

THE CIRCLE OF CONCERNED AFRICAN WOMEN
THEOLOGIANS, HIV AND THE BIBLE

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BY

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The vision of Christ that thou dost see
Is my vision's greatest enemy.
Thine has a great hook nose like thine;
Mine has a snub nose like to mine.
Thine is the Friend of all Mankind;
Mine speaks in parables to the blind.
Thine loves the same world that mine hates;
Thy heaven doors are my hell gates.
Socrates taught what Meletus
Loath'd as a nation's bitterest curse,
And Caiaphas was in his own mind
A benefactor to mankind.
Both read the Bible day and night,
But thou read'st black where I read white.

from the Everlasting Gospel (1818) by William Blake (1757-1827)

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Acknowledgments

It was at the beginning of 2010 that I bought the book *Grant Me Justice! HIV/AIDS and Gender Readings of the Bible* edited by Musa Dube and Musimbi Kanyoro (2004). Although my interests in the book were mainly centred around gender readings of the Bible, my interest surrounding the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians and their work regarding HIV and AIDS and the Bible came about when my supervisor pointed it out to me that this book was a part of a series of books published by the Circle. It was in reading this series of books and other articles surrounding the writers within the Circle that my final thesis topic came into view. Originally my thesis was much broader, focussing on theological work done by theologians within the Circle, however my supervisor suggested that I focus on biblical work done by biblical scholars within the Circle. It was this development that finally gave a coherent focus to my thesis.

I have quite a list of people to thank for this thesis. Firstly, I would like to thank ANHERTHA (African Network of Higher Education in Religion, Theology, HIV and AIDS) who provided me with funding for my studies. My studies were originally geared more towards feminism and gender studies, however I felt that my academic direction was a bit vague. When my supervisor approached me, with the news that ANHERTHA was providing me with a bursary for study and that I had to gear my work towards HIV and AIDS, I was both excited and afraid as my knowledge of HIV and AIDS was much more limited than it is today.

Which leads me to the next two people I would like to thank; Prof. Beverley Haddad and Ms. Bongzi Zengele who ran the THEO830 – The Church and AIDS course. Although, I did my masters through thesis only, my supervisor suggested that because of my limited exposure to work in the field of HIV and AIDS I should also attend the THEO830 course. The course covered many aspects of HIV and AIDS. Dr. Cindi Stephen was one of the guest speakers in THEO830. Dr. Stephen works in HIV and AIDS in Paediatrics at Grey's Hospital in Pietermaritzburg. She discussed how HIV functions on a genetic level, how HIV is spread, how HIV makes a person sick, how AIDS develops and what medicinal treatments are

available and how these medicines work to treat HIV and AIDS. Throughout the course we discussed a large amount of issues surrounding HIV and AIDS, including: global and local impact from economic, political and spiritual perspectives; cultural implications of HIV and AIDS; stigma and discrimination; and also how gender, masculinity and sexuality constructs impact and are impacted upon by HIV and AIDS. Our class, alongside CHART (The Collaborative for HIV and AIDS, Religion and Theology) and New Start: The HIV Counselling and Testing Centre hosted a voluntary HIV and AIDS testing and awareness campaign that ran from 6 to 8 September 2010 on the Commerce lawn at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal. I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Gerald West, in guiding me through a difficult and challenging dissertation. Your encouragement helped me get some focus and scope to my work which has developed over two years from something rather haphazard to a much more focussed piece. My thanks also goes out to Professor Sarojini Nadar who read parts of my work offering me critical feedback, especially regarding my research proposal.

I would like to thank my best friend, Erin Fourie, who despite having to deal with South African Idols helped me at all hours of the night making copies of journal articles, bringing snacks at midnight and would listen to me prattling on about my thesis till the small hours of the morning. I would like to thank my friend, Sita Moyo, for reading some of my work and giving me some feedback and often giving me a healthy distraction from my work... in the form of coffee so strong it could cripple a buffalo. I would like to thank T.J. Tallie, an old and new friend, for letting me bounce random ideas off you from time to time and just having the time to chat. Your input has been invaluable to my work. To all three of you, you perhaps do not realize how much you have helped me in this, but I want you to know that you have my thanks and love.

Most of all, I would like to thank my mother, Jacqueline. It would seem foolish of me to thank you for absolutely everything, but I do. Thank you for keeping me company throughout all of this. You've seen me obsess over this. You've seen my cry over this. I have held you captive till about five o'clock one morning just reading large pieces of this to you. Thank you for all your help. Thank you for support and helping me change my surname and helping me break free from the things that tie us down. These are just the beginning days. We are only starting to become free.

Chapter 1: Introduction

In a time when HIV and AIDS is a reality for many people in South Africa, liberation and liberation theologies cannot simply be a historical moment drawing a line through history whereby injustice and suffering lie on one side and justice and wellbeing lie on the other. It must be better understood that liberation and liberation theologies are an ongoing process that constantly dialogue not only with themselves and their contemporary disciplines, but also with theologies that work along more conservative lines. My interest in the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (The Circle) for the purposes of this thesis is based on their focus on the issue of HIV and AIDS and how they bring various different ideological approaches, particularly their theoretical interpretive features, into dialogue with the context of HIV and AIDS. Because this thesis falls under the umbrella of biblical studies, my focus will therefore fall on selected biblical scholars from within the Circle, their biblical work and how they use the Bible in formulating their approach to working with HIV and AIDS.

I am a middle-class, white, South African man who has lived, worked and studied in the city of Pietermaritzburg my whole life. I was abused as a child by my step-father for nineteen years. I also witnessed the abuse of my mother and grandmother and a multitude of others in that time. Hegemonic and patriarchal violence in my culture and community (and even beyond) is not rare or unique and my experiences are not peculiar or exceptional, but it is exactly because it is normative that it needs to be addressed. My focus on the Bible is mostly due to having gained interest in why it is that the Bible is so often used to reinforce abuse, violence and concepts patriarchy. My focus in these matters is obviously oriented to reading the Bible along more liberationist lines.

There is an underlying thread that connects various liberation theologies, such as African feminist theologies, inculturation theologies, postcolonial theologies and queer theologies. This thesis is particularly interested in the theological frameworks in approaching biblical interpretation and exegesis and theoretical frameworks and interpretive features used to

read the Bible. Although not the central focus of this thesis, the understanding of how these frameworks interconnect not only with each other, but with an array of meta-theoretical, sub-theoretical and methodological strata in socio-theological thought is an important and ongoing theme in my academic studies and will therefore contribute a great deal to this thesis. I think that liberation theologies all approach problems that they face in different ways, but may with collaboration reach similar if not congruent resolutions.

This thesis is primarily concerned with the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, although for the purposes of this thesis I have focussed on the work done by selected biblical scholars from the Circle. I have focussed on African women who resonated particularly with my work. The two main biblical scholars I have chosen to work with are Musa Dube (Botswana) and Sarojini Nadar (South Africa). I have spent a great deal of this dissertation dealing with these two scholars, over others, because of my particular interest in their work and their work's relevance to this dissertation. Their focus on the Bible and HIV and the sheer volume of their work that makes use of arguments and frameworks that appeal to me and my work have been invaluable. I have also chosen to look at articles written by Denise Ackermann (South Africa), Dorothy Akoto (Ghana) and Patricia Bruce (South Africa). Although, I had not worked in as much detail with their work, the inclusion of their work provided a vital addition to the body of this dissertation, particularly because of their unique biblical and theoretical insights. The main research question is:

What research tools and theoretical resources can be ascertained from analysing how certain biblical scholars within the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians engage with the Bible in the Context of HIV and AIDS in Africa from a Gendered Perspective?

The sub questions I want to explore include:

- i. How is the Bible being used by biblical scholars within the Circle in the context of HIV and AIDS?
- ii. To what extent do gender, feminism and masculinity studies play a role in the interpretation process of the selected biblical scholars' approach to the Bible?

iii. Are there unifying interpretive features and theoretical frameworks that underlie this scholarly work that can offer us new ways of reading the Bible in South Africa that keep in mind the context of HIV and AIDS as well as the role that gender plays?

My first objective is therefore to examine and define, specifically, the various interpretive features used by the biblical scholars I have chosen in interfacing with the Bible in the context of HIV and AIDS. The work by Gerald West (2009) and Jonathan Draper (2002), in uncovering the tri-polar way in which people read texts (what Draper calls "contextual exegesis"), is particularly important in this regard as it gives shape not only to my own meta-theoretical framework, but also to the way that I will analyse the work by the scholars I have selected.

My second objective is to examine the context of HIV and AIDS in Africa from the perspective of these biblical scholars while being mindful of the issue of gender. Because of the HIV and AIDS component to this thesis I have consulted a lot of work done by UNAIDS and the World Health Organization, as these organizations are probably at the forefront of statistical analysis of the spread and impact of HIV.

My third objective is to highlight trends in interpretive features at play within the theoretical frameworks of these scholars that arise from the context of reading the Bible in dialogue with HIV and AIDS and gender. Because of the complex nature of gender studies, including issues of social structures such as patriarchy, issues of masculinity, issues of sexuality and others, scholars like Elias Bongmba (2007), David Clines (1995), Judith Butler (1990 and 2004) and Ken Stone (1996 and 2005) provide useful categories and theories to make gender work more tangible, and which will allow me to bring patriarchal or status quo frameworks and liberation frameworks into dialogue with each other. In this way I can see how the various frameworks employed by the scholars interface with patriarchal structures and imbalances of power.

Because this thesis is so concerned with the theoretical frameworks at play within the work of these biblical scholars, it becomes necessary to look at the tri-polar approach and the three individual poles, this model of understanding how the Bible (and arguably other texts) are approached by readers.

The first pole is what Draper calls "Contextualization", the process by which the reader assesses their context in the light of the text (Draper 2002: 16). West notes that this is the process through which the reader analyses their "situation as a reader/hearer" (West 2009: 252). This process involves the use of "sociological, economic and anthropological tools" in order to look at an individual, group or society that is reading or hearing a text (2009: 252). Although HIV and AIDS is the main focus here, the issue of gender cannot be ignored. Adriaan van Klinken in his master's thesis points out that there are very few male theologians who focus on HIV and AIDS (2006: 7). Consequently, because, so many women theologians (and in this case biblical scholars) focus on HIV and AIDS, the conversation has taken on feminist characteristics. Van Klinken notes that female scholars approach HIV and AIDS in "a very socially engaged way, inspired by a practical involvement in the epidemic and in women-issues, understanding their reflections [require] some insight in the context in which they are working" (2006: 7). Gender, in the process of this contextualization, doesn't become a subsidiary issue in contextualizing HIV and AIDS, but a core issue which introduces elements of feminist, inculturation and postcolonial tools for understanding the context in which HIV and AIDS operates in a society.

The second pole is what Draper calls "Distantiation" (Draper 2002: 17). The important issue for Draper here is for the scholar to, "gain 'critical distance' from the text, to suspend what s/he previously understood the text to mean, to open her/himself up to new understandings which may contradict her/his pre-suppositions," and thereby the, "reader [lets] the text be other than her/himself, to be strange, unexpected, even alienating" (2002: 17). West notes that this process is "letting the text be other" (West 2009: 252). The methodological tools being used here range from socio-historical, to rhetorical, to literary, to structural.

The third pole is what Draper calls "Appropriation" (Draper 2002: 18). For West, appropriation is the mediator between contextualization and distantiation, or, context and text (West 2009: 252). West in his analysis of Draper illustrates that, "while our faith context is an important aspect of our contexts, so too are our cultural, socio-economic, and class contexts. So for Draper a theological connection between text and context is not enough; there must also be an ideological connection" (2009: 253). Draper writes, we "are pre-disposed by our own social, economic, political and cultural contexts to read in a certain way" (2002: 16). Draper goes on to challenge the notion that there is a "neutral" reading of the Bible (2002: 16). It is within the understanding of appropriation that we begin to understand that the Bible is not self-evident, but that the reader places themselves within a particular framework within the text. Draper says, "We have to make choices in our reading of the text" (2009: 256). As South Africans, for example, we are constantly reading the Bible in the context of Apartheid and post-Apartheid. Similarly, when we read of injustice we cannot help but bring our personal experiences of injustice into the process of interpretation. Rape and gender violence is a reality for many South Africans. Draper mentions the biblical story of the rape of Tamar. Draper notes that we read these texts, "against the fundamental axis of liberation, love and justice" (2002: 18).

Because of this it becomes important for both West and Draper that we become aware and take ownership of our ideo-theological orientation. West writes that all people would prefer to think of their own interpretations as "immanent or essential" rather than something that is "constructed" (West 2009: 257). The process of interpretation in this light highlights the fact that we as readers approach the Bible from different perspectives. We read the Bible along different ideo-theological strands or trends. There are certainly dispossessory and genocidal (Draper 2002: 18) trends within the Bible that could be interpreted as supporting empire and colonisation and legitimating oppressive and patriarchal theologies, however there are also liberatory strands that run through the Bible. When we understand that our choices in reading along a particular strand are constructed, then we can also see that the very same trends within the text are constructed. West argues that, "not only [is] social location not self-evident, neither [is] the Bible's basic design" (2009: 258). It is in owning up

to this process and owning this process that new skills and resources in biblical scholarship can open up whereby we can ask new questions and find new answers.

The application of the tri-polar approach in this thesis occurs in differentiating between the various interpretive features inherent in the work of the biblical scholars I will be working with. The tri-polar approach aids this thesis by differentiating between the various interpretive features inherent in the world of the biblical scholars I will be working with, identifying how the Circle scholars describe their own interpretive approaches. These categories are etic and arise particularly out of similar analyses and tools used by Gerald West (2010) in looking at how scholars work with scriptural texts. This allows for an analysis of the interpretive approaches as identified by the Circle scholars in their own work, while using the tri-polar framework as a preliminary means of comparative analysis. For instance, I have structured the chapters that deal with their work in such a way that discusses their interpretive framework first, by looking at what meta-theoretical frameworks are being used by the various scholars. Secondly, looking at what methodologies they use to analyse text and context. Lastly, looking at what theological orientations they use to bring text and contexts into conversation. Although these overarching categories are etic arising from the use of the tri-polar approach, they identify the emic interpretive frameworks, methodological tools and theological orientations as represented by the Circle scholars I have chosen to work with.

Chapter 2: HIV and AIDS in South Africa, the Role of Biblical Studies and the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians

"This is a fitting role for an institution that began in an area of freed slaves with the aim of meeting development and social justice needs." (Musa Dube 2003b)

I am not going to spend a great deal of time on the context of HIV in South Africa here as each of the biblical scholars I will be dealing with contribute towards contextualizing issues of HIV and AIDS within African frameworks in their own work. In this chapter, I will be looking at a more statistical context of HIV and AIDS in South Africa, while moving onto the role of biblical studies in South Africa and then the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians.

2.1) HIV and AIDS in South Africa

Here are a few statistics regarding HIV and AIDS just to get a scope of the scale of HIV and AIDS in South Africa. For this purpose I have consulted the UNAIDS 2010 Global Report. Upon reading the UNAIDS Global Report I found it interesting that South Africa is mentioned no less than ninety four times throughout the document. "With an estimated 6.5 million [5.4 million - 5.8million] people living with HIV in 2009, South Africa's epidemic remains the largest in the world" (UNAIDS 2010: 28). The context of HIV and AIDS within South Africa is a dire one and impacts every individual person in South Africa, whether infected or affected. One particular aspect of HIV and AIDS is the way it disproportionately affects women and children. Social attitudes towards women have made women more vulnerable to infection. "A 2010 study in South Africa confirmed the association between violence and HIV infection. Power inequity in relationships and intimate partner violence increased the incident risk of HIV infection among young South African women" (UNAIDS 2010: 136). "AIDS is the largest cause of maternal mortality in South Africa and also accounts for 35% of deaths in children younger than five years" (UNAIDS 2010: 29).

South Africa has been somewhat active in fighting the spread of HIV infection. There has been an "80% coverage of treatment of mother-to-child transmission of HIV" (UNAIDS 2010: 10) and "In South Africa, more than 970 000 people are now enrolled in antiretroviral therapy" (UNAIDS 2010: 109). Movements like Caprisa (Centre for the AIDS Programme of Research in South Africa) which is one of the UNAIDS collaborating centres in South Africa (Caprisa 2008) are active in South Africa working towards independent AIDS research. Caprisa is a non-profit organization that is currently involved in the Microbicide Trials Network (Caprisa 2008).

2.2) The Role of Biblical Studies within the Context of HIV and AIDS

It might be a mistake to consider the statistics regarding HIV and AIDS to be properly separate from the theory and theological considerations within this thesis. These statistics do not occur in a context-free vacuum, which is to say that they are not extra-contextual. The impact of HIV and AIDS is definitive. It is something measurable and countable. Although this thesis deals primarily with the social aspects of HIV and AIDS it must also not be forgotten that HIV infection ends in death for a fair percentage of people infected. Even people who manage to live for many years with infection may live in a state of suffering in a medical and physiological sense. So although it is stated, particularly in this thesis, that HIV and AIDS kills people socially and psychologically, the physiological death is not something to be dismissed or forgotten for the purposes of theoretical aesthetics. This is why these statistics are included here.

Although this thesis deals with the social impact of HIV and AIDS, the theoretical and theological considerations are informed by these statistics and are something to be kept in mind when we deal with the Bible. In discussing the Bible in these circumstances, I have drawn on a number of scholars that illustrate the use and need for biblical studies in the

South African context. I begin with Gerald West arguing for the need to engage with the Bible in South Africa from liberatory perspectives. He writes of the importance of the Bible, "because the Bible is a sacred text and because Christians locate themselves in relation to it" (West 2007: 110). West writes that people do not often hear the "full gospel" (2007: 110) from the churches, churches that either fail to act appropriately to the conditions that people face or churches that have become complicit in abuse and victimizing people. But, instead, ironically, people will turn to the Bible, "to hear the good news of Jesus Christ" (2007: 110). Of course, a narrow moral perspective in approaching the Bible can be equally as detrimental, but as West suggests, it is the Bible can also be read from the perspective of liberation. Liberatory readings of the Bible become important because of the Bible's status in Africa and because it has often been a source of hope for people.

2.3) The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians in response to the context of HIV and AIDS

Musimbi Kanyoro (2004), speaking of the Circle's education process says, "Our contribution serves to educate our societies, to advocate for justice through theology and Scriptures and to empower women to confront the pandemic through a better understanding of the foundation of their faith as presented in the Bible" (Kanyoro 2004: viii).

She argues that if justice is the central theme of the Bible, then new ways of reading the Bible needs to be extracted from the text in the light of the abuse and victimization of women. Women do not fall victim to the abuse and marginalization of men because of "inherent physical or psychological weaknesses" (Kanyoro 2004: viii), but rather because of socially constructed gender imbalances. Critical readings of the Bible in Africa, provide us with tools and arguments that allow us to challenge structures of abuse and systems that lead women into states of vulnerability. "The texts of the Bible continually show that resisting injustice is God's option and it must become our option in the face of HIV and AIDS" (Kanyoro 2006: ix).

The argument for conservative morality becomes problematic in this situation where women are not engaging in risky sexual behaviour but are made vulnerable because of culture, religion and social situations that afford women a lower status than that of men (Kanyoro 2006: ix). This sort of ethical construction is often labelled as ethics "from above", which is to suggest that these ethical and moral statements are made by authority (from above) as totally prescriptive without understanding the contextual situation in which these women live. Kanyoro notes that change is possible if given "sufficient attention, commitment and resources" and "leadership [from the church] and determination" (2006: ix).

These liberal readings of the Bible offer a network of resources within the text that speaks to people living with HIV, women, children and the marginalized. In addition to adding stories of resistance, a source of identification and messages of hope and encouragement, the Bible offers women tools of resistance (Kanyoro 2006: xi), solidarity (2006: xii) and offer structures to bring change into the lives of women (2006: xiii). Contextual biblical study, a particular form of liberatory hermeneutics, has shown to be empowering. In one contextual Bible study done by Gerald West and Phumzile Zondi-Mabizela in working with women through the story of the Rape of Tamar in II Samuel 13v1-22, they write:

Women felt that the story of Tamar was empowering because it was a story in the Bible and therefore could be used in the church and community to break the silence surrounding rape and abuse. We must accept abuse as a reality, they said, and learn to listen to those who claim to have been abused, particularly our children. Women also felt that much more could be done by the legal system, police, hospitals, etc to support and protect women (West and Zondi-Mabizela 2004: 5).

Here we can see a contextual biblical reading that not only pushes for change within the church but within a larger society. West and Zondi-Mabizela write that texts like the story of Tamar are not often read in churches and churches do not want to deal with texts that speak of abuse and rape, but contextual Bible studies like this can offer a voice to women to speak out about abuse. This is where the Circle of Concerned African Woman Theologians

becomes so important. The Circle was founded by Mercy Amba Oduyoye in 1988 (Kanyoro 2006: 19) and inaugurated in 1989 at Trinity College, Legon, Ghana. Their original concern was that there was a severe shortage of literature written by African women (www.thecirclecawt.org 2007) particularly literature of theological significance (Kanyoro 2006: 19).

The sphere of expertise of the Circle in this regard has expanded significantly, now not only encompassing theology and culture, but also addressing issues such as "rites of passages, violence against women, and now HIV/AIDS" (www.thecirclecawt.org 2007) among others. The Circle has gone beyond merely doing research and publication and also begun working actively in communities. A centre for women, religion and culture has been established in Accra, Ghana and a women's resource centre was established in Lumuru, Kenya (www.thecirclecawt.org 2007). The Circle has the following mission statement:

To undertake research and publish theological literature written by African women with special focus on religion and culture.

The Circle is the space for women from Africa to do communal theology. Musa Dube, one of the Circle theologians, asserts that "... a circle of women describes those who are seated together, who are connected and who seek to keep the interconnectedness of life.

The Circle members are women who are rooted in Islam, Christianity, Judaism and African Indigenous Religions. They are indigenous African women and also African women of Asiatic and European origins. These concerned women are engaged in theological dialogue of the cultures, religions, sacred writings and oral stories that shape the African context and define the women of this continent. The Circle members attempt to reflect together on justice across boundaries of gender, faith and belief (www.thecirclecawt.org 2007).

Because of the multifaceted nature of the Circle I want to briefly look at the theoretical frameworks, methodological tools and theological orientations within the Circle. These aspects include HIV and AIDS and the role that gender plays in Circle theology.

Musa Dube, in her work directly concerned with the Circle and the Circle and their work in HIV and AIDS, begins her approach to HIV and AIDS by looking firstly at theology itself and what theology means. She notes the difficulty in finding a coherent theology that people can agree with (Dube 2003b). She does note that there is a lot of disagreement regarding a single definition of theology, but this is what she writes:

Theology is a reflection on the Divine Being within a particular context, people, time and within a certain framework of belief. It is a search for the Divine will and revelation within the lives of a people in their given circumstances. When we define theology from a Christian point of view, we may say it is the interpretation of biblical scriptures for contemporary meaning. It follows that there will/should be many theologies depending on who is reflecting, on their particular contexts, circumstances and their framework of faith in God (Dube 2003b).

Because of this heavily contextual and subjective nature of theology there has been a rise in many different contextualized theologies, such as; "liberation theology, African theology, black theology, women's theology, feminist theology, Asian theology, Contemporary theology, Catholic and Protestant theology (and also many theologies that do not identify themselves)" (Dube 2003b). For Dube the Circle's African (feminist) theology arises out of a situation that places a lot of emphasis on Africa, its culture and its religion. It arises out of the voices from below, from the voices of the people, the poor, the oppressed, the marginalized and abused.

At the Ways Ahead on Ecumenical Theological Education Conference in Limuru, Kenya, in 2003, Musa Dube was a speaker. In her speech formulating her own theological framework (Dube 2003b) describes the theological framework for the Circle. She writes that because God created the world as good, and declared that the world and everything in it was good, that all life is sacred. Every person is created in that space regardless of "color, gender, class, race, religion, ethnicity, health status, age, [and] sexual orientation" (2003b). God loves and values every person. Each person is therefore afforded human dignity and equal

access to resources. All things are created in balance and when this balance is thrown off when people are denied their human dignity and "God's will is disregarded" (2003b). Dube defines evil as that which occurs when "balance, the goodness, the image of God is violated in creation" (2003b). Human beings can only live up to their full potential as "co-creators" with God when they ensure the wellbeing of the whole earth and to maintain balance. The church is responsible to the world in this regard because of its place in society. For Dube, God is revealed through the "Holy Spirit and the prophets that rise among us" (2003b).

Dube's concern in this regard is theological education within in the Circle and within other African institutions, seminaries and universities that work with the Circle. I have concentrated on her work in theological education particularly because her process in defining the Circle's work in theological education also outlines the Circle's process in theological sociological analysis, anthropological frameworks and biblical hermeneutics. Her concern here is how HIV and AIDS complicates the definition of theology, how HIV and AIDS impacts on the theological frameworks set out by her in regards to the Circle.

She notes that HIV and AIDS's impact on the world has been so severe that we have to act appropriately. She says that HIV and AIDS is not merely an African disease. Even though HIV and AIDS is centralized in Africa, its global reach impacts on a far larger scale, impacting on global economics and is in return impacted upon by many other forces including war, poverty and gender inequality (Dube 2003b), and because of its pervasive intrusion into every aspect of our lives, every part of the human experience is affected:

[It affects] the spiritual, mental, political, cultural, social, economical and psychological areas. It affects everything and everyone. It questions the very fabric of our existence and calls for rethinking and research on what we have always taken for granted—and theological education is not an exception (Dube 2003b).

Because of this contextually widespread nature of HIV and AIDS there needs to be a development of specialized approaches to HIV and AIDS that do not only look at individual

morality, but at larger social frameworks and ask why it is that HIV and AIDS has the impact on our society in the way it does.

One way in which the Circle addresses the impact of HIV and AIDS is in its questioning of why it is that HIV and AIDS affects men and women differently, and so many children above and beyond that.

Because of the sexual nature of HIV and AIDS and that one of its major methods of spreading is through physical sexual intercourse, in order to understand HIV and AIDS's impact, we need to understand the gendered influence behind transmission, how men and women are made vulnerable to infection and how culture plays a role (Dube 2003b).

One problem is raised by Dube in this regard is that many theological institutions, seminaries and universities have treated gender like a "novelty" (Dube 2006b) and have not really taken it seriously even though there has been nearly half a century of advances in feminist thought. Dube notes of how she's been told by heads of departments to "stop this gender nonsense", and "this was an excellent workshop, but you almost spoiled it with your gender nonsense" (2003b). For Dube, theological resistance to gender work and education has actually promoted the spread of HIV and AIDS (2003b). Within the Circle there is an understanding of the importance of studying feminism, understanding how gender functions, and introducing previously neglected masculinity studies, for instance.

Oduyoye, dealing specifically with masculinity in her article on the Circle's website that deals with the focus areas of the Circle (Oduyoye 2007) states, that men derive power by "associating masculinity with God" (2007). Therefore there arose a problem when dealing with violence against women in the face of masculinity. Therefore by giving God a feminine face, the concept of gender violence can be separated from God and feminine identity in God can allow for criticism in that regard.

One important issue for Oduyoye was exposing harm and injustices in the face of gender injustice through theological engagement and speaking openly about gender. "Silence is no longer an option where women theologians are concerned" (Oduyoye 2007). There is a call by Oduyoye for breaking this silence around gender and the "denial of women's agency" (2007). There is a call for breaking patriarchal biblical interpretation that seeks to undermine the wellbeing and dignity of women and victimise them with regards to abuse and make them vulnerable to infection. When women are absent or silent in the text there is a call for asking why this is. She makes use of story-telling as a tool for giving women voice in the text again.

In having dealt briefly (by way of introduction) with HIV and AIDS, the Circle and the Bible, I want now to move onto looking at more negative social and theological frameworks that surround HIV and AIDS and how these frameworks play out to create harmful circumstances that victimize people who are vulnerable to infection and also people who are already infected.

Chapter 3: Systems of Stigma, Retribution, Patriarchy and Models of Masculinity

In this section I want to look at the systems of stigma, retribution, patriarchy and models of masculinity that inform biblical interpretation in the church and society, and how these forces work together to create systems of inequality, injustice and vulnerability; concepts I consider important in the context of HIV and AIDS. I include these concepts as they form an important part of my theoretical and conceptual framework.

3.1) Retribution and Stigma

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Galatians 6v7 (KJV)

The first concept I want to deal with is that of retribution. And it is one of the most successful theological mindsets to have been transmitted throughout the church. This is the idea that God is vengeful and always on the lookout for vengeance. It becomes important therefore to analyse how the Bible is used in order to understand how people are made vulnerable either to HIV infection or to stigma if already infected.

Gillian Paterson writes:

For a contextual theologian, says Stephen Bevans, two basic theological orientations or perspectives are available: [Firstly] the creation-centered. 'A creation-centered orientation,' says Bevans, 'sees the world as sacramental, the place where God reveals God's self. It is characterized by the conviction that culture and human experience are generally good. Grace built on nature, but only because nature is capable of being built on.'

[Secondly] A redemption-centered theology, by contrast, 'is characterized by a conviction that culture and human experience are either in need of radical transformation or in need of total replacement. In this context, grace cannot build on or replace nature, because nature is corrupt. Rather than being a vehicle for God's presence, the world distorts God's reality and rebels against it. Rather than a culture being already holy with the presence of God, Christ must be brought to that culture for that culture to have any saving meaning whatsoever.' (Bevans 1992: 16). How might this distinction affect the way we think theologically about AIDS? (Paterson 2005: 4).

Having linked morality to HIV and AIDS, sin, blame and punishment became a part of the pattern in the church's thinking surrounding HIV and AIDS. "Perceptions of morality were linked to promiscuity, moral transgression, choosing to engage in 'bad' behaviour, and punishment from God" (Parker and Birdsall 2005: 6). People, therefore, having 'chosen' to act against what social values consider to be "normative, appropriate or 'good' behaviour" (2005: 6), people become stigmatized and marginalized. The result is that people become excluded in their communities to the extent that churches have even claimed that they do not have HIV and AIDS in their churches. Because sexual intercourse itself is somewhat of a taboo subject within the church, and because HIV and AIDS is transferred sexually in most cases, gender and sex have become highlighted issues in dealing with HIV and AIDS. Parker and Birdsall write, "Gender was found to be a cross-cutting issue whereby women were 'expected to be sexually faithful, chaste and morally upstanding' and thus, when infected with HIV, there was a greater attribution of blame" (2005: 6).

This polarization of society into people who fit into socially accepted and socially marginalized is normal and apparent in all cultural "meanings and practices", according to Parker and Aggleton (2003: 18), which seek to "enhance social distinctions" throughout all levels of society. Prejudicial distinctions that illustrate bias in favour of one person or group of people over and above another lead to stigmatization of the group that is discriminated against. Stigma is therefore not a hallmark of the person or group being stigmatized but rather a hallmark of a society that discriminates against that person or group based on the

characteristic of that person or group being stigmatized (Paterson 2005: 3). Because of this, stigma is contextual. It is a social phenomenon.

An example given by Paterson notes that in a given context a person's race, age, gender, sexuality, political views, social standing, may be stigmatizing, but may be accepted in another society (2005: 3). "It is by the way that others treat me that you form the judgement that I carry a stigma" (2005: 3). Stigma is the conceptualization that either through identification, participation or association with something that is discriminated against by a given society, a person may face marginalization, neglect, abuse, violence and/or oppression.

I think therefore that stigma and retribution theology should be linked; that there is a connection between the idea of a God who seeks retribution and people marginalising others fearing similar retribution in return. Society uses stigma to enforce hegemony. Hegemony within society is maintained through what Parker and Aggleton (2003: 13) call, "symbolic violence." The idea is that cultural meaning and symbolic systems "words, images and practices" are given values based on the dominant group's interest. Parker and Aggleton write:

With respect to stigmatization and discrimination, such insights are important for several reasons. First, if as Bourdieu argues, all cultural meanings and practices embody interests and signal social distinctions among individuals, groups and institutions, then few meanings and practices do so as clearly and as profoundly as stigma, stigmatization and discrimination. Stigma and discrimination therefore operate not merely in relation to difference (as our reading of both Goffman and Foucault would tend to emphasize), but even more clearly in relation to social and structural inequalities. Second, and even more importantly, stigmatization does not simply happen in some abstract manner. On the contrary, it is part of complex struggles for power that lie at the heart of social life. Put even more concretely, stigma is deployed by concrete and identifiable social actors seeking to legitimize their own dominant status within existing structures of social inequality (2003: 18).

Because of this pervasive interaction between stigma, power, symbolic violence and structures of inequality it becomes clear to see why it is that people who are subjected to stigma and discrimination "accept and even internalize the stigma that they are subjected to. This is precisely because they are subjected to an overwhelmingly powerful symbolic apparatus whose function is to legitimize inequalities of power based upon differential understandings of value and worth" (Parker and Aggleton 2003: 18). The idea becomes transposed from, "You have done wrong, you deserve to suffer" to "I have done wrong, I deserve to suffer." In a society that places the value and interests of some over and above others, systems of blame and stigma become far more complicated because victims of these systems cannot seek justice or help from a system that has already deemed them deserving of their afflictions and incapable of questioning injustice.

3.2) Patriarchy

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Galatians 3v28 (KJV)

Patriarchy becomes a dangerous social structure in the light of retribution and stigma, because it already assumes that some have value and a voice in society and others do not. Patriarchy becomes the context in which redemption theology, stigma and discrimination becomes so damaging. Since the Bible already assumes the apparent position of social stratification that sees men as superior to women, it becomes apparent why societies that read the Bible can so easily justify patriarchy within themselves. This socio-sexual stratification is the legitimising process by which patriarchy becomes branded into the social fabric. Susan Rakoczy writes:

If you or I dislike someone for some reason – an annoying personal habit, their physical appearance, differing opinions or a subject – we can respond in various

ways ranging from avoidance to verbal abuse to physical violence. Our prejudicial attitudes are usually kept at bay by the force of public opinion and good manners.

But things become very different when prejudice is joined to power and becomes an ideology such as racism or anti-Semitism or sexism. Now personal prejudice, e.g. Hitler's hatred of the Jews, becomes Nazism, an ideology of power which determined the lives and deaths of millions of people (Rakoczy 2004: 10).

She notes that androcentrism is the idea that is perpetrated through patriarchy, the idea that men are the archetype of the human being, whereas women are less than the archetype or, "an inferior and deficient type," or even to go so far as to call women, "a divine mistake" (Rakoczy 2004: 11). When we look for examples of biblical patriarchy, the Bible presents a world in which women are portrayed as objects and assets that can be bought and sold. Johanna Stiebert (2004: 82) notes that there are elements in the Bible that not only diminish female experience but even goes to far as to animalise and demonise female sexuality (2004: 87). Stiebert notes that employing female sexuality as a "symbol for evil, a woman reader is forced to identify against herself and accepts both blame and brutal punishment" (2004: 86). However when analysed, imagery (according to Stiebert) presented in Hosea 1-3 is no different from modern day domestic violence (2004: 86). Biblical patriarchy does not only, therefore, create a paradigm in which supremacy is enforced upon women, but also creates a legitimizing argument for violence against women.

In the next section, I want to discuss models of masculinity, because models of oppression of women seems to be related to models of oppression among men, as social constructions of gender and gender stratification are at work in both. As this thesis is concerned with the wellbeing of men and women, I therefore wish to underpin the relatedness of patriarchal models of suppression of men over women and also of men over other men.

3.3) Models of Masculinity

David Clines complicates the matter of socio-sexual stratification as mentioned above, highlighting the stratification of men over men, saying that all men are not necessarily equals in that regard in relation to each other, in that they along with women become stratified within the patriarchal gender spectrum. A few men within society have attained elite social status and the rest have fallen down the gender spectrum, some even below women (Clines 1995: 212). It is this process of inherent value and worth between men and women and promotion and demotion between men that creates a system of abuse and risk in society. Clines outlines what it means to be a man in the modern "west" (1995: 212) as he calls it, although I believe his "five major themes in the construction of masculinity" (1995: 212) can be applied to South Africa equally as much.

Clines quotes J.A. Doyle in his first "rule", saying that men should never, "be female," that this is the "negative touch stone" of what men should be. "Whatever women do is ipso facto what a real man must not do" (Clines 1995: 213). Clines, calls this the "primary rule". Actions and roles perceived as female are dangerous to male social standing and risk a man's position along the gender spectrum. One of my lecturers once used the example of gender as a greased pole that men are constantly trying to climb for fearing of slipping down to the level of women. I believe that actions and roles that are perceived as female are the grease in this instance, the slippery slope that men should avoid in the context of the patriarchal system in which they compete to assume hierarchy over one another.

The second "rule" is that men should be successful in all their endeavours and should be envied by other men. The point is that men learn from an early age, "not to be liked but to be envied,... not to be part of a group but to distinguish himself from the others in the group" (Clines 1995: 213). Acquisition, wealth, sexual conquest, and social prestige all play a role in a man's perception in society.

The third "rule" is that men should be aggressive. "From childbirth, boys are encouraged to be tough, to fight, and not to run away. Competitive sport emphasizes these values, and in many cultures military training reinforces them" (Clines 1995: 213-214). Uli Linke (1992: 1992: 587-588) writes of how men's engendered role in violence is related to their capacity to retain their own masculine blood and spill the blood of others. Women bleed menstrually making them weak, whereas men retain blood making them strong. Men have the capacity to make other men like women by making them bleed. Men can therefore only be considered whole if they remain whole and blood retaining (1992: 587-588). Men, however, should not only retain blood, but have to become, "the one who wields a bloody weapon, making men bloody, shedder of blood, performer of a gory act, slaughterer" (1992: 588).

The fourth "rule" is that men should be sexual. Sex is not so much a part of the male experience, but rather typifies the male experience. Men are supposed to know about sex and be sexually experienced. Young men are encouraged to have sex at younger ages in order to achieve 'man-hood' as soon as possible. Men must be interested in sex at all times. "Sex is not a free choice when you have to perform to be a man" (Clines 1995:214).

The fifth "rule" is that men should sustain themselves in all things and be completely "self-reliant" (Clines 1995: 214). Men cannot rely on others for anything. Confidence, independence and autonomy become the hallmark of a 'real man' (1995: 214). Men cannot need for anything, especially not from a woman. A man's masculinity in the context of the dominant notions of masculinity becomes annealed through tempered self-reliance. A man must never ask for something from a woman, but must take it by force if necessary. Models of masculinity such as these do not only undermine the humanity and struggle of women, but also that of other men, and also spill over into other aspects of the human experience including race, sexuality, class and age. Fortunately, as Clines writes, "There is nothing natural or God-given about these roles. Masculinity, like femininity, is a social construct, the product of historical processes, as much a human construction as the pyramids or pewter" (1995: 214).

3.4) Conclusion

The interplay of stigma, retribution theologies and negative models of masculinity, as I have illustrated above, within the larger framework of patriarchy creates systems of inequality, injustice and vulnerability. In South Africa, where HIV and AIDS is a reality that all South Africans have to live with, these social constructs need to be interrogated aggressively in order to find more positive and liberating biblical interpretations, theoretical frameworks and methodologies. From here on, I want to look at the various biblical scholars I have chosen and how they have done their work within these dominant social structures.

Chapter 4: Musa Dube

"Justice delayed is justice denied." Musa Dube (2004: 4)

Dube was born into a Ndebele family (Feder 2011: 79) and she identifies herself as a black Motswana woman (1997: 11). Dube showed great interest in how biblical texts can be engaged in modern contexts of HIV and AIDS. Stephanie Feder writes that Dube's focus lies specifically in the areas of postcolonialism, feminism, and the context of HIV and AIDS and how these three areas relate to biblical texts and themes (2011: 79). It is particularly these interests of Dube's that I want to examine in the process of looking at her larger theological and theoretical framework.

As mentioned in my methodology my focus is on the theoretical frameworks, methodological tools and theological orientations, having used the tri-polar approach as my primary means of comparative analysis. Dube's theoretical framework and this may be true of many of the Circle's biblical scholars, includes a postcolonial and a feminist contextualization of the text. Her methodological tools in this regard is mainly socio-historical in dealing with both text and context while maintaining somewhat of a narrative approach with regards to the text in some circumstances. Her theological interpretive features surround salvation, justice and liberation surrounding HIV and AIDS and particularly the adage "Talitha Cum" as a call to empower people, particularly women and children in the context of HIV and AIDS.

4.1) Dube's Theoretical Framework

In dealing with Dube's theoretical framework, her contextualization of postcolonialism, feminism and HIV and AIDS, I would argue, are not indistinct from one another, and do not operate apart from one another. Dube tends to be very clear about the subject she is talking about at any given time, but she also relates to the reader that she is working in a larger

context. Whereas the context of this thesis is focussed on gender and HIV and AIDS, Dube's context always relates to postcolonialism in one way or another. She reminds the reader that we are a part of a global context. It is the way that she links the bigger picture (that of postcolonialism and globalization) to the smaller issues (that of interpersonal relationships) that can provide valuable resources for biblical scholars in approaching HIV and AIDS.

Here I want to focus mainly on Dube's postcolonial interpretation. Colonizing texts, for Dube, remain products of a force that seeks to legitimate itself unfairly. They promote relationships of inequality, they are interested in what Dube calls, "expansionist aims" (Dube 1997: 7), they are conservative by nature in as much as they are afraid of change, they promote a foreign authority over and above local authority in terms of travelling teachers and they inevitably "disguise their economic interests under moral claims" (1997: 7). Imperialism becomes the system that seeks to extract resources and exploit alien people (1997: 7).

Christianity, Progress, Democracy, or whatever is the prevailing imperialist version of history demands certain cultures, nations, or chosen races that they subject those who fall radically short of the ideal state. Subject people are "savage," "infantile," "untutored," "backward," or simply "underdeveloped" (Dube 1997: 17).

For Dube the Bible remains "a Western book" (Dube 1997: 23) and a part of an imperialistic movement and its connection to oppression cannot be ignored. There are definite trends in the Bible that create what Dube refers to as "a self serving paradigm of constructing one group as superior to another" (2000: 15). Dube puts a lot of effort into coming to terms with the concept of postcolonial interpretation and how imperialistic texts may "function to justify imperialism" (1997: 16).

Dube begins by looking at how characters are portrayed in literature. Because the Bible functions as a colonizing text, often readers attribute the roles of 'coloniser' and 'colonised' to various characters in the text. The Bible is, in and of itself, very imperialistic, rich with language of kingdom and empire.

The subjugated are depicted as helpless, evil inarticulate, backward, disorganized, lazy, exotic, and babies in need of instruction. Such characters are put side by side with those in control, civilized, Christian, teachers, articulate, literate, and cultivated. The contrast serves to validate the domination of the former by the latter (Dube 1997: 16).

It is so pervasive that even our very concept of 'God' is challenged. Dube interprets Canaan Banana's work in criticizing Christianity, saying that Christian imperial teachings regarding the Bible and the use of the Bible has distorted the view of 'God' to such a degree that a person does not feel wholly belonging to God unless you fully accept the Christian paradigm (Dube 2000: 14). The exploitation of people is so complete and so utterly pervasive that even the most basal instincts and worldviews are seen as flawed when viewed along the lines of Western imperial teachings and worldviews. There may be contrary trends within the Bible and there may be theologies of liberation, but they seem underwhelming in the face of the complete and utter assumption by the forces of colonization. Dube would argue that ignoring this is tantamount to supporting the colonization process (2000: 14).

For Dube, the first step in coming face to face with biblical texts is in looking directly at the forces of colonialism and imperialism at play in the text.

The first thing that Dube deals with is the issue of land and how the Bible was used by Western forces to appropriate land in the name of their God and their Bible. For Dube the issue here is that the land originally belonged to black Africans; the land was taken from them by white men (and she uses the word "men" (Dube 2000: 16) here which I believe was deliberate); finally, the Bible was given to the black Africans. The Bible is full of what Dube calls "powerful rhetorical instruments of imperialism" (2000: 16) and it is these instruments of imperialism that 'allowed' the white man to legitimate their presence, their actions and the conservation of their interests in Africa.

Race is the second issue dealt with by Dube. The white man uses the Bible to legitimate a hierarchy among the different races. White people are rhetorically set up as superior and non-white people are rhetorically set up as inferior. The Bible is full of rhetoric that divides races and nations, labelling the self as 'righteous' and the other as 'corrupt'. The West for Dube has shouldered the role of the righteous and linked the issue to their race. Dube makes an interesting point in another article (Dube 1997: 11f):

What may seem to be a gross misreading and mistaken identities of biblical characters can be contested. Some may link it to the orality of my background. Yet oral societies can read paintings. The image of Jesus was and still is a blue-eyed, blonde, white male, whose benevolent face, along with the likewise white faces of his disciples, still graces our churches today. The image of Mary the mother of Jesus was and is a white woman. The devil was, of course, a black, horned man (I do not know what color he is these days).

The issue becomes one of assumption, and Dube's challenge to Western readers is not to ignore the past's influence on our interpretation of the Bible, so as "to avoid repetition of the victimizing of non-Western races" (Dube 2000: 16).

The third issue is that of power. Black Africans have had power taken away from them and this was geographically reinforced by the loss of their lands and racially enforced through the medium of racism.

The fourth issue is that of the reader of the Bible. Historically speaking there is a definitive trend in how the Bible was read and assumed by various forces legitimating their own struggle for survival or their struggle for dominating others. The Exodus-Canaan event in the Bible is important in the context of postcolonial studies because it suggests that the very core of the Israelite movement was one of imperial colonization in which whole lands were stripped of their native people and repopulated by the Exodus Hebrews, which leads the reader to suggest that "at the heart of biblical belief is an imperialist ideology" (2000: 17). The irony here is that the Exodus Hebrews rejected their own oppression and domination by the Egyptians on one hand, but then on the other hand legitimated their own oppression

and domination as well as extermination of the Canaanites. The Roman Empire, in much the same way, was resisting losing ground to invading forces at the time the New Testament was being written while writing into the New Testament the ideology of imperialism. The context becomes normative to the reader because the idea of conquest and empire has been present in the text since its inception.

The fifth issue is that of the international nature of biblical imperialism and the scope and reach of the Bible. Western readers can not ignore the fact that their interpretation of the Bible has impact beyond their spheres of influence, beyond, "their immediate cultures, continents, or countries" (Dube 2000: 19). The sixth issue is that of contemporary history and Africa's quest for liberation. Dube argues that readers of the biblical text need to understand the effect that history has had, not only on national and larger social spaces, but also within personal spaces and mindsets. She argues that although the countries of Africa may have won their independence, the people are still stuck in imperialist mindsets that benefit the West and not the people of Africa. For Dube it seems that independence is only the beginning. "To read the Bible as postcolonial subjects, therefore, is to participate in the long, uncompleted struggle for liberation of these countries and to seek liberating ways of interdependence" (Dube 2000:19f). The Bible and its use in Africa is directly related to our political, economic and social climates.

The last issue is that of gender and how women on both sides, the West and in this case Africa, are either "subsumed or absent" (Dube 2000: 20). Women in colonial contexts therefore, "not only suffer the yoke of colonial oppression but also endure the burden of two patriarchal systems imposed on them" (2000: 20). Dube suggests that because of this relationship between gender imbalance and the postcolonial context, biblical scholars cannot read postcolonialism separately from gender injustice.

Before dealing with gender, as Dube's model would suggest to be the next step, I want to focus closely on Dube's perception of globalization and the impact that globalization has had on the postcolonial world and how it also relates to gender injustice. Dube interplays

various issues with each other in terms of globalization. Her criticism of globalization is not only an economic discussion but also shows strong elements of feminist thought in how globalization reinforces gender inequality, while relating also to elements of her constant attention to HIV and AIDS and how globalization reinforces the dire conditions people face living with HIV and AIDS. Dube defines globalization as, "the creation of a single market economy, an integration of all into one" (2006a :180). Or alternatively:

It is the compression of the world. Globalization is the compression of time and space, the collapse of national boundaries and governments characterized by policies of privatization and trade liberation. Hence we are told that we are now living in the so-called 'global village,' that is, a compressed world (2003a: 72).

Dube (2003a: 71-75) deliberately complicates the issue of globalization. She notes the apparent paradox of the educated scholar having benefited from globalization and now critiquing globalization. She raises the very important question of how we, theologians and biblical scholars, as the educated, empowered and elite can question the very structures of globalization that enabled us to attain our status. There is consequently this criticism of third world scholars, in that:

[We] ought to be grateful that [we] have been civilized, taught English and sent flying around the world. Instead of being so critical of globalization and placing it in the family of imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism, [we] ought to be thankful that [we] have been redeemed and saved from [our] African village, where [we were] seemingly "stuck" and brought the global village (Paraphrased from the first person in Dube 2003a: 72).

Dube calls this argument "old and outdated" (Dube 2003a: 73), as it only serves the interests of the people who benefit from globalization, whereas those who have become the commodity of globalization are heavily oppressed, victimized and marginalized. People who do not comply with globalization are said to be uncooperative and (to use the unfortunate Americanism) 'not game enough'. The point that Dube makes is that of course there is an obvious benefit for the oppressor, but that which needs to be highlighted here is

the effect that oppression has on the oppressed. Naturally a person who steals resources from another person will inherently benefit from their theft, but the person from who the resources were stolen from will suffer loss. To point out that a person has benefited from globalization without taking cognisance of the suffering that globalization has caused is an unacceptable option. The core of the ongoing debate regarding the benefits and detriments of globalization is that the detriments still outweigh the benefits according to Dube (2003a: 73-74). Profit in the face of so much injustice, the loss of life and resultant feelings of hopelessness shows a definitive flaw in the argument for globalization. Dube writes, "As long as the injustice of globalization remains apparent to me, as long as its injustice overshadows its benefits, I will continue to be critical of it, even if the whole choir can choose to sing a different song" (Dube 2003a: 73-74).

On a national scale, globalization coupled with HIV and AIDS weakens the economy.

The impact of HIV/AIDS, goes beyond the health of individuals. As the infected get sick from opportunistic infections, they miss work or loose work, their relatives increasingly stay away from work to care for them. This affects family, the work place and the immediate community. It hurts the financial output/productivity in the household, business, education, agriculture and stresses the health sector (Dube 2003a: 79).

[the] AIDS epidemic is a true development crisis that threatens the social and economic fabric and political stability of whole nations (Dube 2003a: 79 and UNAIDS 2001).

In looking at how HIV and AIDS is complicated and exacerbated by globalization, Dube also links the effects of imperialism to globalization and how it complicates the context of HIV and AIDS. Dube not only links globalization and imperialism directly, but also suggests that globalization is a new form of an old problem. Imperialism did not end when countries gained their independence (Dube 2006a: 183), instead it became a different way in which the West imposed their motives on the "two thirds world" (2005: 183).

And the questions remain the same for Dube. Who is the globalizing force? Who are the people acted upon by globalization and what consequences does it bear for them? Are all people affected equally? Do they have the same roles to play as "beneficiaries of the globalizing process" (2006a: 183)? Dube would argue that the process is not innocent and that we (Africa in particular) do not benefit from globalization nearly as much as the West (USA, Japan and Europe - according to Dube (2006a: 183)). The process of privileging some and not others and the process of justifying the injustice carries on as it always has. The truth of globalization is that it is not concerned about the individual person but rather about the maximization of profit. Dube points out that:

Globalization is not, first and foremost, about improving social lives of individuals or nations of the world as a whole. It is not about consolidation for social justice. Rather, it is first and foremost about the maximization of profit - the drive for market conquest. Globalization is not charitable or a just-seeking socio-economic system that seeks to create equal access to resources for all people, everywhere. Yes, indeed, it seeks to open the markets, for all, but such a statement mask the fact that it is those who are in power who will enjoy and have access to such a global economic village (2006a: 184).

As already indicated above, Dube points out that gender inequality is another aspect exacerbated by globalization. She writes:

It is generally agreed that globalization is an international trade system that does not seek quality or which is not driven by establishing justice in the world. Rather it is a system that is driven by a search for markets and the maximization of profit and creates conditions of cultural and economic insecurity (2003a: 76).

If this is the case, I would argue that whatever pre-existing hierarchical and systematic inequalities (such as sexism, racism and classism) exist within a system will be further intensified by globalization. In this way globalization not only exacerbates the problem of hierarchical and systematic inequality but exploits inequality and thrives from inequality.

The particular inequality I am interested in here is the systematic oppression of women, because Dube writes about it so much throughout her work.

Dube expands upon the issue of gender based inequality with many examples of systematic inequality between men and women. Companies hire women at cheaper rates than men. Women are not able to purchase and maintain assets as readily as men. There is constantly a demand for a cheaper labour force and women are more often than not exploited in this way whereby women, through desperation, may be willing to work for less money and under worse conditions. There is a bias against the education of women and girls which makes it difficult for women to get better jobs and better pay.

Additionally, this also makes it difficult for women to access health care. "Privatization often leads to retrenchment, it reduces employment of women in high and stable income" (Dube 2003a: 77) thereby forcing women to take lower income jobs or assuming domestic roles. Because women in this context are made more vulnerable and desperate, women will seek jobs as sex workers. People in these contexts may employ "survival strategies that crowd out child-care and child welfare" (2003a: 77). Families are torn apart as men are forced to look for jobs further and further away, even in other countries, often leaving the women behind and family structures threatened. In an environment where HIV and AIDS are rife, when women die often it is grandparents, usually grandmothers, and children who are left behind. When the grandparents pass away children are orphaned, either to be taken up by other families which places additional strain on an already strained society, or alternatively the children are forced to live on the streets. Women are consequently removed from public life and thereby their political roles in society are reduced. Land ownership for women is problematic as women acquiring, owning and maintaining land is still socially looked down upon in many developing countries and trade with women is biased in favour of an aggressive market that women will relent to in order to survive. In culture and religion, women are still excluded as communities tighten their grip on patriarchal norms and views. "This often leads to a desperate enforcement of cultural and religious views, which more often than not, marginalizes women as patriarchal values are closely guarded (2003a: 77).

And it is here I want to focus more clearly on Dube's work regarding feminism. The place that women occupy in society is deeply important to Dube. As previously discussed, women are marginalized in society in the form of modern and traditional forms of patriarchy that are biblically reinforced through ancient models of ancient patriarchy and also through the processes of colonization. Women's vulnerability does not only effect them in social contexts, but also in political contexts. The political climate, alongside the effects of globalization, colonization and imperialism make women more vulnerable to HIV infection and perhaps abandon by her family and friends. Additionally women are made more vulnerable because they fail under irrational expectations to achieve irrational goals, they fail to live up to the irrational expectations of imperial and patriarchal worldviews.

Because women often fulfil the role of care-giver to others in the family and community, including those living with AIDS, a home's food production and income generation decreases. Women become stuck in poverty. Additionally, the care of orphans, the sick, the elderly fall into the care of women, in the case of the care of children and orphans the burden usually falls upon grandmothers. Families may disinherit women blaming them for using witchcraft in killing their husbands. Sex work becomes one of the only ways in which women can make an income in this social climate. Women can retain sperm for as long as four days, this doubles women's infection rates. Women being required to have children even when infected with HIV further jeopardises their health and immune systems. Orphans girls, now without parents, have to shoulder the additional burden of taking care of siblings meaning that they often have to drop out of school. Girls will then rather get married to a much older man in order to secure money for younger siblings. Arranged marriage in this case may be a family's way of getting rid of a girl so that remaining family would not have to care for her. HIV infection increases due to young girls being sexually exploited by family members and clients of sex work. Girls may be exploited into child labour or taken into a domestic role at a very young age. Should she be infected, there is little or no opportunity for health care or gaining information about the infection or the consequent illness (Dube 2003a: 80f).

Messages aimed at preventing HIV infection are ineffective for women in a world where they cannot negotiate their own sexualities. The ABC formula (ABCD in some cases) meaning Abstain, Be Faithful and Condomise (with Die added in the case of the ABC+D), is meaningless (Dube 2003a: 80) to women who have been ascribed social gender roles that essentially strip them of all bargaining tools, such as a woman who has been raped by her unfaithful husband for years, or a prostitute financially entrapped and needing to provide for her children, or a widow whose husband has died and is forced to sleep with her husband's brother in a levirate sense, or a virgin who is raped because of the enduring superstition that sleeping with a virgin cures HIV infection, or a lesbian is raped because this is believed to somehow correct her sexuality.

Dube aligns women's vulnerability to the social position that women are afforded in society. Women are not only socially subservient to men, but also economically subservient to men. She goes on to say that women are economically powerless, having to rely on male relatives. They cannot make independent decisions. Women tend to be more illiterate than men as the education of boys is privileged and women's roles are reinforced as domestic and childbearing. Women within the home are subordinate. They have no means by which to negotiate safer sex practices or to demand fidelity or even to "say no to sex" (Dube 2003a: 80). Violence is common and women often submit to violence. Condoms (male and female) are rare and expensive and even when available men are reluctant to use them. The 'roaming man' spreading his 'wild oats' is a common image in Western and African societies, and is even encouraged in some settings. Multiple partners, sexual conquest, infidelity, promiscuity and the use and abuse of women as sexual objects is normal and culturally accepted in many contexts. This makes 'being faithful' meaningless to a woman.

In bringing African feminist thought in line with the postcolonial, Dube makes a strong case for promoting a feminism that does not only look at equality among the genders but also among people of different racial, social and economic spheres. Feminism on its own cannot function if it seeks to create social strata as opposed to gender strata, which is to say that feminism cannot critique inequality between the genders while either ignoring or supporting inequality between the classes. In the same way a postcolonial reading of the

Bible cannot seek to create gender strata as opposed to the social, which is to say, that postcolonial readers cannot critique inequality between the classes while either ignoring or supporting inequality between the genders. In both regards there needs to be a considerable consideration made of both gender and class. For Dube:

The challenges and demands of the postcolonial era must be confronted, for unless the pervasiveness and persistence of the imperial rhetoric in reality and texts, through ancient and current times and over different people and places, is recognized, studied and called into question, its reinscription will be inevitable, even among well-meaning feminists (2000: 27).

When Dube's work on the Bible is now introduced, these theoretical concepts remain deeply imbedded in Dube's work. Although she uses socio-historical and narrative tools in her exegesis of the text, she is constantly informing her exegesis with her theoretical concepts of postcolonialism and African feminism. Here, I would like to have a look at how Dube uses her methodological tools in textual exegesis and brings it into dialogue with her theoretical framework.

For Dube, the Bible cannot be dismissed as merely historic or ancient, but as a contemporary textual instrument that has affected many women, perhaps more for the worse than better, and still acts in the world as an actively interpreted document today. The Bible, for Dube, is inherently "androcentric" (2000: 27), however this problem is compounded by the fact that whereas the female voice is not heard reading the Bible, in that women's opinions on the Bible are often overlooked, the female voice within the Bible is also largely excluded.

The interests, worldviews and contexts of women are therefore excluded in traditional discussions surrounding the Bible and society. The "presence and contributions" (Dube 2000: 27) of women within the text itself and of women actually reading the text is important to Dube. The solution for Dube is firstly, having women involved in the exegetical process, having women read the Bible and inferring meaning from the text and secondly,

finding women within the text and giving the female characters within the text an audible voice. Reappropriation of the text is Dube's goal, in that women should read the Bible with their own interests and contexts in mind.

As Dube is always conscious of the feminist perspective (African feminist in her case) as well as the postcolonial perspective as I have explained before, Dube approached the text in a similar way, not only analysing the text as an African feminist but also as a postcolonial scholar. Here we can see how Dube's theoretical framework impacts on her methodological process.

4.2) Dube's Methodology

When dealing with feminism, Dube begins by asking the questions of how men and women are characterized and why they are characterized (Dube 2004: 128). Additionally, it becomes important to find out what social roles are played by men and women in the text. What do they do? What do they say? Are they main characters within the story or not? How then does it impact on our ideologies and theologies? This methodological approach by Dube seems to lend into a lot of narrative and literary approaches as well as dealing with some socio-historical approaches, perhaps it would be useful to say here that in many respects Dube's approaches are nebulous and they bleed into one another. She writes:

To confront imperialism as a postcolonial feminist, one must, first, recognize that patriarchal oppression overlaps with but is not identical to imperialism; second, recognize its methods and strategies of subjugation in cultural texts and reality; third, identify the patterns of resistance it evokes from the subjugated; fourth, recognize the use of the female gender in colonial discourse as well as explicate how postcolonialism exposes some women to double or triple oppression (2000: 43).

When dealing with postcolonialism, Dube remains somewhat socio-historical in her approach to the text. Her interest in what she calls "imperializing texts" (Dube 2000: 57, 85) asks four questions, particularly concerning the Bible as an ancient imperializing text.

Firstly, is there a liberatory trend within the text that has a clear stance against the political imperialism of its own time? This question is important for Dube because it establishes the strands within the text and also how the text can be approached. It raises the question of; Should the biblical scholar read against the grain of the text? In this way she highlights socio-historical problems within the text and raises socio-historical questions.

Secondly, is there thematic and symbolic rhetoric within the text that encourages travel to distant and inhabited lands, and if so, how does it justify itself? She introduces a thematic methodological approach here, in that she analyses the text by looking at themes like travel, settling, colonising, and war, as well as the sorts of ideological symbols that accompanies these concepts and that are used to legitimate these themes. In the missionary context where the church has infiltrated a country under the guise of 'knowledge' or 'chosenness' (being used here as rhetorical devices of legitimisation), does the text offer a biblical scholar tools to interrogate imperial expansion through criticism or support? Can a trend be found that legitimates 'knowledge' and 'chosenness' of a native person that perhaps was not educated in the Western paradigm?

Thirdly, is there a rhetorical construction of difference: Is there dialogue and mutual interdependence, or condemnation and replacement of all aspects that are perceived as foreign? Is there a sense of dualism whereby these missionary, or colonialist, or imperialist seek to establish a hegemonic dominion? Does the text support dichotomy or does the text support union or unison?

Fourthly, does the text employ gender representations to construct relationships of subordination and domination? (Dube 2000: 57). As above, are women actors within the

text or simply acted upon, subjects of the text or objects? Do women speak for themselves and about themselves or are they spoken to or about (Dube 2000: 57)?

Here it becomes clear that Dube's theoretical frameworks concerning feminism and postcolonialism play a role in her method of approaching the text. Because postcolonialism is so concerned with identity she uses those theoretical categories in conjunction with her narrative approach to the text to ask questions like "Who is the oppressor?" and "Who is the oppressed?".

Dube makes available to the reader narrative tools that allow the reader to place themselves in the story in this way. She offers three narrative as well as conceptual positions: that of the oppressor, that of the liberator or that of the oppressed (Dube 2003a: 89). Her aim here is to personalize the text in a way as to invite the reader to actively participate in the text without allowing the reader to subscribe to imperialistic views, actions or justifications. In this way she aims to create "anti-imperialist and anti-patriarchal" spaces that work towards liberation and new frameworks.

Dube uses these narrative tools to interpret the text in such a way as to assume the reader into roles within the texts. However, Dube's approach employs a socio-historical element as well as a narrative element in her interpretation process. One example of this interplay of socio-historical and narrative in her book, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (2000), Dube speaks of the character Rahab. Dube in her article, "Rahab says Hello to Judith" (2006b), draws a parallel between Rahab, from the book of Joshua and Judith from the deuterocanonical book of Judith.

For Dube, the significance of Rahab is that she is an active character in an overtly patriarchal text. Rahab's occupation as a "sex worker" (Dube 2006b: 156) is established as Dube points out that sacred prostitution cannot easily be proven in this context as being historically accurate (Dube 2000: 75), but sex work in the normal sense is universally present nearly all

cultures at nearly all times. I think Dube's reason for pointing this out is that she is trying to be overtly focussed on the text with regards to Rahab's position as a prostitute, and not focus so much on the socio-historical aspects of prostitution. Dube seems more focussed on the rhetoric surrounding prostitution and colonialism in the context of the larger colonization by the Israelites.

The rhetorical use of the word "harlot" or "prostitute" in the text suggests that Rahab has become a symbol of the land (2000: 77). Dube points out the irony that there is this command to the people of Israel not to make covenants with the 'prostitutes' of Canaan, but the first agreement that is made occurs not only with a woman but also with a prostitute. For Dube, Rahab becomes the symbol of the untamed land being domesticated for the purposes of the Israelites (Dube 2000: 77). Dube highlights the two very clear trends within the texts. One that deliberately portrays Rahab as something deviant that needs to be corrected and one that illustrates a smart eloquent woman within the text fighting and bargaining for the safety of her family and herself. For Dube, identifying these two trends in the text forms an important part of reading against the grain of the text in finding meaningful applications of African feminism, however the imperialistic context of the story cannot be ignored, there is still the postcolonial element to this story.

Rahab in this context is "a colonized woman" (Dube 2000: 76). In Dube's analysis of imperializing texts there is often the representation of the land in the character of a woman. If "her affection [is] won, then the land she represents will also be entered and domesticated by the colonizer" (2000: 76). This domestication of the woman and the land is another rhetorical device employed by the text. Dube points out that the appropriation of this story cannot ignore the fact that Rahab is a tool of the imperialistic agenda within the text. Biblical scholars with feminist frameworks need to remember to keep the postcolonial elements in mind which is probably why Dube would see African feminism as having a postcolonial aspect to it at all times.

In Dube's analysis of the book of *Judith*, Dube looks at the character of Judith as actively performing against the trend of the world in which she is placed and so becomes a decolonizing and depatriarchalizing force within the text (Dube 2006b: 151).

Dube points out that women on the Assyrian side of the narrative are wholly absent, but on the Israelite side however, we see not only Judith, but also many women taking part in the story. Dube is making it very clear that there is a divide between the characters in the narrative, not only between the Israelites and the Assyrians, but also between the characterization of men and women within the narrative.

The city of Bethulia is under siege by Holofernes and the people are suffering of thirst as the city has been cut off from its water source. There is this powerful interplay between men and women in this part of the text when the leaders of the city have decided to remain barricaded inside, but the people complain that they would rather surrender and live than stay trapped and die of thirst. The leaders compromise saying that they would surrender if God does not intervene in five days. Judith in hearing this gets upset and challenges the leaders. Here we see something unusual in a patriarchal setting where a woman not only challenges the will of men, but manages to surpass them rhetorically. Uzziah, one of the leaders, says that he cannot go back on his agreement of five days. Judith then also prays and is given a loud voice in the text and a lot to say. Judith then on her own goes out and kills Holofernes and then returns and leads the people in worship; something that is unusual in patriarchal frameworks (Dube 2006b: 151-155). For Dube the greatest achievement in the text is where Judith says, "But the Almighty Lord hath disappointed them by the hand of a woman" (2006b: 153; Judith 16v6 King James Version).

Dube links Judith and Rahab inter-textually, calling them 'counterparts' (Dube 2006b: 156) and bringing the two texts into conversation with each other. This style of exegesis is used by Dube to link these two texts and place the characters and their actions side-by-side in order to show similarities and differences between these two texts. This style of exegesis allows Dube to show how the patriarchal rhetoric inherent through which these women

operate are historical constructions reacting directly to the anticipation of impending imperialization (2006b: 157). The difference is that, whereas both of them are rebelling against patriarchies commonly held in their time; Rahab works alongside the colonizing force and Judith works against it.

Dube again argues for a recognition of these different trends at play within the text that biblical scholars need to be aware of both aspects of the text, patriarchy and imperialism (2006b: 157). This constantly draws a person back to her theoretical framework where the interplay between the postcolonial and feminist readings in the text as illustrated in this section and the previous section both illustrate a world throughout which women are subjugated and people are colonized. In order to understand Dube's readings more thoroughly, it is important that the reader is aware of her wrestling with the limitations of feminist readings without considering postcolonial circumstances, and the limitations of postcolonial readings without considering feminist circumstances and furthermore the difficulty in bringing those two elements into dialogue with each other through narrative approaches.

4.3) Dube's Theological Orientation

Having considered Dube's theoretical frameworks and the methodological tools she uses, I want to concentrate here on her theological orientation. Dube's theological orientation becomes obvious particularly when she writes of HIV and AIDS. I wanted to start with her use of symbols from within the African context beyond the biblical context first as a cultural source of theological understanding. Dube's approach to HIV and AIDS inside and outside the text both draw on the same notions of African feminism coupled with postcolonial thought. This is important as it shows that Dube also finds theological tools outside of the text and within the context of the people of Africa as well. She shows that African philosophy and culture can provide theological symbols and statements as much as the Bible can. There is the Christian perspective in this regard, but African traditional religions also impact in this regard.

One such symbol is that of the adinkra (Dube 2006c:133) originally employed by Mercy Amba Oduyoye as a symbol for calling African women together for the purposes of "salvation, justice, and liberation" (2006c: 133). Another symbol or maxim specific to Southern Africa that Dube employs is the concept of Ubuntu that essentially says "I am because we are, and we are because I am" or as originally rendered "Motho ke motho ka batho, umuntu ngu muntu nga Bantu" (2006c: 142). Dube uses these concepts in conjunction with that of African feminism and postcolonialism in order to tie up individualistic problems with communal problems and thereby finding more effective theological models working in contexts of HIV and AIDS by using communities working together. This approach recognises the value of the African world view (2006c: 134), the importance of community solidarity in HIV testing (2006c: 135) and changing teaching structures and curriculum regarding HIV and AIDS to more life affirming theological models (2006c: 145).

4.4) Dube's Work with the Text

My main concern here is how Dube theologically links the text, HIV and AIDS, and the larger contexts that a postcolonial Africa and South Africa face. A particular phrase from the book of Mark that Dube uses in at least three occasions that I could find holds a lot of value for Dube with respects to HIV and AIDS. Talitha Cum, the words spoken by Jesus in the book of Mark to the daughter of Jairus, miraculously bringing her back to life, is used by Dube not only as a theological symbol that triumphs over death, but is also read along postcolonial lines, gender lines and a call for solidarity among African women that goes back to the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologian's conference in 1989 "Daughters of Africa Arise" (Phiri 2003: 5). Here is where the three interpretive frameworks play into one another in interesting ways. It is in Dube's use of "Talitha Cum" where she clearly brings her theological orientation with her methodological tools and theoretical interpretive frameworks together. Her usage of the postcolonial and African feminist theoretical perspectives and her narrative

and socio-historical approaches to the text inform her theological orientation when she writes of sickness and the theological implications of sickness.

Dube's first use of the saying "Talitha Cum" that I want to concentrate on is in the introduction chapter "Introduction: "Little Girl, Get Up!"" (Dube 2001) to a book co-edited by Dube and Nyambura J. Njoroge (Nyambura and Dube 2001).

Mark 5v21-43, here specifically focussing on verse 41, tells the story of Jesus being called to the house of the man Jairus, "one of the rulers of the synagogue" (Mark 5v22), to heal Jairus' daughter who is said to be critically ill. On the way, Jesus is touched by a woman who has bled for many years and she is miraculously healed. When Jesus arrives at the house of Jairus, the girl had already died. Jesus says to the girl, "talitha cum" (Contemporary English Version) or "talitha cumi" (King James Version and The Greek New Testament 1894 Scrivener Textus Receptus) and the girl is brought back to life.

This chapter by Dube, serving as an introduction to the book as a whole, focuses on the issue of transformation in the text and what that could mean for society. Here, Dube points out, the story is chiefly concerned with the welfare of two women, notably Jarius' daughter which is the larger story containing the story of the bleeding woman (2001: 7). Dube suggests that the story of the bleeding woman framed by the story of Jairus' daughter is significant and links the story of the two women.

This story becomes about the "empowerment of the disempowered" (Dube 2001: 7). African women and the women of this text find themselves in situations where sickness is a reality in which they are vulnerable, powerless and exploited. Jesus and Jairus are shown within the text to be particularly powerful figures. The definitive difference between them is that Jesus uses his power in a liberating way, and although Jairus is not said to show his power particularly, but he is said to be "one of the rulers of the synagogue".

For Dube, he represents not only the structural power in this world, but also represents the power of patriarchy. The issue of exploitation comes across strongly. The fact that the bleeding woman had spent all of her money and had not gotten any better alongside the exploitation of the sick in Africa and South Africa, especially those with HIV and AIDS or people who are vulnerable to infection strikes a very heavy chord in Dube's writing (2001: 7). Dube lays out a series of challenges that the text provides:

The story challenges the reader to take a certain position in relation to power. It challenges the reader to identify the group to which they belong": to those who run around and beg repeatedly for their dying daughters; to those who are willing to reach out to the places of power and redistribute it to those who need it; to those who are prepared to feel power leave them and flow elsewhere, and accept it; to those who are ready to exploit the weak and powerless; and to those little girls who are lying dead, and who must, nonetheless, hear the voice of the life calling "Little girl, get up!" The little girl must start walking around and speaking. She must. To this task, African women theologians are committed (Dube 2001: 7).

Here again we see Dube's narrative approach interacting with the postcolonial in that Dube forces the reader to assume agency within the text. She forces the reader to identify with the characters, forcing the reader to ask, "Who am I in this text?" This interplay between power and identity is a strong postcolonial theme in this particular article of Dube's and is characteristic in her methodological approach to the narrative from a narrative perspective. The characters and their characterization, their power, their actions are, for Dube, significant from a postcolonial perspective. From an African feminist perspective Dube seems to call for the empowerment of women, here she is not so much concerned with the narrative, but more with the rhetorical nature of the text. The symbol of talitha cum here for Dube is theologically relevant and gives a feminist gradient to the text. For Dube, it seems, as though she is using talitha cum as a theological mandate for women to rise up, speak out, and to empower themselves.

In the second article, "Talitha Cum! A Postcolonial Feminist & HIV/AIDS Reading of Mark 5:21-43" (Dube 2004), again involves the postcolonial elements within the story and the feminist elements in the story. The Markan narrative here is named as a postcolonial setting, occurring within the Roman Empire, providing readers with an endorsement of "particular relationships of domination and oppression between the powerful and less dominating nations in today's world" (2004: 125f).

Dube links the story of the bleeding woman and the Jairus' daughter with the recurring number twelve in the text. The little girl is twelve years old and the bleeding woman has been sick for twelve years. Dube connects the twelve as a symbol of Israel here and the occupation by Rome as the sickness. Jesus in this regard is not only a healer, but also a liberator. This issue of liberation has an important theological element to it. The woman and the girl become symbols for the "subjugated and colonized" (Dube 2004: 128). The subsequent use and abuse of the woman's body as being symbol for the nation of Israel is important here, because the symbolic use of the woman's body as a tool for dominating texts as representing weakness and can be used to "articulate their agenda of domination" (2004: 128). It is for this reason that feminist readings of the text are also important and need to be read side by side with postcolonial readings, as having these theoretical concepts side by side with one another have uncovered a theological element of liberation and elements of soteriology.

Dube's from her theoretical framework as a feminist in scrutinizing the work from a narrative perspective asks the question, again, of how "men and women are characterized and why" (Dube 2004: 128)? None of the women in the text are named: Jairus' daughter, the bleeding women or Jairus' daughter's mother, presumably and "by extension" (Dube 2004: 129), Jairus' wife. This is an important issue when a person considers Dube's postcolonial work as the postcolonial perspective is deeply concerned with identity. Also in terms of gender, we see that the women that are given some degree of identity (Jairus' daughter and wife) are mentioned in relation to their male counterparts. Dube does not expand on this much here, but it is an important event in Dube's theoretical framework and

how it informs her methodology and her theological orientation. It raises the question of how these women are treated within the text.

The bleeding woman is oppressed in many ways, but most importantly in terms of blood taboo, which is linked with ritual cleanliness, in which a person becomes unclean by touching a person who suffers from a flow of blood or undergoes menstruation. Other than being a woman in a patriarchal society, she has no male to speak on her behalf, all of her money has essentially been stolen by exploitative doctors and she can never marry. She is in a space where she does not belong and where she does not have a voice and she has to break the rule of ritual cleanliness in order to be healed. It is ironically her subversion of the social laws that allows her to be healed (2004:128-130).

Jairus' daughter and 'wife' on the other hand are still contained within the domestic space. Their only social redemption in this regard is that they have a connection with the ruler of the synagogue, Jairus. Jairus, particularly in his approach to Jesus we can see the gender differences in the text whereby a man enjoys the freedom to approach Jesus, but a woman must do so in secret. It is ironic for Dube that the salvation of these women does not take place outside of the social gender.

Dube approaching the text from the two different directions, of feminism and postcolonialism allows her to critique a reading of the text that ignores either feminism or postcolonialism in lieu of the other. Ultimately Dube arrives at a reading of the text for the purposes of finding a liberation from the context of death in the face of HIV and AIDS. Given the forces of globalization that destroy a society (Dube 2004: 135) that lives with HIV and AIDS, the ever growing stigma associated with HIV and AIDS resulting not only in a physical death but in a much sooner social death, Dube reads the text in ways that looks for liberatory trends that offer justice in the face of unfair international practices and patriarchal structures and how they contribute to situations where people struggle, are vulnerable and are exploited.

Dube emphasises the need to view the theological shape of the Bible as one that is at times liberatory and that the capacity for liberation as being something inherent in the Bible even if the reader has to employ an exegesis that is deliberately against the immediately obvious grain of the text. Her postcolonial theoretical framework plays into these ideas of liberation and soteriology whereby the characters of the women in the narrative are saved from their circumstances by Jesus acting, not only as a healing, but also as a liberating force within the narrative.

The third article, "Talitha Cum! Calling the Girl-Child and Women to Life" (Dube 2003a), Dube's concern is the role that Christians play in the context of HIV and AIDS. Here there is the call for a "theology of gender empowerment which counteracts death and proclaims life for women and the girl-child" (2003a: 83).

Here, the bleeding woman becomes symbolic of people who live with HIV and AIDS, "Patients who have been sick for [a] long time - patients who have spent all they had searching for healing" (Dube 2003a: 84).

The role that Jesus plays in this context is one of bringing hope back into situations of hopelessness. The role of Jesus flying in the face of death becomes a serious challenge to churches who are still reinforcing structures that cause death, hopelessness and stigma.

Dube by virtue of her theoretical framework which employs both the postcolonial ideas of identity and power, and the African feminist ideas surrounding gender, calls for a criticism of the exploitation of the "poor by the powerful" (Dube 2003a: 87). Theo-philosophically there is a deontological call for people with the means to make use of their power to help the poor and the sick; and to subvert notions that divide people and cause discrimination. In the text, Dube points to where Jesus takes the hand of Jairus' daughter knowing fully that as a Jewish man, that touching a dead body would defile him.

The bleeding woman "pushes against the religious beliefs that hinder her, (2003a: 88) and when she touches Jesus "she becomes an agent of her own empowerment" (2003a: 89). She goes on to challenge the reader of the text, churches and faith based institutions to recognise the role that they would be playing in this text or indeed any text, whether they were a force that re-institutionalizes patriarchy and imperialism or whether they were a force of gender liberation and global freedom.

When reading these three uses of Talitha Cum in these articles in conjunction with the various dimensions as outlined, we see how Dube aligns her soteriological views with here-and-now issues. I have already mentioned a deontological aspect to Dube's work and Dube is perhaps not aware of this, but her theo-philosophical perspective seems to be inclined towards a moral duty towards the poor and marginalized. Theologically speaking salvation becomes directly linked to liberation and duty.

For Dube, postcolonial and feminist reading of the text not only offers us ways of understanding the different trends within the text as either enforcing patriarchal and imperial models, but also reveals a theological trend within the text that offers liberating and life affirming theological models that challenge the patriarchal and imperial models by looking to and giving value the powerless and exploited.

Dube recognizes that the models she uses are not perfect (2003a: 72), that biblical scholars are effectively elite and that we as academics run the risk of hypocrisy in this regard. However, it is in being honest about our approaches and open about our theoretical frameworks and our methodological tools we use in approaching the text that we can find ways of reading in a postcolonial African feminist paradigm that seeks justice, hope and life for people living with or are vulnerable to infection of HIV and AIDS.

Chapter 5: Sarojini Nadar

"When I build shelters for abused wo/men, they call me a saint, when I ask why wo/men are abused they call me a feminist" Sarojini Nadar (AIM 2009:7f).

Sarojini Nadar was born in Durban, South Africa. She grew up in the Full Gospel Church of God in Southern Africa, a Pentecostal church, but has subsequently moved to a Lutheran church. Which Nadar humorously comments on; saying that some of her colleagues call her a "born-again" Lutheran (Nadar 2009a: 131, 133). I've included this detail about Nadar's church as it becomes an important later when discussing her experiences growing up.

Returning to the three interpretive features that I am interested in, Nadar's theoretical framework is predominantly feminist, maintaining a postcolonial critique, while employing elements of work surrounding race and class. Her methodological tools show a strong affinity towards narrative readings of the biblical texts while employing socio-historical readings as well. Her theological orientation is concerned with life affirming theologies that controvert patriarchal theological models such as those of the Mighty Men Movement.

5.1) Nadar's Theoretical Framework

So firstly I want to have a look at Nadar's theoretical framework, Nadar approaches her work from a feminist and womanist perspective while moving into a more postcolonial critique as well (in much the same way that Dube moves from postcolonial critiques to feminist critiques). I made the distinction here between feminist and womanist particularly because Nadar understands that the European feminist hermeneutic does not always take into account the issue of transformation that goes beyond simply asking questions of gender alongside race and class in the way that womanism does (Phiri and Nadar 2005). Perhaps it is in this distinction in considering elements outside gender that sets African feminism and womanism apart from more western feminist frameworks.

Nadar, unlike Dube, seems to start with an interest in African feminism/womanism and the impact of gender and masculinity and then moving onto postcolonial issues focussing on issues of race as well as economic marginalization. This is perhaps an interesting distinction between the two scholars. It is not a hard rule that they always tend to start from one sub-theoretical framework and move onto another, but it seems to be a trend in both of their work that Dube begins with postcolonialism and issues of race and economics and moves into feminism and gender, whereas Nadar begins with feminism and gender and moves into postcolonialism, issues of race, and economics.

But the important thing to note about Nadar is that her process of linking gender and race and postcolonialism alongside her concern for how the church interacts with the Bible and how it enforces ideologies that are harmful to women and her consequent sociological analysis alongside issues of gender and race is the basis of her theoretical framework.

Nadar often references the work of Judith Butler and Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza in her references to gender and sees gender as a social construct. Gender roles as imposed on both men and women, especially when imposed on a scriptural and spiritual basis raise a great deal of criticism from Nadar (Nadar 2009a: 133f).

Nadar makes use of a particular case study that illustrates the abusive nature of gender roles when they are enforced as absolute by the church. This case study is a true story of a woman named Kerina. Her story can be found in the appendix at the end of this thesis. The story is about how this woman is abused at home, physically, even to the degree where her skull was cracked. When she decided to end her marriage to her husband and asked her husband to leave home, the pastor and an elder from her church came to tell her that:

- 1) The Bible says that divorce is wrong
- 2) The man is the head of the woman therefore she is supposed to submit to him

3) By not cooking and doing other household chores—which a wife is supposed to do for her husband—she inevitably brought on the abuse

4) Through submission and prayer, her husband will change.

She has to persevere (2008/2009:2).

Nadar relates her own story of how the "Word of God" (Nadar 2009a) is used to maintain social constructs of gender roles. Nadar tells of how it was perceived as inappropriate for a girl in her culture to wear jeans (2009a: 113f) especially considering Deuteronomy 22v5 which says that it is an abomination for either sex to wear the clothes of the opposite sex, which has become a moot point given the large amount of time that has passed giving rise to thousands of different cultural expressions of what "male" and "female" clothing means, additionally further complicated by a globalized world in which so many different cultures have not only come into contact with each other but also mixed.

Nadar's brother complained when she on one occasion refused to change from pants to a dress. He asked her whether she knew that this was, "abhorrent to the Lord" (2009a: 134), to which Nadar responded by asking her brother whether Jesus wore trousers. Her brother responded by saying that Jesus wore a robe. Nadar then raises the question, "Was Jesus defying God then, by wearing a woman's garment?" For Nadar, at this stage, her argument is what she calls, "fickle and simplistic" (2009a: 134), but we see an emergent pattern of thought that looks at the Bible and patriarchal theological models somewhat critically. This change is where Nadar says, "[I] traded in my hermeneutic of trust for a hermeneutic of suspicion" (2009a: 134). When considering social stratification with regards to social justice and the interpretation and application of the Bible, it becomes important to consider how Nadar not only looks at women, but also at how Nadar looks at men. Nadar explores issues of masculinity and how men are made out to be superior to women.

A long-standing interest of Nadar's in recent years has been the rise of the Mighty Men's Conferences in Greytown in the province of Kwa-Zulu Natal in South Africa and the theology

of its founder Angus Buchan and his church of Shalom Ministries also situated in Greytown (Shalom Ministries 2011; Nadar 2009b: 553f). These conferences focus on the reestablishment of so-called traditional male roles in society. Nadar's analysis of Angus Buchan's work is largely focussed on rhetoric and linguistics, breaking down and analysing the highly symbolic, stereotypical, and gendered language that Buchan employs.

Masculine power is maintained "as brute force; as relational and positional (men are heads of the homes, companies); and through discourses of power, the language we use to construct "everyday wisdom" such as "men are naturally better at mathematics"" (Nadar 2010). This provides the student of masculinity a harsh contrast between masculinism and masculinity. Masculinism becomes the contrasting proposition to feminism in that it is an "ideological system which not only believes in, but actively promotes male power" (Nadar 2009b: 553). And it is noble for men wanting to be more responsible however, Nadar argues, that, "if 'taking responsibility' means asserting dominating and coercive measures, including those in the religious domain, to maintain power" (Nadar 2009b: 554) then we have to be very careful not to be deceived by or persuaded by a "palatable patriarchy, masquerading as 'restoring masculinity'" (2009b: 554).

In an interview with Devi Govender, Buchan makes the following remark:

It's getting back to basics, Devi. Husbands love your wives, ok? Children, respect your parents. Wives, respect your husbands, submit to your husbands... it's very easy when your husbands love you, you see, when your husbands are doing the job properly. But what happens sometimes is that the husbands are not doing the job: they not protecting you, they are not putting bread on the table, they are not disciplining the children - it's very hard to respect a man like that. And so that's why we had the men's conference, ok? We take the shambak [whip] out and we give the guys a big hiding. And they can let their hair down, and they can cry, and they can repent, and they can go back (Govender 2009, and also in Nadar 2009b: 556).

Here we can see a clear patriarchal framework that sidelines women in terms of the ideas of respect and love and submission. Nadar is interested in the rhetorical use of gender categories here. Women are not portrayed as breadwinners, men are. Women are not portrayed as raising children, men are. Men love, but women respect and submit. In this framework, women have clearly become the object of men's demesnes. For Buchan the established order in the Bible is absolute, women cannot surpass this and it is this oppression and marginalization of women in the domestic field, the labour market and the church that Nadar is so critical of.

Men who do not take back this leadership role are considered to be "feminized," thereby establishing women's roles clearly as "not leaders." The epitome of feminization is to be a submissive follower. The epitome of masculinity is taking control, and women who grant men this "natural" role, according to Evans, Wiid, and others who advocate formenism, will reap the dividends of having their men take on increased responsibility in the home and in society (Nadar and Potgieter 2010: 148).

Nadar quotes from Kobus Du Pisani's work in *Afrikaner* constructs of masculinities during and after Apartheid showing that the puritanical notion of the 'man of the house' to be absolute, a concept now being eroded by the emergence of liberalism and growing homosexual exposure. It is liberalism in this case, that Du Pisani says became the bigger breakdown of the *Afrikaner* concept of masculinity which is defined by heterosexuality and conservatism as far as race and gender is concerned (Nadar 2009b: 558).

This form of hegemonic masculinity is not interested in partnership and mutuality and inclusiveness but instead reinstates old ideas of materialism in which women, like all other assets of men, are put in their place. In the light of the story of Kerina we can see how this objectification of women leads to a woman not only being silenced, but abused by her husband, her church and her community. Nadar's use of Du Pisani also gives us clear indication of her alliance with liberation theology, in this case being particularly interested with identity and empire and Du Pisani's work in this regard shows a clear correlation

between a failed empire and a loss of identity with respects to what it means to be 'man' and 'woman' in these contexts.

In a post-Apartheid South Africa, gender based inequality has been legally outlawed and has, in principle, freed South African women from gender discrimination and systems that place the interests of men over that of women. Nadar along with Cheryl Potgieter (2010) analyses the rise of a recent movement among women, in this case the Worthy Women's Conference which is a sister movement of the Mighty Men's Conference that fosters ideologies that are called formenism. Formenism is a range of ideologies created and maintained by women that assert that men are superior to women (Nadar and Potgieter 2010: 141), although it must be noted that even though women design, construct and sustain (2010:141) these ideas it is ultimately men who benefit from these ideas in which women subject themselves to submission.

And yes, the notion is pleasing and falls in neatly with the concept of palatable patriarchy. It is not enforced through physical violence (at first); there is a seeming bargaining occurring here between men and women, in which men assume responsibility, reducing the yoke originally carried by women alone; and because of this exchange of power, white men experience a "reduction of existential anxiety caused by radical changes in South Africa" (2010: 141); all of which adds up to a system that looks, on the face of things, very lucrative. However, when these ideologies are analysed from the perspective of feminist and womanist frameworks it becomes clear that the essential nature of freedom, wellbeing and safety of women is traded in for a system of vulnerability to abuse and subjugation.

This existential anxiety is important in this regard because it describes the processes of the Mighty Men's Conference's masculinism leading to the Worthy Women's Conference's formenism. This anxiety arose out of a white male mindset where white men suddenly do not have certainty of lifestyle. There is no certainty of work. Where white men once enjoyed the benefits of a state funded way of life, now there is a great uncertainty. The control that they once possessed is gone. A way in which men aim to re-establish power in "reducing

[this] existential anxiety" is primarily through religion (Nadar and Potgieter 2010: 148f). Here Nadar and Potgieter point out that sexism and racism are fundamentally linked or "two sides of the same coin" in their words (2010: 149). Their hold on race is completely diminished. Racism, by law, cannot (or should not) function. However, sexism and its relationship to religion is established, if not on a larger social scale, then at least on a domestic scale.

Women cannot be protected here, because not only does their subjugation fall behind closed doors, but behind the closed doors of a religion that does not hold women on the same level as men, but rather as objects of men's demesne, as I mentioned before.

There is, as Nadar and Potgieter write, a tug of war between the secular world and the religious world in regards to the rights of women, which is perhaps why formenism poses such a great threat to women who are vulnerable to abuse, because in this way women have become complicit in the abuse of other women, due to their ignorance of the social, economic and political realities faced by countless women throughout South Africa, their ignorance of the reality of HIV and AIDS and the vulnerability of women that are powerless to negotiate their own sexualities in a patriarchal South Africa, and their ignorance of the reality of women locked in abusive, life threatening relationships and marriages that are sanctioned by the church and its use of scripture.

Even though the secular world is very concerned and critical with social problems inherent in religious ideologies, it is the complementarian hermeneutic of gender that makes formenism so acceptable to the non-critical eye. Complementarian thought segregates the social places of men and women and stratifies them according to gender, as opposed to egalitarian thought which sees men and women as equals in all things. Complementarianism suggests that equality can exist within a submission framework. If women submit to men, then they become equal to men, at least in the sense of fulfilling their 'god-given' roles.

The critical error in the conceptualization of 'god-given' roles and biblical concepts of gender stratification is exemplified through the manifestation of violence. Violence, itself, in the

domestic sphere as well as the endorsement of violence in the domestic sphere is important to Nadar's feminist and womanist theoretical framework. Nadar makes the following statement in regards to the endorsement of violence in the domestic sphere:

Who is afraid of Bible believing Christians? Well, if the Bible believing Christian continues to insist that Kerina remain in an abusive marriage, because the Bible says that divorce is wrong, then I am very afraid of the Bible believing Christian. If the Bible believing Christian continues to perpetuate the myth that women are raped because of immodest dress, then I am very afraid of the Bible believing Christian. If the Bible believing Christian continues to deny women their right to answer the call of God to the ordained ministry, then I am very afraid of the Bible believing Christian (Nadar 2009a: 142).

Nadar focuses on a particular study done by Isabel Phiri that reflects the severity of domestic violence in South Africa. This particular study looks at twenty five women in Pentecostal Indian Christian homes in the area of Phoenix, Kwa-Zulu Natal. Eighty four percent, twenty one, of these women admitted to have fallen victim to domestic violence. They were the wives of leaders within the church. Phiri's study linked biblical beliefs and teaching, like those regarding submission within the home and women who stay in abusive relationships (Nadar 2005: 72 and Nadar and Potgieter 2010: 151 and Phiri 2000).

I am interested in these different churches that Nadar speaks of because they provide a sort of theological landscape in which we can see how different traditions are formed. With the examples I have illustrated, we can see the interesting contrast between the Pentecostal Indian churches maintaining an old patriarchal system of sexist oppression as opposed to Angus Buchan's neo-conservative push to reassert an old forms and establish new forms of sexist oppression.

What is interesting in both these examples is that women in the church are kept in the same roles as they would be kept in within a domestic context. Women may be empowered economically, in their jobs, with their friends; however, they are kept in the domestic space

by the church. Very few women are put in places of power where important decision making happens. It is even more infrequent for women to serve in sacramental capacities (Nadar 2005: 64f).

The subsequent interpretation of the Bible as normative and authoritative contributes to the discrimination against women with regard to various issues that prevent them from enjoying a fullness of humanity equal to that of the men within the church (Nadar 2005: 66).

The story of Kerina is not unusual. If one out of every two women in South Africa will be raped in her lifetime (Nadar 2004b: 62) then there is a serious suspicion raised when social and religious beliefs and cultural mores "promote and condone sexual violence" (2004: 62) and by remaining silent the church only endorses rape and abuse.

Why is it, then, that in the face of so much progress made in by women and by the liberation seekers, that new trends of subjection and self-subjection would arise? Nadar and Potgieter points to what is called "patriarchal bargaining" (Nadar and Potgieter 2010: 147). This is where the wellbeing of a woman and her children depend on them pledging their submission to a patriarchal figure. Their safety is only guaranteed if they submit to the man as the leader of the house. Women are in essence occupied by male ideas and held ransom. In this way if the woman does not submit she is marginalized, but if she does submit then at least she gets the protection by her husband of her and her family.

This compromise seems palatable to women because of three reasons (2010: 151f): firstly, there is no direct violence involved and the process is "disciplinary" (2010: 150) rather than being forceful; secondly, this is a healthier compromise as men are put in a position where they have to take responsibility and does reduce the burden carried by women; and lastly, this process reduces the existential anxiety, "caused by radical changes in the country" (2010: 151).

The criticism of formenism and patriarchal bargaining is that it seems good when seen superficially. It is a good thing for men to take responsibility. It is a good thing for men to think about their role in society and how they have failed in the past and how they can improve things in the future. It is a good thing that men are beginning to talk about masculinities and what it means to be a man. The problem with formenism and patriarchal bargaining here is that when taken to the logical conclusion, in South Africa where women are abused and where abuse is a reality for a fair majority of South African women, women are urged to remain within abusive relationships, and like the story of Kerina, they are blamed when they are abused, because, they are not submitting properly to their husbands. Nadar quotes Anne Borrowdale saying that, "if submission continues to be the 'theory,' then abuse will inevitably continue to be the 'practice'" (Nadar and Potgieter 2010: 151).

Nadar's feminist focus develops from this point onwards in that it, like Musa Dube's work, goes on to focus on race, economics, and social issues. Being based in South Africa, Nadar's feminism is deeply rooted in the community. In the following section I want to show how she incorporates issues of race, economics, and social criticism in her work.

Although her postcolonial approach is not as defined as Musa Dube's work, she is painfully aware of the effects that colonialism has had on South Africa. Nadar also introduces race and issues of economics into her writing at this point. She writes of the effects that Apartheid and post-Apartheid has had on the Afrikaans person (Nadar and Potgieter 2010: 148f and Nadar 2009b: 557f) and on the Indian person (Nadar 2005: 62-64 and Nadar 2009a: 113 and Nadar 2009d: 211f). She writes, about the world in which the different races are forged and then interact. She writes:

The Indian wing of the church to which I belonged was only an "adopted child," and was never fully regarded as part of the Full Gospel Church because of the segregation between White, Black, Colored and Indian congregations, which the church enforced. Thus, we were the adopted Indian children of predominantly white parents who ruled the church (Nadar 2009a: 113).

Here she shows the link between how two systems of racialising and colonisation create a superstructure that suppresses people from different races within the church during Apartheid. Transformation, development, social engagement and academic responsibility are important notions for Nadar who is passionately geared toward helping the disadvantaged. Nadar is in favour of an interventionist approach on the part of the biblical scholar.

She asserts that the biblical scholar has to find ways of applying academic knowledge in real life situations if not to aid in development then to create a critical conscientisation. Application of knowledge on a social level is very important to Nadar. The role of the biblical scholar is to engage with a community as an activist (Nadar 2009d: 349).

In, Nadar's focus on activism she makes a case for "ordinary reader" (Nadar 2006b: 342) and contextual biblical study. Although there is some debate among biblical scholars as illustrated within Nadar's own work as to the usage of the word "ordinary" there is definitely a focus on people who are engaging with the biblical text in a pre-critical way, people who are poor and marginalised and, in many of these cases, people living with HIV and AIDS. Contextual biblical studies offer the marginalized and the poor empowerment and a voice. It provides tools for people who would otherwise not have access to critically approach the Bible, not necessarily bringing them to a place where they themselves can view the Bible in a critical light, but rather offering them tools to question the way that they are treated, to find their own place in the story, to offer them tools through which they can find identification and association within the text and the characters within the narrative (2006b: 342).

Nadar would argue that in reading with a community the scholar comes to understand the ways in which the community reads the Bible. In this way the scholar "goes on to genuinely comprehend the community's motivations and principles behind their reading practices" (Nadar 2006b: 345). When reading Nadar's work it becomes clear that there are some disagreements (particularly among biblical scholars and theologians) about the role of the biblical scholar and the role of biblical studies and how a critical but genuine voice can be

gained from the voices of the marginalized. From Nadar's writing it is clear that her allegiance is to the poor and marginalized in spite of the biblical scholar and she calls for social engagement and transformation.

1. Scholarship must be firmly rooted in the community if it is to be meaningful;
2. Scholarship that fails to engage 'living data' can be considered elitist and paternalistic;
3. Scholarship must be responsible to the community, if it is to have the potential to transform (Nadar 2006b: 340).

5.2) Nadar's Methodological Tools

This push for engagement, particularly in the form contextual biblical studies is evident in Nadar's approach to the Bible. This is where I want to move into the second interpretive feature of Nadar's approach to the Bible. When we look at how Nadar reads the Bible, her feminist and postcolonial frameworks are always at play. When she deals with characters she asks questions regarding gender and masculinity, she asks questions of economics and identity, but the way that she does that is through narrative tools primarily while also employing socio-historical features. She focuses on plot and characterization and the movement of time in the story. She also employs parallels between different texts alongside her African feminist/womanist approach to the text. Her first analysis is a literary analysis of the story of Esther.

I have taken three stories that Nadar focuses on in the book of Esther. The first story that I am interested in is the story of Vashti a wife of Ahasuerus, who is commonly thought to be Xerxes the first (Esther 1v1-22). The story concerns her refusal to attend a banquet in which Ahasuerus commands her to attend improperly dressed and Ahasuerus' consequent wrath against all women of his kingdom.

What is important for Nadar is the character of Vashti. Vashti is very mysterious. In fact, getting verifiable information regarding her is difficult, but she embodies a feminist force within the text. It would seem that her single action in the narrative is one of disobeying her husband (refusing to attend a banquet held by Ahasuerus in arguably improper attire). For Nadar this an act that sets an entire plot in motion in many ways and that affects every character in the plot and threatens the rule of men in an entire kingdom. A king who is humiliated becomes an example to all other men in the land. And it is strange in the biblical text to see such an overt sexism. In a few places in the text it is even written into law the way that men and women are to be treated (Nadar 2006a: 69).

In the narrative we see an aggressively legalised system bent on controlling women (and children given the Contemporary English Version). Cultural systems and legal systems are built around how women are to be treated by and for the purposes of men. Vashti's disobedience causes a problem in this system.

There seems to be what Nadar calls an "equilibrium" that Vashti disrupts. This is a narrative category that Nadar employs where she shows that there is a sort of status quo within the narrative that needs to be guarded by men. Women in this world have to accept their place within the heavily regulated spaces made available to them. There is no bargaining for them. Vashti's actions show exactly how fragile the system is. The king's failure to maintain order within his own household will result in a breakdown of the society within the text. The context of sexism as a state mandated guard against the threat of societal collapse is significant to Nadar in this instance. The king and his men get rid of Vashti. In essence removing her from the plot is the only way in which equilibrium is established again, with Esther coming in later to seemingly restore this order (Nadar 2006a: 69).

In the case of Ahasuerus' harem, Nadar points out the irony in that instead of the king using the model of obedience as the standard by which his new bride is chosen (through which the status quo or "equilibrium" would have had been maintained), keeping in mind that Vashti was disposed of because of disobedience, Ahasuerus chooses a new wife on the

principle of beauty. This portrayal of male and female characters is important to Nadar and is the starting point of her narrative approach to the text. She is not only interested in how men and women are portrayed, but how men and women act, how they are treated, how time flows around the characters in the plot.

Nadar conflates the second part, the story of the rape of the women in Ahasuerus' harem with the rape of the Dinah (Genesis 34v1). This inter-textual analysis is very similar to Dube's inter-textual analysis of Judith and Rahab. The story of Dinah is concerned with Shechem's rape of Dinah and her brother's revenge against Shechem and, his father, Hamor's city. Nadar connects this narrative with that of the rape of the women in Ahasuerus' harem. After Vashti was sent away, Ahasuerus decided to find himself a new queen that would be more pleasing to him than Vashti was. Virgins were brought to Ahasuerus' harem from all the provinces of the kingdom. They were sent to the king in the evenings and only returned in the morning. The king would only call them back by name if she was pleasing to him, or "took delight in her" (Esther 2v14). It is not explicitly stated in this story that these women were raped, but I will get back to this in a moment (Esther 2v1-14).

The last story is that of Esther, who was the woman Ahasuerus eventually chooses after the rape of his harem girls. Her story is concerned with how she and her brother Mordecai outsmart the Persians and saves the Jewish people in the Persian empire.

Returning to Dinah, Nadar focuses on Mercy Oduyoye's re-telling of the rape of Dinah, which tells the story of Dinah from the perspective of Dinah. Her re-telling tells the story with the voice of Dinah, giving Dinah her voice back. She does not speak in the text, in much the same way that neither Vashti nor the women in the harem speak. Oduyoye's re-telling of the story of Dinah speaks of the horror of rape and kidnapping.

The story is horrific. This woman is not only sexually stolen but physically abducted and she is silenced by a male narrator who tells her story from the male perspective. She was stolen

from Jacob, her father; and also from her brothers. This is an interesting use of the narrative that gives weight to a given character within the narrative. This method of exegesis allows the reader of the text to identify directly with a character, like Dinah, who might be silent or the object of other character's actions and not a subject of her own actions. For Nadar, this story "reveals at least three key features of her theology and the Circle theology" (Nadar 2006a: 59).

These three features play equally as important a role for Nadar as it does for Oduyoye and the Circle. The first is that experience in and of itself is a "legitimate source of theology" (Nadar 2006a: 60). For Nadar the fact that women are raped and abused daily makes their experience an invaluable tool in accessing these texts and offering these women an allegiance to the text. Expanding on what Nadar says, the reader brings their experiences to the text, and using their own experiences this form of exegesis allows the reader to find similar instances and similar characters within the text. People may feel sidelined as Vashti was. People may have been raped like Dinah or the harem women. This style of narrative exegesis makes the text personal.

The second feature is that story-telling has value. Women are silent in the text. "We do not hear their voices. Everything about women is filtered through the voice of the narrator, who is male" (2006a: 60). It is because of this silence of the voices of the women that adds to Nadar's belief that these women were raped rather than simply paraded in some sort of beauty contest (2006a: 60).

The patriarchal Bible silences the voices of women, whether as victims of rape or as agents in their own right. We do not hear their voices (2006a: 60).

They are not simply paraded before him in beautiful gowns. Yet what happens to these virgins when they go in to the king's room at night? I suggest that their bodies are violated and raped, being treated as mere objects of desire. The virgins are as violated as the Levite's concubine in Judges 19 (2006a: 68).

Lastly, there needs to be an exposition, interrogation, deconstruction and reinterpretation (Paraphrased from 2006a: 61) of these "Texts of Terror". The role that the Bible plays in

society and its centrality to the story of women in a Christian world raised by the Bible makes it impossible to dismiss the Bible. The Bible has become an invaluable tool in the "hands of the oppressed and exploited" (Nadar 2006a:64). The operation of patriarchal and hegemonic violence, neglect and exploitation within the text needs to be critically deconstructed. These are sociological terms that Nadar brings into the exegetical process. Nadar is conscious about her understanding surrounding the social difficulties regarding sexism and the constructed difference between the genders, among other issues. These things are apparent to Nadar within the text itself, "The text colludes in the approval of the rape of women, and... ..such readings, designated as 'Word of God' are construed as 'Natural'" (Nadar 2006a: 62).

Oppressive readings of these texts therefore make and maintain structures of abuse that women become trapped in. I think that this kind of reading brought alongside Nadar's criticism of Angus Buchan's Mighty Men movement would make a powerful statement in how men create seemingly tasteful masculinist frameworks that simply conspire towards abuse and in all likelihood, rape.

Nadar uses a "Literary-Womanist Analysis" of Esther 2v1-18 (Nadar 2006a: 68), analysing the use of the literary devices of plot and time within the narrative. The plot runs along a familiar pattern of "equilibrium - complication - equilibrium" (2006a: 69). The problem is that especially with the story with Vashti and the consequent rape of the harem is that the equilibrium within the plot is one of male domination over women. Nadar notes that because men are the agents of action within the narrative and that the text functions on the level of a patriarchal ideology that the story leads us to think along the lines of what Nadar calls the "logic" (2006a: 70) of the story.

The unfortunate thing is that although there are markers within the narrative that would seem to contradict the main patriarchal trend within the text, the overall trend "seems to imply that power lies with the males and the Persians only" particularly "within this chapter (2v1-18) it certainly seems to be the case" (2006a: 70-71).

Nadar notes, however, that there is the subtle trend within the text than can be discerned through a womanist's perspective. It sees Esther as victorious over her enemies, rather than merely a woman object that functions within the wishes of men. She is at the mercy of Ahasuerus, but even, it can be argued, wins him over to her cause in saving her people from genocide. There is a certain tension in the text between these two trajectories, one oppressive, the other liberating. Because this text is read in South Africa where rape happens every day and because of how it makes women vulnerable to infection of HIV and AIDS, the African feminist/womanist is forced to recognise these two trajectories and to read against the grain of the text that seeks to oppress and normalize the oppression of women and rationalise rape and headship of men over women; and alternatively to liberate the parts of the text that shows how strong women can be when faced with similar challenges.

Analysis of how time and time markers are used in the text shows that there is a definitive move in the narrative that betrays the motive behind the patriarchy. The story begins in the third year of Ahasuerus; Esther is only taken to Ahasuerus in the tenth month of the seventh year. Assuming that a year is spent in which the virgins are prepared for Ahasuerus that would suggest that the raping of the virgins in the harem continued for about three years and ten months (2006a: 73).

Nadar's criticism of this element in the text is that the male need to re-establish its power within the narrative would go so far as to explain away rape countless women for more than three years. The king's needs are all important regardless of the cost to women and the author reflects this attitude in neglecting to deal with rape in the text. Nadar points to the use of short sentences in the text that speeds the reader through the story "brush[ing] off" what is actually a horrible story for the sake of getting to the point (2006a:73). Rape is condoned by the text, inscribed "into the text" (2006a: 74) but is hidden out of sight from the reader because of the arrival of Esther into the plot. It would seem that rape here

becomes rationalized and explained away, a part of the narrative, rather than a horrific event that scholars should spend a lot of time scrutinizing.

Abuse in this regard and the way that characters (particularly female characters) are treated in the biblical narrative and consequently outside of the Bible in the church is an important aspect of Nadar's work and understanding how Nadar engages with her third interpretive feature that I want to look at, her theological orientation. Her theological orientation seems to be largely informed by her sceptical approach to the Bible and her overt scepticism with regards to the abusive rhetoric that surrounds these texts.

5.3) Nadar's Theological Orientation

Nadar's approach to the biblical text uses a socially aware criticism of patriarchal processes that operate within the text and how those processes are hermeneutically and rhetorically interacting with the thinking of a society and how the church operates within that setting. When looking at Nadar's theological orientation, especially surrounding exegetical approaches to the text, we see, particularly, her hermeneutic of suspicion at play.

Nadar focuses on how fundamentalism and patriarchy operate together while finding more life affirming theologies that function within the frameworks of feminist/womanist and gender based approaches to the text and surrounding theologies, while uncovering violent texts or "Texts of Terror" (Nadar 2006a; Nadar 2004b; West 2004), a term which has become practically idiomatic in my studies as far as the topic of patriarchal and heterosexualistic fundamentalism is concerned.

Because she approaches these texts from the perspective of suspicion with regards to her sociological categories of interest, Nadar's approach to the biblical texts chooses to focus more on the negative trends within the Bible, such as rape, gender inequality and injustice

and focussing on them and creating a critique on how these texts are used to promote modern ways of legitimating gender violence or perhaps turning a blind eye to it.

Nadar's suspicion and scepticism begin by criticizing notions of biblical inerrancy and the sorts of theological and dogmatic rhetoric surrounding the Bible. While there is still a strong pull towards the fundamentalist and conservative notions that create gender roles that are oppressive and dangerous and that foster an atmosphere of vulnerability and exploitation of women. Nadar's approach to the church's attitude towards the Bible and women in this context centres initially throughout the church's approach to the Bible at first in what Nadar calls, the "four i's" (Nadar 2009a: 136). This is important in considering Nadar's theological orientation as she analyses the denominational theological orientations she was faced with. She particularly links this to her own church as a child; her brother's church, which is Pentecostal evangelist and churches that cling to "Pentecostal and Charismatic traditions" (2009a: 136). Although, I do think, that the "four i's" (2009a: 137f) can apply to a much larger group of churches. I certainly think that they apply to my own childhood church experience in the Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk / Dutch Reformed Church.

The first "i" is the Inerrancy of the biblical text, in that it is the Word of God. It does not simply contain the Word of God in this way, but actually embodies it. Thereby leading into the second "i". Because if God says something, then it cannot be wrong. It is indelible, errorless and binding.

The second "i" is that of the Infallibility. Not only was the Word of God in the text errorless, but cannot be corrupted by human authors. I imagine the translation process and errors is also dismissed in this way. Nadar suggests that, "despite factual and scientific errors, its central message could not be corrupted."

The third "i" is that of the Inspired nature of the Bible that since the words of the Bible can be taken to be the literal words of God that their authority is absolute in all tracts of life from training people how to live to punishing people when they do not live properly.

The fourth "i" is that of the Immediate nature of the Bible. The function of the Spirit in the interpretation process takes for granted the social frameworks at play in this context. Often reading and interpreting the Bible is written off as the same process. The Bible in this way can be applied immediately, without thinking, without critical thought, directly and immediately regardless of context or subject. Nadar returns to this saying that, "so texts that, for example, prescribe a particular dress code for women must be obeyed" (Nadar 2009a: 137f).

Nadar's criticism of this process inherent in the neo-Pentecostal sense is how this specific language and use of pedagogical word ordering has arisen is a relatively modern way of arguing for a non-critical approach to the text arising out of the late 1800's and the early 1900's (Nadar 2009a: 138). The problem that arises for Nadar in this situation is that, when this concept is involved in the process of approaching the biblical text, people who are marginalized will be oppressed. Nadar calls this process, "unhelpful in terms of social justice" (2009a: 138).

5.4) Nadar's Work with the Text

Whereas Nadar's approach of the Bible is very sceptical drawing on the sorts of verbal and literary rhetoric employed by the church, she does use the Bible in formulating theological expressions and ideo-theological frameworks that are more positive. Nadar's approach to the book of Job analyses the book on both a literary level and on a rhetorical level. Her concern is for the characters and what they say, but Nadar's concern is also focussed on the theologies (or ideo-theological framework) contained within the book. Given the propensity of the text for making rhetorical spaces for rape and violence, when these sorts of

ideologies come into play with retribution theologies especially within the context of HIV and AIDS then the marginalized, the poor, women and children become vulnerable to infection, they lose connection with their societies and suffer a social death, then followed by a physical death, alone and rejected. Nadar approaches the book of Job as a source of critical theology regarding retribution theology (Nadar 2004a: 60).

As I discussed in chapter three, retribution theologies function on the basis of God unfaithfully rewarding good actions and punishing bad actions, however by contrast indicate that good fortune is God rewarding a person for doing something good and misfortune is God punishing someone for doing something bad. In the context of HIV and AIDS, by logic of retribution theology, if you are dying of HIV and AIDS then you deserve it. This sort of rhetorical theological expression does not take account of or take responsibility for structural injustices and evils (Nadar 2004a: 61f). This is dangerous rhetoric for Nadar.

Nadar notes that HIV and AIDS does not just appear in Africa out of the blue and arbitrarily effect suffering on random people, but rather that there are definitive social and economic forces behind the spread of HIV and also who is most at risk of infection and, after infection, risk of stigma, discrimination, neglect and unnecessary death. "The HIV/AIDS virus came to a people already knocked down by an unending spiral of poverty, disease and violence" (Nadar 2004a: 63).

The book of Job does not offer a contrasting theology to the theology of retribution, but instead an adjacent theology that according to Walter Brueggemann is a "trajectory of theological thought that is born out of the concrete painful experiences of people" (Nadar 2004a: 63). These two trends are active within the text and are shown as engaging with each other. This is also true of how the text is read. Within the text we see a questioning of the traditional model of retributionism. The text, while sidestepping the issue of why it is that bad things happen to good people, the text does use suffering as a way of understanding how people relate to society and God. The biggest critique here is of the traditional formula and that is what Nadar focuses on (Nadar 2006a: 64). Methodologically

this is rhetorical of Nadar, but ideo-theologically this is again a hallmark of Nadar's alliance to liberation theology. This is why social categories keep cropping up in her theological rhetoric, because liberation theology is concerned with concepts of identity and empire.

Essentially Nadar highlights her concern with social categories asking why is it that women are the most vulnerable to infection and are "infected and affected by HIV/AIDS" disproportionately (Nadar 2006a: 64)? The same could be asked of the poor. The same could be asked of black people as opposed to white. Is it that women are more evil than men, the poor more evil than the rich, black people more than white? If retributionistic theologies are to be believed than the answer is yes. Why else would God visit such suffering on people?

Even Job's wife, the only woman in the text given voice to speak, is sidelined as foolish and even as an "agent of Satan" (2006a: 65). It is ironic however that Job reacts to his wife's theological questioning more than to the long diatribes of his friends. She in this way sets the tone for theological discussion in the story (2006b: 66). Nadar writes on this matter particularly,

By acknowledging that Job's friends have not spoken well, but rather that Job has spoken rightly, (even though Job has debated with God in very strong terms concerning his suffering) God indirectly vindicated Job's wife, because Job does what his wife hints at - he begins the process of questioning his suffering in terms of his belief system (Nadar 2006a: 66).

In the context of the poor, Nadar highlights Job's words in chapter 24 which raises the issue of structural sin. Job in this way criticizes those that do not help the poor and the needy alongside those that do harm to others. "He laments the fact that those who cause the suffering of people, those who oppress and exploit are not punished" (2004a: 68). Job sees injustice for what it is and criticises it, highlighting the tension between these two theologies. According to Nadar, this retribution theology draws on the various sources of authority available to the characters within the text. The first source of authority according

to Nadar is that of common sense. "Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? Or where were the righteous cut off?" (Job 4v7 KJV)

The issue here is that this sort of logic only works in an ideal setting and certainly does not function in a South African context where people are dying of HIV and AIDS. It does not function when brought into the light of "colonialism, apartheid, genocides, and the most recent of our woes, globalization" (Nadar 2004a: 69). Common sense does not work in this regard as it fails to take into account the suffering world that is also a righteous world, especially when common sense is becoming euphemistically linked to good judgement when no good judgement takes place.

The second source of authority that Nadar deals with is observation. And Eliphaz particularly draws on the authority of observation, but as Job points out that it is all relative and relies heavily on perspective. Eliphaz says: "Even as I have seen, they that plough iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same" (Job 4v8 KJV).

Job's perspective is different now from Eliphaz who says this. Job has lost so much and has done nothing to deserve this. Eliphaz cannot see this and does not understand. Nadar suggests that Eliphaz is probably as rich as Job was before Job lost everything and cannot see what poverty and suffering is like. Job here becomes aware of social injustice.

They pluck the fatherless from the breast, and take a pledge of the poor. They cause him to go naked without clothing, and they take away the sheaf from the hungry; Which make oil within their walls, and tread their winepresses, and suffer thirst. Men groan from out of the city, and the soul of the wounded crieth out: yet God layeth not folly unto them (Job 24v9-12 KJV)

The third source of authority is that of theology. Elihu, the last friend to visit Job who raises theological issues says: "Therefore hearken unto me, ye men of understanding: far be it

from God, that he should do wickedness; and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity" (Job 34v10 KJV).

I imagine perhaps the author of Job to be writing this with a sense of poetic irony, because everything that has happened within the text happens because of God and Satan's collaboration in the narrative. Job's suffering renders theological discussion about the nature of God useless. It is clear to the reader and to Job that God has done these things anyway. These things happened outside of some sort of theological ethic (Nadar 2004a: 73). Nadar quotes D. Soelle, "Once the question is radically raised, no answer can be given in the context of an understanding of God that combines justice and omnipotence" (Nadar 2004a: 73).

God's response does not answer Job's questions, but instead leads Job away from theological thinking that would suggest that God functions in the way that Job's friends have suggested. After all, God does berate Job's friends and say that Job has spoken correctly of God. Nadar suggests that God does not say how he is to be spoken of, but rather how he is not to be spoken of (2004a: 76).

Retribution theology, for Nadar, creates an environment of "inadequate pastoral care, corrupt theological interpretations and unjustified fear" (2004a: 76-77) when the church should be dealing with people with HIV and AIDS with love and respect and coherent theology. Nadar is careful not to point to the book of Job as a cure for the paradox of suffering existing in a world where an omnipotent God exists, but rather offers biblical scholars tools that can criticize life denying theologies such as retributionism.

With Nadar's theological orientation geared toward liberation theology we can see how her criticisms of broken concepts surrounding identity highlights the foundational errors in arguing for sexist patriarchal models such as Angus Buchan's work and within the story of Kerina and within the Pentecostal evangelist churches in Kwa-Zulu Natal. We can also see

how sexist frameworks and concepts of empire and the damage done by colonialism have impacted on Nadar's reading of the Bible and theological orientation. Nadar's style with the Bible and her womanist work and liberation theology shows clearly how Apartheid has affected the South African academic. Nadar is not as strong in postcolonialism as Musa Dube is, but her work is deeply affected by it and she is overt about postcolonialism in much of her work.

Chapter 6: Denise Ackermann

"HIV and AIDS is our *kairos*." (Denise Ackermann 2004b:54)

Denise Ackermann's interests have progressed through the years from feminist liberation theologies focussed on practical theology, to feminist hermeneutics and biblical interpretation in biblical studies, to more recent developments in biblical interpretation in the context of HIV and AIDS. Ackermann is retired, but is professor emeritus at the universities of Stellenbosch and the Western Cape. Her feminist perspective is heavily influenced by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Rosemary Ruether.

Ackermann is not strictly speaking a biblical scholar, but a practical theologian. Her working with critical feminist hermeneutics, however, is important in studying the Circle's use of the Bible. Her feminist hermeneutic "arises out of the imperative to find a new interpretive frameworks for critical feminist consciousness" (Ackermann 1993a: 1).

Ackermann's interpretive features are interestingly enough geared towards praxis as well. Her theoretical framework is concerned with feminist hermeneutics, her methodological tools are concerned with feminist and gendered appeals to the narrative of the Bible while also employing rhetorical readings that are aware of ethical and moral philosophical arguments. Her theological orientation is centred around feminist liberation and embodied theologies.

6.1) Ackermann's Theoretical Framework

Ackermann's feminist hermeneutic seems to be the theoretical starting point for her work, this is important because, as I will show later, it will inform the way Ackermann goes on to read the Bible in the context of HIV and AIDS. Ackermann directly connects the need of a feminist hermeneutic and the need of new interpretative frameworks (1993a: 2). Perhaps I am anachronistically linking Ackermann to Jonathan Draper (2002) and Gerald West (2009), in saying that there needs to be a development of the analysis and study of context

alongside the development of the appropriative tools used by the feminist. Because of the work done by sociologically aware theologians and biblical scholars, western biblical scholarship has been shown to be flawed (1993a:2), this is almost axiomatic of Ackermann's hermeneutics. Feminism recognises the androcentric nature of the Bible and therefore a critical approach is developed with regards to the text and its ideologies and how the text and androcentric ideology is used to oppress women. This is the feminist hermeneutic (1993a: 3).

Ackermann notes that there are two complications that arise from feminist hermeneutics. The first problem is that of the authority of the Bible. There is a parallel here in some regards with Ackermann and Nadar as they both call biblical authority into question. Ackermann raises the issue that the Bible is used as an oppressive document and that its authority is problematic. She asks of the Bible, "Does the Bible witness to what is live-giving and liberating for both women and men? Does it enable humanity to make choices in regard to its deepest needs that are good, liberating and just for the whole human community?" (Ackermann 1993a: 8)

For Ackermann, the only authority in the Bible is within the "life and teachings of Jesus Christ" (Ackermann 1993a: 8). For Ackermann the values inherent in Jesus' work for all humanity which includes women redeems the Bible.

The second problem is that critical feminist hermeneutics is heavily influenced by modern developments in social sciences, psychologies and post-structuralism (Ackermann 1993a: 9). These developments have made biblical scholars aware that the interpreter approaches the Bible with bias and that bias is equally as important as the interpretation of the text. (1993a: 9). In addressing this problem Ackermann exposes her own principles in this regard.

Ackermann's critical feminist hermeneutic is supported by an "underlying principle" (Ackermann 1993a: 9), that women are fully human and that they need to be treated and valued as if they are fully human. This is built upon by a further two principles. "Firstly, the principle of equality (women and men are fully equal and should be treated as such) and

secondly, the principle of mutuality (humans are viewed as embodied subjects, essentially related and essentially free)" (Ackermann 1993a: 9).

Ackermann challenges the concept of individualism here, namely that people exist in isolation. She calls this inadequate (Ackermann 1993a: 9). The problem is that because of individualistic attitudes especially along the lines of "class, race, sex, age or any other divisive category" people become socially and ideologically isolated and that makes them vulnerable to exploitation. In a context where mutuality is not realised, it "impairs people's freedom to choose and to act" (1993a: 9)

6.2) Ackermann's Methodological Tools

Her methodology in this regard she calls, "reflection on hermeneutical praxis" or "hermeneutical methodology". Ackermann begins by outlining Juan Segundo's approach to hermeneutical methodology. This methodology approaches liberation hermeneutics in the following way: Firstly, our experience of oppression at first hand leads us to ideological suspicion. Secondly, we use our ideological suspicion as a critical tool to view the "whole ideological superstructure" of society, especially its theology, which involves social analysis. Thirdly, because our theological frameworks have been challenged there has come about a consequent rise of suspicion surrounding scriptures and the "prevailing hermeneutical models of scripture". Again there is a parallel here between Ackermann and Nadar regarding a rise of suspicion of biblical authority, I will deal with these parallel's in another chapter. Lastly, a new hermeneutic emerges for interpreting scripture and there is the discovery of liberating trends and motifs in the Bible (Ackermann 1993a: 12).

Ackermann introduces Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's criticism of Segundo which, Fiorenza argues, does not take into account the presence of oppressive biblical ideologies or a "false consciousness". Fiorenza, according to Ackermann understands all ideology as 'false consciousness'. Fiorenza views the Bible as a male document that serves male interests and cannot therefore be accepted in the light of feminist authority or human truth. Fiorenza

uses the Bible in this way to reconstruct the suffering of women within the text (Ackermann 1993a: 13).

Fiorenza's methodology is one which also proposes that we approach the Bible with suspicion. Then, oppressive and androcentric texts can be identified and highlighted. Texts that "socialized women into accepting submissive roles, can be subjected to critical examination" (1993a: 13). Feminist texts or texts that contain feminist trends can be repossessed in reconstructing the story of women in the Bible and women can be involved in the process, not as passive listeners, but as actively engaging in the story.

Ackermann adds her own methodological steps. She proposes that the hermeneutical process should raise awareness and should be involved in conscientisation, leading to change. Again she raises the issue that in raising a hermeneutic of suspicion the reader needs to outline trends within the text that are androcentric and patriarchal. The struggle for liberation needs to be highlighted next to the reclamation of texts that involve women.

6.3) Ackermann's Theological Orientation

Ackermann then moves from the formation of feminist hermeneutics into theologies that deal with action and asking questions of how it is that theologians should act. The formulation of feminist hermeneutics on their own is not enough, but should occur within circumstances where certain and measurable social change can occur.

These sorts of feminist hermeneutics that deal with suspicion of patriarchal voices in the text and a call for theological action are evident in Ackermann's methodological tools when approaching the text itself. What she is doing, in essence, is translating her feminist procedures directly into feminist models of reading the text. However, her methodological tools also encompass a rhetorical reading and examination of the text employing concepts of morality and ethics alongside her social and feminist reading. Ackermann, in this way, reads the text looking for clues that counter the patriarchal and harmful voices. These

healthier clues within the text, that Ackermann is looking for, are ones that offer hermeneutics of "Resistance and Hope" (Ackermann 2004b: 38).

For Ackermann these clues become watershed moments within the text that bolster her feminist hermeneutics. The three clues that she deals with in particular offer insight into texts that she deals with. The first clue for her is the straightforwardness or brusqueness of the text. These may be places where the text merely states horrible things in perhaps cold or unfeeling ways. She looks for instances where "There is no prevarication, no avoidance of the horror, no cover up" (2004b: 39).

What is important here for Ackermann is where the text is recognizably and unmistakably calling out injustices and in some sense provoking the reader to respond. The second clue is where the text speaks of embodiment, especially when the text speaks of the Body of Christ. Ackermann uses the language associated with the Body of Christ alongside the concept of embodied theologies that speak of the corporal nature of human existence.

If, on the one hand, these are embodied readings of the Bible, and, on the other hand, then the church takes on the metaphor of the Body of Christ; then a serious question is raised when the church acts against, or refuses to act for, the corporal bodies of the women within the church or society. Ackermann, in linking these two ideas, sees embodied theologies as contrary to transcendent models of the church that would focus primarily or only on the human soul.

The 'holiness' of the church is not maintained through rejecting the human body in favour of the soul as a cruel dualism, but instead realizes the corporal nature of the human being. In being cognizant of the embodied reality that people face, the church can more honestly and effectively deal with what it means to suffer, to endure, to love, to crave, to be hungry. Ackerman calls this action a "full utilization of our condition toward the concrete reality of love," (2004b: 41). For Ackermann, this is love made physical, because we are paying attention to the physical aspects of humanity. If the body is abused, then the Body of Christ is abused. If the body is infected, then the Body of Christ is infected. A church that operated within the boundaries of stigmas (Ackermann is writing here with reference to Stigmas

surrounding HIV and AIDS particularly), a church that promotes the "experience of fear or rejection, poverty and death" falls short of the ethic inherent in embodied readings of the Bible and the concept of the Body of Christ (2004b: 43).

Embodied theologies play strongly into her theological orientation and tools after this paragraph. The third clue is the issue of ethical codes and where the text speaks of things that should or ought to be done or should not or ought not to be done. These sorts of ethical statements are not simply personal or individualistic statements. These ethical codes and rhetorical statements that Ackermann pays particular credence to are the ones that make somewhat broad and sweeping social claims such as how they deal with HIV and AIDS and the rhetoric that surround abstinence-only messages. I will return to these clues again when I deal with Ackermann's reading of the rape of Tamar.

These three clues show us the way that Ackermann links her feminist perspective to her theological orientation. Ackermann's feminism highlights the questions that need to be asked when confronted by theological issues. Reading the text as provoking the reader, the role of embodied readings, and criticisms and analyses of wrestling moral and ethical codes within the text become the foundation upon which Ackermann begins to build her theological orientation. Within that theological orientation Ackermann's criticism of dualism is very important because it highlights the way in which the perceived callous nature of scripture, the rejection of body, and consequently oppressive ethical and moral codes function. Dualism in this way sets up a divide in the world into which all things seemingly fall, or could be argued to be divided.

To put this crassly, everything is either 'up' or 'down'. This has historically called black-and-white thinking, and the racial implications of such a statement are not ones to be ignored, as I will explain. Because of this way of thinking, the powerful, the entitled, the privileged, people who Ackermann refers to as those who "have monopolised theological self-definition" (Ackermann 1988) have established themselves as normative, and everyone else as other. These are ancient distinctions. To them, they assume the 'up' trope, whereas everyone else assumes (or is made to assume) the 'down' trope. Historically speaking,

therefore, being white, male, rich, heterosexual, and others have been assigned the privilege of being 'up'.

This is a power play happening here. Because everything that is 'up' must be inherently good, perfect, godly, holy and the usual set of adjectives to do with 'up-ness' and therefore are afforded power. The converse is true as well. Whatever is not white, male, rich, heterosexual, and others, are made bad, imperfect, ungodly, unholy, among others and therefore must be stripped of power. Everything that can be rationalized as either good or bad is automatically slotted into these positions and people who are agents of the 'up' trope often take it upon themselves to subjugate the 'down'.

In this line of thinking, white people are inherently better than black people, or the rich are inherently better than the poor, the educated better than the uneducated, and particularly, for Ackermann, men over women. Those with power will "project" (1988) these images and symbols into the people they wish to subjugate. Ackermann's quote of those who "have monopolised theological self-definition," is important here, and repetition is justified.

The patriarchal anthropological symbol then begins to denote women as inferior and broken reflections of men. Moving from the ancient to the time of historical Christian writers Ackermann maps this pattern of thought in these writers:

The result of this is the patriarchal anthropology which has dominated classical theology for so long. The pattern is familiar and has been supported by views on the nature of women by great lights like Augustine, Aquinas, Luther and Barth. "Woman," in the vulgar eloquence of Chrysostom, "is a necessary evil, a natural temptation, a desirable calamity, a domestic peril, a pained ill." According to Ruether, Augustine is the classical source of this type of anthropology. When discussing the question of the image of God, he reflected on the trinity, arriving at the conclusion that the woman ". . . when she is referred to separately in her quality as a helpmeet . . . then she is not the image of God, but as regards the male alone, he is the image of God as fully and completely as when the woman too is joined with him in one" (Ackermann 1988).

These ideas remained strong within Christian philosophy. With the rise of secularism and the Enlightenment there are also new versions of patriarchal hierarchical models. One in particular eighteenth century development is that of the complementary model which reconstructs old patriarchal models, particularly religious patriarchal models that lasted into the modern age.

These sorts of constructs are very reminiscent of the constructs that Sarojini Nadar and Cheryl Potgieter critique, such as the Worthy Women's Conference as I discussed in the previous chapter. A new set of symbols are created. Women are seen as worthy in and of themselves in as much as they are a part of a man, be it their father or husband (Nadar and Potgieter 2010: 414-414). Women are seen as worthy if they play out their socially allocated functions. Ironically, in this anthropological model men are portrayed as "aggressive, logical and materialistic" whereas women are portrayed as "nurturing, affective, [and] non-rational" (Ackermann 1988). This model is designed to designate women not as the defective male, but as the different being. This model is ultimately designed to keep women within the domestic sphere and keep them from public life (Ackermann 1988).

It is publicly expressed in women's organisations which espouse self-depreciation. A striking example in the USA is the National Council of Catholic Women who voted against the Equal Rights Amendment, saying that the amendment was "a threat to the nature of women" (Ackermann 1988).

South African is a good example of where the problem can be a force multiplier due to the way that sexist oppression and racial oppression play into one another causing even wider damage. South African feminists not only face a manifold problem of there being imbalances in race, sex and class, but all of these are complicated by being filtered through the lens of Apartheid in which socio-political racism, sexism and classism are not only enforced by the government on one hand, but enforced by the church (Ackermann 1988).

For Ackermann, the feminist approach rejects ideas like this inherent in patriarchal anthropology. She proposes an androgynous approach through which human nature is not perceived as male or female but innately human. The concept of 'male' capacity or 'female' capacity is absurd to Ackermann. She quotes Rosemary Ruether:

To put it bluntly, there is no biological connection between male gonads and the capacity to reason. Likewise, there is no biological connection between female sexual organs and the capacity to be intuitive, caring, or nurturing. Thus the labelling of these capacities as masculine and feminine simply perpetuates gender role stereotypes and imports gender complementarity into each person's identity in a confusing way . . . We need to affirm not the confusing concept of androgyny but rather that all humans possess a full and equivalent human nature and personhood, as male and female (Ackermann 1988).

For Ackermann, other theological systems, such as Liberation Theology, that propose liberation for women will not be successful until they start to understand women and the needs of women and the experiences of women. Liberation Theology which focuses so heavily on identity begins to do this. Ackermann echoes the sentiments of the Circle that African feminist/womanist theologies depend on regarding the experiences of women as important (Ackermann 1988), this leads into her work regarding the development of feminist hermeneutics. A part of those experiences include the body of a woman and the province of the body.

Here is where the body becomes so important in Ackermann's work when speaking of embodied theologies alongside her feminist perspective. Her understanding of the body is that it is not just a sub-spiritual thing to be discarded, but something intrinsically special. The role of the body is significant to Ackermann in the context of HIV and AIDS and how stigma plays a role in human conceptualization of bodies. The human body is more than simply just the flesh, but also the human experience, thought, emotions, need, memories, imagination, dreams, pain, pleasure, power and difference to use some of the phrases by Ackermann (Ackermann 2008: 116) or in her own words, "Our bodies are, in fact, the intricate treasury of all that is our-self" (2008: 116). A feminist ethic needs to address the human body as a whole.

Ackermann contrasts this with "Ignorance, prejudice, stereotypes, issues of power and dominance" (2008: 117). With the body being more than merely physical, but also social, when a disease like HIV, being a heavily stigmatised disease, infects a body, then the body is being physically and socially affected. There is a distortion of the person's identity with regards to a society that stigmatizes HIV. You are no longer a person, but a person with HIV. You are known by virtue of having HIV, not by virtue of being human.

Stigma is further complicated by a church that tends to moralise the issue on an individualistic level, however the church fails to see how this individualistic morality does not address the larger social context. Sexuality has been moralised as something innately bad by the church, however sexuality is something that is an embodied reality for all human beings. Sexuality is not something that can be repressed, not without negative consequences. In a context like South Africa where women are not able to control or negotiate their own sexualities (whether it be sex by coercion, sex for food and other necessities, sex through rape by strangers and family members, and this is not an extensive list), ethical statements and moral prerogatives by the church that function solely on the basis of injunction actually creates redundant theology.

This is where Ackermann combines her work regarding praxis and embodied theologies together. "Intentional social activity" is the definition that Ackermann gives to the concept of Praxis (Ackermann 2004a: 25). Ackermann, being a strong proponent for action is never satisfied merely discussion the social issues at hand, but always shifts towards action, whether it begins with reading the bible or in addressing something like the marginalization of women living with HIV. Her embodied theology shifts into a theology of praxis. In formulating her feminist theology of praxis, theological praxis becomes accountable to people who are oppressed and discriminated against and to act in the interests of these people. "Praxis is conceived in collaboration with others whose aims are similar and with other disciplines" (2004a: 26) and that praxis is conceived in relation to other people. Theology of praxis does not happen in isolation. Theological praxis also develops while being mindful of the amount of cultures that interact. This is particularly poignant in the South African context.

A feminist theology of praxis is explicitly concerned with the ethical, when issues such as sexuality and reproduction, violence against women and children, relationships between men and women, and relationships between human beings and nature are pursued. Theology that is explicitly ethical and contextual speaks from specific situations; names experiences; identifies suffering; and articulates possibilities of hope and transformation, testing them within a given moral and ethical framework (Ackermann 2004a: 26).

Ackermann uses this theology of praxis in defining new ways of working with developing theologies around HIV and AIDS. For Ackermann, story-telling, the narrative relation of the human experience is more than merely therapeutic, but essential for human existence (Ackermann 2004a: 29). With regards to HIV and AIDS, story-telling presents people with narrative tools in which they can relate their experience.

Raising awareness that HIV/AIDS is a disease and not a moral failure is vital to the respect with which these stories should be treated and disseminated. Feminist theological praxis suggest that telling and listening to the stories of those who are suffering, discriminated against or oppressed, is an essential starting point for counteracting silence, denial and stigma (Ackermann 2004a: 30).

Gender analysis is another praxis that Ackermann deals with. She calls “culture, gender and religion” the unholy trinity that fuels HIV and AIDS. Understanding the role that gender plays in marginalizing, stigmatizing and discriminating against people living with HIV and AIDS is a vital tool in theologizing about HIV and AIDS (Ackermann 2004a: 31).

Although it is important to understand the impact that gender has on culture and religion in this vein, in an aside note Ackermann writes that we also need to see how gender relationships are affected by culture and religion. Ackermann's feminist liberating theology and theology of praxis finds its roots within a particular theology that is founded on the importance of the human experience. However, it is because the human being possesses a body, Ackermann calls for theologies and readings of the Bible that take the human body into account.

6.4) Ackermann's Work with the Text

One biblical story in particular that Ackermann refers to is the story of the rape of Tamar. The story of Tamar is used by many of the biblical scholars of the Circle and is a very useful text when we take an interpretive snapshot of a particular moment of Israelite gender construction. The story of Tamar appears in II Samuel 13.

Ackermann's first statement regarding this text is that women approach texts, especially texts like this one, with different questions, with questions from the perspective of being a woman. If a woman reads from the Bible, a story of the rape of a woman if the reader herself has been raped, or the story of patriarchal violence is the reader herself is abused at home, then the text has a different meaning when read through her eyes. If we as embodied readers approach an embodied text then the issues we raise will ask different questions. Ackermann refers to Teresa Okure's work that we read from a "social location" (Ackermann 2004b: 31).

Ackermann makes the observation that after Tamar is raped that Tamar is no longer "my sister" to Amnon, but suddenly "this woman" (Ackermann 2004b: 33). Ackermann shows how Tamar is no longer his sister or "my sister" (אחיתי / אחית : sister, my sister), she is no longer a "virgin" (בתולה : virgin), but this woman (הזאת / זאת : this thing [irregular feminine of "זה : this"]). I suppose the fact that she is a woman is assumed here and added to the English as it seems that he merely says, "this thing"). This reduction of person to thing shows that the rape is not only physical but social. Ackermann's reading of this text here is not merely about the rhetorical violence inherent in the text and the moral outrage she feels, but she introduces sociological concepts of feminism and humanism here. Ackermann highlights the idea being that women are not things, human beings are not things. The human creature has intrinsic value.

Ackermann's theoretical framework and methodological tools play into each other here when Ackermann starts pulling rhetorical events out of the text. These are events where persuasive arguments are made by the characters. Again, her clues, as I wrote above,

extract rhetorical statements that are important to Ackermann's feminist perspective. With the first clue regarding the straightforwardness of the text, the story of Tamar does not spare the reader any of the horror. Ackermann uses the unfortunate Americanism "says it as it is" (2004b: 39). Tamar, as well, speaks up and challenges her brother before he rapes her,

No, my brother, do not humble me. For no such thing ought to be done in Israel. Do not do this folly. And I, Where shall I cause my shame to go? And as for you, you shall be as one of the fools in Israel. But now please speak to the king. For he will not withhold me from you (II Samuel 13v12-13 MKJV).

And after he rapes her,

There is no cause. This evil in sending me away is greater than the other that you did to me (II Samuel 13v16 MKJV).

For Ackermann this should be enough to push churches to act responsibly, to begin taking responsibility for the role that the church plays in "the promotion and maintenance of gender inequality" (Ackermann 2004b: 40). The second clue, where the text speaks of embodiment. The issue of HIV and AIDS becomes concrete in this context with Ackermann and I repeat what Ackermann says, "My reading of the Tamar text is "from this place", my place, a place, in which the "bleak immensity" of violence against the bodies of women and children, now haunted by the spectre of HIV and AIDS, rages on" (Ackermann 2004b: 32).

For Ackermann there is an indictment against a church that claims to be the Body of Christ when it not only fails the bodies of women and children, but also becomes implicit in the violence and discrimination that acts against those bodies. The third clue is the issue of ethical codes and where the text speaks of things that should or ought to be done or should not or ought not to be done. "For no such thing ought to be done in Israel," (II Samuel 13v12 MKJV) is a powerful cry on Tamar's part. Her cry is not for her own body, but seemingly for a moral community. She does not say, this thing is not done to me, but this thing is not done in Israel, as if she is protecting Israel and the honour of its people.

Abstinence only ethics within the church are incomplete ethical gestures. They formulate an institutional obligation without recompense from the institution. How is the institution responsible to the people that abstinence did not protect. Obviously abstinence theologies are only one element of this kind of a problem, but it is further highlighted by the issue of

embodied readings. How can a wife be abstinent when she is raped by her unfaithful husband? "Moral truth and a way of life go hand in hand" (Ackermann 2004b: 47). For Ackermann, "A moral community is one whose goal is the common good of all. Such a community upholds the integrity of life, values the dignity of the human person, includes those who are on the margins or excluded while not avoiding the reality of structural sin" (Ackermann 2004b: 46).

What Ackermann is doing here is essentially a narrative reading of the text on one hand. She extracts characters and place. Perhaps an unconscious move on her part is making the female body a place, a locus where violence is done to women. The comment that most illustrates this move reads, "My reading of the Tamar text is 'from this place', my place, a place, in which the "bleak immensity" of violence against the bodies of women and children, now haunted by the spectre of HIV and AIDS, rages on" (Ackermann 2004b: 32).

Tamar's body in this regard, to Ackermann, perhaps assumes something of a meta-location. Meta- by virtue of being an objective terrain upon which men can assert their dominance, but subjective as being the selfsame corpus totality of the women, the "bleak immensity" of that reality, as Ackermann puts it. On the other hand, Ackermann pulls the rhetorical arguments the characters make out of the text offering explanations of the spaces and locations those characters assume.

Like Sarojini Nadar, Ackermann moves from suspicion into action. Ackermann's work is a challenge to the church to assume its role as a soteriologic force in society. She challenges patriarchal structures that do not live up to the realities that are faced by women and children, and calls the church into more ethical ways of thinking about gender inequality in South Africa. In regards to HIV and AIDS, her embodied reading of the Bible contributes a framework that is holistic, that sees the human being as body, experience and social creature and challenges ideas of stigma and marginalization.

Chapter 7: Patricia Bruce

"Great care must be taken not to repeat the mistakes of the past." (Patricia Bruce 2004: 25)

Patricia Bruce is a South African biblical scholar whose main interests lie in the world behind the text of the New Testament, the world of the Roman Empire and its people, while bringing that into context with feminist issues and issues surrounding people living with HIV and AIDS and issues surrounding people living with disabilities.

Bruce is important in this discussion because she explores the interconnecting nature of illness and sickness alongside disability alongside justice. Her juxtaposition of these issues is important because it highlights the kind of approach needed in dealing with the text that provides humane and ethical outcomes. Again, I want to look at Bruce's theoretical framework, her methodological tools, and her theological orientation as a part of my own tri-polar approach.

Firstly, looking at Bruce's theoretical framework, her feminism plays an important role, as it explores the nature of sexuality and gender in the world behind the text, this is primarily what she is doing in her theoretical approach. She highlights the attitudes and cultural norms surrounding sexuality and gender within the text from an African feminist perspective. This theoretical framework serves as Bruce's starting point in dealing with HIV and AIDS and disability, and looking at how sickness and disability is constructed within the text (Bruce 2010). Secondly, her methodological tools are largely socio-historical while employing analysis of the sorts of words used within the text as well as rhetoric. Thirdly, her theological orientation is concerned with healthier sexual models and community based theologies that overcome oppressive systems, which is where her work regarding sexuality and disability overlaps, placing an emphasis on social healing over physical healing.

7.1) Bruce's Theoretical Framework

So firstly, in looking at Bruce's theoretical framework her focus on sexuality and gender and specifically women is important. In this regard Bruce highlights the sort of sexual and gender spaces that women in South Africa occupy. Virginitly is an important issue for Bruce as it is a foundational element of women's sexuality in South Africa among many groups of people. The issue of rape is important in this discussion too. The issue of monogamy, sex and marriage, and the sorts of moral and cultural terrain surrounding these issues is raised by Bruce as well. And of course, Bruce's African feminist perspective often keeps children in mind.

Virginitly is an important starting point because it raises the issue of sexual control of women. Bruce writes: "virginitly is usually highly valued in societies that seek to control women" (Bruce 2004: 9). Female sexuality is seen as something dangerous and threatening especially to the masculinised sentimentalities of African men. Virginitly testing is portrayed as a way of controlling the spread of HIV and AIDS, however from Bruce's writing, it would seem as though female promiscuity is blamed for the spread of HIV and not male promiscuity.

Bruce writes that "in some cases attempts are made to test boys for virginitly" (Bruce 2003: 53), however it is the control of female sexuality where the focus lies. The issue of virginitly testing is raised in two of the articles of Bruce's that I will be working with (Bruce 2004 and Bruce 2003). Attitudes towards human sexuality and virginitly in South Africa are complicated due to the colonial contexts that we are working in. Bruce is careful to separate Western and African attitudes though as they can overlap and be confused.

The Western world's approach to sexuality has undergone severe changes. With the sexual revolution in the 1960's there's been a definitive movement in Western cultures that moves away from the social understanding of sexuality towards a more individualistic understanding. Bruce quotes John Davies in this regard. Davies writes:

(1) Sexual transactions are going from being governed by objective rules to being grounded within the subjective experience of 'relationships'; (2) such relationships have at their center the single individual rather than the family; and (3) they are essentially concerned with the appetitive ambitions of adults rather than the interests and protection of children. (4) The overwhelming legitimacy of the new sexual world is the urge to sexual freedom and happiness, and a concomitant denial of any validity in the necessity of self-denial, let alone 'repression'. (5) An open sexual market has replaced the licence-issuing, licence-denying monopolistic 'command economy' of the traditional repressive sexual culture (Bruce 2003: 48; Bruce 2004: 9 and Davies 1997: 48).

For Bruce the promotion of virginity or celibacy in the light of these social changes and their impact on African culture rather than analysing the sexual conquest mentalities and sexual gratification is naive, especially in the light where men measure their value based on sexual conquest (Bruce 2003: 49).

That being said, Bruce would argue that casual or informal sex is not dismissed by people in South Africa as insignificant or even wasteful. The idea that African people are more promiscuous is fallacious, African people are not more promiscuous than anybody else. Sexual behaviour is governed by economic and cultural forces. Sexual behaviour does not negatively affect social wellbeing as more Western morality movements would suggest; contrarily sexual behaviour is by stark contrast an indication of positive social wellbeing (2003: 49).

Bruce notes how African notions of sexuality may indeed have been heavily influenced by the Western paradigms (Bruce 2003; Bruce 2004), but still retain certain critical notions. It may be a truism, but utilitarian views (as opposed to Western moral or romantic views of sexuality) sets African moralities surrounding sex apart from Western models. Sex in return for money, food and gifts is common especially when poverty plays a role.

Because sex is viewed objectively in this regard, there does not seem to be a moral problem. This, in conjunction with the notion that men are considered in African cultures to be biologically built in such a way that they need to have sex with as many partners as possible, female worth is determined by how well they can satisfy the demands of their partners (Bruce 2003: 49 and Bruce 2004: 10).

Virginity testing and the value of virginity in this mixing pot of cultures becomes problematic. Bruce focuses mainly on the Zulu culture in Kwa-Zulu Natal. It seems that virginity testing is, at least, a relatively modern invention among the Zulu people, really only becoming "widespread since the mid-1990's" (Bruce 2003: 51) and there is little evidence suggesting that it occurred before the twentieth century.

There are situations where women are offered a larger ilobola or bridewealth if a bride is found to be a virgin, however this seems to be incidental rather than institutional. The problem with virginity testing is that it comes with a range of human rights issues as children can be subjected to invasive tests against their will. Children found not to be virgins may be ostracised. Parents of children found not to be virgins may have to pay fines for "tainting the community" (Bruce 2003: 52), and then of course if the girl is marked as a virgin she is put at risk of being raped. Rape, as I wrote earlier is a further issue that impacts on female sexuality within society and Bruce addresses it a lot. She gives the following statistics:

Much sexual activity is the result of rape and abuse, often of children and teenagers. According to a report in *The Natal Witness* (April 24, 2002 p.1), in 1998 41% of rape victims were under 18, while 15% were under 12. In addition, many children under the age of 18 are sexually abused, 20% of females and 13% of males. This situation is exacerbated by the myth that sex with a virgin cures HIV/AIDS (Bruce 2003: 45).

Bruce comments on a particular instance where this is the case, within the Zulu practice of virginity testing whereby children, especially girls, are marked as virgins. They are usually marked with a white mark on their forehead (Le Roux 2006: 15) therefore identifying them as virgins. In the context of myths that assert that raping a virgin can cure HIV and AIDS, this practice, Bruce asserts, "could make them [marked virgins] vulnerable to rape" (2006: 15).

Attempts at moralizing female sexuality given the context which they inhabit are also shown to be ineffective. Marriage is one of the areas in which female sexuality is controlled and moralized. Bruce notes that it is clear that if people were monogamous and faithful within marriage and abstained from sex outside of marriage then the sexual transmission of HIV and AIDS could be avoided. Bruce argues that this notion is by no means naive, however in a patriarchal context such as the one faced by women in South Africa, This kind of moral ideal does not take account of the contexts of sexuality in countries like South Africa (Bruce 2003: 45) where women do not have the power to negotiate their own sexualities, chiefly due to the fact that women's bodies are policed by cultural, moral and social forces.

When we move to look at the issue of disability, for instance, as juxtaposed with issues of HIV and AIDS, Bruce highlights the sort of rhetoric that surrounds disability. One text that I will deal with later is Luke 13v10-17. I found this text and Bruce's work surrounding this text (Bruce 2010) particularly useful, even though it does not deal with HIV and AIDS, particularly because it deals with the sticky subject of miraculous healing which I feel is a problematic, or rather should be regarded more as a problematic issue in South Africa where many individuals and churches claim to be able to heal HIV and AIDS. I would note however that HIV and AIDS should not be confused with disabilities; each of these have their own set of challenges and social stigmas. I am merely suggesting that the theological approach by Bruce in regards to empowering people living with disabilities can also be applied within theologies that empower people living with HIV and AIDS, but I will deal with these later.

7.2) Bruce's Methodological Tools

The second part of my analysis of Bruce's work is concerned with her methodological tools. They are quite wide ranging, but essentially always start with looking at various aspects of the text, such as looking at characters and their dialogue and rhetoric within a plot. She does not overtly subscribe to the narrative approach although she does employ it at times. Bruce is much more overt about the socio-historical dimensions of the text often going behind the text and looking at the socio-historical factors that contribute to the world that produced the text and that the text was a part of. Bruce's extensive work with ancient languages often allows her to analyse words and meanings of words and linguistics of a text to explore ideas of social matrixes, cultural and political paradigms and issues of sexuality and illness, among others.

Rhetoric is important to Bruce as it betrays not only the agency and intentions of the characters, but also of the sorts of people that would write those characters. Rhetoric within a narrative betrays the theological landscape, which later becomes important when Bruce analyses the theological terrain of the Bible in formulating her own theological orientation. Rhetoric is also important as biblical rhetoric often plays out outside of the Bible as it becomes imitated and emulated by people reading the Bible in their various contexts, particularly within South African society, as this is where Bruce bases her arguments.

This spilling out of biblical rhetorical events in the text into our modern context is what is important here. So when we take these rhetorical arguments, such as negative biblical values regarding female identity, or sickness, or disability and attaching them to values of purity and moral ideologies surrounding virginity in the efforts to curtail the spread of HIV and AIDS while failing to acknowledge the patriarchal frameworks and social developments at play, we arrive at an abusive or neglectful outcome.

Again with regards to Bruce's use of virginity, she writes that there are a great number of reasons why society no longer values virginity. The church simply does not have the same amount of power that it used to have. Contraception means that women can have sex without the risk of becoming pregnant. Individualistic attitudes towards human sexuality means that society has become more accepting of sex outside of marriage and that also means that more people have decided to remain single.

And lastly, the church is mostly unable to deal with sex or speak about sexual issues (Bruce 2003: 62-63). But, in the context of HIV and AIDS the church cannot merely use HIV and AIDS as a way of "re-imposing traditional sexual ethics" (Bruce 2003: 64). Bruce heavily criticises the fact that the church uses HIV and AIDS as a "scare tactic" (2003: 64) to re-impose outdated ethical models and harmful patriarchal ideologies that are more concerned with control than with actually helping. Virginity is all very fine and well, but; "Arguments for virginity need to be made in an awareness of the many outside factors that impact on it and need to be based on grounds that are life-affirming for both men and women" (Bruce 2004: 25).

7.3) Bruce's Theological Orientation

This leads into the third aspect of Bruce's work look that I want to look at is her theological orientation. Bruce advocates theological models that is community based and works towards overcoming oppressive systems (2003: 65). A new ethic of sexuality is called for in the church (2003: 67) and if the church wants to "advocate virginity it will have to do so on grounds that are not harmful" (2003: 67). Simply because virginity (and virginity testing) coincides with the church's motives and ethics, it does not mean that the church should accept it blindly (2003: 67).

For Bruce this poses a challenge to religious oppression and illustrates the importance of remembering the value of people living with disabilities, people who, like the woman in Luke live regardless of social barriers put ahead of them. Here is a good example where perhaps emphasis on social healing is more important than physical healing. Bruce notes

that when physical healing does not happen, "the result can be confusion, disappointment, a sense of inadequate faith and alienation from the church" (Bruce 2010: 278). Bruce's work behind the text and offers an in depth view of the origins of certain conceptual constructs inherent in the world behind the Bible. She uses the Bible to highlight how the marginalization of women within these contexts is similar to the marginalization of women in our own contexts.

7.4) Bruce's Work with the Text

Here I want to look at Bruce's work with the Bible itself concerning issues of virginity and also her work surrounding Luke 13v10-17. Bruce's work in the Old Testament regarding virginity begins with an analysis of the Hebrew word בתולה / bethulah [betûlâ in Bruce 2003: 54] (virgin). When analysing the word בתולה a problem occurs because the word בתולה does not mean "virgo intacta" (Bruce 2003: 54) in the Hebrew context. It could refer to any young girl, a young widow or a woman who is just of the right age to get married. The reason for this is that it was simply assumed that young women would be virgo intacta before they were married (2003: 54).

Bruce's focus therefore only falls on texts where the word בתולה actually does mean virgo intacta. Some of these texts include, "the stories of specific virgins: Rebekah, Dinah, Jephthah's daughter, Tamar, Esther and the Persian king's [Ahasuerus'] harem" (Bruce 2003: 55). I will only touch briefly on some of these and some of the other stories that Bruce touches on. The issue in these texts are not that virgins are seen as untouched by men, but they are rather seen in terms of being property that passes between men. If a man were to rape or seduce a virgin, the man had to pay for the property of that woman's virginity which belonged to the father, in essence the rapist or seducer had to purchase the asset of the woman's virginity from the father at the cost of her bridewealth (Bruce 2003: 56).

This is reflected in the story of Dinah (Genesis 34). Bruce argues that Dinah may not have been raped, but her abduction seems to have been a violation on Jacob's honour (2003: 57). In Deuteronomy 22v28-29 it is suggested that a woman who has been violated becomes

"damaged goods" (2003: 58) and that would make it difficult for the father to marry her off and therefore she is married to her offender and his right to divorce is waived. This was even more problematic if the woman who was raped was intended for another man, this means that essentially she has been stolen not only from the father, but from her future husband. Both she and her rapist would be stoned to death (2003: 58).

Another story, that of David in his old age (1 Kings 1v1-5) tells of David being so old that a virgin was used to keep him warm at night, and as he was so old that he could not sleep with her, his son Adonijah immediately declared himself king (2003: 59). David's inability to take control of a woman's sexuality or even his own, led him to lose political control. In this context the sexual and political overlaps.

In the story of Lot in Sodom (Genesis 19) when the two angels come to Lot's house and the crowd comes demanding that Lot hand the two angels over (who the crowd believed to be foreign men), that they might be raped, Lot insists that they take his virgin daughters instead. These same daughters later commit incest with their father in order to "preserve [his] seed" (Genesis 19v34). Bruce notes that the need for a virgin to prove her worth as a child bearing woman is more important than the taboo against incest (Bruce 2003: 60).

Here is a picture of the marginalized lives that were lived by virgins. Childbirth became the most important accomplishment for a virgin. The story of Jephthah in Judges 11 tells of Jephthah returning from battle, who promises to God the very first thing that comes out from the doors of his house (Judges 11v31). Tragically, upon arriving home, his daughter comes out of the house. And he is forced to sacrifice her. In Judges 11v38 she is said to mourn for her virginity. This is significant because what she is mourning is the fact that she will never bear children (Bruce 2003: 60). Tamar's rape also shows the disposability of virgins perhaps for people, like David, who were 'wealthy' in terms of having many sons and daughters. Tamar's rape made David very angry, but David did nothing to punish Amnon (2003: 61). It was Absalom who took revenge on Amnon in this case, which tore the kingdom apart. But getting back to the rape of Tamar, for David the loss of his daughter's virginity comes second in importance to punishing his firstborn son, Amnon. Bruce suggests Tamar saw Amnon's rejection of marriage as a double wrong, because not only does he

steal her virginity, but he also casts her away to become "desolate" (II Samuel 13v30). She is not only stolen, but used and rejected to become worthless to society. She cannot be married like this and she is said to remain like this in Absalom's care. For Bruce this story becomes "a commentary on the harm done with justice is neglected" (2003: 62).

In moving to Bruce's New Testament work, she shows how Greco-Roman and early Christian attitudes towards female virginity that is centred around "male control, honour, inheritance and sexual property" (Bruce 2004: 17). Grecian ideas of human sexuality complicated with Christian morality resulted in situations where the sexuality of girls was closely guarded by their kinsmen. Bruce notes that there were sects of Christians, such as the Corinthians, who may have totally foregone sex entirely, preferring to lead celibate lives because of the expectation of Christ's imminent return (2004: 17). Bruce argues against feminist notions that virginity allows for more autonomy for women, as in societies that value virginity of women are controlled by men, view female sexuality with suspicion (Bruce 2004: 18) and are based on misogynistic notions. "Corinthians were abstaining from sex on the basis of the baptismal formula that in Christ there is no more male and female and on a theology of realized eschatology that brought the believe into a present experience of resurrected life" (Bruce 2004: 18).

This was based on the ideology that human sexuality is fallen and not part of the spiritual ideal which is asexual as opposed to the sexualized "bimorphism" (Bruce 2004: 18) inherent in human sexuality. This is reflected in Philo's philosophy regarding Adam. Adam was whole and unbroken, but he became broken when woman/Eve and sex were created. By abstaining from sex, human beings can reclaim their 'wholeness' (2004: 18). Women become the carriers of blame for sin and the fallen state; and male control over their sexualities becomes a way of controlling the threat perceived by men.

It is interesting that Paul does not enforce celibacy outright. There is room for marriage in Paul's theology and this is one of the issues he addresses in his letter to the Corinthians. His concern is not for purity as such but for the prevention of πορνεία (prostitution, fornication and sexual immorality) in the church (Bruce 2004: 22). For Paul, virginity is not as important as avoiding πορνεία, so he would rather see people in the church marry than have sexually

immoral situations crop up and of course the church losing control over the sexualities of its people. Ironically, changes in notions of human sexuality in this context shows the oppressive nature of these selfsame ideologies. This is perhaps a gross oversimplification of the events as Bruce portrays them, but you have a system of Grecian notions of sexuality based on ownership and honour that became tempered by early Christian notions of sexuality based on purity and the fallen state of human sexuality.

Paul's views, however moderate, were then used to oppress virgins during the third and fourth centuries. Asceticism arises in which sexuality can be damning for female virgins. Virgins "were to represent the church's highest expression of piety" (2004: 23). Their lives were secluded "except for worship" (2004: 23). For women to express their sexualities outside of this strictly controlled system would result in "hell-fire" (2004: 23). Not only were women controlled and secluded but they were called "essentially sinful" by the Church Fathers.

Male virginity was encouraged, but not nearly on the same level as female virginity. In considering Bruce's work surrounding disability and Luke 13v10-17. Bruce draws on this story as a source of a more positive theology in regards to disability. This is the story of Jesus going into the synagogue on the Sabbath and healing a woman from infirmity. Jesus was immediately challenged by the synagogue ruler because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath. Jesus then rebuked them.

Bruce contrasts this story with other miracle accounts in the New Testament which she argues to be demeaning to people living with disabilities (Bruce 2010: 271). The biblical portrayal of people living with disabilities is very dim. They are nothing more than "plot-devices" (2010: 272), disabled by God for the purposes of showing off God's power at a later date. People within the Bible living with disabilities are never portrayed by virtue of their own worth, their being human beings, but rather as human actors who play out the role of disability as prescribed by God until such a time comes when God's glory is displayed and the role of disability is no longer needed (2010: 272). Some churches still preach that disability and sickness is the work of the devil or evil spirits or punishments for sin and people living with disabilities are seen as failures (2010: 273). Bruce would argue that Jesus'

intention was to rescue people living with disabilities, to reintegrate them with society as equal members with as much a say and investment in public life. Bruce's use of the story in Luke shows that on one occasion it does happen that a person with a disability is not portrayed in this way within the New Testament text (Bruce 2010: 272).

It is within this text and this sort of approach to the biblical text that Bruce proposes a more socially aware approach in dealing with disability, and arguably also with sickness. Bruce splits this story into two separate ideological events.

The first being a healing/exorcism event and the second being a social event. The healing and exorcism is linked because the text speaks of the woman being possessed by a "spirit of infirmity" (Luke 13:11). In all of this there is no mention of sin or morality, she had not done anything wrong. The impression here is that the woman was the one who was wronged. In addition, the fact that she came for healing on the Sabbath is a challenge to the distorted purposes of the Sabbath. Bruce portrays her as a woman and a person living with a disability actively challenging an unfair social system and becoming active in a marginalizing context wherein she would have otherwise been written off as a demoniac (Bruce 2010: 274).

The second event is interesting because of its social implications. Jesus speaks of her as "a daughter of Abraham" and this is important because whereas she would be otherwise regarded as an outsider (Bruce 2010: 275), Jesus firmly places her within the confines of Jewish conceptual margins, or perhaps he reminds the ruler of the synagogue that she belongs and is entitled to help: "The fact that she had a disability for eighteen years had not affected her status as a member of the community, as a 'daughter of Abraham'" (Bruce 2010: 275).

Jesus refers to the ruler of the synagogue and their companions as hypocrites, and he illustrates that they would spend time to take care of their assets such as their ox and ass, but they would see a woman suffer on the Sabbath (Bruce 2010: 276). Jesus turns the social hierarchy upside down here. The woman is suddenly the insider and they have suddenly become the outsiders. This sort of subversion event is important for Bruce.

Bruce's concern for a feminist reading of the text highlights the social mechanisms at work to create systems of control and oppression. Her concern for people living with disabilities also offers an inclusive styles of hermeneutics and exegeses that are critical of symbolic and abstract talk around healing or the notion of literal physical healing, while offering tangible social healing that I believe is as useful for people living with disabilities as it would be for people living with HIV and AIDS.

Her contribution towards the overarching interpretive features within the Circle provides a feminist perspective that questions patriarchal systems of control while also being mindful of persons living with disabilities, a concern that should not be diminished in the light of HIV and AIDS, but should be treated with an equal urgency, after all, it is my understanding of these texts that suggest that the goals are the same of reading the Bible with and for people living with HIV and AIDS and reading the Bible with and for people living with disabilities.

Chapter 8: Dorothy Akoto

"We are women and African. Our beads (our achievements) mark who we are meant to be.
When we are called home, our beads will remain." (Dorothy Akoto 2006:)

The last scholar I want to deal with is that of Dorothy Akoto. Although predominantly not concerned with South Africa, but rather with either Ghana or the larger African context, Akoto's work is invaluable to circle scholars because it provides an inculturation approach in dealing with HIV and AIDS. Akoto's work often quotes or occurs alongside the work of Mercy Amba Oduyoye a fellow theologian from Ghana.

Because Akoto's approach to the text is informed by both liberation theology and inculturation Akoto places a lot of emphasis on African symbols and African meanings and prefixes the African experience as a point of view when approaching the biblical text. For Akoto, "the missionaries dumped Christianity with other foreign cultural elements on Africans" (Akoto 2000: 274). God, divinity and culture were present in Africa before the arrival of the missionaries and the work done by the missionaries and the ideas such as god, divinity and culture are things that needs to be reclaimed by people who work for African interests.

In returning to my use of the tri-polar approach I will start with Akoto's theoretical framework which is largely informed by African feminism and some postcolonialism and inculturation. Secondly, her methodological tools are rhetorical ways of reading the Bible, looking at symbols inherent in Africa and within the biblical text and seeing how they can be analysed in adjacency and how they interact. Lastly, her theological orientation makes use of rhetorical models of interpretation, understanding theologies surrounding HIV and AIDS as a universal theological concerns that affects every person even if they are not infected.

8.1) Akoto's Theoretical Framework

So, firstly looking at Akoto's theoretical framework, it must be noted that she is an African feminist alongside making a lot of use of inculturation. So her concerns not only surround women, but also children and the elderly. Her feminism begins from the premise that women are regarded as lesser than men. Women are "underrated and not affirmed or offered the opportunity to affirm themselves" (Akoto 2000: 274). "Women and their work as mothers and homemakers have often been bypassed as if women did nothing beyond producing and raising offspring" (Akoto 2000: 274 quoting Oduyoye 1995: 81).

Women's health: mental and physical wellbeing are also intimately tied up in Akoto's feminist approach. She ties it to the Hebrew word shalem derived from shalom. These words connote health and wellbeing for the whole person, not only physical, but also social and spiritual. Akoto writes:

By asserting that when s/he is not nurtured or allowed freedom of expression the individual begins to live as a victim and experiences difficulties in resolving emotional trauma. This gradually becomes an accumulation of unfinished psychological and emotional business and leads to chronic anxiety, fear, confusion, emptiness and unhappiness. Some causes of ill-health—emotional or mental—among African women can be explained by the forgoing assertion. African women have, for the most part, been denied the freedom to be themselves, resulting in their ill-health. I believe this is an issue of human rights (Akoto 2006: 99-100).

Akoto conflates the issue of women's health with the issue of women's rights and also particularly to the rights of children. Life for children in Africa has been terrible. Children have little or no security. Rape, famine and warfare are just some of the horrors that children endure. Akoto lists some of the basic human rights that UNICEF have outlined for children. Children have a right to "affection, love and understanding" (Akoto 2006: 101), a right to food and medicine, education, play, a name and nationality, "special care if handicapped" (2006:101), be put first in times of disaster, participate in society, be raised in

society in a universal brotherhood and sisterhood, and to "Enjoy these rights, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national or social origin" (2006: 101). Akoto notes that these rights are not realized in Africa. In Zimbabwe children are "raped and tortured by Security Police and Youth Brigade members" (Akoto 2006: 101).

In Uganda children are used as child soldiers. She notes that it is true that men do fall victim to the conditions of violence, rape, war, poverty, famine and injustice, but ultimately women and children are at the forefront of the violence. Women and children bear the biggest brunt and carry the heaviest burden and are most at risk.

Although Akoto is critical of the patriarchal values within African culture, she is more critical of European and colonial patriarchal values that have been imposed on African peoples. Here we begin to see where we see how Akoto's inculturation surfaces; where she works towards retrieving images and symbols from African culture and redeeming them, making them accessible African theological resources once again.

8.2) Akoto's Methodological Tools

So the second part of my analysis of Akoto's work is concerned with her methodological tools in dealing with the biblical text. Akoto makes use of rhetorical arguments in this regard extracting symbols and ideas and explanatory elements from the text. Inculturation informing Akoto's theoretical framework becomes the basis of how she extracts symbols and ideas from the text using rhetorical method in approaching the text as the methodological tools that she uses.

When looking at Akoto's methodological tools, reclaiming constructive African cultural notions and reversing the effect that colonialisation has had on the African peoples shows the degree to which Akoto's rhetorical process is informed by inculturation as well as postcolonial thought. Akoto gives the example of the Ewe people who originally worshipped

their god, Mawu. When the missionaries came with the Judaeo-Christian concept of god, the Ewe began to scorn their own cultures in favour of the European culture. They came to see their own culture as a substandard one. With the missionaries framing everything African as "savage" or "devilish" (Akoto 2000: 262) even the Ewe began looking down on their own interpretations of self. They were no longer being defined by themselves but by the missionaries and by Europe. In an attempt to re-read biblical passages from the context of self-definition Akoto reads Ewe notions into the text. Akoto's extraction of symbol and concept from the text rescues good elements of African culture as something valuable and workable in the modern world.

8.3) Akoto's Theological Orientation

The third part of my analysis of Akoto's work is concerned with her theological approach which then extracts theological meaning from these symbols and cultural elements and rhetorical ideas particularly in the light of HIV and AIDS as to promote healthier theological models. For Akoto it is important that theological models are socially constructed in their nature so that HIV and AIDS becomes the concern of every person in society and not simply the concern of the people who live with HIV and AIDS. In places, Akoto also makes use of the dogmatic category of soteriology. Her use of images with regards to her inculturation is one way in which she defines theological and cultural topography within African communities. The use of symbol and image and archetype in this regard roots African experience of the theological in a very practical way. Akoto uses these images to illustrate how theology is understood and expressed by certain African communities.

8.4) Akoto's Work with the Text

In looking at Akoto's biblical work, one of the major images she works with is the image of the Good Shepherd (Psalm 23) and within the gospel of John is re-read by Akoto with Ewe notions of what it means to be a shepherd. It seems though, for Akoto, to hold the image of

the Good Shepherd as merely the domain of God is too abstract and foreign. Jesus playing out the role of the Good Shepherd is not merely Jesus playing his role as God, but rather Jesus acting as an example, how we should act towards one another. Perhaps I am reading into Akoto's work too much. But Akoto does bring the Ghanaian notion of shepherding into her interpretation of the text here.

Shepherding is not an image familiar to the people of Ghana. There are sheep and goats, but they are not kept in the same way that ancient Palestinian shepherds used to watch over them. The image of the shepherd is one that needs to be likened to people who perform roles in society that are seen as guiding people or fighting on behalf of people. Akoto's one likeness of a shepherd in society is that of mothers.

The ewe mother plays a variety of roles, which I see as shepherding, in the cultural context of the Ewe people. She is the channel by which ancestors return to life. She is a homemaker as she bears children, takes care of, loves, provides for and protects her family as well as meets the needs of other extended family members. She is actively involved in the community's life. As a local politician, she helps to maintain the smooth-running of life in the community. She is a custodian of law and order ensuring that these are not violated but are carried out to provide for the welfare of the living and the goodwill of the leaving-dead (Akoto 2000: 267).

In this way, Akoto does not only portray the woman in the traditional sense, but also portrays the woman as an active force within the community. The gendered context of women are reclaimed. Women are not simply the timid creatures that Christian notions would have them be, but instead they are active agents within society working for the welfare of their families and the larger social space. The European image of the Good Shepherd is too abstract and foreign for Akoto, but to reclaim images like this from the perspective and experiences of the peoples of Africa can provide concrete ways of self-definition and socially aware frameworks that can better deal with social issues faced by people in Africa, especially women and children.

Although Akoto uses inculturation in her theological reflections it must be noted that she is not blindly accepting of culture as she illustrates in her work regarding the Trokosi practice. Her African feminist perspective is incredibly strong in this regard and her previous calls for the rights of women and children are reflected in her work surrounding the Trokosi practice where women and children are enslaved.

The practice of Trokosi occurs in Ghana, which involves the enslavement of young virgin girls to appease gods that their families may have offended (Akoto 2006: 103 and Sekyiamah 2008:1). Families fearing punishment from the gods hand their daughters over as living sacrifices to be enslaved as concubines or "wives" by priests or "fetish priests" (Akoto 2006: 103) known as Togbe (Sekyiamah 2008: 1) who are usually old enough to be the girls' grandfathers (Akoto 2006: 103) . Girls are made to work in the fields, clean the altars, in what "loveless" relationships (2006: 103), while bearing children for the Togbe.

Whether these children are enslaved in turn or whether they are considered adopted children of the Togbe is unclear from all my reading of this practice. Nana Sekyiamah's work surrounding Trokosi practice includes the story of Mercy, a Trokosi,

Mercy eventually had 4 children with the Togbe, there were no opportunities to see a doctor. The only medical remedies were infusions of herbs. There was no support for her and her children. Pepper was the main meal. There was no escape route, she tried unsuccessfully. She went home once but her grandfather bound her and brought her back to the shrine (Sekyiamah 2008: 1).

Mercy was enslaved after her grandmother was reported to one of the shrines for stealing from another Trokosi. Mercy was only one of the girls given by the family. Originally Mercy's aunt and sister were taken, one for each of the shrines they were reported to.

When Mercy's aunt died, Mercy was taken as a replacement. Akoto relates the story of Trokosi practice in Ghana with similar stories of enslavement in the Bible. She cites a few examples. Exodus 21v2 speaks of the purchase of slaves and that a slave must remain enslaved for six years, but freed on the seventh year with no cost to the slave. Leviticus 25v39-41 speaks of whole families being sold into slavery. If a father becomes a slave, then his children will also become slaves.

Nehemiah 5v4-5 speaks of people repaying their debts by selling themselves, their siblings and their children into slavery. In Matthew 18v25 Jesus speaks in his parable of a man who could not repay his debts to his king, and the king ordered that the man, his wife and children would be sold into slavery. These structures of slavery are not unknown in the Bible.

Akoto specifically focuses on II Kings 4v1-7 where Elisha helps a widow repay her debt with the help of a miracle. This story is echoed in the plight of "both men and women theologians" in speaking out against cultural practices and "scriptural authority" (Akoto 2006: 105) that enslave women and children and put them into situations where they are exploited and dehumanized.

For Akoto the story of Elisha and the widow is a story about a woman, who not only actively fighting against abusive cultural and religious trends, but also a moral story that criticises unjust practices whether cultural or social. Akoto asks "Why should the living be made to bear the punishment of the dead" (Akoto 2006: 105)? It is argued that the creditor has a right to be repaid. The creditor has a right to his claim. However, is enslavement a just repayment for monetary debt. I would argue that there is a strong criticism inherent here in the way the developed world treats Africa through abusive capitalism, globalization and national debt, but Akoto does not touch on this.

The criticism here is of how scriptural and cultural authority is used, from the rape of girls to the ongoing struggle for the ordination of women. Her linking of the story of Elisha and the Trokosi practice calls for an end to slavery. This story as an activist interpretation for the emancipation of slaves is not only a call on the church, but also a challenge to government and to cultural authorities that reinforce systems of slavery and the abuse of women.

The miracle in the story becomes a touchstone of healing for Akoto. She calls for a healthy contextualization of the African situation. She quotes Justin Ukpong in saying that contextualization is one way of creating links between African culture and Christian values (2006: 106). Akoto calls for an African feminist framework through which this contextualization protects the rights of women and children. Akoto does not mention the risk that this poses for all individuals who are a part of the Trokosi practice with regards to infection of HIV and AIDS and perhaps this is a valid foundation for its own line of research. However Akoto does deal with HIV and AIDS and the Bible, but her theological process changes in that she seems to abandon some of her feminist and inculturation categories at times and begins to concern herself with more rhetorical models that are life-affirming theologies leading ultimately towards altruism.

When it comes to the issue of HIV and AIDS, working with the Bible becomes problematic. HIV and AIDS is not a sickness that was not present in ancient times and the biblical authors did not have to work with it. Akoto uses the story of the valley of the dry bones in Ezekiel 37v1-14 as a metaphor for people living with HIV and AIDS.

Akoto asks the question "as [it] was posed to Ezekiel by Yahweh" (Akoto 2004: 97), "Can these bones live" (Ezekiel 37v3b and Akoto 2004: 97)? The state that HIV and AIDS has left many people in South Africa in is one of utter despair. People living with HIV and AIDS have become as the dry bones on the valley floor. Akoto gives a background to the story.

The first temple had been destroyed in 571BC (Akoto 2004: 99) and the tribe of Judah was in exile. The monarchy had been dismantled and all the leaders and "able-bodied" men were removed to Babylon. This state of exile and desolation is something that Akoto sees as a reality for people living with HIV and AIDS, and Akoto spends a lot of time explaining that every person in the world lives with HIV and AIDS, you may not be infected, but you are certainly affected (Akoto 2004: 100f). And this initiates a kairos for Akoto, an imperative to act on our part as scholars and theologians.

Akoto does not only see this as an academic pursuit, but also as a divine one. In speaking out in prophesy for the people who live with HIV and AIDS, the theologian and scholar invokes God as a vital force in society, bringing people back from the dead so-to-speak, revitalizing them. In this way the scholar and theologian has to prophesy to the people in the same way that Ezekiel prophesied. We are called to speak on God's behalf. We, like Ezekiel, act not of our own accord, but on behalf of God, on behalf of a larger ethic that seeks to heal and to bring people out of desolation. We have to call God to breathe life back into the bodies of the devastated, to offer them hope for a full and fulfilling life. As Ezekiel called Israel back to their homeland, we have to call people living with HIV and AIDS back to society, to reintegrate as full members of society, as agents and benefactors of society. Her final call is one of altruism (Akoto 2004: 105-107). "Accepting every member would mean the humility of allowing us to be wounded by feeling what others feel, in order to heal them" (Akoto 2004:110).

Akoto's work focuses heavily on the cultural elements that surround women and children. She is desperate to see interpretation of the Bible and theological models that incorporate the rights and the health of women and children. She criticises patriarchal frameworks that would undermine the rights and wellbeing of women and children on the basis of culture and uses rhetorical means of extracting meaning from the biblical text and in distinguishing between with what she considers to be African versus foreign and colonial theologies.

Akoto contributes to an African feminism that takes culture seriously and understands that it is not merely the way we do things, but a far more intrinsic attribute of human society that allows for self-definition, self-expression and self-determination. She foresees a possible future in which the voices of women and children are heard alongside those of men, fighting not only for the benefit and interests of men, but also for the benefit and interest of all people. In regards to HIV and AIDS, her approach reads the Bible in the contexts previously mentioned to provide theologies of life and rebirth, in order to reclaim the dead. This style of reading is important to Akoto because it means that the living no longer have to "bear the punishment of the dead" (Akoto 2006: 105).

Chapter 9: Analysis in Search of an Overarching Interpretive Features

Having explored these Circle scholars and in bringing those scholars' work into dialogue whether looking at their theoretical frameworks, or their methodological approaches to the Bible, or whether looking at their theological orientation. This process is important as it allows a biblical scholar to map a trend of theology that is developing in regards to HIV and AIDS and gender in South Africa with regards to the Bible and how the Bible is read. This is why the work of David Clines (1995), Judith Butler (1990 and 2004), Ken Stone (1996 and 2005) and Elias Bongmba (2007) is so important. In bringing these authors into dialogue with the Circle, entirely new sets of questions and issues can be raised by teasing out new ways of approaching the biblical text.

There are aspects of each of these scholars that I have latched onto that I have found useful for my work, which is to say that I have used these scholars to inform my own theoretical framework, my own methodology, and my own theological orientation. David Clines approaches questions of ideology and vested interests within texts. Judith Butler and Ken Stone raise questions of gender construction. Elias Bogmba's work surrounding the Imago Dei is a powerful theological concept that adds to conversations surrounding HIV and AIDS and human dignity. These tools, alongside the interpretive features of the scholar's I have explored begin to illustrate the complicated topography created when reading the Bible in the context of HIV and AIDS. So what I am interested in doing in this chapter is basically bringing the scholars that I have dealt with in previous chapters into conversation with Clines, Butler, Stone and Bongmba's work.

9.1) In Dialogue with David Clines

I want to start with Clines' work and use his focus on ideological structures at work in the text. A brief analysis I want to include here is that of theological and ideological interest, especially that of the writers of the Bible and that of the readers of the Bible (Clines 1995:

79). David Clines is particularly invested in seeing where it is that a person's interests lie. Clines often points out that an ideology is often the product of a group that's interests lie in maintaining a dominant position in society (1995: 10-11). Because Dube and Akoto focus heavily on ideas of colonial ideology I have grouped them together as their work questions the authority of colonial ideology whether in the text or expressed in modern society. Obviously, Clines' work is interested in ideology within the world of the text. I am interested in the meeting place between the ideological voice of the text and the ideologies at play surrounding the contexts of HIV and AIDS.

Dube, for instance, points out that the ideology behind globalization and capitalism only serve the interests of the Western world, whereas it may seem lucrative to Africa, Africa does indeed not benefit from them and even suffers because of them. Dube raises the complicated issue of multiple agendas at work within texts and how certain readings can play towards imperialistic readings and others towards patriarchal readings of the text, but she notes that there needs to be sufficient care, as reading against the grains of these abuses often do not create compatible liberation theologies (2006b: 157).

Perhaps a small note I have to make of Akoto, by contrast, is of the trend I see in her work that often accepts the biblical text at face value, but I suppose this is inherent in her inculturational approach to the text, as inculturation often sees the Bible in high regard as opposed to postcolonial thought which sees the Bible as a Western book which is where Dube's multiple re-readings of the text is so valuable.

Akoto's reading of the story of Ezekiel 37v1-14 lacks many of the hallmarks of African feminist/womanist, and postcolonial approaches, which is odd because the story is saturated with the context of empire and colony. Ezekiel himself is exiled from his homeland because of an empire colonizing his home land. God shows Ezekiel a vision of an army to retake the colonized land. And God delivers a message through Ezekiel for Israel speaking of taking the land back. This text is heavily saturated with postcolonial rhetoric which could potentially add a far richer rhetoric to the story of HIV and AIDS rather than merely a

symbolic revitalization, but also a political and economic and social rebirth. So here we see where reading the Bible with Clines' focus on ideological agency becomes crucial in the context of HIV and AIDS. When we look at Nadar, she criticises the interest of patriarchal and masculinising frameworks that offer tasteful alternatives to freedom or "palatable patriarchies" (Nadar 2009b: 554). She points out their actual interest is not for the benefit of women and children, as Angus Buchan would suggest, but their interests is with power and the reduction of existential anxiety. She illustrates the ideological problem of Angus Buchan and the threat his patriarchal ideology poses to people living with HIV and AIDS. When we look at Ackerman's praxis is important in this regard as she challenges "prevailing hermeneutical models of scripture" (Ackermann 1993a:12) and oppressive biblical ideologies that are based on "false consciousness" (1993a: 12).

Conscientisation becomes the way in which androcentric and patriarchal trends within the text and society are highlighted, and feminist hermeneutics that are geared towards praxis in raising awareness about "sexuality and reproduction, [and] violence against women and children" (Ackermann 2004a: 26). Bruce's work regarding virginity breaks down moral ideologies surrounding sex and HIV and AIDS and challenges the church's use of HIV and AIDS as a "scare tactic" (Bruce 2003: 64) to re-impose their false ideology. For Bruce the church's interest here is one of control. Bruce parallels this with the control of virgins in the ancient world, showing how theological interest was shifted towards the maintenance of power even though the mask of morality was used to hide the church's true interest.

Gender becomes important here, especially how gender is constructed. Vested interests within gender construction are important to Clines. If the interests behind gender construction are not in the interest of women and children, as Clines illustrates with his work surrounding 'Interested Parties' (1995), then critical approaches can be developed in deconstructing patriarchal models. Then, if patriarchal models of gender are constructed and not necessarily innate, essential, unchanging or infallible then they can be analysed and deconstructed.

9.2) In Dialogue with Judith Butler

Judith Butler becomes important here with her work surrounding gender. Butler is probably the strongest proponent that I have read in regards to the notion that gender (and even sex) is a social construct (Butler 1990: 1-6) and therefore any social implications regarding gender (and sex) is also constructed and subject to change and redefinition (1990: 128). This restructuring of gender is important in the light of the work of the scholars I have dealt with in previous chapters because redefinition, re-appropriation and reconstruction of gender is involved in a lot of what feminist scholars do while commenting on how patriarchal systems are created in the first place.

Dube's interest is in re-appropriating the text in terms of the interest of women. Dube's places of interest within the text, that of "oppressor," "liberator" and "oppressed" (Dube 2003: 89) is useful in personalizing the text without allowing the reader to subscribe to imperialistic views or justifications. Nadar spends a lot of time commenting on how patriarchal systems are created and maintained. Nadar's work with the Mighty Men Conference illustrates how the resurging masculinising model is working to recapture lost power. With reference to the Afrikaner man, racial power was lost and now a new model of sexist power is being re-established in order for them to accept themselves as men. Gender based power in this regard becomes the obvious resource in the absence of racially motivated power.

Nadar, of course, argues that racism and sexism are fundamentally linked (2010: 149). This is perhaps most powerfully illustrated with Nadar's quote of Anne Borrowdale that "if submission continues to be the 'theory,' then abuse will inevitably continue to be the 'practice'" (Nadar and Potgieter 2010: 151). When read in the context of Nadar's argument that patriarchal constructs put children at risk of domestic violence, Akoto goes further to say that it, (patriarchal constructs, but also alongside colonial constructs) exposes children to far more than just domestic violence, but also war, famine and as Nadar suggests also vulnerability to infection of HIV.

Perhaps in this way it might be easier to show how sexism is as much a "false consciousness" as Ackermann would say. If racism and sexism are fundamentally the same thing, then surely the ideological underpinnings that support them are also the same thing. Akoto's approach draws on cultural elements that are uplifting in challenging foreign influence in African affairs and speaking out against cultural practices and "scriptural authority" (Akoto 2006: 105) that enslave women and children and put them into situations where they are exploited and dehumanized, as I have written earlier.

Safety of women and children is the important shift here and why I want to look at Stone's work here. Stone's work begins by criticizing the imbalance of access to power, but moves on to illustrate the harm caused by this imbalance. He notes: "Gender itself is a prestige structure to the extent that prestige is allotted differently to men and women by virtue of their gender. Moreover, men often have more access than women to the roles to which prestige generally accrues" (Stone 1995: 38).

9.3) In Dialogue with Ken Stone

Stone is concerned here with how gender imbalance in the text can lead to unsafe ways of reading the Bible. My use of Stone in this regard is important in the context of HIV and AIDS, because unsafe readings of the Bible put women at risk. Stone calls for a methodological approach that advocates for safer reading of the Bible. He outlines a series of places where there are examples of "semiotic functions of sex" (Stone 2005: 77). He illustrates how sex is used in the Bible for the purposes of sending a message such as in II Samuel 16 with Absalom's rape of David's women and in Genesis 19 with Sodom wanting to rape newcomers. In the story of Sodom Lot suggests that the crowd rape his daughters instead. There is also the rape of the Levite's concubine in Judges 19 where she is thrown to a crowd in lieu of raping him and she is raped to death (Stone 2005: 77-80).

Stone is careful to separate the rape of men and the rape of women in this regard. As men are humbled or broken by rape and women are stolen or appropriated by rape in these sorts of texts. Stone comments that a shallow reading of these texts can promote shallow understandings of sexuality, particularly against homosexual relationships or merely just sex among men, the disposability of women and the priority of the protection of men's sexualities.

We see a trend here that endangers women and marginalizes the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual community in favour of the protection of men and men's interests (2005: 89). Nadar approaches rape in much the same way in being very careful and suspicious of texts that either promote or hide rape. This is evident in her work regarding the book of Esther. Here a world is constructed within the text that obviously works to structure men over women and leads to the rape of women while brushing over the rape in the text. Dube and Nadar both work towards finding the feminine voice within the text.

The voice of Tamar is illustrated by Ackermann, "For such a thing ought not to be done in Israel" (II Samuel 13v12). The story of Kerina as a case study alongside the promotion of contextual biblical study creates a critical consciousness in society that challenges readings of the Bible that promotes theologies that endangered Kerina even further. Nadar's approach to the four "i's" (2009a: 137) of charismatic interpretation of the Bible illustrates how non-critical approaches to the Bible cause dangerous circumstances for those without power living under the circumstances of patriarchy.

Bruce's reading is very significant in this regard where she highlights the background situation behind the text in such a way that her reading is careful to avoid these dangers purely because of a more 'archaeological' way of reading. She does raise the danger as well of reading texts that seemingly help people, but in reality serve to marginalize people further, such as the healing accounts in the New Testament. A careful and safer reading of these accounts is needed because they often see people who are sick or disabled in a negative light or in a dismissive way as mere 'plot points' (Bruce 2010: 272). Disability and

HIV and AIDS leads neatly into my next section that discusses the theological interpretive framework that I am interested in. Human dignity is particularly important when discussing these contexts and I begin with the image of God because it centralizes the notion of prioritizing the wellbeing of the human being's welfare as well as providing a springboard from which further conceptualization can occur in dealing with following subjects.

9.4) In Dialogue with Elias Bongmba

Given the risk, given the danger faced by women and children in the context of HIV and AIDS, there is a need for healthy theological arguments. Elias Bongmba's work is what I want to focus on here. Bongmba's work in Genesis relates to a humanity that is not only created in the Image of God, but also created male and female in the Image of God. This *Imago Dei* implies not only a certain status of every human being, male and female, but connotes certain roles and functions within and between human beings. For Bongmba this means that;

One must see it as a relational category that is rich and pregnant with profound possibilities for human and divine interaction. This relationship lies behind the acts of God in the Hebrew Bible and the covenantal relationship that God established with Israel (Bongmba 2007: 45).

The *Imago Dei* according to Bongmba constitutes a relational connection between humanity and God. This relationship is not merely restricted to God and each individual person, but to God and the entire human community and between each individual. The *Imago Dei* compels humanity to act inclusively (Bongmba 2007: 46). There is already a community relationship between God and among humanity. Each person within this community is significant therefore. It would therefore be difficult to justify social structures that promote inequality, injustice and violence. The importance of the *Imago Dei* being present in both men and women therefore upends patriarchal and hegemonic notions that some are more important than others and should therefore be privileged accordingly.

In the framework of Imago Dei, each person's worth and therefore access to resources, power and dignity is equally as important as anyone else's. Bongmba writes that violence against women, "violates the Imago Dei" (2007: 47). Bongmba argues that the difference between men and women is therefore not;

A mechanism of subordination, but the establishment of difference in the economy of relations; it was intended to strengthen the human family. The image of God is present in all its fullness in male and female, and the one is not subordinate to other at the ontological level. The image of God is present in all its fullness in male and female, and the one is not subordinate to other at the ontological level. All cultural concessions that have led to the diminution of the female have effectively sacrificed the image of God in its female expression (Bongmba 2007: 47).

The Imago Dei present in each person imparts "special and immeasurable worth" (Bongmba 2007: 49) on that person. Every human being therefore carries a sacredness with them that exists simply because they are human and despite whether that person is good or spiritual or moral or not. The issue that arises from this is one of human dignity. The human as a whole: mind, body and spirit, becomes a holy thing, which is where some trouble may arise with the body itself being seen as holy, because the body is the level upon which sexuality functions (2007: 50) and therefore complicates issues of a disease that is spread primarily through sexual contact. The HI Virus, however, being an outside influence cannot therefore diminish the Imago Dei and therefore the person's "sense of self and dignity" (2007: 50). It seems strange that Bongmba has to go so far as to say that, "Those who suffer do not have to do anything to earn this respect from the church community because they already have a God-given dignity that calls for respect" (2007: 50), but in retrospect many people feel as though they have to fulfil certain duties in order to garner the church's respect.

For Bongmba, the Image of God calls the church to "defend human flourishing" (Bongmba 2007:51), that basic material needs: "food, clothing, clean water, good health, a secure political climate and an absence of violence" (2007: 51) are urgent matters which the church

must address. In fulfilling the responsibility placed on the church and the church community. We, as community, are called into roles of advocacy. The church needs to speak on behalf of those who cannot speak for themselves. Systems of patriarchy cannot, or at least should not, survive in a church that seeks not to assert for itself hegemonic headship, placing men over women, but instead plays the role of advocate and uses more positive theological models, symbols and rhetoric that foster healthier conversations surround women and other people who are marginalized and vulnerable.

This is why, when dealing with Musa Dube's work, a good place to start is her theological framework she lays out for the Circle (Dube 2007b) as I have commented on in chapter two. One particular concept that sticks out heavily in Dube's approach is that of the image of God inherent in all people. The image of God is a useful symbol for Dube because it highlights the sort of argument for human dignity and divine balance present in Dube's framework for the Circle. Musa Dube's most notable theological framework, her postcolonial approach reflects her petition for the wellbeing of all people especially the rights of women. Her criticism in regards to globalization, the effects of colonialism and neo-colonial patterns that are resurfacing in Africa shows her concern for her concept of divine balance.

In bringing together her critique of postcolonial and feminist theologies she raises issues that are critical of readings of the biblical narrative that either support or neglect systems that rob people of their dignity and create circumstances of vulnerability especially in regards to HIV and AIDS. Her feminist hermeneutic extracts colonial identity from the text and re-reads the text through feminist and postcolonial perspectives looking at trends that either read towards a feminist ideal or a postcolonial ideal. She is careful to point out that this does not always mean that these readings do not conflict with one another.

Rahab for instance may be a strong voice for feminism, but she is also a voice for colonial cooperation (Dube 2000: 76). Human beings being possessors of the image of God entitles them to the dignity and status that is taken from them through globalization and colonialism. Her constant move to reading the Bible from the perspective of the oppressed

is something echoed in Nadar's work. Nadar would push for a more concrete interaction with 'ordinary' or pre-critical readers of the text. For Nadar in cementing the dignity and humanity of the reader the biblical scholar has to read the Bible not only from the perspective, but also alongside people within struggling communities.

For Nadar, the work of a scholar needs to be rooted within a community in such a way as to ascertain not only a genuine voice from within that community but also for the benefit of that community. Her work regarding the Mighty Men Conference and the theology of Angus Buchan highlights patriarchal theological processes both from men that function on the basis of masculinism that feeds off of existential anxiety; alongside women who co-opt themselves in this ideology through formenism.

Nadar's criticism on the basis of human dignity and the Image of God is based on protecting individuals against violence, particularly domestic violence, that is maintained by the church and masculinising rhetoric. Nadar would argue that the human dignity due to each individual human creature is neglected even through patriarchal bargaining and making women and children vulnerable to domestic violence. Her biblical work criticizes stories of rape that are covered up in the text. She proposes the use of storytelling and the re-telling of stories from the perspective of women in the text. Nadar clearly points out "three key features" of Mercy Amba Oduyoye and the Circle's theology in the process of storytelling (Nadar 2006a: 78):

The first is that experience is a legitimate source of theology (Nadar 2006a: 78)

The second feature can be found in the very act of re-telling the story from Dinah's perspective. Feminists and womanists have argued for the power of story-telling for a long time. The patriarchal Bible silences the voices of women, whether as victims of rape or as against in their own right (2006a: 78).

[Third], in creating space to re-read "texts of terror" from the perspective of a woman, Oduyoye makes the implicit point that the Bible cannot be dismissed-even those texts that are difficult to read have to be exposed, interrogated, deconstructed

and re-interpreted until a liberating message or at least a voice that women can identify with can be found (2006a: 78).

Human safety and dignity are one place where Nadar and Ackermann's work meet. Ackermann's focus on human safety and dignity, however, springs from her feminist hermeneutic and praxis. Her call for "Intentional social activity" (Ackermann 2004a: 25) that acts in the interest of people seeks a reduction of violence against women and children (2004a: 26) and reducing the effects of stigma (2004a: 31). Embodied theologies that combat stigma seeks to look at the human body as a whole, including body, psyche and spirit and reading against texts that would suggest otherwise and seek to create submission and stigma through stratifying the human holism into different pieces (Ackermann 2008: 116). Stigma because of HIV does not see the human being as a whole, but the human being by virtue of the virus and this threatens human dignity. In restoring the Image of God, theologies need to be formulated that are embodied and that challenge larger social structures and not merely personal morality. Ackermann's biblical work challenges morality on a social and communal level rather than a personal level, as she writes: "A moral community is one whose goal is the common good of all. Such a community upholds the integrity of life, values the dignity of the human person, includes those who are on the margins or excluded while not avoiding the reality of structural sin (Ackermann 2004b: 46).

When the church becomes the moral community and approaches an embodied reading of the text, then the church takes on the metaphor of the Body of Christ. This concept of the church as the Body of Christ and the oppressed as owning the Image of God are two metaphors which play into one another in a way that reinforces human dignity. Bruce's approach in this regard is echoed in her approach to human disability. Her work with healing seeks to re-establish the position of the disabled within society. I have argued that her approach with regards to disability can also be applied with regards to HIV and AIDS, particularly stigma as stigmatization has exiled people with disability and HIV infection. Bruce's reading of the text would suggest an alternate hermeneutic that is twofold.

First, that disability and infection is not the domain of retribution on God's behalf. Nadar has made similar comments with regards to her work regarding Job and her understanding of the book of Job's criticism of retribution theologies. Secondly, Bruce argues that people with disabilities have always been "sons and daughters of Abraham" (Bruce 2010: 275) and that the church and society have to be challenged to accept them as rightfully belonging in 'the synagogue' so-to-speak. Akoto's biblical work regarding Ezekiel plays an important role in this regard as it calls for life to be breathed back into people, to restore their dignity, to restore the Image of God in their lives. Akoto says that we have to call people out of desolation (Akoto 2004: 105-107), invoking the vital force of God even if HIV and AIDS has made everything hopeless as if we are in a valley of dried bones.

My concern here is chiefly in the rediscovery and re-formulation of theological and ideological frameworks and interpretive features that guard against theological models that perpetuate violence and abuse, against models that increase vulnerability to infection of HIV, and against models that stigmatize and discriminate people who are already infected. The use of the image of God prefixes the sacredness in all human beings. Human dignity becomes more important than theological models that stratify people over and above one another. This questions our theological and ideological interest: what are we doing, what is the church doing, and why?

I echo what I have said before, that in a society that places the value and interest of some over and above others, systems of blame and stigma become far more complicated because victims of these systems cannot seek justice or help from a system that has already deemed them deserving of their afflictions and incapable of questioning injustice. This is particularly pertinent when considering how gender is constructed by society. If gender constructs are engineered in such a way that injustice becomes a part of society's functioning then those structures need to be analysed, deconstructed and reconstructed from a more humane perspective. This will require safer and more responsible readings of the text in formulating safer and more responsible theological frameworks. Musa Dube writes:

What passes as legitimate or let me say, godly theology, will largely depend on what we believe holds true as God's will for creation as a whole, for humanity, indeed, for all of us in this world (Dube 2007b).

Clearly, this framework does not subscribe to perspectives which, for whatever reason, hold that certain groups of people, be it on the basis of their ethnicity, health status, gender, race, age, class, or sexual orientation should be subjugated, oppressed or denied their God-given human dignity. In this framework, salvation is liberation from spiritual, physical, economic, cultural and politically oppressive and exploitative structures and institutions. In this framework, social structures and institutions that sanction oppression and exploitation do not represent God's will, and must be counteracted by those of us who accept our role as co-creators in keeping the earth sacred, good, and balanced (Dube 2007b).

Chapter 10: Conclusion

The most important findings of this dissertation remains an emphasis on not only how the Bible is being read, but interpreting the very process of how the Bible is being read. In exploring and categorizing the theoretical, methodological, and theological features and theoretical frameworks of the scholars that I have chosen to work with we can see a strong affinity by the Circle of Concerned Women Theologians to read the Bible in increasingly humane ways that prefix the concerns of the most vulnerable peoples in their communities.

There is also a growing consciousness among biblical scholars as to how the process of interpretation is occurring. Gender has plays a massive role within the work of these biblical scholars. Perhaps I have taken for granted when setting out to do this thesis the extent and scope and near infinite facets of gender that are in play in feminist and womanist theologies.

Perhaps it is because of the way that African feminism is concerned with economics and politics alongside social constructions of gender as Dube would suggest. I do not suggest that there is some sort of "Theory of Everything" for the Circle, however, there is a growing terrain of theory surrounding Feminist and Womanist biblical scholars which the biblical scholar should remain aware of. Musa Dube's outline of a theological framework for the Circle is an example of her both mapping the theoretical terrain as well as interacting with and navigating through it. Her outline seeks the wellbeing of all people and the world and seeks to product theological tools and resources that point us in the same direction.

Contrasts in the terrain are rich in resources too. Nadar's more sceptical view of the Bible as opposed to Akoto holding the Bible in high regard, may contradict each other as far as their theoretical orientations are concerned, but essentially they are both fighting for the rights of women and children. The interconnecting frameworks that underlie all of these scholars provide biblical scholarship with critical tools, whether we criticize the biblical text or the

society that reads the text. Either way, they provide tools that can cause change in the way we read the Bible and how the Bible is used in society that creates a praxis for theological action (Ackermann 2004: 25) that holds the experiences of the marginalized and abused in high esteem (Nadar 2006a: 60).

Dube contributes to the issue of the Bible and HIV being postcolonial and feminist challenges patriarchy and globalizations and calls into question systems that cause and exacerbate vulnerability of people most affected by HIV and AIDS.

Nadar contributes to the issue of the Bible and HIV by calling into question the issues of harmful theological models and the importance of reading the bible responsibly with feminist and womanist trajectories for the purposes of liberation theologies that deconstruct retributionism and sexist patriarchal models that cause so much harm in conversations surrounding HIV and AIDS.

Ackermann contributes to the issue of the Bible and HIV in much the same way as Nadar does starting from suspicion but looking at soteriological models in discussing issues surrounding HIV and AIDS. Her holistic approach is what gives her reading of the Bible so much value as an ethical tool.

Bruce contributes to the issue of the Bible and HIV through her investigation of the text and the world behind the text, extracting inclusive hermeneutics and exegeses, and showing a strong criticism for patriarchal and exclusive systems that victimize people living with HIV and AIDS. Her concern for people living with disabilities provides a valuable supplementary argument alongside with issues surrounding HIV and AIDS, dealing with positive and inclusive and ethical talk surrounding healing in the Bible.

Akoto contributes to the issue of the Bible and HIV by making use of inculturation and cultural symbols and working with them alongside the bible to discuss pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial issues, looking at African, foreign, and colonial theologies, and distinguishing among them what is beneficial, providing theological models derived from Biblical reading that emphasises life over death with regards to HIV and AIDS.

As I've described in previous chapters these issues are not the only ones raised by these scholars, but you have a wealth of approaches that critiques patriarchy, colonialism, globalization, retributionism, racism, and other abusive systems that are harmful to people living with HIV and AIDS. With these scholars there also arises a series of theoretical frameworks, methodological tools, and theological orientations that provide useful and beneficial tools for speaking about and for HIV and AIDS contexts and issues.

What makes this line of research interesting is that it is both valuable within and outside the boundaries of biblical scholarship and theology. This sort of approach can be used in other forms of literature and media. Within biblical studies this line of study allows for more comprehensive and exhaustive analysis of not only biblical text, but also the work of other people engaging with the text.

Bringing this multitude of voices into dialogue raises new questions and creates new tools to explore how the bible is being used in the world. Regarding South Africa, renewed forms of biblical scholarship is important given the history of the Bible and the readers of the Bible in South Africa. Ways of reading the Bible impact on the biblical scholars approach to HIV and AIDS. The same can be said of gender. The same can be said of many other contexts that I may not even have considered in this thesis. This is where further work into these concerns becomes valuable.

For a closing remark I would like to say that biblical scholarship should explore and push against the margins between explored and unexplored territories. Gender studies,

masculinity studies, queer studies and feminist and womanist studies have illustrated a need for pushing against the boundaries and margins set up to contain women in subalternate roles. HIV and AIDS complicates the matter by feeding off of circumstances that suppress men, women and children making them either vulnerable to infection or susceptible to stigma and discrimination if they are already infected. Biblical scholarship must continue to read against the grain of oppression and oppressive texts in the ongoing search for liberating theologies that work towards the wellbeing of all people and the world in which they live.

Appendix - Kerina's Story

Here are the two versions of Kerina's story as they appear in articles by Nadar and Phiri. This is a true story used by biblical scholars like Sarojini Nadar, Isabel Phiri and Gerald West (Nadar 2009; Nadar and Phiri 2008/2009; West 2008/2009).

Kerina's Story - A Case Study

“Kerina has been married for sixteen years now, and has two children (Selvan aged fifteen and Levin aged nine). Her husband, Peter, has been beating her periodically, for a number of years.

They both come from working class backgrounds, with little education. Kerina works in a shoe factory and Peter works casually. He is an alcoholic. They belong to an Evangelical church, one that does not ordain women, nor allow women to participate equally in the life and activities of the church. *Kerina's* [sic: Kerina] suffers from asthma. Her youngest son Levin also suffers from asthma and epileptic seizures.

The last beating that Kerina received from her husband was particularly severe. X-rays showed that she had a fractured skull. Her youngest sister, Simi, advises Kerina to leave her husband, because "until death do us part, should not mean 'until he kills me.'" Kerina decided she wanted to end her marriage. Because they were living with her mother, she asked Peter to move out. Her pastor, Rev. Bobby Naidoo and his elder, Brother Rajen Moonsamy, immediately came over to visit telling Kerina that:

- 1) The Bible says that divorce is wrong
- 2) The man is the head of the woman therefore she is supposed to submit to him
- 3) By not cooking and doing other household chores—which a wife is supposed to do for her husband—she inevitably brought on the abuse
- 4) Through submission and prayer, her husband will change.

She has to persevere

Kerina's mother, Mrs Rani Naicker gives Kerina some motherly advice: "You see, Kerina, according to our culture, you are not a good wife. You should wake up early in the morning and pack lunch for your husband. Peter says that you do not iron his trousers with a neat crease—how many times have I taught you how to do that? His clothes are not washed, ironed folded and put into his cupboard on time, so that every morning he has to look for his socks; His food is not ready when he comes home really hungry. Kerina, you should really try to be a better wife. Then maybe Peter would not beat you so badly."

Kerina protests that she leaves home two-and-a-half-hours before he does, while it is still dark. She says that she comes home only after him therefore it is difficult to have food ready on time before he is home. She says that sometimes she has to take leave from work and spend the whole day in a public hospital with Levin, so that he can receive treatment for his asthma and epileptic seizures. She protests that she is often very tired and very sick...

Kerina's protests fall upon deaf ears. Her mother tells her that marriage is for life, and things were much more difficult "in the old days." Rev. Boddy Naidoo tells her that she should return to her husband, pray for him, and submit to his will. Her friends at work also tell her

that it is an open disgrace for a woman to leave her husband: "What would people say? Return to him," they tell her.

She does. The following week he punches her in the face again..." (Nadar and Phiri 2008/2009:1-3).

Kerina's Story - A Case Study

"Kerina has been married for sixteen years. She has two children (boys aged fifteen and nine). Her husband, Peter, has been beating her periodically for a number of years. Both come from working class backgrounds, with little education. She works in a shoe factory and he is a casual labourer. He is an alcoholic. They belong to an evangelical church, one that does not ordain women, nor allow them to participate equally in the life and activities of the church. Kerina is asthmatic, as is her youngest son who is also epileptic.

The last beating that Kerina received from her husband was particularly severe. X-rays showed that her skull was cracked. She decided that she wanted to end their marriage. Because they were living with her mother, she asked Peter to move out. The pastor and the elder immediately came to visit, telling Kerina that (a) according to the Bible, divorce is wrong; (b) the man is the head of the woman and therefore she is supposed to submit to him; and (c) that by not cooking and doing other household chores which a wife is supposed to do for her husband, she inevitably brought on the abuse.

Kerina protested that she leaves home two and a half hours before Peter does, while it is still dark. She comes home after him and therefore it is difficult to have food ready on time before he is home. She says that sometimes she has to take leave from work and spend the whole day in a public hospital with her youngest son who is asthmatic and epileptic. She is often very tired and sick. Her protests fell on deaf ears. Her pastor told her that she should return to her husband, pray for him and submit to his will. She did and the following week he punched her in the face again” (Nadar 2009: 135).

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