

The copyright of this thesis vests in the author. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

Published by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in terms of the non-exclusive license granted to UCT by the author.

**GENDER JUSTICE:**

**A THEOLOGICAL CHALLENGE TO THE  
CHURCH IN ZAMBIA IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

**BY**

**PEGGY MULAMBYA KABONDE (MLMPEG001)**

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award  
of the degree of Master of Social Science in the Department of  
Religious Studies,

Faculty of Humanities

University of Cape Town,

January 2003

**Supervisor: Professor John W. de Gruchy**

*To the memory of  
my mother Vickie and  
mother-in-law Mable for  
their inspiration and faith in God.*

~~~~~

*The God of Jesus Christ is the God of justice,  
of victory over the splintering and death-dealing  
power of sin. And by the same token,  
this is the God who is with the oppressed and marginalized,  
who takes the side of those who are persecuted,  
repressed and condemned by the kingdom of this world;  
this is the God who raised Jesus crucified,  
and who raises all those crucified in history.<sup>1</sup>*

---

<sup>1</sup> From Ronaldo Munoz. 1990. *The God of Christians*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books. Pg 172

---

## ABSTRACT

---

*Act justly;  
Love tenderly;  
And walk humbly with your God.  
[Micah 6:8]*

Guided by faith in the love and justice of God for humanity, this paper aims to examine the rhetoric and reality of the question of gender justice in the church in Zambia. Although the church holds the view of the empowerment of women and both the clergy and lay people are opening doors for women's participation in the life and work of the church, there are still imbalances that exist and govern the relationships within the church between men and women. As a result of this realization, the challenge to the church in Zambia is to explore ways in which the mainline churches can engage with the issue of how this situation could be redressed.

*"Then God said, let us make man in our own image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish, the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle and over the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. So God created man in His own image, in the image of Him, male and female He created them" (Genesis 1: 26-27).*

It is important to note that humans are not instructed to dominate one another. But both are given an equal responsibility of caring for the rest of creation. They are instructed instead to have dominion over the rest of creation. Therefore, according to the scriptures, relationships in which humans dominate one another are wrong.

Gender justice is concerned with the transformation of relationships between men and women particularly in so far as power relations are concerned. Jesus was involved in overcoming barriers that divided people. Repeatedly, Jesus said the Kingdom of God

had come. This leads to the conclusion that God's will for the perfection of humanity involves transcending human barriers of all kinds. In his kingdom, God wants us to live united with Him rather than divided by our differences from one another.

This research poses a challenge to the church to examine this subject of gender justice further. The lack of adequate female representation and equipped women leaders has been taken for granted. Women are still a minority in leadership positions though some men say that sufficient numbers of women have not come up without considering various impediments placed in their way. It is hoped that the church and women will work out strategies that will enhance equal participation and enable every member, female or male alike, realize their full potential.

The research was done in different denominations on the Copperbelt. The questionnaire and oral interviews were both used to collect data. Interviews were conducted on twenty women and ten men coming from the grassroots up to the top leadership. In the collection of the data, I found that it was easier getting information from women than men. The other method used was literary research covering contemporary writing on the issue of gender justice.

---

## ABBREVIATIONS

---

|       |                                                   |
|-------|---------------------------------------------------|
| AACC  | All Africa Conference of Churches                 |
| AME   | African Methodist Episcopal Church                |
| CCAP  | Church of Central Africa Presbyterian             |
| CCAR  | Church of Central Africa in Rhodesia              |
| CCZ   | Christian Council of Zambia                       |
| DAWN  | Development Alternatives for Women in the New Era |
| GAD   | Gender and Development                            |
| IMF   | International Monetary Fund                       |
| MEF   | Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation                     |
| PEMS  | Paris Evangelical Missionary Society              |
| RCZ   | Reformed Church in Zambia                         |
| UCC   | United Church of Canada                           |
| UCCAR | United Church of Central Africa of Rhodesia       |
| UCZ   | United Church of Zambia                           |
| UN    | United Nations                                    |
| UPCSA | Uniting Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa    |
| WARC  | World Alliance of Reformed Churches               |
| WCC   | World Council of Churches                         |
| WID   | Women in Development                              |

---

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

|                                           |     |
|-------------------------------------------|-----|
| <b>Abstract</b>                           | i   |
| <b>Abbreviations</b>                      | iii |
| <b>Table of contents</b>                  | iv  |
| <b>Acknowledgements</b>                   | vi  |
| <br>                                      |     |
| <b>Introduction</b>                       | 1   |
| Research statement                        | 7   |
| Significance and value of study           | 7   |
| Methodology                               | 10  |
| Limitations                               | 10  |
| Organization and scope                    | 11  |
| <br>                                      |     |
| <b>Chapter 1- Defining the context</b>    | 12  |
| Church and gender                         | 12  |
| Religion in Zambia                        | 15  |
| The church in Zambia                      | 16  |
| <br>                                      |     |
| <b>Chapter 2 – What is gender justice</b> | 20  |
| Hermeneutics of gender justice            | 20  |
| The concept of male and female divide     | 21  |
| The challenge of patriarchal colonization | 27  |
| <br>                                      |     |
| 1. Cultural barriers                      | 29  |
| 2. Education barriers                     | 32  |

|                                                          |           |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| 3. Health barriers                                       | 35        |
| <b>Chapter 3 – Women and church</b>                      | <b>38</b> |
| Women in the church                                      | 38        |
| Women, church and society                                | 45        |
| <b>Chapter 4 – Theological perspectives</b>              | <b>48</b> |
| Theological perspectives in the 21 <sup>st</sup> century | 48        |
| The role of women in the Old Testament                   | 51        |
| The role of women in the New Testament                   | 53        |
| Feminist vision of the inclusive church (oikumene)       | 58        |
| <b>Chapter 5 – Conclusion</b>                            | <b>64</b> |
| Summary remarks to the church in Zambia                  | 64        |
| Church leaders                                           | 70        |
| <b>Bibliography</b>                                      | <b>72</b> |
| Appendix I                                               | 74        |
| Appendix II                                              | 77        |

---

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

---

I managed to finish my thesis due to the tremendous support that I have received from colleagues and family. To all of them, too numerous to mention, I say thank you.

I would like to extend my special thanks to my supervisor Professor John de Gruchy for his support and providing guidance to understand the subject matter and to Dr lyn Jean Holness for her encouragement and inspiration. Many thanks to Dr Nyambura Njoroge for her support during the writing of the thesis.

I would like to pay my tribute to the United Church of Zambia, Copperbelt Presbytery and in particular, Chifubu congregation for their moral and spiritual support that they rendered to me. I am grateful for their patience during my absence when they needed me for the pastoral care of the congregation.

I also wish to acknowledge the financial assistance from the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America and from the University of Cape Town.

My special thanks to the Department of Religious Studies of the University of Cape Town for their mentoring and the opportunities, which they offered to me.

Thank you to all those unnamed, who through words and actions, showed in caring for an inclusive community of both male and female alike.

All opinions expressed and reached are those of the author, and not to be regarded as those of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America or the University of Cape Town.

I extend my gratitude to all my brothers and sisters and my father for their unfailing love and advice to me to keep on working hard.

Finally, my indebtedness to my family, one cannot find kind words to say thank you. To my loving husband Fred, and our children Songwe, Kabonde, Ntamanyanga, and Kapuka-Mapalo; to you all I say "God Bless you". You have been an inspiration in

my coming in and going out during the research and writing of the thesis. Thank you once again for your patience and understanding of the wife and mother you have.

University of Cape Town

## INTRODUCTION

This thesis sets out to assess critically how the Church in Zambia has understood and responded to the question of gender<sup>1</sup> justice in its mission. In this study, an attempt is being made to describe the reality of women's situation in the church in Zambia. Thus, calling up the churches to analyze the reality and rhetoric praxes on gender justice.

It seems appropriate at this point to identify my own location. I write as a Zambian woman and an ordained minister. I am a mother and a wife. I am also a social activist on gender issues. I am therefore able to speak and write from within the situation I am reflecting on in this dissertation

The church in Zambia does not explicitly recognize the triple role of women that is, reproductive, productive and social work. Women unlike men find themselves burdened to an extent of not ascending to top positions. Women by virtue of their being, shoulder all the work that sometimes can be shared with men. Usually, women are found doing every job that men think is associated with women's work. It is this unreasonable tendency that the women in church are calling for to come to an end. Women must not be burdened at the church, the way they get over burdened in homes. The church is supposed to be an institution that society must be emulating. Musimbi Kanyoro has argued that there cannot be full partnership unless the churches review and change the traditions and structures which tend to relegate women to the home.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand Diana Elson has observed that, 'it may even give rise to the feeling that the problem is women rather than the disadvantages women face; and that women are unreasonably asking for special treatment rather than redress for injustices and for the removal of distortions, which limit their capacities.'<sup>3</sup> It is necessary then to move from the so-called programmes for women to approaches that emphasize gender relations.

The situation of a Zambian woman is derived from the three dimensions to her cultural reality namely; religious, traditional and the West. All the three components have been used to interpret the women's lives and as such women have found themselves to be at a distance

---

<sup>1</sup> Gender – is concerned with the roles assumed by men and women within their cultures through socialization, and therefore not biologically determined. People come to learn about the behavior expected of them within their society.

<sup>2</sup> Musimbi Kanyoro, 1996. God calls to ministry: An inclusive Hospitality. *In Groaning in Faith*. (eds) M. Kanyoro and N. Njoroge. Nairobi : Acton Press. Pg 151.

<sup>3</sup> Elson, D. 1991. *Male Bias in the Development Process*. New York: Manchester University Press. Pg 98.

within the church. This has resulted into women accepting the position that has been imposed on them of serving men. It is from this situation that Kanyoro further writes

The church is the place to which women can turn and ask for solidarity in identifying values and structures which stand in the way of the full realization of their worth and calling to discipleship as partners with men in all areas.<sup>4</sup>

It can further be argued that the status of women in the church has not been addressed adequately to provide space and encourage women's aspirations in the running of the church. This is the focus and motivation of contributing to the writing on gender justice and how the church can examine the issue further.

Despite the fact that women are the majority in the church, it seems that the leadership structures of the church will continue to be dominated by men, both clergy and laity. It is not likely that this situation will improve in the foreseeable future, simply because there are very few women represented in the decision-making bodies of the church. This goes again to the heart of the matter.

As far as I understand, this piece of work will help to develop an approach to gender praxis for justice in the church, which has been hampered by cultural views on women and ecclesiastical structures that promote unequal status between the sexes.<sup>5</sup>

Stella Munachongo cited in Naomi Chazan describes poor representation of women in Zambia in the way society is perceived to have incorporated women as participants in the system. She indicates that

While Zambian women are represented at all levels of the system, their numbers are too low compared with those of their male counterparts to help integrate women into development. The Zambian case is indicative

---

<sup>4</sup>Musimbi Kanyoro, 1974. *Human Liberation in a Feminist Perspective – A Theology*. The Westminster Press, Philadelphia. Pg 96.

<sup>5</sup>Oduyoye Mercy, 1988. *The Christ for African Women in With Passion and Compassion*. (Eds) Virginia Fabella, M.M. & Mercy Amba Oduyoye. Orbis Books, Maryknoll. Pp 35-46.

of a strategy of female incorporation and subsequent segregation. Although women have been drawn into the system, they have been organized in separate institutions heavily reliant on official handouts and thereby prevented from exerting pressure in accordance with their number.<sup>6</sup>

The inequality inherited from the gender-insensitive political structures of the wider society, as such, has found its way into the church. The reality is that so often the church mimics society rather than setting an example for it. The church has always been condemning political structures for not being democratic in the running of the affairs of the country. But it is surprising to note that the church herself has been very slow in the issues pertaining to gender.

This systemic injustice is also rooted in established economic, political and cultural structures with a male-dominated approach as the governing and leading reality that oppresses women. The church in Zambia needs to break away from the old system where only men were employed, and as such, conditions of service favored them. This needs to be checked.

As churchwomen we have experienced the effects of patriarchy in subjugation and marginalization. Thus, we see an urgent need to examine our church structures, traditions and practices in order to remedy injustices and to correct misinterpretations and distortions that have crippled us. The church seems to pay lip service to women's concerns. Its rhetoric has done little to improve the status of women. This is being hidden in the practice of culture that widens the gap between woman and man. All this has come about as a result of the systemic injustice, which perpetuates the oppression of women in our church today. Kanyoro as further observed that

Women, by virtue of their gender, often experience discrimination in terms of denial of equal access to decision-making positions in church and society. Discrimination promotes the uneconomical use

---

<sup>6</sup> Chazan, N. 1989 Gender perspectives on African States in *Women and the State in Africa* (eds) J. Parpart and K. Staudt.. Colorado: Lynne Reiner Publishers. Pp 185-201.

of women's talents, and it creates feelings of low esteem and worthlessness.<sup>7</sup>

The above statement refers to the existing reality of the church. Apparently the church of Jesus Christ has become an organization that has laid down rules, structures and traditions that continue to widen the gap between men and women. As a result of these man-made rules and bureaucracies confronting our 'institutional church' as Yong Ting Yin puts it, 'new meanings and definitions of the leadership, power and authority concepts must be given.'<sup>8</sup>

At the outset there are restrictions from different sources, which make women really feel that they are women, as the community would deem to be fit. Women are an integral part of the society, although they have been turned into commodities. There is no female emancipation without the emancipation of society itself. Is it possible to separate women's problems from children's, youth's, parent's, society's, state or church? Hence many leaders say that a state cannot be developed if women are absent in participation; society must also realize that a well-educated woman is of great help to society. There is an adage that says; 'if you train a woman, you train the nation.' Therefore, women's education is important to enable them to participate effectively in the empowerment process.

Unfortunately, in this case, there are still many barriers that surround women such as in church, work place, home, and politics all over the world. Sharon Potgieter says

The church recognizes that we have moved on in areas such as science, yet it chooses to impose a first-century interpretation on the question of women. So much energy is spent on restricting women when the church should be actively involved in promoting its prophetic role and extending Jesus' invitation to an abundant life.<sup>9</sup>

We can see a variety of barriers in Zambian churches such as tradition and belief, no female clergy in some churches. Most Zambian women living in rural areas have no access

---

<sup>7</sup> Musimbi Kanyoro, 1974. *Human Liberation in a Feminist Perspective – A Theology*. The Westminster Press, Philadelphia. Pg 74.

<sup>8</sup> Yong Ting Yin. 1989. "A protestant Perspective" in *we dare to dream: Doing Theology as Asian Women* (eds) Virginia Fabella M. M. and Sun Ai Lee Park; AWCC: Kowloon. Pg 45.

<sup>9</sup> Potgieter, Sharon. 1996. "Church Praxis and Women who remain within the Church" in *Groaning in Faith* (eds) Musimbi R.A Kanyoro and Nyambura Njoroge. Nairobi: Acton Publishers. Pg 22.

to information that leads to the empowerment of women within easy reach. It is women and children who are the most vulnerable when it comes to education and health and so forth as I will show in chapter 2.

One of the most striking failures in church organizations is that we are not accustomed to revisit critically the traditions that perpetuate the subordination of women and particularly, those related to women, status and justice. Many people think that these traditions have descended upon us from the heavens whereas in fact they are no more than the reflections of patriarchal and class society, where one class rules over another, where man rules over woman. As Angelene Swart puts it:

The challenge calls on us to be hopeful and to work towards a common-wealth of God's unlimited love which gives every living person the same value and importance, regardless of sex, class, race and religion... We need to learn from our past history and the experiences of women to rediscover and reconstruct a new creation.<sup>10</sup>

One of the first principles of justice is that no one should be able to subjugate another. If a rich man oppresses the poor man, this oppression goes against what is considered honourable. If a man owns a woman as though he were her property this relationship will not in its essence, be described as honourable. Honour is justice and equality in human rights. Dignity is love built on such justice and equality.

Another condition of the so-called justice is an exchange, and a necessary condition for exchange is a balance, equality between the two partners. Exchange cannot take place between someone superior and inferior, between something that is higher and lower. Real justice cannot therefore be based on a relationship characterized by exploitation of any kind. It is therefore in order to say that most of the relationships that arise between men and women are not based on true justice. Justice that seems to exclude and well up from rhetoric alone is not really justice. The language that is depicted between man and woman

---

<sup>10</sup> Swart, Angelene. 1996. "Dignity and worth in the Commonwealth of God" in *Groaning in Faith* (eds) Musimbi R.A. Kanyoro and Nyambura Njoroge, Nairobi: Acton Publishers. Pg 58.

in the official church documents and hearing from the stories on gender justice expressive of feelings cannot be called real partnership.

Some of the women in the church have been subjected to mental, emotional and psychological suppression and as such have been left with no other option but to take a low profile. This has resulted into a situation where a number of women have opted to work in the background. Women who are outspoken have always been left out in decisions pertaining to the administration of the church affairs.

The passivity observed in church - women are therefore not something they cherish, but it is a requirement that has been imposed upon them by society. In Zambia, there are overwhelming barriers to women's development in Church as I have indicated else where in my thesis that:

Women are not accorded same opportunities as men. A case in point can be noticed at the highest decision-making body in most of the churches when it comes to the composition of leadership.<sup>11</sup>

Women who are in the majority mostly attend church services in Zambia. Research has shown that the majority in the following denominations are women; the Anglican, African Methodist Episcopal Church, Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Uniting Presbyterian Church in Zambia, Reformed Church in Zambia and the United Church of Zambia.

It is surprising that although there are a number of organizations addressing gender issues like Women for Change, yet there are still 'stumbling blocks' for women in the church. For example, from the Monitor Newspaper, gender analyst Sarah Longwe says

A crucial point to come out here as well as from the responses to the previous questions is a complaint that gender issues are treated as a concern for women leaders and do not concern men leaders.<sup>12</sup>

God created male and female in his image. Hence we must reiterate that being created both in the image of God does not mean that women are inferior to men. They co-exist to help one another. Therefore, there should be no barrier to women's participation or development.

---

<sup>11</sup> Kabonde Peggy. 2000. *Gender Justice and partnership: An Overview of the United Church of Zambia*. Unpublished. CapeTown.

<sup>12</sup> Longwe Sarah. Female leaders are responsive than males in *The Monitor. For human rights and development* 229 (2002) pg 2.

A woman has been created by God to work alongside with a man as God's representative in this world. Man and woman are equal in relation to themselves and God (1Peter 3: 7). But the realities surrounding us are different. Often, a woman is looked upon as a tool and not a person. Letty Russell argues that

In the Yahwist creation story the focus is on the fact that Adam is not supposed to be lonesome but twosome. The interpretation of this text, including that of Paul, which asserts that man is to be the head of woman, reflects the social pattern of the ancient world and not necessarily an ontological structure given in creation (1Cor. 11:3-16; Eph. 5:21-33).<sup>13</sup>

As we face the challenge of women's emancipation in the twenty-first century, the church of Jesus Christ should be an organ that fully promotes the equality of women at all levels to uphold the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ. The issue at stake is not the men deciding at what time and when to include women, but the women themselves should be seen to be making decisions on what ought to be done about their lives.

#### **RESEARCH STATEMENT:**

**The church in Zambia has an obligation to promote gender justice in both Church and society. To what extent has it in fact acted to address this issue?**

#### **SIGNIFICANCE AND VALUE OF STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to review the issue of gender justice and challenge the church to take stock of the policies concerning women that are in place. Denise Ackermann has observed that, 'women's voices do not impact on this inner circle of practical theology, except as objectified themes of study, for example, on how to counsel a battered wife. Women's concerns and women's faith praxis remain obscured'<sup>14</sup> In this study a substantial number of Christians, both men and women will be interviewed resulting in observable descriptions of themes concerning their understanding of gender justice in the church. At this

---

<sup>13</sup> Russell, Letty. 1995. *Echoes, WCC Magazines*, No7.

<sup>14</sup> Ackermann, Denise. 1996. *Engaging Freedom: A contextual Feminist Theology Of Praxis in Journal of Southern Africa*. Pg 33.

stage in the research, gender justice will be dealt with to some extent as justice and injustice reflected in the relationship between men and women in the church, particularly with regard

to how they define their roles in the life and work of the church. Or to put it in another way, how should Christian men and women relate to each other at all levels of the church structures? Rosemary Edet in her article on Church Women of Africa writes:

In describing the roles that women play in the churches in Africa, one is struck by how traditionally feminine they are. We do not dispute the validity and necessity of these ministries, but we are distressed by the obvious lack of decisive action against societal exploitation and injustice. For women, Jesus is attractive because he is a fighter for justice, a healer, and a teacher. We retell the story of Jesus because it speaks directly to those areas of our lives where the reality of God is active and compelling. We find God in social justice and in the services of the church that respond to this need in society<sup>15</sup>.

The church has a role to play in the enhancement of gender justice in the wider society. Church leaders constitute one of the groups in the country that has the responsibility not only to speak against injustices but also to ensure that its own organs develop a sense of responsibility towards justice between sexes. The church needs to engage in social praxis that makes it a community witnessing to a new option for human life. Because evils in the world have diversified and grown exponentially, justice communities have a tendency to become paralyzed, and attempt to address everything in theory, while doing very little in practice, as others have documented; Ackerman<sup>16</sup>, Rosemary Radford Ruether<sup>17</sup>. The church has for

---

<sup>15</sup> Edet Rosemary. 1988. Church Women of Africa: A theological Community in *With Passion and Compassion* edited by Virginia Fabella and Mercy Oduyoye. Maryknoll: Orbis Books. Pg 9.

<sup>16</sup> Ackermann, Denise. 1996. Engaging Freedom: A contextual Feminist Theology Of Praxis in *Journal of Southern Africa*. Pg 48.

<sup>17</sup> Rosemary Radford Ruether. Writes that In God's Kingdom the corrupting principles of domination and subjugation will be overcome. People will no longer model social or religious relationships even relationships to God, after the sort of power that reduces others to servility. Rather they will discover a new kind of power, a power exercised through service, which empowers the disinherited and brings all to a new relationship of mutual enhancement. Jesus image of God and Christ as servant transforms all relations including relations of God. *Sexism and God-Talk*. London: SCM press. (1975) Pg 30.

centuries been an outspoken institution that has had an impact on the community, in the sense that it creates a framework for protecting the rights of individuals, especially those that are marginalized. Although on the part of gender issues, the church seems not to be very much involved.

As this study unpacks and analyses the role the church might play in gender issues, the significance of the church will be made abundantly clear not only in preaching about equality but also in effecting training that will challenge those institutions that are biased against women. The church has an important function in calling for a free society, by breaking away from its own gender-insensitive practices. An inclusive church will indeed assist in enhancing the status of women, especially as the church accepts the challenge of addressing gender-issues. Among other issues, the discussion on gender justice by providing praxis for women's emancipation will be tackled in order to address the issue of gender relations.

The roles that society has, through socialization, prescribed for the sexes need to change. Oakley argues that 'we need an ideological revolution, a revolution in the ideology of gender roles current in our culture, a revolution in concepts of gender identity. Thus, men and women must be seen as people, not as males and females.'<sup>18</sup> It is therefore, imperative to observe that a gender-based analysis of the role of women in the church needs to be underpinned by the notion that God's mission for humanity transcends any form of social distinction. Clearly, scripture says: "For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, they are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ" (Romans 3: 23-25).

If we take this approach, then we will understand that our God is an all-inclusive God, preferring to deal with all his/her creatures in the same way, regardless of their sex, race, class, tribe, age, and conviction.

Therefore, within the churches' responsibility to promote systemic justice, the struggle for gender justice is one of the most fundamental ways in which we seek to transform systems and structures. The church is called to this vision of radical justice as reflected in the book of Jeremiah:

---

<sup>18</sup> Oakley, Ann. 1995. Cited in Haralambos. Pg 867.

Thus says the Lord: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the lord who practice steadfast... justice and righteousness" (Jeremiah 9:23-24).

## **METHODOLOGY**

This dissertation has both primary and secondary data. Mostly, time was spent with Christian women and the head of the churches. The methodology employed was to conduct in-depth interviews with a number of women and men residing in urban areas. The research was done in different denominations on the Copperbelt. The questionnaire and oral interviews were both used to collect data. Interviews were conducted on twenty women and ten men coming from the grassroots up to the top leadership. In the collection of the data, I found that it was easier getting information from women than men.

A questionnaire was sent to both men and women to get the general opinion of the members from the church. The other method used was to hear oral stories from elderly women to get their understanding on the issue of gender justice. This was very interesting as they narrated the way they perceive the role of women and men according to their worldview. This brought another perspective in the research that I carried out. And it is my hope that the church can make use of the hidden wisdom and such women as the church continues to seek the quest for true gender justice. This research was developed from the stories of Zambian women concerned with their status in the church as well as society. This is the reason why different views have been expressed from women of mixed backgrounds.

The other method used was archival research. This method enabled me to collect the relevant documentation covering the subject under study from the Church headquarters. In other words, the methods that were used to collect the necessary data for the project were interviews, archival research, contemporary literature and other documentation as listed in the bibliography. This work is fundamentally a theological study and an understanding of the Christian faith on gender justice for the Church in Zambia.

## **LIMITATIONS**

I encountered a lot of problems in the course of this research. It was difficult for me to get the questionnaires from the head of the Churches except one. The other problem encountered was language, because the questions were distorted in the sense that some women and men could not understand the real meaning of the word gender hence some answers were not really meaningful.

Nevertheless, it was also my intention to extend the interviews to some rural women, primarily to get their opinion about the impact of gender imbalances in the church. But due to time and financial constraints, this did not take place.

## **ORGANISATION AND SCOPE**

This dissertation falls into five parts. Following the introduction is chapter 1, in which I will examine the history of the church and gender in Zambia. The role of the church in Zambia will also be discussed here and because this is my own tradition the focus will be on the Protestant churches and how they have responded to the issue of gender justice. Chapter 2 will be an overview of my understanding of gender justice. The various complex issues that go with the definition of gender justice will be observed. The chapter will then analyze two notions: Rhetoric and Reality of gender justice. It will then focus on the divide between men and women in the church, in the context of different actors in the process of gender justice. Chapter 3 will then be devoted to an analysis of some women's stories and the role of these women in the construction of the church. The position of the church will also be discussed and how it envisages the issue of gender justice, given time and space to address some of the issues under consideration. Within the context of exploring different ways of bridging the women /men divide in theological reflection. Chapter 4 reflects and examines how authoritarian structures in Zambian culture are perpetuated in the church. This critical analysis focuses on church organization and how it can be more gender responsive, to facilitate the church seeing male and female as people, regardless of their sex.

Chapter 5 highlights the key issues from each chapter. It raises critical concerns for the church and how it can further examine gender issues as social constructs, which can be unlearned in order to transform the church's role as an official organ of the wider society.

**CHAPTER ONE**  
**DEFINING THE CONTEXT**  
**CHURCH AND GENDER**

The history of the church in Zambia has been silent on the issue of gender. When we trace back to the time of missionaries, who brought the Gospel to Zambia, you find that most of them were men accompanied by their wives who were doing social work. A case in point is of Reverend Collins Morris<sup>19</sup> who was around at the time of the union of the biggest Protestant church in Zambia, the United Church of Zambia. His wife is not mentioned anywhere, although she was a Sunday school teacher.

When missionaries came to Africa, they started teaching men alone how to preach and it was only males who went to school. Women were told to remain at home, be married to assume responsibility for the house, whilst some girls were told that they should wait for marriage only and remain uneducated. At the same time there was lack of leadership skills for the female in general. In African culture attitude combined with missionary teaching has frequently limited women's participation in the church.

Rhoda Ada writes that 'Many churches in Africa have been dominated by foreign missionaries so much so that the church in Africa has been alienated from the African context and situation.'<sup>20</sup> So it is the responsibility of the church to know that the role of women in church should be seriously considered.

The issue of gender justice did not arise at the time of missionaries because of lack of conscientization on the part of women. The church has taken advantage of the women because of the way society has treated them as weaker vessels who should be led.<sup>21</sup> Mary Mikhael observes that the attitude that has been ingrained in the society is that "The picture of society manifested in the Old Testament introduces man as predominant and woman as subordinate and places in man's hands the policy-making for life and conduct on every level, and this has to be deconstructed if true partnership has to exist."<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> He was a white missionary and first president of the United Church of Zambia.

<sup>20</sup> Ada, Rhoda, 1998. *Women in the Church*, Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation (MEF), Kitwe. Unpublished.

<sup>21</sup> 1Peter3v7.

<sup>22</sup> Mary Mikhael. 1995. Seeking dialogue with the church: Christian Women in the Middle East. *In Women's Visions*. (Ed) Ofelia Ortega. Pg 168.

This same attitude continued governing the church. The combination of culture and missionary teaching reinforced the place of women in the affairs of the church coupled with the already existing perceptions about women. As the church grew, some women wanted to expand their ministries as from being mere sweepers of the church to duties like preaching the word of God and so forth. This came as a result of the publicity that was in the political arena in the inclusion of women in whatever the state was doing for meaningful development to take place. When the word gender was introduced for the first time in Zambia, there was apathy and phobia on the side of the interested parties like men and some women. This included the main actors in the government machinery who were supposed to educate the public about gender equality in all sectors. When churchwomen got involved to reinforce the concept of gender justice and partnership like other official organizations were doing, the church did not receive it positively. There were reservations on the part of most of the denominations in Zambia and that there was no problem as far as gender equality was concerned.

When the Zambian women came back from the United Nations (UN) women's conference from Beijing in 1995, the message on gender was loud and clear, such that nobody could shoot it down. The women from different facets of life including the church went on campaign and formed different pressure groups to sensitize the society on the inequalities as experienced by women. To silence what was going on in this sensitization campaign, Mr. Ali Simwinga a town clerk, openly in a seminar said, 'this gender issue has brought confusions in homes, personally I wouldn't like to run a home like a co-corporative and this is what our women folk are urging us to do.'<sup>23</sup>

There was resistance on the part of some women as well as men as the campaign went on. Some women were being used by men to rise against their fellow women those seen to be in the forefront of propagating gender equality. Despite these set backs the struggle continued for gender equality. It was through this persistence on the part of some women that the law on gender equity was passed in the parliament because there was no way the government could have avoided the pressure. The government took upon it self to put in place a desk at the cabinet office called Gender and Development (GAD). This spilled over to other

---

<sup>23</sup> Mr Ali Simwinga is a lawyer by profession and Town Clerk for Kitwe in Zambia. He was passing a comment at a workshop when the budget allocation was being made for cross-cutting issues like gender for the province to be included in the Transitional National development plan from 2002-2005 in Ndola in 2002, June.

organizations such as the church to open discussions on gender related issues. It was no longer secret because there was publicity to sensitize society and individuals.

This prompted some denominations to start including their women folk in forums like decision-making bodies, committees and so forth. Although the number was not impressive at first, this became the beginning of change in some denominations like the African Methodist Episcopal (AME), United Church of Zambia (UCZ), Anglican Church, Reformed Church in Zambia (RCZ) and the Uniting Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa (UPCSA). The Bishop of Central Diocese of Zambia the Rt. Rev. Derek Kamukwamba, reiterates that 'the diocese encourages women to develop their talents and abilities. We are different but equal in the eyes of God.'<sup>24</sup>

Some denominations like AME, UCZ and UPCSA started recruiting and training women for the ministry and later ordained them. It was a great joy to women especially those who had the passion to serve the Lord as full time church workers. So far some women have faired well like the former general secretary for Christian Council of Zambia (CCZ). At first it was not easy at all, but with the move toward gender justice and partnership, some of the denominations have started acknowledging the potential that the women folk have. Though the penetration has been very difficult, suffice it to say, there has been a tremendous progress for women's participation in the life and work of the church in Zambia. For example, Evelyn Malambo feels that women in the church have been silent even when they hear the scripture being read and given a patriarchal interpretation in the teaching of the church. This continues to perpetuate the subordination of the place of women in the Church.<sup>25</sup>

The history for churchwomen in Zambia has not been very good. Martha Chileshe the founder of the women's group in the United Church of Zambia has said that 'women in the past were only involved in doing social work and teaching Sunday school children in the church'.<sup>26</sup> The gender roles that have been inherited from the past generations by women and men seem to have been passed on to the church. Rosemary Edet expresses the same view as that of Chileshe that the Christian church has suffered and is suffering from a growing cultural

---

<sup>24</sup> Bishop Derek Kamukwamba. 2002. He is from the Anglican church, Central Diocese of Zambia.

<sup>25</sup> Mrs. Evelyn Malambo. 2002. Teacher by profession and Elder in the Salvation Army Church in Zambia.

<sup>26</sup> Martha Chileshe. 2001, Elder and founder of the women's group in UCZ.

alienation because Christianity has not been that of cultural exchange but of cultural domination or assimilation.<sup>27</sup>

Now that the issue is open to everyone some women have taken a very serious stand to redress the issue with all those interested to wipe out the inequalities that have existed between men and women over the years. Since the church has come to a realization of not allowing history to repeat itself, justice has to be done as Jesus taught us to 'seek first the kingdom of God and his justice' (Matthew 6:33). The church is meant to have the power to forgive its past sins that it has committed over women.

The church in Zambia has acted as the voice of the voiceless on pertinent issues like poverty, health, education and other important matters. One wonders why the church has been so silent on the issue of gender justice instead of approaching it vigorously.

## **RELIGION IN ZAMBIA**

There is complete freedom of worship in Zambia and almost every denomination of Christian religion is represented. The most well known mainline churches are African Methodist Episcopal, Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Reformed Church in Zambia, Roman Catholic, Anglican, United Church of Zambia and the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa.

Zambia was declared a Christian nation by the second republican president, Dr Fredrick Chiluba, in December, 1991. This of course did not mean that other religions do not have freedom of worship. The constitution grants the rights of worship to the adherents of other religions. This declaration has not yet been translated into practical terms. The church has not well utilized the opportunity brought about by the declaration because of the many issues that have not been addressed. One of the issues that have not been tackled vigorously as a church is the issue of gender despite the government having put in place state machinery called gender and development to monitor the progression of sex inequalities in all sectors. The Church in Zambia has not acted as it should because there is a belief that the Church is an institution partly owned by God and as such, time has to be given for it to consult before the gender issue can be finally adopted as a policy of the church.

---

<sup>27</sup> Edet, Rosemary. 1989, Church Women of Africa: A Theological Community in *With Passion and Compassion*. (Ed) Virginia Fabella, M.M. and Mercy Oduyoye. Pg 12.

I must say here that this has not made much difference in terms of morality in that we have seen many evils in the land in the last ten years of the declaration. The leaders both national and church have not lived to the norms of the declaration. We have however, seen the mushrooming of cults and independent ministries many of which have lacked credibility.

Although Zambia has been declared a Christian nation, Islam, modernity and traditionalism challenge it. Islam is spreading at a faster rate because the Muslims are able to provide bread and butter to the poor. And this is posing a big threat on the Christian religion.

### THE CHURCH IN ZAMBIA

Historically, the church in Zambia dates back to the 1880s beginning with the demise of David Livingstone. Livingstone's death in 1873 inspired many of his colleagues to come to Zambia to set up different missionary societies. He was concerned with the alleviation of human suffering and to enter Central Africa, in 1857 Livingstone commented:

I know that in a few years I shall be cut off in that country (Africa), which is now open: do not let it be shut again! I go back to Africa to make an open path for commerce and Christianity.<sup>28</sup>

After twenty-five years of responding to Livingstone's challenge, the first missionary to make a move to Christian evangelism in the future Zambia was a Scottish man named Fredrick Arnot of the Plymouth Brethren, who had been brought up alongside Livingstone's children. Arnot arrived in the Lozi's Barotseland (present Western Province of Zambia) in December 1882.<sup>29</sup> He remained there until the arrival of Francois Coillard. During that time he opened a school for the sons of the chiefs, in which the future king Yeta III and his chief minister, both outstanding Christians in later years, first learned the rudiments of the Christian faith. In his mid-twenties and new to Africa, Arnot soon found that difficulties of the work were too formidable for a solitary man. Even in a way of visible results, he realized he was achieving very little. In 1884, he therefore but wisely decided to leave the field for the party led by the more experienced Francois Coillard.

---

<sup>28</sup> David Livingstone, 1857. In Peter Bolink. 1967. *Towards church Union in Zambia*. Franeker: T. Wever. Pg 8. See also John Baur. 1994. *2000 years of Christianity in Africa: An African History 1962-1992*. Nairobi: Paulines. Pg 198.

<sup>29</sup> John Baur. 1994. *2000 years of Christianity in Africa: An African History 1962-1992*. Nairobi: Paulines. Pg 205.

In August 1884,<sup>30</sup> Coillard, a French Calvinist missionary in the employ of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS) (Societe des Missions Evangeliques de Paris) reached the Zambezi and set up the first mission station at Sesheke in 1885, advancing to a second station at Sefula in 1887.<sup>31</sup> Building on the foundation Arnot had laid, the Coillards were able to concentrate their work upon the royal enclosure and the aristocracy of the lozi tribe. Coillard died in 1904. It was not until after Coillards death that the most spectacular progress was made.

Some more missionary societies were established after Livingstone's death like the London missionary society, the Church of Scotland, the Methodists, the Anglican Church, The Roman Catholic Church and the Reformed Church.

Despite these different missionary societies coming from different countries, traditions, theologies and communions, there was considerable similarity in their means of evangelism. Committed to the vision of the task of missions, which included the reconstruction of the country for the benefit of the "heathens", and of the transforming all phases of life; missionaries believed that one of the keys to accomplishing this goal was through education and health. When and wherever possible, the mission station included a school, a hospital or clinic. Missionaries believed that it was the responsibility of the church to teach every believer to read the bible. Reading the bible in accordance with Western standards of education, for the missionaries, came to mean, in effect, civilization of this non-western world, in keeping with the motto made famous by David Livingstone concerning the double aims of "*commerce*" and "*Christianity*".

In medical work, missions had the field to themselves. In this respect, missionary physicians pioneered in the fields of medical education, leprosy and humanitarian service during plagues and famines.

We can only conclude by saying that, although disruptive to the local culture and the like, the influence of mission schools and hospitals was eminently helpful to evangelize the Zambian people.

---

<sup>30</sup> Peter Bolink, 1967. *Towards Church Union in Zambia*. Franeker: T. Wever. Pg 52

<sup>31</sup> Peter Bolink, 1967. *Towards Church Union in Zambia*. Franeker: T. Wever Pg 83

The 1960s did not only see the rapid growth and development of the church in Zambia. These years also signaled the end of missions. This meant that the juridical autonomy of the local church was being established hand in hand with the Africanisation or Zambianisation of highest positions of leadership. The prevailing objective of this policy was to establish national churches to which 'missions' were somehow subject. This was inevitable since the nation was in the process of becoming autonomous.

The country became independent on 24<sup>th</sup> October 1964. Before that date few missionary societies had become united. The Church of Scotland had united with the London Missionary Society and the African Union Church of the Copperbelt in 1945-to form the church of Central Africa in Rhodesia (CCAR).<sup>32</sup> Soon after the CCAR was formed, the suggestion was made that the Central Free Church Council, which coordinated the European congregations, should merge with new body. Though no theological problems were foreseen, there were, however, delicate racial problems in adding a number of white congregations as it were to a Church, which was almost entirely African. The leadership of the CCAR was by now to a large extent in black Zambian hands. Agreeing to retain the parallel structure, the union took place on 26<sup>th</sup> July 1958 to form the United Church of Central Africa in Rhodesia (UCCAR).<sup>33</sup>

There can be little doubt that it was the arrival of political independence that conquered the waverers and brought the union into being. Two things should be noted about this union. First, the significant feature of the United Church of Zambia (UCZ) was not only the merger of denominations but also the coming together of white and African churches into a self-governing structure in which African leadership was going to dominate.

Second, on the political front, the new government was just adopting the slogan of "One Zambia, One Nation." It was thus clear that a church which, united considerable number of

---

<sup>32</sup> Adrian Hastings. 1979. *A History of African Christianity. 1950-1975*. London: CUP. P 161. Why the name CCAR? It is to be remembered that the Presbyterian churches in Malawi were already federated and formed the church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP). The CCAR (Union of the London Missionary Society/ African Copperbelt United Church and the Presbyterian church in Northern Rhodesia) was thus to distinguish itself from the church of Central Africa in Malawi and so to have a distinctly Rhodesian (Northern) name. See also John Baur. Pg 433.

<sup>33</sup> Adrian Hastings, 1979. *A History of African Christianity. 1950-1975*. London: CUP. Pg 450

tribes would be in a much better position to contribute to nation building than a number of smaller ones, based for the most part on single tribes.

Other major churches that were founded by foreign missions have taken virtually the same road towards autonomy. The African Methodist Episcopal, the Baptist Churches, the Pentecostal churches, the Church of God, the Salvation Army and the Seventh Day Adventists have developed local leadership and indigenous ministry. So, the church in Zambia has been localized to suit the local environment while still retaining an ecumenical link with churches from other parts of the world. This ecumenical link portrays the image of a church that is not only national but also universal in outlook.

The history of the church in Zambia is one that is based on other factors other than of gender. Just from the time of the arrival of the missionaries up to the period of Africanisation or Zambianisation there is no mention of male and female inequality. The line of approach was a different one based on evangelization. It is from this background that the women of Zambia have come. This will lead us into the next chapter that explores the Hermeneutics of gender justice arising from the history that has been silent, as I have indicated elsewhere.

## CHAPTER TWO

### WHAT IS GENDER JUSTICE?

#### HERMENEUTICS OF GENDER JUSTICE

One of the defining movements of the twentieth century has been the relentless struggle for gender equality, led mostly by women, but supported by a growing number of men.<sup>34</sup> When this struggle finally succeeds, as it must, it will mark a great milestone in human progress. And along the way it will change most of today's premises for social, economic and political life.

I believe that the gift of Jesus Christ and the call of the Gospel are to be honest, just and to have transparent relationships with God, with one another, and with creation. Within the churches' responsibility to promote systemic justice, the struggle for gender justice is one of the most fundamental ways in which we seek to transform structures and systems in order to be faithful to God's vision for humanity and creation as revealed in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The church of Jesus Christ has been turned into an organisation that has only a few people with authority who decide for the rest of other members. Mary-John Mananzan says that:

The institutional church is not only patriarchal, hierarchical and clerical but also colonialistic, capitalistic, feudal and fundamentalist at its core. It produces a ministry that is dualistic, power-oriented, ritual-centred and discriminatory against women. There is need for a new ecclesia that is *oikos* of God, an inclusive community that encompasses all beings.<sup>35</sup>

We live in a world broken by poverty, systemic and domestic violence and oppressive patriarchal structures. These realities, which are magnified by the effects of globalization, take root even in our churches. Globally, the majority of people in the world are denied justice and access to decision-making and power denying them the fullness of life. The

---

<sup>34</sup> Mainstreaming- A men's perspective: "We the group of men within UNDP, feel a strong concern about existing gender disparities, and would like to promote collaboration between men and women to reduce current disparities in the work place and in the world. From our male colleagues, we ask for the sensitivity to renounce dominant stereotypes and a willingness to re-evaluate our own attitudes towards gender equality issues and the advancement of women" (Gender in Development, April 1999. pg19).

<sup>35</sup> Mananzan Mary-John, 1995. Feminist Theology in Asia: An Overview, in *Women's Visions, Theological Reflection, Celebration, Action.* (ed) Ofelia Ortega. Geneva : WCC Publications, Pg 30.

injustices that result from this brokenness impact most heavily, on women. This is the time to commit ourselves and to act for gender justice that has been distorted by the impact of culture and ecclesiastical teachings as I have indicated before.

It is important to articulate in a clear and concise manner from the gender perspective what I feel to be the basic principles and practices guiding our work for justice that should guide our work and witness as members of the universal religious community and as partners in God's mission. There has been the history of challenging injustices from Biblical times, when Yahweh revealed Himself to Moses from the burning bush:

I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters; I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey...(Exod.3: 7 ff.)

We have to continue to struggle with sexism within the structures of globalization. We should be challenging systems and structures that discriminate against women in church and society and of working toward the creation of an inclusive community. This requires listening carefully to the stories of women including both their struggles and hopes. The journey should be toward wholeness, therefore, this calls us to the ongoing repentance and renewal as religious groups participating in the on going injustices in the world today. It challenges us to be free prophets,<sup>36</sup> to be speaking out to the people concerned in globalization so that they can create policies and practices that promote the inclusion of the marginalized, particularly women.

### **THE CONCEPT OF FEMALE AND MALE DIVIDE**

Let me now look at the specific meaning of the word gender, the way I understand it and what other people say. I use the word gender to define a concept that is fundamental to our understanding of human relationships. Gender refers to the roles that society defines for women and men, boys and girls. Sex roles, in contrast, refer to the biological function of being male and female. Gender roles are passed on by tradition, religious beliefs/interpretations and the value system of a community. They become institutionalized in

---

<sup>36</sup>Free Prophets - People who can speak openly and condemn the injustices going on in the world today.

social practices, ideas and relationships and become ingrained in the consciousness of both men and women. They are learned and therefore can be unlearned.<sup>37</sup>

An example of the difference between gender roles and sex roles is that women (sex role) biologically can become pregnant, not men. On the other hand, a socially constructed role (gender role) is the idea; common to many cultures, that childcare is women's work. The fact that women give birth to children does not necessarily mean that they alone should take care of the responsibility for childcare. Men, too, can be nurturing and take care of children as can be seen in the practice of some tribal societies.

Simply defining what we mean by "gender" is not enough. We are conscious that gender roles are located within a larger system of power relations and that our commitment must be extended to include the struggle for gender "justice". Most often there is an imbalance of power in favor of men resulting from giving more opportunities to men and placing constraints on women. Discrimination against women is culturally entrenched and has become global. The concept of gender introduces us to the differences in the roles of men and women in relation to work; to sharing the world's resources and benefits; to human rights; and to culture and religion. This entails that men and women have roles in the domain of production and public life from the community, the church, through to government level. With reference to the world's resources and benefits, gender inequality still holds true, as stated in a paper presented at the Beijing conference in 1995. To quote development alternatives for women in the New Era's (DAWN) statistics;

'Women world-wide produce half of the world's food;

Women constitute 70 per cent of the world's 1.3 billion absolute poor.

Women own only one per cent of the world's land'.

Thus, although women are engaged in these productive activities, they still work in an environment that militates against them in terms of the following factors;

1. The non-involvement of women in mainstream production;
2. The lack of access for women to property ownership and financial loans;

---

<sup>37</sup> Oakley, A. 1972. *Sex, Gender and Society*. London: Temple Smith.

3. The downgrading of women as potential candidates for high religious offices in the church.
4. The lack of church will to involve women in the development process in general. As Jennings suggests, 'the majority of development assistance still fails to reach women and there is a call for a more holistic gender approach rather than a Women in Development (WID) approach. To achieve this, projects must focus their analysis on those on whom power relation presses mostly'.<sup>38</sup>

Some forms of 'patriarchy' can be described as violent, a system of domination in which women, children and creation are subordinate and in which men are granted privilege because they are men. Patriarchy has been perpetuated throughout human history through the institutionalization of domination in the social, cultural and religious practices of societies. Prachar Hutanuwatr speaking of domination of one group over another and not considering what others feel argues that:

When we look at this worldview in the context of globalization, we can see that it has created a kind of civilization that victimizes its own people, people of other worldviews and other sentient beings. Over the last few hundred years this has been happening in the name of Industrialization, colonization and development in both capitalist and communist frameworks.<sup>39</sup>

Patriarchy is legitimized through the media and political, legal, economic and education systems. Patriarchy is so complex, with its interplaying factors of sex, gender, class, age, ability, ethnicity, religion, that it encircles women and men in its exploitative, discriminatory and oppressive control. Patriarchy prevents both men and women from being fully human. Gender justice analyses relationships between men and women, particularly those relationships that are oppressive. It looks at how these relationships are affected by other factors, such as class, race, ethnicity, globalization and so forth. The ultimate goal of gender justice is to support the creation or strengthening of transformative, non-oppressive relationships, which I believe to be expressive of the reign of God. We have much to learn

---

<sup>38</sup> Jennings, Mary. 1996. *Communities in Development: The theory and Practice of Gender in A Woman's world beyond the Headlines*. Dublin: Attic Press. Pg 116.

<sup>39</sup> Hutanuwar, P. 2000. Globalization from a Buddhist perspective, in *Globalization and its Consequences*. Vol.50, No 2, June. Geneva: WARC. Pg 4.

about this problem of gender that faces all of us, perhaps in different ways and to different degrees.

We have seen and heard the harsh and oppressive reality facing women and girls the world over. This oppression is structural and systemic. It forms part of the system of domination that subjugates by class, race, ability, ethnicity, geographical regions and other factors. Violence on all levels destroys women's lives.

In the destruction of the lives of women with the HIV/AIDS pandemic and millions of exploited women sex workers today, we hear again the story of the Pharisees wanting to stone the woman caught in adultery. In the situation of grandmothers remaining with the orphaned children, we hear Mary weeping at the cross of Jesus. In the enslavement of African women's future to foreign monetary powers, we remember the enslavement of the Israelites in Egypt.<sup>40</sup>

In the face of this violence and oppression God stands with those who suffer and speaks a resounding "NO" to structures and systems, which destroy human lives and earth community. God calls us to a world of shalom, where justice prevails and peace flourishes. We know that God requires of us "to act justly, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with our God". (Micah 6:8). In the dignity and the resistance of poor people the world over, in their quest for justice, we are inspired by Moses, David, Hannah and Mary and the promise of the time when God will have:

*"... Brought down the powerful from their thrones, lifted up the lowly, filled the hungry with good things, and the rich sent empty away". (Luke 1:52,53).*

Therefore, within the churches' responsibility to promote equity, the struggle for gender justice is one of the most cardinal ways in which we seek to transform systems and structures. The church is called to this vision of new radical start as reflected in the book of Paul:

For consider your call, brethren; not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth; but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the

---

<sup>40</sup> United Church of Canada:1998. *Gender Justice and partnership document*. Unpublished.

strong, God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption (1Corinthians1: 26-30).

The earth and all its resources belong to God for all the people to share equally. In other words, the church of Jesus Christ belongs to both women and men. Our vision recognizes the full humanity of women together with men as people of God called to work for dignity and genuine community based on love, understanding and right relationships. It is a vision of restoring and enriching community and family/home life by enabling men and women to be an integral part of a whole. It also requires understanding of biblical message through the eyes and experience of women and men in church and society, unlike the situation prevailing in our world today. I would like to quote from Ahn Sang Nim's feminist theology of interpretation:

The church is the body of Christ, so men and women should participate equally in all its activities, committees and gatherings. We have to change our attitudes, customs and systems to enable men and women to work together in decision-making and in activities of services. As a result many women elders and ministers should be ordained and they should be able to find places to serve without difficulty, and they should receive equal treatment with men in similar conditions.<sup>41</sup>

The above statement has a practical point that the Church needs to take note of seriously, especially in the area of opening doors to all members of the church. We should be involved in programmes that are action oriented in empowering women to be part in decision-making bodies at all levels of church courts to enhance equal partnership in the running of church affairs. Nim is right to speak against the decisions that are made from men on top while on the ground the people concerned do not even know what happens.

---

<sup>41</sup> Nim, Ahn Sang. 1989. *Feminist Theology in the Korean Church in We dare to dream* (eds.) Virginia Fabella M.M. and Sun Ai Lee Park. Hong Kong: AWCCT. pg 129.

I understand gender justice to be one aspect of a comprehensive understanding of justice in all-human and institutional relationships – gender justice is linked to issues of class, race, age, ability, ecology, ethnicity and global economic justice as indicated earlier on - and that this subject needs to be addressed in that context.

We need to uplift Jesus' relationship to women and men as a model and dare to become a community of men and women in equal partnership. Our different experiences and traditions can become the starting point in the search for the full humanity of women and men and the renewal of creation. The church also needs to be involved as a healing community. In this context the participation of women in the different ministries of the church is something that empowers them rather than subordinates them; when women are empowered so is the whole community – equality as well as inclusivity are reinforced. But as the present partnership stands with stories coming from above and gendered policies and programmes, women will be further marginalized if the trend is not addressed adequately. Duchrow observes that:

The situation of the majority of peoples in the present economic, political, and military systems clearly indicates that the point of departure for theological penetration cannot be “the good creation” but the suffering and oppression of humanity. Here we see even more easily than in the case of creation that in our present situation the weaker “partner” must endure the ruthless violence of the wealth, “the haves.”<sup>42</sup>

Throughout history, the witness and leadership of women have enriched the church. However, the church has often failed to embrace the gift of community that is for women in Christ. It has used its power as an institution to control liturgy, the interpretation of scripture and access to leadership roles, to reinforce the oppression of women. We need to repent of the ways in which the church participates in and sustains patriarchal structures that suppress women and keep them from fully sharing their God-given gifts in community. God denounces the religion that does not practice justice. It is only when justice is done that God recognizes the praises due to him. The church requires speaking out both to men and women, boys and girls so that together they can build the community of real partnership based on love and

---

<sup>42</sup> Duchrow, Ulrich and Gerhard Liedke. 1987. *Shalom: Biblical Perspectives on Creation, Justice & Peace*. Geneva: WCC Publications. pg 78.

justice. The creation of a just church cannot only be left to women alone but also for men to be involved.

We will now deal with the Patriarchal colonization while exegete the contributions of women both from the Old and New Testament.

## THE CHALLENGE OF PATRIARCHAL COLONIZATION

The patriarchs were seen as instruments in which God could communicate to people from time to time. Religion and society in the Old Testament was patriarchal and this is symbolized perhaps most clearly in the fact that sin and the fall are ascribed to Eve's disobedience. And that it was the woman who brought the curse on humanity because of her disobedience. This view has colonized many minds and they have internalized it to an extent of treating women to be under the authority of men. The view on the fall of man has been passed on from generation to generation. Even the present generation, has the same perception about women.

It is surprising to note that some churches if not all have adopted the same stance based on the Old Testament religion. This has contributed to the present predicament of women in the church as well as society. This notion needs to be revisited to promote the status of women basing on the new church of Galatians 3V28-29. Nelly Ritchie in her reflection on women's participation in the church explains that from the Old Testament to New Testament, there is a qualitative leap in the idea of woman. Jesus' own attitude to women was one that enhanced women by enabling them to participate fully in the announcing of the kingdom of God and anticipating the new humankind.<sup>43</sup>

Women were made to share with men in the service of God and in the custodial ruling of the earth. The woman was indeed made to live side by side with her counterpart. It was for this reason that God had to find a companion and fellow worker rather than man's need to use a

---

<sup>43</sup>Once more it is clearly the case that sharing in the promise is not conditioned by being of a particular race (foreigners are included) or of one gender but, rather, the condition for being incorporated into God's project is the acceptance of Yahweh as true God, and the commitment to respond in fidelity to this faithful God. Despite all the conditioning factors characteristic of that period, in the old Testament women are incorporated into the saving plan as active participants. Ritchie, N. 1988. Women's participation in the church. A Protestant perspective. *With passion and compassion*. (eds). Virginia Fabella & Mercy Amba Odoyoye. Maryknoll:Orbis Books. Pp151-158.

woman as a toy, which was in man's view. But as Mananzan has further observed man has distorted the original plan of God's intention. She says

The morality that has evolved in patriarchal society has crippled women's minds and produced guilt complexes that have infringed on their freedom. So pervasive has this been – in the home, in education and indeed in all areas of life – that it has become a structural sin. There is a need to develop a cosmic spirituality by returning to our life-giving roots and actively participating in creating a society based on just, right and harmonious relationships.<sup>44</sup>

God's intention was to see man and woman enjoy companionship. He commanded man to have dominion over the rest of creation and not the human being. God neither instructed Adam to be above Eve, nor Eve to be above Adam. Both were equal to love and to help each other. Any relationship that dominates one another is not a true relationship. It is like slave and master.

The exegesis of biblical scriptures from the feminist view could be the point of departure to guide Christians to interpret the word of God that has been distorted for many years. In the interpretation of the Bible like this, as Elsa Tamez writes

Despite this situation, women with a certain degree of female consciousness have started to raise some questions about the bible. It is not that they don't feel included in the main liberation experiences of the Bible: the exodus and the historical role of Jesus. It is that women find clear, explicit cases of the marginalization or segregation of women in several passages of both the Old and the New Testaments.<sup>45</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup> Mananzan Mary-John. 1995. *Feminist Theology in Asia: An Overview*, in *Women's Visions, Theological Reflection, Celebration, Action*. (ed) Ofelia Ortega. Geneva : WCC Publications. Pg 35.

<sup>45</sup> Tamez Elsa, 1988. *Women's rereading of the Bible in With Passion and Compassion*. (Eds) Virginia Fabella, M.M. and Mercy Amba Oduyoye. Orbis Books: Maryknoll. Pg 166.

Women are able to re-look at the scriptures from their perspective as to challenge the patriarchal colonization that has been governing the church structures. As Elsa Tamez further argues, it is at this point, therefore, that women are called to deny the authority of the scriptures that harm them instead of uplifting their standards.<sup>46</sup>

The women will do well to be using positive Bible texts rather than dwelling on negative texts on women's issues if they will have to uplift their standards. When it comes to preaching the word of God, women preachers should be using verses that empower women in the congregation and be good examples. Sometimes women themselves have been obstacles in the issues of liberation. This must be redressed by vigorous education for self discovery to enable women know who they are.

There are many barriers that prevent women's development. The few common ones that are prevalent in our society concern:

- I. Culture
- II. Education
- III. Health

### 1. CULTURAL BARRIERS

According to the Oxford Dictionary, culture is understood as customs, arts, social institutions of a particular group of people.<sup>47</sup> Malinowski's definition of culture is wider and specific. He said that culture is that complex, which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs and all other capabilities and habits acquired by a member of the society.<sup>48</sup>

Culture is the way by which we do things. Through culture, our community can be controlled in order to live a normal life, reasonable or peacefully. Therefore, culture is part of a society. Surely every country or tribe has a different culture but mostly in one nation. They have similar customs although they may have many tribes.

---

<sup>46</sup> It is here, then, that the collaboration of women biblical scholars exegete with feminist perspectives is needed to reinterpret the texts, using a new hermeneutic approach. Thus it would finally be possible for women to do a liberation-oriented reading of a text that for centuries had been used against them. However, on occasion there will be no other way to interpret the text except as a put down of women. Its exegesis will show only the patriarchal ideology of the author, the commentator, the culture, and the historic moment in which the text was elaborated. This is the other Bible-related problem that women confront. Tamez, Elsa. 1988. Pg 170.

<sup>47</sup> The Concise Oxford Dictionary. 1995. Ninth edition, edited by Della Thompson Oxford: Clarendon Press.

<sup>48</sup> Malinowski Bronislaw, 1944. *A Scientific Theory of Culture*. University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill.

In some African cultures, the system is mostly patriarchal, which means that the male is always the head of a tribe or family. Men are the decision-makers. The patriarchal system has adversely affected the development of women in Zambia.

Commonly in some African cultures, women are expected to be housewives, mothers, nurses, teachers, cleaners or cooks. The economic status of most families has limited the roles of women, since most of them are the bread earners. In other words, there are forces that are dictating the lives of women as time changes. Up until now, we have had very few women as engineers, astronauts, doctors, presidents, politicians, priests to name a few, even though it does not mean that women cannot do such jobs. Society gives limitations for women's involvement in the areas above e.g. the gender role for boys would be that of breadwinner while for girls it would be a mother or house wife. Hence even at an early age young boys and girls undertake different activities. The former engage in science and technology related activities i.e. (cars, guns, boats, planes etc.), and the latter in household activities (playing in the house and acting the role of the mother). Parents continue to reinforce this role from generation to generation. This position carries with it expectations of behaviour that are defined as well as sanctioned by the demands of society. It is evident from our day-to-day life that the most important function of the family is the socialization of children so that they can truly become members of the society into which they were born. Parents encourage boys to be strong, not to cry, to be independent and active and girls tend to be timid, passive, sensitive, depend on men, speak softly, while men can shout at the top of their voices and nobody would be bothered. Men would need to be married. A woman marries a man and that is how she gets into her life. Her life is him.

In rural areas, the society gives room for women to do agriculture for food production. Thus women are the cultivators and harvesters of the crops for both subsistence and commercial. In a family, a woman as a housewife or mother is to provide food, fetch water and firewood, and look after the children and husband.

In dealing with society, it is chiefly the responsibility of women to provide for the family's social obligations such as weddings, funerals or any other occasions. In churches, women are expected to participate in worship, prayer, choir, fundraising, visit the church premises or clean the building. When we look at the church Oduyoye further observes that

Responding to a question on the participation of women in church practices and the place of their special needs and concerns in the agenda of church, an African woman wrote: The women are very much concerned about the church, but the church is not so much concerned with the women.<sup>49</sup>

If we go back to the famous universal adage, which says, 'a woman's place is in the kitchen,' this signifies the role of women that exists in the Zambian church. This is part of cultural values, which are largely the roots of barriers to women's progress in church as well as in society at large.

In some African societies to marry off their daughter is part of dignity for parents and to close relatives because being a grand mother is a pride to them. But for young girls, early marriage is a heavy burden because mentally, physically and psychologically, she would have not been ready to adjust with her husband to be. If her reason to get married is to stop her from going to school then even her burden will be doubled.

The young woman cannot be herself in the marriage because her status depends on her husband. She has to play the role of a good mother and wife. When she agrees with her parent's suggestion of getting married and refuses to serve the husband at home because she does not love the man, tired, bored and unhappy, her husband is entitled to apply for a divorce.

Previously, as a wife, she was expected to have as many children as possible, because children are wealth, especially boys who are very much valued. Nowadays, for highly educated women, many prefer to be single. They relinquish marriage to take up a professional career which they feel would not fit in with the oppressive customary marriage. It is not easy for women who make such a decision. But they have to. There is a song in Africa that is sung to show sympathy for unmarried women:

Young woman,  
Go and seek for some drug  
You have been ill long  
Get yourself a drug

---

<sup>49</sup> Oduyoye, Mercy. 1986 *Hearing and Knowing*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books. Pg13

So that somebody may marry you.

Moreover, the community itself will look down upon women if they decline to get married as Betty Kaunda said, "In Africa there is little recognition and appreciation of the contribution single women may give to the well being of the society. There has never been much room for a single woman in our society."<sup>50</sup>

The church is there to teach people that Jesus' ministry transcends local culture and religion, bringing renewal in women. There have been misinterpretations of the Bible as said elsewhere e.g. the condemnation of slavery while the oppression of women is upheld by the Church and this coming from the same Bible.

### EDUCATION BARRIERS

Society should realize that education is an important component in some one's life be it a man or woman. Through education, women could be in a position to know how to analyze the roots of the problems and use their mind instead of their feelings. Education helps people to build their future. Previously, women did not question their status, unlike recently when they have had to problematise every situation because of education. Education does contribute towards economic growth and the improvement of the quality of life. It also develops the potential of everyone. Yet historically, many women have been denied access to education. This is particularly so in developing countries, not least Zambia.

According to Geoffrey Lungwangwa, in the Proceedings of the eleventh Professors World Peace Academy 'the problem of women being under represented in education and careers is an old and worldwide one. As long as serious steps are not taken to redress the situation this trend is likely to be with us for many years. It is more acute in science and technology. Possible explanations for this could be sex stereotyping, societal expectations and attitudes and socialization' (upbringing practices).<sup>51</sup> Society must begin to realize that a well-educated woman is of great help to the nation.

Marcella Ballara notes 'in Africa one third of women cannot read and write. The situation regarding uneducated women is most acute in developing countries where poverty is

---

<sup>50</sup> Cited in Cultrufelli R. Maria. 1983. *Women of Africa – Roots of oppression*. London: Zed. Pg 70

<sup>51</sup> Lungwangwa, G. 1990. *Professors World Peace Academy of Zambia*. Lusaka: Masaki Publishers. Pg 49.

generally closely associated with the high illiteracy rate in these countries (South East Asia and Sub - Sahara Africa). Women are the most affected; one third are illiterate, compared with one fifth of men. Among the reasons for this are the economic crisis and adjustment programmes implemented during the 1980's, which led governments to make substantial cuts in health and education spending. These measures have had also negative economic results for women resulting in what is known as the "feminization of poverty".<sup>52</sup>

For example, one of the major problems that Zambia is experiencing, as a nation within the global system today is that of the restructuring of its economy under the International Monetary Fund (IMF)/ World Bank structural adjustment programme (Saps).

The findings of Sap underscore how dramatically worse off the general population of Zambia has been since the country decided to return to the IMF/ World Bank in 1989.

The IMF/ World Bank's desire is to look for strategies for making the structural adjustment programme work faster and more effectively, which has caused political and social havoc in Zambia's economy as already mentioned. Instead of enabling the country to reduce its external debt, debt servicing has actually increased during the period under investigation. Moreover, within the current existing framework of restrictive social, political and economic structures in Zambia, adjustment is fraught with many problems. For instance, the government seems to have no clear vision of overall human development; its emphasis has been on achieving economic growth as the means to promote development in Zambia.

To reiterate on the African states case of policies Chazan further observes that:

The alternative explanations of the nature and impact of political action for gender relations reveal some limitations of existing Paradigms. Uniquely materialist or statist modes of analyses do not adequately take into account issues of mobilization and agency, nor do they provide sufficiently honed tools for the exploration of the diversity of gender politics.<sup>53</sup>

In Zambia the section of the society that has been hit hard with the structural adjustment programme is women and children, both in urban and rural areas. Women in Zambia are among the poorest in the country. It can be argued that women, children, peasants and the

---

<sup>52</sup> Marcella Ballara. 1992. *Women and literacy*. London: Zed. Pg 32.

working class adversely felt the IMF/ World Bank policies and programmes on different social groups in Zambia in general. As already argued the removal of the subsidies and the decontrolling of prices led to the escalation of prices on all commodities. As a result when it came to education boys were given first preference to go to school as opposed to girls. Most Zambians could not afford to meet all school requirements or cope with the high cost of living. Tsikata argues,

The Sap, like other programmes before it, has fundamental gender biases, which cannot be addressed by welfare measures. Specific measures such as increases in the rates of taxation have hurt informal sector operators, the majority of whom are women. The restructuring of state enterprises and the resultant job losses have also affected the woman-dominated categories like the service sector.<sup>54</sup>

Indeed the devaluation of the *Kwacha* has brought unimaginable suffering upon the majority of Zambians because they cannot afford the commodities since the prices have shot up. Naturally in Zambia and indeed even in other Third World countries, women's concerns are basic-where the next meal will come from.

One of the ways of removing barriers from a girl is by educating her, giving her similar opportunities to those offered to boys. The traditional education of boys and not girls has perpetuated the domination of the former over the latter. In addition boys are exempted from many chores, which take up the time and energy of girls.

There is a slight difference between the situation in urban and rural areas because of urbanization. In towns, parents may send their daughters to school. Nevertheless, the subjects will be related to family life, while sons will be encouraged to take up challenging scientific, business subjects to prepare them for best positions in society. All these serve as barriers to women's development. This further entrenches the male-female stereotypes that have been detrimental to women. This is why it is important to make deliberate policies for women and girls in as far as education is concerned. After all the women are the ones in most cases closer

---

<sup>53</sup> Chazan C. 1989, *Gender Perspectives on African States in Women and the State in Africa* (eds) J. Parpart and K. Staudt. Colorado: Lynne Reiner Publishers. Pg45.

<sup>54</sup> Tsikata, D. 1996. *Gender Equality and the State in Ghana: Some issues of policy and practice in Mama A. Engendering Social Sciences in Africa*. Dakar: Codestria. Pg 87.

to children than men. It is most likely that uneducated women will influence their children since a mother is the first teacher for her children. Children of illiterate parents are more disadvantaged than to their peers and will probably follow the pattern set by their parents. Parent's influence on their children will affect the church and the society at large.

The church is not an exception in that in some cases, parents would rather send boys to seminary or theological college than girls. Males are encouraged and prepared to become leaders and decision-makers while females is the other way round. Since man is viewed as some one superior.

Suffice it to say whether Biblically or secularly, people have a notion that man is the head of the house or family. This has a very strong bearing in the community. It is a patriarchal system. Man is always a leader and head in the community. He is a planner, a decision-maker, protector, an administrator, etc. Reacting to the church's conservative way of looking at things Elisabeth Schussler fiorenza contends that

One must also consider that women, even more than men, have internalized cultural-religious feminine values and they consequently tend to reproduce uncritically the patriarchal "politics of submission and otherness" in their speaking and writing.<sup>55</sup>

Such perceptions are supposed to be deconstructed from women and girls so that they can be encouraged to see themselves as unique beings. If this were realized then church or society would have moved forward in emancipating women from the old century thinking.

## HEALTH BARRIERS

The other barrier to women's development is health. The report from Patricia Smyke about women and health shows that; '500,000 women die from pregnancy related causes, 99% of them in developing countries.'<sup>56</sup> Many others suffer prolonged or permanent ill health and disability. The identified causes are lack of prenatal care, trained personnel, equipment, and

---

<sup>55</sup> Fiorenza, Schussler-Elizabeth, 1993. *Discipleship of Equals*. New York: Crossroad Publishing Company. Pg 153.

<sup>56</sup> Smyke Patricia. 1990. *Women and Health*. London: Zed books. Pg17.

blood transfusion at the time of obstetrical emergencies. Others die as result of lack of family planning to help avoid unwanted pregnancies, too closely spaced births, too young or old at the time of giving birth. Pre-existing conditions like anemia, fatigue, malnutrition and malaria could also be causes.

In many developing nations, more women die because they are over burdened with work in the field and at home. They walk long distances to get to the field while carrying the baby on the back, with a container of drinking water and firewood. So much energy consumed because of physical exertion with only little food to eat. This affects their health very much. Compounded by the state of the health institutions that no longer provides proper medical services because government has cut down on funding in order to meet its Saps obligations. Zambia is indeed experiencing stagnation in per capita income and inflation trends has increased. In fact, the structural adjustment programme has been implemented at high human costs and sacrifices. In many parts of the country, poverty (hunger and sickness) is alarming. This is because of the IMF/ World Bank through its structural adjustment programme imposed strict limits on government spending, and consequently government was forced to cut down its budget expenditure on social infrastructure. In this context, the most adversely affected people are women and children.

Women need knowledge about nutrition e.g. a balanced diet for children and adults, and knowledge about health e.g. childcare, hygiene, water and sanitation and other types of diseases that are common. Sometimes, because of poor information about health, women do harm to themselves and their children too. Meanwhile, the women who try to put distance between pregnancies have to ask permission from their husbands, whether he will agree or not, since men are the decision-makers, or else she can be divorced. So there is no choice for women. They are expected to respect and obey their husbands.

The barriers that have been outlined in this chapter can be removed if people were treating each other as equals. No human being is above the other. It is better to begin opening our eyes in the light of the Bible and the hearing of women's stories to lead us to an inclusive community of both men and women.

As far as measures are not taken to consider the factors outlined above that perpetuate the poor health of women in church and society, the present situation may not improve for the next few years. The minds of our people need to be decolonized in order to live as partners.

University of Cape Town

### CHAPTER THREE WOMEN AND CHURCH WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

We need a fresh start. We need to rebuild civilization upon a new foundation. It is not enough that we become fatter. The old body must die if life is to be preserved in a new one... This is what gives life a chance to create a new body for itself. And only beyond the dissolution of the old, now hopelessly enmeshed in its internal contradictions, can a new synthesis be created.<sup>57</sup>

The general topic in the context in which this falls is “women in the Church” and Jesus Christ the liberator of women. The topic perceives its task as one of uncovering the realities and experience of Zambian women in the Church and relating these realities to the work of Jesus Christ as their liberator.

My point of departure is the view that all women have been oppressed in one-way or the other. However, owing to the wide range categories of Zambian women and a corresponding variety of problems from which they need to be liberated, it is impossible and indeed undesirable to make sweeping statements concerning the issues that confront Zambian women in the Church today.

My second point of departure is the observation that what Christ did to liberate and redeem humanity over two thousand years ago; He can also do it for the Zambian women. However, it is vital to marry the liberation work of Jesus Christ to particular contexts of the Zambian women in the Church.

From the beginning of my dissertation; much emphasis is laid on the need to know what these contexts are. I have highlighted contexts like that of humiliation of women, structural and ecclesiastical injustices against women, leadership-muted ness of women and sexism.

---

<sup>57</sup> Alves, R.A. 1972. *Tomorrow's Child. Imagination, Creativity and the Rebirth of Culture*. London: SCM Press. Pg321.

According to Francis, 'there are no such laws that prohibit women from taking leadership and executive positions, but the fact of the matter is that men through various screening processes, eliminate women from taking positions of power prestige and higher pay and keep them for themselves.'<sup>58</sup>

The contribution of women to the ministry of the church is not at the forefront because their work is limited to some extent. In the church, women fill up the pews of the congregation. Yet there are so many impediments placed in the way of women and as such they fail to fit in the Church structures.

Women's contribution to the work of God is invaluable. They are not given total freedom in the church and their views, ideas and interests are not represented, as it should. As a result of this, some women withdraw and resort to other opportunities as Leonie Liveris puts it:

Some women have left the structured church, either relinquishing all faith in Christ and his church or seeking to join or establish communities working for social justice in which the gospel can be lived out. Many others lack the strength or knowledge to challenge the church. All they know is that the church has failed them, and what it offers bears little resemblance.<sup>59</sup>

A good number of women feel alienated in the church they belong to because of the way the church understands their role while they also have their own perception. Many women are not developing their talents as it were because they have been some how discouraged in the manner in which the church has been handling their affairs. For example, there is an emphasis that women are to be helpers, implying that women are to be submissive to men (Ephesians 5:22-23). A clear example can be picked from what Caroline Sikazwe a church elder said when asked about the significance contribution women make in the church? She explained that women visit the sick, the aged and bereaved families, care for the need, and clean the church. She further suggested that women should be encouraged to be making themselves available if equal participation has to be realized. She went on to say, women themselves should prove to men that they can do a good job, although men do not have to prove to

---

<sup>58</sup> Francis, A. 1995. *Discrimination against women*. New York: St Davids, Pennsylvania. Pg 89.

<sup>59</sup> Liveris B. Leonie, 1995. *Feminist Ecclesiology: An Orthodox Perspective from Australia in Women's visions: Theological Reflection, Celebration, Action*, (ed) Orfelina Ortega, Geneva : WCC Publications. Pg 156.

women that they can do a good job. These are some of the stereotypes we should be overcoming. Sikazwe only mentions jobs that are traditionally defined as “feminine”, and this is exactly what is passed on into the church.

For me, I take it that the women themselves have to articulate their own aspirations, unlike the present fragmented situation women find themselves in. The absence of concerted efforts to achieve what needs to be done worsens the position of women in the church. On the other hand, Vaidah Namunyenembe has observed that because of the situation women find themselves in, as outlined above, the result has always been that women’s issues are always trivialized.

It is unfortunate that some people still doubt women’s performance to run Church affairs. But women are actually hard workers as experience as taught in almost all churches. According to the *Zambian Monitor Newspaper* No 229, 2002, it says

Female leaders are more responsive to the needs of the people than males who hold leadership positions, a research on ‘Effective Leaders? Views from East and Central Africa’ has revealed... that women leaders tended to be regarded as more effective than men in the sense they were considered to be generally less corrupt, more caring and more responsive to the community they were to serve.<sup>60</sup>

Though the Zambian woman has been denied equal participation for years, she has been in fact the pillar of the Church. Church women in Zambia understand gender justice in their own way, They do not want to cause confusion but rather see themselves as God’s vessels seeking the opportunity denied to them to serve their God to the fullest. They do not want their contributions to be confined to only specific areas as earlier discussed.

Rev. Jeremiah Chenge has observed that the ecclesiastical and cultural background of the church in Zambia has also sometimes contributed to the predicament the women find themselves in. He cites an example of the sitting arrangements, which is traditionally backed, where women have their own pews, separate from men. Furthermore, sometimes men are the

---

<sup>60</sup> The Monitor, Issue No229: May 10-15, 2002.

only ones who are critical and speak usually on their own behalf women speak last. He went on to say, this situation is not likely to improve if women themselves will not speak for themselves and support each other wholeheartedly. The men will not look at the interests of women, as they themselves can, because men also have their own agenda and interests. Both Chenge and the Rev. Derrick Silwenga feel that there is a need on the part of women to encourage and support each other, if gender justice is ever to be realized in the church in Zambia.

Personally, I have not always agreed with the people who have raised sentiments like women do not support and are enemies of each other. In fact, it is the same men who have contributed to the same predicament, making women internalize the idea that they do not support each other, an idea, that can be unlearned.

However, there is another category of women in Zambia that is against the idea of fighting for gender justice. They believe that the cardinal role every Christian woman is expected to play involves total service to the husband without seeking any rights of her own in order to safeguard the marriage.

But there is another group of women that is taking steps by revisiting the mission of the church in relation to their role as women. The church should be encouraging and supporting such women who have the zeal to serve the Lord in whatever capacity. In Jesus Christ, we are all His children through faith.

Munoz Ronaldo observes that, 'women are the main pillars of our religion, the vanguard of social purity, refined manners, elegance and domestic happiness and that they can at the same time carry out many good works.'<sup>61</sup> I do agree with Ronaldo, though some people give their own reasons for not entrusting full leadership roles to women that; women are not knowledgeable on certain issues that go on in the meetings. Jane Sakala adds another perspective that women who are in leadership positions do not consider the women at the grassroots to be partners. The latter are considered being inferior, although these same leaders pretend in their sermons by preaching otherwise. Leaders portray the holier than thou attitude in many cases. Her claim is based on what she has seen in practice. She has heard women in

---

<sup>61</sup> Ronaldo M. 1990. *The God of Christians*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books. Pg 90.

leadership roles preaching the right things on what a woman should be, but off the pulpit they turn out to be the greatest snobs who would not like to be seen talking or befriending the likes of the poor and lowly women in business without any discrimination based on colour, gender, religion, age, social and economic status.

Some of the women are very active but are shy to perform as expected. Others may be active but find it difficult to lead other women in the church. Even if women go through the theological education, they are not fully recognized as men are or placed in good positions. This has a negative impact on women who are ready to give service in the church as full time workers. As such, many women have sought employment elsewhere especially in the institutions of higher learning. Others have too many problems with their families for example; many husbands do not provide adequately for their families, others do not attend church services; even if the wife can be a good leader in the church. In most cases, a woman finds it difficult because there is no one to support her back home. Others are discouraged by the bad behaviors of their children. Women carry heavy burdens of their families and this prevents the possibility of developing their potentialities. Esther Acolatse points out to the agony that a typical African woman goes through and says:

Consider the case of the typical African woman, whose day starts long before breakfast. She not only works at home but is also in the market place until sundown, selling her wares and taking care of her children at the same time.<sup>62</sup>

Isabel Simukonda, the education secretary for the United Church of Zambia, argues that while the church seems to be flexible on women's issues since it stands for equality between sexes, in fact, there is still no gender balance, as there are no women who have the opportunity of holding senior positions of policy making. I agree with the sentiments raised by Simukonda because in my experience this has been the true picture of the church in Zambia today although some would contend this.

---

<sup>62</sup> Esther E. Acolatse. 2001. Rethinking sin and grace: An African Evangelical Feminist Response to Niebuhr in *Talitha Cum! Theologies of African Women*. (Eds) Nyambura Njoroge and Musa Dube Pietermaritzburg: Cluster publications. Pg 121.

A case in point is an interview carried out with a male church minister from the Harvest church, who outlined what he thought the roles of church women were in the following manner:

- To support the men-folk in their work.
- To give guidance to the growth and education of the youth.
- To get involved in church work like the fundraisings and so forth.<sup>63</sup>

While the Bishop from the Anglican church central diocese of Zambia had this to say, 'the first and foremost role of women in the church especially in my diocese is to be mothers to every one, they are to take up the motherly role which we have lost in society today.'<sup>64</sup>

In Zambia, society has prescribed roles for men and women and boys and girls. This could be one of the reasons why for instance many women and girls have been lagging behind when issues like gender justice are discussed.

Francis has further argued that women are sometimes not encouraged to go to school by their parents because of this and other factors – lack of cash for buying school materials, clothing and mothers keeping girls to help them at home, elementary to secondary-school enrolment of girls remain much lower than boys.<sup>65</sup>

As I have indicated earlier on the lack of education, most women lose control over resources such as land and are sometimes excluded from access to new technology. Women carry a double or even triple burden of work as they cope with housework, childcare and subsistence food production.

The same phenomenon has spilled over into the Church, women fall prey to many opportunities that come their way. There is need for exposure in all areas of human endeavors. Certain beliefs about a woman's subordinate position based on cultural and religious concepts that cannot stand up to close scrutiny, as well as misconception about their physiology being and intelligence have made women accept without questioning the

---

<sup>63</sup> Rev E. Mesa. Teacher by profession and Harvest Church Pastor in Zambia. 2002.

<sup>64</sup> Bishop Derek Kamukwamba. 2002. Anglican Church, Central Diocese of Zambia.

<sup>65</sup> Francis, A. 1995. *Discrimination Against women*. New York: St. Davids, Pennsylvania. Pg 97.

superiority of men. It is this exposure that can foster in women an analytical and critical mind that would make them question the religious, cultural and physiological based on their supposed inferiority. As earlier discussed, it is only education that can help women to expose the fallacies behind the cultural practices that keep them in subordination. Without such emancipation, Zambian women will take several more centuries before gender justice is achieved.

In various denominations women have been striving for many years to open the church hierarchies for the participation of women and to increase women's representation in church decision-making bodies. Some protestant churches have admitted women to the ministry of the word and sacrament while the Roman Catholic and some orthodox churches are still adamant.

In general, women are found mostly in the lowest levels of the church bureaucracies and in serving roles, where men do not feel threatened. Women do all sorts of jobs that one can think of in the church, but very rare to find many at the top.

For example, the Anglican bishop of central Zambia feels that women are mothers and as such there is already a place for them in the church. He says, they do not have the gender guidelines because as a church, this has not become an issue.

Many women express concern about their own exclusion in their various denominations. Andre' Karamanga says, 'if it is true that women are the majority in the church, then they form a dynamic force in the church and their problems and concerns should be catered for'.<sup>66</sup> In that report, the women fear that the popular word "Democracy" might not apply to them. In other words it is a meaningless word in that structures of several churches are undemocratic. They further raise a question, as in the family and society in general, is not the church also the domain of men?' They observe that African women are victims of isolation in the home, at work place and even in the church. Oduyoye and Kanyoro argue that 'religion is an area of life that seems to be able to escape public attention. It is an area in which individual may be intimidated to abdicate responsibility for their own lives and to place themselves and

---

<sup>66</sup> Karamanga, Andre'. 1991. All Africa Conference of Churches Problems and promises of Africa Towards and beyond the year 2000. *A Summary of the proceedings of the Symposium* convened by the AACC in Mombassa in November 1991. Pg 15.

everybody else in 'God's hands'. To them 'religion, plays a major role in enforcing societal norms and ethics'.<sup>67</sup>

Recently, the Church of Central African Presbyterian had a region assembly to talk about the ordination of women. In this meeting, the majority were men and only few women. In reality the main speakers were men and women could not exert pressure, as they should as a result of their representation in the meeting. This is the concern of Munachango as earlier on pointed out. Men determine the thinking of the church as though women by nature were not capable of participating in a debate in the light of the word of God as this concerns them most. What has started happening now will influence the Zambian society in spearheading the partnership that God wants us to uphold.

## WOMEN, CHURCH AND SOCIETY

Women in the traditional society were supposed to be "house wives" and to bear children, to prepare food and look after their families because the home was the first place where her first role started and the good character was formed. If the home was well organized, people expected the family's to be God fearing, upright and a blessing to the world. Women work not only in the church but also outside the church. They work as teachers, nurses, ministers, doctors, magistrates etc. It is true that women are able to do what men do, but they are not given equal opportunity. According to the women magazine 1993, it says, 'some women are working as teachers, doctors, and as believers some are working as deaconesses and ministers. Women are the most active although they are not given equal opportunities in holding important positions. Usually they are relegated to duties, which are extensions of their housework.'<sup>68</sup> Women at home spend time in agriculture, they rise up before dawn, walk long distances to the fields cultivating, planting, weeding, harvesting, bringing food, water, firewood at home. They work out the time and they contribute very much in the whole circle of the families work and attend to the family's social obligations such as weddings, and funerals, they may have to provide full time for their children and leaving not enough time for themselves. Surprisingly enough, Margaret Strobel comments:

---

<sup>67</sup> Kanyoro R. A. Musimbi and Mercy A. Oduyoye. 1992. *The Will to Arise*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books (Introduction).

<sup>68</sup> July (1993) *Women Magazine*, No 39, Lutheran World Federation (L.W.F). Geneva, Department for Mission and Development.

A woman has suffered a lot of injustices nearly in all aspects of life socially, traditionally and religious. She is not considered as someone who can lead or manage any organization either formal or informal but even that, in the eyes of God men and women are equal because both are children of God and they serve God without segregation.<sup>69</sup>

Therefore, the role of women should be seen as important and supported in the church and society. When you analyze the roles that women play critically, it shows that they are a suffering majority. What makes them disadvantaged is lack of sound economic base, power and control of job. Women need total freedom so as to be able to practice their talents in the church. Women should be considered as people who are capable of performing duties in the church. On the part of women, Vaidah Munyenembe as a church elder, she encourages women to prove to be counter-parts of men in occupying positions of decision-making. She has observed that the mainline churches in particular have a tendency of copying things from the society instead of the opposite. The position of women in reality is pathetic though they talk about equal partnership.

The church today is caught up in a pot of mixed loyalties. Most Zambian churches are to some extent linked, both in doctrine and structure to what may be called traditional way of doing things. On the other hand, the church in Zambia has continued to be stagnant in the face of changing conditions. A certain fear of the unknown seems to characterize the Zambian church's outlook on gender-related matters. It seems as if culture has its roots in the life and work of the church. Because of culture the church is afraid to come out in the open and address the issues head on pertaining to women as discussed in chapter 2. Jin writes:

Women, church, and new ways of being church are viewed in the perspective of God's Kingdom and the new creation. It is in the light of this perspective that the woman's role and contribution are discussed. Never the less, the task is very demanding of all of us at all levels of change.<sup>70</sup>

---

<sup>69</sup> Strobel, M. Women. 1988. In *Religion and Secular ideology in African Women South of the Sahara*. (Eds) Margaret J. Hay and Sharon Stichter. London & New York: Longman. Pg 98.

<sup>70</sup> Yong Ting Jin. 1988. A protestant perspective in *With Passion and Compassion*. (Eds) Virginia Fabella M. M. and Mercy Oduyoye. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books. Pg 107.

At the moment, the system that runs the wider society incorporates injustice in many ways. There are all sorts of unfair imbalances in relationships, caused by various differences in aspects of humanity: wealth, education, class, race, age and so forth. But of the most important, perhaps the most crucial, is the difference between men and women. It is important because it underlies or adds to other imbalances in relationships; a poor woman has less power than a poor man, a black woman has less power than a black man; a woman is less likely to receive education or to own her property than a man and so is disadvantaged first by her gender and then by consequences. So in attacking gender injustice, it is argued that one may then be attacking one of the fundamental aspects of systemic injustice, in an attempt to change the whole system that controls society and to reorient relationships in the direction of God's kingdom. But how should the church of Jesus Christ be? The next chapter offers some theological perspectives on gender justice and partnership in the church.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES**

#### **THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY**

Every community builds up its own religion. For instance, Judaism is typical of the Jewish people while the African traditional religion is built up in the African societies. However, a number of religions include, the beliefs of the community about God, their beliefs about God's relationship with the world, the way people worship and how they relate with Him. Rules and regulations are formulated about the religion, there are places for worship and people are appointed to minister in various ways. There are restrictions as to who does what to protect the existence of their belief. On the other hand there are certain ways of thinking and acting which occur in most religions. That means in essence, it reveals to us that religion is basic human activity, which many people can identify with.

Religion per se has been one of the main vehicles for women's participation in community life and society. The organization of women continues to take place within religious bodies. Religion represents a legitimate space within which women can participate but with strings attached. Religion provides spiritual solace in a world in which hard work, social and economic and physical or emotional violence are the order of the day. Women's role in the world's major religion today varies tremendously between and within religions. Some religious organs are founded on fundamentalist supportive principles that promote a traditional or even regressive social position for women.

It is important at this point to describe the position of women in the Old and New Testament so that one can be able to trace the negative attitude towards women, which has found its way in Christianity. This will enable us to come up with theological perspectives in the twenty-first century and how we can overcome this prejudice against women in some churches.

#### **The role of women in the Old Testament religion**

The history of women in the Old Testament has been recorded either explicitly or implicitly. We hear the stories of how Deborah and Esther performed their duties entrusted to them to an extent of men depending upon them. They rose above to the challenges that they were faced

with. For example in the case of Esther, she did not even have the fear of the king, who was believed to be a bad and hard person. From the scriptures we are told that these women performed diligently. In fact, there are cases where we read that this and that woman performed well in her duties and yet their names have not been mentioned anywhere. This takes us back to the issue of patriarchs as the pillars in the Old Testament religion. There are women of integrity who have not been mentioned yet their contribution to the OT religion was significant. Many women in the Old Testament went unnamed despite the major role they played in their lifetime. For instance, the great woman of Shunem's name was never known despite the fact that she built a house and provided comfort for the man of God – Elisha. (II Kings 4: 8 – 37)

The mother of Samson to whom God sent an angel to reveal to her about her conception heard that, "For lo thou shall conceive, and bear a son, and no razor shall come from the womb and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines (Judges 13: 5). She was just referred to as Manoah's wife. The polarity on the place of women started in the biblical times and it is haunting the church today. However, there are outstanding women who did so well and we will hear what they did later in the chapter.

### **The role of women in Christianity**

Women in the Bible were very much devoted to the service of God. In the concluding chapter of Romans, Paul gave a list of women who needed special commendation because of their contributions to God's work.

I commend unto you Phoebe our sister, who is a Deaconess of the church, which is at Cenchrea. That ye receive her in the Lord, as a saint, and that ye assist her in what-so-ever business she hath need of you, for she has been a helper of many and myself also.

Greet Priscilla and Aquilla my helpers in Christ Jesus. Greet the church that is in their house. Greet my beloved Epaphroditus who is the first fruit of Achaia unto Christ. Greet Mary who bestowed much labour on us (Romans 16: 1-6).

During the ministry of Jesus on earth, many women followed him. They worshipped him and played an active role in the service of God. Jesus met the need of the individual as seen in the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. When Jesus visited them, Mary took the supposedly “male” role – the role of sitting at Jesus’ feet and listened to him. Martha was busy trying to prepare food for Jesus. Mary did not help her. Martha complained to Jesus but Jesus’ response was a refusal to force all women into the acceptable role of cooking. Every woman has the right to set her own priorities. Mary in this instance had chosen the better part. Jesus commended her for this and that it was not to be taken away from her. Jesus met the need of the woman with demons. Jesus cast out seven demons from her. He set her free from the devils oppression. The woman worshipped Jesus by pouring costly perfume at Jesus’ feet and wiping it with her hair.

Jesus treated women with love, care and respect. His encounter with the woman of Samaria broke the barrier and He presented eternal life to the woman. The woman became Jesus’ follower in spite of the negative attitude of men towards women, saying to the woman, “now we believe, not because of your saying, for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world” (John 4: 42).

Women were the first to see Jesus after his resurrection. “And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not” (Luke 24: 11). The disciples of Jesus could not believe the women’s witness about Jesus’ resurrection because women were not important but inferior beings hence such amazing news of “the Lord is risen” could not come from them.

### **The church of Jesus Christ of Galatians 3:28**

In spite of all the barriers that women face, yet we hear stories of women from the Old and New Testaments who broke free from the bonds of patriarchy. Such women inspire women of the church. The Bible has shown us that God created men and women equally, whether young or old, intelligent or disabled and regardless of their culture, race or rank in society; they are one and equal in the sight of God. From both Testaments, we will hear about partnership and the roles that women played in different ways. Since the Bible offers to some extent a

liberative trajectory, this chapter will bring out some biblical examples of women who worked alongside men.

## **1. THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE OLD TESTAMENT;**

### **The role of Deborah as Judge: Judges 4:4-5**

Deborah was a ruler of her country as well as a prophetess. According to Israel's culture, their system was patriarchal. Women in Israel, like children and slaves, could not make moral and legal decisions. Their oaths, for example had to be ratified by the husband or father before they could become valid. For the woman did not have the freedom which moral decision of this kind entails. But regardless of Israel's culture, God called Deborah a woman to be judge in Israel (Judges 4:5). She was a judge to whom the Israelites were willing to submit their cases, indicating their acceptance of her position.

*"and the people of Israel came up to her for judgment."* (Judges 4:5)

Deborah's authority extended not only to the cases brought before her as a judge, but as personal adviser to honourable men such as Barak, who sought her advice and presence for emotional support.

Deborah held several roles at once; she was a wife, a prophetess and a messenger, a mediator to passing God's message to Israel. *The many roles at the same time were not an easy task, particularly if we compare with Israel's conditions of patriarchal.* She had to face the opinions of people who were always anxious about women's abilities. She stands out as an example of women with responsible positions in national government. She also stands out as an example of wise and capable women of our time.

In Zambia, the church has had women like Deborah, the former general secretary of the Christian Council of Zambia (CCZ), who excelled and performed diligently in her position. She is one of the living legend of our time. At the time when the contract of the two men she took over from were terminated that's when herself worked for two terms as required by the CCZ constitution. Even today, women are there who can perform their duties diligently.

### **The role of Esther as Queen: Esther 2:20**

Esther Queen of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, is another example of an Israelite woman who played an important public role, as queen and helper of her people. Her love for her people caused her to put her life at risk for them. Her story has been read widely. We have heard Esther playing different roles, one of them being the bringing up of Mordecai because his parents had died. As a result of her beauty and integrity, Esther won the favour of everyone who saw her. She excelled in her life to an extent of the king Xerxes pronouncing a set of royal crown on the head of Esther and made her Queen. Her leadership was displayed in the way she had shown her firmness by saving her people from being killed. Esther was a courageous woman. She sacrificed her life to go and meet the king even if it was against the law. She even said, "and if I perish, I perish" (2:20). She mobilized other Jews to fast and pray so that God could intervene in what they were going through. She also did the same together with her maids. She had a sense of direction that led other people to do what they were told in order to achieve good results. As a result of her mobilization of fasting, the impediments on their way were removed. Esther gained confidence to go and answer the king's question by inviting the king and Haman to a banquet. Note the cleverness of Esther, she organizes and creates a conducive atmosphere to talk to the king to neutralize the anger. Even though she was going to talk to men, she was not afraid but went ahead and accused Haman and said, "the adversary and enemy is this vile Haman" (7 : 8). Esther played a vital role in bringing joy, gladness and honour for the Jews. She was a determined woman who fought for her people. She maintained her persuasive spirit in order to free the Jews.

The church in Zambia needs women who have a persistent spirit to continue challenging the systems that exist within the church like Esther. A case in point is what has taken place in the Reformed Church in Zambia where they have started ordaining women. So far two women have been licensed to the ministry of the word and sacrament. It was not something that could have been achieved within a short period of time. This happened because some women had exerted pressure on the leadership of the church for many years. And this has enabled many denominations to see the need of equal participation of both men and women, there is need to have determined women like Esther.

### **The role of Miriam as a Prophetess : Exodus 2:4**

Miriam played a very important role in the deliverance of her people from Pharaoh. A woman of God inspired and directed to teach the will of God. She was a teacher who taught others so that people could be knowledgeable about the things of God. In the situation of her brother as a baby, Miriam stood a far off to know what could be done to her brother, when taken away by unknown people. She played a very important role of a watchwoman in difficult circumstances like this one. She was a carer and because of her dedication, and intelligence, she quickly went to Pharaoh's daughter and offered herself to go and look for someone to nurse the baby. Miriam stood firm even in difficult times, like opposing her brother to marry a foreign woman. This is an indication of her having good leadership qualities. Despite being single, she did her work diligently. Her work involved making difficult decisions to save life and maintain the dignity of her people. She was sent to go and deliver his brother and the Israelites from Pharaoh. She was used by God to overcome all the obstacles she met on her way so that she could achieve the goal. Miriam stands out to be a model for the women in the church in Zambia. We need women who can rise above difficulties to become instruments for change.

### **2. THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

In the New Testament there is enough evidence showing how women participated in the ministry of Jesus. Jesus paid attention to and even helped women. The tax collectors, Pharisees, lepers, the blind, prostitutes and young women, mothers, single women and widows were all equally in need of his message which he delivered without prejudice. Jesus saw the women as individuals to whom and for whom the kingdom comes. He spoke and listened to them. If we turn back our memories to his crucifixion, we will recall that women were present there. They were the first to see the risen Lord. They were the first to hear the news of his resurrection and speak of it. There are two examples of women in the New Testament who worked alongside with men.

### **The role of Lydia as a professional woman: Acts: 16**

Lydia was a professional woman in her own right. She was an entrepreneur because she was a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira and at the same time, she was a worshipper of God. Lydia and her household were believers. She had opened her home for fellowship with other believers. For example, Acts 16:40 says, 'After Paul and Silas came out of prison, they went to Lydia's house where they met with the brothers and encouraged them'. She was *a woman who was hospitable to others so that the servants of God like Paul and Silas would not be stranded.*

Lydia was very creative for the sustainability of her family and other people. She was a businesswoman who worked very hard so that her livelihood could be improved. She was brought up in the region where her ancestors had lived in Asia minor. As a result her creativity, her business had flourished through the famous Graeco-Roman world. After the death of her husband, Lydia moved to Macedonia (Europe) where she continued her business. Despite the bereavement of her husband, Lydia continued working hard because of her perseverance spirit. This enabled her to maintain her style of life. Many people gained confidence in her because of the courage and spirit of working hard in spite of the tragedy of the husband.

Lydia was a gentile and faithful to God. At about 50 A.D Lydia became a part of a group of Jewish women who worshipped the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. She believed in Him as the true God. Lydia was a church planter or organizer and a very strong woman. In fact she was noted for hospitality. She welcomed many people in her home and looked after them. She was a hard worker, a woman who utilized her talents to an extent of benefiting others. And yet her outstanding performance is not well recorded because of the androcentric writings of the scriptures.

### **The role of Priscilla as a self – supporting woman: Acts: 18**

Priscilla was a self-supporting missionary of God's ministry. In the Epistles, she is called Prisca (Romans 16:3, 2Tim 4:19). She traveled extensively. She worked very hard with her husband, both in their trade and in the church. Note that, she had triple roles. She became a good companion and hard working both in business and God's work. They were co-workers as husband and wife. She opened her home for church meetings. Paul calls Priscilla and her

husband “fellow workers” (Rom16v3). Priscilla was always being remembered because of her commitment to God’s work. So Paul sent greetings being in constant touch and remembrance of Priscilla and her husband. Priscilla together with the husband was creative and industrious.

Priscilla and her husband had things in common with Paul. They were both Jews and socially well bred. They had been to many places and at some point they were refugees. They were very strong Christians and traders at the same time.

When Paul visited them he was dispirited because of the tribulations and difficulties he had gone through. Through working with Aquila and Priscilla Paul recovered his vitality. They helped each other in defending the faith of Jesus Christ in the synagogue every Sabbath. They were encouragers to many people who doubted the belief in the Lord Jesus. They played a very important role in traveling with Paul to Ephesus. They stayed on and with no doubt; they helped Paul to establish the church in Ephesus through their preaching and teaching of the word of God.

Priscilla and Aquila helped and nurtured many people into the fullness of the Holy Spirit. One of them was Apollos to whom they expounded the word of God. There was harmony between her and the husband in that they worked together in everything without grumbling. As a result of her commitment and integrity, she is mentioned in history and not the husband. She was a woman who performed her tasks beyond the doubts of her audience. Priscilla instructed Tertullian. She became famous because of her famous good characteristics of leadership. What a prestigious honour? She displayed her leadership qualities by working for people. Paul had to recommend Priscilla because of her creativity and commitment to what she was doing. She displayed her talents in a way that benefited others. This made her to be remembered by her fellow workers. Her leadership style stands out as a role model to other women holding important and high positions of responsibility.

There are many women like Priscilla who have laboured and worked hard from time in memorial. The fact of women being regarded a secondary in importance to men has undermined the vital roles that they have played in history. In the characteristics of the five women that have been analyzed, we see a great talent of leadership in them. This is an indication that women can do better given a positive encouragement. That is why it is

important to face the challenge and the impediments that women face in church rather than blaming them for non-participation especially in higher decision-making bodies.

In both Old and New Testament, We hear some women who performed so well in carrying out their duties and worked alongside with men. Whoever was identified to be capable did the work of God. There was no distinction between woman and man. For example, the apostle Paul further encouraged the churches wherever he went to work with the women and to help them in their ministry. The true picture of the church of God should be where no one is above the other. The spirit of domination of one sex or race over the other is sin, because we have all been created in the image of God (Gen1v27). Marlene Perera describes the church as people – women, men, and children working together. Then the church is truly the sacrament, the sign, and the symbol of God's Kingdom that is within us and is coming to be. She further argues that:

The ministry of the church, being the community of persons who commit themselves to follow Jesus, is life centred, service-oriented and determined by gifts and aptitudes rather than by statutes and accidents of gender. Any task that promotes life and the service of the community is equally valued. Decisions are made in community, and in this even the child has its due place.<sup>71</sup>

In order to make good role models for the young, women and men in leadership positions should be speaking about ways to change the Zambian cultural perception of a woman as inferior to man. The church tends to carry the stigma of “woman cannot do this or that” and end up with the mentality that because they have got to high leadership positions in the church, then they must be better than women. It is out of convenience sometimes that men in some churches allow women to possess authority so that they are not seen by the outside world as people alienating others from the church. The church of God should be seen in the light of Jesus Christ who welcomed everyone regardless of someone's status in the society.

Women should not be seen as people being given favour to belong to the church of Jesus Christ. In fact, women have been in forefront at every call of every event, yet their status is questionable. A number of male leaders spoken to strongly felt that in fact they were very

---

<sup>71</sup> Perera, M. 1995, *An Asian Feminist Ecclesiology in Women's Visions*. Edited by Ofelia Ortega. Geneva: WCC Publications. Pg 50.

happy at the pace the church was handling the issue on gender justice. They feel the church cannot be rushed into the issue of gender because it is not Zambian and as such much time is needed for the church to absolve it. Oduyoye comments that:

The person who sleeps by the fire knows best how intensely it burns; so runs an Asante proverb. The irruption of women in church and society is an integral part of the voice of the earth's voiceless majority that is beginning to penetrate the atmosphere and disturb the peace of the principalities and powers that hold the structures of our so-called one world in their hands.<sup>72</sup>

Women have done a lot to advance God's kingdom starting from the Old and New Testament. Similarly, even today women do need support from the church to be effective as they carry out God's work. Let us now turn to the feminist vision of the inclusive church.

---

<sup>72</sup> Oduyoye, Mercy. 1986. *Hearing and Knowing*. Mary knoll, New York : Orbis Books. Pg 89.

## **FEMINIST VISION OF THE INCLUSIVE CHURCH (OIKUMENE)**

In order to participate as equal partners in the organization and management of church affairs there should be no designated women and men specific roles. Both men and women should play any role without discrimination as long as whoever is chosen is most suitable for that role. If there is a woman present who is most competent at decorating the church then by all means let her carry out the task. Similarly if there is a man available who can do that task better than the woman then let the man do it and not give it to the woman because it is considered as her stereotyped role? Women should be given opportunities to hold high positions like Bishops, General Secretaries and other policy-making positions at all level of church courts. It is important to be mindful of the fact that as women, they should learn to support one another and not to be the enemy of each other. Women at all levels should respect each other's contributions towards the building and strengthening of God's church. The women should be each other's keeper. Women have contributed a lot to the growth of the church by doing different jobs. Perhaps the most significant jobs they do are cleaning and decorating the church as well as attending to the social affairs and the fundraising ventures of the church. The both roles of woman's and man's contribution must be seen in the light of new ways of church to consider educating the young, especially in the formation of their metanoia, instilling, inculcating fresh ideas and values following the new vision of gender justice where equality love and justice and peace will reign.

The need for creating a new partnership and pattern of relationship especially between husband and wife must be tackled on a more individual level. It may not be seen important, but in order to be fully incorporated in the new, the old model and pattern of doing things in a relationship must also go. Both men and women will have to break some of the traditions and cultural practices that make them hold to their respective gender roles. This entails to go through a laborious and painful process. Women will have to find a way themselves first and foremost to burst out of the roles that have been defined for them. Women have to revisit the notion of the image and the position that hinder them from creativity and freedom. By doing so at the personal level, part of the job would have been already done when men and women enter knowingly into equity and mutual partnership in the total life and work of the church.

Dorothy Ramodibe puts it this way:

The church, the male-dominated church, wants women but does not need them. Women are wanted because they are workers (cleaning the

church, making cakes, fundraising, etc) for the comfort of men. Men are like Pharaoh, who wanted the children of Israel as slaves, but did not need them as people.<sup>73</sup>

The fact is that the resurrected Christ who transcended all particularities is forgotten and the male historical Jesus is remembered. The argument put forward is simply that Jesus was a male. And no one questions that. The women in the Zambian church are no better than the women in the society at large. The magnitudes of problems that confront the lives of women in society are also found in the church. This is so because the social values and traditions prevalent in society have found their way into the church structures and in the lives of the members of the church. Therefore, diffusing and distorting the divine intentions of God for women as written in the Scriptures (cf Galatians 3v28).

Although recently there has been an outcry on the issue of gender as a result of the external pressure, some denominations have slightly responded by incorporating women in their structures. Although there has been this move, the representation of women in decision-making circles remains insignificant when compared to their numbers in different denominations. Thus their leadership and participation weight is practically nil.

It is important to consider women's work as it stands in appreciation of the role of the women in the history of God's relationship with man as exemplified by some leading women in both the New and Old Testament. Overcoming injustices and attaining partnership is not simply a matter of persuasion, argument, rhetoric and changes of notions expressed in everyday attitudes, in theoretical reasoning and in policy process. It requires changes in the deep structures of the church and social life, and collective action not simply individual action. It also requires profound changes in the way that cooking and serving during meetings is integrated, so as to make the women's participation autonomous. If women have been doing most of the work in the church, like cooking and serving, why can't the system be changed? The feminist vision of the inclusive church means becoming involved with others in God's mission for the wholeness of life especially with those who suffer from systems of injustice. The inclusive vision brings people together in community for mutual empowerment through the sharing of gifts. I believe that movement towards a more just, participatory society will be

---

<sup>73</sup>Ramodibe, D. 1988. Women and men building together the church in Africa in *With Passion and Compassion*. Mary knoll: Orbis Books. Pg 17.

fostered through the building of relationships of respect, and the sharing of resources, experiences and values among people. I acknowledge the need for mutual accountability, trust, honesty, forgiveness and persistent love, which requires long-term commitments.

Resource i.e. human, financial, material sharing acknowledges that all are called to participate in God's mission. Resources must be shared to enable mission to take place. We should uphold the just sharing of resources, recognizing our variety and that not only a certain category of people controlling the resources we have for God's mission. Ramodibe further describes the church as:

Men and women need to cooperate on the basis of mutuality. God's plan of differentiation of God's creatures was not meant to be a disadvantage to others, but was meant to enrich one another. Mutuality is relevant only where partners recognize and respect each other; mutuality does not recognize paternalism.<sup>74</sup>

It is true that when people are responsible in their actions, the whole community benefits. Because it is the desire of Yahweh that resources should be shared equally with those who do not have.

Justice works for the transformation of the systems and organizations, which structure our communities. Injustice, at its heart, is organized, institutionalized and systemic. But social, cultural, political and economic systems can be changed so that no groups or individuals have unfair advantages over others. The struggle for systemic justice calls us to continually challenge fields of power so that all people are enabled to control and transform the conditions of their lives. The prophet Jeremiah prophesied words of warning about knowing God and justice:

This is the city, which must be punished; there is nothing but oppression within her... violence and destruction are heard within her; sickness and wounds are ever before me... For from the least to the greatest of them, every one is greedy for unjust gain; and from prophet to priest, every one

---

<sup>74</sup> Ramodibe, D. 1988. Women and men building together the church in Africa in *With Passion and Compassion*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books. Pg 19.

deals falsely. They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, 'peace, peace,' when there is no peace (Jer. 6:6-7, 13-14).

Equipping God's people is about people taking control of their own lives, gaining skills, increasing self-confidence, solving problems and participating in decision-making. The capacity to act in the face of systemic oppression, which is shaped, constrained and enabled by social structures. I believe that God works through people to build social movements of resistance to this oppression. We have to be committed to supporting the processes of change through which people and groups can address injustices, renegotiate power, and advance goals for a more just world. Together with the words of Jesus we are empowered to say:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord (Luke 4:18).

Building sustainable communities offers the vision of healthy communities as the foundation of a just and peaceful world. This vision centres on the meaning of Shalom, a biblical word that encompasses peace, shelter, well-being, justice, harmony, healthy working environments and a stable ecosystem. To be concerned for healthy communities draws us into consideration of the neighbor and the question of who is included and who is excluded. We are committed to working for inclusive communities in which all people are welcome and diversity is celebrated.<sup>75</sup> It is God's intention to give all creatures life and sustain it. Isaiah states:

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of the wickedness, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your

---

<sup>75</sup>United Church of Canada (UCC) *Gender justice and partnership guidelines*. Pg14.

healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you, the glory of the lord shall be your rear guard (Isaiah 58: 6-8).

There is a criterion that Jesus will use even at the last judgment time to welcome the faithful from all nations during that time He will say: "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me a drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to see me" (Matt. 25: 35-36).

It is my understanding that people concerned with justice yearn for the healing of creation. This calls for the church to go beyond its traditional relationships to make common cause with people of good will throughout the world who are committed to compassion, peace and justice. This model of ecumenism returns the understanding of *oikoumene* (the household of God) to that of the whole inhabited earth. In a world at risk, the church must both deepen its existing partnerships throughout the world and seek out new forms of relationship for the sake of the healing of God's creation. Duchrow writes that:

One thing is clear: Jesus understands the centre of the kingdom of God and his mission in terms of healing, liberation, encouragement, justice, and the building of a new community among the poor, and not in an attempt to change the situation from above by the conversion of the rich. He constructs small cells of the new society under God's loving rule in the middle of oppressive imperialism.<sup>76</sup>

I understand that when the members of the church get together as of a body of Christ, this signifies a decisive turning away or *metanoia* (changing of one's mind) from the powers and principalities of personal and systemic oppression. It will mean that we abandon their destructive powers and reject their hold over our lives. We have to recognize that the principalities of evil go beyond our conscious control. They have been ingrained into the thick layers of our unconscious, so we continue to obey them without realizing it. They are manifested in political, economic, religious and social systems that we do not control or entirely escape, as long as they continue to exist. Rosemary Radford Ruether writes 'The

---

<sup>76</sup> Duchrow Ulrich and Gerhard Liedke. 1987. *Shalom: Biblical Perspectives on Creation, Justice & Peace*. Geneva: WCC Publications. Pg 90.

body of Christ signifies our disaffiliation from patriarchy and all its claims to social necessity and divine legitimacy, and our commitment to a new order'.<sup>77</sup>

The church of Jesus Christ should be understood in the light of a theology, which has recognized both an objective and a subjective side of baptism. In other words, this means that all people who have passed through baptism regardless of their gender are children of God. The objective side is God's liberating love, which is given to both men and women as unmerited gift from beyond our historical nature and which transforms the self into a new being in communion with God. The subjective side is the process of personally examining baptism by making this journey of metanoia and transformation meaningful in one's own life.<sup>78</sup> The church must work towards the inclusive community, which holds all the members of the body of Christ together and not a community, which turn males into instruments of domination and shape women into tools of submission.

For me, gender justice cannot exist outside of our understanding of partnership. The religious groups should be committed to working at mutuality and equality in our relationships unlike the situation, which is in globalisation where there are only few key people who make decisions on behalf of billions of people. We are supposed to acknowledge the power imbalance that results from unequal access to resources (especially, financial resources) and therefore strive to relate to one another as people who have different but equally valuable gifts. Once this is recognized, the church should be committed to the struggle to redress existing power imbalances in the world. Because we see gender injustice as something that exists in all cultures, politics, economy, religion and work place so that everyone recognising these anomalies can be engaged in a mutual struggle to promote gender justice. All of us have much to learn about this problem that faces us, perhaps in different ways and to different degrees as echoed before.

---

<sup>77</sup> Ruether, R.R. 1985. *Women-Church. Theology and Practice of Feminist Liturgical Communities*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers. Pg 68.

<sup>78</sup> Ruether R.R. 1985. *Women-Church. Theology and Practice of Feminist Liturgical Communities*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers. pg 93.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

#### SUMMARY REMARKS TO THE CHURCH IN ZAMBIA

It has to be noted that remarkable changes are taking place, which could open or break the chains of injustice, and make clear at the same time that for the present style of some church structures, change is inevitable. We should be working towards proposals to developing and enforcing a further recognition of human rights look, especially promising for change to be implemented.

The church in Zambia does not work in isolation. But it works alongside with other partners worldwide. And as such it is not excluded from what is happening in other parts of the world. In fact, the Christian church was global from its very beginning, related to the whole-inhabited world (*oikumene*). The apostle Paul even speaks of God's own globalization, when he refers to this administration of times in the perspective of the coming of the shepherd king, his plan for the fullness of time to gather up all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth (Eph 1). From a Christian perspective what matters is the style of globalization, a style, which should be characterized not by the survival of the fittest, but by the survival of the weak.<sup>79</sup>

I believe in living in a house of order, peace and tranquility, but also I believe that all people including women have the right to participate fully in the activities of the Church. Age, racism, classism, ethnicity and sexism are some of the problems that have confronted the church over the years. Zambian women, it could be said, always face many problems. They are victims of sexism and lack of formal education to mention a few and as already indicated.

I have seen young women feeling embarrassed when headscarfs have been forced on them in their pews in church. Oftenly the women's insubordination in the church is blamed on Paul and the Church fathers who interpreted his writings. The general scenario given is that theology has been oppressive to women while it has lifted the men. Even in Matriarchal

---

<sup>79</sup> World Alliance of Reformed churches (WARC). (2000) June, Vol. 10. No229.

societies, Christianity uplifts patriarchy. Many things favour men than women. This happens when the word of God is interpreted to suppress women.

They have been revolutions that have taken place to uplift the status of women in the secular world and the Church. The international bodies like the United Nations, World Council of Churches and other ecumenical organizations have effected some of the changes. The work of some Christian women and youths have opened the eyes of many women, a few women have received theological training and have been able to influence their community. Despite all the involvement of women in the life of the church as described by Munachongo, the number is still negligible.

Paul K. Jewett in *Man as Male and Female: A study in Sexual Relationships from a theological point of view* writes: Since one is "called Of God" to the office, one does not simply choose to be a minister as one would choose to enter a profession. One must be called...<sup>80</sup> Jewett, acknowledges that God calls human beings in His Church. If it is God who calls, why has the Church of Christ operated like a secular institution that segregates? It is every Christian's responsibility to discern from the biblical scriptures and interpret the word of God as it should be.

It is in this respect that I would like to urge the church in Zambia to be open and learn what is happening else where on and how others have arrived at equitable gender justice guidelines to govern the church of God. Young has suggested that for the meaningful development to be achieved the involvement of both women and men will make a difference:

Involving women at all levels of development thinking, planning and implementation will make a world of difference not merely to women but to the capacity of society to envisage and carry out planned social change, which will permit human kind to live in harmony with nature and itself. To bring women to centre, however, will require profound changes in the way that societies conceive of relations between the

---

<sup>80</sup> Paul K. Jewett. 1975. *Man as Male and Female: A Study in sexual relationships from a Theological point of view*. Grand Rapids: Eedermans. Pg 168.

genders and the dismantling of centuries old structures of thought and practice.<sup>81</sup>

There are suggestions to be concretized if the above has to be realised. These are often related to the social and economic strength of communities, where people decided to work together and to sustain each other by building up co-operation and taking common concerns seriously. The patterns of economic growth in those communities are usually very different from the modern ones, they are of an inclusive nature, not overburdening the environment, and related to the idea of sufficiency. On one hand as Prachar Hutanuwatr has observed, 'on a more positive note, all around the world we can witness evidence of the rising consciousness of the interconnection of ecological systems and the emergence of global networking among the civil society'.<sup>82</sup> On the other hand, we should not lose sight on the proliferation of side effects that have come about as a result of globalization of male and woman divide, rich and poor, First and Third World, black and white and so forth.

Today the Third World countries' economic policy can no longer be governed by globalization and national goals alone. The social issues that have been raised challenge the civil society and governments to broaden their horizon and enhance their collaboration and a sense of solidarity on all levels of the human society. In fact the cause for democracy is closely linked with economic justice. Seen in this light, all of us (regardless from which sector) have the responsibility to contribute to the construction of an economic paradigm based on justice, participation and human solidarity like the demonstration of concerned debt cancellation colleagues had where the Board of Directors of IMF and the World Bank met.<sup>83</sup>

Justice here must be understood as removing all that make the woman in bondage, all that makes her treated less human than what God intended her to be. It means the total freedom from fear, uncertainty, sickness, illiteracy, hunger, oppression and distortion of her image.

---

<sup>81</sup> Young, K. 1993. *Planning Development with women: Making a world of difference*. London: Macmillan. Pg 206.

<sup>82</sup> Hutanuwatr, P. 2000. Globalization from a Buddhist perspective, in *Globalization and its Consequences*. Vol. 50. No 2, June. Geneva: WARC. Pg 6.

<sup>83</sup> Some of the concerned Americans had to demonstrate when the board of directors of IMF and World Bank were meeting in Washing D.C. in 2000. These people were complaining about the harsh policies that affect millions of people including other sentient beings. People have had to protest whenever the IMF/ World Bank has held meetings. For example, in places like the Washington D.C., Seattle and across the world [2000]. Prachar Hutanuwatr has observed that, "on a positive note, all around the world we can witness evidence of the rising consciousness of the interconnection of ecological systems and the emergence of global networking among civil society.

My understanding of Jesus Christ as a liberator is expressed in our Lord's own words: Luke 4:18. The most important point in the above quotation is the work of Jesus Christ as liberator as indicated in chapter 4. Freedom is the determination not to give up into life's limitations, but to rise above the challenges, which make life so dull. It means the courage to have a persistence attitude to stick to the best solutions. It means the ability to feel the sense of identity.

Whether women were created from the rib of men or not, one thing that is important is that women and men were created to be partners. They have the spirit of God in them. It is the presence of the Spirit that keeps them consistently (always keeping in contact) tied to the image of God. God is love and those who live in God live in love.

The society and the church leaders should demonstrate this love to the women by putting them in their top hierarchies of the churches. However, it must be borne in mind that in some denominations discrimination against women is minimal. Women in such denominations should utilize this advantage to the maximum. Women in the Central Baptist church and African Methodist Episcopal church who are at the top echelon of their churches should continue to utilize their positions to develop their members and other women around them.

Women in these positions have become mirrors of other women. It must be understood that slowly some churches will start opening doors for women to fully develop their gifts. If this spirit continues of women's involvement, this may improve the position of many Zambian women.

But women have to know that liberation is costly and so some women who have taken this direction have found themselves on the periphery as reflected in the introduction. Liberation has its consequences, and women who have ever wanted to liberate themselves have paid a price. I have come to understand that people who are not concerned with the women have in the Church usually used theoretical methods to solve problems. This has resulted into some women reacting to this tendency of not appreciating some men who are helping them to seek the gender justice that they need. Zambian women like other women in the Bible believe that God has the way of liberating them from cultural and ecclesiastical barriers. The freedom that women are seeking in the church today is not the spirit of domination over their male counterparts, but the freedom to participate equally in the body of Christ. And this will cause both parties to be obedient to what God requires of us in our relationships. Obedience is

considered a necessity, not only in religion, but also as a strong expression of humility. For without humility there is no true love. Both women and men should know that obedience is the capacity to listen, establish communion and interpret the word of God correctly.

In as much as women will need men because no one is an Island of her/his own, they must realize that nature has endowed them with dignity, energy and spiritual wisdom to be equal with men in the things of God. Deborah in the Bible as above was a woman, a prophetess and a judge over Israel. She led the children of Israel to fight a war against Jabins army. And they won. (Judges 4: 4-24)

Women must realize that they are part of the people of God. They are indispensable. That is men cannot do without them. They are wives, mothers, cleaners, farmers and anything one can think of. The women's numerical strength in every denomination and their zeal for God's work make them indispensable. Men should know that women desire to be heard and consulted in decision-making. Abraham the father of the Jewish people and his wife Sarah were upright before God. When Sarah told Abraham to send Hagar and her son away, Abraham did not like that instruction, but God told him to obey Sarah. Abraham listened to Sarah and obeyed her. (Genesis 21:9-12)

Further more, women must fight against the feeling that they are being oppressed. They should ignore the men's devices against them. They should not underrate their abilities and effectiveness in religious matters. Women must learn never to be discouraged by neither the attitude of men nor the pressure of work but press on. On the other hand the men should bear in mind that the worst feeling is to be excluded, being left out, denied information and knowledge, denied a listening ear and sharing heart. Leah the wife of Jacob both of them were Jewish people who practiced Judaism in their time. Leah was excluded denied a listening ear and a sharing heart. This can be deduced from the names that she gave to her children. " And Leah conceived, and bore a son and called his name Reuben; for she said, surely the Lord hath looked upon my affliction, now therefore, my husband will love me. And she conceived again and bore a son; and said, because the Lord has heard that I was hated, he hath given me another son, she called him Simeon".

In most marriages, women are over worked, treated as slaves sometimes, not given a listening ear and a sharing heart by the one they love. Such women cannot express themselves in the type of names they give their children as Leah did because it is a male dominated world. Only

men have the right to christen their children while women compromise. Perhaps in Leah's time, when men worked closely with God they were more sensitive to God's voice and respected their wives opinions than today.

The issue of dowry (bride price), especially in Africa, must be viewed positively by men and society. To some men paying dowry is like buying the woman. Hence, she can be ill treated and abused. This must not be entertained. Rather the dowry must be seen as giving a token of one's appreciation to the parents of his would be bride. Parents of the bride must be wise not to ask for too much.

Church leaders should learn to discern the times and to clearly interpret the will of God. Our freedom lies in knowing and doing the will of God, since we are created in his image and we have no life separate from him.

This research is about Gender Justice; reality or rhetoric, a theological challenge to the church in Zambia. One thing that is evident is that no one has a clear-cut answer to the eradication of this man-made problem. However, women must know that they hold the key to their freedom.

For women to free themselves the following must be their goals:

- Must struggle to be included in high level of decision-making committees and at the top hierarchy of their denominations. If they are in these positions, they can raise the issues of oppression against them at the highest body of their denomination and press for equality. Women should stand up and challenge the men and show their capability of performing duties in their denominations and in all programmes.
- To come together and fight for a common goal. They should realize that this battle is not only physical but also spiritual. They need to pray each time they take a step to abolish some restrictions that are man-made. There is need to point out some of the things that make them not to advance in taking what they believe in to be just to other people. In the secular world women who formed groups in the struggle to bring about women's emancipation had a break through in their lives. A popular example is this group that helped women to attain what they wanted and eradicate many oppressive issues against them. Through this group women have been placed in national

decision-making bodies e.g. Government, political scenario, which seem to be like a man's club.

- Must be courageous enough and have confidence that will portray them as equal counterparts to the men. They should be well versed with the Bible and be able to interpret it correctly. Women should organize seminars and workshops on church matters and invite men to attend.

### **CHURCH LEADERS**

Church leaders should cultivate the following for gender justice to be achieved:

- Must be studying their Christian books critically and interpret correctly. The fact that the Christian teachings are selected to suit the men should be stopped. Wherever women did great things, that part should be emphasized. For instance, the example of Deborah from the book of (Judges 4:4-24).
- To initiate and implement for women educational programme that will increase their religious knowledge and understanding. Beliefs and practices, which contribute to women's oppression must be identified, exposed and removed completely.
- Should be re-arranging their priorities to make greater impact on the society they are serving. They should discourage women from being married to a married man. This is because when a man has more than one wife, his wives compete for his love, thereby making him proud and arrogant. As a result of his pride and arrogance he can treat his wives as he likes without having any respect for them. But where you have one man, one wife, there is a tendency for the man to be more humane (showing understanding) and will treat his wife with respect.
- Must discourage the payment of high dowry. They should let the society know that children (sons and daughters) are God's gift to them therefore, they should not ask for high dowry as if they were selling their daughters. In addition to that when parents get high dowry on their daughters, their husbands will use them as property instead of

loving and respecting them. On the other hand church leaders should be enlightening the society that the dowry is just a token of the bridegroom's appreciation to his bride's parents. This enlightenment is very important to create awareness in the bridegroom that his parent's in-law single handedly brought up his bride, without his contributions. In this case the bridegroom should not be seeing such payment as buying a slave. Hence wives must be seen as equal partners to their husbands. As a matter of serious consideration, biblical examples such as of Jacob serving Laban for seven years to marry Rachel should be referred to. "And Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him a few days, for the love he had for her". (Genesis 29:20)

- Should be living an exemplary and holy life for their followers to emulate. They should be able to correct, guide and encourage the society when need arises. I keep on mentioning the church leaders because they are the pillars of society. In other words, I am saying these leaders should be able to move with time and interpret the signs correctly.

The recommendations above can only be realized when all parties have a common goal. This will enhance unity and harmony if all people feel part and parcel of the overall system. This will entail dismantling the towers that have been built for years. And I believe this is what is required of us as custodians of God's Kingdom here on earth. In fact, it is Jesus who taught His disciples to always say in the prayer 'Let the Kingdom of God come on earth as it is in heaven where there is no woman or man, old and young, rich and poor but all are mirrored as God's children. The openness of the church in Zambia can be the point of departure for the celebration of the inclusive community of men and women to work as equal partners for the advancement of God's Kingdom in Zambia. As Oduyoye further makes an emphasis that 'African women's theology constructed at their pace, own place, portrays their own priorities and perspectives. There has been an emphasis on survival, as they may have to live so that they may be present in this life to struggle to disclose God's hand in their lives and in the actualities of Africa.'<sup>84</sup>

---

<sup>84</sup> Oduyoye. 2001. *Introducing African Women's Theology*. London: Sheffield Academic Press. Pg 11.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Acolatse, E.E. 2001. Rethinking Sin and Grace: African Evangelical Feminist Response to Niebuhr. In *Talithacum! Theologies of African Women*. (Eds) Nyambura Njoroge and Musa Dube. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.
- Akitintunde, D.O. 2001. *African Culture and the Quest for Women's Rights*. Ibadan :Sefer Books.
- Alves, R.A. 1972. *Tomorrow's Child. Imagination, Creativity and the Rebirth of Culture*. London: SCM Press.
- Bolink, P. 1967. *Towards Church Union in Zambia*. Franeker: T. Wever.
- Chazan, N. 1989 "Gender perspectives on African States." In J. Parpart and K. Staudt. *Women and the State in Africa*. Colorado: Lynne Reiner Publishers.
- Cultrufelli R. Maria. 1983. *Women of Africa – Roots of oppression*. London: Zed.
- Duchrow, Ulrich and Gerhard Liedke. 1987. *Shalom: Biblical Perspectives on Creation, Justice & Peace*. Geneva: WCC Publications.
- Elson, D., 1991. *Male Bias in the Development Process*, New York: Manchester University Press.
- Fiorenza, E. S. 1993. *Discipleship of Equals*, New York: Crossroad Publishing Company.
- Francis, A, 1995. *Discrimination Against women*, New York: St. Davids, Pennsylvania.
- Haralambos, M and M. Holborn. 1995. *Themes and Perspectives*. London: Harper Collins Publishers.
- Hastings, A. 1979. *A History of African Christianity. 1950-1975*. London: CUP.
- Hutanuwar, P. 2000. "Globalisation from a Buddhist perspective." In *Globalisation and its consequences*. Vol.50, No 2, June. Geneva:Warc.
- Jennings, M, 1996. "Communities in Development: The theory and Practice of Gender." In Mary Van Lieshout, ed., *A Woman's World Beyond the Headlines*. Dublin: Attic Press.
- Jewett, K. Paul. 1975. *Man as Male and Female: A Study in Sexual Relationships from a Theological point of view*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Kanyoro R. A. Musimbi and Mercy A. Oduyoye. 1992. *The Will to Arise*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- 1996. God calls to ministry: An inclusive Hospitality. In *Groaning in Faith*. (eds) M. Kanyoro and N. Njoroge. Nairobi : Acton Press.

-----1974. *Human Liberation in a Feminist Perspective – A Theology*. The Westminster Press, Philadelphia.

Lungwangwa G. 1990. *Professors world peace Academy of Zambia in the 1990's proceedings of the 11<sup>th</sup> PWPA*. Lusaka: Masaki Publishers.

Malinowski B. 1944. *A Scientific Theory of Culture*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Marcella B. 1992. *Women and literacy*. London: Zed.

Mananzan Mary-John. 1995. *Feminist Theology in Asia: In Women's Visions, Theological Reflection, Celebration, Action*. (ed) Ofelia Ortega. An Overview. Geneva: WCC Publications.

Mittelman, J.H. "The Dynamics of Globalisation". In James H. Mittelman, ed., *Globalization: Critical Reflections*. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Moser C, 1991. "Gender Planning in the Third World. Meeting Practical And Strategic Needs." In T Wallace & C March, (eds.). *Changing perceptions: Writings on Gender and Development*. London: Oxfam.

Mayra, B. 1976. *Women and World Development*. New York: Cherris Adams Gabrielle.

Nim, A. S. 1989. *Feminist Theology in the Korean Church*. In *We dare to dream*. Edited by Virginia Fabella M.M. and Sun Ai Lee Park. Hong Kong: AWCCT.

Njoronge, J.N. and Musa W. Dube. 2001. *Theologies of African Women: Talithacum!* Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.

Oakley, A. 1972, *Sex, Gender and Society*. London: Temple

Oduyoye, A. M. 1983. "Reflections from a Third World Woman's Perspective: Women's experience and liberation Theologies." In Virginia Fabella, M.M. and Sergio Torres, eds. In *Irruption of the Third World, Challenge to Theology*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books.

-----1986. *Hearing and Knowing*. Maryknoll, Orbis.

-----2001. *Introducing African Women's Theology*. London: Sheffield Academic Press.

Perera, M, 1995. *An Asian Feminist Ecclesiology*. In *Women's Visions*, Edited by Ofelia Ortega. Geneva: WCC Publications.

Power G. 1996. "Globalization and its Discontents in Development." In Jerry Mander & Edward Goldsmith. (Eds.), *the Case against the Global Economy: And for a Turn to the local*, San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.

Ramodibe. D. 1988. *Women and men building Together the church in Africa, In With Passion and Compassion*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.

- Ronaldo, M. 1990. *The God of Christians*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books.
- Rowland, C. and Mark Corner. 1990. *Liberating Exegesis: The Challenge of Liberation Theology to Biblical Studies*. Cambridge: The University Press.
- Ruether, R. R. 1985. *Women - Church. Theology and Practice of Feminist Liturgical Communities*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers.
- 1983. *Sexism and God-Talk*. London SCM Press Ltd.
- 1975. *New Woman and New Earth*. Minneapolis: The Seabury Press.
- Russell, L.M. 1974. *Liberation Theology in a Feminist Perspective*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.
- Smyke Patricia. 1990. *Women and Health*. Zed books, London
- Swart, Angelene. 1996. Dignity and worth in the Commonwealth of God. In *Groaning in Faith* edited by Musimbi R.A. Kanyoro and Nyambura Njoroge, Nairobi: Acton Publishers.
- The Concise Oxford Dictionary. 1995. Ninth edition, edited by Della Thompson. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Thomson, M. 1970. *Voices of the New Feminism*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Tsikata, D. 1996. "Gender equality and the state in Ghana: Some issues of policy and practice." In Mama A (Ed) *Engendering Social Sciences in Africa*. Dakar: Codesria.
- Ulrich, D. and G. Liedke. 1987, *Shalom: Biblical Perspectives on Creation, Justice and Peace*. Geneva WCC Publications, Pp76-111.
- Young, K 1993. *Planning Development with women: Making a World of Difference*. London: Macmillan.
- Yong Jing Jin. 1989. A protestant Perspective: (eds) Virginia Fabella M. M. and Sun Ai Lee Park; *we dare to dream: Doing Theology as Asian Women*. AWCCT, Kowloon.
- A protestant Perspective, in *With Passion and Compassion*. (Eds) Virginia Fabella M. M. and Mercy Oduyoye. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books.

## JOURNALS

- Ackerman, D, 1996. "Engaging Freedom: A contextual Feminist Theology of Praxis." In *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, no94, March.
- Karamanga, A. 1991. All Africa Conference of Churches. Problems and promises of Africa Towards and beyond the year 2000. *A Summary of the proceedings of the Symposium* convened by the AACCC in Mombasa. November.

## **ARCHIVAL SOURCES**

Ada, Rhoda. 1988. Women in the Church. Kitwe: Unpublished.

DAWN (1995) Securing our gains and moving Forward to the twenty-first century: A position paper by DAWN for the fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, September 1995, University of the West Indies, Barbados.

Echoes, 1995. WCC Magazines, No7.

July (1993) Women Magazine, No 39, Lutheran World Federation (L.W.F). Geneva, Department for Mission and Development.

Kabonde, P. 2000. Gender Justice and partnership: An Overview of the United Church of Zambia. Unpublished. CapeTown.

The Monitor. 2002. For human rights and development 229 p2.

Weekly Post. Zambia's leading independent newspaper, No. 1335, Thursday edition, October 14, 1999.

WCC Ecumenical Decade findings (November, 1998).

UCC Gender Justice and Partnership Guidelines (February, 1998).

## **Appendix I**

### **LIST OF INTERVIEWEES**

1. Rev Violet Sampa- Bredt,
2. Ms Valerie Chama
3. Rev. Jeremiah Chenge
4. Mrs Martha Chileshe
5. Rev. Commissioner Mwape Chilekwa
6. Bishop Rt Rev. Derek Kamukwamba
7. Commissioner Lucy Kasanga
8. Mrs Evelyn Kamwendo
9. Deac. Sylvia Kumwenda
10. Evangelist George Lushinga
11. Mrs Suzanne Matale
12. Rev. E. C. Mesa
13. Mrs Evelyn Malambo
14. Mrs Annie Mwale
15. Ms Chanda Mwandia
16. Mr Frank Mwansa
17. Mrs Idah Mufonka
18. Mrs Vaidah Munyenyembe
19. Mrs Maggie Mumba
20. Mr Joseph Nyendwa
21. Rev. Gerald Phiri

22. Mrs B. M. Phiri
23. Ms Jane Sakala
24. Deac. Violet Sikasote
25. Ms Caroline M. Sikazwe
26. Mrs Isabel K. Simukonda
27. Mrs Winnie Silangwa
28. Rev. Samuel Silungwe
29. Rev Derrick Silwenga
30. Rev. Dr. Caroline Wickens

University of Cape Town

## **Appendix II**

### **GUIDING QUESTIONS ON GENDER JUSTICE: A THEOLOGICAL CHALLENGE TO THE CHURCH IN ZAMBIA IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY.**

#### **Identification:**

Name:

Age:

Gender:

Church:

Position in church:

Marital status: Married, single, divorce, widow, and widower.

Occupation:

#### **Section one: Church and Women**

1. What is the role of women in your church?
2. How does your church affect women's development?
3. How is the issue of Gender Justice and partnership perceived in your church?
4. Do women have the ability to develop themselves?
5. Do you think it is necessary to provide opportunities for women's development?
6. Does your church have guidelines on Gender justice?

#### **Section two: Society and women**

1. Can women play an important role in society? If yes list some of the roles?
2. What is society's perception towards the development of women?
3. How can society help in gender justice and development?
4. How can we change the attitude of society towards women's development?
5. Any other comment?