

The first seven questions were intended to establish whether women lecturers experience gender bias and discrimination.

- a. Do you feel accepted as a woman in your institution? 26 out of 30 agreed.
- b. Do you feel treated as an equal in decision making? 26 out of 30 agreed.
- c. Did you experience sexual harassment? 11 out of 30 agreed.
- d. Equal promotion for female staff? 22 out of 30 agreed.
- e. Taken seriously while teaching / in classes? 28 out of 30 agreed.
- f. Taken serious in meetings by male staff? 27 out of 30 agreed.
- g. Do women students have equal work opportunity? 13 out of 30 agreed.

It is clear that in the NetACT network’s twelve schools women lecturers overwhelmingly feel accepted and treated as equals. They are taken seriously and listened to in classes by the students and in staff meetings by their male colleagues. This says a lot for these institutions and is something to be proud of.

There is, however, a serious issue: eleven female staff members have experienced what they regard as sexual harassment. Wisdom is needed in order to deal with this matter in

a responsible way. Situations differ so much at the twelve schools that it would not be wise to prescribe a particular course of action. Leaving the matter in silence, however, would not be a wise move either.

The last question about whether women students have an equal chance of being called to congregations produced an interesting response: at Stellenbosch nine out of ten women staff members disagreed. Men get preference when congregations call ministers. This certainly was the case up to now in the DRC in SA. The writer of this chapter thinks that this tendency will change in the foreseeable future. The staff members of the 11 other schools voted the other way round. 12 out of 20 indicated that women have an equal chance of being called. The writer who compiled the answers can in this case say that it is clear that in some churches women will find it difficult to be ministers, while in other churches there is certainly less bias.

The second set of seven questions enquired about gender issues *in the community*.

- | | |
|---|----------------------|
| a. Rape and abuse are serious problems. | 20 out of 30 agreed. |
| b. Rape and abuse are seriously talked about | 18 out of 30 agreed. |
| c. Domestic violence is treated seriously | 14 out of 30 agreed. |
| d. There are safe places for women to talk | 19 out of 30 agreed. |
| e. There are safe places where women can get help | 21 out of 30 agreed. |
| f. Bible views support violence against women | 17 out of 30 agreed. |
| g. The church is a safe place for women to get help | 17 out of 30 agreed. |

The first remark is obvious: there are not clear cut answers to these questions that deal with the wider community in which the schools are located. In compiling the answers, it was clear that there are distinct differences between institutions. The highest level of agreement is that there are safe places where women can talk about their problems ... yet only 70% agreed on this issue.

It is clear that in the communities in which the schools are situated women have a raw deal. If 17 out of 30 respondents indicate that popular opinion agrees that the Bible supports violence against women, no church, synod or seminary should feel proud of its teaching. The same number of women agree that the church is a safe place to get help. If thirteen disagree, this is a sad state of affairs. Seven out of ten women lecturers at SU do not find the church a safe place to get help. This is bad news.

It may also be said that there is progress. Rape and violence are in most cases regarded as serious problems and talked about. Domestic violence does not receive the same attention, but it is at least treated seriously, according to nearly half of the 30 women respondents. The fact that the highest score, 21 out of 30, indicates that there are safe places for women to get help, is encouraging.

Conclusions

The research questionnaire gave us clear answers to the three questions we asked.

In the first place the NetACT goal to seriously address the HIV&AIDS pandemic through its schools was certainly attained. At all the seminaries programmes teaching

HIV&AIDS are in place. At the same time it is equally clear that this is a long journey that has only started.

Secondly, the network was successful in implementing HIV&AIDS curricula. They are having a positive effect, even though there is certainly still room for improvement. This was clear from the answers received. HIV&AIDS certainly has a dire impact on students and institutions. It is clear that this is not directly seen in students or lecturers being HIV positive, but in the reality that everybody in church and society is directly affected by the pandemic.

However, it was equally clear that women are most affected by the pandemic and poverty. The patriarchal cultural system in particular discriminates against women and cause lots of pain and injustice.

The third question that the network wants to address, namely that of gender equity, proves to be a very valid concern. The result of the questions that addressed this issue proved without any doubt that gender inequality it is a sad reality in African cultures. But it did surprise us how much progress theological schools have made in this regard. There certainly still is a gender imbalance in seminaries when it comes to women as students and women as staff members. However, within the NetACT schools women by and large testify that they are well accepted and treated as equals.

In conclusion, the central hypothesis of the research questions is that the reality of HIV&AIDS pandemic will not be eradicated without addressing the gender issue in our culture and thus in our theological curricula. This hypothesis certainly holds true in the responses to the questionnaire and in the rationale of the NetACT network.

But how does it apply to the papers given at the Gender Equality workshop? Do these papers support the hypothesis? Do they shed more light on the hypothesis? The following chapters will answer these questions.

TABLE 6 Implementation of the NetACT HIV&AIDS Curriculum

Note to those who answered the questionnaire: In 2008 and 2009 some of your staff members attended the NetACT HIV curriculum development workshops. Ask knowledgeable staff member(s) to supply the information about your HIV&AIDS modules.

QUESTION: Has the NetACT curriculum that was developed been implemented at your seminary? If not, indicate what material you are using in this regard.	YES	NO
ABC: Lilongwe, Malawi	YES	
The programme was first taught by the late Janet Brown, who did her DTh degree on HIV&AIDS. Up to 2009 we were using the materials that we had developed up to that point at NETACT. Since Mrs Madimbo left to do doctoral studies (2010 onwards) the programme was not taught.		
Hefsiba: Vila Ulongue, Mozambique		NO
They are using some of the NetACT material used by the presenter of the NetACT programme as well as material from other sources (Logey & Smith).		

ISEU: Huambo, Angola	YES	
ISTEL: Lubango, Angola	YES	
JMTI: Nkhoma, Malawi	YES	
JMTUC: Lusaka, Zambia	YES	
They are also using internet sources, library sources, NetACT's book <i>Our church has AIDS</i> and a book by Musa Dube.		
MThC: Masvingo, Zimbabwe	YES	
NETS: Windhoek, Namibia		NO
They are using some of it, but added material from the Namibia Council of Churches.		
RITT: Eldoret, Kenya	YES	
RTS: Mkar, Nigeria		NO
They joined NetACT in 2010 and report: The denominational HIV&AIDS counsellor lectures on HIV&AIDS to students every semester using his material.		
SU: Stellenbosch, South Africa		NO
Our faculty focuses on HIV&AIDS on different levels. We have a short course (official University certificate) in HIV&AIDS. This short course was developed in collaboration with the University's HIV&AIDS desk and the European Foundation. The content is based on a manual (consisting of different units) and the book by Alta van Dyk.		
We also have an HIV&AIDS course/module as part of the MDiv programme in pastoral care. The focus in this programme is on the medical content and the counselling content. The book by Alta van Dyk and other material is used in this programme.		
We also have a full Master's clinical program on HIV&AIDS. This is a one-year programme based on a clinical and academic programme as well as a research thesis. This programme was developed in collaboration with five other universities in Africa and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.		
ZTC: Zomba, Malawi	YES	

TABLE 7 HIV&AIDS Programmes and Credits

QUESTION: Please indicate the following about the HIV&AIDS curriculum that you are following: In which study years it is taught? In which programme (subject) it is taught? What is the credit value of the modules?
ABC: Lilongwe, Malawi
An elective offered to 3rd and 4th year students in the Personnel Management two-credit programme.
Hefsiba: Vila Ulongue, Mozambique
Taught in first year. It is called SIDA (Portuguese for AIDS) 113 and 123. It has 8 credits each, which means there are two classes per week devoted to it for the whole year.
ISEU: Huambo, Angola
It is taught in the second year in the regular programme and fourth year in the part-time programme. It is considered a complementary subject and constitutes three credits or six hours per week.
ISTEL: Lubango, Angola
Taught in first year in the programme HIV&AIDS. Three-credits programme or 45 hours a semester.

JMTI: Nkhoma, Malawi
Final year. Programme is called: HIV&AIDS. Four hours per week.
JMTUC: Lusaka, Zambia
It is taught in the third year and called Pastoral Theology. 3 periods of 50 minutes each per week.
MThC: Masvingo, Zimbabwe
Taught in 2nd year in the programme Practical Theology, which has a 4-credit value.
NETS: Windhoek, Namibia
1st, 2nd, & 3rd years. It is called "African Social Issues" in the first year (6 credits) and HIV&AIDS in 2nd and 3rd years: 8 credits for the two years.
RITT: Eldoret, Kenya
It is taught in the second year. The programme is called "Interpreting the Bible in the light of HIV&AIDS." The credit value of the modules is 2 hours per week.
RTS: Mkar, Nigeria
They joined NetACT in 2010. It is taught by the denominational AIDS counsellor once a semester to all students in all classes. These presentations carry no credit value.
SU: Faculty of Theology, Stellenbosch South Africa
A short 12-credit course was developed so that anybody with a senior certificate can enrol in this course. Thus it is open to the broader community. The MDiv programme (fifth year of the ministerial training) has a five-credit module on HIV&AIDS. The MTh Clinical Pastoral Care in HIV&AIDS is a full year, 180 credits. HIV&AIDS programmes are part of the Practical Theology curriculum.
ZTC: Zomba, Malawi
Taught in 3rd and 4th years in the programme: Practical Theology and Moral Issues. It constitutes 25% of the module.

TABLE 8 Effectiveness of Curriculum

QUESTION: Has the curriculum that you use been effective? Please motivate your answer.
ABC: Lilongwe, Malawi
It certainly was effective. Students went for voluntary HIV testing – which was well received.
Hefsiba: Vila Ulongue, Mozambique
Yes, very much so. The students are well informed about the facts, but also of the ethical issues. The lecturer is following a very open approach in his teaching and there is a lot of discussion.
ISEU: Huambo, Angola
Yes. Our students are very effective activists and they are doing good work in their communities in Huambo and surrounding towns.
ISTEL: Lubango, Angola
It has been very effective even though it is only taught in the first semester of the BTh programme.
JMTI: Nkhoma, Malawi
Yes. Many pastors are now aware of HIV&AIDS and are not just negatively condemning it, but deal with it more positively.

JMTUC: Lusaka, Zambia
Yes. Students have acquired basic theological understanding of HIV&AIDS and are able to apply the knowledge in specific ministry situations.
MThC: Masvingo, Zimbabwe
To a certain extent. Most people are not ready to open up on issues of HIV&AIDS status.
NETS: Windhoek, Namibia
Yes, the curriculum is very effective, because it is practical and gives the students skills to minister to HIV&AIDS. Some of our students are ministering to PLWHA.
RITT: Eldoret, Kenya
Yes; students are sensitive about PLWHA as well as to those who are affected by it. This is noticeable in their preaching.
RTS: Nigeria
They joined NetACT in 2010. They report: So far this has been effective. The students did well in the inter-seminary joint lecture session. The resource persons rated our students as being the most alert on issues of handling HIV&AIDS in ministry.
SU: South Africa
Yes, to a large extent. We had good feedback from the participants in the short course and the students in the MDiv programme. The MTh in Clinical Pastoral Care & Counselling (HIV&AIDS) is regularly externally audited and updated with the latest research information.
ZTC: Zomba, Malawi
Yes. It helps students with: managing skills, counselling skills, pastoral skills and awareness raising in how to deal with the different age groups.

TABLE 9 HIV-positive Students in the Seminary?

QUESTION: What is the effect of HIV&AIDS on the seminary and how many students do you have who are openly living with HIV?
ABC: Lilongwe, Malawi
It is difficult to know the effect as it is not discussed publicly. The school did lose students and other members due to HIV&AIDS.
Hefsiba: Vila Ulongue, Mozambique
If there is an effect, we do not know about it, because people are not open about it. We are not aware of HIV-positive students.
ISEU: Huambo, Angola
Before the HIV module was implemented in the curriculum, silence reigned and HIV&AIDS were simply seen as sin. Attitudes changed with the introduction of the modules. It clearly affects the church. We had two HIV-positive students in 2010.
ISTEL: Lubango, Angola
At present there are no known cases of HIV positive students. However, before the HIV programme one of their students died because of HIV&AIDS.

JMTI: Nkhoma, Malawi
People are normally affected when one of their family members are sick or has died; then one has to excuse him or her from classes to attend the funeral. Since students have medical check-ups before being interviewed and allowed, the Executive Committee knows that there are two positive students.
JMTUC: Lusaka, Zambia
No answer. / Not aware of students who are HIV positive.
MThC: Masvingo, Zimbabwe
Everyone is affected in one way or another especially through close relatives who are infected. They are not aware of students who at present are HIV positive.
NETS: Windhoek, Namibia
No answer. / Not aware of students who are HIV positive.
RITT: Eldoret, Kenya
Not sure. Nobody comes out openly.
RTS: Nigeria
They joined NetACT in 2010 and report: Three of our students are infected with HIV&AIDS and are facing the challenges of fear of stigmatisation.
SU: South Africa
I do think the effect is due to the lack of students and staff who have been tested. Indirectly one can only imagine the emotional, economic and spiritual effect of family and friends living with HIV&AIDS must be high due to the reality of the infections in Africa. Some lecturers do know of HIV-positive students.
ZTC: Zomba, Malawi
Today we live in a community where all have been affected in one way or another. The effects of this are some orphaned children being raised by relatives in the college community. The HIV&AIDS modules have inspired them to form an HIV&AIDS response group. / Not aware of students who are HIV positive.

TABLE 10 The Impact of HIV&AIDS on Seminaries

QUESTIONS: Do you have students and lecturers who are affected by HIV? How has HIV impacted your seminary?
ABC: Lilongwe, Malawi
Students are affected, lecturers not. HIV&AIDS do affect the seminary, but are only talked about when someone dies.
Hefsiba: Mozambique
If there is an effect, we do not know that it is because of HIV&AIDS. People are not open about it. The impact of AIDS is not noticeable, but people are now aware of the dangers.
ISEU: Huambo, Angola
Students and lecturers are affected by HIV. The seminary is now more open to address the issue of HIV&AIDS as we are all affected by the problem. There is a theological approach concerning the issue and through Bible studies people are becoming more aware of the disease and they feel responsible to fight against this epidemic.

ISTEL: Lubango, Angola
At present no students or lecturers are known to be HIV positive, although everyone is affected by it.
JMTI: Nkhoma, Malawi
In Malawi there is no family that can say that it is not affected by HIV – thus everyone at JMTI is affected. HIV did impact on the seminary, for those infected are often ill and spend lots of money on medical bills; they miss classes and their performance is affected.
JMTUC: Lusaka, Zambia
Students and lecturers are affected by HIV. The college has lost some students due to HIV&AIDS-related illnesses.
MThC: Masvingo, Zimbabwe
All students and lecturers are affected by HIV. Lecturers are affected when students and lecturers attend funerals. There is financial strain on students and lecturers in assisting HIV&AIDS-infected relatives.
NETS: Windhoek, Namibia
Students and lecturers are affected by HIV. Impact: it has caused us to come up with additional courses that are relevant to the community around us. This meant major changes to the curriculum.
RITT: Eldoret, Kenya
Students and lecturers are affected by HIV. It impacts on the seminary in that most people are willing to know their HIV status and support vulnerable people in the society.
RTS: Nigeria
They joined NetACT in 2010 and report: We lost two students in the last two years to HIV. Some students have difficulty paying tuition fees as their relations who could support them are infected or affected.
SU: South Africa
They have students but not lecturers affected by HIV&AIDS. The effect is limited in terms of direct infections but it could be much more significant in terms of family and friends.
ZTC: Zomba, Malawi
All students and lecturers are affected by HIV. The impact is not much, because previously ministry students have gone through a screening process before joining ZTC. This has now been discouraged in order not to violate human rights. The situation might therefore change.

TABLE 11 Most Affected: Women or Men?

QUESTION: WHO ARE MOST AFFECTED BY HIV&AIDS IN YOUR SEMINARY: WOMEN OR MEN? WHY?
ABC: Lilongwe, Malawi
Men are more affected because most of the students are men.
Hefsiba: Vila Ulongue, Mozambique
No visible impact.

ISEU: Huambo, Angola
It is difficult to evaluate who is more infected or affected by the disease, because at the moment none of the lecturers or students are assumed or confirmed HIV positive. But in practical terms women are more affected. Why? Because they have no power, even within some churches, they become more vulnerable.
ISTEL: Lubango, Angola
No answer.
JMTI: Nkhoma, Malawi
No answer.
JMTUC: Lusaka, Zambia
Both are affected. Taking care of the orphans affects all.
MThC: Masvingo, Zimbabwe
Since there are more male students it is difficult to see who is more affected.
NETS: Windhoek, Namibia
No answer.
RITT: Eldoret, Kenya
Women. Why? They are victims of cultural practices that fuel the spread of HIV&AIDS. They are biologically vulnerable, often without power and as such often very poor.
RTS: Nigeria
Men. Men tend to be more unfaithful in marriage. They hide their status and claim not to have safe sex to prove they are not infected.
SU: South Africa
I do think both. Why? The male student living with HIV struggles with many issues that are known to me. But broader in terms of friends and family it must be women, because they are the most vulnerable in terms of our cultural and economic realities.
ZTC: Zomba, Malawi
No answer

TABLE 12 Regarding Faithfulness and Poverty

QUESTIONS: We requested the two delegates to the Gender Equality workshop to give their opinion of what the view of the general public is on the following issue: Is it more serious if a wife is unfaithful to her husband or is it the other way round? Who is more affected by poverty: women or men? Explain.
ABC: Lilongwe, Malawi
It is more serious if a wife is unfaithful. Women are more affected by HIV and since most people in Malawi live below the poverty line women are affected most. Also: more women are not educated and illiteracy makes poverty worse.

Hefsiba: Mozambique
It is more serious if a wife is unfaithful. Both genders are suffering, but perhaps women are suffering more, because often they are tending to the house, children and land. Men use the money they earn for themselves. If the man dies, the family of the husband will come and take everything.
ISEU: Huambo, Angola
It is more serious if a wife is unfaithful. In my opinion and according to the practical reality, women are more affected by poverty because they have less access to financial resources. They have no input in decision making which makes them more vulnerable to HIV&AIDS.
ISTEL: Lubango, Angola
It is more serious if a wife is unfaithful. Reasons: less access to finances and no say in decision making.
JMTI: Nkhoma, Malawi
It is more serious if a wife is unfaithful. Pastors divorced unfaithful wives, but it does not happen when the husband is unfaithful. Culture and poverty make women stay and take care of the children.
JMTUC: Lusaka, Zambia
It is more serious if a wife is unfaithful. Both are affected since there is a high rate of unemployment.
MThC: Masvingo, Zimbabwe
It is more serious if a wife is unfaithful. Women are less economically empowered. They do not own cattle or land which are the traditional symbols of wealth.
NETS: Windhoek, Namibia
They are uncertain in which case unfaithfulness is more serious. Women are more affected by poverty in their communities because of their day-to-day responsibilities of taking care of the family.
RITT: Eldoret, Kenya
It is more serious if a wife is unfaithful. Women are less educated and they have no right of inheriting.
RTS: Nigeria
It is more serious if a wife is unfaithful. Most women depend on their husbands and do not have any personal means of livelihood. Men do not always provide women with what is needed.
SU: South Africa
It is more serious if a wife is unfaithful. Women are more affected by poverty because: 1) They are paid less for the same work (the situation is improving though); 2) Race plays a role, black women are paid least; 3) Women are taking responsibility for children, orphans, and all vulnerable people in society; 4) Because of these responsibilities they are often divorced and exposed to hardship and hopelessness.
ZTC: Malawi
It is more serious if a wife is unfaithful. Women are more affected because of illiteracy and the lack of economic empowerment.

TABLE 13 Women's Experience of Gender Bias (Or Not)

The following questions were put to women staff members: The first line represents the response of ten women from SU. The second line is the combined response of nine schools totalling 20 respondents. JMTI and RTS have no women on staff and did not respond to these questions. The = signifies the total of the 30 who answered (n=30).					
		STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
30a	As a woman, I feel completely accepted in our institution	3 12=15	5 6=11	2 2=4	=0
30b	I feel treated as an equal in decision making	3 9=12	6 8=14	3=3	1 0=1
30c	I have experienced instances of sexual harassment in the seminary / faculty / college	1 6=7	3 1=4	5 8=13	1 5=6
30d	Opportunities for promotion and advancement are equal for female staff members	3 7=10	6 6=12	5=5	1 2=3
30e	When I lecture, I feel like I am listened to/taken seriously by students (1 no answer)	3 12=15	6 7=13	1 0=1	0 0=0
30f	When at staff meetings I feel I am listened to and taken seriously by faculty members	3 11=14	6 6=12	1 3=4	
30g	Your view please: Compared with male students, women students have an equal opportunity of being called to a congregation (1 no answer)	0 7=7	1 5=6	6 4=10	3 3=6
Evaluate the following statements:					
31a	In my community, rape and abuse are serious problems	3 4=7	5 8=12	2 6=8	0 2=2
31b	In my community, rape and abuse are seriously talked about	0 2=2	4 12=16	4 3=7	2 3=5
31c	Domestic violence is treated seriously	0 6=6	4 4=8	5 8=13	1 2=3
31d	There are safe spaces where women can voice their pain	0 5=5	7 7=14	2 5=7	1 3=4
31e	There are safe spaces where women can get help if needed	0 6=6	7 8=15	3 5=8	0 1=1
31f	People's view of the Bible supports violence against women	1 1=2	6 9=15	3 7=10	0 3=3
31g	The church is a safe place for women to look for help for domestic violence, rape and abuse	0 5=5	3 9=12	5 3=8	2 3=5

Chapter 4

Why sexual violence?

The social reality of an absent church

*Elisabet le Roux*¹



Sylvia² is a 25-year-old woman from Liberia. During the war she was abducted by a group of men and raped by each of them in turn. One of them took her home and she was forced to stay with him as wife for two years, after which his parents chased her away. Now, after the war, she has not found any of her family and survives by doing small jobs for food. She has never had any medical treatment for the physical consequences of the rapes and has never received any emotional support for the trauma that she experienced. “My only comfort is the word of God, which I hear at church. But I have never told anyone at church what has happened to me. The church does not do anything for sexual violence survivors, so there is no reason to tell them anything.”

Two years ago Linda, a young Liberian girl who was then 12 years old, was drugged in a bar by three (also underage) boys from her community. They took her to one of the boys’ homes, where they took turns in raping her. Her father found her there early the next morning. The police were called in and forensic evidence obtained proving that she had been raped by the three boys. Yet the pressure from the community and the police department forced the family to abandon the case. Her family is still furious with her for shaming them in such a way. She does not talk to anyone at church about what happened, as she is too ashamed. Furthermore, she feels that her church does nothing for sexual violence survivors in any case, so there is no reason to talk to them about it.

Siku, a Rwandese woman, had been raped by a 28-year-old male member of the family that she was fostered by after the genocide. He was arrested and spent a few months in prison, but is now back living in her community. “Everyone knows what happened to me. They stigmatise me and wherever I go they say ‘There she goes’. The same happens at church. The church members talk and gossip about me and they give me no support.”

¹ Unit for Religion and Development Research (URDR), Stellenbosch University. The URDR can be contracted for consultancy research by any party, private or public. The field research referred to in this chapter was done for Tearfund UK in 2010 and 2011. It is used here with their permission and with the acknowledgement that they funded the original research project. The opinions, findings and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this chapter are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of Tearfund. E-mail: eleroux@sun.ac.za

² None of the names used in this chapter are real. They have been changed to protect the identities and privacy of the respondents. In certain cases some key details may have been left out or changed to protect the identity of the individual.

Introduction

These stories and quotes are from field research I conducted in 2010 in the DRC, Rwanda and Liberia, and continued in Burundi in 2011.³ This research, done for Tearfund UK,⁴ was on the role of the church in dealing with sexual violence (SV) in areas affected by armed conflict.^{5,6}

I will use this fieldwork to argue that the church is systematically absent in responding to the reality of SV, both in a preventative sense and in providing after-care. As such, congregations are actively creating a context in which SV survivors are stigmatised and discriminated against, and in which sexually violent practices are implicitly condoned.

Exploring the issue of inculturation as a possible reason for this state of affairs, sexually violent practices condoned by the church will be explored within the context of Burundi. After that, the theoretical undergirding of sexual violence will be briefly unpacked, focusing on the key issues of definition, power and masculinities. The key role of pastors in such a programme of church sensitisation is highlighted throughout and the need for training on SV *at seminary level* is reiterated. In conclusion, it is argued that such a programme of training is best done within a broader gender curriculum.

Conceptual clarity

While my focus is on the African context, it is important to remember that SV is not only an African, or a developing world, problem. In 2009 an estimated 1 318 398 violent crimes occurred in the United States of America, 6,7% of which were forcible rape, which means an estimated 88 333 cases of forcible rape were reported.⁷ In Wales and England in 2009/10 43 579 people experienced a “most serious sexual offence”⁸ (defined as being rape, sexual assault and sexual activity with children).⁹ These figures are a reflection of reported sexual violence, which (as is widely recognised) is a fraction of the actual offences committed. Furthermore, these figures are based on police statistics and/or household surveys. Statistics from centres that assist survivors of sexual violence would in all probability offer different numbers. Yet this suffices to point out that SV is thus clearly not only an African problem, though I will be focusing on the issue within the African context.

³ In doing the research in Burundi I was assisted by Denise Niyonizigiye, a Burundian psychologist, who conducted the fieldwork on-site in Burundi.

⁴ See footnote 1.

⁵ The full URDR reports, as well as the Tearfund report based on the URDR original research (*Silent no more*) can be downloaded at <http://tilz.tearfund.org/Topics/HIV+and+AIDS/Silent+No+More+Report+and+Event.htm>

⁶ This is also the topic of my current PhD studies.

⁷ US Department of Justice Federal Bureau of Investigation. 2010. Crime in the United States, 2009. Abstract. Online at: <http://www.ncjrs.gov/App/publications/abstract.aspx?ID=253949> [Accessed: October 25, 2011].

⁸ These ‘most serious sexual offences’ accounted for 80% of all sexual offences in 2009/10.

⁹ Flatley, John, Chirs Kershaw, Kevin Smith, Rupert Chaplin and Debbie Moon (eds.). Crime in England and Wales 2009/10: Findings from the British Crime Survey and police recorded crime. Online at: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110218135832/http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs10/hosb1210.pdf> [Accessed: October 25, 2011].

Secondly, while the Tearfund research was done in countries that are or were involved in armed conflict, this is not the (exclusive) focus in this chapter. SV is explored as a general phenomenon in society.¹⁰ SV is not a problem only in countries that are experiencing or have experienced armed conflict. South Africa is an example of this; while it has no recent history of armed conflict, a 2010 study by the Medical Research Foundation of South Africa reported that one in three men interviewed in Gauteng Province admitted to having raped a woman,¹¹ while a similar study in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape reported one in every four men admitting to at least one rape.¹² A study done based on survivors accessing help at public Thuthuzela rape survivor centres across South Africa points out that South African children between the ages of 12 and 17 are more likely to be raped than South Africans of any other age. In the three years that were reviewed during the study more than 34 000 survivors visited these centres.¹³ While these statistics are limited in scope and do not paint a picture of the entire situation across South Africa, they suffice to indicate that South Africa arguably deserves its reputation as the ‘rape capital’ of the world.¹⁴

Before going any further, I wish to clarify my use of pronouns in this chapter. I will be referring to those who are victims of SV by using the pronouns ‘she’ and ‘her’. Examples are primarily those that position females as victims and men as aggressors during sexual violence. At no time does this mean that men cannot and are not victims of SV as well; nor does it mean that women are never aggressors. This issue will be explored in more detail when unpacking the definition of SV. My use of female pronouns, as well as examples from a predominantly feminine context, reflects the context in which SV is perpetrated most often and I wish to avoid the repetitive “he/she”.

Current church involvement on SV in four African countries

The 2010 and 2011 Tearfund fieldwork revealed a bleak picture of church involvement in dealing with sexual violence, both in a preventative sense and as a caring institution. All of the research sites emphasised that SV is a serious problem within their communities and society, but that the churches in their communities (in general) fail to address it. In all the sites that formed part of the study, research participants told stories of churches that are not engaging with the issue; on the contrary, in many contexts churches were actively contributing to the stigma and discrimination that SV survivors face. Some churches are preaching and teaching in ways that support gender-discriminatory and sexually violent practices; others even openly advocate it. Some churches say that SV is

¹⁰ This is reflected in the quotes given at the beginning, where two of the instances of sexual violence that are described occurred in a time of peace.

¹¹ Tay, Nastasay. 1 in 3 men admit to rape. Online at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/11/27/south-africa-rape-study-m_n_788722.html [Accessed: October 27, 2011].

¹² South African rape survey shock. Online at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8107039.stm> [Accessed: October 27, 2011].

¹³ SA children most at risk of rape – study. Online at <http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/SA-children-most-at-risk-of-rape-study-20110329> [Accessed: October 27, 2011].

¹⁴ McAdam, Thomas. South Africa: rape capital of the world. Online at: <http://www.examiner.com/city-hall-in-louisville/south-africa-rape-capital-of-the-world> [Accessed: October 27, 2011]; Morse, John. From economic powerhouse to rape capital. Online at: <http://www.spearhead.com/0002-jm.html> [Accessed: October 27, 2011]; SA ‘rape capital’ of the world. Online at: <http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/SA-rape-capital-of-the-world-20051122> [Accessed: October 27, 2011].

not a 'spiritual' topic, part of the big taboo of sex, and refuse to talk about it or address it in any way. Little support is available for survivors in such a context; they are usually not even allowed space to talk about what happened to them. Thus some churches' advocacy for or support of traditions and beliefs conducive to sexual violence is not the only problem; even though churches may not actively support sexually violent practices, their lack of opposition also indirectly supports such practices.¹⁵

An interview with a faith-based organisation (FBO) leader in Goma, DRC, explained the dominant attitude of churches in his country to SV. It is not that they are unaware of the issue; on the contrary: "Churches do know what is happening. But when it comes to doing something they are lethargic."

SV is like the proverbial elephant in the room; the church knows what is going on in the community, but pretends and attempts to be unaware of it. In doing this, it takes its lead from the community. Communities refuse to address the issue; cultural practices generally dictate that SV survivors are stigmatised and ostracised and that perpetrators are rarely punished. SV is often not even recognised as SV, but seen as 'normal' or acceptable.¹⁶

Because of the cultural and social convictions and principles dominant within the community, the churches choose not to address the issue of sexual violence. This, I argue, is the result of the process of inculturation, with, to paraphrase Bosch,¹⁷ the gospel becoming the prisoner of culture. This will now be explained in more detail.

Inculturation

"The Christian faith never exists except as 'translated' into a culture."¹⁸ This faith has been inculturated into many different forms and contexts, while with Constantine's institution of the state church, with missionary movements and with Western colonialism the church has often (at least partly) been the bearer of culture¹⁹ instead of offering inculturised faith. I think it is safe to say that there is currently acceptance and acknowledgement that Christianity should take on context- and culturally appropriate forms, inviting a plurality of theologies.²⁰

Yet acknowledging and embracing the plurality of inculturised faith does not presuppose a seamless amalgamation of faith with culture. Bosch highlights the seemingly paradoxical binary present in inculturation. Inculturation should not be so successful

¹⁵ There were of course exceptions to this rule; some churches are supportive of SV survivors and condemn SV and beliefs and practices conducive to SV. Yet these churches were the exception to the rule and most churches who do engage with the issue do so on a limited scale.

¹⁶ This is particularly true with cases of marital sexual violence. It is understood that, since the sexual act happens within the confines of marriage, none of it can be wrong; many have in fact argued that sexual violence within a marriage is a logical impossibility. Usually the women, who are almost always the targets of sexual violence within a marriage, also do not see such acts as sexual violence. It is rather perceived as one of the less savoury aspects of marriage, which is nevertheless their duty to submit to.

¹⁷ Bosch, David J. 1992. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. New York, NY: Orbis Books.

¹⁸ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 447.

¹⁹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 448.

²⁰ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 452.

that in hearing it one only hears the religious dimension of one's own culture. The gospel should also be contradictory to one's culture.²¹

On the one hand there is the 'indigenizing' principle, which affirms that the gospel is at home in every culture and every culture is at home with the gospel. But then there is the 'pilgrim' principle, which warns us that the gospel will put us out of step with society ... Authentic inculturation may indeed view the gospel as the liberator of culture; the gospel can, however, also become culture's prisoner.²²

In looking at the issue of sexual violence and how this issue is addressed within the sites where I conducted my fieldwork, I argue that such a situation of 'the gospel becoming culture's prisoner' has occurred. Cultural perceptions of sex, sexuality, sexual violence and gender relations have become what the church preaches and enacts regarding sex, sexuality, sexual violence and gender relations.

What I think is called for in such a situation is what Pedro Arrupe describes as the need for inculturation to become "a principle that animates, directs, and unifies the culture, transforming it and remaking it so as to bring about a 'new creation.'"²³ In such a process, which is still mindful and respectful of culture, the gospel becomes the liberator of culture.

I posit, though, that mobilising for and steering such a process of liberating inculturation is a process that few people instinctively engage with. Most of us are products of our societies. We grow up within a certain culture, context and society; the beliefs, norms and standards of that society become ours. And these inherent a priori beliefs and norms are the ones that we find most difficult to investigate or critique; on the contrary, they are held as truths that we are often blind to.

Positioning a church that engages in such a process of liberating inculturation, which can transform the sexually violent and gendered practices and perceptions of a culture and society, needs a leader who is able to see 'beyond' the culturally scripted roles and practices of the community. I argue that pastors are in the perfect position to engage and drive such a process. They are leaders in their communities, with grassroots access and credibility. Yet, I contend, they do not engage in such a process of liberating inculturation as they are too firmly embedded within their cultural and societal framework. The majority of people need guidance and support in order to be able to critically engage with such deeply-held beliefs such as gender roles, sexual relations, etc. Pastors are people too.

Thus I argue for the urgent and very real need for training on sexual violence for pastors at seminary level. One might be surprised to know that – even in the most rural of areas, where the community has been devastated by decades of war and whole generations have missed out on formal education – research participants have explained to me that the problem is that their pastor adopts the same cultural thinking and mentality as the community. They were the ones telling me that their pastors need to be taught to see that the church should engage with SV and that they (as pastors) should be talking

²¹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 455.

²² Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 455.

²³ Arrupe in Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 455

and preaching about it. Of course, one cannot unreservedly blame pastors for the lack of involvement of churches in the issue of SV. My research did not entail an in-depth investigation of the causes of church disengagement. However, this is definitely a point to consider and an issue that needs further investigation. What can be argued without reservation is that people need guidance to investigate and evaluate their cultural perceptions regarding gender, sexual relationships and behaviour. Pastors can offer such guidance, but most of them will first also need such guidance! This should be done at seminary level, as there they can be challenged and guided in such a process.

Some loaded issues: sexually violent cultural practices

I have proposed that SV is continuing unopposed by churches in many communities because inculturised forms of the Christian faith have embraced prevailing cultural views on gender, sex and sexual violence, and has not critically engaged with the culture on these issues. I contend that some cultural beliefs and practices are inherently related to power and gender, and are inequitably powered and gendered, creating a situation in which SV is condoned as culturally acceptable. I will use the research done in Burundi in 2011 to illustrate this point.

Different types of research participants were interviewed in Burundi. But, whether asked or not asked, the common theme that all of them acknowledged was the existence of unequal power relations between men and women. Even the men who were interviewed acknowledged this. They also easily drew a connection between this inequality and the SV that was rife within their communities. They gave countless examples of how the power of men was being translated into sexual abuse of women, with the community condoning this behaviour. The link between how the Burundian culture upholds and enforces this gendered power imbalance was also easily recognised and identified.

In Burundi basically the same research methodology was used as in the 2010 research project. But in interviews with community leaders an important question was added, asking specifically whether they thought there are any cultural traditions that they think play a role in the incidence of SV. The answer was a resounding yes. Only one leader said that cultural traditions and practices do not play a role.

The culturally ordained practices that are conducive to SV that were mentioned by the research participants were polygamy, the practice that obliges young girls to share a room with a male guest, the custom of having a widow marry the brother of her dead husband, wives who run away from their abusive husbands being forced by their own families to return to their husbands, and the fact that culturally the rapist of one's daughter is considered one's son-in-law. These were only some of the practices that were mentioned. A more indirect practice that research participants stated is also contributing to SV is the taboo connected to talking about sex, sexual matters and sexual violence. Nowhere is it permissible to speak about these issues, also not in church.

Many research participants gave cultural idioms in illustration of the ingrained nature of the abusive, unequal sexual relationships between men and women within Burundian culture. Some of these (again, many different ones were given) included:

“A woman is a mat for guests”.

“No one can set a limit to the bull”.

“A true man is one who eats his food and that of others”.

The research participants (including the leaders) were mostly not educated people. Yet they could easily make the connection between their culture and its beliefs and practices, and the occurrence of SV. It is sad that, even though people coming to church can often clearly see the connection between cultural and societal attitudes towards sex and gender, and the occurrence of SV, it seems that the church as an institution and the pastors have not been able to do so. Or it might be that the church leadership are seeing the connection, but they tend not to do anything about it. The research participants described their churches as being hesitant to engage with the subject of SV, mainly limiting it to preaching against adultery. Many churches totally avoid the subject. There seems to be no attempt to deal with SV, its causes or its consequences.

I use the case of Burundi to show that church members are connecting the dots; they are recognising the cultural and social practices that are conducive to SV, and they are recognising a church and a pastor that cannot, or will not, deal with the situation.

Looking more broadly at the DRC, Rwanda and Liberia and the issue of pastors' involvement, research participants in these three countries referred to pastors who use certain scriptural passages, interpreted in a certain way, to support sexually violent practices, or at least power imbalances between the genders. Thus the church's – and pastors' – role in SV has not just been that of no action, but in some cases also active promotion of the status quo. I would go so far as to say that there have possibly, perhaps even probably, been more malevolent, more driven motives behind this as well. With most cultural constructs of male/female relationships putting the male in the position of power, and most pastors being male, there is a vested interest in supporting and continuing these unequal power relationships. In Goma (DRC) quite a few male FBO leaders told me that this is one of the main reasons why churches are not engaging with the issue of SV. Doing a group session with a women's rights organisation in Goma, the women were quite vocal in condemning the church and its role in SV. They have had numerous experiences where the church had directly or indirectly opposed their work. As one of the members explained to me: “Religious institutions are undermining women. They do not see women as important and they do not see a role for them.”

Unpacking SV and culture

The previous section argued for the need for training on SV for pastors as a way of ensuring that pastors move beyond their cultural perceptions of gender, sex and sexuality, and SV, and are able to guide their congregations and communities in the same process. As the first step to exploring the content of such SV education/training, it is necessary to look at sexual violence and unpack the contexts in which SV happens in more detail.

Defining sexual violence

I define sexual violence as any kind of violence enacted through sexual means or targeting the sexuality of another, regardless of age.²⁴ This includes penetration of the vagina or anus with any foreign object, forced vaginal, anal or oral sex, the cutting or mutilation of sexual parts, forced marriage/cohabitation, forced impregnation, forced abortion, forced sterilisation, sexual humiliation, medical experimentation on a person's sexual and reproductive organs, forced prostitution, coercive sex, trafficking in men/women, and pornography.²⁵

I think this broad definition is very important to ensure that all SV survivors get the support they need, but also so that all sexually violent practices are addressed for what they are, namely violence perpetrated by sexual means.

As I explained earlier, I have made a conscious choice to talk about SV, not sexual violence against women (SVAW). Yet my use of feminine pronouns and female-centred examples are meant to reflect the fact that SV does to an overwhelming extent happen to females. In teaching on SV I would caution against focusing only on SVAW, lest this further entrench gender divides positioning men as strong/aggressors, women as weak/victims; but also simply because the reality is that males also fall victim to SV. As a male respondent in DRC explained to me, telling me about the lack of funding available for medical care for male survivors of SV: "There seems to be little room for suffering men."²⁶

Yet the reality must be acknowledged for what it is – in the overwhelming majority of cases men are perpetrators of SV and women are victims. This tension between the two sides of the coin will thus be a challenge to those teaching on the subject.

But why does SV happen? POWER

There have been numerous attempts to explain the nature and motivation behind sexual violence. Susan Brownmiller, for example, in her seminal feminist text on rape contextualised male genitalia as a weapon and the rape of women by men as a "conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear".²⁷ In doing so, she ascribes a sociobiological basis to rape, suggesting that men innately use their sexual power to dominate women.²⁸ Yet other feminist theorists maintain that such explanations are inadequate and that rape is not purely an act of *sexual* aggression, but rather an act that carries out the desire to prove and maintain the aggressor's power and

²⁴ Salzman, Todd A. 1998. Rape camps as a means of ethnic cleansing: religious, cultural and ethical responses to rape victims in the former Yugoslavia. *Human Rights Quarterly*, 20:348.

²⁵ Gardam, Judith and Jarvis, Michelle. 2000. Women and armed conflict: the international response to the Beijing Platform for Action. *Columbia Human Rights Law Review*, 32(1):1-65. Their definition has been adapted slightly, so as to include both genders.

²⁶ The sexual violation of men is an issue that is fairly consistently ignored, on a social and academic level, and needs further in-depth research. See, for example, the article by Will Storr on the rape of men in Uganda, at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2011/jul/17/the-rape-of-men>.

²⁷ Brownmiller, Susan. 1975. *Against our Will: Men, Women and Rape*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 15.

²⁸ Milillo, Diana. 2006. Rape as tactic of war: social and psychological perspectives. *Affilia: Journal of Women and Social Work* 21(2):196-205, (198).

control. In other words, satisfaction does not come from the sexual act, but from the power enacted and the abasement of the victim.²⁹

There seems to be relative consensus on the fact that rape is an aggressive rather than a sexual act.³⁰ Consciously taking a step away from a focus on SVAW, and taking this further into SV in general, this power component of the sexual act is always present, I think. Yet in certain contexts there might be a different dynamic to the power relationship, for example, when a husband forces his wife to commit sexual practices she does not want to perform. While there is power present in this sexually violent act – for he is able to force her to do it because of his empowered role as male and husband – this power is what allows the act to happen and not necessarily what provides sexual pleasure in the act (or, at least, it is not necessarily the only thing that provides sexual pleasure). Thus, while power is always a component of SV, I argue that it is not necessarily always only an act of aggression rather than a sexual act.

In exploring power dynamics the issue of masculinity and masculinities arises. While one cannot here undertake a full discussion of the loaded concept of ‘masculinity’, it will suffice to say that it is a gendered concept with specific cultural meaning,³¹ a fluid concept of what it means to be ‘a man’. It is important to acknowledge the issue of multiple masculinities – there are different ways of being a man. But to quote Connell: “To recognise more than one kind of masculinity is only a first step. We need to examine the relations between them.”³² Thus the idea of a hegemonic masculinity is introduced, a concept which I think is important in the context of SV. Hegemonic masculinity is defined as *the composition of gender practices that justify patriarchy within a society*.³³ Within this context certain types of masculinity are expected and at times enforced on all men, which guarantees the dominant position of men and the subordination of women.

The idea of hegemonic masculinity serves to explain why some men at times engage in practices that seem contrary to their natures. Within the context of this concept and Connell’s explanation, a man would thus periodically have to engage in certain practices – not even necessarily sexually violent practices – that enforce male dominance. Thus, while his ‘normal’ masculinity is not patriarchal, periodically such acts are expected of him, as a way of ensuring that all men keep their position of power over all women.

Of course, the perpetration of SV can form part of this enactment of such a hegemonic masculinity. Furthermore, group identity is often built and performed through the execution of SV, where it becomes a group custom which supports the national or group

²⁹ Milillo, Rape as tactic of war, 196-205; Seifert, Ruth. 1996. The second front: the logic of sexual violence in wars. *Women’s Studies International Forum* 19(1/2):35-43; Seifert, Ruth. 1994. War and rape: a preliminary analysis. In Stiglmyer, Alexandra (ed.). *Mass Rape: The War against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina*. London: University of Nebraska Press, 54-72.

³⁰ While theorists such as Seifert and Milillo claim that there is consensus that sexual violence is an aggressive act (rather than a sexual act), others, such as Skjelsbæk (2001), state that there is no such consensus. Cf. Seifert, The second front; Seifert, War and rape; Skjelsbæk, Inger. 2001. Sexual violence and war: mapping out a complex relationship. *European Journal of International Relations* 7(2):211-237.

³¹ Connell, Raewyn W. 1995. The social organization of masculinity. In Connell, R.W. (ed.). *Masculinities*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 67-86, (31).

³² Connell, The social organization, 38.

³³ Connell, The social organization, 38-39.

identity.³⁴ Thus through SV a cohesive, hegemonic, masculine identity for men can constantly be created and reinforced. This identity is built on the premise of a power differential between men and women.

Exploring why men also fall victim to SV, Skjelsbæk³⁵ explains this by arguing that the key element of masculinity is power, whereas females and femininity are associated with weakness and victimisation. Looking at SV within the context of conflict, she explains that

(T)he victim of sexual violence in the war-zone is victimized by feminizing both the sex and the ethnic/religious/political identity to which the victim belongs, likewise the perpetrator's sex and ethnic/religious/political identity is empowered by becoming masculinised.³⁶

This view explains why men too are at times the targets of SV. Through the sexually violent act they become feminised and per definition weak and disempowered, and the perpetrator is masculinised and empowered. Skjelsbæk's argument³⁷ is that SV functions as an identity transaction between perpetrator and victim. The sexually violent act is thus a power transaction, which is the reason why both men and women can be aggressors and victims in this exchange.

Contextualising SV within the broader framework of teaching gender

I have offered these brief remarks about the nature of SV to give some kind of indication of how it fits into the broader framework of teaching gender. I think it would be impossible to teach on SV without teaching on gender; the two go hand in hand. As one can see from the brief remarks on the nature of SV, many of the topics and issues discussed in gender studies are also problematised under SV: masculinity, power, gender relations, culture, and so forth.

Allow me a few further remarks on what I think are important issues to address in a curriculum on SV. Once again these remarks are grounded on what was learnt from research participants in four different African countries.

Firstly, the issue of biblical gender roles and the use of biblical texts to support certain gendered practices. Other chapters in this book will go into this issue in more detail. But as I briefly mentioned earlier, participants identified scriptures that were used and interpreted in certain ways to condone certain sexually violent practices, or to condone the power imbalances between men and women. This is a very relevant and difficult issue, which will require careful handling by any teacher. It will also require teachers to carefully investigate their own motivations for their own biblical interpretations.

A second important issue is the fact that SV takes on different forms in different contexts. In the DRC SV targeted all women of any tribe, and it was extremely widespread. In Rwanda, on the other hand, participants focused to a much larger extent on the SV

³⁴ Milillo, Rape as tactic of war, 201.

³⁵ Skjelsbæk, Sexual violence and war, 225.

³⁶ Skjelsbæk, Sexual violence and war, 225.

³⁷ Skjelsbæk, Sexual violence and war, 226.

occurring between spouses, although culturally this is not seen as SV. In Liberia, the fact that young girls and boys are targets of SV, because of their impoverished situation, was one of the main concerns.

So it is important to realise that SV and sexually violent practices take on different forms in different communities. The consequences are also different. For example,³⁸ in the DRC all SV survivors are heavily stigmatised and rejected; in Rwanda post-genocide SV survivors generally receive support, while genocide SV survivors are heavily stigmatised and discriminated against. Pastors have to be prepared for the different forms that SV might take within the community that they serve, and equipped with the tools to firstly identify the different practices and consequences, and secondly develop appropriate responses to them.

Thirdly, this discussion runs the risk of implying that all African cultures are inherently sexually violent. I would like to discuss this briefly, with reference to two of my research sites. In the DRC it was interesting that the majority of the research participants said that prior to the war SV did not occur.³⁹ Now, with war and very extreme SV being part of the DRC context for so long, they explained that Congolese culture has changed and that it has become a sexually violent culture. It is no longer only combatants who perpetrate SV, but also civilians. In Burundi, on the other hand, where participants were generally much more direct in assessing the causes of SV, and they were also directly asked about cultural links to SV, the majority pointed to polygamy, a cultural tradition that predates the conflict, as being a particularly active causative factor in SV.

Thus the research sites that I did fieldwork in had ambiguous opinions regarding the causes of the cultural perceptions regarding SV. I posit that, because of the extremely patriarchal nature of most African cultures,⁴⁰ there is inherently a cultural risk of SV. In situations where culturally men and women are empowered and valued so differently, the possibility of SV occurring – and of the church as an inculturised product of that society condoning it – is inherently present.

Conclusion

The 2010 Tearfund Report in its final recommendations emphasised the need for seminary students to be trained on SV at seminary level:

Seminaries are one of the most fertile grounds for connecting with future pastors and training them to be truly active in addressing SV. The seminary environment is a meeting place for African and Western thought and culture, which creates space

³⁸ Once again, it is recognised that these are generalisations and that there are exceptions.

³⁹ One cannot really test the accuracy of this statement, as the same research was not done prior to the war as well. Generally, research on SV in the DRC has mostly been done during and after the war.

⁴⁰ See Castells (Castells, Manuel. 2004. *The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture. Volume II: The Power of Identity*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 192-302.) for an insightful discussion of patriarchy as founding structure of all contemporary societies, and the challenges and crises facing this model.

within students for new thoughts and ideas. SV should be part of the standard curriculum and students should be taught how to preach, train and counsel on it.⁴¹

It was especially poignant to realise while doing this research that the research participants did not need me, with my academic degrees and consultant status, to make the connections for them. They could clearly tell me what I have highlighted in this chapter. While they could envision the church playing a key role in dealing with SV – for they believe that it has the ability to do so – it is most decidedly not doing so at the moment. The leadership of the church and the church as a community are choosing to ignore, or are actively promoting, a societal status quo that is conducive to SV.

Allow me to end on an activist rather than an academic note. There is a need for pastors in the field who can cope with this situation. At the moment – at best – they do not have the tools to deal with and respond to SV. At worst they are condoning and promoting it. We need to train our students on this issue.

⁴¹ Le Roux, Elisabet. 2010. An Explorative Baseline: The Role of the Church in Sexual Violence in Countries that are/were in Armed Conflict, both in a Preventative Sense and as a Caring Institution. Unpublished research report for Tearfund, UK.

Chapter 5

Widowhood

A story of pain, a need for healing

*Gertrude Aopesyaga Kapuma*¹



Introduction

Women are created in the image of God. Yet this is hard to believe when one sees the way they are treated in most societies, even by their family members. Abusive relationships abound and violence against women is common within our communities.

One particular passage of life is particularly fraught with danger for women: that of becoming a widow. Losing one's partner is traumatic, but this trauma is compounded by the societal and cultural expectations of widows. With the spread of HIV&AIDS widowhood has become even more common, with women becoming widowed at an ever younger age, often also debilitated by the virus.

Despite the trauma suffered by widows and despite the fact that this status is becoming more common, widowhood remains an issue people are hesitant to speak about. Death and the dead are topics to be avoided and people are hesitant to address and confront traditional cultural practices. This hesitation is also present within higher institutions of theological learning. Ministers are not trained on how to support women who have lost their partners, nor are they shown how to confront cultural practices that discriminate against widows. On the contrary, ministers often do not even see what is wrong with such cultural practices. Thus widows are not supported in their time of need and the church plays no role in helping women to heal.

This chapter focuses on the issue of widowhood and widowhood practices, with the aim of highlighting the role that church leaders and churches should play in supporting widows. Church leaders have tremendous potential for educating and empowering communities to treat women in general, and widows specifically, with respect. In discussing this issue, I will draw on my personal experiences as a Chi-Chewa widow living in the southern region of Malawi. In doing so I pay heed to what Mercy Oduyoye rightly says:

The stories we tell of our hurts and joys are sacred. Telling them makes us vulnerable, but without sharing we cannot build community and solidarity. Our stories are precious paths on which we have walked with God and struggled for

¹ Dean of Studies, Zomba Theological College, Malawi. E-mail: mbusaga@yahoo.com

a passage to full humanity. They are events through which we have received the blessings of life from the hand of God.²

My story, as well as the stories of others that I share, will serve to illustrate the plight of widows. At the same time, these stories are shared in order to highlight the support that is needed and can be provided by church leaders and the church.

Death of a husband

I became a widow when my husband died in 1998.

I lost my husband in a car accident. It happened while we were in South Africa, thus I was far removed from friends and family in Malawi. The accident occurred on a Friday and I was only informed about the accident and his death on the following Tuesday. I will not forget the terrible week following that Tuesday, having to arrange for his remains to be taken back to Malawi.

While going through immigration at the border, the form asked for my marital status. Standing with a pen in my hand, I realised that my status had changed from married to widowed. My identity had changed without my having any choice or say in the matter. I realised that the stigma attached to widowhood will now be attached to me as well. This proved true once I arrived at home. I was a different person, friends were afraid to approach me. I was not who I used to be. I still find it difficult to adjust to the new life and lifestyle I was forced into once I became a widow.

Each type of loss brings its own kind of pain, challenges, reactions and responses. The death of a husband is a painful experience, especially unexpected death. Women are shocked and traumatised when hearing the news, especially if it is communicated in an insensitive way. One young widow shared with me how she could not believe the news the police brought her when her husband was killed in a car accident. She thought that they were lying to her, that it simply could not be her husband. She demanded that they take her to see and touch him, as they “ha(d) taken (her) husband alive to the mortuary”.³

Yet the shock of realising the death of a husband is but the first of the many trials a widow has to bear. Burdens and problems that used to be shared now have to be borne alone by the widow, which can be overwhelming and stressful.⁴ Yet the trauma of death is compounded most by the cultural practices and societal expectations to which the widow is forced to submit. As Rosemary Edet highlights:

² Oduyoye, Mercy A. 2001. *Introducing African Women's Theology*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 21.

³ The lady (name withheld) was relating the story of the death of her husband at a Widows Retreat on 20 June 2002 at the University of Fort Hare.

⁴ Collin, Gray R. 1988. *Christian Counselling: A Comprehensive Guide*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 348.

The death of a husband heralds a period of imprisonment and hostility to the wife or wives. This treatment may or may not be out of malice, but in all cases, women suffer and are subjected to rituals that are health hazards and heart-rending.⁵

Harmful cultural practices

There are many customs and practices that people follow when death occurs in a family. Cultural practices differ from one ethnic grouping to another and between different family clans. I am most acquainted with the practices of my own culture and my examples will draw heavily on this culture. It is important to note that these cultural practices place heavier and more burdens on widows in comparison to widowers. Many of these practices are also decidedly emotionally, physically and/or financially harmful to the widow.

Disempowering the widow

When her husband dies the woman is perceived to be unable to make any concrete decisions. Decisions are imposed on her, mostly by her family-in-law. These decisions are often not to her benefit, nor do they take her wishes into account. For example, the widow is not allowed the freedom to decide the format of her husband's funeral. This is decided by his family. An acquaintance of mine was in a car accident with her husband. He died fairly quickly, while she was kept in hospital for observation. Yet cultural practices demanded that her husband be buried immediately, because of the belief that the body of a person who died in an accident may not lie in state in the house (the way it normally does), as misfortune will then affect the entire family and they may die. The widow desperately wanted to attend the funeral, especially since the manner of his dying – he suffered tremendously – was very traumatic to her. Yet her wishes were ignored. Cultural demands were judged as being more important than the needs of the widow and she could not attend the funeral of her husband.

This disempowered state is not limited to the period immediately following the death. It continues, often for the rest of her life. When we talk about these experiences, she often says to me: "I wish I could be at the burial – just to say goodbye to my husband." The family never thought about her; they simply did what suited them. In my case, the wish of my husband was to be buried in my home village. However, his family decided to bury him at his village against his own wishes and mine. Every time we go to the grave, we are reminded of that painful decision made by in-laws.

Widowhood cleansing

The practice of ritual cleansing is present in many traditional African societies. It is based on the belief that the person most affected by the death – in this case the widow – is unclean. Evil spirits, agents of death, are present and she has to be purified before she can re-enter society. Thus rituals are performed after the death to cleanse or purify the widow. Many of these rituals are dangerous, especially because of the threat of

⁵ Edet, Rosemary N. 1992. Christianity and African Women's Rituals. In Kanyoro, Musimbi R.A. and Oduyoye, Mercy A. (eds.). *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition, and the Church in Africa*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 25-29.

HIV&AIDS, yet many communities continue to perform them. Fortunately, I did not have to go through this, because my family clan and that of my husband do not practise these rituals. But even if they had asked for it, my position and status as a minister would have stopped them. This does not stop me from mentioning the dangerous rituals that some of my sisters (widows) have gone through.

To those who still practice this ritual, the mourning process is perceived to be incomplete if the widow does not undergo the process of widowhood cleansing. The most common cleansing ritual in Malawi is what is called *kupita kufa* or *kuchotsa fumbi*. Literally this means “taking away dust after death”. With this practice a man is identified in the community to perform the ritual of cleansing. He is paid to do this. The man chosen is often one who is mentally unstable or someone generally ostracised by the community. His role is then to have sexual intercourse with the widow. This is believed to cleanse her from the evil spirits that caused the death in the family.

No one in the family seems to question this practice. How is sexual intercourse supposed to get rid of evil spirits? Why is it the widow who must have sex in order to cleanse the whole family? Why is a random man used to do this and why is he paid? This practice shows no respect for the widow. On the contrary, she loses her dignity and integrity by being forced to have sex with a man she did not choose herself. She also runs a great risk of contracting, or spreading, HIV&AIDS and/or other STIs.

This process of widowhood cleansing is arranged by the widow’s in-laws and she is not consulted, or her consent asked for, at any stage. On the contrary, the community in general, especially the older women, show support for the practice. Young widows find no support when they want to object to the practice, often because the older widows want to ensure that others go through the same rituals they did. Even if this practice clashes with Christian doctrine, widows are advised to uphold their cultural identity. In Kenya a recently widowed woman was advised by an older widow, who claimed to be a born-again Christian, that she should not follow Christianity blindly, but that “when it (came) to Luo tradition (she should) make sure that (she) put (her) house in order”. When she asked what was meant by this, she was told to “pull down your pants. It is the way things are done. It will only be for one night and your family will be taken care of. In the morning, you can repent, and go on with your Christianity”.⁶

Financial implications

Even if a husband provided for his wife in the event of his death, widows cannot always be sure that they will have access to that provision. A widow cannot even be sure that she will be allowed to keep the money and property that she herself worked for and earned. If an inheritance is available – such as a house, cars, cattle or money – the widow’s family-in-law often lays claim to it. This is done in two ways. The widow herself can be inherited by a male member of her dead husband’s family. Forcing her to marry him, the family-in-law gains control of the property and children. In many cases with the absence of a will, the family-in-law may simply take everything, leaving the widow behind to fend for herself.

⁶ Reggy-Mano. Mae A. 1999. *Widows: Challenges and the Choices*. Nairobi: SALAMTA.

This happened to a friend of mine. At the death of her husband, his family came to her house and proceeded to share amongst themselves all of the property, including a car. Luckily the widow could at least report the car as stolen as it was registered in her name, and it was returned to her.

Society expects that the costs of the death and burial be carried by the widow, in cases where the deceased was working and it is assumed that the widow has money. These expenses are not limited to the funeral. For example, a widow is expected to erect a tombstone for her husband one year after this death. Sometimes this is done without any financial assistance from her dead husband's family. Cultural beliefs state that the soul of her husband will haunt her otherwise. Thus many widows are forced into crippling debt by having to pay for the tombstone. Before one year had passed after the death of my husband, I consulted my father-in-law about erecting the tombstone. I was shocked at his response, which indicated that it was my sole responsibility to make sure that this was done. My brother-in-law further said that this assignment was costly and that I should be ready to meet the cost. Eventually this proved true and I was only supported by my family members.

Churches are not addressing this issue. While some churches may try to intervene in some widowhood rituals, the financial abuse of widows has rarely been addressed by churches.

In places where the church has played a role in stopping widowhood rituals, the African Christian widow still remains handicapped in terms of finance and property inheritance. If the widow is not in paid employment, she is thrown into penury, which goes against Christian principles.⁷

It is not only a widow's family-in-law that may abuse her. Her own family may do the same. Some widows are sent back to their parents' home with nothing and thus forced into a miserable life. Their own families often fail to provide for them, even though they are destitute. Sent away from the life she knew, she arrives with nothing, having to provide for herself and her children with no means of support. She becomes a stranger in her own village among her own people and she often becomes a dependant of the parents if they are still living.

Isolation from the world

Widowhood leads to the woman having to reposition herself within society. Both cultural practices relating to widowhood but also cultural views on widowhood serve to create an entirely new identity, role and position for the widow within her community and broader society.

Firstly, the widow is physically isolated, with people avoiding her after the burial. Owiti notes that "after the burial you don't see a single church member coming to visit. You

⁷ Nwachuku, Daisy N. 1992. The Christian Widow in African Culture. In Kanyoro, Musimbi R.A. and Oduyoye, Mercy A. *The Will to Arise*, 54-73.

are left in a very, very lonely situation".⁸ Many widows have said that this isolation was the most torturous experience they have ever gone through. The widow is expected to be silent and should not be seen talking to anyone: this is perceived as one of the virtues of a good grieving widow. She is constrained socially: she is not allowed to visit other homes or even shake hands with people. Thus the widow is forced to be alone and lonely at a time when she is arguably in most need of support and companionship. This is so traumatic that it can lead to depression and affect her physical health.

Widows are expected to undergo cultural rituals and practices without questioning them, even though these rituals might isolate them and/or not be a reflection of their feelings. For example, according to some cultural traditions, the widow cannot eat with others and in some traditions she is only allowed to use old plates, which will be destroyed after the rituals are done. To an extent these cultural rituals become a circus, with the rest of the community observing and checking to see whether the widow does adhere to them. Fulata Moyo, for example, was accused of not crying loudly enough for everybody to notice that she was the widow.⁹ This case suggests that often people do not come to comfort the widow at a difficult time, but rather come to observe whether she is adhering to the cultural expectations of a grieving widow.

Of course, people's inability to talk to widows is not always the result of cultural constraints, but also because of ignorance and/or ineptness in knowing how to talk to someone who is grieving. People are uncomfortable with death and those affected by it. One of my friends told me that she found it difficult to talk with me during the period after my husband died, as she felt she did not know what to say to me. I could not understand the difficulty – why could we not talk about the things we used to talk about? If she felt that talking about husbands was a sensitive issue, there remained many other topics as our friendship was not restricted to talking about our husbands. Yet every time we met she would only tell me that I was 'looking good'. Afterwards she explained that she kept on expecting me to look different and not be presentable. I had to look like someone who was mourning.

Widows' isolation is compounded – paradoxically – by the fact that they are forced to be so visible. The widow is forced to wear black during the mourning period and not allowed to wear anything fancy or attention-grabbing. Some cultures expect widows to cover their heads with a black scarf, while others expect widows to shave their heads. Thus the widow is instantly noticeable and cannot escape the stigma of her widowhood. It also allows the community to easily monitor her movements and behaviour, constantly checking whether she is adhering to cultural standards.

My own brother expected me to wear only black after the death of my husband. When I did not, he went to my mother demanding to know why I was not following cultural practices. This made me very angry when I heard about it – why did he go to my mother

⁸ Owiti, Monica. 2011. God Provides you with Iron Shoes. In Mombo, Esther and Joziase, Heleen (eds.). *If you Have No Voice, Just Sing! Narratives of Women's lives and Theological Education at St. Paul's University*. Limuru: Zapf Chancery, 80-85.

⁹ Moyo, Fulata L. 2002. Singing and Dancing Women's Liberation: My Story of Faith. In Phiri, Isabel A., Devakarsham Betty Govinden and Sarojini Nadar (eds.). *Her Stories: Hidden Histories of Women of Faith in Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 389-408.

and not come directly to me? My mother supported me, as she had also refused to wear black after the death of her husband. Yet my brother did not understand and refused to be satisfied. In the end I confronted him, explaining that I did not ask for the situation I was in and that I found no reason to show society what I was going through by wearing mourning clothes. At the time he still did not understand, but after some time had passed he apologised to me. Yet this whole situation meant that, in a time that I was in need of support, my own brother could not look past cultural protocol long enough to reach out and help his sister.

Repositioning within society

While a married woman is a person with respect and standing within a community, the moment her husband dies she becomes a sexualised being, a threat to the church and society. As a single woman the widow (again) experiences what single women go through. She is not free to talk to any man, not even the minister who can assist her in her grief. She must not speak to men otherwise she is perceived as enticing and seducing them. Whenever she has to talk to a man, she has to ensure that she has someone else present. Her interaction with her social networks is curtailed as she is under observation by the community. If the widow has a job, these restrictions cause even more problems, as one cannot work with women only, especially not if you are a pastor like me. I experienced that people concluded that my relationship with males was not professional but intimate. I am very aware that male colleagues do not feel comfortable in my presence. They cannot visit me alone unless they are accompanied by a friend or wife. I have learnt to be careful in order not to embarrass people. However, one has a feeling that married people can talk freely but as a widow you are avoided. Many times I feel isolated.

Impact on children

A woman who has children not only has to deal with her own trauma at the death of husband, but also that of her children. She has to support them both psychologically and physically.

My daughter had problems accepting the passing away of her father. In the time prior to his death I was concentrating on my studies, thus many of the child-rearing responsibilities were taken over by my husband. One result of this was that he and my daughter became very close. Not only was this relationship taken from her at his death, but she also had to go to boarding school in the following year, even though she was still very young. I remember her being sad, wishing that her father could fetch her from school when the holidays came, as all her friends' fathers were fetching them.

Helping her children adjust and go on with life without their father is the biggest challenge facing a widow. First, she has to help them deal with the psychological pain, helping them understand why he is no longer there and assisting them to deal with the pain of separation. Difficult questions are asked and the widow is the one who has to answer, even though it might be questions that she herself is struggling with.

In situations where the widow is stripped of her property and forced to relocate, she has to also help her children adjust to the new circumstances and environment. There might be a drastic fall in their financial situation, and they have to adjust to new friends and (even) family.

Lastly, children are affected by seeing how their mother is treated as a widow. It affects children to see their family and community members mistreat and disrespect their mother. This can have many different consequences. Some children become depressed and unable to perform at school. Others become rebellious and angry, sometimes even venting that anger on their mothers. Other children see the way their mothers are treated and internalise it, accepting it as the way women should be treated. This affects the way they will structure and run their own families one day.

Widowhood as a theological issue

Widowhood is a theological issue because it deals with human dignity. Genesis tells us that both sexes were created in the image of God. Later in this book there will be ample references to biblical passages and theological arguments dealing with gender equality. We need to look at our theology and see what we can do to address this issue. What does God say about widows? How can dignity be restored to these women when they read scripture? What mechanisms or systems are there in the Church to help and assist widows in their experience of pain as well as their healing?

In June 2002 I conducted a Widows' Retreat in the community of Fort Hare University in South Africa. This was the participants' first ever opportunity of sharing what they experienced as widows. The stories shared by these widows were heart-rending. There were some who had been widowed for more than 20 years and were still waiting for their husbands to return. There were some who were afraid to sleep alone in a room, because of all the nightmares they had.

We need our theology to be able to address the realities and problems of these widows. How can they even begin to understand the liberation wrought by a God who was so particular about widows and their problems, if we as a church do not address the issue? Our theology and our churches should give recognition to and address the experiences and realities of women. Oduyoye justifies the need to do a theology from such experiences of women and says that:

Women experience the injustice of being blamed for whatever does not go right. The injustice of having to implement decisions they did not help to make, the injustice of having to struggle to have one's humanity recognized and treated as such, all this becomes the context of struggle reflected in women's theology.¹⁰

The church can intervene in the plight of widows in different ways, as explained below.

¹⁰ Oduyoye, *Introducing*, 36-37.

Addressing misuse of the Bible and theology

The Bible is often quoted incorrectly and/or out of context, or misinterpreted, in order to provide comfort to widows. But this often has the opposite result, with the widow beginning to question God and her faith.

When my husband died, whenever I approached my fellow Christian women for comfort or support, I was repeatedly told that I was not alone. Quoting Isaiah 54:4-5, they pointed out that I am now married to God:

Do not be afraid; you will not suffer shame. Do not fear disgrace; you will not be humiliated. You will forget the shame of your youth and remember no more the reproach of your widowhood. For your maker is your husband – the Lord God Almighty is his name.

I was also reminded that Jesus Christ was now the father of my children and that I could and should ask him for anything.

This ‘support’ led to me questioning theology and biblical interpretation. I was made even more vulnerable by these women and their words. They were trying to help, but were adding to my pain, and my vulnerability in becoming widowed. It made me rebellious, because I was suffering from pain and isolation. I read the Isaiah passage repeatedly. How does it apply to widows only? What about the single women and married women? Is God not their husband also? I could not understand their interpretation of the passage, which made me question my own faith and understanding.

Most Christians are guilty of misusing or misinterpreting biblical texts, even ministers. The church needs to engage more with the issue of death, widows and widowers, in order to give church members a better theological framework to deal with these issues. What is said and done to widows is in many cases more culturally induced than biblically. This has to be countered in theological discourses.

Show solidarity with women

It is the church’s responsibility to liberate women from the unjust experiences they go through in the community. The church is a critically important agent in achieving a society in which women’s equality and dignity is recognised. If the dignity and importance of women in general is not recognised, the plight of widows cannot be addressed. The church has to identify and side with women, not only in order to improve the situation of widows, but because it is their Christian duty to be in solidarity with those who are in pain.

Liberate women by opposing cultural practices that discriminate

Many churches have disciplinary protocols and actions in place that discipline members who do not follow the rules, practices and procedures of the given church. Yet churches should also put in place practical measures to counter the injustices that widows face. Issues mentioned in this paper can and should be addressed with disciplinary measures against, for example, the illegal “inheritance” of the property of a deceased, when this leads to the widow and her children suffering hardships.

Give women room to tell their stories

The church is called to listen to the stories told by women, of their experiences of abuse and pain, of the struggles women go through and how these can be made public to bring positive change. Finca was a witness to how the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission helped people through listening to the stories that were being told or uncovered. This was not easy, because the experience was painful to both the listener and the victim. He observed that the process of telling the story helped many to begin to heal or reconcile with the past. He says "Telling your story of obedience to a higher goal is a liberating act. You bless your memories of pain and struggle as you fit together in one picture the act of liberation".¹¹

Provide practical pastoral care

Through some practical pastoral care models the church may provide wholeness, healing and liberation to widows and become an instrument of justice for widows and those who are marginalised. The church should provide mechanisms or special facilities that can help and assist widows to heal and liberate themselves from unfortunate and negative experiences of widowhood.

Western communities generally make counselling facilities and medical support available to widows. Wills are usually made and generally provide for the widow. The community also tends to be accepting of widows remarrying. In African societies, on the other hand, this is usually not the case. Widows are isolated and expected to go through painful experiences in addition to dealing with the trauma of losing a husband.

The church should be providing the counselling and emotional support that widows need, both immediately after the death of a husband but also in the long term. This raises many challenges for the African church. The church should have properly organised counselling available in which the widow is helped to appraise herself realistically in her new situation. She should be equipped with new skills to help her deal with her new reality. She needs help in acquiring strategies for dealing with grief.

Conclusion

In most African cultures the church and contextualised theology should work at providing refuge and emotional support for widows as people created in the image of God whose human dignity is at stake. It should also provide practical interventions countering the cultural beliefs and practices that subjugate widows.

I have shared my story of what hampered me and what helped me in dealing with the death of my husband. This is a continuing process and one that has been healing. The challenge is to allow this space for all widows, so that healing can also be achieved for them.

¹¹ Finca, Bongani. 2000. Learning to Bless our Memories. In Denis, Philippe (ed). *Orality, Memory & the Past: Listening to Voices of Black Clergy under the Colonialism and Apartheid*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 11-19 (15).

Chapter 6

Religion and masculinities in Africa

The impact on HIV infection and gender-based violence

*Ezra Chitando*¹



Introduction

The study of religion in Africa² is a product of external influences. The discipline has been closely related to the experiences of the continent and its encounter with “outsiders.” To a large extent the study of religion in Africa has been shaped by European traditions.³ The implication has been that the methods and approaches adopted in the study of religion in Africa have been derived from outside of Africa. For a continent that has waged liberation struggles, this becomes a contentious issue. How can African scholars be subservient to the theories and methods of their erstwhile colonisers? Can African scholars of religion have the confidence to take the discipline in a different direction as they respond to African realities? Such questions lie at the heart of debates on developing African traditions in the study of religion in Africa.

This chapter utilises the emerging field of religion and masculinities to explore the opportunities for Africanisation. The main argument is that African material will necessarily colour and influence the study of religion in Africa. This is rightly so: being located in Africa means that the study of religion should not be the same here as it is elsewhere in the world. The chapter argues that the discourse on religion and masculinities in Africa provides a valuable opportunity for African scholars to be creative and illustrate the possibility of doing religious studies with an African flavour.

The first section of the paper outlines male dominance in the study of religion in Africa. The second section describes the discourse on gender in the study of religion in Africa, paying particular attention to women’s issues and the subsequent marginalisation of men. The third section briefly explains the factors that have given rise to the attention devoted to masculinities in Africa, with a emphasis on the impact of the HIV epidemic. The fourth section examines how the theme of religion and masculinities offers a valuable

¹ Prof Dr Ezra Chitando is affiliated to the Ecumenical HIV&AIDS Initiative in Africa (EHAIA)/World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Department of Religious Studies, Classics and Philosophy, University of Zimbabwe. E-mail: chitsa21@yahoo.com

² “Africa” is a multivalent term. It is used here in a general sense to cover Anglophone sub-Saharan Africa. While there are notable differences in the growth of the discipline in the area under analysis, there are sufficient similarities to justify the generalisations.

³ Ludwig, Frieder and Afe, Adogame (eds.). 2004. *European Traditions in the Study of Religion in Africa*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag.

opportunity to African scholars to chart a new path in the discipline. It analyses the opportunities for Africanisation. In conclusion, the paper argues that the Africanisation of religious studies in Africa must be undertaken as matter of urgency.

Male dominance and the study of religion in Africa

The study of religion in Africa has generally been gender blind until very recently. This is due to the fact that the pioneering scholars in the study of religion were European and, later, African males who did not pay attention to the dynamics of gender. In his useful application of the ideas of Edward Said to the study of African Traditional Religions,⁴ Henk J. van Rinsum suggests that Geoffrey Parrinder could be regarded as the patriarchal authority, with John S. Mbiti and E. Bolaji Idowu as “followers and elaborators.” In this scheme Jacob Olupona, Friday Mbon and Umar H. D. Danfulani would be the “new authorities.”⁵ As becomes apparent, the line of succession is exclusively male.

The study of religion in Africa has therefore been (and continues to be) a male-dominated discipline.⁶ As was the case with the development of the discipline in Europe, male scholars, interests and methodologies have been dominant. While it might seem controversial to describe methodologies as “male”, it must be appreciated that approaches such as phenomenology are not gender neutral. Although they purport to be “scientific and scholarly”, they are very much an outcome of male interests and preoccupations. By carrying over from Europe to Africa this male dominance of the discipline, religious studies missed an opportunity to develop a different outlook in Africa.

Male scholars have been shaping the direction of religious studies in Africa since the 1960s, when the discipline sought to establish itself more firmly on the continent. Across the various regions of Africa it was male scholars who were replacing the departing European scholars. In this regard the coalescence of indigenous and European patriarchies has played a major role in excluding women from religious studies. Patriarchy privileges male interests, needs and even frivolities. As a result, a visit to most departments of religious studies in Africa will familiarise one with male “gate keepers and patriarchal authorities.”⁷

It is important to highlight the fact that the dominance of men in religious studies is in keeping with the general absence of women in higher education in Africa. There is a need to acknowledge the “politics of exclusion in higher education”⁸ and the historical

⁴ There is currently greater gravitation towards the term, “African Indigenous Religions.” However, I retain the term “African Traditional Religions” because of its recurrence in the literature consulted.

⁵ Van Rinsum, Henk J. 2003. “Knowing the African”: Edwin W. Smith and the Invention of African Traditional Religion. In Cox, James L. and Ter Haar, Gerrie (eds.). *Uniquely African? African Christian Identity from Cultural and Historical Perspectives*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 39-66.

⁶ Chitando, Ezra and Chirongoma, Sophie. 2008. Challenging Masculinities: Religious Studies, Men and HIV in Africa. *Journal of Constructive Theology* 14(1):55-69.

⁷ The approach to power in African academia (as indeed elsewhere) is characterised by the dominance of the “power over” paradigm, in contrast to the “power with” paradigm. While the former induces suffocation, the latter promotes solidarity and a shared vision.

⁸ Moja, Teboho. 2007. Politics of Exclusion in Higher Education: The Inadequacy of Gender Issues in the Globalization Debates. In Assié-Lumumba, N’Dri T. (ed.) *Women and Higher Education in Africa: Reconceptualizing Gender-Based Human Capabilities and Upgrading Human Rights to Knowledge*. Abidjan: CEPARRED, 39-66.

factors that have led to male dominance. An awareness of the historical and ideological factors that have kept women out of higher education will enable one to put the absence of women in the study of religion into proper perspective.

Women in Africa (as is the case the world over) generally entered academia later than their male counterparts. A systematic and deliberate colonial policy ensured that African women were excluded from the various ivory towers that dotted the continent. Not only did missionary education disproportionately extend educational opportunities to males, but men's education was also accorded higher priority than that of women. A variety of factors, including the emphasis on female responsibility for domestic chores, generalised conditions of poverty and the overarching influence of patriarchy combined to make women's access and admission to academic institutions an unreachable dream for much of the colonial period. Women were a rare commodity in the annals of academia and were Africa's true "drawers of water, and hewers of wood."⁹

Thus men have dominated the academic study of religion in Africa. The situation in religious studies remained unchanged until the late 1970s, when some departments of religious studies in West Africa began to employ the occasional woman lecturer. It was only in the 1990s, through the forceful work of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (hereafter, the Circle) led by the Ghanaian theologian Mercy Amba Oduyoye, that more departments of religious studies began to recruit women scholars. However, the situation is still far from satisfactory, as the percentage of women scholars active within the discipline remains very low. As with their counterparts in theology,¹⁰ African women undertaking religious studies face numerous challenges. However, those who have been able to face these challenges and were able to enter into this male-dominated discipline began to devote attention to the issue of gender.

Gender and the study of religion in Africa

Since the 1990s the Circle has played a major role in ensuring that gender is put on the agenda of the study of religion in Africa. Although most of the Circle activists are theologians, some are involved in religious studies. Yet others straddle both worlds.¹¹ Circle authors have challenged the church in Africa and departments of religious studies at academic institutions to take women's issues seriously. Whereas previously the departments of religious studies had given the impression that religion meant the same to men and women, women scholars have sought to highlight the significance of religion to women (as opposed to what it means to men).

African women scholars of religion have challenged the dominant approaches to the discipline by paying attention to the status of women in the various religions of Africa. In particular, they have dwelt on the status of women in African Traditional Religions,

⁹ Oloka-Onyango, Joe and Tamale, Sylvia. 2000. "Bitches" at the Academy: Gender and Academic Freedom in Africa. In Sall, Ebrima (ed.). *Women in Academia: Gender and Academic Freedom in Africa*. Dakar: CODESRIA, 1-23.

¹⁰ Phiri, Isabel A. 2009. Major Challenges for African Women in Theological Education (1989-2008). *International Review of Mission* 98(1):105-119.

¹¹ A separate study is required to explore the relationship between theology and religious studies in Africa. However, a number of practitioners have moved between the two areas with relative ease.

Christianity and Islam. Whereas male scholars have tended to describe these religions in general terms, women scholars have been more interested in focusing on women's voices. In her book, *Women in the Yoruba Religious Sphere*, Oyeronke Olajubu clarifies this stance:

Where people extol complementary gender relations, but accounts of people's culture and religious traditions present the male as the active participant and the female as docile and passive, there is a valid reason for the hermeneutic of suspicion. This is very true of Yoruba religious tradition, which is the focus of this work. There is need to retrieve, reinterpret, and reevaluate previous assumptions about women in religious traditions to arrive at the center point where all voices are heard and respected.¹²

The focus on gender has been accentuated by the Circle's focus on HIV and its impact on women and girls in Africa. The Circle has emerged as the most consistent group writing on HIV, religion and gender in Africa.¹³ The Circle has demonstrated how inequitable gender relations buttressed by religion and culture have left African women and girls more vulnerable to HIV. Women scholars in religious studies and theology have shown how religion and culture have been abused to condemn women and children to premature deaths in the era of HIV in Africa. Whereas approaches such as phenomenology call upon scholars to be neutral, African women scholars have spoken out in favour of restructuring religions in order to achieve gender justice.

By placing the emphasis on women's religious experiences, African women scholars of religion such as Isabel A. Phiri have forced the discipline to become conscious of gender dynamics. Although many male scholars of religion have resisted applying the tools of gender analysis to their work, it is fair to say that the face of the discipline has been affected decisively by the arrival of African women scholars. While some male scholars condescendingly dismiss gendered approaches to the study of religion in Africa,¹⁴ it must be acknowledged that women scholars have been productive and effective.

Emphasising women's religious experiences, however, has had the effect of effacing men from the discourse on gender. This has had the negative effect of suggesting that men do not have a gender. Whereas gender refers to the socially prescribed roles for men and women, the trend has been to focus exclusively on women. Around 2000 it became clear to gender activists that there was a need to bring men back into the discourse on gender and HIV. As a result, there has been a notable increase in interest in masculinities and religion in Africa. For example, the *Journal of Constructive Theology*, published by the School of Religion and Theology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, has devoted two full issues to the theme of masculinity.¹⁵

¹² Olajubu, Oyeronke. 2003. *Women in the Yoruba Religious Sphere*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 7.

¹³ Dube, Musa W. 2009. HIV&AIDS Research and Writing in the Circle of African Women Theologians, 2002-2006. In Chitando, Ezra and Hadebe, Nontando (eds.). *Compassionate Circles: African Women Theologians Facing HIV*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 173-196.

¹⁴ Incredibly, some male lecturers (in some African universities) contend that publications on gender must not be considered in promotion processes as "gender is not academic"!

¹⁵ Issue 12(1) in 2006 and Issue 14(1) in 2008.

Masculinities, HIV and religion in Africa

Recognising the importance of men in the response to HIV, there have been calls to pay more attention to the social construction of masculinity. It has become generally accepted that society plays an important role in shaping perceptions of manhood. It is society that prescribes what men may or may not do. Of significance has been society's double standards regarding the sexual behaviour of men and women. Whereas women are expected to be chaste and restrained, men having multiple sexual partners is more readily condoned. Furthermore, men are by far most often the perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence (GBV). Such observations have led to calls to pay more attention to masculinities¹⁶ in the time of HIV.¹⁷

Religion is a major force in the construction of masculinities across Africa (and in other parts of the world). As a guide to belief and action, religion equips its adherents with ethical standards. African Traditional Religions, Christianity and Islam all have certain expectations regarding men. To a large extent they construct men to be the leaders and to take control over women and children. As with most other religions in the world, they are decidedly patriarchal.¹⁸ through their sacred writings, oral traditions, myths, inherited beliefs and practices, they posit men as being superior to women.

Faced with the challenges of HIV and GBV, activists in Africa have been calling for the transformation of masculinities. They contend that religion has a role to play in this transformation, as it has up until now promoted aggressive masculinities. For example, many men cite the scriptures of various religions to defend their authority to "discipline" women. An abuse of sacred texts and traditions by men has allowed men to project having multiple sexual partners and using violence as "divinely sanctioned." Others maintain that as "heads" they have the license to make decisions without consulting women. In many instances this leads to GBV as women resist such abuses of power. In short, religion has been implicated in promoting death-dealing masculinities in the time of HIV and GBV.¹⁹

Furthermore, for centuries the processes of urbanisation, Arabisation and Christianisation have had a telling effect on how men in Africa express their masculinities. The fact that Arabisation and Westernisation demonised African ethnic masculinities as primitive, heathen and barbaric did not bar African men from cross-pollinating the masculinities of Arab and Western cultures. As a result current African elite masculinities are predominantly crossbreeds and hybrids of indigenous masculinity and Western modernity. To prove that they are men, many African leaders sacrifice their own lives and those of innocent women, men and children at the altar of their own masculine ambiguity.

¹⁶ The plural ("masculinities") is used as there is no single, uniform way of being a man across different religions and cultures.

¹⁷ Van Klinken, Adriaan. 2009. *Intersecting Religion, Masculinities and HIV & AIDS*. In Breetvelt, Jaap (ed.). *Theological Responses to the HIV&AIDS Epidemic*. Utrecht: Kerk in Actie, 44-56.

¹⁸ Sharma, Arvind (ed.). 1987. *Women in World Religions*. Albany, NY: University of New York Press.

¹⁹ Chitando, Ezra. 2007. *Acting in Hope: African Churches and HIV/AIDS*. Volume 2. Geneva: World Council of Churches.

There is a growing appreciation that religions can play a constructive role in challenging men to be change agents in the face of HIV and gender-based violence in Africa.²⁰ Men must be challenged to adopt new approaches towards power. This will require rigorous analyses of the religious and cultural factors that inform aggressive masculinities. Researchers in different African contexts will need to interrogate the African appropriation of sacred texts in Christianity and Islam, as well as the use of oral traditions to support patriarchal dominance. Deconstructing and reinterpreting these texts to transform masculinities must be undertaken in order to discover and deliver “the justice men owe to women”, while acknowledging the “positive resources from world religions”.²¹

From the foregoing discussion, it is clear that there is growing interest in the area of masculinities, HIV and religion. As this is a new area of research and publication, there is room for Africanising. However, before illustrating how the area of masculinities and religion can have “African traditions”, there is a need to grapple, briefly, with the very concept of Africanisation. I undertake this task in the following section.

Africanising religious studies: a characterisation and an overview of the challenges

The discourse on religion and masculinities in Africa can pursue one of a number of opportunities for Africanising the field of study. However, there is no unanimity on either the meaning or desirability of Africanisation. In general, Africanising refers to the process of ensuring that African concerns, issues, methods and personnel are reflected in a given discipline. With special reference to religious studies, Africanising the discipline would mean that a student studying religion in Africa would be able to interact with African concerns, issues, methods and personnel in an African university. Walter Kamba, the University of Zimbabwe’s first black Vice-Chancellor, offers some useful insights on Africanisation following his appointment in 1981:²²

It became necessary for the University to have its feet on Zimbabwean soil ... It became essential to have a new ethos and orientation rooted in the new reality of Zimbabwe. To say this was not in any way to deny the unquestionable importance of the international dimension. There was, however, a need for the University of Zimbabwe to play, and be seen to play, a more active and meaningful role in the development of Zimbabwe.²³

From this comment one can argue that Africanisation implies that institutions of higher learning should “have their feet on African soil.” They should strive to grapple with African issues and endeavour to find African solutions. However, they should do this

²⁰ Manda, Domoka Lucinda. 2009. Religions and the Responsibility of Men in Relation to HIV and Gender-Based Violence: An Ethical Call. *Journal of Constructive Theology* 15(2):23-40.

²¹ Raines, John and Maguire, Daniel (eds). 2000. *The Justice Men Owe to Women: Positive Resources from World Religions*. New York, NY: State University of New York Press.

²² Zimbabwe attained independence in 1980.

²³ Zinyemba, Ranga. 2010. Introduction: The Book, The Man and the Essence of the Change Sought. In Ranga, Zinyemba (ed.). *Academia and the Dynamics of Transformative Leadership: The Experience of the University of Zimbabwe in the First Decade after Zimbabwe’s Independence (1981-1992)*. Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 1-24.

knowing full well that universities necessarily have an international dimension and therefore ensure that African students are not alienated from the rest of the world during their studies.

In the case of religious studies, it is vital that students experience the discipline as reflecting an African ethos. The bulk of the material encountered should speak to the real-life situation of the student. The textbooks accessed and examples used must reflect African realities. A student studying religion in Harare must be exposed to different material and contextual settings compared to a student studying religion in London. This would mean that religious studies has “its roots in African soil.” Of course, these students from the respective countries should still have a lot in common as both study in the same discipline.

The Africanisation of religious studies faces a number of challenges. First, as discussed earlier, one has to realise that the discipline has its origins outside of Africa.²⁴ This poses a major challenge to the discipline in an African context. African practitioners of the discipline are unavoidably heavily influenced by the formulations of the (Western) pioneers. The vision, procedures and goals have already been framed, forcing most practitioners to utilise pre-existing categories and concepts. This “burden of history” has meant that most African practitioners of the discipline are content, or are forced to be content, with rehashing the methodologies and conclusions that were reached by their European predecessors in the discipline. Since “African ancestors” of the discipline are still too few, African practitioners of the discipline have had to become merely “mediums” of these “European ancestors”.

Secondly, the Africanisation of religious studies in Africa has been compromised by the absence of vibrant methodological schools. Apart from the pioneering work done in countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Uganda, Botswana and Zimbabwe, most departments of religious studies in Africa continue to rely on publications from outside the continent. This still remains the situation decades after the process of decolonisation started. While there are African publications, these tend to be rare and rarely replaced. Most reading lists on African Traditional Religions, for example, are made up of the earlier publications by Mbiti and Idowu. There has been very little innovation and expansion of the scope of the discipline. Even a recent essay by Mike P. Adogbo²⁵ on the methodological challenges in studying African Traditional Religions hardly brings any new insights on method and theory into the study of religion. In the absence of rigorous theoretical reflections on the assumptions and approaches within religious studies in Africa, it has been difficult for “African traditions” to emerge.

A third challenge is the book famine that characterises the study of religion in Africa. Most religious studies courses in Africa are totally dependent on textbooks that were written and published in Europe and North America. There have been notable publishing initiatives in Kenya and South Africa, but these remain few and inadequate.

²⁴ Chitando, Ezra. 2008. Sub-Saharan Africa. In Alles, Gregory D. (ed.). *Religious Studies: A Global View*. New York, NY: Routledge, 102-125.

²⁵ Adogbo, Mike P. 2005. Methodological Problems in the Study of African Traditional Religions. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 122:76-83.

In Nigeria considerable progress has been made, but mainly within the area of biblical studies.²⁶ While there are significant publications within the field of Africanisation,²⁷ there remains a crying need for African scholars in religious studies to follow this lead and reflect on the process of Africanisation.

Finally, there are some African scholars of religion who are uncomfortable with the very concept of Africanisation. Given the intractable problems that Africa faces, it is understandable that some scholars would be wary of embracing a concept that seems to imply accepting the “ugly face” of the continent. Africa continues to struggle economically, socially and politically. The HIV epidemic has worsened the continent’s image as it gives the impression of a diseased and dying continent. Others contend that Africanisation implies a lowering of standards. They are convinced that the concept is laden with ideological assumptions and that it results in acceptance of mediocrity.

Despite the challenges and misgivings surrounding Africanisation, I am convinced that the study of religion in Africa must prioritise the process of Africanisation. Failure to undertake Africanisation implies that the discipline will struggle to have a meaningful impact on the continent. I am also persuaded that the area of religion and masculinities offers useful insights into the process of Africanisation. The following section therefore uses the theme of religion and masculinities to investigate opportunities for Africanisation.

Religion and masculinities: opportunities for Africanisation

The foregoing section has outlined some of the major challenges facing the quest to Africanise religious studies. In this section, I seek to highlight how scholars working on religion and masculinities in Africa have ample scope for Africanising in their academic endeavours. I argue that although concepts and material developed by scholars outside the continent is helpful, African scholars should not feel bound to work only within the parameters that have been set by their Western counterparts.

Masculinities as research focus in African religious studies

One of the key aims of Africanisation is to ensure that African concerns are at the centre of research efforts in religious studies. In the face of the HIV epidemic, the theme of masculinities must find a place in the study of religion in Africa. If the discipline is to be contextually sensitive and relevant to the lived realities of Africans, it must grapple with the theme of masculinities. The Circle has done well to bring gender to the fore. However, women scholars have tended to focus exclusively on women’s issues. To complement this process, there is a need to undertake research into religion and the formation of masculinities in Africa.

For too long the study of religion in Africa has waited for topics to come to the fore within the discipline in Europe and North America and then followed suit. This is the “follow my leader” mentality that continues to stifle the growth of the discipline in

²⁶ This was done mainly by the Nigerian Association of Biblical Studies.

²⁷ For example, Abogunrin, S. O. (ed.). 2005. *Decolonization of Biblical Interpretation in Africa*. Biblical Studies Series Number 4. Ibadan: Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies (NABIS).

Africa²⁸ and it is probably for this reason that the study of religion in Africa continues to struggle to integrate HIV as a focus area. Since HIV has not received attention within the discipline in Europe and North America, most African scholars do not feel confident to tackle it within their research, teaching and community engagement activities. Paying attention to masculinities within the study of religion in Africa will ensure that a key issue on the continent finds space within the curriculum. An added benefit would be that, as this theme has not yet received much scholarly attention, African scholars will not feel compelled to look to Western scholars for guidance and will be free to engage innovatively with the subject.

The study of the interface between religion and masculinities in Africa is an urgent undertaking as it will provide policy makers with helpful insights into HIV. Although the study of religion is often taken as an end in itself, the crisis brought about by HIV means that this is a luxury that Africa cannot afford. Pursuing knowledge for the sake of knowledge is indeed the mandate of the university, including universities based in Africa. However, in Africa accessing life-saving knowledge is equally critical (I shall return to this theme below). Consequently, the study of the relationship between religion and masculinities will equip and assist students, lecturers and the general public in creating strategies for effective interventions.

Research efforts in religious studies in Africa must be directed towards the transformation of masculinities in the face of HIV and GBV. This must become an urgent undertaking. Scholars in the various areas of religious studies must utilise the opportunity to reflect on how current perceptions of masculinities have not been beneficial to African communities. Writing on Islam in general, Trad Godsey has suggested the need for new conceptualisations of masculinity.

The redefining and reformulation of masculinity in the Muslim world to allow manliness to be expressed as weakness and vulnerability has both a Qur'anic and Prophetic precedent. While the AIDS pandemic creates an urgency for change, the Qur'an and the Sunnah have always contained tools to reconstruct manhood in a way that achieves greater gender equity for women and men alike.²⁹

The approach that Godsey adopts to Islam needs to be emulated in the reflections on masculinities in African Traditional Religions, African Christianity, African Islam, African Buddhism and other religions found in the African religious sphere. How does a particular African religion shape the values that men hold dear? To what extent do these ideas of manhood pose a danger to women, children and other men? What are the redemptive values found in these religions and how do they challenge hegemonic masculinities that define manhood in contemporary African societies? Engaging with such questions will enable African scholars to indigenise scholarship on religion and masculinities and make it relevant to the struggles against HIV and GBV.

²⁸ Chitando, Ezra. 2002. Review Article: Emerging Perspectives on Religious Studies: Reflections in a Zimbabwean Context. *Swedish Missiological Themes* 90(2):267-279.

²⁹ Godsey, Trad. 2009. The Muslim Man and AIDS: Negotiating Spaces for New Conceptualizations of Masculinity. In Esack, Farid and Chiddy, Sarah (eds.). *Islam and AIDS: Between Scorn, Pity and Justice*. Oxford: Oneworld, 119-136.

By paying attention to the interface between religion and masculinities, African scholars choose to focus on a theme that is of existential significance to African communities. They would be guided by African issues and concerns in their selection of the theme. While Randi R. Warne notes that (Western) scholarship that reflected on maleness and masculinity developed a high profile in the 1980s and 1990s,³⁰ it has not had an impact on the study of religion in Africa. By taking up the theme of religion and masculinities in the time of HIV, African scholars would be addressing a timely and relevant issue.

Utilising African material to understand African masculinities

Alongside giving priority to African issues and concerns, Africanisation also implies utilising African material to clarify (religious) concepts and phenomena. For example, if the term “religion” has been notoriously difficult to define in European and American religious studies, the question arises as to how or whether religion in Africa clarifies (or even complicates) the concept. Similarly, studying religion and masculinities in Africa provides ample opportunity to expand the meaning of masculinities. How do religion and culture in Africa socialise men to understand themselves as men? Are there specific African notions of manhood that are at play? How do indigenous rites of passage such as circumcision contribute to the formation of masculinities in Africa? By responding to such questions, the study of religion and masculinities in Africa can provide valuable insights into the discourses on masculinity.

In studying the interface between religion and masculinity in Africa, African scholars must not blindly follow theories on masculinity that have been formulated in other contexts. To say this is not to suggest that Africa is not part of the human race. Rather, it is to highlight the need for African scholars to summon enough courage and confidence to formulate their own theories of masculinity within their own contexts. They have an opportunity to investigate and enrich the study of the relationship between religion and masculinity by utilising African resources and phenomena. This task is best executed by African scholars, as I shall argue below.

From the foregoing it follows that African scholars of religion who venture into the theme of masculinities must chart new approaches to the phenomenon. Since the factors that form masculinities are shaped by specific contexts, African scholars must mine the African context to provide new perspectives on masculinities. In undertaking this exercise African scholars should give priority to data on masculinities from African communities. Too often African phenomena are forced to fit into imported theoretical schemes.

Utilising African material to understand religion and masculinity also means that African scholars must be willing to take the oral dimension of African communities seriously. For example, there is a need to pay attention to proverbs and their role in forming masculinities. African scholars need to interrogate proverbs that promote dangerous versions of masculinity and draw attention to those that call upon men to be peaceful and tolerant. Furthermore, African scholars must make use of myths, folktales,

³⁰ Warne, Randi R. 2000. Gender. In Braun, Willi and McCutcheon, Russell T. (eds.). *Guide to the Study of Religion*. London: Cassell, 140-154.

music and other forms of communication in their analyses of the factors that inform masculinities in Africa.

Applying research results on religion and masculinities for social transformation

One of the biggest challenges facing the academic study of religion in Africa is to make it relevant to the process of social transformation. Critics wonder why scholars of religion demand respect when their teaching and research activities do not readily translate into an agenda to change African communities for the better. The question can be posed more directly: can the study of religion in Africa afford to be “only scholarly” and not contribute practically to the resolution of challenges facing African societies? It would appear that Africa cannot afford to pursue “knowledge for the sake of knowledge.”³¹

Research results on religion and masculinities in Africa must be harnessed in the struggle for health and wellbeing. It would be futile to come up with research results that are relevant to the struggle for gender justice and then fail to disseminate these results in a way that promotes active engagement in society. What is the value of discovering, for example, that certain religious beliefs and practices promote dangerous masculinities in the time of HIV, and then failing to embark on practical strategies to construct alternative masculinities? I am convinced that the study of religion and masculinities holds a lot of promise in terms of enabling scholars of religious studies to become socially engaged.

Embarking on transformative masculinities in the time of HIV and GBV would enable departments of religious studies in Africa to engage in what Paulo Freire called “the pedagogy of the oppressed.”³² In applying this methodology, lecturers would ensure that education leads to freedom by engaging students in exercises that tackle real-life situations. In the context of religion and masculinities, students would grapple with how religion often sponsors destructive masculinities. They can then work towards transforming these harmful masculinities. According to Freire:

Students, as they are increasingly posed with problems relating to themselves in the world, and with the world, will feel increasingly challenged and obliged to respond to that challenge. Because they apprehend the challenge as interrelated to other problems within a total context, not as a theoretical question, the resulting comprehension tends to be increasingly critical and thus constantly less alienated. Their response to the challenge evokes new challenges, followed by new understandings; and gradually the students come to regard themselves as committed.³³

Conclusion

The academic study of religion in Africa needs to set its own agenda and to give priority to issues that vex African communities. In this paper I have drawn attention to the theme of religion and masculinities in the face of HIV and GBV. I have argued that research on this theme allows sufficient scope for Africanisation. As the theme has not

³¹ Chitando, *Sub-Saharan Africa*, 121.

³² Freire, Paulo. 2004. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York, NY: Continuum.

³³ Freire, *Pedagogy*, 81.

yet received extensive scholarly attention, there is potential for African scholars to shape this particular area of research without feeling threatened by European or American “experts”.

In closing, I must reiterate that the area of religion and masculinities has existential significance. Thus:

Masculinities have come to the fore in contemporary discourses on the HIV epidemic. There is a need to interrogate men’s sexual behaviour, men’s violence against women and men’s ineffective leadership in the time of HIV. Departments of religious studies in Africa must become sites of struggle where these themes are examined and alternative masculinities are formulated. Graduates of religious studies must emerge as competent gender activists who critique aggressive masculinities. They must be actively involved in mobilising their communities to promote gender justice in the wake of HIV. Working with boys and young men, they must prepare a generation of men who are committed to partnership and mutuality.³⁴

³⁴ Chitando and Chirongoma, *Challenging Masculinities*, 67

PART II

The Bible and gender



IN CHAPTER 7 Hazel Ayanga describes the quest for gender equity as she experiences it in Kenya. This may be one of the best descriptions of the experience of women who teach gender in Africa. The wisdom of the recommendations she makes speaks for itself.

CHAPTER 8 starts with shocking statistical evidence of violence against women in Africa. It then gives a hermeneutically sensitive overview of what the Bible teaches about gender, comparing Old and New Testament scriptural passages theologically. The outcome is a nuanced view on gender complementarity in marriage. From this theological stance the chapter advises women and the church what to do if violence continues in a relationship.

CHAPTER 9 defines terminology and then describes the negative state of affairs with regard to teaching gender in Malawi. Why is this the case? The author then answers the question of why the Bible is interpreted in such ambiguous ways regarding gender equality. She starts by outlining obvious biblical principles that put gender equality beyond dispute and then describes the factors that indicate it is nevertheless still a matter of dispute.

CHAPTER 10 deals with one of the Bible passages that have become known as 'texts of terror'. The King James version translated 1 Tim 2:10-14 as follows:

But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. ¹¹Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. ¹²But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. ¹³For Adam was first formed, then Eve. ¹⁴And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. ¹⁵Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.

THE CHAPTER argues that this translation is based on a patriarchal hermeneutic and notes that this passage stands in contradiction to what the rest of the Bible teaches about gender. It offers an alternative and viable translation and explanation of how the passage should be interpreted.

Chapter 7

Inspired and gendered

The hermeneutical challenge of teaching gender in Kenya

*Hazel Ayanga*¹



Introduction

The term ‘gender’ tends to evoke certain emotions in both the user and the hearer of the term. For men in particular it conjures up images of militant women who forcefully and emotionally want to become like men. These women want to wrench “power” in its various dimensions from the rightful “owners”, who in this case are the male human species. For some women, the term ‘gender’ calls up images of their fellow women who have lost direction and who want to destroy the God-given mandate to be submissive and indeed only follow their husbands’ direction. Mercy Oduyoye suggests that the gender question is a cross-cutting one. It represents “one of the oldest power struggles of humanity”.²

When we move on to gender equality or gender equity, the emotions run a notch higher as this signifies an actualisation of the fears described above. This situation creates fear and suspicion in both user and hearer. Thus the gender discourse is often a case of people talking at one another rather people talking to one another, appreciating each other’s perspective and contribution. It fails to be a discourse, because it turns into an argument and a contest. One side seeks to hold on to what is perceived as rightfully theirs, while the other struggles to acquire the same.

However, in the last several decades there has been a concerted effort to initiate dialogue and to interrogate seriously and as objectively as possible the concept of gender and the practice of gender inequities in society. Gender studies and women studies have become popular course offerings in universities around the world. Theological institutions and departments of religious studies have not been left behind in the pursuit of a better understanding of the relationship between theology, religion and gender issues. Many resources for the teaching of these courses are now available. From the perspective of religion and theology, the Bible has remained one of the major resources for the teaching of gender and gender-related issues. Such issues include gender equality, the ordination of

¹ Associate Professor of Moi University, Kenya. East Africa Coordinator, Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, Religion and Society, Phenomenology of Religion, History of Christian Doctrine. E-mail: hayangaus@yahoo.com

² Oduyoye, Mercy A. 1995. *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy*. New York, NY: Orbis Books, 2.

women as well the relationship between family members, particularly the relationship between husband and wife.

Gender in Africa has been described as a theological issue. From the perspective of the Christian religious tradition, therefore, the Bible is central to any form of gender discourse. It can be described as the basic textbook for teaching gender and gender-related issues. Kwok Pui-lan underscores this fact when she says that “the Bible is an important source and resource for theology”.³ The importance of the Bible as a tool for teaching gender equality, however, should not blind us to the myriad of problems and challenges inherent in that very importance. How we relate to the Bible and how we interpret and apply its message are part of a challenging process. Indeed, it will affect what and how we teach gender and gender equality. Any cursory reading of the Bible shows that it contains both positive and negative teaching on gender equality. How then can we use it for teaching gender and what role can the Bible play in enhancing gender equality? These are the questions this chapter sets out to analyse as it seeks to critique the role of the Bible in Africa in general and the role of the Bible in the gender discourse in particular.

The Bible in African Christianity

The role of the Bible in teaching gender is intimately related to the role of the Bible in Africa in general. The Bible is as important as it is a controversial document in Africa. But whether important or just plain controversial, the Bible is indeed a prized possession of many in Africa. Parents give it as a gift to their children at important occasions in their lives, such as weddings and graduations. Even those who do not necessarily subscribe to the Christian faith still refer to it as “the holy book.” It is held in high esteem as an inspired book.

In many academic circles the Bible is viewed as the “white man’s book.” This situation is a result of its perceived role in the process of colonisation. In Kenya, for example, there is the common saying and belief that the missionary came carrying the Bible in one hand and a gun in the other and that, when the African closed his eyes in prayer, the missionary and his colonial counterpart took the land away. Thus the Bible is seen as an instrument in the subjugation and colonisation of Kenyans. It was used to pacify the “natives” whenever they tried to resist the colonisers. Paul states, after all, that rulers should be obeyed because they rule and act on God’s behalf. Indeed the Bible was used to justify the process of colonisation just as it had been used in the previous century to justify slavery and other socio-economic atrocities. “The Bible therefore is an integral part of the colonial discourse”.⁴ For those who see the Bible in this light, therefore, it is a book with negative connotations, one that contains a message of oppression for the colonised. But this does not reduce the importance placed on the book. Its message was powerful enough to subdue the colonised mind. It gave a certain power to the coloniser, even if it was a power to oppress with impunity and through inhumane behaviour.

³ Kwok, Pui-lan. 2005. *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 60.

⁴ Kwok, *Postcolonial Imagination*, 61.

On the other hand, the Bible is believed to be the true inspired word of God. Christians of all walks of life seek to appropriate its message for themselves. The second use of the Bible in African Christianity is much less academic, yet it is the more widespread and commonplace. This is the use made by ordinary Africans Christians either at church or at home. The Bible in this instance is not just a record of God's dealings with our forefathers. Rather the Bible is viewed as God's word for the here and now. Believers therefore appropriate the word sometimes in incredibly ingenious ways. Paul Gifford has given an interesting account of how the Bible is used in some of the newer and more charismatic churches in Kenya. In these churches the Bible is understood as a record of covenants, promises, pledges and commitments between God and his chosen people. It is not just a record of covenants and commitments to others in the past. It is not primarily a historical document at all – it is a contemporary document; it tells of God's promises to me. It tells my story; it explains who I am.⁵

Of particular interest here is Paul Gifford's conclusion that for this particular group of Bible users in Africa, the accepted and conventional academic interpretation of scripture is neither here nor there. What matters is what the Word says and how I can appropriate for myself. The historicity and the culture of the writers do not matter.

There is a third and often very private and personal use of the Bible in Africa. Here the Bible is used almost as a magical wand or even as a magical formula of sorts. People put it under their pillows to ward off bad dreams and for protection from evil spirits. On the other hand, there are those who use the Bible arbitrarily; you close your eyes and open the Bible and whatever verses you have opened, that is God's direction or instruction for you in your particular situation. Indeed some claim that this really works for them; God uses scripture, without any human agency, to guide and give direction in their lives. Interestingly, God may use the same scripture to give different instructions at different times and in different circumstances. For this group of users also it is the book in its physical format that is very important. Getting rid of even an old and tattered Bible is tantamount to blasphemy. One should not destroy the "word of God", even when its physical condition demands that it should be discarded!

All these attitudes described above have implications for the teaching and understanding of gender and gender equality. They determine what we can or cannot do with and about the Bible and its message on gender equality. In the section below we describe – albeit in a very summarised form – the experiences of some scholars involved in teaching gender and gender equality in both public and private institutions in Kenya. We conclude the section with a description of how one woman leader in the Anglican Church simply weaves her message around gender equality without necessarily heading it as such.

Voices

As indicated earlier, gender studies are currently popular aspects of syllabi and course offerings in many institutions of higher learning whether public, private or faith-based.

⁵ Gifford, Paul. 2008. The Bible in Africa: A Novel Usage in Africa's New Churches, *Bulletin of SOAS* 71(2):203-219, (214).

Those involved in teaching gender and gender equality are, however, faced with challenges and frustrations. But they all agree that the Bible is an important resource for gender studies and the gender discourse in general. The different attitudes towards the Bible and its role in African Christianity have an impact on the teaching of gender. Dr Choge⁶ notes that the greatest challenge she faces in teaching gender and gender equality is the attitude of both fellow teachers and students alike. Choge explains that both teachers and students of gender come to the course with already formed attitudes about the Bible and its teaching on men and women. Generally, it is difficult, almost impossible, to change these attitudes. For many students of gender the Bible is the inspired word of God and not an iota should be changed or challenged. Such students believe that the Holy Book should not be analysed. Women are subordinate to men for no other reason than that the Bible says so. For students in this category the Bible is an important resource if only to underscore the differences between men and women as divinely mandated. It should be used for instruction in the rightful roles and attitudes of women. One reader reacting to a new perspective on Paul's teaching on women expresses the fears and apprehensions of such students in the following words:

I wanted to believe that women could teach and lead just as easily as men, at the same level as men; that they were more than just "spiritually equal"; that they didn't have to obey their husbands. It all sounded really nice. But unfortunately, it was not what the Bible said – and we can't simply follow truths we would like and ignore parts of the Bible we don't like.

These are the words of one reviewer with a pseudonym Jedidiah Palosaari⁷ responding to John T. Bristow's ideas expressed in his book *What Paul Really Said About Women: The Apostle's Liberating Views on Equality in Marriage, Leadership, and Love*. Dr Choge further notes that although the Biblical message is liberatory, the book is contradictory here and there and there are elements of oppression. However, it is important to see the biblical message in totality, not as bits and pieces strung together. Accordingly therefore, in its totality the Bible teaches equality between men and women as creatures of God. The apparent silence on the contribution of women should be understood as an intrusion of cultural and historical underpinnings.

Prof. Kamaara⁸ concurs with this. According to her, in spite of the liberationist view of the Bible, it still contains very subordinationist perspectives. The Biblical teaching of perseverance and turning the other cheek can and has been used to keep to the oppressed "in their place." Moreover, the Bible is not quite explicit on the importance and contribution of women. So to make use of it, one needs to look beyond the text or at least read between the lines. The use of the Bible in teaching is basically an exercise in interpretation. But according to Choge, the resources available for teaching hermeneutics are generally not relevant in the African context. This is a problem that Prof. Kamaara alludes to when she describes her frustration in teaching gender in general and gender

⁶ Dr Choge is a senior lecturer in the Department of Philosophy and Religion at Moi University in Eldoret, Kenya.

⁷ Palosaari, Jedidah. 2001. *Paul is More Liberal than the Feminist Movement. A Review of John J. Bristow's What Paul Really Said about Women*, March 11.

⁸ Prof. Kamaara is a Professor of Ethics at Moi University, Eldoret Kenya.

equality and theology in particular. “For me the greatest challenge is in developing non-Eurocentric perspectives to gender issues”.⁹ This is a point we shall return to a little later. Suffice it to say that this is a frustration experienced by many teachers of gender and indeed for any teachers of theology in Africa.

A few Sundays ago, it was mission Sunday in my church. The speaker¹⁰ at the morning services was a lady lay reader. She chose the events of the Resurrection morning using Mark 16 and Matthew 28 as her texts. She suggested that the important and indeed central aspect of the Christian message is the Resurrection. It is because she saw the risen Lord that Mary Magdalene is transformed into the evangelist par excellence. When she sees the risen Lord, she does not wait to ask questions and to understand or theologise about the situation. She runs out to share the good news. Her first sermon was not complicated. It was simply “I have seen the Lord”. Mary Magdalene’s response to the Resurrection was different from that of the male disciples. Yet when they come onto the scene somehow Mary and the other women are relegated to the background. Nevertheless, it went down in history that the first messenger of the good news was Mary Magdalene and her female companions. The angel and Jesus himself did not hesitate to commission the woman with this important message. The preacher challenged the whole church to let women play their rightful role in mission. The speaker would probably not describe herself as of feminist, but her hermeneutics as well as her exegesis definitely had a feminist slant. Her second illustration was that of the Samaritan woman (John 4:39) whom she jokingly described as “the amorous beauty”, the idea being that she must have been very beautiful to attract several men. But in Jesus she met a different kind of man, one who saw beyond her physical beauty and sees her “unbeautiful” aspects. Nevertheless, he does not condemn her for that. Instead he offers her a way out of her life as a toy for men to play with. The Samaritan woman also becomes an evangelist because she met a man who knew all about her past but did not condemn her. She too runs back to the village to tell the good news of salvation; she becomes a messenger bearing the life-changing message. The villagers then come and see for themselves. Once again Jesus does not seem to be bothered that this is a woman and one with a questionable past at that. The woman does not stop to apply some hermeneutical principles before she shares the message. She shares a simple message of her encounter and the effects of this encounter on her perception on life and her social relationships. This may fly in the face of Pauline teaching, but it is an example from Jesus himself and it should be emulated by all who seek to follow him.

Conclusions

What can we conclude from the above on the role of the Bible in the teaching of gender equality in our context? Several conclusions can be drawn.

1. The Bible plays an important role in the faith lives of Africans in general. This importance is expressed in different ways. Generally the Bible is a tool for understanding and explaining experiences. It provides a meaning system.

⁹ Prof. Kamaara, June 2011.

¹⁰ Dr Judy Achoka is a Lay Reader in the Diocese of Maseno North, Kakamega. She also is a Lecturer at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Kenya.

2. There are challenges for those who use the Bible as a resource for teaching gender and gender equality. These range from the apparent ambiguities in relation to the role of women in church and society, and the Western bias in the tools needed for hermeneutics and exegesis.
3. Most African Christians view the Bible as the true inspired word of God. They therefore are not very comfortable analysing it or interrogating its message. This has led to a literalist approach which does not allow for any serious interpretation of the content. “The Bible says” is good enough and it is enough to silence any dissenting voices. This is a challenge which teachers must face in trying to teach gender equality. They need to convince the students about the legitimacy of the analytical exercise. They need to point out that the analytical exercise does not necessarily undermine the inspiration of the Bible; rather it may help us to understand the inspired word in “our own languages” and from the informed platform of our experiences.
4. There are preachers and teachers of the Bible who may not be academic theologians and who may not even want the label of feminist, but their preaching and teaching are clearly done from the perspective of women, their experiences and their needs. Such preachers and their sermons may be used as resources for the teaching of gender and gender equality.

Recommendations

The use of the Bible in the teaching of gender and gender equality cannot be over-emphasised, especially if we want to remain faithful to our faith tradition. The Bible will continue to be a source of inspiration for Christians. We also note that the Bible says many things about women and how they should behave. Paul does not just talk about submission and silence in the church. He offers suggestions on a possible dress code. But we do not seem to hold on to some of these as tenaciously as we do on the gender equality aspects of the teaching. Why is this? I suggest that the problem lies in the relational nature of gender equality. In other words, gender equality – or inequality for that matter – has to do with power, at least the human understanding of it. Power politics is generally violent. Those who have it over others do not want to give it up nor to share it. This has often led to selective application of scripture and scriptural teaching, a weakness that is all too evident in hermeneutics and in the preaching we hear in our churches. This calls for an interdisciplinary approach to the interpretation of texts related to gender.

The use of the Bible as a teaching resource basically raises a problem of hermeneutics. It is necessary therefore to take a holistic and multidisciplinary approach. In my view, biblical teaching on gender and gender equality must be understood and interpreted in the light of the entire message of the Bible. In particular, the life and teaching of Jesus must be the theoretical framework within which gender equality is understood and practised. The tendency has always been to use statements attributed to Paul to inform the total biblical gender discourse. This is both myopic and unfair to the Christian gender discourse, where Christ should be both the centre and the central player. The selective approach definitely does a disservice to the hermeneutical process and to the understanding of what the Bible may actually be saying in the larger context. In this

regard there is need to point out that God used (and still uses) very human instruments to speak to us. In the case of the Bible, we need to be careful that the voice of the messenger does not cloud the message and the voice of the source of the message. Aspects of the cultural context in which the message is conveyed do colour the message. These include the language of transmission and the realities which the language describes.

For many Christians and non-Christians alike, the Bible is an inspired book. This leads to the belief that what is written in it should neither be questioned nor analysed. Thus biblical gender hermeneutics must concern itself with the effort to change the student's understanding of the inspiration of scripture before an attempt is made to interpret specific scriptures. Those who teach in gender studies and theology need to start from the very basic hermeneutical principles as foundational to a proper understanding of the message. In this way both student and teacher can be free to "re-explore scriptures in the light of cultural changes and modernization".¹¹ Understanding or viewing the Bible as the inspired word of God has often led to a fear of "tampering" with its contents as that would be tantamount to questioning God and God's authority. But in the words of B.A. Robinson, "Reinterpretation of scripture does not mean abandoning the authority of our holy books. It does not mean abandoning faith in God ...".¹²

In an apparently similar line of thought Letty Russell reminds us that scriptural and ecclesiastical tradition "witnesses to the presence of God in Jesus Christ and in our lives, but its meaning changes as the context of the message and the messenger change".¹³ Scripture is the word of God because in it we can find meaning and direction throughout the centuries, but the voice and context of the messengers must always be taken into consideration as they tend to colour the message. Is there a possibility that, in passing on the message and the tradition, the messenger's perspectives and interpretations have become more paramount than the message? The history of the church and the development of Christian doctrine are fraught with examples where this has been the case. Sometimes the perspectives of church fathers have clouded the actual teaching of scripture. It is from this perspective that we may say that the Bible is inspired, but interpretation of its message is often gendered in terms of patriarchal values.

Questions as to whether there is one understanding and one interpretation that are right for all time need to be addressed as well. Can Africans find their own hermeneutical space or must we always rely on what the West has handed down to us? Where does the role of experience fit into the hermeneutical process? In other words, is there an understanding that is totally removed from our experiences and our cultural environment? The teaching of gender equality in Africa must take cognisance of the fact that there can be no bodiless theology. The environment and the experiences of women must be taken into account in interpreting and applying biblical teaching not just in Africa, but everywhere else as well.

¹¹ Robinson, B.A. 2011. A Review of "The Status of Women in the Bible and Early Christianity". Mother Pelican: *Journal of Sustainable Human Development* 7 (No. 6, June). Online at <http://www.pelicanweb.org/solisustv07n06supp5.html#section1> [Accessed: June 10, 2011].

¹² Robinson, A Review.

¹³ Russell, Letty. 1993. *Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 38.

In teaching gender and gender equality there is a tendency to forget that gender is not just about women. Men must at some point become participants in the discourse. They too have been affected by patriarchy. Men's understanding of their identity and their relationship to women is indeed defined by patriarchy. This can be frustrating and oppressive, especially for those men who do not meet the expectations of a patriarchal society. Our teaching of gender equality should be done in such a way that men too can see and experience the liberating power of Christ's message.

Chapter 8

Combating gender-based violence The Bible's teaching on gender complementarity

*Simon Gillham*¹



The reality of gender-based violence

The awful numbers

Research conducted in 2004 under the auspices of the World Health Organisation found that in the city where I live (Windhoek, Namibia) 60% of women have suffered physical abuse in an intimate relationship. One in five women in this city lives in relationships where they continue to be physically abused.² These awful numbers are tragically representative of the situation throughout sub-Saharan Africa; 59% of Zambian women, 43% of Kenyan women, 49% of Ethiopian women and 47% of Tanzanian women also report being physically abused in their marriages or most intimate relationships.³

No-one living in southern Africa is untouched by the reality of GBV or the attitudes which underlie it. Raw statistics or numbers, no matter how awful they are, do not give us a proper appreciation of the reality of GBV.

The personal perspective

In other chapters in this volume we share the stories of particular women who have themselves been victims of GBV. Their personal perspective brings a depth, intensity and immediacy to the discussion which all of us need to confront. However, even those of us who have never been victims of GBV ourselves have a personal perspective and concerns that also need to be heard.

I write as a man married to a wife I love and we are raising a teenage daughter in a city where more than half of the women will be physically abused in marriage or intimate relationships! I am equally concerned about the effect that living in the midst of such widespread violence against women might have on the way my teenage son views himself in relation to women. No-one living in southern Africa is untouched! We all

¹ Reverend Simon Gillham is the Academic Dean at Namibia Evangelical Theological Seminary, where he lectures in Biblical Theology, Old Testament and Practical Ministry. E-mail: academicdean@nets.edu.na

² World Health Organisation. 2004. *Multi-country study on Intimate Partner Violence, Windhoek*. Geneva: WHO, 3.

³ Population Council. *Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Africa*. Literature Review. Feb 2008. Online at: http://www.popcouncil.org/pdfs/AfricaSGBV_LitReview.pdf [Accessed: July 30, 2011].

have a personal perspective, and should have a personal stake in combating GBV and the attitudes which underlie it.

The reasons for the violence

There are undoubtedly many reasons for such a prevalence of GBV in southern Africa. Some researchers have pointed to cultural factors⁴ and others to economics and the abuse of alcohol as key reasons for gender-based violence.⁵ Economics plays an important role – because people living in poverty, particularly women, have fewer options or choices.

Governments can make and enforce laws to protect the rights of women. In many of our countries commendable progress has been made in these areas over recent years. In Namibia, for example, many important pieces of legislation have been passed:

- The Maintenance Act, 1996;
- The Married Persons Equality Act, 1996;
- The Combating of Rape Act, 2000;
- The Combating of Domestic Violence Act, 2003;
- The Children Status Act, 2007.

While introducing legislation such as this is critically important, legislation alone will continue to prove ineffective in stemming the tide of violence and discrimination. It is sobering to note that the Married Persons Equality Act had been in effect for almost a decade before the above-mentioned survey, which found 60% of Namibian women were suffering abuse in marriage and intimate relationships!

Work in understanding and alleviating the plight of women as a result of prejudicial cultural practices, economic factors and uses of alcohol which put them at greater risk of violence is also critically important. The contention of this paper is that there is an even more fundamental reason for the violence which, like the violence itself, is not defined by or limited to the southern African context.

A global problem

In fact, in seeking to address GBV in southern Africa, one of the first things that we must come to terms with is that what we have here is a local expression of a global problem.⁶ While there are local social and economic factors at work, this is an evil which crosses all cultural, ethnic and socio-economic boundaries.⁷ In that sense we are speaking of a global rather than a distinctly African problem.

⁴ For example Rose-Junias, Hettie, Tjapeua, V. and Julia de Witt. 1998. "The nature and incidence of spouse abuse in three sub-urban areas in the Karas Region." (Unpublished Report). The Report lists seven cultural practices which "adversely affect the health and lives of women and children, and are not only examples of gender-based violence, but are grave infringements on the human rights of partners within gender relationships", 113.

⁵ Hubbard, Dianne. 1998. *The Problem of Spousal Abuse*. Windhoek: Legal Assistance Centre, Namibia, 3.

⁶ See, for example, the seminal research sponsored by the United Nations and conducted by Heise, Lori. 1994. Gender-based Abuse: The Global Epidemic. *Cad. Saúde Públ., Rio de Janeiro*, (10: Supplement 1), 135-145.

⁷ Prior to entering full-time Christian work the author was a police officer in multicultural Sydney, Australia, and served for some years as a Domestic Violence Liaison Officer and trainer in Protective Behaviours.

This paper seeks to establish that the fundamental cause behind the global problem of GBV is sin. It is as simple and as profound as that! This is a problem which crosses all cultural, ethnic and socio-economic boundaries, because its cause is common to all humanity. Sin!

The role of the Bible

This is why the role of teaching the Bible in theological seminaries is so critical. Christians have historically relied on the Bible for their understanding of sin, its effects and its solutions. Teaching the Bible properly in southern Africa is critical, because a majority of men in this part of the world claim to be Christian, and there is a history of men using the Bible to justify their exploitation of women on the basis that wives must submit to husbands.⁸ Against this background, the temptation is to want to argue rightly for the equality of men and women, but then to ignore the distinctions that the Bible makes. An unfortunate side effect of this approach is that it further excuses men from a responsibility that the Bible insists they bear.

This paper proposes that a key part of the resolution of the problem of the subjugation of women in southern Africa should be the faithful teaching in seminaries and churches of the biblical notion of gender complementarity. The place of Christianity and the Bible in southern Africa means that a change in this area has the very real potential to lead to societal transformation. The focus here will fall on the marriage relationship, which is both the centre of GBV and also central to a biblical view of gender. A biblical-theological approach will be followed, tracing God's progressive revelation in this area of thought from Creation to New Creation.⁹ This approach seeks to understand and take account of all that the Bible has to say, expecting to find unity within the diversity of scriptural references rather than sets of competing influences that one must choose between.¹⁰

A biblical theology of marriage

The man and the woman at Creation

As we reflect on the Creation, we see that the two accounts in Genesis 1 and 2 both affirm in different ways that the man and the woman are the pinnacle or highlight of the created order.

Joint image bearers

In Genesis 1:26-27 the man and the woman together bear the image of God. Whatever else is implied in this, it is clear that not only do the man and the woman equally bear the image of God, but that it is the two of them together who bear this image.

⁸ Hubbard, *The Problem of Spousal Abuse*, 3-4. Respondents to this survey who identified themselves as abusers listed amongst their justifications "the Creation of Adam and Eve, and the fact that wives should submit to their husbands."

⁹ It is significant to note at this point that biblical theology denotes an approach to hermeneutics that assumes the inspiration, authority and unity of Scripture. The approach is perhaps most cogently argued for in Graeme Goldsworthy. 2006. *Gospel-centred Hermeneutics: Biblical-theological Foundations and Principles*. Downers Grove, IL: Apollos.

¹⁰ This approach is in contrast to, for example, the very influential 'hermeneutic of suspicion'. See Schussler-Fiorenza, Elizabeth. 1983. *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*. New York, NY: Crossroad.

Profoundly equal

In Genesis 2:23 the man affirms that the woman is bone of his bones; not just equal but of exactly the same substance as he is. The man and the woman are perfectly suited to one another and only *after* the Creation of the woman is the one element in creation which is “not good”, the man’s aloneness (Gen. 2:18), resolved.

It is clear that men and women are created equal. All attitudes which see women as lesser than men, or less valuable or important than men, must be dismissed on the evidence of the Creation itself.

Distinctly complementary

It is equally clear in the Creation, however, that there are distinctions between the man and woman. It was not another man that God created as he looked for the suitable helper and companion for the man, but a woman. Maleness is not the image of God, but male and female together (Gen. 1:27).

One of these distinctions is reflected in the created order. The man and woman together are to fill the earth and subdue it, and to rule over all the living creatures (Gen. 1:28), but the man bears a responsibility that is different from that of the woman. In Genesis 2 he is given the commands about the two central trees in the Garden, before the woman is created.

The man and woman at the Fall; the order of Creation

As we move into Genesis 3, we can clearly see this responsibility in *the order of creation* played out in the way that the narrative unfolds. The serpent, a wild animal, a living creature, takes the lead. It leads the woman who then leads the man.

When God comes back into the garden in verse 8, he calls for the man. The man blames the woman. The woman blames the serpent. God then unfolds the reality of the curse first to the serpent, then to the woman and then to the man.

We might say that sin and the Fall originally came from the serpent, but consistently throughout Scripture it is not the serpent that is held responsible. It is not the woman who is held responsible. It is the sin of Adam! Adam is held responsible.¹¹

There are only two references in the rest of the Bible to Eve’s role in the Fall (2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:11-15) Both of them describe her as being deceived and in 1 Timothy 2 the point of the passage seems again to highlight the responsibility of men.¹²

The curse and the promise

In 1 Timothy 2:15 there is also this curious mention of the woman being saved through childbearing, which should be taken to be a reference back again to Genesis 3:15, where God promises that there would be a day where one of the woman’s descendants would

¹¹ See, for example, Romans 5:12-19; 1 Corinthians 15:21-23, 44-49; Hosea 6:7; Ecclesiastes 7:29.

¹² For a detailed discussion on 1 Timothy 2, see Elna Mouton’s study in Chapter 10.

crush the serpent's head.¹³ Jesus is of course the descendant, and the crushing of Satan was achieved at the cross.¹⁴

While the effects of the curse are spelt out to the man in terms of the pain that it will cause him in work, for the woman it is pain in her family; pain in childbearing and pain in the relationship between husband and wife.

To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing;
with pain you will give birth to children.
Your desire will be for your husband,
and he will rule over you." (Gen. 3:16, NIV)

The common tendency is to read this desire that the woman will have for her husband as a positive expression of love for him. Following Susan Foh, though, it is better to see this desire as an urge for independence, or indeed a desire to dominate her husband. For Foh, "These words mark the beginning of the battle of the sexes."¹⁵ This understanding of the woman's desire fits better with the context, where a positive love or yearning would be an odd effect of the curse in the midst of so many other negatives. It also fits more neatly with the writer's own use of the same word and the same sentence construction in the following chapter (Gen. 4:7) to describe the way that 'sin' desires to have Cain, but he must master it. It also fits more closely with the existential reality of life in a fallen world, where tension and conflict are more likely to mark marriages than not.

The husband's response described in the verse above is to rule over, master or dominate the wife. We must be clear that what is being described here is not the same thing as the responsibility and order described in the Creation narrative of Genesis 2, but a kind of ruling, mastery or domination that is a consequence and expression of sin.

It is exactly this expression of sin that we see played out in the brutal violence and subjugation of women across southern Africa; conflict in marriages that end with men ruling over, oppressing and crushing their wives. This pattern in marriage generates a society where women are crushed and oppressed more broadly as well.

Men and women in redemption: a narrative of distorted relationships

Throughout the Bible from this point on we have the progressive unfolding of God's plan to deal with sin, redeem a people for himself and reverse the effects of the Fall. From Abraham and throughout the history of the nation of Israel we find examples of both God's good creative purposes for men and women, and also (perhaps much more commonly) examples of the distortion of these purposes through sin.

¹³ See, for example, Witherington, Ben, III. 2006. *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians. Volume I: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Titus, 1-2 Timothy and 1-3 John*. Downers Grove, IL: Apollos, 230. "Rather, I suggest that although the subject in 1 Timothy 2:15 surely is women in general (which would include Jesus' mother), 'the childbearing' is indeed a reference to a particular birth, that of Jesus. The point is that it was through woman that the fall came, and through woman redemption came as well."

¹⁴ See, for example, Hebrews 2:14. By extension this is a victory also given to those in Christ; Romans 16:20.

¹⁵ Foh, Susan. 1974/5. "What is the Woman's Desire?" *Westminster Theological Journal* 37:382.

Indeed the effects of the Fall are painted time and again in vivid colours throughout the pages of the Old Testament. Phyllis Trible's coining of the phrase "texts of terror" to highlight the horrific treatment of some women in Old Testament narratives has been an influential factor in bringing the issue of GBV in the Bible to the fore.¹⁶ Some of these incidents are clearly condemned within the narratives, while others appear to pass without comment. This again highlights the need for a comprehensive biblical theology which has the capacity to make sense of the parts, within the framework of the whole of Scripture. From such a framework the condemnation of GBV is loud and clear, so that there should be no confusion between narratives which describe God's good purposes for men and women, and those which describe the effects and expressions of sin.

The marriage of God and Israel

In a way the marriage of God and Israel underscores both the significance of the marriage relationship and also the intimacy of the relationship between God and his people; at several points in the Old Testament Israel is pictured as the wife of God.¹⁷ This is particularly highlighted in the context of covenant fidelity, where time and again the idolatry of the nation of Israel is akin to adultery. While the Bible does not encourage us to try and press this relational analogy in every detail, where it is used it is clear that to be the wife of God is a position of great esteem and value. God as the husband lavishes love, grace, mercy, forgiveness and all good things on his wife – even in spite of her unfaithfulness.¹⁸ To be a wife is to be elevated above all others by your husband.

Women in the gospels

As we come to the pages of the New Testament and meet the person of the Lord Jesus, we find the true man, the new Adam who, although tempted, never sins. Although we do not have any record of his explicit teaching on the equality or distinct roles of men and women, we can clearly see the way that he challenges many of the preconceptions of his day.¹⁹ Women such as Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, Mary and Martha were among his closest followers.²⁰ Jesus responds with compassion and respect when culturally it might have been expected that he would be dismissive of the value of women.²¹ Women are the first witnesses of the resurrection. For all this, though, he still chooses twelve men as apostles and never challenges the Old Testament notions surrounding the particular accountability and responsibility of men before God in marriage and in the broader life of his people.

¹⁶ Trible, Phyllis. 1984. *Texts of Terror: Literary Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives*. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press.

¹⁷ See, for example, Ezekiel 16, Hosea 1-3.

¹⁸ See, for example, Hosea 3:1.

¹⁹ Compare this with "Contempt, discrimination, and demeaning references often characterized rabbinic teachings about women. Rabbis, for instance, were encouraged not to teach women or even speak to them" in Eckman, James P. 2002. *Exploring Church History*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 13. See also Richards, Sue and Richards, Lawrence. 1999. *Every Woman in the Bible*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 157.

²⁰ Evidenced in frequent references and closeness of contact described, e.g. Luke 8:1-3.

²¹ See, for example, Mark 14:6-9, Luke 8:41-49, Luke 10:38-42, Luke 13:10-17, John 4:1-26, John 11:17-37, etc.

Radical equality

The trajectory that the Lord Jesus established is reflected in the New Testament epistles. Women are from the very earliest times active participants in the life of the Christian communities. They are numbered amongst Paul's closest co-workers,²² as hosts of the new churches,²³ as hard workers,²⁴ as outstanding among the apostles.²⁵ Women are expected to be learning,²⁶ praying and prophesying²⁷ in church, albeit in such a way that there remains a clear distinction between men and women in each case. Perhaps in stark contrast to prevailing cultural mores both in the New Testament Greco-Roman world and also in contemporary southern Africa, the New Testament derides the notion that women are somehow second-class citizens.²⁸

Indeed, because all who trust in Christ find their true value and identity in Him, they are each equally "sons of God" and therefore "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for (we) are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26-29).²⁹ In the context of Galatians 3 the stress is on equality before God of Jews and Gentiles.³⁰ As the list unfolds in verse 28, however, two other equally common ways of distinguishing between first- and second-class citizens are provided to drive the point home. Slave or free, male or female; it makes no difference! The identity of those who have faith in Christ is Christ himself!

Distinct complementarity

This is not to say, however, that these and other distinctions have no ongoing significance in the Christian life this side of glory. People did not cease to be Jewish, Gentile, slave, free, men, women, young, old, married, or single by virtue of their faith in Jesus. At various points in the New Testament instructions are given specific to each of these groups.³¹

In what is perhaps the key biblical reference for the purposes of this paper, 1 Peter 3:7, we find an instruction specific to husbands that incorporates both the profound equality of men and women, and also complementarity of their roles due to differences between them.

²² Priscilla in Romans 16:3.

²³ Nympha in Colossians 4:15, Priscilla in Romans 16:3-5.

²⁴ A long list! See, for example, Romans 16:6, 12.

²⁵ Junias in Romans 16:6.

²⁶ 1 Timothy 2:11.

²⁷ 1 Corinthians 11:5.

²⁸ For a balanced introduction to the cultural situation of women in the Greco-Roman world, see Kroeger, Catherine. 2000. *Women in Greco-Roman World and Judaism*. In Porter, Stanley E. and Evans, Craig A. *Dictionary of New Testament Background: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

²⁹ So argues Longenecker, Richard. 2002. *Word Biblical Commentary: Galatians*. Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 41. Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 159.

³⁰ See especially Galatians 3:8,14.

³¹ In Ephesians 5:21-6:9 and Colossians 3:18-4:1, Paul uses the familiar form of a Roman household code in addressing different people in various groups, but the content is transformed by the gospel. Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 7:17ff urges his readers to remain in whatever situation in life they found themselves when they became followers of Jesus, except that if slaves have an opportunity to become free, they should take it.

Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers. (NIV)

Husbands are to live with understanding, consideration and intelligence, and honour their wives in the light of two things. To take the second point first, wives are *co-heirs* of God's gracious gift of life with their husbands. Believing wives are heirs in every sense that their believing husbands are. They are utterly equal in all respects at this point. On this basis there can be no countenancing of the idea that women are somehow spiritually second rate, or somehow dependent upon their husbands for their salvation.

Secondly, wives are *physically weaker*.³² Whilst this may not be true of all married couples in every circumstance, it is sufficiently true of most couples around the world and throughout history to warrant the comment.

The importance of such an instruction is borne out in the GBV and the subjugation of women throughout southern Africa that forms the backdrop of this volume. What we witness in our countries is the result of men who are physically more powerful than their wives using this power for their own ends. This is precisely what Peter is railing against.

Love and submission

In Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3 Paul also addresses husbands specifically and in a way which, if lived out, would transform gender issues in southern Africa. If we consider Ephesians 5:25-33, the fuller treatment of the issue, we find that husbands are to love their wives in the same way in which Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her (Eph. 5:25). This 'giving up' carries the implication of giving up one's rights or privileges, but if Jesus is the example, it extends even to laying down one's life for the other. This is the perspective which is to characterise a Christian husband's attitude to his wife.

As verses 26-28 continue, we are reminded that Jesus' love for the church was given for the purpose of presenting her to himself sanctified, pure and spotless – and again the husband's love for his wife is somehow analogous to this. The husband's love is given in part because he longs to see his wife sanctified. The husband bears an asymmetric spiritual responsibility within the marriage. That is, the New Testament does not ever speak of the wife carrying a similar responsibility for her husband.³³

³² Whilst the semantic range of *asthenestero* can include "moral weakness", this rendering must be dismissed on exegetical and experiential grounds. Peter has an expectation that, rather than being morally weak, the wives he is writing to may be the ones who lead their husbands to faith (1 Peter 3:1). When used in combination with *skenei*, as here, it is clear that Peter is referring to a physical not emotional or moral weakness.

³³ The same is true for the spiritual responsibility of raising children in Ephesians 6:4. Despite the almost universal practice of insisting that mothers are responsible for the raising of children, it is fathers who are to raise their children in "the training and instruction of the Lord." In neither case does this mean that the wife is not responsible at all or should not be spiritually active and leading, but the husband bears a primary and disproportionate responsibility.

The history of the church is scarred with examples of those who have used the biblical injunctions for wives to submit to their husbands as a justification for the oppression of women. In such a context it is understandable that many people would want to turn their backs on these passages completely. Ironically, in the view put forward in this paper, it is precisely such passages which deliver the clearest biblical instructions to combat the oppression which they have been used to generate or justify.

Two important points must be noted to qualify the application of such an explosive idea:

- Firstly, the submission of wives is always and only ever mentioned in Scripture in the context of what might reasonably be considered a greater command to self-denial on the part of the husband. To seek to apply one without the other is to abuse Scripture;
- Secondly, the man can no more coerce the submission of his wife than the wife can force the love of her husband. A man who attempts to force or manipulate his wife to submit to him, either physically or through any other way, is living out the results of the curse of Genesis 3:16, not the instructions of the New Testament.

Gender complementarity and gender-based violence

Submission in a sinful world

Given the background of GBV which is the focus of this paper, it is important to point a clear way forward for Christian women who are suffering abuse within their marriages right now. The instructions for wives to submit to their husbands *do not* compel and should not even encourage women to remain or be left in violent situations!

Submission is a fundamental stance to be adopted by all Christian people in a variety of situations. We are to submit primarily to God in everything (James 4:7). We are also urged to submit to our parents (Eph. 6:1), to those in church leadership (Heb. 13:7), and to governments and ruling authorities (1 Peter 2:13; Rom. 13:1, 5). All of these forms of submission to other people, however, clearly have their limitations. Under some circumstances, such as false teaching, church leaders are to be opposed (Gal. 2:11; 2 Tim. 3:1-5). Just as Daniel and his friends found limits to the submission they were prepared to offer the ruling authorities in their day (Dan. 1:8, 3:18, 6:10), so also the early Christians went to their deaths rather than to submit to some of the demands of various Roman emperors.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer's wrestling with the demand to submit to the Third Reich's ruling authority provides an even more readily applicable model for women experiencing GBV. Bonhoeffer argued that there came a point when continuing to submit to an evil regime made the submitter complicit in the evil.³⁴ Once we have recognised GBV for the evil that it is, it is clear that anything which is done to perpetuate or allow that situation to continue becomes complicit in that evil.

³⁴ Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. 1971. *Letters and Papers from Prison*. Enlarged edition. Norwich: SCM. 5-7.

Love in a sinful world

Women in marriages where there are ongoing issues of GBV will often feel a tension between their commitment to love and even submit to their husbands, and concern over their own (or their children's) safety. Such women must be liberated from feeling any such tension, as in fact the commitment to loving their husbands and a concern for safety both dictate that their husband's violence must stop! It would be unloving to perpetuate a situation where that sin would go on unchecked. The abused wife should not simply be 'allowed' by her Christian friends to separate from her husband; she should be encouraged, supported, enabled and urged to separate – at least until the abusive behaviour is stopped. It is the loving thing to do for her, her children *and* her husband.

This focus and discussion on the role of women in these relationships, however, must not distract us from the fact that it is the men who must bear responsibility for the problem. GBV must be addressed and corrected over the long term by men who are committed to loving their wives after the self-sacrificial pattern of the Lord Jesus (cf. Eph. 5:25). GBV must be addressed and corrected in the long term by men who, instead of using their physical strength to oppress their wives, commit themselves to serving their wives as co-heirs with them of the gracious gift of life (cf. 1 Peter 3:7).

Conclusions

At a time in southern Africa when women continue to be trivialised, subjugated, mistreated and abused – and when those actions and attitudes are sometimes justified by appeals to Scripture – it is critical that theological seminaries teach the whole counsel of God regarding men and women.

This paper has followed a biblical theological approach and has focused on the marriage relationship as seen in the Creation, the Fall and the Redemptive Plan of God. It is clear throughout the Bible that men and women are of equal and inestimable value as God's image bearers in creation, and through faith in the Lord Jesus as co-heirs in redemption. Advocates of any view which sees women as in any sense 'lesser' than men must be called to account for their ignorance or distortion of Scripture.

This paper has further argued that if the abuse of the physical power differential between men and women is to be addressed, we must embrace the truth that men and women, although absolutely equal, are also different. Following from these differences or distinctions, there are specific biblical instructions issued to men as husbands which confront precisely the acts and attitudes that lie behind the detestable treatment of women in southern Africa.

Seminaries in Africa ought to give loud and bold voice to what the Bible as a whole says about men and women. In our context it is particularly critical at this time that men and women hear of, and understand, their equality before God in all things, as they each find the heart of their identity in Christ. It is equally critical that men hear and understand that using their physical power over women for their own ends is an expression of pure evil. Instead, taking the love of the Lord Jesus as their cue, they must lay down their

lives for their wives, being ready to serve them and present them pure and blameless on the last day.

Legislative changes designed to improve the plight of women in southern Africa must be applauded, but a genuine societal transformation will only flow from the hearts of transformed men and women. To achieve this, the role of seminaries in teaching what the Bible says about men and women, and training others to adopt these principles, is critical.

Chapter 9

The Bible, gender equality and teaching theology in Malawi

*Chimwemwe Harawa-Katumbi*¹



Introduction

For most Christians the Bible is central to their faith. Understood to be the inspired and living Word of God, often referred to as “Holy”, “Sacred” or “Divine”, the Bible is seen as both authoritative and unique in nature.² As such, Christians over the centuries have turned to the Bible for guidance on diverse issues, many of which have sparked heated debates. Some of these issues and questions have remained unresolved and, in many parts of the world, one of these contentious issues is gender equality in church and society. What makes the issue even more complex is that proponents of different views all appeal to the Bible. Even scholars proposing different hermeneutical analyses of biblical passages that deal with gender put forward arguments in favour or against gender equality.

Gender equality: towards a redefinition of terms

Before reflecting in more detail on the relationship between gender, theological education and the Bible, it may be helpful to come to some conceptual clarity regarding the first of these terms.

Gender refers to the division of people into male and female with their accompanying socially constructed roles, rules of behaviour, activities and attributes. As a child grows, she/he learns these gender roles and how men or women in their societies are expected to behave. In this sense gender is not physiologically determined but socially constructed. It is extremely important, since it also determines one’s rights, responsibilities and identity.³ Gender often constitutes the most important organising principle in societies and it governs the processes of the production, consumption and distribution of resources in societies.

¹ Lecturer in Religious Studies at Chancellor College, University of Malawi. E-mail: charawa01@yahoo.com

² See Amanze, James 2010. Reading and Understanding the Bible as an African. In Amanze, James, Nkomazana, F and Obed N. Kealotswe. *Biblical Studies, Theology, Religion and Philosophy. An Introduction for African Universities*. Eldoret: Zapf Chancery, 115-136 (116).

³ “What is gender?” FAO corporate document repository, produced by Economic and Social Development Department. Online at: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/007/y5608e/y5608e01.htm>. [Accessed: April 18, 2011].

Gender studies have often been understood as a discipline that focuses solely on the promotion of women's rights. This, however, is a misconception. Even though the discipline usually concentrates on women as they mostly constitute the disadvantaged sex, its focus is rather on the promotion of *gender equality*. According to Pelle Billing, gender equality rests on the following five pillars, namely the recognition that:

- men and women have the same intrinsic value;
- men and women are equally valuable to society;
- men and women should have equal rights and responsibilities;
- there should be no discrimination on grounds of gender; and
- equality need not translate into sameness.⁴

In the light the above one may ask whether and how these convictions are reflected in Malawian institutions of theological education.

Theological education in Malawi and gender studies: the current situation

Higher theological education in Malawi developed gradually and includes the founding of universities, colleges and the implementation of a theological education by extension programme. Since 1991 the University of Malawi, for example, offers a degree programme in theology. Until as recently as 2007 most participants in this programme came from the ranks of the clergy – most of whom were in possession of a Diploma in Theology. The latter programme was approved in the country in 1975 as a result of negotiations between representatives from the University of Malawi, the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Church forming a Board for Theological Studies.⁵ The latter is a central body in theological education in Malawi. The Board consists of nine member colleges as well as the University of Malawi.⁶ However, there are also a good number of theological institutions in the country that are not members of the Board for Theological Studies.⁷

Returning to the issue under discussion in this essay, one may ask whether these institutions are contributing to gender equality in the church and in society or whether they are at least geared towards making a contribution? One way of answering this question is to look at the curricula of these institutions. In the Diploma and Bachelor of Divinity programmes of the Board for Theological Studies and Bachelor of Theology programme offered by the Theology and Religious Studies Department at Chancellor College, as recorded in *Church, University and Theological Education in Malawi*,⁸ there is no gender studies course nor is there any mention made of gender in course descriptions.

⁴ Billing, Pelle. 2009. Defining Gender Equality. April 24th, 2009. Online at: <http://www.pellebilling.com/2009/04/defining-gender-equality/> [Accessed: April 15, 2011].

⁵ Board for Theological Studies. 2007. *Bachelor of Divinity Syllabus*. Zomba: Kachere Series, 3.

⁶ These are the Colleges: Baptist Theological Seminary, College of Christian Ministries, Evangelical Bible College, Josaphat Mwale Theological Institute, Leonard Kamungu Theological College, St. Peter's Major Seminary, TEEM: Theological Education by Extension in Malawi, Zambezi College of Ministries and Zomba Theological College.

⁷ See Ross, Kenneth (ed.). 1995. *Church, University and Theological Education in Malawi*. Zomba: University of Malawi, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, 11-29.

⁸ Ross, *Church, University and Theological Education*, 35-57.

The syllabi cover only traditional theological courses (Old and New Testament, Church History, Theology, Old Testament Hebrew and New Testament Greek, Christian Ethics, African Traditional Religions, Islam, Pastoral Counselling, Basic Pastoral Psychology, Missiology and Philosophy of Religion).⁹ At the level of the Bachelor of Divinity and Bachelor of Theology there are at least some themes that touch on women studies/gender, such as Feminist African Theology, feminist readings of the Bible, the role of women in African Traditional Religions and the development of Christian women's movements in central and southern Africa. However, if this indeed happens and students are at least exposed to gender issues in the different courses, it does not mean that these issues are studied in any great depth as would happen in a course dedicated to gender studies.

The challenge of the recognition of a dedicated space for gender studies at these institutions is aggravated by the fact that many of them are church-owned and the seminaries are obliged to follow their respective theological traditions. For this reason some member institutions of the Board for Theological Studies have very few or even no female students or female lecturers – this state of affairs also reflects the absence of women in many leadership positions in many churches in Malawi and, indeed, in much of Africa.¹⁰ This clearly raises the question of how this situation can be rectified. One suggestion is allowing a separate space for the teaching of gender studies, especially gender equality, at these institutions. The latter not only serve as incubators of future generations of church leaders, but also for new theologies that need to be developed according to particular contexts and needs. Such teaching will have a bearing on the way gender relations play out not only in churches but also in the broader society. As they are theological institutions, this of course implies teaching gender equality with reference to the Bible. As was mentioned in the introduction above, this creates a challenge in itself. As such, this essay also addresses the question of the challenges, promise and pitfalls of using the Bible in teaching gender in the Malawian context.¹¹

The Bible and the teaching of gender equality

Why is the participation of women in the leadership of churches – even in those traditions that accept the ordination of women – so limited, even though in most countries and churches women constitute the greater part of the population and church membership? Some scholars refer to this “stained glass ceiling effect” in discussing the exclusion of

⁹ In most cases the language used is not even gender sensitive – one of the themes in *Fundamental Moral Theology*, Christian Anthropology focuses on “consideration of man as an individual and as community” (26). One theme in African Traditional Religions is “Man and Ethics” (28).

¹⁰ Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness (PACSA). 2008. Created in God's Image. A tool for women and men in churches. Online at: http://www.pacsa.org.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=62&Itemid=65 [Accessed: April 11, 2011], 16. No wonder Susan Rakoczy calls for “an inclusive ecclesiology” using especially two images of the church as a discipleship of all believers and the church as a community of liberation for all. Susan Rakoczy. 2004. *In Her Name. Women doing Theology*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 216-223.

¹¹ The findings in this paper not only draw on, amongst other things, my experience as a lecturer and a member of the Board for Theological Studies in Malawi for the past five years, but also on focus group discussions with colleagues and students within recognised theological institutions in Zomba, Malawi. There are four theological institutions in Zomba, namely the Leonard Kamungu Theological College, Zomba Theological College, St. Peter's Major Seminary, and the Theology and Religious Studies Department in Chancellor College, University of Malawi.

women from top positions.¹² One reason may lie in the way biblical texts on gender have been used or misused.

The Bible is a product of many authors, writing on various issues in diverse social-cultural settings centuries ago. This presents a challenge to any modern reader in interpreting its message. This is also true with regard to the interpretation of biblical passages on gender. Elisabeth Fiorenza rightly refers to a tension in the search for meaning in our contemporary context and the historical context of the biblical texts.¹³ Scholars have developed methods and techniques for interpreting the Bible in an attempt to overcome challenges such as these.¹⁴ The Holy Spirit also guides the reader to discern the meaning. Therefore, biblical interpretation is also influenced by personal experience. That said, what follows is, firstly, a brief overview of gender in the Bible,¹⁵ and secondly, specific considerations and challenges in using the Bible in teaching gender.

Gender equality in the Bible: a brief overview

The Old Testament teaches that both men and women are created equally in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1-2) and, according to the Apostle Paul, all believers, men and women, are to conform to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18; 4:10-11; Gal. 4:19). Although the biblical story of salvation is told mostly from a male point of view and with reference to a male God, most theologians agree that God is neither male nor female. To speak of God as the Father does not mean that God is a male person. The Bible only uses human language to say that the role of a father in ancient Israel gives us some insight into the nature of God.¹⁶ As an ontological category, gender is an attribute of the created order and is thus not attributable to God's nature. Likewise, gender is only attributable to Christ's human nature and not to his divine nature.

Spiritually speaking, authority is not grounded in maleness. Both men and women were given authority to rule over the earth. There is no biologically-based inequality in creational authority, personal agency or responsibilities.¹⁷ Despite the fact that gender traditionalists argue, for example, that the ministry of the prophet included some functions that excluded women, both men and women were recognised as prophets in ancient Israel – Huldah and Deborah (2 Kings 22:14-19; Chron. 34:23-27) being prime examples. There are also passages in the New Testament telling of women who were called and blessed in ministries that entailed teaching and leading assemblies of both men and women. In Romans 16:7 Paul refers to a male apostle Andronicus and a female

¹² Adams, Jimi. 2007. Stained Glass makes the Ceiling Visible. Organisational Opposition to Women in Congregational Leadership. *Gender and Society* 21(1), 80-105, (81). Online at: <http://gas.sagepub.com/content/21/1/80.full.pdf>. [Accessed: April 15, 2011].

¹³ Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth. 1984. *Bread Not Stone. The Challenges of Feminist Biblical Interpretation*. Toronto: Beacon Press, 23.

¹⁴ McGrath, Alister. 1994. *Christian Theology. An Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell, 205-210.

¹⁵ This chapter offers neither a hermeneutical analysis of specific biblical texts, nor an account of the history of the debates on gender equality in the church. Where a text is cited, it is done to illustrate what factors may affect one's interpretation of gender in the Bible.

¹⁶ Cf. McGrath, *Christian Theology*.

¹⁷ Groothuis, Rebecca M. 2005. The Bible and Gender Equality. Online at: <http://www.cbeinternational.org/?q=content/bible-and-gender-equality>. [Accessed: April 15, 2011].

apostle Junia¹⁸ as outstanding among the apostles. In Acts 21:9 four young women are referred to as prophetesses. Susan Rakoczy shows in her book that in the Bible women were not only apostles and prophets, but also preachers, deacons, evangelists and that they even presided over the Eucharist.¹⁹ Surely, if God had decreed that these positions are unsuitable for women because of their being women, these examples would not exist. This also goes to show that one must be extremely careful in interpreting at face value and without qualification and contextualisation passages to the contrary (e.g. 1 Tim. 2:12).²⁰ To do so may amount to ignoring or contradicting other biblical passages.

Furthermore, there are instructions in the New Testament for all believers to relate to one another with humility and respect, and to submit to each other as the other's servants and not to be concerned with positions of status and authority. These passages urge believers to treat one another as they would like to be treated themselves (cf. Luke 22:25-27; Matt. 7:12; 20:25-28; 23:8-12; Rom. 12:3,10; Phil. 2:2-5). In the new covenant, we are told, there is no longer any distinction between Jew and Gentile, slave and free person, a man and a woman (Gal. 3:26-28). Thus, every believer is an adopted child of God, an heir of God and co-heir with Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:15-17). Husbands and wives are equal heirs of all God's gifts of life (1 Peter 3:7). As equal heirs, men and women have equal rights and responsibilities, the same access to and right to represent the Father and both should obey his commands. All believers are filled with the Holy Spirit and blessed with its gifts without discrimination on grounds of age, race, social status or gender (Acts 2:17-18).²¹ Any believer who has received a gift is to use it for the sake of others, with responsibility and without restriction. With Christ as our High Priest (1 Tim. 2:5), we are also all called to be priests of God (1 Peter 2:5, 9) and we all are representatives of God in the church and the world (2 Cor. 5:20). Every believer has been given the priestly ministry of representing Christ to the church and the world and is directly accountable to God. These examples from Scripture show that, in their dealings with human beings, God and Christ do not favour those of one gender above the other and, as a follower of Christ and child of God, one needs to do the same (James 2:1-9; Acts. 10:34-35).²² All of this, however, does not mean that men and women are identical and undifferentiated, but that God designed men and women to complement and benefit each other.²³ Unfortunately, all is not as uncomplicated, as the following section will show.

¹⁸ Junia is a woman's name though some editors have interpreted it as a man's name – footnote in Senior, Donald and Collins, John. (eds.). 2006. *Catholic Study Bible*. 2nd edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1515.

¹⁹ Rakoczy, *In Her Name*, 202-207.

²⁰ Such as 1 Timothy 2:12 "I do not permit women to teach or have authority over a man; she must be silent." (See Chapter 10, which deals with the interpretation of 1 Tim. 2:12).

²¹ Cf. Groothuis, *The Bible and Gender Equality*, 1: Gifts and callings of the Holy Spirit are distributed without regard to gender and that believers in Christ stand on equal ground before God, and repudiates the notion that the Bible grants to men spiritual authority and other religious privileges that it denies to women.

²² Groothuis. *The Bible and Gender Equality*, 2.

²³ Groothuis. *The Bible and Gender Equality*.

Considerations when teaching gender with the use of the Bible

Insufficiency of biblical content on gender issues

Using the Bible to teach gender (equality) itself poses a challenge. As was shown above, the Bible has something to say about gender equality. This, however, is not enough. One may ask many questions regarding gender issues to which the Bible offers no straightforward answers. As has already been shown, there is even some tension within Scripture regarding gender issues – passages, when taken at face value, may put women down rather than lift them up. Furthermore, there is no single section that reflects biblical teaching on gender in its entirety. Different texts need to be brought into conversation with each other. It is dangerous to ignore some patriarchal attitudes and practices simply because they seem to contradict one's own views.

However, Jesus' views about women are well known. He respected and cared for women, speaking freely with them in public at a time when men were not allowed to do so. Furthermore, his positive views on women are consistent throughout the New Testament and even include considering them worthy of being members of his inner circle.²⁴ These texts should be considered alongside those reflecting seemingly unfair and discriminatory views of and against women. It may even be that such passages contain reports on the status quo that biblical authors did not necessarily approve of, but reported nevertheless just like any other good news reporter would do. All of this does, however, not erase the negative views of women in the Bible.

Negative presentations of women in the Bible

A major problem to be considered when using the Bible to teach gender equality is that – besides the fact that there are not very many direct biblical texts one can use to this end – one finds ample texts that refer to women in very negative ways. The Genesis story has often been used as evidence for women's propensity to sin and their inferiority to men. Women are sometimes portrayed as sexual predators (1 Kings 11; Judges 16; Gen. 19:30-36; 39:7-20), as deceitful and untrustworthy.²⁵ These portrayals have damaging implications not just for women but for the whole church and, as David Halperin argues, such negative images have for centuries been instrumental in the subjection and humiliation of women.²⁶ A woman reader is forced thereby to identify herself in negative terms and to accept her inferior status.

Feminist scholars offer two ways of dealing with such negative interpretations of Scripture. First, they reinterpret some of these well-known texts in positive ways.²⁷ Second, they often highlight "forgotten" texts that present women in a completely

²⁴ One need only think of the stories of Martha and Mary (Luke 10:38-42; John 11: 20-33), of the woman who anointed Jesus (Matt. 26:6-13, John 12: 1-8) and of the Samaritan woman in John 4:7-12.

²⁵ See also Akintunde, Dorcas O. 2005. Partnership and the Exercise of Power in the Christ Apostolic Church, Nigeria. In Phiri, Isabel, A. and Nadar, Sarojini (eds.). *On being Church. African Women's Voices and Visions*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 80-95 (82).

²⁶ Stiebert, Johanna. 2004. Women's sexuality and stigma in Genesis and the Prophets. In Dube, Musa W. and Kanyoro, Musambi (eds.). *Grant me Justice! HIV/AIDS & Gender Readings of the Bible*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 81-97 (86).

²⁷ For example, instead of looking at Eve as the mother of sin and death, she is the mother of humankind.

different light.²⁸ Within the rich variety of the biblical texts there are many examples of good and true men, but also of women who may serve as worthy role models of a life of faith: Sarah, mother of nations; Deborah, a judge; Jael, a hero for killing Sisera; Hannah, mother of Samuel; Huldah, the Hebrew prophetess; Rahab, the saviour of Joshua's spies; Esther, the queen who risked her life for her people; Mary, the mother of Jesus and among the first women to establish Christ's church; Lydia, a business person and Europe's first convert; Priscilla, a leader in the New Testament Church; and Mary Magdalene and other women who first witnessed and preached about the resurrection of Jesus.

The challenge of Bible translation

The Bible is probably the most translated book in the world. This is a positive development that enabled the spread of Christianity and believers to understand and enjoy the Good News in their own language. However, because of the nature of the translations, they may enrich or impoverish understanding. Words, themes and ideas sometimes have different connotations in translation.²⁹ The translation of Romans 16:1 serves as a case in point, where Paul refers to Phoebe as a minister (*diakonos*) of the church at Cenchrea. Some translations call Phoebe a deaconess; others downplay her position by translating *diakonos* as "servant" or "helper". The Bible also contains a variety of text patterns that pose challenges for translators, some of whom may even lack sufficient knowledge of the original language in which the Bible was written.³⁰ Coupled with this is the fact that the New Testament, for example, was influenced to a great extent by Hellenistic culture and many seemingly unproblematic terms are thus laden with foreign philosophical and/or religious meaning.³¹ Language is also dynamic and changes, often making translations outdated and in need of revision. Besides these factors, we do not even have one original manuscript of the Bible, but several copies that are not even identical.³²

Linguistic difficulties

Connected to the above observation and the fact that the primary medium of human communication is language is that the meaning of language is often implicit and language as such provides only the starting point for interpretation. Morgan and Barton underscore the fact that biblical texts are both human communications to humans and divine communications to humans. This creates wide scope for disagreement concerning the meaning of biblical texts and their message.³³ The language one uses when speaking

²⁸ Sakenfeld, Katharine Doob. 1985. *Feminist Uses of Biblical Materials*. In Russell, Letty M. (ed.). *Feminist Interpretations of the Bible*. Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 55-62 (57). Other writers have tried to follow this approach, including Johnson, Elizabeth A. 1996. *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*. New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing.

²⁹ For a good example look at Table 14 on different translations of 1 Corinthians 14: 33-34.

³⁰ Amanze, Reading and Understanding the Bible, 126.

³¹ Harris, Stephen, L. 2000. *Understanding the Bible*. 5th edition. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing, 28.

³² Harris, *Understanding the Bible*, 28-31.

³³ Amanze, 126 (citing Robert Morgan and John Barton. 1988. *Biblical Interpretation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1).

of gender equality may be highly ambiguous. Some words the Bible used in association with gender – for example, submission, dominion and helper – are problematic, since they may imply more than what the original authors intended. Does the word “helper”, for example, when used to refer to God helping Israel to defeat its enemies, have the same meaning as “helper” when used in Genesis in reference to woman being the “helper” of – and thus weaker than – than man?

Cultural differences

Like all people, theological students are born and raised in particular cultures that, among other things, also have their own views on gender and gender equality. Mercy Oduyoye points out that the position of women in Africa is generally prescribed by male authorities based on what they think is beneficial to the welfare of the community. As a result the role of women is often limited and hemmed within a set of norms enshrined in culture.³⁴ Students, therefore, come to class with a set of notions about gender equality shaped by culture. The impact of culture on the understanding and interpretation of biblical passages on gender equality in Malawi constitutes a major challenge. Especially in patrilineal cultures, such as those found in Malawi, there are often negative cultural attitudes towards gender equality at home, but also more widely in the church and in society. Although the church has rejected some cultural practices that undermine gender equality,³⁵ it has also imposed its own measures of gender oppression that still makes it difficult to achieve gender equality within its ranks.³⁶

The Bible, too, originated in a different culture, in a patriarchal world. Therefore the picture of women painted in the Bible more often than not reflects patriarchal thinking. Dorcas Akintunde, in her study of the biblical concept of women with reference to its Judaic, Hellenistic and Greco-Roman context, affirms that the environment in which the Bible was written could not but influence its views on the subordination of women.³⁷ Reading the Bible within an equally patriarchal context may easily lead to a simplistic application of the text to the African/Malawian context to the detriment of women. This should be guarded against.

The position of the churches

The way we read, interpret and understand the Bible is, of course, also influenced by our respective denominations and church traditions, also with regard to gender issues and the differences among these views. This should also be kept in mind when teaching gender equality in Africa and in Malawi in particular. Among the benefits of learning institutions consisting of students and lecturers from a variety of denominations and traditions is that this may broaden the students’ understanding of gender issues. The

³⁴ Oduyoye, Mercy A. 1992. In Oduyoye, Mercy A. and Kanyoro, Musimbi R.A. (eds.). *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition and the Church in Africa*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 9-24.

³⁵ For example, the traditional practices that dehumanise the widow, such as being kept in isolation for a period, are discouraged by the church. See also Chapter 5.

³⁶ See also Phiri, Isabel A. 1997. *Women, Presbyterianism, and Patriarchy. Religious Experiences of Chewa Women in Central Malawi*. Blantyre: CLAIM, 43.

³⁷ Akintunde, Dorcas. 2003. The Subordination of Women in the Church in Nigeria. *Journal of Constructive Theology* 9(1):3-33 (4-5).

aim should be to produce graduates who move beyond both dogmatism and cynicism. As teachers, we are not only academics, but also representatives of our denominations. As such we should be sensitive to the strengths and weaknesses of our denominational positions, also with regard to the issue of gender.

Ideological orientation

As human beings we all have certain ways of thinking. These affect the way we behave and relate with our environment. The conclusions that we draw on biblical gender equality are partly influenced by our ideological orientation. Though students go through intellectual, moral and faith development processes during their studies at theological institutions, the process remains a challenge because they already have existing bodies of ideas and a set of beliefs, besides their faith convictions, that inform their orientation.

With regard to ideological orientation, there are, of course, views on gender equality that can be found within Christianity that may support either positions on the far right or the far left on the ideological continuum. The role of academic institutions is to critically evaluate the views from one end to the other of the ideological continuum, but also to take into account all available research done on gender from different disciplines. There is a need for scholarship on Scripture also to be informed by gender scholarship in other disciplines, even if the latter seem to contradict its views. One should, however, also resist the exploitation of some sources and disregard others purely to reinforce only one's own dogmatic views. Consultation of other sources in our approach to teaching gender is also a way of empowering our students to deal with gender issues in their respective churches and work places. Such an approach will undoubtedly enhance the quality of education in our institutions.

Conclusion: the meaning of theological education

Finally, when teaching gender at a theological institution, one needs to consider what is really meant by *theological* education. This will guide our approach to gender issues not only in the Bible, but also in our institutions and the churches they serve. Theological education is part of the church's mission of proclaiming the kingdom of God on earth. It is a particular kind of education connected with critical, creative, systematic reflection on our faith and its sources from the perspective of our diversity of gifts and ministries.⁵⁸

For quality theological education our institutions should offer curricula open and sensitive to the needs of all believers, men and women. Curricula should also offer the opportunity for dialogue with socio-political and socio-cultural contexts. The challenge that theological education faces, especially at university level, is to demonstrate greater responsibility toward society by relating the content of theology to the practices, attitudes and paradigms that are part of that society. One aspect of this is responsibility for addressing the lack of gender equality, or promoting it, towards an abundant life for all. It is part of the mission of God and the task of God's people and their institutions to develop and participate in liberating social practices that lead us towards greater equality,

⁵⁸ Preiswerk, Matthias *et al.* 2008. Manifesto of Quality Theological Education in Latin America. *Ministerial Formation* 111:44-51 (45).

peace, love and justice. In this regard it is helpful to refer to Matthias Preiswerk's seven factors that theological institutions need for quality theological education: democratic political participation; transparency and flexibility; a style of relations based on mutual trust and transforming professional commitment; empowerment of various actors; distribution of information; sustainability and solidarity; and efficiency.³⁹ These factors call for positive gender relations in theological institutions and eventually the fruit of this will flow from our churches to society. In this way quality theological institutions and quality theological education may help in the formation of solid human resources for the church and society.⁴⁰

³⁹ Therefore, I also share Preiswerk's conviction that quality management of the institutional life of any place of theological education should be measured by its levels of learning, security, welfare, mutual trust, gender equity and diversity (Preiswerk *et al.*, Manifesto, 51).

⁴⁰ Preiswerk *et al.*, Manifesto, 51.

Chapter 10

Reading a pastoral ‘text of terror’ in Africa today?

1 Timothy 2:8-15 as a context-specific appropriation
of the creation story¹

Elna Mouton²



Introduction: overview of argument

For many people today, particularly African women, 1 Timothy 2:8-15 is a canonical text that resists being read liberatively. It has probably become – especially since the nineteenth century³ – one of the most controversial texts in the history of biblical interpretation with respect to the participation of women in church leadership and decision-making processes. It often explicitly or implicitly functioned, and in various ecclesial contexts still functions, to legitimate private, ‘submissive’ and restrictive positions for women.⁴ Because its understanding has often contributed to an ethos where

¹ Paper read at a Gender Equality Workshop presented by NetACT, EFSA and the Faculty of Theology, Stellenbosch, 1-3 August 2011. It is a shortened version of a more technical essay entitled “New life from a pastoral ‘text of terror’? Gender perspectives on God and humanity in 1 Timothy 2,” which will be published elsewhere. The ‘text of terror’ in the title is borrowed from Phyllis Trible’s 1984 monograph *Texts of Terror. Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives*. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press.

² Elna Mouton is professor of New Testament in, and former dean of, the Faculty of Theology, Stellenbosch University, South Africa. E-mail: emouton@sun.ac.za

³ Johnson, Luke T. 2001. *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*. Anchor Bible 35A. New York, NY: Doubleday, 42-54; Wall, Robert W. 2004. 1 Timothy 2:9-10 Reconsidered (Again). *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 14 (1):81-103 (82).

⁴ For aspects of the history of interpretation of 1 Tim. 2:8-15 see, among others, Roloff, Jürgen. 1988. *Der erste Brief an Timotheus*. Zürich: Benziger Verlag, 142-147; Porter, Stanley E. 1993. What does it mean to be “saved by childbirth” (1 Timothy 2:15)? *JSNT* 49:87-90; Schottroff, Luise. 1995. *Lydia’s Impatient Sisters. A Feminist Social History of Early Christianity* (tr. Barbara and Martin Rumscheidt). London: Westminster John Knox Press; Bassler, Jouette M. 2000. 1 Timothy. In Mays, James L. (General Ed.). *Harper Collins Bible Commentary*. (Rev. ed.). San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1137-1141; Phiri, Isabel A. 2000. African women in mission. Two case studies from Malawi. *Missionalia* 28:267-293; Johnson, *Timothy*, 20-54; Kawale, Winston R. 2001a. The role of women in social transformation in the Nkhoma Synod (Malawi). *Scriptura* 77:211-223; Kawale, Winston R. 2001b. Women, social transformation and the Bible in Nkhoma Synod (Malawi). *Scriptura* 77:225-238; Jacobs, Maretha. 2002. Vroue en die Nuwe Hervorming. Afskeid van die Pastor. (Women and the New Reformation. Farewell to the Pastor). In Muller, Piet (red.). *Die Nuwe Hervorming*. (The New Reformation). Pretoria: Protea Boekhuis, 112-133; Wall, 1 Timothy Reconsidered, 81-82; West, Gerald 2004. Taming Texts of Terror. Reading (against) the Gender Grain of 1 Timothy. *Scriptura* 86(2):160-165; Waters, Kenneth L. 2004. Saved through childbearing. Virtues as children in 1 Timothy 2:11-15. *JBL* 123(4):731-733; Oguntoyinbo-Atere, Martina I. 2011. The Dynamics of Power and Violence in the Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:11-15. Case Studies of some Nigerian married Christian Women. Paper presented at a conference of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (Theme: “Gender-based violence in religiously pluralistic societies: West African experiences”), Talitha Qumi Centre, Trinity Theological College, Legon (Accra, Ghana), June 20-22, 2011.

not only the prophetic contribution of women, but also their humanity and growth as baptised members of God's household have been inhibited or viewed as inferior, the *integrity* of the Christian gospel is at stake in its interpretation and appropriation by later generations.⁵

This essay has a twofold purpose. Its first part comprises a brief analysis of 1 Timothy 2:8-15 within the broad literary thrust of the epistle. Its second aim is to explore the (inter-)textual coherence of the passage, with particular reference to images from Genesis 2-3 referred to in 2:13-15.

1 Timothy seems to be concerned mainly with the trustworthiness of the Christian gospel and its adherents' response to it amid the threatening reality of false teachers. This urgent need provides the epistle's theological-rhetorical framework, within which the implied receivers' identity and daily ethos would be challenged and redefined. In an attempt to account for its rich yet complex worldview, the inter-textual coherence of 1 Timothy 2:1-15 will be investigated – with special reference to gender images from Genesis 2-3 in 2:13-15.

In an attempt to make sense of the command regarding a woman in 2:11-12, and its motivation in 2:13-15, the essay explores two sets of arguments: (a) that the author contrasted the thinking of Genesis 2-3 by importing a limited selection from it into his letter, thereby conveying a new significance that would enable the recipients of 1 Timothy 2 to reread Genesis 2-3 *literally* with the interpretation of 1 Timothy 2 in mind. This strategy runs the risk of being incompatible with 1 Timothy's theological thrust; (b) a second view argues that 1 Timothy functioned as an *allegory* – a well-known method of interpretation at the time. This opens the possibility that Adam and Eve, as well as the image of childbearing, functioned *metaphorically* as a context-specific appropriation of the creation story rather than as indicating the general relationship between women and men.

The "authority" of Scripture has for many people in Africa become synonymous with "authoritarianism" – the close association of religious (sacred) authority and the abuse of (political) power (Bediako, Kwame. 2000. *Jesus in Africa. The Christian Gospel in African History and Experience*. Akropong-Akuapem: Regnum Africa, 97-107). In continuation with Jesus' "desacralisation" of all worldly power (which Bediako calls the "essential thrust of the New Testament"), Bediako pleads for the desacralisation of any dominating, absolutising, manipulative authority, power, institution or structure that rules over human existence (Bediako, *Jesus in Africa*, 102-107; cf. Oduyoye, Mercy A. 2002. *Beads and Strands. Reflections of an African Woman on Christianity in Africa*. Akropong-Akuapem: Regnum Africa, 90-101). This essay works with the premise that the text under discussion (1 Tim. 2) forms part of the redemptive, non-dominating, justice-seeking thrust of the NT and that the meaning and intended rhetorical effect of biblical "authority" continuously need to be reinterpreted and reclaimed from this perspective.

⁵ One of the greatest hermeneutical challenges for biblical scholars is to ponder how the tension inherent in our own (often unquestioned ideological) pre-understandings of a text may correlate with the tensions within the text itself, as well as the socio-historical situation of the early faith communities by which it was prompted. This is particularly pertinent to the study of 1 Tim. 2:8-15, which has become almost embarrassing in the attention it draws to itself, out of all proportion to its exegetical significance (cf. Porter, "Saved by childbirth?," 87-88). For an extended bibliography on the passage see Mounce, William D. 2000. *Pastoral Epistles*. Word Biblical Commentary 46. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 94-102.

Teaching this text in an African context today would challenge interpreters to read courageously against the grain of its history of interpretation and to allow the text to speak afresh in its dynamic multidimensionality.

Theological thrust of 1 Timothy

For the purpose of the argument it is of major importance to acknowledge the *theological* thrust of the epistle. 1 Timothy is undergirded by (male) images of God as a gracious *saviour* through Christ Jesus (1:1,13-16; 2:3-6; 4:10; 2 Tim. 1:9-10), an honourable *father* (1:2) and authoritative *king* (1:17; 6:15-16). This Saviour-God's *sōtēria* (encompassing kingdom of health and goodwill) is compared to a transformed household (1:4; 3:15) or assembly (3:15).

In order to focus on 2:8-15 from here, it would be necessary to situate the passage within its immediate literary context. The saying "faithful is the word" or "the saying is sure" (NRSV) or "this is a reliable opinion"⁶ recurs in 1:15 and 3:1, possibly as a "framing device" for presenting 1:15-3:1 as a coherent syntactic unit.⁷ It comprises a saying about Jesus the *saviour* of the world (1:15-16), a doxology (1:17), encouragement to Timothy (1:18-20), and instructions on prayer and worship (2:1-15), with specific reference to God as *sōtēr* (saviour) in 2:3-4. It ends with a second saying about *salvation*, namely that a woman would be *saved* through childbearing (2:15). The *focus* subject of 1:15-3:1, therefore, is the believers' appropriate response to God's radical saving initiative in Christ Jesus. Every other aspect constitutes the predicate which makes an extended assertion about the subject.

The two main sentences in chapter 2 (2:1 and 8) follow as logical consequence on what has gone before. Verses 2:1-7 elaborate on the glorious and truthful gospel of God and Jesus Christ (1:1,11-17). The ultimate *goal* (1:5) or rhetorical purpose of the author's instruction is the community's appropriate response to this gospel, namely an ethos of "love that comes from a *pure heart*, a *good conscience*, and *sincere faith*" (NRSV).⁸ This gospel has been entrusted to the author's care, rhetorically referred to as 'Paul' (1:11-16), who now shares the responsibility with Timothy, his "true son in the faith" (1:2,18-19; 4:11-16; 6:20). Through Timothy 'Paul' urges the believing community in Ephesus to *pray for everyone* (2:1-2), particularly for those in authority, "so that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all 'godliness' (NIV) and 'dignity'" (NRSV).⁹ Two *theological* motivations are given for Timothy's call to service and the community's ethos of public worship: (a) there is only one God and one mediator¹⁰ between God and humanity, Christ Jesus

⁶ Johnson, *Timothy*, 198.

⁷ The "sayings" in 1 Tim. (also 4:9) are all statements concerning *salvation* (Johnson, *Timothy*, 203, with reference to Nestle-Aland). For this reason 3:1 is interpreted here as a comment on 2:15 and as a conclusion to chapter 2 rather than as an introduction to chapter 3, as suggested by most translations.

⁸ These notions run like a golden thread through the entire epistle (cf. 1:14,19; 2:2,7-8,15; 3:2,9,13; 4:1,6-12; 5:7-8,22; 6:1-2,11,14,21).

⁹ Syntactically, *prayer* is the main subject of chapter 2.

¹⁰ Emphasis on the one and only God in 1 Tim. seems not only to occur over against the divisions from within the faith community, but also the polytheism of their neighbours – cf. the *shema* of Deut. 6:4 ("Hear, o Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone"). See Clark Kroeger, Richard and Clark Kroeger, Catherine. 1992. *I Suffer Not a Woman. Rethinking 1 Timothy 2:11-15 in light of ancient evidence*. Grand

(1:17; 2:5); (b) it is good and pleases God that all people be saved and live worthy, godly lives (1:15; 2:3-6). It is because of *who God is* that the community is invited to respond in reverence and awe, and with ‘good works’ (2:9-10; 5:10,25; 6:18). These theological references – articulated in limited human language – represent the dynamic thrust and orientation of the epistle.¹¹ It concerns the recipients’ *primary identity as the household of God* (1:4; 3:15).

Verses 2:8-15 take the invitation to prayer in 2:1-2 further by emphasising the kind of disposition, atmosphere and even clothing that would be conducive to truthful worship and worthy of respect (cf. 3:1-15). The author’s first wish is that men should pray in every place, “lifting up holy hands without anger or argument” (2:8). *Likewise*, women should pray (and learn – v. 11), having dressed themselves “modestly and decently in suitable clothing ... with good works” (2:9-10).¹² Subsequent to the profoundly *theological* motivations in 1:15-2:7, two *anthropological* reasons are provided in 2:8-15 to support the instructions for worthy behaviour in the worship service, particularly with respect to women (vv. 13-14): (a) Adam was formed first, then Eve; and (b) Adam was not deceived but the woman. Then the argument turns to yet another utterance on salvation in 2:15.¹³ Before dealing with this complex interpretation of Genesis 2-3, the probable moral situation from within which the document originated is explored briefly.

1 Timothy's basic need?

The Pastoral epistles (1 and 2 Timothy, Titus) are addressed to the pastors of some early faith communities in Asia Minor. According to 1 Timothy 1:3, Timothy was at Ephesus during the time of its writing, where Paul probably left him behind during his third missionary journey to do follow-up work after they had ministered there for some time.¹⁴ Opinions vary, however, when it comes to situating 1 Timothy more precisely in terms of time, authorship and circumstance.¹⁵

Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 67-74 for an interesting discussion on (female) deities and mediators in Ephesus during the 1st century CE.

¹¹ Cf. Donelson, Lewis R. 1988. The Structure of Ethical Argument in the Pastorals. *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 18(3):108-113 for a similar discussion on the logic and coherence of ethical reasoning in the Pastorals.

¹² Typically, the passage reflects the desired ethos mentioned in 1:5 and 2:2, particularly in the conditional clause of 2:15 – “if they continue in *faith, love and holiness* with propriety” – NIV. The latter may also be translated with ‘sobriety’, ‘modesty’ or ‘discernment’ (cf. 2:9). The desired outcomes of *godliness, holiness, faith, and love* referred to in 2:2 and 15 thus frame the instructions on worship in chapter 2 (under the umbrella of the author’s explicit goal in 1:5 and 3:14-15). This pathos and logic set the scene for what follows in the remaining part of the document.

¹³ The *salvation* rhetoric used here is not uncommon in the rest of the letter as well as the NT. In 1 Tim. 4:16 the author instructs Timothy to pay close attention to himself and to his teaching, “for in doing this *you will save both yourself and your hearers*” (NRSV; cf. Mk. 13:13; Matt. 24:13; Luke 21:19).

¹⁴ Cf. Acts 18:23-20:38; Clark Kroeger and Clark Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman*, 47-58; Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, xlviiii-lix, lxiv-lxix.

¹⁵ Some scholars consider it as pertaining to a situation in Ephesus during the early sixties of the first century (Pelser, Gert M. M. 1984. Die Pastorale brieve (The Pastoral epistles), in Du Toit, Andries B. (red.). *Die Pauliniese Brieve. Inleiding en Teologie*. (The Pauline Epistles. Introduction and Theology) (Handleiding by die NT, Vol. V). Pretoria: NG Kerkboekhandel Tvl, 190), while others understand it to be a deuterio-Pauline (even second century) writing (Dewey, Joanna. 1998. 1 Timothy. In Newsom, Carol A. and Ringe, Sharon H. (eds.). *Women’s Bible Commentary*. (Expanded ed.) Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 444-449). For a more detailed discussion on introductory issues with regards to 1 Tim., see Roloff, *Timotheus*, 19-50; Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, cxviii-cxxix; Johnson,

The *urgent need* prompting the author (the situation that calls for a response) seems to be his deep concern with preserving the sound teaching and ethos of the Christian faith against various pseudo-practices which apparently threatened its integrity. The text mentions certain opponents or false teachers in the Christian community at Ephesus (1:3-11), although these are not clearly identified. Later readers are left with fragments of their influence, together with the author's passionate response to it.¹⁶ He is concerned that the recipients could be lured and deceived by *different* teachings (1:3), by *pseudo-knowledge* (6:20-21), and that they would consequently be drawn into endless controversy, dispute, speculation, suspicion and confusion, which could easily deprive them of their freedom, love and truth in Jesus Christ (1:4; 2:8; 3:2-3; 4:2; 6:3,20-21).¹⁷ He interprets the false teachings as a characteristic of "later times" in which "some will renounce the faith by paying attention to deceitful spirits and teaching of demons" (4:1 – NRSV; cf. 1:19-20). This may further explain the epistle's urgency and the author's serious exhortations to the believers not to deviate from their focus on God and Christ Jesus (1:17; 2:3-6; 4:16; 5:21; 6:13-15). In view of this 'state of emergency', the author urgently instructs them to avoid *any argument or disposition* that could result in divisive quarrels and the consequent loss of their moral discernment and integrity.

Metaphorical descriptions of God and the implied recipients' moral identity and conduct thus seem to be embedded within a rhetorical context of unholy disharmony, disputes and quarrels.¹⁸ Ultimately every moral exhortation – including 2:8-15 – derives

Timothy, 13-15, 55-99.

¹⁶ His pathos for the *trustworthiness* of the saving grace of Jesus Christ is particularly expressed in recurring confessional statements such as "The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" – 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; cf 2 Tim. 2:11; Tt. 3:8, references to "the knowledge of the truth" – 2:4; 4:3, as well as purpose statements at the beginning and end of the letter (1:3-7,10; 6:3-10, 20-21). In 2:7 he identifies himself as "a herald, apostle and teacher of the true faith" (NIV) and Timothy in 6:20 as "a guard of the precious deposit that has been entrusted to him" (cf. 1:11,18 NIV), while the implied recipients are referred to in 3:15 as "God's household, the pillar and foundation of the truth" (NIV) or "the pillar and bulwark of the truth" (NRSV).

¹⁷ The exact *nature of such false teachings* would be particularly pertinent as context for 2:8-3:1. Also this issue has led to much debate in the past (cf. Pelser, *Pastorale briewe*, 188-189; Gritz, Sharon H. 1991. *Paul, Women Teachers, and the Mother Goddess at Ephesus. A Study of 1 Timothy 2:9-15 in Light of the Religious and Cultural Milieu of the First Century*. Lanham/New York: University Press of America, 31-49; Clark Kroeger and Clark Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman*, 59-66; Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, lxx-lxxiv; Johnson, *Timothy*, 142-154). Reference to controversy about genealogies and the Torah (1:4-10; cf. Tt. 1:10,14; 3:9) may suggest a Jewish character, which would concern the very heart of a Jewish identity. Reference to myths, genealogies (1:4; 4:7; 6:20) and so-called knowledge (6:20-21) may suggest association with some form of Gnosticism (Bassler, "1 Timothy," 1137). Reference to stories told by old women and the asceticism of celibacy and abstinence from foods (4:2-7; Tt. 1:14-16) may suggest ascetic Christian groups, which often included women as prominent members (Dewey, 1 Timothy, 445; cf. Brown, Lucinda A. 1992. *Asceticism and Ideology. The Language of Power in the Pastoral Epistles*. *Semeia* 57:77-94; 2 Tim. 3:6-9; 1 Tim. 2:9-15; 5:11-16). In the atmosphere of Hellenism it is also possible that elements of Greek dualism were appropriated with its negative view of the body and all things material (Wiebe, Ben. 1994. *Two texts on women* (1 Tim 2:11-15; Gal 3:26-29). A test of interpretation. *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 16 (1):56). This may account for the author's obsession with 'good deeds' (2:10; 5:10, 25; 6:18), which are substantiated by practical, *bodily* actions of loving service and compassion (such as bearing and bringing up children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the saints, helping those in trouble, teaching truthfully – 5:10; 4:11-13). Such continuous references to 'good works' indicate that it is "not a trivializing phrase, but points to a life of productive virtue" (Johnson, *Timothy*, 200).

¹⁸ The letter refers to God as "the only God" (1:17), and as "one" (2:5). God is described as the saviour of all human beings (1:1,15; 2:3,4; 4:10) – not only the saviour *from* sin as any possible form of

its authority and relevance from this *theological* emphasis, as response to a particular need.¹⁹ *Because of who God is* the addressees should not undermine God's training (1:4). Subsequently, the conjunction *therefore* in 2:1 and 2:8 links what follows as a direct and logical consequence to the preceding section and purpose for writing (1:3-7,15), and as an explication of the gospel (1:11). Because of God's desire that *all people* be saved (1:15), the author wishes to ensure proper conduct in the worship assembly – particularly in view of the distortion and divisions caused by false teachings.²⁰

It is from within this rich yet complex theological-ethical vision that I believe the coherence of 1 Timothy 2 has to be explored. In this respect further exegetical observations have to be made, particularly in view of 2:8-15.

Praying without anger ... clothed in good works

1 Timothy 2:8 expresses the author's desire that men should pray in every place, lifting up holy hands without anger or argument (NRSV). Noteworthy is that believing men are encouraged everywhere to take special care to avoid disputing or a quarrelsome spirit at their prayer meetings, so as to cause no further division and conflict.²¹ This qualification is confirmed by other moral instructions in the letter – all meant to contribute towards a peaceful, holy and trustworthy way of living in God's sight.

Like the men (2:8), women are *similarly* invited to pray, this being implied (v. 9). Since most synagogue prayers were offered by men, this freedom is significant.²² The recurring conjunction *similarly* communicates a sense of mutuality, partnership and interconnectedness among the members of the community (3:8,11; cf. 5:25). When the focus turns to women, however, specific attention is given to the way in which they should *dress* when they pray in public. Probable reasons for the admonitions to women deserve closer attention.

Firstly, the insistence that women dress modestly and perform good deeds "is a commonplace in both Greco-Roman and Jewish moralists."²³ In both Hellenistic and Jewish thought the connection between certain types of dress and improper sexual conduct on the part of women was prominent. That the early Christian community at

alienation within and among themselves or between them and God (1:15; 2:14; 5:20, 22), but also the saviour *towards* a new, peaceful life in Christ (2:2). Trustworthy knowledge of this living and life-giving God (4:10; 6:13) is implicitly defined as *saving* (liberating and healing) knowledge. Jesus Christ is likewise pictured in dramatic images such as "our hope" (1:1; cf. 4:9; 5:5; 6:17), and in 2:3-6 as the only *mediator* between God and humanity, who gave himself as *ransom* (*redemption price*) for all. These metaphors depict a hopeless situation which could only be salvaged through external mediation and intervention. Collectively they constitute the theological thrust of the letter, implicitly and explicitly subverting any form of deception or division in and among the recipients.

¹⁹ Cf. Donelson, Ethical Argument.

²⁰ In the worship service men and women should *therefore* pray in a specific way (2:1-3, 8-9). The overseers should *therefore* be "above reproach" (3:2). Deacons and their wives (sic) were *therefore* to be "worthy of respect" (3:8, 11 – NIV). Timothy himself was *therefore* to set a truthful example of sound living and teaching, "without spot or blame" (4:6-16; 5:22; 6:14).

²¹ Bowman, Ann L. 1992. Women in Ministry. An Exegetical Study of 1 Timothy 2:11-15. *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 196.

²² Keener, Craig S. 1992. *Paul, Women and Wives. Marriage and Women's Ministry in the Letters of Paul*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 102-103.

²³ Johnson, *Timothy*, 199; cf. Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives*, 103-107.

Ephesus had to redefine its identity and ethos amid various mother and saviour goddess cults – such as the Artemis fertility cult – probably further accounts for the particular nature of these admonitions.²⁴ Rather than making a sensational display of excessive outer adornment in terms of dress, fancy hair styles or jewellery, thereby distracting the attention at worship meetings, believing women were metaphorically to be clothed “with *good works*, as is proper for women who profess reverence for God” (2:9-10, NRSV).

Secondly, the women described in verses 9-10 suggest wealthy, educated and articulate women.²⁵ Although Paul’s converts and co-workers also included wealthy women (Acts 16:15; 17:4,12,34), the rhetoric of 1 Timothy suggests a certain unhealthy love of money, which is contrasted with their hope in God and the treasure of ‘good deeds’ (3:3; 6:6-10,17-19). The rest of the passage (2:11-3:1) substantiates the nature of such ‘good works’ for women in the specific socio-religious context implied by the text.

Let a woman learn ...!

The ‘good deeds’ of 2:10 are explicated in terms of four distinct elements with respect to the functioning of women, comprising:

1. a *positive* statement in 2:11 concerning women’s learning;
2. a *negative* statement: women are not permitted to teach or exercise authority over men (v. 12);
3. a *motivating* reason: the example of Adam and Eve (13-14); and
4. a *concluding* remark on women being saved “through childbearing” (2:15-3:1).

As the very first explication of the ‘good deeds’ referred to in verse 10, verse 11 starts with a remarkable statement: “*Let a woman learn ...*”. This is a radical movement from within the cultural context of Judaism, where men were the public speakers in any assembly, and where it was forbidden that women should learn and interpret the Torah.²⁶

The expression *en hēsuchia* used twice (in 2:11 and 12) can be translated as either ‘in silence’ (NRSV) or ‘in quietness’ (NIV). In 2:2 *hēsuchia* *bion* is usually translated as ‘a quiet life’. In the socio-rhetorical context of 1 Timothy, the invitation to ‘quietness’ and ‘full submission’ would represent a respectful, honourable attitude for proper learning, spiritual contemplation and receptivity.²⁷ Moreover, the epistle often contrasts a ‘modest’ and ‘submissive’ attitude (2:9,11) to conceit and arrogance (cf. 3:6; 6:4).

²⁴ Cf. Acts 19:27-35; Gritz, *Women Teachers*, 36-43; Clark Kroeger and Clark Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman*, 105-113, 153-170. That this could be an issue of a more general nature in some early faith communities is implied by similar instructions in 1 Peter 3:2-3. Concern that women should dress and behave modestly was pervasive in the culture.

²⁵ Cf. Cotter, Wendy. 1994. Women’s Authority Roles in Paul’s Churches. Counter-culture or Conventional? *Novum Testamentum* 36:357-358.

²⁶ Johnson, *Timothy*, 201,204. Cf. also Barnett, Paul W. 1989. Wives and Women’s Ministry (1 Timothy 2:11-15). *Evangelical Quarterly* 61(3):229: “In the Talmud is written: ‘may the words of the Torah be burned rather than be handed over to a woman ... Women were not even permitted to say the Benediction after a meal ... That Christian women were encouraged to learn was a new departure.”

²⁷ Cf. Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives*, 107-108; Bowman, *Women in Ministry*, 199; Clark Kroeger and Clark Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman*, 74-76; Wiebe, *Two texts*, 58, 62; Barnett, *Wives and Women’s Ministry*, 229-230; Wall, *1 Timothy Reconsidered*, 86-91. According to Malina, Bruce J. 1993. *The New Testament World. Insights from Cultural Anthropology*. (Rev. ed.). Louisville, KY: Westminster Press, 39,51, an honourable person in the 1st-century Mediterranean world would have been “one who knows how to and can maintain his or her social boundaries in the intersection of power, gender, and

... but I do not permit her to teach

Verse 12 continues with: “I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent” (NRSV). The command that women should not teach occurs *only* here in the New Testament. Apart from specific tensions in the early Christian community at Ephesus which could have prompted such an utterance, later readers have to be mindful of more general attitudes about women’s public behaviour in antiquity.²⁸ In the context of 1 Timothy, the call is probably not for a prohibition of all (female) speaking as such, but rather of speech that interrupts and disturbs.²⁹ Such a disposition of ‘quietness’ would be in contrast to the anger and disputes that some men were bringing to the worship meetings (2:8). The qualification ‘in silence’ could also simply have referred to a practical situation where women did not have the authority (*eksousia*) to speak *yet*, since they had not *yet* learned to do so (v. 11).³⁰

The Greek word *authentēin* in verse 12 (to domineer or usurp authority) appears only here in the New Testament. Compared to the rare instances of its contemporary classical use, it has a substantially negative connotation, namely *to act aggressively or violently against another, or to instigate forceful action or perpetrate a crime against others*, leading to disruptive behaviour.³¹ With reference to appropriate teaching and authority, the New

social respect, including God. The shameless person is one who does not observe social boundaries ... one outside the boundaries of acceptable moral life, hence a person who must be denied the normal social courtesies”. Therefore, “any physical boundary-crossing on the part of another presumes and implies the intention to dishonour. In honour societies, actions are more important than words, and how one speaks is more important than what one says” (Malina, *New Testament World*, 41; cf. the noun *parabasis* (transgression, disobedience) in 2:14, which literally means ‘crossing of boundaries’ – Johnson, *Timothy*, 201). For a detailed discussion on honour and shame as pivotal values in such societies, see Malina, *New Testament World*, 28-55.

²⁸ Cf. Gritz, *Women Teachers*, 11-29, 59-73; Cotter, *Authority Roles*, 358-372; Kittredge, Cynthia B. 1998. *Community and Authority. The Rhetoric of Obedience in the Pauline Tradition*. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, 37-51.

²⁹ During its reception history, however, the *unnuanced* silencing of women ironically served as a filter through which the rest of the text has been viewed. It seems that the situationally conditioned clause “I am not allowing a woman to teach” in 2:12 (referring to a specific situation in Ephesus at the time – cf. 1:7) has been interpreted as a forceful universal command, even to the detriment of the utterance “Let her learn” in 2:11 (Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives*, 112, 128 n. 94). More attention seems further to be focused on the (second) negative statement in 2:11 (“in silence with full submission”) than the (first) positive one (with ironic reference to v. 13!). In my view, this way of appropriating the text is contrary to 1 Timothy’s fundamental perspective on a *life-giving and life-sustaining God*, and the *church as God’s life-giving and life-sustaining household*.

Although the command that women should not teach occurs *only* here in the NT, the text inadvertently reinforced the conservative tendencies of other utterances associated with Paul, such as 1 Cor. 14:33-40 and Eph. 5:21-6:9, while obscuring the more liberating aspects of Paul’s statements about women (cf. Bassler, 1 Timothy; Kittredge, *Community and Authority*; Mouton, Elna. 2011. Human dignity as expression of God images? Perspectives from/on 1 Corinthians 14 and Ephesians 5. *Neotestamentica* 45(2):275-292). Consequently, women were silenced and marginalised in churches and societies – in explicit and in subtle ways – while their submissive (passive, private) role was overemphasised (cf. Phiri, African women; Kawale, Women, social transformation and the Bible). *In this way the context-specific utterances of 1 Tim. 2:8-15 have been amplified into universal norms for ecclesial ethos and gender identity*.

³⁰ Analogously, in the very next chapter (3:2, 6), it is stated about an overseer that he “must be an apt teacher ... he (sic) *must not be a recent convert*, or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil” (NRSV; cf. also 1:7 and Mk. 8:29-30 regarding Jesus’ “silencing” of Peter).

³¹ Wiebe, Two texts”, 59; Bowman, Women in Ministry, 201-202; Clark Kroeger and Clark Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman*, 79-104, 185-188.

Testament regularly uses *eksousia*. In the broader context of 1 Timothy any *aggressive* or *violent* action (also with regard to Paul's own background – cf. Acts 7:58-8:3; 9:1-2) is contrasted to the Christian ethos of *love and peace* (1:13; 2:2; 3:3).

However, for later readers of this text it would be imperative at the same time to problematise and nuance the dualistic patriarchal epistemology on which societies of the 1st and 2nd century Mediterranean world were based. The hermeneutical questions then become: Were the general and specific positions of men, women, children and slaves supposed to be *reconstructed* by early Christian rhetoric (as a *re-description* of patriarchal traditions from a Christian perspective)?³² Or was its rhetoric (and particular that of 1 Timothy) a mere *description* of the status quo at the time, and a further legitimization of women's silent and submissive roles?³³ If not, how would the author of 1 Timothy have anticipated transcending the socio-cultural boundaries of his audience?

I would like to argue that, although the requirement that women be silent and submissive derives from Hellenistic household management traditions,³⁴ it is *reconfigured* and *reappropriated* here within the rhetoric of the household of God. Through his profoundly *theological* orientation, as argued above, the author of 1 Timothy creates a particular *frame of reference*, of *new significance*, with glimpses of an alternative moral world to be inhabited by his audience. Yet, even though he seems fundamentally to challenge usual assumptions about what would be regarded as 'honourable' (cf. 2:11), he remains a product of his time who could only describe the awesome reality of God's saving presence in limited (patriarchal) language. This seems to become particularly evident in his interpretation of the creation story in 2:8-15.

In order to appreciate the enigmatic inter-(con)textuality of 1 Timothy 2 more fully, I invited professor Ellen van Wolde, respected Old Testament scholar from the Netherlands (Radboud University of Nijmegen), to comment on the functioning of the creation story (Gen. 2-3) in 1 Timothy 2. Her (reduced) response is reflected verbatim under the following two subheadings (except for the footnotes).

For Adam was formed first, and was not deceived ...

Without elaborating on the fascinating detail of Genesis 2-3 as a textual unit here,³⁵ one may ask what the author of 1 Timothy 2:13-15 has chosen to select from this text. Van Wolde argues that:

³² Cf. Mouton, Elna. 2003. (Re)Describing Reality? The Transformative Potential of Ephesians across Times and Cultures. In Levine, Amy-Jill and Blickenstaff, Marianne (eds.). *A Feminist Companion to the Deutero-Pauline Epistles*. Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 59-87.

³³ Cf. Cotter, Authority Roles.

³⁴ Cf. Bassler, 1 Timothy, 1139.

³⁵ For an extensive description see Van Wolde, Ellen J. 1994. *Words become Worlds. Semantic Studies of Genesis 1-11*. Biblical Interpretation Series, Vol. 6. Leiden/Boston, MA: Brill, 3-47. Cf. Van Wolde, Ellen. 2006. Het paradijsverhaal in Genesis 2-3. (The Paradise Story in Genesis 2-3) In Van Wolde, Ellen (red.). *Het paradijs*. (Paradise) Zoetermeer: Meinema, 9-32 Serie: *De bijbel: teksten en thema's in beeld*; Mouton, Elna. 2006. Van Eden naar Heden via Paulus. (From Eden to Today via Paul) In Van Wolde, Ellen (red.). *Het paradijs*. Zoetermeer: Meinema, 84-86.

“... his main thesis seems to be that women are saved through childbearing.³⁶ In order to support his thesis he refers to Genesis 2-3. His first argument is one of sequence: Adam was created first, then Eve. Based on this sequence, he apparently concludes that the best, that is Adam, comes first. However, this argument does not count in Genesis 1. Because there the human being was created last, and here one usually concludes that the human being is the climax of creation. So one may wonder why this conclusion is not valid for Eve. The second argument in 1 Timothy 2:14 is that Eve was seduced, not Adam. Would it not have been more correct to say that Eve was seduced first and Adam second? And 1 Timothy’s third argument is that Eve transgressed God’s prohibition; we know, of course, that Adam did so too. Therefore, these three arguments are not very good examples of correct reasoning.

“More important still is the following feature. In the story in Genesis 2-3 childbearing was the consequence of the transgression of the prohibition to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Because they were seduced and because they ate from the tree of knowledge, man and woman acquired the competence to procreate, and were thereby enabled to multiply and fill the earth. This is what makes 1 Timothy’s argumentation so illogical. In 1 Timothy childbearing is presented as the woman’s only capacity to be saved, yet at the same time the preceding activity that had led to this capacity is rejected.³⁷ And to support this, the author refers to Genesis! It is amazing! And nevertheless the rhetorical strategy seems to have worked!”

1 Timothy 2's way of thinking?

“What is the logic or way of thinking at work here? The author of 1 Timothy 2:13-15 uses a well-known story in ways that emphasise a strong cause and effect relation

³⁶ The example of bearing children could have been chosen because the false teachers were downplaying the importance of marriage (1 Tim. 4:1-5; cf. 3:2,4,12; 5:14). Generally, for women to be child bearers in the patriarchal Greco-Roman culture of the 1st century would be a primary way of embodying the cardinal virtue of *sōphrosunē* (modesty, decency, sobriety, sound moral judgment, discretion, prudence or good sense – cf. Johnson, *Timothy*, 200, 203; Brown, *Asceticism and Ideology*, 80-93; Wall, *1 Timothy Reconsidered*, 86). This would be in harmony with the religious views of Asia Minor and especially Ephesus where the maternal principle reigned supreme. The author of 1 Tim. also links *sōphrosunē* to ‘good works’ (2:9,15), yet anchors it – through his *theological* framework – in the new reality of God’s restored creation in Christ Jesus (cf. 3:2 with respect also to male leaders). The link between salvation and childbirth (both metaphors for *new life*) could thus serve as a piece of concrete advice against the opponents’ ascetic teachings, which the author rebuts by insisting on the goodness of God’s creation. From such a perspective, one might argue that women’s calling to be life-givers – physically and metaphorically (cf. Gen. 3:20) – is being affirmed here. No wonder that some interpreters consider the text to be referring to Mary, the mother of Jesus, who – unlike Eve – presented the world with the Saviour, the new Adam (cf. Wall, *1 Timothy Reconsidered*, 95-96). In this sense 2:15 could be seen as radically contrasting Eve and all believing women to the ‘snake of deception’ – both in the creation narrative of Gen. 2-3 and the Ephesians community (cf. Clark Kroeger and Clark Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman*, 117-177, for a discussion of the many perspectives on Eve and the serpent in ancient myths; and Fuhrmann, Sebastian. 2010. *Saved by childbirth. Struggling ideologies, the female body and a placing of 1 Tim 2:15a. Neotestamentica* 44(1):31-46, for an interpretation of 2:15 against the backdrop of ancient medical teachings concerning female diseases and Gnostic writings related to myths of the ‘womb’).

³⁷ The underlying moral theme of the letter becomes evident once again. Believing, praying women and men in Ephesus would be bearers of life, co-saviours with Christ Jesus, ‘*provided they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty.*’ This is probably the reliable (life-giving) saying to which 3:1 was meant to refer.

between a singular event in the story of the garden of Eden, and the present relation between men and women. 1 Timothy contrasts the thinking of Genesis 2-3, and by a limited selection of only two elements and a new embedding in his letter, the author is able to convey a *new significance*. And through this editorial practice he is able to change the way of thinking of its contemporary and later audiences. The readers or hearers of 1 Timothy then start to reread Genesis 2-3 with the text of 1 Timothy in mind. And they read in it a story of an evil woman who is transgressing God's prohibition and who is leading her husband astray. That is not what Genesis is about, but what 1 Timothy seems to be about – at least as far as its history of interpretation was/is concerned.³⁸

"The letter written by 1 Timothy's author is, however, not only based on this interpretation of Genesis 2 and 3, but also on the way in which the debate is framed, so that it seems to assume that there is only one history and one story to be told. Indeed, 1 Timothy's rhetorical purpose seems to be to make this selection in some sense the audience's own. This is a letter in which recollection serves a normative prescription.

"What then does the pairing of these highly selective and sharply contrasting citations suggest? It testifies of historical cognition that is partial, while depending on the subject of 1 Timothy's author.³⁹ This probably explains why the authority of the writer of this document is stressed so emphatically: At the beginning and ending of his message he emphasises the truthfulness of his words, so that the audience will follow him in his reconstruction of the past, which very much depends on his present position. Therefore, the historical cognition also depends on the authority of 'Paul' as the suggested writer of this letter. In addition to that, these words' evaluation depends on the historical audiences. The letter of 1 Timothy helps the reading or hearing men to stick to their own highly valued positions, and provides them with ammunition to keep the women in their rightfully defended lower places. This may also explain why these words were so successful in their rhetorical effect, as do ages of defences of women's suppression in churches witness, which were more often than not based on 1 Timothy 2."⁴⁰

Reading 1 Timothy 2:8–15 allegorically

Van Wolde's careful reading of Genesis 2-3 convinced me that 1 Timothy's selection and appropriation of the creation story do not make sense when interpreted *literally*. And yet, this was the hermeneutical position that prevailed for almost twenty centuries. In this way later audiences were "successfully" prevented from recognising the life-

³⁸ During its history of interpretation, Adam's status as 'first-created' and 'Eve's deception by the serpent' (even contra Rom. 5:12-21) were often understood as confirming the superiority of men and the unsuitability of women for church leadership (Schottroff, *Lydia's Impatient Sisters*, 69-78; cf. Webb, William J. 2001. *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals. Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 263-268).

³⁹ Some scholars have argued that the intended rhetorical effect of the references to Gen. 2-3 in 1 Tim. 2 could be that Eve's negative role was meant to serve as a *cautionary type* for those people in Ephesus who were prone to the deception of false teachings (cf. Wiebe, *Two texts*, 60-61). In fact, they consider it probable that the author had the abuse of the Hebrew Scriptures (as part of the false teaching) in mind when referring to the creation and fall narratives of humankind. As much as such views would be coherent with the theological-ethical thrust of 1 Tim., it is not clear that this is what the author had in mind with 2:13-15.

⁴⁰ Here Ellen van Wolde's contribution ends.

giving meaning potential of the text, which detrimentally influenced the functioning of God's household in many contexts. It is at this point that Paul Ricoeur's important observation regarding the role of metaphorical language comes into play. According to Ricoeur, metaphor often opens up new meaning where a literal interpretation would not make sense any longer.⁴¹ For him, the transformative power of a text lies in its ability to suggest, to facilitate, to produce "a proposed world" which readers may adopt or inhabit – a typical function of metaphorical language.⁴² This seems to be particularly pertinent with reference to 1 Timothy 2:11-15.

In contrast to the predominantly literal interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 that prevailed for a long time, a dramatically different perspective on its enigmatic nature was presented by Kenneth L. Waters in an essay in *Journal of Biblical Literature* in 2004.⁴³ Rather than to be read literally, Waters argued that the mode of cognition of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 is that of an *allegory* or extended metaphor – in the sense of "language, imagery, and structure drawn from an ancient narrative and applied to a contemporary circumstance."⁴⁴ Waters distinguished the categories of typology and allegory by stating that "in a typology the present derives its meaning from the past, but in an allegory *the past derives its meaning from the present.*"⁴⁵ By drawing on Plato and Philo and their probable influence on earlier Ionian thinking and the symbolic world of Ephesus, Waters stated that allegory connotes "a particular method of biblical interpretation contemporaneous with the Pastoral Epistles."⁴⁶ In continuation from Alan Padgett and Andrew C Perriman, Waters argued extensively that the use of allegory in 1 Timothy 2 was determined by the present rhetorical situation of the author and his audience, and "that there is nothing idiosyncratic about the author's hermeneutic in 1 Tim 2:11-15."⁴⁷ For Waters, "(r)ecognition of the allegorical character of 1 Tim 2:11-15 is forced by the author's appropriation of Gen 3:1-21, particularly his use of the names Adam and Eve, and the apparent equivalence that the author creates between the singular pronoun 'she' and the plural 'they' in v. 15."⁴⁸ Accordingly,

(a)s Adam was 'formed first' ... in Gen 2:7-25, so the male teachers and leaders of the Ephesian church were formed first in Christ before the women. The seniority of the male teachers and leaders in Christ becomes the author's reason for affirming their

⁴¹ Ricoeur, Paul. 1975. *Biblical hermeneutics. Semeia* 4:78. Cf Mouton, Elna 2002. *Reading a New Testament Document Ethically*. Atlanta, GA: SBL, 32-52, 142-151.

⁴² Ricoeur, Paul. 1976. *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*. Fort Worth, TX: Texas Christian University, 89-95.

⁴³ Waters, Kenneth L. 2004. Saved through childbearing. Virtues as children in 1 Timothy 2:11-15. *JBL* 123(4):703-735.

⁴⁴ Waters, Saved through childbearing, 703-704. Cf. 1 Timothy's metaphorical language for God (2:3-6) and women's adornment (2:9). According to Deist, Ferdinand. 1990. *A Concise Dictionary of Theological and Related Terms*. Pretoria: JL van Schaik, 8, allegory may be defined as "a literary device, and even a literary genre, that makes extensive use of figurative or symbolic language to expound a subject or to tell a story."

⁴⁵ Waters, Saved through childbearing, 704; emphasis mine.

⁴⁶ Waters, Saved through childbearing, 703-710, cf. 722-727.

⁴⁷ Waters, Saved through childbearing, 705.

⁴⁸ Waters, Saved through childbearing, 708. This creates the possibility that 1 Timothy's interpretation of Gen. 2-3 could have been a "calculated error" (Ricoeur, *Biblical hermeneutics*, 78) – a deliberate effort on the author's side to force his audience to give *new (metaphorical) meaning* to traditional concepts which would not make (*literal*) sense any longer.

authority over those women of Ephesus who were far less mature in terms of their Christian development (not the authority of every man over every woman). It was because of their immaturity in Christ that these women were being deceived by false teachers, just as Eve was deceived by the serpent. They were therefore called on to submit in silence to the instruction of more seasoned, genuine leaders.⁴⁹

Unlike many interpreters who view 2:15 as referring to the literal act of childbearing (which would be at odds with the rest of Pauline thinking about salvation), Waters subsequently showed how the immediate and larger literary context of the passage, as well as the symbolic world of Greek mythology and Hellenistic thinking, created a non-literal, metaphorical equivalence between *children* and the *virtues* of faith, love, holiness, and temperance.⁵⁰ According to Waters,

[such] a reading would have been a natural, although metaphorical, interpretation of good works ... for women in 1 Tim 2:10. Oddly, *we* probably would have been spared years of modern exegetical difficulty if the author of 1 Timothy had used the term "fruit bearing" instead of "childbearing" in 2:15 ... However ... the most prevalent metaphorical use of children in the cultural environment of the Pastoral Epistles was as references to virtues. The author of 1 Timothy therefore uses his audience's familiarity with a commonplace idea to introduce a more Christian form of that same idea ... this verse helps to make a point about the distance between the perspective of ancient writers and our modern sensibilities.⁵¹

Reading 1 Timothy 2:11-15 allegorically thus re-opens the life-giving possibility that references to both Adam and Eve, as well as the image of childbearing, functioned rhetorically as a context-specific appropriation of the creation story, and *not* as a (literal) theological-anthropological statement or moral prescription for all times and circumstances.⁵²

1 Timothy 2 – 'clay jar' of human interpretation?

Where does this leave us? Did the author of this 'canonical' (pastoral!) epistle after all find himself caught up within the tensions and terrors of a *theologically liberated* yet *culturally limited* liturgical-social space?⁵³ Or was this rather the case with his audiences

⁴⁹ Waters, *Saved through childbearing*, 709-710.

⁵⁰ Waters, *Saved through childbearing*, 710-727. Socrates (being the son of a midwife) was known for regarding himself as a midwife for the souls of men (Waters, *Saved through childbearing*, 726).

⁵¹ Waters, *Saved through childbearing*, 715-716 (cf. Mouton, *Human dignity*). Although Waters differs from the Clark Kroegers' interpretation of 1 Tim. 2:12, he finds their characterisation of 1 Tim. 2:15 as a probable response to some features of the Artemis fertility cult of Ephesus helpful (cf. Waters, *Saved through childbearing*, 725-727).

⁵² Reading 1 Tim. 2:11-15 allegorically would obviously have implications for interpreting the rest of the Pastorals. If we as later readers read 1 Timothy's interpretation of Gen. 2-3 allegorically, what about other parts of 1 Timothy – such as 6:1-2, "Let all who are under the yoke of slavery regard their masters as worthy of all honour, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be blasphemed"? (Cf. Hays, Richard B. 1996. *The Moral Vision of the New Testament. Community, Cross, New Creation*. New York, NY: HarperSanFrancisco, 66-72) Since all theological language is metaphorical, its use and moral appropriation would necessarily need to be congruent with believers' (liberating, community-creating) faith in God and Jesus Christ and the (life-giving) discernment of God's Spirit, and thus be accountable as trustworthy to *all* members of the faith community (cf. 1 Tim. 4:9-10).

⁵³ Johnson, *Timothy*, 206-211; Schneiders, Sandra M. 1989. *Feminist ideology criticism and biblical*

through the centuries, or both – a disposition typical of the complex process of human interpretation?

While author and recipients were all called to fight the good fight against any form of unworthy behaviour (including any form of partiality, favouritism or exclusivism – 5:21), the author's selective use of the creation story seems nevertheless, albeit unwittingly, to have jeopardised its transformative power in unthinkable ways, especially for later audiences. As such 1 Timothy witnesses to the awesome yet fragile reality that God's glorious gospel had been entrusted to the care of human beings – a 'treasure in clay jars' (1:11; 6:20; 2 Cor. 4:7). Thus, instead of being prescriptive to all Christians in the same way, it rather resembles the *dynamic processes* through which the early faith communities wrestled to understand the will of God for their particular time, while using the available language, symbols and metaphors from their contexts.⁵⁴

Biblical scholars, systematic and pastoral theologians, and preachers therefore all share the creative yet complex liminal spaces between the 'authoritative' witness of 1 Timothy and the experiences (of alienation, disillusion, confusion) of present-day audiences. Teaching this text in an African context today challenges interpreters to read courageously against the grain of its history of interpretation and to allow the text to speak afresh in its multidimensional contextuality. In continuation with the dynamic processes represented and stimulated by the text, such spaces invite an ongoing, faithful struggle to interpret God's radical presence in the world. Anything less would run the risk of being incompatible with the rich world of discipleship that the New Testament projects, and of confining the living, life-giving and life-sustaining God of 1 Timothy to the boundaries of an ancient text in ways contradictory to its own theological thrust.

hermeneutics. *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 19:3-10.

⁵⁴ Cf. Meeks, Wayne A. 1986. *The Moral World of the First Christians*. Philadelphia, PA: Westminster; Meeks, Wayne A. 1993. *The Origins of Christian Morality. The First Two Centuries*. New Haven, NJ: Yale University, 1-17, 109-110.

PART III

Teaching gender



CHAPTER 11 is an introduction to the teaching of gender. It says that any teaching on gender in theological seminaries needs to consider three factors:

- 1) The reality of the matter;
- 2) The necessity of biblical principles in teaching gender; and
- 3) The different academic levels of students, explaining what a taxonomical approach implies.

CHAPTER 12 is a case study of a week-long intensive course called "Gender, Culture and Scripture." It describes how gender is taught at Stellenbosch University in the MDiv programme that prepares students for ministry. It is a compulsory module taught to a multicultural group of students. The content and impact of the module are discussed in detail.

CHAPTER 13 first gives an overview of some international and Zimbabwean instruments to promote the rights and equality of women. This is followed by reflections on the concept of gender justice, its application in the Zimbabwean church, and some Christological guidelines and suggestions regarding gender, especially with regard to theological education and pastoral leadership as possible ways to address gender injustice within Shona culture in Zimbabwe. Positive practical suggestions are put forward to achieve this.

CHAPTER 14 is a case study depicting the story of the Reformed Church in East Africa and how the gender equity issue came on the agenda. It tells about the experiences of women who are called to serve the Lord through their church and in seminaries. One can call this chapter "a reality show" on gender in Africa as one can see and feel the emotion and even hardship of women who refuse to forsake their calling.

CHAPTER 15 first outlines the reasons for teaching gender and theology to theology students by highlighting the position of men and women in the church, and why engendering theological education is necessary. The second part concentrates on African Women's Theologies by explaining the content and the methodology. The ideas and feelings of the students at the beginning of the course are highlighted. In a second section three specific subjects are discussed, namely the Bible and violence against women, the Church, and Marriage and Family Life. Finally, information is provided on how students evaluate the course after having completed it, showing the impact of this topic on the students.

Chapter 11

Considerations for teaching gender in theological seminaries

*Florence Matsveru*¹



Introduction

The intensity of the gender revolution is increasingly being felt in today's church. Denominations that had taken for granted that the Bible is clear on how to handle gender issues are being challenged to rethink the issue more deeply. This challenge can no longer be ignored and demands the serious attention of pastors and Christian leaders. The theological seminary is the hub of the church in the sense that what comes from the pulpit is a reflection of the impact of the seminary on the pastor (assuming that churches send their pastors to a seminary). Theological institutions therefore have a primary role to actively teach gender.

Any teaching on gender in theological seminaries needs to consider three factors, which are the subject matter of this chapter: 1) the reality of the matter; 2) the necessity of biblical principles in teaching gender; and 3) the different academic levels of students: a taxonomical approach.

The reality of the matter

Real gender issues

Theological seminaries need to realise that the gender revolution did not originate in a vacuum. There are some very practical issues that have progressively led people to rethink societal ideologies and practices. Global policies on gender and ministries of gender equality are in existence today because there are real gender issues to be addressed. Oduyoye and Kanyoro plainly spell out some of the social evils in African culture, marriage and Christianity.² Issues such as gender and poverty, gender and HIV&AIDS, gender and violence, gender and the media, gender and culture, gender and identity, gender and employment, gender and marriage, and gender and the church³ were identified by the Network for African Congregational Theology (NetACT) to be some of the real issues challenging today's church. Namibia's Ministry of Gender Equality

¹ Florence Matsveru is a lecturer in African Social Issues and Study Skills at Namibia Evangelical Theological Seminary, Windhoek, Namibia. E-mail: fmatsveru@nets.edu.na

² Kanyoro, Musimbi R.A. and Oduyoye, Mercy A. 1992 *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition and the Church in Africa*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

³ These issues were raised at the NetACT Workshop on Gender Equality held at Stellenbosch University, South Africa from 1-3 August 2011.

and Child Welfare produced a Statistical Profile of women and men in Namibia. All the above issues are covered in the profile in one way or the other, except gender and the church. It is encouraging to note that “[g]ender inequality in education has decreased” in Namibia.⁴ Education opens doors to every sphere of life, and theological education is not an exception.

Some systems – written or unwritten – or their abuse have caused untold gender-based suffering. The abuse of power has been one of the major causes of gender-related social evils, thereby bringing about the gender revolution. The revolution is either a result of the distress and discomfort felt by those who are crying out on their own behalf, or a result of compassion and an attempt to provide a voice for the voiceless. Quite understandably, the gender revolution by women is an attempt to respond to such suffering. Theological institutions are challenged to think carefully and to take a leading role in training pastors and other Christian leaders to proactively defend God’s truth, to model true Christian living and to promote human value and dignity. The NETS principal⁵ once said these profound words: “God’s people should be the catalyst for social transformation ... A genuine societal transformation will only flow from the hearts of transformed men and women.” Assuming that the lecturers are already transformed, students’ thinking patterns and practices need to be transformed to conform to God’s standards. Seminaries that do not teach on gender may be guilty of promoting gender-based social evils by their silence, since the pastors they train – and therefore the church at large – will also be silent about it.

The other reality that needs to be considered is the two-sided nature of gender, which is addressed below.

The dual nature of gender

Beverley Haddad describes gender as “the socially constructed and culturally defined differences between men and women that are usually identified through a set of role expectations.”⁶ The word “expectations” signifies the fact that gender does not necessarily refer to inherent capabilities, but is rather determined by society. This is emphasised by the fact that gender is “socially constructed” and “culturally defined”, and that it is about “roles” (or nurture) rather than nature.

Because of the reality of gender-related problems, there is a temptation to focus on one sex and neglect the other when teaching gender. Thinking about long term solutions is a process that needs to be emphasised in the seminary. The sobriety and objectivity that should characterise the seminary’s teaching help to address both sides of gender rather than just the one that is currently feeling the heat.

⁴ Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare. 2010. *Statistical Profile of Women and Men in Namibia*. Windhoek: Republic of Namibia, 52.

⁵ Rev. Josh Hooker, Principal, Namibia Evangelical Theological Seminary, 25 July 2011.

⁶ Haddad, Beverley. 2010. Gender, Development and Faith: Religious Networks and Women’s Struggle to Survive. In Swart, Ignatius, Rocher, Hermann, Green, Sulina and Johannes Erasmus (eds.). *Religion and Social Development in Post-Apartheid South Africa: Perspectives for Critical Engagement*. Stellenbosch: SUN PRESS, 121.

From the above definition, gender should be understood as a neutral term that refers to both male and female roles. This correct perception of gender helps to bring about a balanced outlook, thereby producing longer-lasting results. A lopsided view of gender (which focuses on only one sex) needs to be corrected in the seminary. Such a view is also problematic, because it can have a see-saw effect (Figures 1-3 below) on the social lives of people. To explain this further, women's cries for gender equality today are an attempt to address the problems they find in the patriarchal system. There is no measure as to how far this can go. If there is no balance in our outlook, a few years from now we may see men staging a male revolution in the same way, which will in turn cause women to rise up again, and so the cycle could go on. This scenario does not help to achieve a permanent gender reformation.

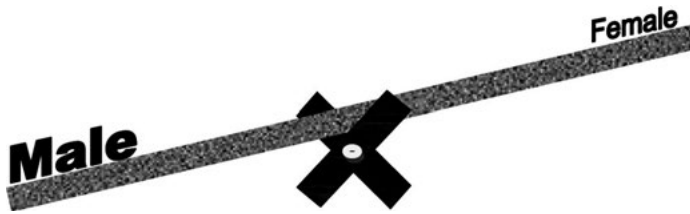


Figure 1: Male dominance

The first scenario is what women are currently trying to address, where the see-saw is men-heavy. Figure 1 above shows women and their position in society, including the church, as insignificant, while men are portrayed as the drivers of society; heavily rooted in power and domination.

The opposite scenario is such that the see-saw slides all the way in the opposite direction and becomes women-heavy (Figure 2). Women are now the drivers of society, heavily rooted in power and domination, while men have become insignificant.

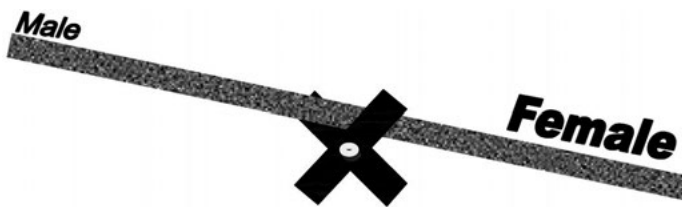


Figure 2: Female dominance

The effects of the scenario depicted in Figure 2 are just as unhealthy as the first one. As women cry out to be recognised, it is not helpful to do it in such a way as to step on the heads of men. This is usually the result of a reactive as opposed to a proactive approach. On a recent Namibia Broadcasting Corporation live television programme called *Tupopyeni*⁷, men were complaining that recent new legislation has been tailored to favour women only; that the Ministry of Gender and Child Welfare was focusing on women only; and that women were taking advantage of such legislation to abuse

⁷ *Tupopyeni* is a Namibian live weekly television program that discusses current affairs.

men emotionally and psychologically. Theological institutions need to add their voice to protest against systems that are likely to have a negative impact on the social lives of both men and women.

Figure 3 below illustrates a gender balance. It reflects both males and females as contributing equally to society, both being able to realise their full potential, both being held equally responsible for their actions, and both enjoying the blessings of the Lord on earth.



Figure 3: Balance

Examples of such a scenario include: parents raising their children in such a way that they feel significant and useful regardless of their sex; in the home, parents modelling mutual love and respect for each other; at schools, both boys and girls being encouraged to perform well, not for the purpose of beating the opposite sex, but in order to lead a productive life and contribute positively to society; at work, both men and women having equal opportunities and value, and experiencing equal recognition; and in church, both men and women mutually valuing one another and being able to use their God-given abilities in equal ways.

Gender equality should not be perceived as sameness. Such an understanding would be nonsensical, since it is obvious to all that men and women are not the same. This is why the balanced see-saw retains the words “male” and “female”. However, it is possible for each one to do their part, working together in unity to fulfil that for which God created us.

Theological institutions need to model the dual nature of gender and the positive implications of paying attention to both sides. At the NetACT gender equality workshop held in Stellenbosch in August 2011, participants agreed that we need to address “gender” issues rather than “women’s” issues if we are to have a holistic approach to the matter, although we do not ignore the fact that the majority of marginalised and disadvantaged people are women and that their issues need urgent attention.

Gender studies in theological seminaries need to appeal to male as well as female students. In most cases gender has been construed as a women’s issue. As a result, men have felt that they have nothing to do with it. Studies that are tailored to appeal to only one sex are doomed to fail, since they disregard fifty per cent of the population. The endeavour to uplift women should not amount to an endeavour to reduce men. Groothuis rightly says that “our efforts need to become less of a battle and more of a ministry.”⁸ The term “gender”, if understood correctly in its neutral form, will be taken more seriously by

⁸ Groothuis, Rebecca M. 2008. *Where do Biblical Egalitarians go from here?* Online at: <http://www.ivpress.com/groothuis/pdf.php/rebecca/000177.pdf>. [Accessed: September 7, 2011].

both men and women, thereby bringing longer-lasting results. Both sexes therefore need to be engaged with. This implies male and female lecturers teaching on gender; male and female students learning about gender; and male- and female-oriented content in the gender curriculum.

Having acknowledged the realities around gender, the nature of theological institutions requires that they be biblical in their response. The next consideration for teaching gender in theological institutions is the necessity of adhering to biblical principles.

The necessity of biblical principles for teaching gender

The temptation to either undermine or misuse God's Word can become very high in the face of any revolutionary response to societal evils. The evangelical understanding of Scripture regards the Bible as the primary source of addressing all matters of life. In any attempt to find solutions to gender problems, seminaries should continually be cognisant of the everlasting authoritative position of God and take his Word seriously.

While students need to be exposed to the different ideas on gender, it is important that the views that receive serious consideration in the seminary are those that claim the Bible as their authority, over and above secular worldviews. Biblical views should be approached open-mindedly.

The different views on gender call for a scholarly attitude on the part of the lecturer as well as the student. In studying biblical texts on gender, or any other issue, translation and hermeneutics are the two pillars that should guide the study. A New Testament scholar, Paul Gunning,⁹ warns strongly against the temptation of *eisegesis* (i.e. reading into the text) when dealing with controversial issues. He emphasises the importance of original languages, original contexts, genre and the nature of the texts (e.g. whether the texts are proscriptive or descriptive) to determine how they can be applied in our day.

Below are examples of how translation and interpretation have been employed on 1 Cor 14:33-34 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15 (two of the most contentious gender texts) respectively from different angles. These passages may be placed in the category of gender and the church.

Translation

The translation one uses has a significant impact on the interpretation of Scripture. To date the Bible has been translated into almost every language under the sun, and every translation has either its intended audience, an endeavour to stay true to the original writings or both in mind. The original languages themselves have also evolved over time, with more than five thousand Greek manuscripts to date.¹⁰ The depth to which a seminary goes in terms of translation depends on its mission and priorities. A guideline would be: the higher the qualification the student strives to achieve, the greater the emphasis on original manuscripts and translations.

⁹ Paul Gunning is a lecturer in New Testament Greek at NETS.

¹⁰ Slick, Matthew J. 1995-2001. Manuscript Evidence for Superior New Testament Reliability. *Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry*. Online at: <http://carm.org/manuscript-evidence>. [Accessed: September 26, 2011].

Students need to be aware of how other theologians have viewed gender issues. The two major Christian views on gender equality are the traditional/hierarchical/complementarian view (also referred to as the traditional view) and the biblical egalitarian view. Bowman defines the traditionalists as those who regard men and women as “equal in dignity and worth, though women are subordinate to their husbands and barred from holding offices in the church of leadership over men.” He describes egalitarianism as an approach regarding men and women “as equals in authority in the home and given equal access to all positions of leadership in the church”.¹¹ It is noteworthy that none of these views condones gender-based violence, discrimination in education, or any of the social evils identified above.

Both traditionalists and biblical egalitarians have used different translations to support their respective views. The translation of 1 Corinthians 14:33-34 is used here as an example. Different Bible versions present this passage differently. Translation in this case refers to meaning at face value, word order and verse arrangement.

A random survey of the different Bible translations has shown the following two basic treatments of 1 Corinthians 14:33-34.

Division of verse 33

³³For God is not a God of disorder, but of peace.

[new paragraph] As in all the congregations of the saints,³⁴ women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says (NIV).

Unity of verse 33

... ³³for God is not a God of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

[new paragraph] ³⁴The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says (NASB).

The NIV and the NASB represent several versions that either divide or unite verse 33. Table 14 below is a random list of the different versions.

TABLE 14: Different Versions on 1 Corinthians 14:33-34

DIVISION OF VERSE 33 (PREFERRED BY TRADITIONALISTS)	UNITY OF VERSE 33 (PREFERRED BY BIBLICAL EGALITARIANS)
New International Version (NIV) (2002) - including Women's Devotional Bible (1995) Couples' Devotional Bible (1994) and Archaeological Bible (2005)	New American Standard Bible (NASB) (2002)
*The Clear Word Bible (CWB) (1994)	King James Version (KJV) (1979, 2006)
Contemporary English Version (CEV) (2001)	New King James Version (1975)
Good News Bible (GNB) (1976)	The Message (2002)
Novum Testamentum Graece et Latin (1984)	The Darby Translation (1961)
New Jerusalem Bible (NJB) (1985)	**New Living Translation (2002)

¹¹ These definitions are found in an article by Bowman, Robert M. 2011. Women in Christian Perspective. *Apologetics Index*. Online at: <http://www.apologeticsindex.org/cpoint1-6.html>. [Accessed: September 7, 2011].

DIVISION OF VERSE 33 (PREFERRED BY TRADITIONALISTS)	UNITY OF VERSE 33 (PREFERRED BY BIBLICAL EGALITARIANS)
New Revised Standard Version (1999)	***The Reader's Bible
Revised English Bible (1989)	The Everyday Bible (1987)
Revised Standard Version (1971)	The Companion Bible (n.d)
New Revised Standard Version: Catholic Edition (1999)	The Interlinear Bible (1985)
Revised English Bible (1989)	The Everyday Bible (1987)
English Standard Version	Weymouth New Testament (n.d.)
	Young's Literal Translation (1898)
	Wycliffe Bible (2001)

* In this version the phrase “As in all churches” begins verse 34

** The footnote in this version acknowledges that “as in all the other churches could be joined to the beginning of 14:34”

*** “Women” begins a new paragraph

The significance of 1 Corinthians 14:33-34 to gender studies especially lies in the phrase: “as in all churches.” This phrase gives universal authority over whatever it is referring to. On the one hand, linking the phrase with verse 33 renders “God being a God of order” universally applicable in all churches at all times. On the other hand, linking the phrase to verse 34 renders the “silence of women in church” universally applicable to all women in all churches at all times. Traditionalists use Bible versions that apply the phrase to verse 34, while biblical egalitarians use versions that link it with verse 33. Translation therefore is important in studying controversial subjects such as gender equality. However, addressing translation issues alone is insufficient.

Hermeneutics

It would be simplistic to employ only translation in dealing with a serious and controversial issue such as gender equality. This is where hermeneutics comes in. Yarborough describes hermeneutics as involving the “constellation of assumptions, principles, and *modus operandi* of the exegete.” It helps us to interpret a passage according to what it meant to the original readers and how that meaning can be applied to today.

The continuum below shows two extremes of biblical interpretation, and the seminary should help students to get to a point where they find their own place on the continuum.



Figure 4: *Biblical interpretation continuum*

Literal interpreters would focus more on the actual words as they appear on the pages of the Scripture (whether original languages or other translations), with little consideration of the rest of the Bible and the contexts within which the words were written or said. The passage therefore would be regarded as a complete entity and self-explanatory.

The dangers of literal interpretation of every biblical passage are that those who adopt it will find it very difficult to apply to different passages of Scripture, since this kind of interpretation may result in a perceived contradiction of different passages. Also, literal interpretation of Scripture may lead to legalism, which may not necessarily have been originally intended by the author.

Liberal interpretation

Liberal interpreters would focus more on the context. The dangers of liberal interpretation lie in the resultant denial of the authoritative nature of the Word, transferring that authority to contexts. This way of interpreting Scripture can lead people to only those Scriptures that tend to agree with their contextual perceptions.

Balanced interpretation

A balanced interpretation understands the actual words of a passage in the light of the rest of Scripture and of the context within which the words were written.

Where one stands along the continuum largely depends on one or more of the following: one's church tradition; one's theological understanding; one's cultural beliefs; and one's personal convictions (sometimes based on experiences). Theological understanding should have the highest consideration in theological seminaries.

Interpretation examples of 1 Timothy 2:11-15

Well-meaning theologians and other writers from both the traditional and the egalitarian camps have attempted to understand scriptural passages such as 1 Timothy 2:11-15 with a genuine desire to remain biblical, while at the same time addressing the evils of gender inequality.¹² Instead of ignoring such passages, these authors have done well to address them head-on in the light of the whole of Scripture. Not surprisingly, the conclusions differ as to how these passages should be interpreted and applied in today's context. For example, Douglas Moo¹³ and Wayne Grudem¹⁴ support the universality of the subordinate position of women to men, while Rebecca Merrill Groothuis and Craig Keener promote the equality of men and women both in the home and outside the home, including the church.¹⁵

In response to feminism, Douglas Moo argues against loosely limiting Scriptural passages to specific contexts, since almost the entire New Testament is written to specific circumstances – correcting certain false teachings, answering specific questions,

¹² For example, Wayne Grudem, Douglas Moo, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, Craig S Keener, to mention a few.

¹³ Moo, Douglas. 1991. What Does It Mean Not to Teach or Have Authority Over Men?: 1 Timothy 2:11-15. In Piper, John and Grudem, Wayne (eds.). *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 179-193.

¹⁴ Grudem, Wayne. 1991. Wives like Sarah, and husbands who honour them: 1 Peter 3:1-7. In Piper, John and Grudem, Wayne (eds.). *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 194-208.

¹⁵ Groothuis, Rebecca M. 1997. *Good News for Women: A Biblical Picture of Gender Equality*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

seeking to unify specific church factions, etc. – but this does not necessarily mean that what is written applies only to those circumstances.¹⁶

Moo gives the example of “justification by faith” in Galatians, which applies to all people at all times, yet Paul was writing to the Galatians. According to Moo, the text itself must tell us whether it is limited to a specific context or not, and he sees 1 Timothy 2:11-15 as unlimited.

On the other hand, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis argues that, (i) if 1 Timothy 2:11-15 can be understood as a prohibition relevant only for women in a historically specific circumstance (which it can), and (ii) if there is no other biblical text that explicitly forbids women to teach or have authority over men (which there is not), and (iii) if there are texts that assert the fundamental spiritual equality of women with men (which there are), then women who are not in the circumstances for which the 1 Timothy 2:12 prohibition was intended may safely follow whatever call they may have to ministry. In other words, it ought at least be acknowledged that the traditionalist interpretation is debatable on biblical grounds.¹⁷

Groothuis goes on to argue that there are numerous exegetical uncertainties in the 1 Timothy 2:11-15 passage on gender, and that we cannot base an important biblical teaching upon this isolated text.¹⁸

Musa Dube brings together both the Old Testament and the New Testament, and concludes with a call to the church to “improve the relationships between men and women both in the church itself and in broader society”.¹⁹

More studies of this nature – which begin by seriously engaging with Scripture as the foundational source and move to contextual application – will see more meaningful, longer-lasting and more biblical transformation. Such studies are more suitable in theological institutions. They consider what the Bible says; the possible reasons why things were the way they were in biblical times; whether certain practices were condoned or condemned; why Scripture says what it says (if discoverable); why things are the way they are in our contexts; the pros and cons of the status quo; and how Scripture can be applied to the different contexts.

Some guiding principles for avoiding pitfalls in teaching gender: Mayers’s matrix

Mayers’s matrix (Table 15) is a valuable guide for checking our priorities for gender studies in theological seminaries.²⁰ Willcox uses Mayers’s matrix to argue for biblical absolutes and cultural relativity in doing theology.

¹⁶ Moo, Douglas, What does it mean.

¹⁷ Groothuis, *Good News for Women*, 211.

¹⁸ Groothuis, *Good News for Women*, 212.

¹⁹ Dube, Musa. 2001. Grant Me Justice: Female and Male Equality in the New Testament. *Journal of Religion and Theology in Namibia*, 3:82-115.

²⁰ Willcox, Sandy. 2005. *Cutflowers: Female Genital Mutilation and a Biblical Response*. Addis Ababa: SIM Publishing, 80

TABLE 15 Adapted from Mayers's Matrix as in Willcox, 2005. *Cutflowers: Female Genital Mutilation and a Biblical Response*²¹

		BIBLICAL	
		Relativism	Absolutism
CONTEXTUAL	Absolutism	Situation Ethics	Traditionalist
	Relativism	Antinomian (without law)	Mutual respect

Below is an explanation of the matrix.

Biblical relativism/contextual absolutism results in situation ethics. The context has the final say and the Bible is used as a helpful tool. Culture therefore becomes the primary point of decision-making and social practice, and the Bible becomes a supporting tool.

Biblical absolutism/contextual absolutism is a traditionalist view.²² They are of equal importance. In terms of gender issues, both the Bible and our context (experiences) have equal authority to dictate our thoughts and actions. Proponents of this view look for biblical justification for what happens in their context, especially that which they believe to be right. If there is a clash between the two, one view will simply be given preference and the other ignored.

Biblical relativism/contextual relativism imply that there is no law. In this case, the Bible can mean different things to different people. This is a postmodern view of both biblical and contextual realities – the idea that what works for you is the right thing; there are no absolutes. Gender issues can therefore be looked at according to our different contexts, and the Bible can be reinterpreted to suit our different contexts.

Biblical absolutism/contextual relativism places the Bible above our different contexts. Although both the context and the Bible are taken seriously, the Bible has the final say. This means that contexts can be changed to suit Biblical principles, and not vice-versa.

The Biblical absolutism/contextual relativism position should be the guiding principle for gender studies in theological institutions.

²¹ For purposes of this chapter, the word “cultural” has been replaced by “contextual” in the matrix.

²² Note that this is different from the traditional view on gender referred to elsewhere in this chapter.

Some guiding principles for avoiding pitfalls in teaching gender: Van der Walt's model

Another guiding principle for teaching gender is Van der Walt's gender 'reformation' vs gender revolution model for societal renewal.²³ Van der Walt introduces three models: 1) the dualist-pietist model, which defends the status quo and posits Christians as those who have no concern about the goings on in the world since their focus is on heaven; 2) the revolutionary model that is vehemently against the existing order and wishes to create a utopia on earth. Revolutionaries are aggressive and forthright in their approach to change and are focused on destroying the status quo. The results of the revolutionary model are more and more revolutions as depicted in the see-saw effect illustrated in Figures 1-3 above; 3) the 'reformationalist' model that sees God transforming the world. Proponents of this model wish for a realistic renewal of the world – "but not utopian perfectionism." Its strategies are transformational and may take time. It is non-violent – working like "salt, yeast [and] light." It involves "total conversion of the human heart in order to change sinful structures from within."

Both traditionalists and biblical egalitarians should be able to agree on the reformist approach to teaching gender in theological institutions if the gender problem is to be addressed.

The church is the salt and the light of the earth. The seminary should therefore model the best way of dealing with gender issues by training its students to uphold biblical standards in dealing with gender issues. However, this is a process and students need to be taken from one level to another in learning about gender.

Students' different academic levels: a taxonomic approach

Gender has become a very controversial topic in churches and society at large. The challenge for theological institutions is to correct misunderstandings about gender, to evaluate ideologies and to help the students to see things from a biblical perspective and make informed decisions in dealing with gender issues. A progressive approach to gender studies can help to reach them at their different levels, thereby bringing about real transformation.

A theological institution can decide to either embed gender studies within some of its courses, or to mainstream gender as a full course. The mission and educational policies of each institution should inform such a decision. Whether an institution decides to embed or to mainstream gender studies, an intentional and systematic approach to this serious matter should be considered by all theological institutions.

The controversial nature of gender studies and the different academic levels call for a taxonomical approach to teaching gender in theological institutions. A taxonomy is "a hierarchical organisational structure for the classification of concepts or things." NetACT has recommended Bloom's taxonomy for its member institutions²⁴ and Bloom's revised taxonomy (BRT) is being implemented at Namibia Evangelical Theological Seminary

²³ Van der Walt, Bennie. 1994. *The Liberating Message: A Christian Worldview for Africa*. The Institute for Reformation Studies. Potchefstroom: Potchefstroom University for CHE, 301-302.

²⁴ Hendriks, H. Jurgens. Executive Director of NetACT. Bloom's taxonomy. Unpublished presentation at a NetACT Curriculum Development Conference held at NETS, Windhoek, 2010.

(NETS). I recommend BRT for teaching gender in theological institutions because of its progressive and its two-dimensional nature which allows institutions to classify objectives, instruction and assessment according to knowledge levels and cognitive process levels. BRT is explained briefly below.

A brief explanation of Bloom's revised taxonomy (BRT)

BRT of educational objectives is "a framework for classifying statements of what we expect or intend students to learn as a result of instruction."²⁵ It focuses on two dimensions: the knowledge dimension and the cognitive process dimension. Tables 16 and 17 below show the elements of each dimension.

TABLE 16 Structure of the Knowledge Dimension of BRT (adapted from Krathwohl 2002)

CATEGORY	COGNITIVE PROCESS
Factual knowledge	Aa. Knowledge of terminology
	Ab. Knowledge of specific details and elements
Conceptual knowledge	Ba. Knowledge of classifications and categories
	Bb. Knowledge of principles and generalisations
	Bc. Knowledge of theories, models and structures
Procedural knowledge	Ca. Knowledge of subject-specific skills and algorithms
	Cb. Knowledge of subject-specific techniques and methods
	Cc. Knowledge of criteria for determining when to use appropriate procedures
Metacognitive knowledge	Da. Strategic knowledge
	Db. Knowledge about cognitive tasks, including appropriate contextual and conditional knowledge
	Dc. Self-knowledge

TABLE 17 Structure of the Cognitive Process Dimension of BRT (adapted from Krathwohl 2002)

CATEGORY	COGNITIVE PROCESS
Remembering	Recognising Recalling
Understanding	Interpreting Exemplifying Classifying Summarising Inferring Comparing Explaining

²⁵ Krathwohl, David R. 2002. A revision of Bloom's Taxonomy: An Overview. *Theory into Practice*. 41(4), 212-218.

CATEGORY	COGNITIVE PROCESS
Applying	Executing Implementing
Analysing	Differentiating Organising Attributing
Evaluating	Checking Critiquing
Creating	Generating Planning Producing

The two dimensions of Bloom's revised taxonomy help lecturers to check curriculum alignment. Curriculum alignment is the process of organising instruction (including instruction materials), objectives (or standards) and assessment.²⁶ The curriculum alignment brings together the knowledge dimension and the cognitive process dimension using the taxonomy table as illustrated in Table 18 below (please note that the cell contents are examples only, and are explained below):

TABLE 18 Taxonomy Table (adapted from Amer, 2006)

		COGNITIVE PROCESS DIMENSION					
		Remember	Understand	Apply	Analyse	Evaluate	Create
KNOWLEDGE DIMENSION	Factual knowledge	Assessment (1) Instruction (1)					
	Conceptual knowledge		Objective (2) Instruction manual (2) Assessment (2)		Objective (1)		
	Procedural knowledge	Instruction (3)					Objective (3) Assessment (3)
	Metacognitive knowledge						

The taxonomy table helps the lecturer to reflect on the relationship between the objectives set for students, instructional activities and manuals, and the assessments set for students. A complete alignment is in place when all three elements fall into the same cell (as shown in Cell B2, where objective 2, instruction manual 2 and assessment 2 agree). A lecturer who is working with objective 1 will not achieve that objective because he/she is teaching and assessing at a lower level. The students of a lecturer working on objective 3 are doomed to fail, because the lecturer is teaching at a lower

²⁶ Amer, Aly. 2006. Reflections on Bloom's Revised Taxonomy. Electronic elements. *Journal of Research in Educational Psychology* 8(4):213-230 (226).

level than the objective and the assessment. (For a more detailed explanation of BRT refer to Krathwohl²⁷ and Amer.²⁸)

Applying Bloom's revised taxonomy to gender studies in theological institutions

Bloom's revised taxonomy allows institutions to apply it either within a level or across levels of study. For example, an institution can decide to make gender studies a diploma-level course. The first year can focus on remembering and understanding. Applying and analysing can constitute the second year, while evaluating and creating can be the focus of the final year. In another institution, entrance-level students (e.g. certificate level) can be introduced to the course at the remembering and understanding levels; the diploma level can focus on applying and analysing, the undergraduate degree level can focus on analysing and evaluating, and postgraduate studies can focus on evaluating and creating.

NETS implements BRT in line with the Namibia Qualifications Framework (NQF) (similar to the South African Qualifications Framework). Below is an outline of how the framework is implemented at NETS.

TABLE 19 NETS's Taxonomy²⁹

QUALIFICATION	NQF LEVEL	CATEGORY (MINIMUM EXPECTATION TO PASS THE COURSE)
-	3	Remembering
Certificate in Ministry	4	Understanding
Diploma in Ministry	5	Applying
Diploma in Theology	6	Analysing
Bachelor of Theology	7	Evaluating
-	8-10	Creating

Suppose NETS was to apply BRT in mainstreamed gender studies and across its qualifications ladder, the taxonomy would look like Table 20 on the next page. Note that the details in Table 20 are just random and general examples (assuming that NETS has grown to offer postgraduate-level qualifications).

Conclusion

Theological seminaries are faced with the challenge of addressing gender inequality. Rather than ignoring this challenge, the seminaries should take the lead in modelling the right response to social evils. The issues being raised by women are real, and should be acknowledged and taken seriously. However, the seminary has the primary role of teaching pastors to deal with social problems using biblical principles. Teaching gender in seminaries can be difficult because of students' different levels of understanding and the controversial nature of gender. A taxonomical approach to the matter may be helpful.

²⁷ Krathwohl, *A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy*.

²⁸ Amer, *Reflections on Bloom's Revised Taxonomy*.

²⁹ Note that NETS does not yet offer postgraduate studies.

TABLE 20 Example of a Taxonomy for Gender Studies

QUALIFICATION	NQF LEVEL	COGNITIVE PROCESS CATEGORY	DETAILS
—		Remembering	At this level, the student can be exposed to gender terminology, statistical facts on men and women in different spheres, gender-related problems in society, biblical passages on gender, and different perspectives on gender, etc. This example is on the factual level of the knowledge dimension. This level is introductory and no qualification can be obtained at this level in tertiary education (or at least probably a certificate of attendance).
Certificate in Ministry	4	Understanding	Here the student is expected to demonstrate his/her understanding by putting information in his/her own words. This may include summarising different views on gender, comparing the different views, interpreting a biblical passage on gender, etc. This example is on the conceptual and procedural level of the knowledge dimension.
Diploma in Ministry	5	Applying	Students can be taught to implement gender knowledge in different areas of gender such as gender and the media; gender and poverty; gender and work; gender and HIV&AIDS; gender and violence; gender and the church, etc. A student who has reached this stage will be able to implement ready-made programmes in his/her area of ministry.
Diploma in Theology	6	Analysing	Here students can be introduced to different methods of interpreting gender passages (as in the translation/hermeneutics example above) or to differentiate secular and biblical approaches to gender issues. This example is at the procedural level of the knowledge dimension.
Bachelor of Theology	7	Evaluating	Students should be able to critique different views from a biblical perspective. Examples: evaluating the literal/liberal continuum and finding and defending their position; evaluating different views using Mayers's matrix and Van der Walt's model and decide on a position; exegetical papers and debates can be useful here. The metacognitive level of the knowledge dimension fits here.
Postgraduate studies	8-10	Creating	Students should be able to design a gender programme or to develop a gender policy or curriculum for their area of ministry. Generally speaking, this example encompasses the conceptual, procedural and metacognitive levels of the knowledge dimension.

Chapter 12

Teaching gender at Stellenbosch University

L. Juliana M. Claassens¹



Introduction

Since 2010 I have been privileged to be able to teach a week-long intensive course called “Gender, Culture and Scripture” to the MDiv students at the Faculty of Theology, Stellenbosch University. I inherited this course from Denise Ackermann, one of the mothers of feminist theology in South Africa and founder of the Cape Town Chapter of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians. After retiring from teaching for many years at the University of the Western Cape, Professor Ackermann taught part time at Stellenbosch University’s Faculty of Theology – becoming the first woman to do so.

In 2009 Professor Ackermann received an honorary doctorate from Stellenbosch University together with Mercy Amba Oduyoye, the founder of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians. In the collection of essays dedicated to Professor Ackermann, *Ragbag Theologies*, the story is told how someone asked Professor Oduyoye what she did to receive this honour from a university that was so associated with the legacy of apartheid. She said, “I did not do anything – we all have simply become more human!”²

Professor Oduyoye’s profound answer is a good reminder that things do change. The course on “Gender, Culture and Scripture” is evidence of this as well. When I was a student at Stellenbosch University, twenty years ago, we did not have such a course, nor did I have a female professor. Now we are six female colleagues teaching at the Faculty of Theology, including a former dean who has just finished her term as the first female dean of a theological seminary in Africa.³

I have taught a similar course on gender in the biblical traditions at a variety of institutions during the time I taught in the United States. What is unique about teaching this course in the South African context, though, is that in contrast to the USA, where such a course on gender would be an elective class taken mostly by females (typically I would have 18 females and 3 men in my classes), I now teach this course to all our

¹ Prof. Juliana Claassens is Associate Professor of Old Testament in the Department of Old and New Testament, Faculty of Theology, Stellenbosch University. E-mail: jclaassens@sun.ac.za

² Pillay, Miranda, Nadar, Sarojini and Clint Le Bruyns (eds.). 2009. *Ragbag Theologies: Essays in Honour of Denise Ackermann, A Feminist Theologian of Praxis*. Stellenbosch: SUN PRESS, 5.

³ The female faculty members at the Faculty of Theology of Stellenbosch University include in order of appointment Elna Mouton (New Testament), Elmé Bosman (Homiletics & Liturgy), Anita Cloete (Youth Work), Mary-Ann Plaatjies-Van Huffel (Church Polity), Juliana Claassens (Old Testament), Shantelle Weber (Youth Work).

students in the MDiv. class. The class is made up of 5th-year students, male and female, from different racial and cultural groups, including a couple of European and American students, which provides a rich teaching and learning environment.

In this essay I will outline the structure I follow in this course, offering some brief perspectives on the content as well as the resources that I utilise in teaching this class, which consists of eight two-hour sessions. Obviously one cannot replicate everything that transpires in a class, and each of the topics introduced warrants much more attention than can be given within the space allowed. However, the reader will hopefully get some idea of the direction followed in this course. In the concluding section I will offer some critical reflection on the experience of teaching gender in our South African context.

Teaching Gender, Culture, Scripture

Session 1: Introduction to the Course

In the introduction to this course I try to show how the three elements of this course – Gender, Culture and Scripture – are interrelated. In the first instance I introduce students to the notion that gender constructs are not biologically determined but rather socially constructed.⁴ Margaret Kamitsuka says it well: “It took many years for early feminists to convince men and women that biology is not destiny and that what it means to be masculine and feminine can change over time and across cultures.”⁵ By using some creative teaching strategies, students are challenged to identify their own as well as their communities’ traditional ways of thinking about male and female identity and roles. For instance, we investigate the nature of gender stereotypes by asking the students to respond to the following statements:

Men are ...
 Women are ...
 Men should ...
 Women should ...

After compiling the students’ responses in an often humorous list, I draw a box around this list, proposing that this is the students’ personal or communal gender construct. The course seeks to challenge students to be aware of these gender stereotypes and also to consider how their assumptions have been challenged (or not) by the readings and class discussion.

A second important perspective to consider in the introduction regards the links between privilege, power and patriarchy. Using the analogy of race and class, Judith Lorber argues that “a white person might assume that white is ‘normal,’ feel lucky to be white and fail to see that the alleged superiority of whiteness is a piece of a racist system that keeps people of colour from moving freely in the social order. A person born wealthy is commonly taught that he or she deserves the wealth, rather than being taught how

⁴ Lorber, Judith. 2000. The Social Construction of Gender. In Disch, Estelle (ed.). *Reconstructing Gender: A Multicultural Anthology*. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Co., 73–79.

⁵ Kamitsuka, Margaret D. 2003. Reading the Raced and Sexed Body in *The Color Purple*: Repatterning White Feminist and Womanist Theological Hermeneutics. *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 19(2):44-66 (63).

wealth is related to poverty in US society.”⁶ The same argument could be made with regard to gender. As my dean at a former institution used to describe this reality: “Male privilege is like running with the wind blowing in your back, and you do not even know that the wind is blowing.”⁷

To illustrate the notion of unearned privilege in a way that demonstrates that the benefits one inadvertently receives is based on factors that one has not earned (class, gender, race, sexual orientation, nationality) but is born with, I use a particular exercise. The students are randomly divided into three groups, with each group receiving different types of “building material” – playing cards, paper cups and drinking straws. Each group is asked to build the highest tower possible in the shortest amount of time. Of course, the paper-cups group executes this exercise in record time. Receiving lavish praise and a reward, the group talks through their experiences of the exercise, the inequality in the building materials received, the feelings of frustration of having received only straws.

For students this is indeed a process of becoming aware of their own privilege, and learning how this relates to the reality of race, class and gender. The question students are asked to grapple with is how one can employ this awareness of privilege and power to challenge injustice, working for a world which is, as Gerda Lerner has said, “free of dominance and hierarchy, a world that is truly human.”⁸

A third element of this course regards the link with Scripture. On the one hand, biblical texts play a key role in forming and sustaining a worldview where the males in society are privileged and thus in power. So the patriarchal worldview in the text, i.e. the construct according to which the male members of society hold the positions of power (derived from the Greek *patria*, meaning “father,” and *arché*, meaning “rule”) contributes to a worldview in contemporary society where the same would be said to be true. In this regard, many women and men have internalised these values and worldview reflected in the biblical text and cannot look at the text (or their world) in any other way.⁹

In this regard feminist biblical interpretation is a helpful tool in deconstructing the power of the text to uphold patriarchal values. Students often have strong reservations regarding the use of the term “feminist;” however, I refer tongue-in-the-cheek to a bumper sticker I once saw: “Feminism is the radical notion that women are people.” In this introductory session students are encouraged to see the liberating power of a feminist approach that is committed to working for the equality of male and female so that full humanity for all may be achieved.

⁶ Disch, Estelle. 2000. Introduction. In Disch, Estelle (ed.). *Reconstructing Gender: A Multicultural Anthology*, 7.

⁷ Personal communication from Howard Ebert, St Norbert College, Green Bay Wisconsin, March 2003.

⁸ Gerda Lerner (*The Creation of Patriarchy*, 1986) as quoted in Disch, Introduction, 7. Cf. also Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth. 1996. For Women in Men’s World: A Critical Feminist Theology of Liberation. In Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth (ed.). *The Power of Naming: A Concilium Reader in Feminist Liberation Theology*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 3-13; Kanyoro, Musimbi R. A. 2001. Engendered Communal Theology: African Women’s Contribution to Theology in the 21st Century. In Njoroge, Nyambura J. and Dube, Musa W. (eds.). *Talitacumi! Theologies of African Women*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 158-180.

⁹ Lapsley, Jacqueline E. 2005. *Whispering the Word: Hearing Women’s Stories in the Old Testament*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 7.

In this regard, feminist biblical interpretation also seeks to reconstruct readings of the text that may serve as a powerful source of resistance in the fight for gender justice. Drawing, for instance, on the work of Elizabeth Johnson, I propose that feminist biblical interpretation has played an important role in including women's memories of suffering, survival and agency, such as the story of Hagar told in Genesis 16 and 21. Johnson writes the following:

The example of Hagar illustrates one front on which women's practices of memory are working. Hagar is certainly in the biblical text; her suffering is profound; her wits are keen; her encounters with the divine are ground breaking. Yet the prevailing voice of the tradition has made her virtually invisible. Recovering the lost memory of her creative striving to survive interrupts the dominant discourse. It demands that the corporate memory of the ekklesia make room for the female, the foreigner, the one in servitude, the religious stranger – and the person who is all four – as a vital player in the history of humanity with God. By bringing Hagar visibly into the cloud of witnesses, it lifts up a source of lament and resistance as well as strength and inspiration for all who remember her name.¹⁰

With this approach to the biblical traditions in mind, I structure the course on Gender, Culture and Scripture in such a way that biblical narratives of women may help the reader to gain entry into the issues we are discussing.

Session 2: Gender and the Media

In the second session we turn our attention to a discussion on gender representations in the media. Drawing on two essays by David Gunn and Cheryl Exum, we focus our discussion on the way Bathsheba is portrayed in the biblical narrative (2 Sam. 11), in film and in art (as reflected in the title of Exum's essay "Plotted, Shot and Painted").¹¹ The biblical version is by no means a love story – David and Bathsheba's erotic involvement is given only one verse of narrative space. Moreover, the narrative occurs in a context of violence: All of Israel's men are out fighting, except David, who is at home "taking" a woman (cf. the series of active verbs that is used to describe David's action – David saw, sent, took, lay – all verbs signifying control and acquisition). The narrative is followed by an account of David's sons who will also be involved with rape (Amnon rapes his half-sister, Tamar, in 2 Samuel 13, and Absalom the ten concubines of David in 2 Samuel 16).

The story of David and Bathsheba has moreover fascinated artists and film makers. It is particularly interesting to consider the role art plays in conveying the notion of a naked Bathsheba, who is somehow responsible for her own rape, as the "sensual woman who enflames male lust."¹² Also in the 1951 film, *David and Bathsheba*, the body of the bathing Bathsheba is portrayed as the object of sexual desire when David is watching her from his window and obviously lusting after her. The gaps in the narrative text are filled in by the film version, where Bathsheba is portrayed as being trapped in a loveless

¹⁰ Johnson, Elizabeth A. 1999. *Friends of God and Prophets: A Feminist Theological Reading of the Communion of Saints*. Sheffield: Continuum, 145-146.

¹¹ Exum, J. Cheryl. 1996. Bathsheba Plotted, Shot, and Painted. *Semeia* 74:47-73; Gunn, David M. 1996. Bathsheba Goes Bathing in Hollywood. *Semeia* 74:75-101.

¹² Exum, Bathsheba, 54

marriage and moreover as the one who tempts David to act on his desire. Drawing on the social and cultural assumptions regarding gender expectations and stereotypes, Bathsheba is depicted as “the wife ... every man of creative genius in a mid-life crisis needs.”¹³ This gender representation of David and Bathsheba in art, film as well as in the biblical text typically leads to an interesting discussion regarding the conscious and unconscious motivations that impact on gender portrayals in the media today.

The class session ends with a discussion on the way gender is portrayed in advertisements. Showing a brief clip of Jean Kilbourne’s documentary *Killing Us Softly III* (available on YouTube), we learn about the role of advertising in shaping people’s perceptions – also regarding gender. Kilbourne notes that we are surrounded by images of beautiful women which send the message that what is most important about women is the way they look. This “beauty myth” is responsible for the fact that women spend much time, money and energy on beauty treatments, diets and even plastic surgery – all the while being set up for failure as the women in advertising and the media function as an impossible ideal – photos often being airbrushed to get rid of wrinkles, blemishes and even pores!¹⁴

Kilbourne further shows how women’s bodies are turned into objects or things in order to sell a variety of merchandise: jeans, beer, cars, paint. By using women’s body parts to sell products, the message is sent that women are not fully human. Such views inadvertently contribute to a world where violence against women is tolerated.

In this second session I try to show students how the media draw from socio-cultural gender representations but at the same time also shape contemporary views about women and men. Moreover, the class is challenged to see that what is necessary is not just to change the advertisements, but to change attitudes when it comes to gender.

Session 3: Gender and Poverty

The third session uses the biblical story of Naomi and Ruth as lens to speak about the widespread phenomenon of what is typically called “the feminisation of poverty.” Starting the session with a close reading of the text in its socio-cultural context, we contemplate the question of what this story tells us about women and poverty in Ancient Israel. What choices did these widows have and how did they respond to these choices? What can we tell from the narrative regarding the response of the community to the plight of impoverished women reflected in this story?¹⁵

Moving from the biblical text to poverty in a global context, we consider the following issues as they pertain to the theme of gender:

- Access to and level of employment or income;

¹³ Gunn, Bathsheba, 94.

¹⁴ Saltzberg, Elayne A. and Chrisler, Joan C. 2000. Beauty is the Beast: Psychological Effects of the Pursuit of the Perfect Female Body. In Disch, Estelle (ed.). *Reconstructing Gender: A Multicultural Anthology*. Mountain View, 146-154.

¹⁵ Sakenfeld, Katharine Doob. 2003. *Just Wives? Stories of Power and Survival in the Old Testament and Today*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 27-48; Masenya, Madipoane J. 2004. Struggling with Poverty/Emptiness: Rereading the Naomi-Ruth Story in African-South Africa. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa (JTSA)* 120, 46-59.

- Access to and level of education;
- Household work / Access to leisure;
- Access to private property;
- Poverty and motherhood;
- The role of globalisation.

It is evident in our conversation that in both ancient and contemporary societies women tend to experience greater vulnerability with regard to their economic options and their choice of survival strategies.¹⁶ So one finds, for instance, that women typically experience higher unemployment rates and/or find themselves underrepresented in better remunerated waged work; how women are often excluded from educational opportunities and skills training; how women have been largely excluded from access to, and control over, land. An important topic relates to the role that globalisation plays in creating impoverishing conditions that impact especially on mothers and children in a significant way. Cherryl Walker writes that in the rural areas of apartheid South Africa “men were recruited as migrant workers while women were left to manage the domestic economy of those areas” or as she formulates it: “to manage institutionalized poverty.”¹⁷ And with regard to the rest of our continent, the situation is equally dire. Mercy Amba Oduyoye points to the impact of globalisation, which leads to the employment of cheap labour and resources at the cost of the local inhabitants:

Many are the economic widows and orphans who are being created by the poverty-enhancing syndrome of globalization. Africa has known many traumatic displacements of her population. When southern African men left women and children to serve in the mines of Egoli, they began a trend which continues to this day. Women and children who are expecting fathers and sons to return, to bring wealth or send a contribution for the management of the family have been regularly disappointed. These women and children have worked the land and themselves dry, trying to survive.¹⁸

This session seeks to create awareness of the root causes of poverty, the far-reaching effects of poverty on every aspect of the lives of men, women and children, as well as of the community’s response to mitigate its effects.

¹⁶ In our own country statistics also indicate large numbers of women who can be counted among the poor. Over 70% of the poor in South Africa are found among the 40% of people classified as rural Africans. Within this demographic, particularly rural women fall into the category of poor to very poor. Kehler, Johanna. 2001. Women and Poverty: The South African Experience. *Journal of International Women’s Studies*. Online at: <http://www.bridgew.edu/SoAS/jiws/fall01/kehler.pdf>. [Accessed: August 16, 2011]. Cf. also Basu, Alaka M. 2000. Women, Poverty, and Demographic Change: Some Possible Interrelationships over Time and Space. In Garcia, Brigida (ed.). *Women, Poverty and Demographic Change*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 21-41.

¹⁷ Walker, Cherryl. 2002. Land Reform and the Empowerment of Rural Women in Post-Apartheid South Africa. In Razavi, Shahrashoub (ed.). *Shifting Burdens: Gender and Agrarian Change under Neoliberalism*. Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press, 67-92 (72).

¹⁸ Oduyoye, Mercy A. 1999. Reducing Welfare and Sacrificing Women and Children. *JTSA* 104:74-77 (76).

Session 4: Gender and Work

The fourth session on Gender and Work builds on the former session on Gender and Poverty and focuses on the following topics:

- Equality in the workplace;
- Equal work, equal pay;
- The glass ceiling;
- Sexual harassment;
- Formal versus informal sector;
- Globalisation;
- Employment and motherhood;
- The second shift (unpaid work, i.e. household activities and child care).

There continues to be a great disparity based upon gender when it comes to work. We discuss, for instance, how women more often find themselves unemployed than men and for longer periods of time. South Africa has a high unemployment rate (42% in 2003), of whom 56% were women compared to 44% men. Moreover, a United Nations publication, *The World's Women, 2000: Trends and Statistics*, notes that even though the principle of “equal pay for work of equal value” has been incorporated into the labour legislation of many countries, in no country for which data were collected did women actually receive equal pay for equal work – women typically received between 20% and 30% less than their male counterparts.¹⁹

Another factor that adversely affects women's prospects in the workplace is the so-called glass ceiling, which Truman describes as “a barrier so subtle that it is transparent, yet so strong that it prevents women and minorities from moving up the management hierarchies.”²⁰

It is, moreover, a reality worldwide that much of women's work is invisible – either because it falls within the informal economy, or because it is unpaid. One sees this in the Western notion of “The Second Shift,” a designation coined by Hochschild and Machung in the 1970s that describes the phenomenon of career women going home to work roughly 15 hours each week more than men on household duties and child care, adding up to an extra month of 24-hour workdays. And one sees this even more prominently when one considers the many hours African women spend on keeping the home, tilling the land, taking care of children, getting firewood and water.²¹

Another point of discussion in this session is the impact of globalisation on gender and work. In an important book, *Global Women: Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy*, Ehrenreich and Hochschild describe “the female underside of globalization,”

¹⁹ Cf. the United Nations publication, *The World's Women, 2000: Trends and Statistics*. Geneva: United Nations Publications as well as Basu, Women, Poverty, and Demographic Change, 24-25.

²⁰ Truman, Carole. 1996. Paid Work in Women's Lives: Continuity and Change. In Cosslett, Tess, Easton, Alison and Penny Summerfield (eds.). *Women, Power, and Resistance: An Introduction to Women's Studies*. Buckingham, PA: Open University Press, 35-47 (40).

²¹ Hochschild, Arlie Russell and Machung, Anne Russell. 1997. *The Second Shift*. New York, NY: Avon Books.

whereby millions of nannies, maids and sometimes sex workers from poor countries migrate to do the ‘women’s work’ of the affluent. They write:

Globalization of child care and housework brings the ambitious and independent women of the world together: the career-oriented upper-middle-class woman of an affluent nation and the striving woman from a crumbling Third World or postcommunist economy. Only it does not bring them together in the way that second-wave feminists in affluent countries once liked to imagine – as sisters and allies struggling to achieve common goals. Instead they come together as mistress and maid, employer and employee, across a great divide of privilege and opportunity.²²

Within this topic it is important to consider the numerous factors, both local and global, that affect women’s relationship to work. Students are encouraged to consider the gender constructs underlying this reality – for instance, the phenomenon of sexual harassment in the workplace that shows how some men have difficulty seeing women as anything but sexual objects – in the process abusing their power/privilege.

Session 5: Screening of Feature Film “Yesterday”

In an afternoon or evening session scheduled between the sessions on Gender and Poverty/Gender and Work, and Gender and HIV&AIDS/Gender and Violence, I have found that it works well to show the film *Yesterday* – the first film to be filmed in Zulu with English subtitles – which tells the story of a young South African woman named Yesterday, who learns that she has HIV. In this sad but poignant story, we learn how Yesterday deals with this disease as well as the stigma associated with it. Her relationships with her daughter Beauty, her migrant worker husband from whom she has contracted the disease, the townspeople and her friend, the new teacher of the town, are powerfully depicted indeed. In a particularly harrowing scene, Yesterday’s husband violently beats her when she goes to tell him at the mine where he works about his HIV status. This film thus works especially well in that it shows students something of the reality of what we are speaking of in class when addressing topics such as Gender and Poverty, Gender and HIV&AIDS, and Gender and Violence.

Session 6: Gender and HIV&AIDS

In session 6 we turn to the painful reality of HIV&AIDS and particularly the way in which women are especially vulnerable to this disease. I typically start session 6 with a discussion of the film that the class saw in the previous session, which offers an effective entry into the interrelated themes of gender, HIV&AIDS and violence.

According to 2005 statistics, of the 5 million of South Africa’s population of 45 million people that are infected with the HIV virus, 77% are women. Even more shocking is that 25% of all women in the age group 20-24 are affected. This is one in four women compared to one in fourteen men who are infected in the same age group.²³ According

²² Ehrenreich, Barbara and Hochschild, Arlie R. 2002. *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy*. New York, NY: Metropolitan Books, 11.

²³ For statistics cf. the United Nation website at www.unaids.org.

to Beverley Haddad, women are particularly vulnerable to the HIV&AIDS pandemic because of a number of factors: women are biologically more susceptible to contracting the disease; cultural practices such as lobola, which means the husband does not want to use a condom with his wife because he has paid a lot of money for her; the widespread myth that if one has sex with a virgin girl, one would be cured of the disease is responsible for many young women being raped; the migrant labour system that is responsible for the fact that many men work in the cities and then bring the disease back home to their wives who have stayed behind in rural areas – a reality vividly portrayed in the film *Yesterday* – all increase women’s vulnerability to contracting this disease.²⁴

We also saw in this film how women in particular are affected by HIV&AIDS as they quite often emerge as the caregivers for their family members who live with the disease – not to speak of the many grandmothers/friends who are compelled to take care of the more than 2 million AIDS orphans that will be in need of care.

The session on Gender and HIV&AIDS utilises a reading by Denise Ackermann of the tragic story of the rape of Tamar by her half-brother Amnon (2 Sam. 13) in the context of the HIV&AIDS pandemic. The responses of the male family members to what had happened to Tamar (e.g. the father David doing nothing, Absalom her brother telling her to be silent, Amnon’s friends conspiring to allow him to have his way with her, the servants shutting her out) serve as a compelling way to contemplate the lack of action in church and society on this injustice that is being inflicted on society’s most vulnerable members.²⁵ This story, moreover, serves as a bridge to the next session, when we speak about gender and violence, which are quite often interrelated with HIV&AIDS.

This painful narrative of a woman’s violation and her family and society’s inability to respond to the injustice can hardly be described as good news for women. Phyllis Trible rightly states that “Sad stories do not have happy endings.”²⁶ And yet this narrative may be used as Trible suggests “in memoriam,” in memory of the many women who are victims of gender-based violence. In this way the biblical text serves as a mirror of society, challenging readers to recognise the victims in their own society. In addition, we can ask together with Gerald West how the Bible can serve as “a resource for dignity, healing and wholeness when the church is clearly not (yet)?”²⁷

By naming the unspeakable injustice of women being ostracised by their communities or violently beaten when they learn about their HIV status; by challenging gender stereotypes that do not allow a woman to control her own sexuality, one already has taken a few steps in the right direction.

²⁴ Haddad, Beverley. 2002. Gender, Violence and HIV/AIDS: A Deadly Silence in the Church. *JSTA* 114:93-106.

²⁵ Ackermann, Denise. 2004. Tamar’s Cry: Rereading an Ancient Text in the Midst of an HIV/AIDS Pandemic. In Dube, Musa (ed.). *Grant Me Justice! HIV/AIDS & Gender Readings of the Bible*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 27-59. Cf. also Dube, Musa W. 2002. Fighting with God: Children and HIV/AIDS in Botswana. In *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 114:31-42.

²⁶ Trible, Phyllis. 1984. *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives*. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 2

²⁷ West, Gerald. 2003. Reading the Bible in the Light of HIV/AIDS. *Ecumenical Review* 55: 335-344 (336).

Session 7: Gender and Violence

In session 7 we focus on the painful reality of how women often find themselves victim to sexual and domestic violence. According to statistics from the South African Police Service, in 2006 55 097 women were reported to be raped – a total of 150 women a day. Given the fact that only 1 in 20 rape victims reports the crime to the police, the real picture is much grimmer. It is estimated that South Africa has one of the highest rates of rape in the world, with a woman being raped approximately every 17 seconds.²⁸ In my experience, I have found that this topic really succeeds in convincing students why a class on gender is so important.

Drawing on a classic text by Rosemary Radford Ruether, the class focuses on the role of the Western religious tradition, which has contributed towards creating a culture where violence against women is tolerated. Ruether, for instance, shows how the interpretation of biblical texts such as Genesis 2-3 blamed Eve and her daughters after her for all that is wrong, so much so that Thomas Aquinas would call a woman a “misbegotten male.”²⁹ As recently as in the 19th century in the United States one still would find laws about beating women with a stick no thicker than your thumb.

The class further looks at the gender constructions underlying violence both in the home as well as in public, the so-called “rape scripts” prevalent in society – women are rapable; women deserve rape; women provoke rape; women want rape; women publicly lie about being raped.³⁰ Important in this regard is once again the gender constructs responsible for creating a culture of violence, e.g. the numerous instances in which women are considered to be less than fully human; as objects owned by their fathers and husbands; as disobedient or sinful people who deserve to be taught a lesson.

The class also looks at rape as instrument of war, viewing a trailer from a heart-breaking documentary called “The Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo,” which deals with the widespread occurrence of rape in the war-torn Congo and shows haunting interviews with both victims of sexual violence as well as the perpetrators.³¹ This film clip makes evident what is often said about rape, i.e. that rape is not about sex but about power. In conclusion, there are several biblical texts that can be used in conjunction with this topic. I often use the “text of terror” in Judges 19-21 that narrates the rape and brutal mutilation of the Levite’s wife, who in feminist literature has been given the name “Bat-Sheber” (in Hebrew “woman of brokenness”).³² Once again, I have found that biblical

²⁸ Cf. Online: http://www.rape.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=875. [Accessed: August 16, 2011]. According to 2009/2010 statistics, among the 68 332 reported cases of sex-related crimes, 55 097 are incidences of rape.

²⁹ Ruether, Rosemary Radford. 1989. The Western Religious Tradition and Violence Against Women in the Home. In Brown, Joanne Carlson and Bohn, Carole R. (eds.). *Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse: The Feminist Critique*. New York, NY: The Pilgrim Press, 31-41.

³⁰ Marcus, Sharon. 2003. Fighting Bodies, Fighting Words: A Theory and Politics of Rape Prevention. In McCann, Carole R. and Kim, Seung-kyung (eds.). *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*. New York, NY: Routledge, 432, 441. Cf. also Phiri, Isabel A. 2002. “Why does God allow our Husbands to Hurt Us?” Overcoming Violence against Women. *JTSA* 114:19-30.

³¹ Cf. online <http://thegreatestsilence.org/about/>. [Accessed: August 16, 2011]. Also available on YouTube.

³² Tribble, Phyllis. 1984. An Unnamed Woman: The Extravagance of Violence. In *Texts of Terror*, 65-92; Lapsley, *Whispering the Word*, 35-68.

texts may serve as conversation starters – seeing the ugly face of violence against women in the text helps students to recognise it in the world around them as well.

Session 8: Gender and the Church

In session 8 we consider the variety of experiences of women in ministry. This includes attention to the numerous ways in which women have been excluded from ministry, contemplating the obstacles women in many denominations face in order to be ordained, but also how women who serve in various aspects of ministry struggle to find the space to live out their call.³³

And yet this topic also celebrates women's gifts to serve as pastors. The story is told about a little boy who grew up in a church that only had female pastors. One day a male pastor came to visit – the little boy tugged on his mother's arm saying: "Mommy, but men cannot be pastors, can they?" From this story it is evident that what people see determines their perceptions about women in ministry.

In this session on gender in the church I bring together a panel of female ministers to come and talk about their experiences – both positive and negative. It is such an important experience for students to see women in ministry embodied; to hear their struggles to balance family and work as well as the resistance they still experience – often from female congregation members who may feel that the status quo is threatened by the presence of female ministers. But all in all, the message is that it is a joy and privilege to live out their call as ministers of word and sacrament.

We conclude the class by asking students to come up with practical strategies that we can employ to effect change in our respective congregations. I give students the following exercise to do in groups: You are the pastor of a congregation. You are convinced that the church needs more female pastors; that *your* church needs a female pastor. What strategies would you employ to convince your congregation of the value of female pastors? I have found that by the time of the concluding session, the majority of the students are invested enough in the topic that they can constructively engage with this exercise, working together to imagine creative ideas to effect change.

Assessment

Teaching this course on Gender, Culture and Scripture at Stellenbosch University has been a rich experience every time I have taught it. It is not always easy to teach the vast diversity of students – male/female, white/black, African/European – all in different stages of receptiveness to gender issues. In particular, challenging students' worldviews that are often quite fixed is regularly experienced by students as rather traumatic. In addition, the content matter of the course may be quite painful for some students – I often get students who come up after class to share their own stories of violation.

And yet I have found that many of the students find this class extremely helpful. The class offers students a language with which to describe their experiences – for instance,

³³ Rakoczy, Susan. 2004. Church and Ministry: Women Included and Excluded. In Rakoczy, Susan (ed.). *In Her Name: Women Doing Theology*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 198-254.

when we talk about sexual harassment, many students will – after I have explained what sexual harassment is – tell of incidents that did not feel right to them, but which they could not name.

Over the years I have developed quite a few strategies to help move students from where they are. I am all too aware that not all students will completely change their worldview, but the goal of the class is to move most students a little bit. My hope is to create awareness or to conscientise students in this class as to the role of gender in their own lives as well as in society at large.

Regarding the topic of this book about gender in Africa, I am well aware that I have taught eight years in a United States/Western context which inadvertently shapes the examples I use in class. Yet there is a lot of common ground and a mutual vocation to work for the dignity of women in the areas outlined above. In an act of enculturation, teachers in different contexts are encouraged to find examples from their own context to convey the important issues and themes encapsulated in this course.

Chapter 13

Gender transformation and leadership

On teaching gender in Shona culture

Ester Rutoro¹



Introduction

According to Nicola Slee,² human communities are characterised by a basic structural injustice, a distorted relationship between the sexes that affords men as a group power over women. This distorted relationship is also found in Zimbabwean society and translates into challenges of gender-based socialisation, stereotyping, violence and discrimination in almost all spheres of life. This discrimination is not only physical, economic, social, cultural and political but also emotional and spiritual. And, although such discrimination affects women primarily, it also impacts on the wellbeing of the whole of Zimbabwean society. How this state of affairs can be changed forms the main focus of this essay. First an overview will be given of some international and Zimbabwean instruments to promote the rights and equality of women. This is followed by some reflections on the concept of gender justice, its application in the Zimbabwean church, and some Christological guidelines and suggestions regarding gender, especially with regard to theological education and pastoral leadership as possible ways to address gender injustice within Shona culture in Zimbabwe.

Promoting gender justice: Global initiatives and local challenges

After the founding of United Nations (UN) in 1945, it adopted several treaties and conventions aimed at the protection and promotion of women's rights. The UN Charter affirms fundamental human rights, the dignity of all human persons and the equal rights of men and women.³ As early as 1946, the UN instituted a commission on the status of women. This commission proposed political, economic and social measures needed to address the root causes as well as the consequences of systemic and systematic

¹ Ester Rutoro teaches at Morgenster Teachers' College and she is doing her doctorate on education management with special emphasis on gender equity in education management in Zimbabwean schools. She is involved with the women's league in the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe as a minister's wife. She is involved in gender research with Murray Theological College to promote gender equity in theological education. E-mail: erutoro@cooltoad.com

² Slee, Nicola. 2003. *Faith and Feminism: An Introduction to Christian Feminist Theology*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd.

³ Munroe, Myles. 2001. *Understanding the Purpose and Power of Women*. New Kensington: Whitaker House; Benedek, Wolfgang, Kisaaye, Esther M. and Gerd Oberleitner. 2002. *The Human Rights of Women: International Instruments and African Experiences*. London: ZED Books. For UN involvement see online at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/> [Accessed: March 9, 2012].

discrimination against women worldwide. Later, in 1967, the UN adopted the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).⁴ According to Benedek *et al.*⁵ CEDAW constitutes the central and most comprehensive bill of human rights for women in particular. In its preamble, CEDAW acknowledges the existence of extensive discrimination against women. It defines discrimination as

any distinction, exclusive or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, irrespective of their marital status, on the basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres (Article 1).⁶

In Article 2 CEDAW explicitly condemns gender discrimination and obliges signatories to the convention to pursue comprehensive policies and measures to eliminate such discrimination at all levels. According to Benedek *et al.*, the purpose of Article 3 of CEDAW is the

full development and advancement of women for the purposes of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on the basis of equality with men.⁷

In Africa the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (1981)⁸ represents a continent-wide effort to provide regional mechanisms for the protection of human rights. According to a supplement to the African Charter, a protocol on the rights of women in particular had been ratified by fifteen African countries by January 2006.⁹

After Zimbabwe gained independence in 1980, the government took a proactive approach towards addressing women's issues and problems. Pressure to address gender disparities was a historical product of women's involvement in the struggle for national liberation in Zimbabwe and throughout Africa.¹⁰ From this it may seem as if the international community, the African continent and the Zimbabwean government take the issue of gender seriously. They have all shown concern with gender justice. But what exactly is gender justice?

⁴ <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/history.htm>. [Accessed: March 9, 2012].

⁵ Benedek *et al.*, *The Human Rights of Women*, 34.

⁶ For the text see online at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm>. [Accessed: March 9, 2012].

⁷ Benedek *et al.*, *The Human Rights of Women*, 34.

⁸ Online at: http://www.africa-union.org/official_documents/treaties_%20conventions_%20protocols/banjul%20charter.pdf. [Accessed: March 9, 2012].

⁹ Hellum, Anne, Stewart, Julie, Ali, Shaheen S. and Amy Tsanga. 2007. *Human Rights, Plural Legalities and Gendered Realities: Paths are Made for Walking*. Harare: Weaver Press.

¹⁰ Makombe, Farai T. and Geroy, Garry. 2008. Seeking Culturally Attentive Career Advancement Strategies for Women: Perspectives from Zimbabwean Women. *Advancing Women in Leadership Journal* 26. Online at: http://advancingwomen.com/awl/awl_wordpress/seeking-culturally-attentive-career-advancement-strategies-for-women-perspectives-from-zimbabwean-women-2/. [Accessed: March 9, 2012].

Gender justice

According to the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), gender justice entails ending the inequalities between women and men that are produced and reproduced in the family, the community, the state and in institutions. Gender justice is often used with reference to emancipatory projects that advance women's rights through legal change or that promote women's interests in social and economic policy.¹¹

Looking at the concept of gender justice from a theological perspective one may say that it entails the comprehensive application of biblical law, love, mercy, justice and equity at the levels of the self, family, community, church and state. According to the report on gender justice tabled at the assembly of the World Council of Reformed Churches' Uniting General Council in Grand Rapids, USA (18 to 28 June 2010),

gender justice is an on-going journey of praying together, engaging, challenging, always seeking discernment on how God wants us to live as women and men. It involves finding and putting into practice new ways to express and live out the uniqueness of bearing the image of God, fulfilling our responsibility of building and nurturing right, just and equal relationships in our families, churches, communities, regions and the world. We do so by first being open to the promptings of the Spirit of God, challenging us to hold under the scrutiny of God's justice all the norms that we have nurtured about the roles and places of men and women in the family, society and church which have resulted in exclusionary practices that pain God and fracture relationships.¹²

But how does the church, specifically the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe, reflect and live up to these convictions and what challenges remain for it regarding these issues?

Gender justice in the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe

The Reformed Church in Zimbabwe (RCZ) has for long been quiet on gender issues, even though women constitute the majority of its membership. The church has maintained a patriarchal theology that keeps women from – or at least on the periphery of – church leadership. This happens despite the fact that the ministers' wives' sororal association and the Women's League demanded the recognition of the humanity of women in the RCZ – by, amongst other things, including them in church leadership positions – at the League's biannual meetings from as early as the 1970s. These women therefore acted as a pressure group for the realisation of women's rights in the Church despite very negative and sometimes very arrogant responses from the then male-only synod. Only in 1984, 93 years after its founding, did the RCZ allow the election of women as elders. And only in 2002, after Rangarirai Rutoro and Wilbert Runyowa's report entitled *Resource*

¹¹ Cf. Goetz, Anne-Marie. 2007. Gender justice, citizenship and entitlements: Core concepts, central debates and new directions for research. In Mukhopadhyay, Maitrayee and Singh, Navsharan (eds.). *Gender Justice, Citizenship and Development*. New Delhi: International Development Research Centre, 15-57.

¹² The discussion can be followed online at http://warc.jalb.de/warcajsp/side.jsp?news_id=451&navi=29&part_id=34 [Accessed: March 9, 2012].

Development and Women in Leadership Positions in the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe served before the General Synod, were women allowed to be trained as ministers¹³.

As recent as 2007, however, the same Rangarira Rutoro wrote a doctoral thesis on *Lay Leadership Development in the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe*¹⁴ in which special attention is paid to the issue of women; he notes that “theology in the RCZ needs to interpret the Christian faith tradition in the light of its present realities and also discern what God requires of it.”¹⁵ He goes on to say that the inclusion and involvement of women in broader leadership structures will bring transformative development in the church. Despite findings such as these, glaring shortcomings remain in addressing gender issues in the RCZ. The ordination of women has been accepted, implemented and is slowly bearing fruit, but much needs to be done within the systems and structures of the RCZ to make it more responsive to gender challenges. It is not enough simply to let women into positions previously occupied by men; what is also needed is a redefinition of the structures to make them less discriminatory, not only for women, but for all people. There is need to address not only the numbers of women in church positions, but also the structure of the framework that sustains uneven relationships between men and women in the church. Stated numerically, the current situation is as follows:

POSITION	MALES	FEMALES
Ordained ministers	70	6
Student ministers	25	5
On the moderamen	5 (ordained) 1 (not minister)	2 (not ministers)

In order to address the above discrepancies, the RCZ has to re-examine its views on biblical justice and should find a renewed vision of its role in promoting gender equity in both church and the society. To this end the Church may once more turn to the example of Christ.

Gender justice: The example of Christ

Jesus Christ the author of gender justice

John 8:2-11 tells of the Pharisees who brought to Jesus a woman caught in adultery, in *the act* of adultery. In terms of justice, questions such as the following might have raced through Jesus’ mind, as they perhaps do in our minds today:

- If the woman was caught in *the act*, she was surely not *acting* alone?
- Where, then, was the other party to the adultery? Why did the Pharisees and the teachers of the law not bring the man before Jesus as well?

¹³ Runyowa, Wilbert and Rutoro, Rangarira. 2001. Resource Development and Women in Leadership Positions in the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe. In Hendriks, H. Jurgens, Luidens, Donald A., Nemeth, Roger J., Smidt, Corwin E. and Hijme, C. Stoffels (eds.). *Reformed Encounters with Modernity: Perspectives from Three Continents*. Cape Town: Nasionale Pers, 56-64.

¹⁴ Rutoro, Rangarira. 2007. Lay Leadership Development in the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe. DTh dissertation, Stellenbosch University. Online at: <http://scholar.sun.ac.za/handle/10019.1/5490>. [Accessed: March 9, 2012].

¹⁵ Rutoro, Lay Leadership, 18.

- When the Pharisees and the teachers of the law appealed to it and demanded that the stoning of *such women*, did the same not apply to *such men*?
- Was this not a blatant case of gender injustice?

Jesus, however, looked beyond the accusation, challenging the accusers: “If anyone of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.” Jesus did not transgress the Law of Moses but he was saying that if the woman is to be stoned according to that Law, it should not be applied only partially, not only to the woman. Therefore, the woman should be stoned only by those whose lives did not warrant stoning. Jesus the impartial judge saw beyond the accusation and recognised the unfairness of unequal punishment and in this way becomes a champion for gender justice.

Today’s society also often “throws stones” at women, yet ignores the indiscretions of men. At times this even happens in church. Should the church not follow the example of Jesus and be a champion of gender justice in communities? Many physically or emotionally wounded women attend church every Sunday. It is just too easy to urge them to forgive “seventy times seven times” (Matt. 18:21-22) and “to bless those who persecute” them (Rom. 12:14). Is it really enough to offer them the hope of the crown in heaven when the same people preaching those words might be the perpetrators of injustice? Should the church not go further and correct causes of gender-based injustice?

Jesus welcomed women to His ministry

After his resurrection, Jesus appeared first to a woman, Mary Magdalene (John 20:1–18). Surely this can be no coincidence? Mary Magdalene was the first to discover the empty tomb and also the one to report the event to the male disciples. After following her to the tomb and finding that she spoke the truth, Mary Magdalene was left alone at the tomb and was also the first to see the resurrected Christ. Not only this, she was also commissioned by Christ to make the fact of his resurrection known to his disciples. Even after his death and resurrection, women were important in Jesus’ ministry. This too is an example that the church should follow in its ministry.

The Holy Spirit fills all regardless of sex

Acts 1:14 tells of the disciples waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit: “they all joined together in prayer, *with the women* and Mary the mother of Jesus and with his brothers.” When the Holy Spirit was poured out, they were *all* filled with the Spirit, irrespective of their sex. Immediately Peter confirms the prophecy of Joel 2:28: “And in those days I will pour out my spirit on all flesh. Your sons *and daughters* will prophesy ...” Surely this sets another example for the church to follow, to recognise that all believers are the recipients of the Holy Spirit and its gifts, and have the right and obligation to use them in and for the benefit of the church and the kingdom of God?

Gender and the plight of women in Shona culture

In Zimbabwe, as everywhere, people are not only members of churches, but also of communities and cultures. The challenge to churches is exacerbated by the patriarchal

nature of Shona culture and its consequences, which include gender-based injustices such as physical, emotional, economic, socio-cultural and spiritual abuse.

It remains an unfortunate fact that women are more often the victims of *physical abuse*. Not only do husbands beat their wives; unmarried women are sometimes beaten by boyfriends, brothers, fathers and sometimes by any male members of the extended family. The latter have a right to beat an unmarried female member of the family, if they think that she has misbehaved. Women never “own” their own bodies and are usually seen as having “asked” for a beating by behaving inappropriately. Many women bear in silence their bruises, pain and anger caused by injustice, oppression and many other forms of violence, often caught in abusive relationships for the sakes of their children or because of financial dependence on their partners.

The consequences of physical violence can often be seen in broken bones and wounds. What is much more difficult to see are the wounds inflicted by *emotional abuse* – anger, disillusionment, fear, self-depreciation, depression and feelings of being worthless or rejected. These women are dehumanised, humiliated, their confidence shattered. They are discouraged from exposing their husbands’ or partners’ transgressions as the Shona proverbs “*usafukura hapwa*” (Do not open the armpit”) and “*chakafukidza dzimba matenga*” (The roofs cover what happen inside homes) demands of them.

Gender injustice and abuse also have an *economic* dimension. Males traditionally own the means of production (land), the symbols of wealth (cattle), the homestead and all it contains – including the children and the wife. Even when the husband dies everything goes to his oldest son, while the mother is left without any property of her own and under authority of her own son or male members of the extended family. Because of their economic power, men often mistreat women without being challenged by them and, as a result of their economic dependence, women often remain trapped in very harsh circumstances.

Socio-cultural abuse occurs because of socialisation processes that demean women and do not recognise their value. Decision making is an exclusively male prerogative and women are merely the followers or implementers of the decisions taken by men. Even when taking a major decision that will affect the family, the husband (or son) will not consult with his wife (or mother), but will rather consult other male relatives.

Finally, all the forms of discrimination and abuse mentioned above combine to have a devastating effect on the *spirituality* of women. Many women come to church with broken spirits. They sometimes sit, sing, pray and take the sacraments with the very people who wound them daily in the name of culture. Instead of finding places of safety and healing, they sometimes only find ministers who add salt to their wounds with gender-insensitive sermons and misinterpretation of Scripture in order to serve other agendas, reminding women to “love thy enemy and forgive those who persecute you”. Can one blame these women for being confused in their faith, for sometimes feeling forsaken, even by God?

In Shona culture most people believe that women’s subordination is legitimated by socially embedded convictions. These belief systems are assumed to be beyond the

realms of justice. Hence the concept of gender justice, which seeks to enhance women's autonomy and rights in relation to men, is controversial and unleashes intense debate. It is within this social system that the RCZ is called upon to make a difference.

A paradigm shift in theological education

Theological education should pave the way towards a gender-responsive Christian ministry in the church. For this to happen, gender issues should be adequately integrated into theological curricula. Unfortunately these issues are often relegated to the periphery, where only student ministers' wives are involved in women's ministry programmes taught by other ministers' wives. The RCZ's theological education system is male oriented. Theological epistemologies are also male centred with female voices absent from theological discourse.

To address this situation a liberative theology, which implies the development of a rights-based and gender-responsive theology is proposed. Such a theology implies:

- Breaking the bonds of silence that bind women and making the voices of women audible in theological discourse;
- Developing a new paradigm by integrating gender studies within the theological education framework;
- Including justice as a central theme in gender-sensitive theology;
- Promoting the application of justice because knowing about justice is not enough;
- Developing a theological education of transformation intent on fostering a culture of partnership that fully integrates gender perspectives.

The new paradigm proposed should be people centred, contextual and issue based, preparing students for life in congregations, because their theology will be practised in congregations. Therefore, it is imperative to equip prospective ministers with the right type of theology that is sensitive to the contextual realities of gender injustice in Zimbabwe. Since such theology should integrate women's experiences and voices; it should also place women's experiences at the centre. In his book *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*,¹⁶ educator Paulo Freire rightly asks: "Who are better equipped than the oppressed to understand the terrible significance of an unjust society?" Including women in theological discourse will ensure that life experiences of the marginalised are used as the basis for research and for empowering students towards a gender-responsive Christian ministry. It is, therefore, also pertinent to include women in the redefinition of a theological curriculum that facilitates the development of ministers who are gender sensitive and who will contribute towards a gender-responsive Christian ministry. Theological education should be in a position to interrogate the system in which it finds itself embedded, to interrogate unjust social practices such as gender-based socialisation, patriarchy, stereotyping and violence.

¹⁶ Freire, Paulo. 1972. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 22.

Redefining theological education as gender-inclusive education

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). With the blood of Jesus, God redeemed all of humankind and we are all equal before him. There is a need for men and women to work in partnership with the understanding that both were created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27), redeemed by Christ (Gal. 3:26-28) and gifted by the Spirit without distinction (Joel 2:28).

Gender-inclusiveness should not be a marginal issue in theological education, but should be central to the achievement of gender sensitivity in the church. Inclusive theological education should ensure that obstacles to attendance of institutions of theological education are removed to ensure that any individual can take the opportunity and find the necessary support to identify and develop his or her talents to the full. This encompasses the removal of obstacles in the church but also in society.

Substantial progress has been made by the RCZ as far as the training of women into the church ministry is concerned. Nevertheless, it remains evident that new strategies and methods must be adopted to change attitudes and perceptions, and to ensure that theological education is responsive to the gender challenges that the church and society are facing.

Theological education should therefore lead to the transformation of values through curriculum transformation. Curricula should:

- Build critical awareness to make students aware of the urgency of gender-inclusive justice in the Christian ministry;
- Create new spaces for reappraisal and rethinking by interrogating existing discourses and by focusing attention on overlooked possibilities for moving practice forward;
- Find a methodology that makes the familiar unfamiliar and in this way motivate students to find hidden meanings and connotations of often-taken-for-granted actions in a way that stimulates self-questioning and creativity.

In this way ministers will be better equipped with spiritual, academic, social and other skills to prepare them to work in contemporary societies.

Transforming pastoral leadership styles: Towards a gender-responsive Christian ministry

For the kind of inclusion and transformation referred to above to occur within the church, there should be a shift in leadership style from being authoritative to becoming transformational leadership that should, according to Bass and Riggio, and Clegg, Kornberger and Pitsis,¹⁷ redefine people’s mission and vision with renewed commitment and the restructuring of systems. Applied to the church, it means that leadership and laity as well as the institutional system of the church need transformation. It is

¹⁷ Bass, Bernard M. and Riggio, Ronald, E. 2006. *Transformational Leadership*. 2nd edition. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Clegg, Stewart, Kornberger, Martin and Tyrone Pitsis. 2005. *Managing and Organisations: An Introduction to Theory and Practice*. New Delhi: SAGE.

obvious that our societies discriminate against women with regard to both decision-making processes and positions of leadership. Women's experiences are often not valued at all, making them invisible in most areas of social, political, economic and at times religious life. A leadership style is needed that will empower women and transform the church into a gender-responsive institution. According to Chalou Asares,¹⁸ the goals of transformational leadership are to transform people and organisations by changing their minds and hearts, by broadening their perspectives, deepening their insight and understanding by clarifying aims, making behaviour congruent with beliefs, principles and values, and bringing about changes that are permanent, self-perpetuating and momentum-building. Theological curricula should empower students with skills to be transformational leaders in congregations, so that they may reorient belief systems, foster tolerance and promote human rights as a tool in transcending cultural, gender and other differences.

A thorough understanding of the organisational structures and cultures of churches is of course very important in order to transform them.¹⁹ However, for relevant action to transform these structures and cultures with a view to achieving gender justice, the problem should put in its correct perspective. Ministers themselves should have a thorough understanding of gender problems in the church. An in-depth macro analysis of gender challenges using a participatory approach may prove especially useful. This may also provide a broader perspective on how gender justice challenges are related to wider societal issues. It is the transformational minister who can impart the same attitudes in congregations that will ensure that the church will eventually become gender responsive.

According to Munroe,²⁰ the incorporation of women into male-dominated spheres comes at a cost, as it may require the downplaying of elements of the way that women define themselves. In this regard many female ministers have had the experience that, in order to be assimilated into prevailing institutional church structures, they had to forsake some of their distinctive female identity markers. However, it is crucial that women recognise the importance of their unique experiences and attributes in order to empower them and to promote gender-inclusive justice in the church.

The changed attitudes of the minister will influence those of the congregants. In this sense the minister will be an inspiration and motivator of the congregants. In this regard Hay's list²¹ of motivational devices may prove useful also with regard to the promotion of gender-inclusive justice:

¹⁸ Asares, Charlou. 2010. *Eyes on Success*. Online at: www.eyesonsuccess.com/author/chaserasalou/. [Accessed: September 28, 2011].

¹⁹ Lim, Jon Y-S. 2001. Transformational Leadership: Organisational Culture and Organisational Effectiveness in Sports Organisations. *The Sport Journal* 4(2). Online at: <http://www.thesportjournal.org/article/transformational-leadership-organizational-culture-and-organizational-effectiveness-sport-or>. [Accessed: March 9, 2012].

²⁰ Munroe, Myles. 2001. *Understanding the Purpose and Power of Women*. New Kensington: Whitaker House.

²¹ Hay, Iain. 2009. *Transformational Leadership: Characteristics and Criticisms*. School of Geography, Population and Environmental Management, Flinders University, 8. Online at: <http://www.leadingtoday.org/weleadinlearning/transformationalleadership.htm> [Accessed: March 9, 2012].

- Motivational speeches, conversations and sermons;
- Public displays of optimism and enthusiasm;
- Highlighting positive outcomes;
- Stimulating teamwork;
- Encouraging women to contribute to the development of an attractive, alternative future.

In this way the minister may:

- Promote a critical awareness of the urgency of gender-responsive justice in the church and may set in motion dialogue with the church members who should also be agents of change;
- Through teamwork, facilitated by him/her, teach church members to work together and, while respecting each other irrespective of gender, to confront these gender issues together and to accept shared goals;
- Enhance participation to help overcome resistance and encourage understanding of the need for gender responsiveness;
- Establish external networks to help the church in the process of establishing gender-responsive justice.

At the same time this will create opportunities for resocialisation and for the creation of alternative value systems. There is also need for what I want to call reculturalisation (the gradual process of instilling an alternative culture by gradually doing away with the ingrained gender-insensitive beliefs, attitudes, values and ideologies). This can be done through:

- Gender conscientisation workshops;
- Gender education;
- Gender days (awareness campaigns to build awareness that there is no alternative but to address the gender problem);
- Gender memorial sessions (where inspirational speeches, sermons, poems, songs are to be prepared for the sessions).

Finally, the segregation between gender-based groupings in the church – for example, the men's, women's, boys' and girls' leagues – should be challenged. One way is by establishing gender forums in the church in which both male and female congregants can participate. However, this should not be limited to the congregational level, but should also take place at presbyterial and synodical levels. These too will be ideal platforms to inspire members of the church to consider their actions, attitudes, perceptions and discourses with regard to gender. These forums will therefore also be forums of conscientisation, sensitisation, awareness building and education.

Conclusion

This essay argued that, in the face of the gender injustice found in the church, there is a clear need for transformational pastoral leaders. However, to achieve this requires an honest reflection on the theological education that prospective church leaders receive.

It requires vision, initiative, patience, integrity, courage and persistence. In this way the fruits of such education will also be seen in congregations, church membership and in church structures, realising the vision of a church in which gender-inclusive justice will prevail and which will truly be a home for all.

Chapter 14

Teaching gender and theology in the Reformed Institute for Theological Training (RITT) in Eldoret, Kenya

Dorcas Chebet¹ and Beatrice Cherop²



Introduction

The teaching of theology as part of the preparation for ministry in the church has a long history in Africa. The study and interpretation of the Bible provide the foundation upon which theological education has been built over the centuries. It is only since a few decades ago that women have had the opportunity to study theology, preach in churches and teach in theological institutions. The story of women's involvement is told at the denominational level as each denomination has debated on whether women should study and be ordained for the ministry. This story of women's involvement in the Reformed tradition is not unique and differs from one continent to the other. While there are places where the Reformed tradition has allowed women to study and be ordained for the ministry, there are places where it is still an issue. The Reformed Church of East Africa (RCEA) is one of those places.

Even in the RCEA the importance of women doing theology lies in their unique experience of reading and interpreting the Bible. They reflect on their own life experiences as the children of God who have been called to worship God and to serve holistically. In this way women become revealers of the divine Word and add to the fullness of the diversity of the preaching of the Word in this world which consists of men *and* women.³ It is only through the emphasis of female theologians that the fullness of God has been revealed anew: a God who created men and women in his image and likeness in order that they can worship and serve God. The contribution in doing theology from a female perspective is necessary, since women form the majority of the church members and are very active in the church. As noted above, for a very long time this contribution of women has not been taken into consideration and valued. Their voices have not been

¹ Dorcas Chebet is a lecturer at St. Philips Theological College, Maseno Kenya, PhD candidate (Old Testament) at Stellenbosch University, RSA. E-mail: jumadorcas@hotmail.com

² Beatrice Cherop coordinates Bible study at the Centre for Mission and Leadership training (CML) in the Reformed Church of East Africa and she is a lecturer at RITT. E-mail: cheropb2006@gmail.com

³ Renita Weems gives a detailed analysis of how the Bible can have the power to fill women and men with the passion and vision for liberation and by extension the public ministry of both men and women. See Weems, Renita. 2011. *Re-Reading for Liberation: African American Women and the Bible*. In Cannon, Katie G., Townes, Emilie M. and Angela D. Sims (eds.). *Womanist Theological Ethics: A Reader*. Louisville, KY: Orbis Books, 58.

sought and heard, and they were not part of the leadership in the church and ministry. Denying women a role in theological education and in ministry has been one form of injustice within Christian tradition, which affirms the equality of male and female in Christ. In areas where this injustice has been addressed, this has come about through engendering education and ministry in the church.

In the Reformed Church of East Africa the teaching of theology has taken place at the Reformed Institute for Theological Training (RITT), at St. Paul's University (SPU) and overseas. The inclusion of women in theological education is a very recent phenomenon. Some women have either started by studying at RITT and then proceeded to St. Paul's, while some started with St. Paul's because of their qualification and the position of the church in training. This paper seeks to analyse the teaching of gender at RITT as part of the ongoing discussions on teaching gender in the Reformed Colleges in Africa. It has four parts, highlighting first the history of the RCEA, followed by an account of the theological training in the RCEA as such. We then look at women and RITT and how women fared after theological training. Here the stories of the pioneer women are presented as part of considering the challenges of engendering theological education and the ministry. Finally, we discuss the curriculum at RITT and the challenges related to teaching gender and theology in the RCEA, and we propose a way forward in engendering theological education both in the RCEA and at RITT.

The history of the Reformed Church of East Africa⁴

RCEA traces its history back to the Dutch settlers who came to Kenya after the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902). Although they left South Africa in order not to submit to British rule, a number of South African families choose to settle in East Africa, where they received huge pieces of land for farming, especially in parts of Eldoret, Nyahururu and Nakuru in Kenya. Many of these families from South Africa were members of the Dutch Reformed Church and after settling in Kenya, they organised themselves into separate groups of worshippers of Afrikaners and Africans. A missionary called Tini Loubser arrived in 1909 and worked together with Joseph Sengerut and Daniel Kimurgong in planting what was later to be called the Reformed Church of East Africa.

Rev. Loubser left for South Africa for health reasons and the Dutch Reformed Church mission station was named the "Bwana Loubser Sending Mission" in his honour.⁵ Many Dutch farmers continued to minister to their workers. During a church council meeting on 21 January 1944 a decision was made to call a full-time missionary and thus Rev. B. Eybers came from Malawi. For easy access to the people, outposts were established at central points on the farms, which were managed by evangelists who were trained by Eybers. Among the evangelists were people from the Lutheran Church of Tanzania. After

⁴ The information for this paragraph is mainly derived from Chemei, Lydia. 2009. A Critical Investigation into why the Reformed Church of East Africa has enshrined in her Constitution that an Ordained Minister must be a Biological Male. Bachelor's Thesis. St. Paul's University, Limuru, Kenya.

⁵ For a detailed description of the impact of Rev. Loubser see Van Zyl, Jacob. 2001. The Impact of Reformed Missions on the Origin, Growth and Identity of the Reformed Church of East Africa: 1905-2000. DTh dissertation. Stellenbosch University, 78-81. This study is a rich source of information on the history of the RCEA.

six years of evangelism to the labourers, the impact was still minimal. This prompted the need to start ministerial training. Rev. Eybers thus started a pastor's training course at the Plateau Mission Station. This four-year course was started in 1952 and the first graduates included the late Rev. Jeremiah Lugumira, Rev. Hubert Tibanga and the late Rev. Jason Wamukota, who was the only Kenyan. After ordination, Rev. Lugumira was posted to Eldoret, whereas Rev. Wamukota and Rev. Tibanga were posted to Plateau and Kitale respectively. They served as parish ministers and school managers of the Dutch Reformed Church Schools.

From the late 1950s many South Africans started leaving Kenya out of "fear of independence".⁶ The Dutch congregations that formed the consistory of the Dutch Reformed Church then decided to form a church government for the newly established African church, so that it would continue the work. A church government was set up and inaugurated. Under this government the stations at Eldoret, Plateau and Kitale were transformed into the congregations of Eldoret, Plateau, and Trans-Nzoia. Each congregation was now a church of its own. Ordination of elders took place and parish councils for these congregations were formed. The parish councils in turn formed a presbytery. On its institution the presbytery became the supreme body that exercised jurisdiction over the three consistories and the congregations present.

A new episode and the formation of the Reformed Church of East Africa

The fleeing of Dutch settlers from Kenya coincided with a search by the Reformed Mission League (RML)⁷ of the Netherlands for a mission field. A delegation from the Reformed Mission League came to Kenya and held a meeting with the "Bwana Loubser Sending Mission" Committee on 21 September 1960. An agreement was later reached to let the Reformed Mission League of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) take over the work of the "Bwana Loubser Sending Mission." The work was formally handed over from the "Bwana Loubser Sending Mission" to the Reformed Mission League on 20 January 1961.

The board of the Reformed Mission League immediately started sending missionaries under the name "Bwana Loubser Sending Mission." Plans were later made to merge the "Bwana Loubser Sending Mission" and the consistories into one church under one umbrella. This union was adopted on 5 September 1963 and a synod was formed to be the supreme body in the establishment. The creation of the synod prompted the registration of the church under the name "Reformed Church of East Africa" (RCEA).

RCEA then formally instituted the Presbyterian system of church government and the synod accepted a constitution which was taken over from the Presbyterian Church of East Africa. All this was done under the guidance of the Reformed Mission League.⁸ The

⁶ Van Zyl, *The Impact of Reformed Missions*, 12.

⁷ The Reformed Mission League (RML) was founded in 1901 as a missionary organisation based on the foundation of Scripture and the Reformed confession of faith. The League mainly worked from within the Dutch Reformed Church (since 2004 united in the Protestant Church in the Netherlands) and represents the 'conservative' strand in this church, meaning that the RML does not approve of the ordained ministry of women. See also Van Zyl, *The Impact of Reformed Missions*, 115-131.

⁸ Van Zyl, *The Impact of Reformed Missions*, 199.

synod consisted of delegates from the church councils of the existing congregations and it therefore formed the broader governing body of the church. The Dutch Reformed Church aimed at reaching the labourers on the farms and their mission work took place mainly in the Eldoret and Kitale districts. As a result, the RCEA was established mainly among members of the Kalenjin community of Kenya, who are the main inhabitants of the Eldoret and Kitale regions.⁹

The Reformed Institute for Theological Training (RITT)

The Reformed Institute for Theological Training is situated in the Uasin Gishu District, 20 kilometres south of Eldoret town. Its mission is to equip servants of God for a biblically grounded holistic ministry and service.¹⁰ RITT offers a Certificate in Theology that is awarded by the institution itself and a Diploma in Theology, accredited by St. Paul's University (SPU), which is accepted by the RCEA Synod.¹¹ The RCEA started its own theological institution at the heart of the church in order to enhance Reformed doctrines and to foster the traditions of the church.¹² Theological education in the RCEA traces its roots back to the 1950s, when evangelists (only men) were trained at the Reformed Bible School (RBS). After two decades the name changed from RBS to the Reformed Theological College of East Africa.¹³

The training of RCEA ministers commenced in 1952 at the RBS. The tutors were Rev. Eybers, together with his wife, from South Africa who was assisted by Dutch Reformed ministers from South Africa. It was a policy that the tutors must be approved by the Synod Committee of the Dutch Reformed Church in Transvaal and the standard of the syllabus was set according to their school for evangelists at Dingaanstat in South Africa (Stofberg Gedenkskool).¹⁴ During this period some ministers were trained at Scott Theological College. The requirement for one to be trained as minister was a certificate in Evangelism. This was the situation until 1969, when the RCEA synod decided to partner with St. Paul's United Theological College (SPUTC)¹⁵ for training their ministers.¹⁶ The Dutch Reformed Church accepted that the RCEA synod was partnering with SPUTC. In 1972 the RCEA became the fourth official partner of SPUTC.¹⁷ The partnering meant that students from the RCEA who had qualified through RITT and, with the recommendation of the church, could join St. Paul's and take a Diploma in Theology that was being offered by St. Paul's and accredited by Makerere University in Uganda. Students of the RCEA took theology courses offered at SPUTC, but had to do two hours per week on Reformed doctrine, as the other partner churches also taught their own doctrine as SPUTC was an ecumenical institution. The students were financially

⁹ Van Zyl, *The Impact of Reformed Missions*, 139.

¹⁰ Ekitala, Ariko. 2004. *RITT Strategic Plan, 2004-2010*. Eldoret: RITT.

¹¹ The certificate course takes one year, while the diploma course takes three years.

¹² Ekitala, *RITT Strategic Plan, 2004-2010*.

¹³ Currently known as RITT.

¹⁴ Van Zyl, *The Impact of Reformed Missions*, 224.

¹⁵ Currently called St Paul's University (SPU).

¹⁶ Information is derived from an interview with Rev. Dr Peter Bisem, a minister in the Reformed Church of East Africa and former Deputy General Secretary of the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK).

¹⁷ The shareholders of SPUTC in Limuru were the Anglican Church of Kenya, the Methodist Church of Kenya and the Presbyterian Church of East Africa.

sponsored by the Reformed Mission League. In 1978 SPUTC started to offer a Bachelor of Divinity with the Association of Theological Institutions in Eastern Africa. Students who completed a Diploma in Theology from Makerere University could proceed to do the Bachelor of Divinity Degree. There were students who went directly to the Bachelor of Divinity if they had the required qualifications for the degree, even without the Diploma in Theology. SPUTC continued to offer both the Diploma in Theology and the Bachelor of Divinity curriculums. The education was based on traditional theology curriculums in which gender issues were not highlighted. From 1989 SPUTC ceased to offer the Diploma in Theology and passed it on to the colleges that were under the leadership of individual denominations but affiliated to SPUTC; RITT was one of these denominational colleges.¹⁸ It celebrated its first graduation of Diploma in Theology students in 1993.

After the completion of the Diploma course, students were sent to different parishes for a one-year ministry-oriented internship under an ordained minister. After that a student was required to preach at the presbytery council of elders for a final assessment to qualify for the ordained ministry. If the student qualified, the council then recommended the candidate for ordination. The student was sent into the parish and finally, in conjunction with the moderator's office, the student was ordained to serve as a minister. This is the procedure which is followed to this day. For women, things are different. They too are sent to do the same one-year ministry-oriented internship, but they are not ordained. After their internship, some women are employed in church departments as coordinators, as chaplains in RCEA-sponsored schools and hospitals, and currently some are lecturers at RITT. As there are few departments, only some women are absorbed into the ministry of the church, while the remaining women are put on the waiting list until a vacancy opens up that does not necessarily need an ordained minister. This is the reason why a number of women stay at home after graduating from RITT, while some go for further studies, which enables them to find work somewhere else outside the RCEA institutional church.

Women and theological education in the Reformed Church of East Africa

The late Rose Barmasai was the first woman from the RCEA to receive theological education, not at RITT but in SPU. Most women who want to do theology or who want to continue their theological training do not receive direct financial support from the church. The male students get scholarships from RCEA's main missionary partner, the Reformed Mission League,¹⁹ and because of the availability of these scholarships more male students are enrolled at RITT than female students. But it is worth mentioning that Rose Barmasai was seconded by the RCEA to be given a scholarship by the Reformed Mission League to study Theology at St. Paul's. She was, however, given

¹⁸ The other colleges which offer a Diploma in Theology are: St. Andrew's College Kabare; St. Philip's Theological College Maseno; Berea Theological College Nakuru; St. Paul's Theological College Kapsabet; Bishop Hannington Institute Mombasa; Bishop Allison and Bishop Gwynne College in Southern Soudan (Anglican); Friends Theological College Kaimosi (Quaker).

¹⁹ RMI's mission was and still remains to support male ministers only in the ordained ministry of the RCEA. The purpose is fulfilling the mission of the church through planting churches and taking care of the congregants.

the scholarship specifically to be trained for the ministry of women and not for the ordained ministry. She graduated with a Bachelor of Divinity in 1990, and served as a mentor and a motivation for other women who were later trained at RITT.

Rose Barmasai was followed by Jane Barkeben, who was the first woman to study theology at RITT. Jane first worked as a storekeeper at RITT and later on she worked as a librarian. In time Jane developed an interest in Theology and the church gave her an opportunity to study Theology at RITT. She raised her fees herself through the work she was doing, as mentioned above. She started in 1993 as the only woman among seven men and she was able to successfully finish her theological studies in 1995. After her graduation, the church was impressed with her zeal and determination, and they sent her to be a chaplain at Plateau Mission Hospital. In 2002 Jane Barkeben accompanied her husband to the United States of America, where she still lives.²⁰

After Jane Barkeben RITT admitted three women to the class of 1998-2001, i.e. Dorcas Chebet, Beatrice Cherop and Peris Njoroge. Since then other female students have enrolled at RITT, namely Evelyne Biboko, Lena Rop, Sally Too, Grace Rugut,²¹ Milka Kabuu, Fridah Mengich, Lilian Ruto, Adelite Nanyama, Mary Wanjiru, Ruth Koech, Dinah Tuwei, Lilian Jeptepkeny and Prisca Jerop.

Studying theology at RITT has not been easy for the women theologians, especially given the predominantly male environment. The challenges were and are many and varied. There is the challenge of space, the fact that there were no women role models, the absence of a gender-sensitive curriculum at RITT, the prevalence of sexual harassment, no opening for ordained ministry and thus exclusion from mainstream church work, cultural and theological hostility against women, etc. Despite the harsh environment for women doing theology, women were not deterred from joining RITT and at least 23 women have completed their studies through RITT; overall the RCEA already has over 30 trained women theologians. Some hold a Diploma in Theology, others hold a Bachelor of Divinity degree, others hold or are pursuing a Master's Degree in Theology and others are already enrolled for their doctoral studies in Theology.

The ministry of women theologians and the impact of female theologians in the RCEA

When individual women were sent to theological institutions, there were clauses in the agreements on what role they would play after studying theology. Such roles were confined to specific departments. But with the increase of the number of trained women theologians and no more departments to absorb them, there was a problem of what to do with the women who had qualified. The women began asking to be employed in the church in other capacities and not just in the few departments that were available. Below are some accounts of women's experiences after completing their theological studies.

²⁰ The information about Jane Barkeben was obtained through a phone interview with Rev. Ariko Ekitala on 4 April 2012. Rev. Ariko Ekitala is also a former principal of RITT and an alumnus of SPU. He is currently the Deputy General Secretary of the RCEA.

²¹ The life of Grace Rugut and her experiences in theological education have been documented in Mombo, Esther and Joziase, Heleen. 2011. *If You Have No Voice, Just Sing! Narratives of Women's Lives and Theological Education at St. Paul's University*. Eldoret: Zapf Chancery, 46-49.

Rose Barmasai

The first female theologian in the RCEA, the late Rose Barmasai, graduated with a Bachelor of Divinity from SPU in 1990. She challenged the RCEA leadership for endorsing her for theological training without absorbing her within the church leadership. After graduation Rose was posted to RITT as adjunct lecturer, but her status as lecturer was undermined since the RCEA constitution stated in part that “a professor of theology must be biologically male”. The church kept silent. Later she was fully employed by RCEA as the National Women’s Coordinator and head of the Home and Family Life department, currently called the Women’s League department. This was done in terms of the clause that was used to allow her to study. Rose thus worked in the heart of the RCEA, but this did not last long. When an opportunity with a scholarship for further studies arose in 1993, she went to Edinburgh University and did a one-year Master’s in Theology and Development. After completion, she returned to the RCEA and after one year she was seconded by the RCEA to work with the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) as coordinator in the Peace and Reconciliation Programme. Her area of work was in peace building and reconciliation activities among communities in the North Rift Region of Kenya, where there were ethnic clashes.

The RCEA lost a woman theologian of great potential through a road accident on 22 October 1999 on her way home from a peace meeting in Baringo District.²² Her death was a big loss not only for the NCCCK, but also for the RCEA, where she is celebrated as the first woman to break the norm and venture into the male-dominated field of theological studies. Rose has been a particularly great source of inspiration to RCEA women theologians. She was passionate about the ministry of women and she mentored and encouraged younger women who were pursuing a theological education at RITT.²³

Peris Njoroge

After Rose Barmasai, Peris Njoroge was also seconded by the RCEA secretariat to receive a scholarship from De Verre Naaste (DVN)²⁴ to study at RITT. She received funding under a written agreement that she was going to work under the pastoral ministry of people with HIV&AIDS and widows in the RCEA. She was not being trained for the ordained ministry. After the completion of her Diploma studies in 2001, she worked at Plateau Hospital as chaplain and was also involved in HIV&AIDS counselling and outreach work. In 2006 she completed her Bachelor of Divinity at St. Paul’s University and got married to a man from the Presbyterian Church. From 2009 she taught History at RITT as a full-time lecturer, while pursuing a Master’s in Islam and Muslim-Christian relationships at SPU in Limuru. In 2010, while she was working on the final stage of her

²² She left behind her husband Japheth Barmasai and her children Risper, Enock, Loice and Elijah.

²³ It is because of her passion for the public ministry of women and her peace-building efforts across Kenya that on 14 October 2006 a new building in St. Paul’s University was named in her honour. The Rose Barmasai building houses lecture rooms, faculty offices and the St. Paul’s University radio and television studio.

²⁴ DVN (De Verre Naaste or “The Distant Neighbour”) is a department in the Reformed Church in the Netherlands (Liberated).

dissertation, she disappeared mysteriously, leaving behind two daughters, the youngest being 3 months old.²⁵

Dorcas Chebet

After successfully completing her Diploma Certificate at RITT, Dorcas was posted to Kapsabet Parish²⁶ for a one-year internship under the supervision of the parish minister. Although she discharged her duties very effectively, the local church could not afford to pay for her upkeep any longer and after nine months she had to go back to her home in Mt. Elgon region. There she continued to be involved in her local congregation. In 2003 she went to St. Paul's University to do a Bachelor of Divinity degree, which she completed in December 2005.²⁷ Dorcas was then posted to coordinate the department of HIV&AIDS in the RCEA, organising seminars for clergy and managing huge funding from USAID. She faced a lot of challenges and in 2007 she was sent on compulsory leave of absence because of lack of external funding for the programme. After her dismissal, she found a teaching job at St. Philips Theological College, an Anglican institution for the training of church ministers. In 2009-2010 Dorcas did her Master's degree in Theology at Kampen Protestant University in the Netherlands in the field of Old Testament Studies from a feminist perspective. After studying in Kampen, she returned to St. Philips to teach Biblical Studies and African Church History. The teaching of these subjects has enabled her to mainstream issues of gender disparities. Working outside of the RCEA did not stop her from contributing to the ministry of the Reformed Church by preaching, teaching Sunday school and being involved in other church activities. In 2009 she was awarded the Sylvia Michel Prize,²⁸ together with Professor Esther Mombo,²⁹ for their efforts in exposing issues that hinder RCEA women from entering the ordained ministry.

Edith Chemorion

Edith Chemorion did not start her theological career at RITT but at St. Paul's United Theological College through a scholarship from the WARC. Her desire was to serve in the ordained ministry. After her graduation in 2002 she was sent for an internship at two places: to teach at RITT and to serve as a chaplain for Plateau Primary and Secondary Schools, which were RCEA sponsored. When she finished her internship, she was appointed by the church to head a Care Department.³⁰ This department was receiving funding from the Reformed Mission League (RML) and the Christian Reformed

²⁵ This chapter is dedicated to her, as stated in the conclusion.

²⁶ Kapsabet parish is a congregation that was started by a department in the RCEA, the Evangelism by Extension Committee.

²⁷ This was through a scholarships from the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC).

²⁸ The Sylvia Michel Prize was established in 2007. It is given every two years to an organisation or individuals(s) working to promote women as leaders. The award was established by the Reformed Church of Argovia in Switzerland to honour Sylvia Michel – the first woman to lead a Swiss Reformed congregation and the first female president of the Reformed Church of Argovia.

²⁹ Prof. Esther Mombo is a graduate of St. Paul's University. She has worked with the RCEA as a secondary school teacher and as a part-time lecturer at RITT. She is currently the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Academics at St. Paul's University, Limuru.

³⁰ RCEA has several departments which are mandated to cater for specific issues that interest the church. The Care Department is tasked with the responsibility of responding to socio-economic issues that affect people.

World Relief Committee (CRWRC). Her responsibilities included local resource mobilisation, disaster response, peace building, capacity building and networking with other organisations. She described her experience in the Care Department as humbling, but still felt her calling was to the ordained ministry, where she could work closely with church congregations by empowering and strengthening the members socially, economically and spiritually. She found working in a male-dominated environment in the office very challenging. She had to work twice as hard to prove her capability to achieve the desired results. In 2006 she left working with Care for a number of reasons, including frustration because of the patriarchal structures. She later got an opportunity to do a Master's Degree at Stellenbosch University, and currently she is working at Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital under Moi University as a counsellor, while she is also pursuing her PhD at Stellenbosch University in South Africa.

Beatrice Cherop

Beatrice Cherop began her theological career at RITT and graduated in 2001. In 2002 she did the internship in two places: in Ushirika local church and at the Women's Desk of the RCEA. When she completed her internship, she waited to be posted by the staffing committee of RCEA, but she was not offered a position. Therefore she started to run a private business and attended church. In 2004 she joined St. Paul's University and completed her Bachelor of Divinity in 2007. Again, she stayed home for one year and in October 2008 she was employed by the RCEA as the coordinator of Bible study in the Centre for Mission and Leadership training (CML). Her work is to encourage the RCEA membership in the study of the Bible in order to be grounded in the Christian faith. This is done through developing Bible study and Sunday school material for use by the members. About 30 congregations are actively involved in these programmes. Five congregations have been born as a result of home Bible study. Beatrice travels to meet RCEA members at local congregations and she finds the congregations receptive to the work she is doing. In most cases participants are very appreciative and enthusiastic, and they affirm her talent in training them. The elders furthermore make extra appointments for different kinds of training (apart from Bible study) to empower them on leadership skills, stewardship and other social needs.

As well as working in the Department, Beatrice is also a part-time lecturer at RITT, teaching the unit on Christian Responses towards HIV&AIDS. The men often deliberately discuss the public ministry of women in her presence to try and discourage her. However, Beatrice loves her work and her theological study has enabled her to know how to bridge the gap of gender disparities. She is currently enrolled for a Master's Degree in Psychological Counselling at Egerton University, Nakuru.

Theological education and the curriculum at RITT

RITT is an affiliate college of SPU and therefore the Diploma in Theology is accredited by SPU. The syllabus covers the five core areas of Theology: Biblical Studies, Systematic Theology, Pastoral Studies, Church History and Religious Studies. The curriculum of SPU went through the process of engendering in 1999 in order to mainstream contextual issues such as Gender in Theology, African Women's Theologies and Christian Response

towards HIV&AIDS. Since St. Paul's does not manage the different colleges, the institutions are allowed freedom to teach aspects of their denominational polity and the specific theology of their denomination. They are also free to engender the teaching of theology in accordance with their context. So colleges carry out the mandate of teaching using the expertise of staff and available resources. From the curriculum composed by SPU, RITT has only chosen to offer Christian Response to HIV&AIDS, but not courses dealing with gender issues, despite the fact that men and women are trained in the institution and also that the churches have women as the majority of their members.

The question which arises is therefore: Why has RITT chosen not to offer gender courses while the mission of the school is "to equip servants of God for a biblically grounded holistic ministry and service?" Does "holistic" not include gender issues? There could be many different reasons for not teaching gender as part of theological education at RITT, as discussed below.

Ecclesiastical

The history of the RCEA shows that it is a church that in the beginning struggled with issues of race as Africans and Afrikaners worshipped separately. When the Reformed Mission League took over in 1961, they became and continued to be a strong supporter of RITT, but since the RML did not and still does not approve of the ordination of women, there was no room for the theological education for women. That is why women who were to be trained at RITT could only be admitted with a clause specifically indicating why they were training (see the stories above). The link between ordination and theological training made it difficult for RITT to consider engendering their own theological education, as RITT is solely a denominational college. The leadership of RCEA has not been able to break away from the ecclesiastical domination of the RML, especially regarding the role and position of women in the church. So the doctrine of RML and African patriarchy are perpetuated in the teaching of theological education. There are, however, concrete indications that the vision on the role and position of women in the RCEA is changing and that more and more people support the ordination of women. A first step was taken by the synod at the end of 2010, when a clause in the constitution was removed in which it was stated that an ordained minister must be "biologically male". It seems that the legislative objections against the leadership of women in the church have now been removed. The next step should be the actual ordination of women, but the question is: Who will roll this stone away?

Resources

Other reasons why gender studies are not offered in RITT would include lack of resources and staffing. If the college does not consider gender in theology as a valid course, they will not invest in library resources such as books and other materials. With regard to staffing, there is a challenge for those who teach theology. As recently as 2010, the RCEA constitution had stated that a professor of theology must be "biologically male". That created a problem for women. The constitution has since been amended; in 2010 the Synod removed the clause in the constitution which stated that an ordained minister must be "biologically male", but the position and authority of female lecturers are often

still challenged, because “how can women who are not ordained prepare men for the ministry”? In order to teach gender in theology, the ordained men must be convinced that it is a genuinely theological issue. Since women are not ordained, even when they are teaching, their position is undermined and their courses will not be taken seriously, especially when they teach gender and theology courses. Both resources and staffing are challenges, but the situation will improve, since more and more male theologians in the RCEA who went through SPU are positive towards – and see the importance of including – gender issues in the teaching of theology.

The cultural context and opportunity to minister

Another challenge facing the implementation of gender in the teaching at RITT may be the cultural context. While culture is not static on issues affecting women, it is slow to change and is often used as an argument against women’s leadership in the church. Teaching gender and theology is regarded as introducing Western feminism, which is feared as breaking down traditional culture in which the role and place of women and men is defined. This, however, cannot be used as an argument against engendering theological education, since in the same cultural context women are theologically trained and ordained.³¹

In addition to the cultural context, another argument against teaching gender and ordaining women is that the church already has a huge number of ordained men. Where will they place ordained women? But we ask ourselves: where have they been placing men theologians? Maybe this is an argument stemming from a phobia among men that “those women will take our jobs”. On the contrary, other people within the RCEA highlight that there is still need for qualified ministers in the church. It seems as though the church has not taken time to rethink the opportunities for ministry and how to use the gifts of both men and women.

The way forward

The mission of RITT is “to equip servants of God for a biblically grounded holistic ministry and service.” The curriculum provides for holistic teaching by having courses that impact on men and women in their context of ministry. To choose not to teach the whole curriculum is to impoverish ministry in the church and to deny an understanding of the majority of church members, who are women. The central theme of theological education is to propagate God’s mission through social formation and understanding the mission of the church in the world. Theological education should be a bonding and blending together of the text and the context, a transformative interaction between the Word of God and interpretation. Both women and men should be actors and receptors in this creative process.

The RCEA is a member church of WARC/WCRC,³² whose mission includes: “to promote inclusivity and partnership in church and society by addressing gender inequality and

³¹ E.g. the Anglican Diocese of Eldoret.

³² The World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) and the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) joined together in the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) in June 2010.

violence and making a place for women and youth in society". Also their aim is to enable Reformed churches to witness for justice and peace through advocating for human rights and supporting peace initiatives.³³

In order to equip men and women to fulfil this function, theological education in RITT should be engendered.

The public ministry of women in the RCEA ought to be addressed in a spirit of togetherness³⁴ and the engendering of education will help RITT to play its part. Male and female theologians from different branches of the global Reformed family should inspire each other and should seek cooperation in bringing life in its fullness for all.

We acknowledge the women theologians and pastors from the Reformed Church of East Africa for their relentless efforts in calling for a leadership of co-partnership in the church. The church vision of equipping ministers, leaders, scholars and all people of God should be committed to the creative discernment of the time and active participation in God's liberative mission in the world at large and RCEA in particular.

Dedication

This paper is dedicated to Peris Njoroge, whose story is included in this paper and who disappeared mysteriously in 2010. We pray that this paper may contribute toward bringing justice for women and men equally in this country.

³³ See Greenaway, Kristine. WARC's Core Callings. Online at: http://warc.jalb.de/warcajsp/side.jsp?news_id=708&part_id=0&navi=9. [Accessed: April 30, 2012].

³⁴ In other words, of truly being our sisters' and brothers' keepers.

Chapter 15

From the pew to the pulpit Engendering the pulpit through teaching “African Women’s Theologies”

*Esther Mombo and Heleen Joziasse*¹



Introduction

One observation can immediately be made when entering a Kenyan church, no matter the denomination or the geographical area in which it is situated: the pews are overwhelmingly filled with women, while men occupy the front seats and the pulpit. The question of why there are so many women in the pews and so few in the pulpit has yet to be fully answered. At St. Paul’s University ways are sought to engage students in this discussion about the gender imbalance in leadership in church and society, aiming at raising awareness, encouraging critical analysis and acquainting students with theological insights from African women’s perspectives. One of the ways in which these topics are raised in the faculty of theology at St. Paul’s University² is by teaching a course entitled “African Women’s Theologies”, abbreviated as AWT. This course is taught to students who have already ministered or who are looking for ways to serve the church from the pulpit.

In this chapter we first indicate the reasons for teaching gender and theology to theological students by highlighting the position of men and women in the church and discussing why engendering theological education is necessary. In the second part we concentrate on the AWT course itself by outlining its content and the methodology.

¹ Esther Mombo is Professor of Theology and Deputy Vice-Chancellor of St. Paul’s University, Limuru, Kenya. She is an active member of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians and has published widely on gender, the church and African religion. E-mail: esthermombo@yahoo.co.uk

Heleen Joziasse is a lecturer at St. Paul’s University, Limuru, Kenya, in the fields of systematic theology and gender and theology. She is an ordained minister in the Protestant Church in the Netherlands. E-mail: jansenjoziasse@yahoo.com

² St. Paul’s University is a chartered private Christian university which had been a theological college for 105 years. It was founded as an Anglican Divinity School to train freed slaves for holistic ministry in the colonial era. In 1955 it became a United Theological College which trained men from three different traditions: Anglican, Presbyterian and Methodist. Later the three were joined by the Reformed Church of East Africa and then the National Council of Churches of Kenya brought in other church traditions, especially those from the African Instituted Churches. The college took in its first women students to study theology in 1976 and became instrumental in the training of men and women for church leadership. As far as the curriculum is concerned, the college was at the forefront of introducing not only new courses on cutting-edge issues such as women, gender and interfaith matters, but was among the first in the region to mainstream HIV&AIDS studies into its curriculum.

The ideas and feelings of the students at the beginning of the course are also highlighted. In a second section three specific subjects are discussed, namely the Bible and violence against women; the Church; and Marriage and Family Life. Finally information is given about how students evaluate the course after having completed it, showing the impact of this topic on the students.

Why teach gender in the Kenyan context?

As stated in the introduction, an initial analysis of gender and gender imbalances can be made simply while attending a Sunday church service. But for some reason the status quo of women in the pews and men in leadership roles is taken for granted even by students when they start their theological education.³ Therefore, to make students aware of the imbalance between men and women in the church, they are given a questionnaire to fill in the percentages of women and men in their churches and the leadership roles they play, starting from top positions and ending at the bottom, indicating the percentage of female presence compared to male. The roles include cleaning, cooking and preparing the church, social services, women leading and participating in women's groups, women leading Sunday School, women leading the service, women studying theology, women in roles such as moderator, bishop, high priest, general secretary, presiding bishop, superintendent, etc. Once this questionnaire has been completed, the picture becomes very clear: women constitute about 70 or 80 per cent of the total congregation, but they are virtually absent when it comes to leadership positions. They are seen but not heard. They do the "minor jobs" of cleaning, cooking and caring for the needy. They are allowed to sing and dance. It is the men who teach and preach to the congregation. Women can do the children's service. Women are active in fundraising, but they do not own the money and have no access to decision-making bodies.

Why women are not in the pulpit

After having analysed the gender situation in the church, we can ask ourselves: What are the reasons for this imbalance? Why are there so few women in the pulpit? First of all, theological education seems to be a preserve of the male gender. This leads men automatically to exercise their ministries from the pulpit. The number of men and women in theological colleges is far from equal; a survey at St. Paul's University shows that between 1976, when the first women were admitted,⁴ until 2003 between two and six women graduated annually⁵ compared to an average of 25 male graduates every year. The reasons why very few women were doing theology at St. Paul's for a long time included the link between theology and ordination. Thus, churches that had not accepted the ordination of women, such as the Reformed Church of East Africa (RCEA) and others whose male students studied at St. Paul's, would not send women to study theology. This is also noted below:

³ Apart from being taught AWT as a third-year course, all Bachelor of Divinity (BD) students are introduced to Gender and Theology in a compulsory course taught to first-year students.

⁴ At that time St. Paul's was still a United Theological College.

⁵ See Mombo, Esther and Joziassse, Heleen. 2011. *If You Have No Voice, Just Sing! Narratives of Women's Lives and Theological Education at St. Paul's University*. Limuru: Zapf Chancery, 3.

My church, the Reformed Church of East Africa (RCEA), does not ordain women and the pulpit is reserved for men. I studied theology and graduated with a theology degree, but I have remained on the margins of the church. My studies exposed me to the realities of the church life and helped me to analyze the situation of women in the church, especially single women and widows. With my training I chose to work from the grassroots by organizing a school and running small income-generating projects for vulnerable women.⁶

The reasons for women not being ordained include specific conservative biblical interpretations within patriarchal societies. In a patriarchal system gender roles are specifically defined and valued differently, which means that men are socialised to be public figures, while the women are socialised to be in the domestic sphere. When this is applied in the church the men are ordained and allowed to use the pulpit, while women remain in the pews.

The teachings in these churches support and give a divine blessing to the patriarchal system. Apart from this, theological education is an economic investment, so when the church has to choose whom they invest in, they will rather invest in a man who can be ordained.

Engendering theological education to engender the pulpit

Teaching “Gender in Africa” is only *one* step in a manifold strategy of tackling the injustices of patriarchy and male dominance in the church in general and in theological education in particular. Simply raising issues of gender and gender equality in a class to a male audience does not provide an adequate answer. Therefore teaching gender should be part of an on-going process of engendering theological education.

First of all engendering education means opening up education for all the people of God, including women – single mothers, married and widowed women, people living with disabilities, etc. As soon as theological education and ordination are disengaged, the question of the recruitment of women (and other students) and their funding arises, since both the churches and the families of female students are reluctant to support women financially. At the same time the university needs to create space for women, offering them facilities such as separate washrooms and hostels, apart from having to create a welcoming and safe environment.

The second part in the process of engendering theological education has to do with the curriculum of theological education in terms of structure and content. It has to be opened up to prepare men and women for ministry in the church of the 21st century. Not only a few new courses dealing with gender need to be developed, but the whole study needs to be restructured into a gender-sensitive curriculum in which issues affecting all people in our society are addressed such as gender-based violence; HIV&AIDS; theologies from the perspectives of women; theology and questions of wealth and poverty; theology and power; gender and theology; masculinity; and equity laws and society. This also

⁶ This quotation from Grace Rugut, a female student who graduated in 2009, is taken from an interview conducted in 2010. Part of the interview is published in Mombo and Joziase, *If You Have No Voice, Just Sing!*

implies adding a female perspective to theological education as such in order to include the experiences of women in all the courses being taught, and to enable women to teach and write about their views.

Finally, the process of engendering theological education is manifested through developing new courses, introducing topics which are relevant to the lives of men and women in serving the church. One of these specific courses is African Women's Theologies, which we will now elaborate on.

Teaching African Women's Theologies: aims, objectives, content and method

Since one of the aims of teaching AWT is to challenge existing theology, this unit is taught as a third-year core course, implying that the bachelor-degree students attending this unit already have a clear understanding of the major theological concepts taught in Bible and Exegesis, Church History, Systematic Theology, Pastoral Care, Sociology and Psychology. The course encourages students to reflect on theologies from a woman's perspective, drawing on the Bible, the story of the church, and contemporary theological and missiological issues. The unit aims to develop an understanding of African Women's Theologies and an examination of the world view in which African women do their theologies – cultural, religious, political, economic and social. It finally aims at equipping students, both men and women, to participate equally in the life of the church at all levels. The course covers all the main topics in doing theology from a female perspective.⁷

In the beginning: Questions, motivations, fears and expectations of the students

To involve students right from the beginning, their questions concerning African Women's Theologies are put on the table. The questions are diverse and often quite critical.⁸ These questions are addressed during the course of the semester.

In the same first session of AWT students fill in a written questionnaire about their motivation, expectations and fears. It becomes apparent that the answers students give

⁷ The course comprises: 1. Contextual Theologies and African Women's Theologies; 2. Sources, method and context of AWT; 3. Other women's theologies e.g. Western Feminist Theologies, Womanist Theology, Asian Women's Theologies; 4. Masculinities; 5. Bible and Women's Theologies I and II; 6. Language and Women's Theologies; 7. Christology in African Women's Theologies; 8. Sin/Salvation in African Women's Theologies; 9. Theology of the Church, Theology of the Body; 10. Theology of Marriage and Family Life, Women and Poverty, Gender-Based Violence; 11. Conclusions: What are African Women's Theologies?

⁸ The questions students raise are: What is African Women's Theologies? Why African? Why Theologies? Why women? What are the aims? What are the sources? Does it have sources? Who are the pioneers? Are there Western Women's Theologies? Is it a reaction against men? What has theology to do with women? What is the relevance of AWT? Why don't we have African *Men's* Theology? Is it applicable in our African context? What does the Bible say about it? Is it correlated with biblical teaching? How many theologies are there? What is the history of AWT, and how often does it change? Will the course make us extremist-feminist theologians? Will this course empower women and disempower men? Will this course break marriages by making women rebel against men? Is it feminism from the West and is it good for the African culture? Is this course destroying the church? Did God call women? Why is it a core course? Who should teach it? Who should study it? Why is it taught? Does AWT have an impact on the study of Theology? What is the origin of AWT? What are the advantages and disadvantages of AWT? How old is it in St. Paul's? What makes it unique? What is its place in the church?

to these questions are gendered. There is, for instance, a significant difference between the answers of female and male students on their *motivation* for doing AWT. As one woman wrote: “I am a lady priest and since I am passing through so many challenges concerning the ministry as a woman, I would like to take the course so that I can learn enough to face the challenges and come out successful.” Women do connect the subject of AWT to their own position and ministry. They want to gain strength and knowledge on how to do theology and how to minister as a woman. “I do AWT because since it concerns an African woman and I am part of it, I want to study it so that I may understand what others have contributed to this course. Also that I may be liberated and liberate other women.” Women are personally and emotionally involved and seek to gain from it, while men want to *know* more about theology from the perspective of women, and they want to become informed about the “right” position of women in church and society. As one male student wrote: “I want to do AWT so that I can learn about the contribution of African women towards the development of Theology in Africa.”

There is also a difference in the way men and women answer the question on what they *expect* from this course: One female student wrote: “I expect that this course helps me to realize myself as a woman in the ministry, that it helps me to understand the world from the African woman’s perspective.” Overall, female students expect to get well equipped and empowered to minister in church and society. They hope to gain strength from other female theologians and to get a clear grounded vision about the role and position of women in church and society. Male students, on the other hand, expect to gain knowledge about this African Women’s Theologies in relation to “universal” or “male” theology. In addition to this, some male students mention that they want to gain more insight into how to support female colleagues in the ministry.

When students start the course, they also express their *fears*. Rumours are spread from one cohort of students to the other about the content of the course and about the lecturer(s). Outside St. Paul’s University students are already warned about this unit. This shows that AWT is not an “ordinary” topic. It touches the lives and emotions of the students. Since it is about gender in relation to theology and the Bible, it is about the fundamentals of faith and identity; it sparks strong resistance but also strong adherence. Students are not neutral about it.

The fears of the students revolve around four issues: the authority of the Bible, the teachings of the Church, the place of family in society, and the course as such. The direction of the fears is different depending on whether students are male or female. Both express the fear of AWT not being biblical, but women especially are afraid that their position will be weakened when relating African Women’s Theologies to the Bible. Men fear that by allowing women to teach and lead, the church somehow will be destroyed, while women are not sure how they should serve the church. Concerning society and social relationships a man stated: “My fear about this course is that it can pose a threat between men and women in the society.” A woman wrote: “I fear the fact that men will see us as a threat to their domain of freedom, hence seen as a feminist, since the lecturer is a feminist activist.” Men fear that this course is promoting women having authority

over men and that studying AWT will break marriages. They also mention the fear of being biased, while female students mention the fear of being intimidated by men as well as by women. Men and women share the fear that AWT is not theology. Some male students fear that African Women's Theologies have no theoretical basis or that it lacks theological depth: that it is just about "women groaning through their stories". They suppose that there is not enough African literature, or that the sources are mainly from the West. Women are afraid that AWT will not give them the right theoretical basis for supporting their position and struggle in the church.

In conclusion, male and female students engage with this course from the beginning very differently and this is taken into account while teaching this unit.⁹ In group discussions sometimes students are mixed, while at other times men and women are separated in the search for a "female" perspective. In highlighting parts of the content of AWT in this chapter; we concentrate on the three "most feared" subjects: the authority of the Bible, the teaching of the church, and marriage and family life.

The method, definitions, and sources of AWT

After this exploration of the ideas of the students, the method, it is necessary to introduce the sources of AWT and definitions, using the writings of members of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians.¹⁰ The teaching methodology throughout the course is interactive, combining lectures with discussions, individual research, group work, reading assignments and interviews. Apart from written sources, oral sources are used, beside television programmes and articles in newspapers. Students analyse sermons and liturgies, interview women at grassroots about, for instance, their images of Jesus. Participants analyse the policy of their church on marriage and compare it with the recent discussions in the political arena about new marriage laws. These and other methods are used to introduce students to the topics and the methodology of AWT. In this course theology is related to the actual experiences of women in the church, and we let the male students share in these experiences.

The narrative method is a major pillar and a fundamental source for doing AWT, since African Women's Theologies are founded on the experiences of women through their stories. Stories are a source of knowledge, while also presenting another way of knowing. Right from the beginning students are encouraged to engage in this course by telling their own stories as this helps them to deal with issues not just in an abstract

⁹ To be able to understand the position and ideas of students at the beginning of the course, it is also revealing to discuss key words such as "feminism" or "patriarchy". After a first round of ventilating rather "kind" ideas, students should be challenged to reveal their real thoughts: that feminism is about men bashing, it is biased, it destroys family life, it is against the Bible, it comes only from learned women, men will be destroyed by women through the study of African Women's Theologies, women will lead the men, etc. Thus the initial thoughts, fears and prejudices of students are channelled, ventilated and can be addressed during the course.

¹⁰ The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians was inaugurated in 1989 and is an ecumenical and interfaith body of African women theologians, aimed at influencing the nature and teaching of theology by doing research and writing. More information about the Circle is provided by, for instance: Kanyoro, Musimbi R.A. 2006. *Beads and Strands. Threading More Beads in the Story of the Circle*. In Phiri, Isabel A. and Nadar, Sarojini (eds.). *African Women, Religion, and Health*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

manner. Obviously, it takes time for them to overcome their fears of this method being “just listening to stories of women” and to become acquainted to the importance of storytelling. One of the women’s stories that starts the course off is “A coming home to myself. The Childless Woman in the West African Space”, written by Mercy Amba Oduyoye.¹¹ After reading the story the students engage with it in discussions and the male students in particular are shocked by the way the men in the story are insensitive to Oduyoye’s plight. The article opens the students up to the experiences of women in doing theology. Therefore this story is used to discuss the sources, the methodology and the aims of AWT, which are also highlighted in the definitions.¹²

The Bible as a double-edged sword

The Bible is regarded as the most important book for both women and men in the church and naturally also for our students. One of the fears of female and male students should be addressed, i.e. that AWT goes against the Bible, while actually the Bible is a main source for doing AWT. Musimbi Kanyoro spells out the view of African women theologians regarding the Bible: “The Bible is a message of liberation for African women, much as it is also used to deny their freedom.”¹³ Starting the discussion on the Bible and Gender, four texts from the Old Testament are read and discussed in groups. These are the texts which Phyllis Trible labels “Texts of Terror”: Judges 11:29-40 about the daughter of Jephthah; 2 Samuel 13:1-22, the rape of Tamar; Judges 19:1-30 about the rape and murder of an unnamed woman; and Genesis 16:1-16 and 21:9-21, the story of Hagar.¹⁴ The two guiding questions for the students are: 1. Is this the Word of God? If so, how? If not, why not? 2. Are these things still happening in our days?

Most of the students are shocked when reading these texts of rape, murder and abandonment of women. These texts of unheard violence against women are usually omitted from the lectionary or interpreted in such a way that the atrocities are covered up by a “leading theme”, such as, for instance, the “kingship in Israel”, or “God’s covenant with Abram”. First, students are challenged to read these texts from the perspective of women. Second, by reading and discussing these texts, students realise that these forms of violence are not exceptions which happened only once. Violence against women occurs at all times and at all places. They recognise the interconnectedness between

¹¹ Oduyoye, Mercy A. 1999. A coming home to myself. The Childless Woman in the West African Space. In Farley, Margret A. and Jones, Serene (eds.). *Liberating Eschatology, Essays in Honor of Letty M. Russell*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 105-123.

¹² One of the definitions used is taken from Isabel Phiri: “African women’s theologies are a critical, academic study of the causes of women’s oppression, particularly the struggle against societal, cultural and religious patriarchy. It is a commitment to eradicate all forms of oppression against women through a critique of the social and religious dimensions both in African culture and Christianity. African women’s theologies take women’s experiences as its starting point, focusing on the oppressive areas of life caused by injustices such as patriarchy, colonialism, neocolonialism, racism, capitalism, globalisation and sexism. It sees a need to include the voices of all women, not just theologians, because it acknowledges that the majority of African women are engaging in oral theology.” See Phiri, Isabel A. 2004. Southern Africa. In Parratt, John (ed.). *An Introduction to Third World Theologies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 156.

¹³ Oduyoye, Mercy Amba and Kanyoro, Musimbi R.A. (eds.). 1990. *Talitha Qumi! Proceedings of the Convocation of African Women Theologians 1989*. Ibadan: Day-star Press, 52-53.

¹⁴ Trible, Phyllis. 1984. *Texts of Terror. Literary Feminist Reading of Biblical Narratives*. London: Fortress Press.

patriarchy and violence against women. Third, students are challenged to think again about their view of the Bible: How do you reconcile these horrible stories with the Bible as the inspired Word of God? Some groups conclude in the end that the story they read is not part of the Word of God. Concerning the concubine who was gang raped, students say, for instance: “No, this it is not the Word of God because never in this chapter is God mentioned, nor does God show whether justice should be rendered to the woman.” “No, it is not the Word of God because God doesn’t condemn the character and God doesn’t protect the daughter.” The answer given to the next question about *how* this is *not* the Word of God is: “This passage is a report, not words from above. It’s a story.” These statements of course spark a lot of discussion in class. More often students conclude that these stories *do* reflect the Word of God, not in the sense that the violence is affirmed from above, but that the Bible shows the relation between God and human beings in their real-life situations. According to them, violence against women is obviously part of this life on earth. It is not something which should be encouraged, but these stories should enhance feelings of shame and guilt.

These discussions show too how the Bible should be read critically, since the stories and the gender relations reflect the specific cultural context and time. The biblical stories need to be interpreted properly to become meaningful and authoritative in the present context. Based on this insight, hermeneutical methods are discussed, especially the neo-orthodox models of interpretation, a hermeneutics of suspicion, a hermeneutics of remembrance and feminist cultural hermeneutics.¹⁵ Musimbi Kanyoro introduced this method of analysing culture as a means of seeking justice and liberation for women in Africa. She states that the culture of a reader has more influence on the way the biblical text is understood and used in African communities than the historical facts about the text itself. Kanyoro therefore advocates for cultural hermeneutics as a prerequisite to biblical hermeneutics. The students are encouraged to interpret the texts from their own cultural framework. The story of Hagar, for instance, is read by the students through the lenses of their cultural context as a story about a woman in a polygamous marriage, a family that struggles with the infertility of the first spouse, while the main conflict arises from inheritance issues. Through discussing these different hermeneutical methods, students become aware of the importance of dealing with cultural concepts of gender and gender roles in interpreting texts from the Bible. This insight is also used in the second part of “Gender and Bible” in which passages from the New Testament and especially from Paul on women are discussed.¹⁶ The overall guideline for teaching this topic is the affirmation by Oduyoye:

As a woman who feels the weight of sexism, I cannot but go again and again to the stories of the exodus, exile, and to other biblical motifs in which ‘the least’ are recognized and affirmed, are saved or held up as beloved of God or at least are

¹⁵ Musimbi Kanyoro introduced this contextual method to interpret the Bible: cf. Kanyoro, Musimbi R.A. 2002. *Introducing Feminist Cultural Hermeneutics*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.

¹⁶ In the introductory course “Gender and Theology” the views on women in the New Testament are discussed extensively with reference to the synoptic gospels, Acts and the letters of Paul.

empowered to grow at the fundamentals of the structures of injustice until these fundamentals cave in on themselves.¹⁷

The church as a place of pride and pain

Since most of the students are already serving in a particular church, either as ordained pastors and ministers, or as evangelists and youth workers, they are asked about their attitude towards the church: What are you proud of and what are you critical about? They all are proud of their churches, since they are born into it, or they choose to serve God through this institution. However, at the same time students are also very critical. They mention that in their church there is a huge gap between the rich and the poor, where poor people, for instance, are not appointed as elders. The top positions are for men and generally there are no positions for women. The church is also a place of power games and competition, especially when it comes to elections. In preaching and in the liturgy women are largely excluded and their issues do not form part of the major agenda in the church.

In discussing the church, female students observe that the church can be a painful place for them. This statement provokes a lot of resistance and disbelief from the male students until it is further explained and analysed. But when the women narrate their experiences, the men understand and appreciate why the women see the church as a painful place. It is then noted that the original idea of the church as the body of Christ in which all human beings participate equally has been replaced by a clericalist male-dominated hierarchical organisation. The clerics have monopolised the religious tasks: they are the powerful experts, leaving the congregation to be the passive recipients who fear the clergy. According to Rosemary Ruether, clericalism disempowers people in three ways: in the sacramental life, where only certain people have the power to share in the sacraments; in education, since only certain people gain access to theological schools and are able to understand the foreign theological jargon; and in blocking their participating in the church administration.¹⁸ The power imbalance between men and women in these three areas is clearly recognised by the students.

Another area of pain that students come across is the male-dominated symbolism, language and preaching in the church. In an individual assignment students analyse how women are mentioned (or not mentioned) in sermons. The overall conclusion is that traditional religious language and the imagery and symbolism in sermons, scripture and liturgy are male-biased and make women invisible and powerless. Women are referred to as “brothers, men and sons of God” and most of the examples of women in sermons are negative and often very painful for the female audience. In the sermons it is clearly communicated that men represent the model of humanity while women are the deviation, while issues that women are struggling with are not addressed. The male dominance is further enhanced by the architecture of churches. Church buildings reflect hierarchy and distance through imposing towers, high roofs, remote sanctuaries

¹⁷ Oduyoye, Mercy A. 1986. *Hearing and Knowing. Theological Reflections on Christianity in Africa*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 147.

¹⁸ Ruether, Rosemary Radford. 1983. *Sexism and God-Talk. Toward a Feminist Theology*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 193-201.

and predominantly male visual imagery in windows, on the walls and around the altar. Throughout the centuries the story of salvation has been told by men through their male perspective, resulting in a male-dominated church tradition. The church calendar celebrates the achievements of men and tends to ignore or belittle the contribution of women.

The touching question becomes: What are you doing as an ordained woman in this institutional church? Most female students agree with their African sisters doing theology: they long to remain in the church, to work under the authorities and within the structure, but at the same time they opt for trying to change the structures from within. Musimbi Kanyoro and others have introduced the image of a round table as an alternative way of being church.¹⁹ The image of “the church as a round table” depicts a circle which always can be expanded. Seated in a circle you are able to look at each other and to talk with each other. The idea of the “church in the round” as an ecclesia of equals, where patriarchy is renounced and the full humanity of everybody is upheld, where women can “talk back” and where people mutually empower each other and ministry is seen as a co-operative task, is introduced as a challenging alternative not only for women but also for men. It is through discussing these issues that women and men are encouraged and supported to make a difference in the church they belong to.

Marriage and family – life threatened or encouraged?

A third area associated with fears while teaching AWT is the topic of marriage and family life. The topics under discussion in class reflect the issues which are very relevant in the Kenyan context. The discussion starts with the cultural marriage rites and how they influence the church rites, especially in the liturgies and the sermons. Most of the sermons at weddings are drawn from the creation stories and the epistle of Ephesians, where the hierarchical model and subordination of women are emphasised. The questions raised are: Can men and women relate differently? What about the notion of companionship derived from Genesis 1? Should girls and boys be prepared in a different way for marriage? What is the place of being single in society?

Further areas discussed under the topic of marriage are indicated below.

- The importance of children and the strategies for coping with barrenness in a family. What is the stance of the church? How can we interpret God’s command in Genesis 1:28 “Be fruitful and multiply” in our own context?
- The purpose of sex within marriage, the ways in which sex can have a negative influence on marriage, and whether women have any control over their own sexuality.
- What is the place of polygyny, which has persisted from traditional societies to the current times. The problems of polygyny are examined from the perspectives of women and include competition and rivalries among the women, creating unhealthy relationships.

¹⁹ Kanyoro, Musimbi R.A. 1997. *In Search of a Round Table. Gender, Theology & Church Leadership*. Geneva: WCC.

- Could people divorce in the past? When is divorce acceptable in modern times? What status does a divorced woman have within society and within the church? Can the church justify any acceptance of divorce, for instance, when wives are abused?
- How does society support widows and in what ways are widows perceived as a threat? How are widows perceived differently compared to widowers? What is the biblical teaching on widowhood and what should be the role of the community and the church?
- What are the reasons for violence entering a relationship between partners? How do we respond theologically and pastorally to violence in marriage? How do patriarchal customs, readings of the Bible and theological arguments enhance gender-based violence? How is gender-based violence linked to issues of poverty and women's health, especially women's reproductive health. In this regard issues of HIV&AIDS are raised and discussed and analysed theologically.

In discussing these topics, students are challenged to come up with their own ideas and concerns. They learn to analyse relationships and theological concepts from a female perspective, which is a real eye-opener for some and a feast of recognition for others. One of the students concluded about the initial fear of AWT breaking up marriages: "In this class nobody advocated for divorce, we were focused on enhancing healthy relationships in which each partner is equally valued. If marriages break after this course, it is because those marriages were in serious problems or were long dead before the spouse came to this class."

Empowering students for serving the gender-inclusive church

In the last session of AWT the students reflect again on their fears, motivations and expectations and are requested to write down their experiences during the course, whether the unit has met their expectations and whether their fears have been allayed. Generally, the atmosphere of resistance that was present at the beginning of the semester has made room for appreciation and enthusiasm.

Some comments from male students

- The course is an eye opener. I can now approach issues of gender with open mind without bias.
- The course was very relevant, not as I thought about it. It's also encouraging to see how the Bible has been used negatively to suppress women. Practically, I have developed a lot, academically, in mission work, and caring of all people as they are created in the image of God.
- The course has led me to understand the imbalances that exist between male and female participation both in the church and society. The presentations were more balanced than what I feared about initially.
- I thank God so much for the AWT course. It has fanned up my ever burning zeal to have my wife and other women empowered as much as possible as equal members

with me and all men, for we are all God's image and God's children. Women should be empowered especially through the voice of the church.

- The course has been very relevant, with a positive impact and a lot of preparedness to the subject. My fears have been well covered and done away with. It is a very relevant course in ministry.

Women evaluating the course

- I have become more enlightened and gotten a new perspective in looking at issues critically and not like "as it was in the beginning so is it now and will be forever." I am liberated and now I disagree with what someone had told me that this course is totally against men. I promise to pass the same message to those that I will serve.
- My expectations of this course have been realized: but we have a lot to do and a long journey to walk before the society accepts the role of women both in the church, society, nation and the community.
- The course was enjoyable. I was a bit conservative to start with, but now my mind is opened. I used to overlook problems concerning my husband but now I can face him and ask him to solve it. I hope I will be a help to others as I have been helped.
- Though challenging the present beliefs and practices, the course has opened new (very) important perspectives of dealing with Bible, culture, theology and male-female relationships. I am personally challenged.
- All my fears have been addressed both theologically and from a woman's perspective. The course has really liberated me and also challenged that I should no longer view things and issues from one perspective. I have gained new strength and will liberate other women.
- This course has met me at the real time, I needed such teachings because me personally being a young unmarried lady, I had faced violence from men especially when I was in primary school. It is encouraging and liberating.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

A selection made from references in contributions to this publication:

- Amanze, James, Nkomazana, F and Obed N. Kealotswe. *Biblical Studies, Theology, Religion and Philosophy. An Introduction for African Universities*. Eldoret: Zapf Chancery.
- Amoah, Elisabeth. 1997. *Where God Reigns: Reflections on Women in God's World*. Accra: Sam-Woode.
- Amoah, Elisabeth. 2001. *Divine Empowerment of Women in Africa's Complex Realities*. Accra: Sam-Woode.
- Assié-Lumumba, N'Dri T. (ed.). 2007. *Women and Higher Education in Africa: Reconceptualizing Gender-Based Human Capabilities and Upgrading Human Rights to Knowledge*. Abidjan: CÉPARRED.
- Bediako, Kwame. 2000. *Jesus in Africa. The Christian Gospel in African History and Experience*. Akropong-Akuapem: Regnum Africa.
- Benedek, Wolfgang, Kisaaye, Esther M. and Gerd Oberleitner. 2002. *The Human Rights of Women: International Instruments and African Experiences*. London: ZED Books.
- Brown, Joanne Carlson and Bohn, Carole R. (eds.). 1989. *Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse: The Feminist Critique*. New York, NY: The Pilgrim Press.
- Cannon, Katie G., Townes, Emilie M. and Angela D. Sims (eds.). *Womanist Theological Ethics: A Reader*. Louisville, KY: Orbis Books.
- Chitando, Ezra. 2007. *Acting in Hope: African Churches and HIV/AIDS*. Volume 2. Geneva: World Council of Churches.
- Chitando, Ezra and Hadebe, Nontando (eds.). 2009. *Compassionate Circles: African Women Theologians Facing HIV*. Geneva: World Council of Churches.
- Chung, Hyun Kyung. 1991. *Struggle to be the Sun Again: Introducing Asian Women's Theology*. London: SCM.
- Cosslett, Tess, Easton, Alison and Penny Summerfield (eds.). 1996. *Women, Power, and Resistance: An Introduction to Women's Studies*. Buckingham, PA: Open University Press.
- Daly, Mary. 1986. *Beyond God the Father: Towards a Philosophy of Women's Liberation*. London: Women's Press.
- Disch, Estelle (ed.). 2000. *Reconstructing Gender: A Multicultural Anthology*. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Co.
- Dube, Musa W. 2000. *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice.
- Dube, Musa W. (ed.). 2001. *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible*. Geneva: World Council of Churches.
- Dube, Musa W. and Kanyoro, Musimbi R.A. (eds.). 2004. *Grant Me Justice: HIV/AIDS and Gender Readings of the Bible*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.
- Ehrenreich, Barbara and Hochschild, Arlie Russell. 2002. *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy*. New York, NY: Metropolitan Books.
- Fabella, Virginia and Oduyoye, Mercy Amba. 1988. *With Passion and Compassion: Third World Women Doing Theology*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis.
- Farley, Margaret A. and Jones, Serene. (eds.) 1999. *Liberating Eschatology: Essays in Honor of Letty M. Russell*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press.
- Garcia, Brigida (ed.). 2000. *Women, Poverty and Demographic Change*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Getui, Mary and Wamue, Grace. 1996. *Violence against Women: Reflections by Kenyan Women Theologians*. Nairobi: Acton.
- Gnanadason, Arunda. 1997. *No Longer Silent: The Church and Violence against Women*. Geneva: World Council of Churches.
- Groothuis, Rebecca M. 1997. *Good News for Women: A Biblical Picture of Gender Equality*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.
- Hellum, Anne, Stewart, Julie, Ali, Shaheen S. and Amy Tsanga. 2007. *Human Rights, Plural Legalities and Gendered Realities: Paths are Made for Walking*. Harare: Weaver Press.

- Hinga, Teresia M., Kubai, Ann N., Mwaura, Philomena and Hazel Ayanga (eds.). 2008. *Women, Religion and HIV/AIDS in Africa: Responding to Ethical and Theological Challenges*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster publications.
- Isherwood, Lisa and McEwan, Dorothea. 2001. *Introducing Feminist Theology* (2nd edition). Sheffield Academic Press.
- Johnson, Elizabeth A. 1996. *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*. New York, NY: Crossroad Publication.
- Johnson, Elizabeth A. 1999. *Friends of God and Prophets: A Feminist Theological Reading of the Communion of Saints*. Sheffield: Continuum.
- Kanyoro, Musimbi R.A. 1997. *In Search of a Round Table: Gender, Theology and Church Leadership*. Geneva: World Council of Churches.
- Kanyoro, Musimbi R.A. 2002. *Introducing Feminist Cultural Hermeneutics*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
- Kanyoro, Musimbi R.A. and Odoyoye, Mercy A. (eds.). 1992. *The Will to Arise. Women, Tradition and the Church in Africa*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- King, Ursula. 1994. *Feminist Theology from the Third World*. London: SPCK.
- Kwok, Pui-lan. 2005. *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Lapsley, Jacqueline E. 2005. *Whispering the Word: Hearing Women's Stories in the Old Testament*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Loades, Ann. 1990. *Feminist Theology: A Reader*. London: SPCK.
- Mbuy Beya, Marie Bernadette. 1998. *Women, Who Are You? A Challenge*. Nairobi: Pauline Publications.
- McCann, Carole R. and Kim, Seungkyung (eds.). 2003. *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Mombo, Esther and Joziassie, Heleen (eds.). 2011. *If You Have No Voice, Just Sing! Narratives of Women's Lives and Theological Education at St. Paul's University*. Limuru: Zapf Chancery.
- Mukhopadhyay, Maitrayee and Singh, Navsharan (eds.). 2007. *Gender Justice, Citizenship and Development*. New Delhi: International Development Research Centre.
- Munroe, Myles. 2001. *Understanding the Purpose and Power of Women*. New Kensington: Whitaker House.
- Njoroge, Nyambura J. 2000. *Kiama Kia Ngo: An African Christian Feminist Ethic of Resistance and Transformation*. Accra: Legon Theological Studies (in association with Asempa Publishers).
- Njoroge, Nyambura J. and Kanyoro, Musimbi R.A. 1996. *Groaning in Faith: African Women in the Household of God*. Nairobi: Acton.
- Nyambura J. Njoroge and Musa W. Dube (eds.). 2001. *TalitaCumi! Theologies of African Women*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.
- Oduyoye, Mercy A. 1986. *Hearing and Knowing. Theological Reflections on Christianity in Africa*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis.
- Oduyoye, Mercy A. 1988. *Who will roll the stone away?* Geneva: World Council of Churches.
- Oduyoye, Mercy A. 1995. *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis.
- Oduyoye, Mercy A. 2001. *Introducing African Women's Theology*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
- Oduyoye, Mercy A. 2002. *Beads and Strands. Reflections of an African Woman on Christianity in Africa*. Carlisle: Paternoster.
- Oduyoye, Mercy A. and Kanyoro, Musimbi R.A. 1992. *Transforming Power: Women in the Household of God. Proceedings of the Pan-African Conference of the Circle*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.
- Phiri, Isabel A. 1997. *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy: Religions experience of Chewa Women in Central Malawi*. Lilongwe: CLAIM.
- Phiri, Isabel A., Devakarsham, Betty Govinden and Sarojini Nadar. (eds.) 2002. *Her-Stories: Hidden Stories of Women of Faith in Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.

- Phiri, Isabel A., Haddad, Beverly and Madipoane Masenya. 2003. *African Women, HIV/AIDS and Faith Communities*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.
- Phiri, Isabel, A. and Nadar, Sarojini (eds.). 2005. *On being Church. African Women's Voices and Visions*. Geneva: World Council of Churches.
- Phiri Isabel A., and Nadar, Sarodjinie. (ed). 2006. *African Women, Religion, and Health. Essays in Honor of Mercy Amba Ewudziwa Oduyoye*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.
- Raines, John and Maguire, Daniel (eds). 2000. *The Justice Men Owe to Women: Positive Resources from World Religions*. New York, NY: SUNY Press.
- Rakoczy, Susan (ed.). 2004. *In Her Name: Women Doing Theology*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.
- Razavi, Shahrashoub (ed.). 2002. *Shifting Burdens: Gender and Agrarian Change under Neoliberalism*. Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press.
- Richards, Sue and Richards, Lawrence. 1999. *Every Woman in the Bible*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers.
- Ruether, Rosemary Radford. 1983. *Sexism and God-Talk*. London: SCM.
- Russell, Letty. 1985. *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Russell, Letty. 1993. *Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Sakenfeld, Katharine Doob. 2003. *Just Wives? Stories of Power and Survival in the Old Testament and Today*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Sall, Ebrima (ed.). 2000. *Women in Academia: Gender and Academic Freedom in Africa*. Dakar: CODESRIA.
- Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth. 1984. *Bread Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth. 1993, 1994. *Searching the Scriptures* (2 Vols.). London: SCM.
- Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth. 1994. *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*. London: SCM.
- Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth (ed.). 1996. *The Power of Naming: A Concilium Reader in Feminist Liberation Theology*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Sharma, Arvind (ed.). 1987. *Women in World Religions*. Albany, NY: University of New York Press.
- Slee, Nicola. 2003. *Faith and Feminism: An Introduction to Christian Feminist Theology*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd.
- Tamez, Elza, 1989. *Through Her Eyes: Women's Theology from Latin America*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis.
- Trible, Phyllis. 1984. *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives*. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press.



INDEX

A

- abuse
 - emotional 134, 164
 - physical 93, 102, 164
 - socio-cultural 164
 - spiritual 164
- ACTEA 16
- African Charter on Human and People's Rights 160
- Africanisation 71-72, 76-78, 80-81
- African resources 80
 - challenges 77
 - definition 76
 - opportunities 78
 - publications 78
 - religious studies 77-78
 - resistance 78
- African Women's Theologies 179, 183-184, 186-189, 192-193
 - and the Bible 189

B

- Banda, Devison 14, 17
- Barmasai, Rose 175-177
- Bible
 - African Christianity 86-87
 - colonisation 86
 - and gender 58, 86, 102, 105, 107-110, 139-140, 149, 189
 - interpretation 137-139, 149, 156, 171, 181
 - misuse 69
 - translation 111, 135-136
- "biologically male" 177, 180
- Bloom's revised taxonomy 141-144
- Brown, Janet 35
- Bwana Loubser Sending Mission 172-173

C

- Chebet, Dorcas 178
- Chemorion, Edith 178
- Cherop, Beatrice 179
- Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians 73-74, 85, 115, 147, 183, 188
 - gender 73-74, 78
 - HIV 74
- Clinical Pastoral Care and Counselling programme (HIV&AIDS) 36

Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women 160

Creation 95-97, 102, 116, 123, 127, 149

curriculum

- alignment 143
- development 18, 20-21, 33-34, 36, 40, 60, 135
- effectiveness 37, 42
- gender 50, 135
- NetACT 33, 35-36, 40
- RITT 172, 176, 179
- theological 165, 167, 175
- transformation 166

D

- Dekker, Gerard 18
- discrimination 94, 98, 136, 159-160, 164
 - gender-based 35, 160
- du Preez, Kruger 21, 33

E

economics 94, 152, 164

F

- Fall, the 96-98, 102
- feminism 56, 89-90, 107, 138, 147, 149-150, 156, 159, 178, 181, 186-188, 190

G

gender

- bias 38, 113
- and the Bible 86-88, 90-91, 95, 105, 108, 110
- complementarity 93, 95, 101, 136
- definition 105
- equality 15, 18, 20-21, 25, 33-34, 68, 85-92, 95-96, 98-100, 105-110, 112-113, 131, 133-134, 136-137, 153, 166, 172, 185
- equity 33, 40, 79, 85, 114, 159, 162
- of God 108, 117
- and HIV&AIDS 154-155
- impact of culture 111-112, 132, 140
- issues 131-132
- justice 74, 81-82, 150, 159-163, 165, 167
- in the media 150-151
- and poverty 151
- representation 26, 150-151
- number of students 27, 32
- staff qualifications 27, 31

roles 53, 58, 105, 132, 185, 190
stereotypes 148, 155, 165
studies 58, 85, 87-88, 91, 106-107, 134, 137,
139-141, 144, 165, 180
theology 86, 102
transformation 159, 165
and work 153

gender-based violence
and gender complementarity 101-102
and the Bible 39, 93, 95, 98, 189
in marriages 102
in southern Africa 93-94, 154
in sub-Saharan Africa 93
masculinities 75
physical abuse 93
reasons 94
tolerated 156

gender-responsive ministry 165-168

globalisation 72, 152-154, 189

Greyling, Christo 19

Guyer, Janet 20

H

Hartgerink, Ron 18

HIV&AIDS

and faithfulness 38, 46
and poverty 38, 46
impact 37, 44
NetACT curriculum 35-37, 40
pandemic 34, 39-40, 155
programmes 18-19, 33-35, 37, 41-42
HIV-positive students 37, 43-44

human dignity 15, 68, 70

husbands 15, 38, 46-47, 54, 57, 62-70, 85-86, 88, 95,
97-102, 125, 136, 138, 154-156, 164, 176-177, 194

I

ideological orientation 113

image of God 61, 68, 70, 95-96, 102, 108, 161, 166,
193

inculturation 50, 52-53

K

Kasambala, Amon 17, 19

Kenya 16, 21, 26, 28-32, 41-47, 64, 77, 85-89, 171-174,
177, 183

M

Malawi 15, 17-19, 21, 26, 28-32, 34-35, 37, 40-47,
61-62, 64, 105-107, 112, 115, 172

marriage 46, 52, 56, 93-95, 97-98, 100, 102, 124, 131,
151, 188, 190, 192-193

masculinities 74-75

African masculinities 75, 79
African resources 80, 152
gender-based violence 75-76, 79, 82
hegemonic 57-58, 108
HIV 75-76, 79, 82
multiple masculinities 57
religion 75-76
sexuality 75, 82
social transformation 75, 81-82
societal constructs 75

Mayers's matrix 139-140, 145

missional church 14, 18, 21

N

Namibia 132

abuse 94
legislation 94
Windhoek 93

NetACT 13-21, 25, 27, 33-45, 115, 131, 134, 141

Njoroge, Peris 177

O

ordination

cultural context 181
of women 85, 107, 162, 180, 184

orphans 15, 19, 37-38, 46-47, 152, 155

P

patriarchy 34, 40, 57, 59, 72, 75-76, 85, 91-92, 110,
112, 123-124, 133, 148-149, 156, 161, 163, 165, 179,
185, 190, 193

Pauw, Martin 16, 18

politics of exclusion 72, 152, 157

poverty 94, 131, 145, 149, 151-152, 185, 193

power 85, 90, 100, 102, 148-149

privilege 148-149

R

rape scripts 156

Reformed Church in Zimbabwe 13, 159,
161-162, 165-166

Reformed Church of East Africa 26, 28-29,
171-185

**Reformed Institute for Theological
Training** 17, 28-32, 41-47, 171-172, 174-182

Reformed Mission League 173, 175, 178, 180

religious studies 71-74, 77-81

African women scholars 73-74
 gender 72-73
 HIV 78
 male dominance 72
 masculinities as research focus 78-79
 social transformation 73-75, 79, 81, 95, 103

S

Scripture *See* Bible

second shift 153

sexual violence 49-60, 156
 against women 56-57
 Bible 58
 and the church 51-53
 and culture 52-55, 59, 94
 curriculum 58
 definition 56
 international statistics 50-51
 male vs female aggressors/victims 51, 56, 58
 pastors 53
 patriarchy 59
 power 54-58, 100, 132-133, 154, 156, 159
 training on 53, 58

Shona culture 159, 163-164

sin 95-98, 102, 110, 163

spirituality 164

story telling 61, 70, 80, 87, 108, 150-151, 155,
 188-190

St. Paul's University 66, 172, 174-181, 183-184,
 187

submission 101, 112, 115

T

teaching gender

African perspective 91, 107, 117, 128, 181
 challenges 88, 90, 113, 141, 180-181
 hermeneutical approach 90, 137-139
 responsibility of seminaries 16, 59, 95,
 102-103, 112-114, 131-132, 134-135, 138-139, 141,
 144, 166
 role of the Bible 86-91, 95, 107-108, 110, 135, 171
 taxonomic approach 141-145

'texts of terror' 98, 115, 155-156, 189

1 Timothy 2:11-15 96-97, 99, 109, 115-117,
 120-121, 125-127, 135, 138-139
 allegorical reading 125-127
 theological thrust 116-117

togetherness 182

transformational leadership 166-167

U

United Nations Development Fund for
 Women 161

V

van Wolde, Ellen 123

violence *See also* gender-based violence
 culture of 156

W

widowhood 61-66, 68-70, 193

children 67
 church 65, 68-70
 cleansing 63
 cultural practices 63-69
 finances 64, 152
 isolation 65, 69
 pastoral care 70
 power 63
 societal repositioning 67
 taboo 61
 theology 68-69

wives 13, 27, 30, 49, 54, 57, 63-64, 67, 86, 93, 95,
 97-98, 100-103, 109, 120, 151, 155-156, 159, 161,
 164-165, 174, 193
 submission of 100-101

women

exploitation 95
 in the gospels 98-99, 109
 role models 111
 serving as pastors 26, 29, 157
 solidarity with 69
 subjugation of 95, 97, 100, 102, 110, 112, 136

women's rights 94, 109, 159-161, 165

Z

Zimbabwe 159-163, 165

Men in the pulpit, women in the pew? Addressing gender inequality in Africa is that rarest of gems – a work that takes a fresh look at familiar biblical teachings, and cause us to question what we have been accepting as a matter of course for so long. It is an innovative blend of culture, theology, and education viewed through a gendered lens. This book is the first of its kind to take into account the fullness of the African experience. I expect that it will profoundly change the way we teach theology and gender in African context.

Bettina Wyngaard

Gender Desk Coordinator: False Bay Diocese

Men in the pulpit, women in the pew? offers a full coverage of contemporary issues of gender. It is a must-read for all Christians and an eye-opener to the realities that surround us. Christians in leadership positions will find it especially useful as a concise evaluation of what believers hear and see being promoted in the church.

This book should be treated as a handbook for all leaders, Christian or not, because it stresses the importance of gender equality in our communities. Simply put, the book shows the reader that gender equality is the best way of dealing with most of the injustice around us, especially while HIV&AIDS continues to cause so much pain and suffering.

Maggie Madimbo

Dean of Admissions, African Bible College, Lilongwe (Malawi)

