

**LUKE AND THE MARGINALIZED:  
AN AFRICAN FEMINIST'S PERSPECTIVE  
ON THREE LUKAN PARABLES  
(LUKE 10: 25-37; 15: 8-10; 18: 1-8)**

**BY**

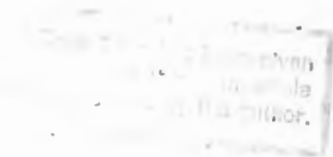
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## A B S T R A C T

Part I of this study introduces the problem and the feminist methodologies to be employed in the thesis. The argument is that biblical scholarship and interpretation was based on Western patriarchal androcentric and sexist approach which considered maleness as normative human behaviour. The feminist approach to the parabolic interpretation is introduced as a contrast to the normative male dominated Western scholarship.

Feminist theology demonstrates convincingly that the androcentric and misogynist bias of patriarchal tradition is serious. Then again, American, European African women theologians realize the need has arisen to establish alternative norms and sources of tradition to challenge these biases, and women seek a reconstruction or re-envisioning of the theological themes that will free males from these biases. While sharing these concerns I want to discuss these issues from the point of view of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians whose founding person is Mercy Oduyoye. These women feel oppressed by their African culture, religion and White domination. The African context will be represented by the Lesotho situation whose areas of similarity in oral mentality, culture and mode of life between the Basotho people and the ancient Jewish culture are close.

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Part II presents a historical interpretation of the three selected parabolic paradigms. These are: The parables of The Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25-37), The Lost Coin (Luke 15: 8-10) and The Unjust Judge (Luke 18: 1-8). This presentation is exposed by a selection of three scholars who typify the approach and views of their generation in the interpretation of each respective parable.

Part III focuses on critical analyses of the three parables. The structural, exegetical, hermeneutical and African feminist's analysis will be the burden of this section. The conclusion will be the culmination of the present study.

## PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis was originally a term paper entitled "Parabolic Interpretation: The Difference between Luke's Parables, and the Rabbinic and Non-Rabbinic Parables" for the course of "Parables and their Interpretation" led by Dr. L.W. Mazamisa. At the suggestion of Dr. Mazamisa, the Department of Religious Studies agreed that the paper could be converted into an M.A. thesis. I became interested in contextualizing the three selected Lukan parables, namely, the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25-37), the Lost Coin (Luke 15: 8-10) and the Unjust Judge and the Widow (Luke 18: 1-8). The aim is to explore them from an African feminist perspective.

I wish to extend my cordial thanks to my supervisor for publicly affirming me as a student, from which time new horizons opened and my outlook on life changed dramatically.

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## Introduction

This is a study of biblical interpretation. Biblical interpretation has been characterized in both early and modern Western scholarship by an emphasis on text as the only mode of communication. It has also been done almost exclusively by white, male scholars. In this mode of hermeneutics maleness represents the normative human behaviour.

Feminism reminds us that a complete biblical interpretation must, of necessity, include the feminist's perspective and experience. The present study draws on First World feminist perspectives, while maintaining solidarity with the perspectives of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians. (Oduyoye-Kanyoro 1990). Both feminist theologies and the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians are identified in Part I of this study.

The study is divided into three sections. Part I introduces the methodology used to approach and challenge Western scholarship in historical parabolic interpretation. Part II presents a historical interpretation of the three parables Lk10: 25-37; 15: 8-10; 18: 1-8. Part III introduces the critical exegetical, hermeneutical and feminist's interpretation of the three parabolic paradigms.

Chapter one presents the problem of the present study. Feminist theologies have emerged as an alternative approach to

the traditional model. Feminist theologians argue that maleness can no longer represent the normative human behaviour. Therefore, in Chapter Two feminist methodologies from First World women theologians (represented by Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Dorothee Soelle and Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel) are discussed. For these theologians, the Bible has both some liberating and oppressing elements in its depiction of women. Oppressive biblical elements are characterized by androcentricism, patriarchy, sexism and and misrepresentation of some stories about women. Liberating biblical elements include those based on Gen 1: 27, which show that human beings are created by God, in God's image, and both males and females were meant to be living on equal basis. If the oppressive elements were to be eliminated, God's reign would come and a new community of men and women would be created. The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians has emerged as an attempt by some African women at a continental level to seek a methodology for studying African culture and religion from an African women's perspective. In this continent the political factors of colonialism, economy, sexism, and racism have contribution in discriminating against women.

Chapter Three exposes the androcentric character of the three parables on Luke: the Good Samaritan (10: 25-37); the Lost Coin (15: 8-10) and the Unjust Judge and the Widow (18: 1-8). All three are chosen as paradigms of biblical and Lukan

androcentricism. This is done by addressing the scholarship of a selection of three scholars so as to represent the views of their generation in the interpretation of each respective parable. Irenaeus, Luther and Linnemann have interpreted the parable of the Good Samaritan in sexist and androcentric ways. Maleness reflects the normative conduct of humanity in their work. None of them challenge the absence of women in the parable because they take for granted the fact that women and their experiences are included in the humanity of male figures in the parable.

Tertullian, Bultmann and Tolbert constitute three scholars who have interpreted the Lost Coin from its androcentric perspective. Hunter, Linnemann and Tolbert reflect the voice of those scholars who interpret the Unjust Judge from the same androcentric and sexist perspective due to the fact that none of them has attempted to interpret the parable from the widow's point of view. Some of these scholars have undermined the role of the widow. This will be explored in the text.

Chapter Four shows that androcentric scholarship and the interpretation of the three parables as reflected in the theological analysed Chapter Three is not adequate. An attempt will be made to interpret them from women's perspective with particular emphasis on the African context of Lesotho. As a Mosotho Catholic religious woman, I am committed to Bible

traditions. I come from that country which, though now very literate, still relies on the culture of the people. It will be argued that geographical and socio-cultural elements of the First Century Palestine community have some affinities with the Lesotho rural setting of the present day.

When the three parables are seen through an African woman's perspective of suspicion implied above it will be evident that the parable of the Good Samaritan endorses the epitome of Palestinian male world view. In that world view the normative human behaviour was presented by androcentric and patriarchy expressed through a sexist language. Symbols of the divine were also androcentric. Through the symbolic interactionist approach women are determined to find some liberating aspects of the parable so as to sustain hope in a God whose fatherhood is less emphasized, giving way to a communal, spiritual God. Already represented in the Trinitarian understanding of this God, communal spirit is still very prevalent in African community life. The question of the racial issues, which affect the Samaritan and the Jew is also of importance to African women.

The parable of the Lost Coin, subject to its setting as an addendum to the more substantive Lost Sheep parable, limits its interpretation by being interwoven with that of the former. While it is possible to believe that the parable had been spoken by Jesus, the present researcher does not believe

## PART I: METHODOLOGY

### 1. The Problem

#### 1.1 The purpose of this study

Biblical hermeneutics has been dominated by male scholars from the beginnings of the Christian Church. Male dominance in the field of biblical scholarship stretches to the writing of the text of the Bible itself. It is not surprising, therefore, that female biblical scholars have adopted a critical stance towards biblical scholarship of the past two centuries. Well known female theologians have in the past twenty years entered the debate on biblical hermeneutics with new insights and scholarly contributions.

This study performs two tasks. Firstly, it examines the role of androcentric hermeneutics in the interpretation of three Lukan parables, namely, Luke 10: 25-37; 15: 8-10; 18 :1-8. Secondly, it makes a contribution to parabolic interpretation from African women's perspective with special reference to Lesotho.

#### 1.2. Statement of the problem.

The problem in biblical hermeneutics is central to the purpose of the present study. One of the problem in biblical

hermeneutics has been androcentric conservatism. Traditional male scholarship has always ignored the fact that one's social position directly influences one's perception of the world and how one interprets the Bible. The majority of male scholars, especially in traditional historical criticism, have been obsessed with the view that scholarship must be value free, otherwise the intellectual rigor of the discipline would suffer.

What is the implication of a presuppositionless interpretation? Schussler-Fiorenza ably articulates the mind-set of its position

The scientist ethos of value-free detached inquiry insists that the biblical critic needs to stand outside the common circumstances of collective life and stresses the alien character of biblical materials. What makes biblical interpretation possible is radical detachment, emotional, intellectual and political distancing (1988:10-11).

One of the major problems of androcentric interpretation is that it projects itself as normative and, therefore, superior to interpretations that emerge from feminist scholars and theologians from the so-called Third World.

The subject matter of this study entails a necessary concentration on the insights and challenges of feminist interpretations of biblical texts, and especially, the three parables of Luke 10: 25-37; 15: 8-10; 18 :1-8. Biblical scholarship needs a paradigm shift from established

androcentricism to a responsible, non-sexist, scholarly citizenship that can participate in the global discourse seeking justice and the recognition of the humanity of all, regardless of race and sex. In most cases a feminist interpretation attempts to do this.

### **1.3. Delimitations and Limitations of the Study**

The two words limitation and delimitation are often confusing. A limitation can be explained as a factor that may affect the study in preparation in an important way, but is not necessarily under the control of the researcher. However, a delimitation differs principally, in that it is a factor that is controlled by the researcher. The limitation is that it will not always be possible to respond effectively because there are few studies that have been written on this subject from an African women's perspective. Therefore, the limitations which tend to surface as variables that cannot be controlled by the present researcher, may limit or affect the outcome of the study. The study is delimited to the demonstration of the inadequacy of androcentric interpretation of the three parables of the present study.



#### 1.4 Some Trends in biblical hermeneutics

Three positive trends have emerged:

1) There is a growing awareness of the importance of feminist methodology in biblical hermeneutics. It is being gradually realized by some male biblical scholars that the contribution of women can no longer be ignored in the field of biblical scholarship. The contribution of theologians like Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Dorothee Soelle and others are cases in point.

2) Increasingly, African women are entering the field of the study of theology and biblical studies in greater numbers. Names like Mercy Oduyoye, Musimbi Kanyoro, Teresa Okure, Rosemary Edet, Bette Ekeya and others are common place in African theology and biblical scholarship.

3) Another important point that cannot be overlooked is the growing agreement among theologians of the profound influence which women will exert in future in both State and Church.

## 2. METHOD

### 2.1 The method to be used in this study.

The vital importance of methodology in the study of parables is discussed by several scholars (Jeremias, 1977, Via, 1967, Linnemann, 1966). A feminist biblical scholar who wishes to study the parables and the thought of their authors finds herself in a dilemma because biblical authors, as well as the majority of exegetes, are male. The best method is to situate the parables in the world of women's experience. However, this method would have evident limitations because it is an historical fact that the parables were written and interpreted from a male world's view. Even if the recommendations of certain female scholars are followed, the fact is that the Bible was written by men and to a great extent, interpreted by men. Some feminist scholars like Mary Daly (1984) propose the rejection of the Bible because it is a patriarchal production.

Therefore, it will be necessary to employ multiple methods so as to take into consideration the problem of the absence of the voice of women in biblical interpretation, as well as the absence of the African women's contribution in biblical and theological scholarship.

Secondly, the social scientific or sociological approach will be used. Three major theoretical perspectives are distinguishable in this approach.

a) A conflict perspective which is described by Botha who argues that

the dominant process in society is conflict, social arrangement represents the dominance of a powerful establishment or a small elite over the masses, and once the masses become aware of their plight, they will overthrow the prevailing order and establish a more just world (1991: 242).

This perspective is proposed and developed by Karl Marx and C. Wright Mills. In biblical scholarship, it is employed by such scholars as Norman Gottwald (1979, 1987) and Fernando Belo (1974).

b) A functional-structural perspective. According to Botha, in this perspective

order is dominant in society and social arrangements arise and persist because they serve society and their members well, social patterns serve to stabilize and maintain groups and their members (1991:242).

The major proponent of this perspective is Emile Durkheim. In biblical interpretation this approach is employed by Theissen and Gager.

c) A symbolic interaction perspective. Botha posits that in this view

symbols (namely a word, gesture or sign which conveys meaning) are seen as central to the understanding of social patterns and a person's sense of self; important action in society takes place around the use of symbols (1991:242).

G. H. Meads is viewed as a pioneer of this perspective, and Peter Berger as its most important exponent. Neyrey (1988) applies this approach in his study on Mark 7. In this study some aspects of the conflict model and symbolic interaction approach will be used. The reason why they are used is that they provide a feminist researcher with tools to analyze a world of scholarship that is dominated by a powerful male establishment or small male elite that dominate both women generally and the Bible-reading masses of the so-called Third World.

The symbolic interactionist perspective is important because it highlights symbols as central in the identification of a person's sense of self. Symbolic interaction perspective also has to deal with creation of symbolic worlds. Women need to understand the symbolic meaning of womanhood. The essential feature of a multiple approach is that it is inclusive of other insights which may help to edify the text. In this chapter a critical examination of American and European feminist hermeneutics will transpire. The African Women Theologians' hermeneutics will be used as a possible method to read the three parables.

### **2.1.1. American Feminist Hermeneutics**

We need to point out a few differences and similarities between various perspectives of feminist theology. While the common denominator is womanhood, geographical, cultural, racial, social and religious factors make it impossible for women to have a common world view. When the term "First World" is used it usually refers to North America and Western Europe, while "Third World" includes economically poorer countries of Latin America, Africa and Asia. Yet cultural issues separate women in Europe from those in America though they are all white and come from the so-called "First World". Women from the so-called "Third World" are alienated from each other by religion, culture, colour and social class. By identifying American from European and from African Feminist theologies, I hope some of the elements of unity and diversity will be exposed within feminist traditions. Two American feminist theologians, Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza and Rosemary Radford Ruether will be discussed in order to illustrate their perspectives on feminist theology.

#### **2.1.1.1. Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza**

I chose Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza because she is a leading feminist biblical scholar whose works are readily available. As a Catholic she has experienced the oppressive

nature of the Church, yet she remains part of that tradition. Her primary concern is feminist biblical interpretation which she expresses in her works *In Memory of Her* (1983) and *Bread not Stone* (1984).

Schussler Fiorenza's methodology is a feminist critical hermeneutics of liberation. Her approach is based on the fact that Western, androcentric, linguistic and scientific structures define and place women as inferior to men and thus, as insignificant in the making of human culture, religion and history.

In such androcentric world view women are historically and culturally marginal. As an oppressed people they do not have a written history... (1983: 28).

Therefore, a feminist critical hermeneutics must aim at moving away from androcentric text to its socio-historical context. A feminist theology of liberation should aim at claiming back its forefathers as victims and subjects who unconsciously participated in patriarchal culture. It seeks to develop a historical-biblical hermeneutics of liberation.

In the words of Fiorenza

challenges biblical theological scholarship to develop a paradigm for biblical revelation that does not understand the New Testament as an archetype but as a prototype....A prototype...is critically open to the possibility of its own transformation (1983: 33).

Therefore, Schussler Fiorenza's feminist approach is aimed at uncovering and rejecting those elements within all

biblical traditions and texts that continue violence, alienation, and patriarchal subordination done in the name of God. It is against those text that wipe out women from historical-theological consciousness.

Schussler Fiorenza in *In Memory of Her* has done her hermeneutics in the context of Christianity and its revolutionary impact on first century Palestinian society. She argues that Christianity emerged as a counter-movement against social and religious patterns. It became not only an alternative paradigm to the existing Jewish Rabbinicism but also emerged as a subversive and threatening institution to Judaism. In its original form it was a liberating movement to both men and women because Christ introduced a new vision of the reign of God which treated humans on an equal basis.

She maintains that the original equality of human beings was lost in the process of producing biblical texts. These texts reflect the maleness of the authors. Maleness became the normative image of God, Christ, the Church and society. Therefore, what constitutes the true word of God and the heart of the Christian message must be defined theologically. A search for the "canon within the canon" (Fiorenza 1983: 14) becomes an absolute necessity.

In her later work, *Bread Not Stone*, (1984) Schussler Fiorenza continues to show how feminist theology begins with

experiences of women. Fiorenza's feminist hermeneutics is that of reclaiming the liberating nature of the Bible by promoting a critical new model of reconstructing the Bible in such a way that God's words must be transformed from patriarchal texts. This would enable women in their struggle for liberation to reclaim their sufferings and struggles in and through the subversive power of the "remembered past" (1984: 31). Thus, it becomes evident that Fiorenza does not entirely throw away the Bible but wishes to transform it so that both women and men are represented as equals in a new humanity.

The Woman-Church becomes the model of both women and men in the new creation. She argues that

The hermeneutical center of feminist biblical interpretation is the Women-Church, the movement of self identified women and women identified men in biblical religion...Its goal is not simply the full humanity of women since humanity as we know it is male defined, but women's religious self affirmation, power, and liberation from all patriarchal alienation, marginalization, and oppression (Russell ed. 1985: 126)

The visibility of women must be included in a normative humanity. Through the application of hermeneutics of "suspicion, proclamation, remembrance, and of creative actualization," (Fiorenza 1984: 148) this becomes a possibility.



### 2.1.1.2. Rosemary Radford Ruether

I chose Ruether's methodology not only because she is one of the leading feminist theologians and prolific writers on this subject, but because she is the first feminist theologian I met in 1989 when she was a visiting lecturer at the University of Cape Town. I became acquainted with her methodology through personal contact with her as lecturer.

Young describes Ruether's methodology as "Feminist Eclecticism" (1990: 33) since she draws on and from various sources of historical significance. Ruether proposes a type of feminist theology that affirms particularity but rejects exclusive feminist theology. She introduces a concept of "usable tradition". She differs from Fiorenza in that while Fiorenza bases her theology on Christian biblical traditions only Ruether is open to other historical cultures. Her "usable tradition" (1983: 21) is drawn from five sources which are:

1. Scripture, both Hebrew and Christian Old and New Testaments;
2. Marginalized or "heretical" Christian traditions such as Gnosticism, Montanism, Quakerism, and Shakerism;
3. The primary theological themes of the dominant stream of classical Christian theology - Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant;
4. Non-Christian Near Eastern and Greco-Roman religion and philosophy;
5. and Critical Post-Christian world views such as liberalism, romanticism and Marxism (Ruether (1983: 21-2)).

Ruether's inclusive methodology becomes useful in the sense that it does not exclude other world views. She recognizes "usable principles" (1983: 22) that need to be corrected by the feminist critical approach which seeks to recapitulate the journey of Western consciousness. This means that what has been lost to humanity must be regained. New humanity might emerge through the affirmation of the full personhood of women. In her "usable tradition" she insists that both male and female images of the divine should be used, as well as inclusive language.

Ruether claims that women cannot afford to ignore all these historical movements and traditions for they validate women's historical presence. "We do not and cannot stand as though we had no history at all; we cannot begin anew so to speak, for we are historically situated beings influenced in the present by the past" (1983: 22).

Ruether's *Sexism and God-Talk*, identifies male's experience as being different from universal human experience. At the same time women's experience is different from male's experience. She argues that male theology has been corrupted by sexism. "The naming of males as norms of authentic humanity has caused women to be scapegoated for sin and marginalized in both original and redeemed humanity" (1983: 19). This is because, according to Ruether, the "imago dei/Christ," is distorted and contradicted for he is

defined as male humanity against or above women, as ruling class-humanity above servant classes" (1883: 13). The "Imago dei/Christ" paradigm becomes an instrument of sin rather than the disclosure of the divine and an instrument of grace. To her, "Jesus' maleness is not central to his importance. What is important in his message, is judgement on all that excludes or subordinates some people and raises others to pride of place" (Young 1990: 38).

Ruether includes ecological ethics in her feminist theology. She argues that women have been identified with the mother earth in their body and have been thus subjugated and dominated by males. Nature too, has been exploited by the structures of social domination. Dominant class, race and sex have taken advantage of nature for centuries. "There must be an ethic of eco-justice that recognizes the interconnection of social domination and domination of nature" (1983: 91).

Ruether also notes that women's experience needs to be taken into account because it has been excluded from the dominant phenomenon of patriarchy. She argues that

menstruation, birthing, suckling, and the like have been hitherto interpreted through patriarchal eyes. Therefore even these bodily experiences have to be reinterpreted and used in ways that women can recognize as their own. Women need to claim their right to write their own text and create their stories that speak to them. (Ruether 1985: 283 cited in Young 1990: 36); see Schussler Fiorenza 1984: 1-22).

For Ruether, the true Church is the community of the liberated from oppression, a community where the spirit rules and where patriarchy is no more. Ruether's feminist theology is wider in its sources and addresses patriarchy from various cultural experiences of women and also with ecological ethics. However, Ruether's "usable tradition" is too embracing to focus on the issues in depth. Nevertheless, she agrees that "there is no final or definite theology..." (1983: 20 ). Her major concern is to appropriate the past to its limits, but to point to new futures" (1983: 33). Thus the issues raised by both Fiorenza and Ruether include patriarchy, sexism and ecology as seen through their American and Catholic eyes .

### **2.1.2 European Feminist Hermeneutics**

The works of Catharina Halkes (1980;1984) in the Netherlands; Ursula King (1987; 1989); in England; is Christine Schaberg (1987) and Iris Muller (1985) in Germany give living testimony that feminist theology in Europe made its mark "into universal theology". The works of Dorothee Soelle (1984; 1990) and of Elizabeth Moltmann- Wendel (1986) will serve in this thesis as illustrations of Western-European feminist theology. Just as both Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza and Rosemary Radford Ruether represent the North American feminist theology in this study and yet are from

the same country, Dorothee Soelle and Elizabeth Moltmann-Wendel are both Germans. This will serve to highlight the particularity of their context which shapes their identity and the type of feminist theology within West-European feminist theology. I have chosen Dorothee Soelle and Elizabeth Moltmann-Wendel to represent West European feminism for reasons which will be given as each is discussed in detail.

#### **2.1.2.1. Dorothee Soelle**

Soelle is chosen because she wants to remain in the biblical tradition for she believes in the liberating elements of the Bible and in the transformation of the oppressive elements of that tradition. Soelle identifies herself as a German Christian feminist theologian. She is proud of her national identity as a German which has its dark and bright history. Her own story gives testimony to the fact that her doing of feminist theology was a result of suffering and pain.

Soelle's feminist hermeneutical approach emphasizes the hermeneutical privilege of the oppressed as the guiding principle of all theologies of liberation. She accepts the authority of the Bible in principle except for the fact that it has been written by male authors in a sexist androcentric language - its presentation and symbols of God reflecting their hegemony. God is reflected as a powerful father

promoting oppression of the poor, subjugating women into patriarchy and to male domination in the church and society. She could not comprehend how people could talk about Almighty God after something like Auschwitz had happened. How could such "a powerful God look at Auschwitz, tolerate it, participate in it, observe it?" (1984: 98). The only conclusion she arrives at is that such a God is certainly powerful but without love.

In her book, *Thinking about God* Soelle explains her understanding of the liberating aspects of the Bible which she argues cannot be entirely dismissed. What she accepts from the Bible is "Christ Jesus, the one Word of God" as the centre of liberation theology. Jesus impressed his followers because he identified himself with the poor. He was not just known as the poor man of Nazareth but one who shared with the hungry, made the blind see, and lived and died for justice. This is what made him represent God's presence in a meaningful way to the world. Faith and hope are principles of liberation theology in that

...the poor are the teachers and so we learn most today from the poor and through the poor.... In any situation, God is with the poor and for the poor, with and for the tormented and oppressed in the most varied circumstances. Their fights for liberation and their attempts to rebuild a new and more just society have become *loci theologici*, theological contexts, from which the Word of God is interpreted and the presence of God is experienced (1990: 19).

Soelle further demonstrates that in any context of the poor, women are included, since male authors have excluded women's voices in the Bible and in their centuries-long biblical interpretation. Through opening church seminaries and universities to women in the last two decades, feminist theology has raised new questions which involve "new subjects, new objects and new methods" (1990: 68) of doing theology. She uses the magnificat (Lk 1: 50-53) as the best illustration of applying this new method of asking new questions such as: Who is speaking in the Magnificat? What does she say? To whom? Who needs to hear the message of Mary's song, or rather who profits from it? In fact she states that "... given the Magnificat, women can ask what right a middle class person has to define theology" (1990: 68). Thus Mary's Magnificat is rediscovered by women doing theology as one of the finest feminist texts in the Bible. They identify Mary speaking as a young woman who is pregnant, unmarried, poor, and a second class person praising God with a voice liberating tradition.

Many books have been written about Mary's song by male authors who have glorified the idea that the joy Mary expresses in the Magnificat is centred around Jesus only. But looking at it through feminists eyes we see that Mary has touched upon some of the burning issues of the contemporary world of single mothers - where abortion and suicide seem to be the answer for them when they are, for

example, rejected by claims of culture or ecclesial prejudice. Thus, while traditional theology exalts "the self glorification of males" 'Herrlichkeit', (glory) contains the word, 'Herr' which means Lord, so that there is a word play in German which cannot be repeated in English)... "feminist theology grows out of an understanding of the God who is with the lowly, the disinherited and the offended and who speaks through them" (1990: 69-70). Soelle's approach to feminism, in which she clearly identifies with the poor, with justice and the liberating aspects of the Bible, distinguishes her from other feminist theologians of the West.

The second point which makes Dorothee Soelle's special femi-textual methodology is her ability to combine mysticism and feminism. While feminism celebrates the historically invisible and silent experience of women in the Bible, its symbols and its interpretation, women's, struggle for liberation from this exclusion becomes the tool by which women want their voices to be heard. Women doing theology, therefore, make their experiences their point of departure because that is how they and other women in the past have experienced the God of the Bible. They understand that doing theology is first and foremost, an expression of an intimate personal experience of God, even before it could be an expression of authoritative statement about God. They demonstrate how they can live that experience when the Bible



is transformed through inclusion of their voice and experience in the traditional theology. Soelle bases her methodology on this concept of personal women's experience to show that mysticism and women's experience are not far removed from each other and that they are complementary. She defines mysticism as a

...*cognitio Dei experimentalis*, a perception of God through experience ... an awareness of God gained not through books, not through the authority of religious teachings, not through the so-called priestly office. The life experiences that are articulated and reflected upon in religious language, independent of the church's institutions (1984: 86).

This ties in with feminist liberation theology because as Soelle and other Christian feminist mystical theologians maintain, mystical theology can be "a greatest support on their long road to liberation and emancipation" (1984: 90). She summarizes how feminism and mysticism can be interrelated as "soul mates" in only five sentences. She argues that

1. Theology originates in pain.
2. Faith is liberation from colonialism.
3. Feminist theology is a theology of liberation.
4. The image of God is subject to change.
5. Mysticism means learning to yield up self completely (Soelle 1984:90).

It is crucial to emphasize that in any critical stance against the present biblical image of a powerful, patriarchal God, the sexist language of the Bible is central. Soelle

points at the inevitable pain of imprisoning God's image within the male world. The fact is that *the imago Dei* of the male world is fixed because it is regarded as normative by male exegetes. Due to this fact the concept of equal discipleship in the church will never be reached for it is impossible for women to change their sex. Soelle's suggestion is that theology should move from family and from hierarchical images of the Divine to those of natural phenomena, like light and water, which imply unity and solidarity with the Divine. These images would make more sense than those of the master/servant relationship of the patriarchal model. In the so-called 'Third World' situation, where colonialism has made its stronghold, the master/servant relationship is at its worst.

#### 2.1.2.2. Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel

I have chosen Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel because she transcends other feminists mentioned in this study in her attempts to actualize feminist theology in family life. In this section we shall focus on *Humanity in God* (1983) and *God: His and Hers* (1991) because of their relevance to this study. In both books Moltmann-Wendel expresses her ideas about God, herself, and other women, in a dialogue with her husband, the theologian, Jurgen Moltmann. Together they demonstrate that

Christianity transcends all patriarchal and matriarchal categories...Both have visions, are one in Christ and are not fixed in certain sexual roles. Christianity provides identity and ... challenges an ever changing world to provide more justice and freedom for all (1983: 50).

The fact that Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel and Jurgen Moltmann have portrayed their hermeneutics together in their theological reflections shows that feminist liberation theology is a reality which can no longer be ignored. This is reflected in her understanding of God as the Father and Jurgen Moltmann's portrays God as the Mother. The fact that they can call chapter three "Our Image of God" (1991: 25-38) shows that their commitment to building a new community is real. They also demonstrate that through their personal experiences of God theology and Christian living are possible.

The second aspect of Moltmann-Wendel's feminist hermeneutics is that of recognizing the Bible as written by male authors in a sexist language for their own interests. Women in the Bible are either made invisible within the androcentric patriarchal context, or are misinterpretedly presented in a confusing manner, and their heroism underplayed and undermined. According to Moltmann-Wendel the Bible should not be thrown away or rejected entirely. Her hermeneutics in *Humanity in God* and in *God-His & Hers* is similar to the hermeneutics of suspicion and remembrance as portrayed by Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza.

In *Humanity in God*, Moltmann-Wendel reconstructs several stories found in the Bible about women. Mary Magdalene's story serves as an illustration of how women's stories in the Bible are misinterpreted and distorted. She argues, for example that Mary Magdalene's leadership and authority are not clearly reflected in the Gospels. The evidence of this is "when any of the four gospel writers refers to the groups of women around Jesus, Mary Magdalene's name is always listed first..." (1983: 5). At every important event of Jesus' life, such as his passion, death, burial, and at the tomb on the Easter morning, she was present. This, according to Moltmann-Wendel, indicates Mary Magdalene's special relation to Jesus. Luke identifies Mary Magdalene as a lady who had suffered from a severe mental illness and as one of those women healed by Jesus (Lk 8: 2). According to extra-biblical traditions Mary Magdalene acted as an apostle who competed for leadership with Peter. Moltmann-Wendel quotes Edgar Hennecke who maintains that "in the 'Pistis Sophia' (Peter) complains to Jesus: ' My Lord, we can no longer stand this woman. She takes away from us every opportunity to speak" (1983: 6).

According to Moltmann-Wendel the apocryphal writings present Mary Magdalene as overriding men. Furthermore, in the Middle Ages paintings in France and Germany depicted Mary Magdalene as a preacher and bishop. In the Lubeck

painting she is depicted as consecrating her brother Lazarus as the Bishop of Marseilles (1983: 7) At one time she was even known as 'apostle of all apostles'. Yet the Bible reflects her as the exemplary "great sinner." Moltmann-Wendel is able to find an answer to this riddle by pointing to cultural factors at the time which associated sexual symbolism with illness in a woman. She explains that (1983: 10-1)

Demonic possession in a woman could be interpreted as nothing else than unbridled passion-lust, carnality, licentious sexuality. Mary Magdalene's illness (Lk 8: 2) was identified as a form of sexual obsession. She was merged with the woman sinner (Lk 7: 37) and with the anointing Mary of Bethany (Jn 12: 3).

Basing itself on the story of the fall (Gen 3), where the woman is blamed for human predicament, "Western-European theology erroneously and unambiguously places sin in the human body, especially in the body of woman" (1983: 12). It is not surprising that within that tradition of western culture which was also welded to centuries-long patriarchy, women were associated with sinfulness and in turn developed low self-esteem. Moltmann-Wendel has done the same research with the story of Martha and has reconstructed her true worth differently from the way she is represented in the Gospels' stories and is similar to other women's stories found in extra biblical traditions.

## **2.4 The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians' Hermeneutics.**

The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (hereafter the Circle) was established in 1989. It will be discussed in greater detail because it is new and unfamiliar to most biblical scholars. This will be done under the following headings: historical background and objectives; methodology and critical analysis.

### **2.4.1 Historical background and objectives**

Under the leadership of Mercy Amba Oduyoye who is the first African woman to obtain an Honours degree in theology from one of the African universities, a group of African women from all over the continent have established the Institute of African Women in Religion and Culture for a sabbatical period (1989-1996). During this time African women theologians have pledged themselves to concentrating "...their efforts on producing literature from the base of religion and culture to enrich the critical study and empower the practice of religion in Africa" (Oduyoye and Kanyoro, 1990: 1). The idea of embarking on theology together as African women who are ready to go out and search for one another in order to break their invisibility and centuries-long silence manifests the African's saying that "Motho ke motho ka batho ba bang" "a person is a person

through other persons" They wish to write up their own individual theological journeys, collect other women stories and record changes that are happening in African culture relating them to God, to new society in Christ and to themselves and one another.

In African culture a name does not only denote identification of a person or group of persons per se, but also signals what a person's mission in life is. African women doing theology have chosen the name of "The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians" to mark their commitment and motto which is rooted in the biblical tradition of "Daughter, arise" (Lk 8:40-56). They have applied it to themselves as "Daughters of Africa Arise." The reason for this choice is that the metaphor of the Circle expresses the ever expanding notion of commitment to doing theology together of being "... concerned for each other and concerned with religion and for all who will work with us towards the effectiveness of African women on this continent and in the global sisterhood" (Oduyoye and Kanyoro 1990: 48). Oduyoye expresses it thus

By the name [the Circle] we present ourselves as an ever expanding group of women concerned with doing theology. Our logo has a kneeling woman with her hands raised in prayer and in the process of responding to call to arise! (1990:18).

The Circle is a result of African women's awareness of the fact that since the arrival of Christianity in Africa,

theology was never done from their perspective. However, since the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) met in Ibadan in 1980 it was made possible for many of African women who have been invisible, nameless and "voiceless to have a voice"

What liberation theologies of the Third World say to Western theology is that other voices must be heard because experiences vary. African women wish the same message on African male theologians. However, African women realize that they may have hope that some of the male theologians have received their message in good faith. Idowu, for example, welcomes the appearance of the Concerned African Women Theologians on the theological scenario as it provides the "second wing" to male theology.

#### **2.4.2 Methodology and Critical analysis of the Circle**

One of the purposes of the convocation of the Circle in 1989 was to call for papers on the methodology of studying religion and culture in Africa and papers to identify African's issues. According to Oduyoye, the Circle describes its methodology as being inter-disciplinary in the sense that specific issues facing African women are connected with African traditional religion which is the base for African culture. For example, myths, laws relating to inheritance, polygamy, and widowhood all militate against women in



African culture. Islam and Christianity discriminate against women. Political factors like colonialization, economy, sexism and racism have also contributed in the discrimination against women.

From a biblical point of view, Kanyoro has summarised the hermeneutics of the Circle in the following way

... for women to find justice and peace through the text of the Bible, they have to try to recover the women participants as well as their possible participation in the light of the text. Secondly, women will need to read the Scriptures side by side with the study of cultures and learn to recognise the boundaries between the two. Such recognition will help women to interpret biblical passages within the proper hermeneutical understanding of ourselves and our contexts as Christian African women. Women will sincerely claim biblical liberation without being apologetic to the culture set-up in which the message of the biblical passage has to find its biblical audience today (Oduyoye and Kanyoro, 1990: 52-3).

As a contribution to the Circle, the present researcher ventures to suggest the methodology described by Botha (1991: 240-1) and is proposed in the study of the three Lukan parables as mentioned in the introduction. This is the social scientific or sociological approach especially (a) a conflict and (c) a symbolic interaction perspective. These two perspectives are chosen because they seem to be the most appropriate paradigms for the Circle.

This is appropriate because the African Women Theologians identify themselves as using the term

'Concerned' which implies that they are conscious of conflict dominating their social structures and do not wish to see the status quo continuing. They are tired of the hitherto prevailing (b) functional-structural perspective which has for centuries kept women silent in order that they be in harmony with the hierarchical and patriarchal model of African societies. These societies have given ownership to males.

The awareness of the conflict within social structures has made women both constructive and creative in their contribution wishing to assert their self-consciousness against the oppressive symbols of the status quo. Hence, the symbolic interaction perspective is also preferred in order to appropriate some symbols which have been used against women for their own empowerment and interest. Motherhood, for instance, is the one symbol used against women to enslave them to males. However, the Circle wants to appropriate that symbolism to represent the spirit of African survival. This methodology seems to offer a viable and creative paradigm which will allow women to be inclusive of even of their oppressive male counterparts.

A critical analysis of the Circle is difficult at this stage because the methodology is still in the making. It would be premature to engage in raising critical issues while the Circle is in its second stage of launching and

identifying national issues. However, there exists the need to define what the Circle means by the term "African Women Theologians". If it refers to black women only, what about those born in Africa and are not black? The South African context, where women represent different racial groupings and regard themselves legitimately as South Africans illustrates my point. If by African Women Theologians is meant black only, is the Circle inclusive of the South African context which is so multi-racial?

Since theology has always been done by males only, the Circle's concern, though started few years ago, is to provide a "second wing". Thus, from the outset its strength rests in its inclusive character of the Africans' love for community spirit. Women from all levels of education, pastors of churches, executives in church organizations, heads of women's convents are to be found in the Circle.

African men too, are invited to shape a new and relevant theology for Africa with women theologians within the African context. For instance Idowu is recorded as having expressed the wish that African women should also do theology when he inspired these women theologians with the new concept of "two winged theology". "In our theological reflection in the church today, we are like a bird trying to fly with one wing... if the church in Africa is to become an

African church, then it needs both wings in full strength" (Oduyoye and Kanyoro, 1990: 38).

What African women theologians are doing in their theology is to join other liberation theologians in claiming their "Africanness" from the Euro-centric theology, language and sexist symbolism of God. They want to articulate their own experience and understanding of God as African women. For those who are writing from a Christian point of view, they recognize Christ as their liberator. They recognize themselves as part of the so-called "Third World" who still believe in religion and culture as key factors in the liberation of women, no matter how much that culture bedevils them.

For operative and administrative purposes, the Circle has been divided into national and regional groupings. For instance, Southern Africa, that is, South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland and Namibia, forms one regional group operating under the Research and Documentation Centre in Harare. An attempt is being made to dialogue with women theologians from other continents.

This brings us to the relation of the Circle with other feminist theologians throughout the world. African Women Theologians are telling the world that they do not see themselves as a "separatist" organization or a "new

association" different from the rest of feminist theology in other parts of the world. No, that would be defeating their purpose of "searching for kindred spirits." The Circle is part of a global sisterhood of women doing theology but it relies on the contextual situation and experience of African women whose life-style, self-perception and world view are shaped by their Africanness, culture, political background, economic status, religion, class and racism.

The majority of the Concerned African Women Theologians do not want to be known as feminist theologians because that term is associated with "sisters" in the Northern Hemisphere. On one hand, the term "Womanist" theologians refers to African American theologians who also want to be identified as different from their white "sisters" who have not experienced marginalization in terms of racial discrimination. The Circle, on the other hand, identify themselves as "Concerned African Women Theologians" from the context of the African situation which has its own unique problems.

## 2.5 Summary

This chapter has attempted to discuss Christian feminist theology as it proposes to offer a challenge and introduces an alternative paradigm to the already existing western male dominated theology and biblical interpretation.

Feminist theology has emerged as a reminder that a complete biblical interpretation must of necessity, include the feminist perspective and experiences. The present study draws on the First World feminist perspectives while maintaining solidarity with the perspectives of the Circle.

Context seems to be the determining factor in distinguishing the nature, content and type of Christian feminist theology we are discussing. Thus, at the very end, the bottom line is that whether it be North Americans, Western Europeans or the Circle's perspectives, all have a common purpose of liberating women from oppression. These theologies are determined to make their own contribution in the creation of new symbols of God, in the use of inclusive language and in building global sisterhood in the community of men and women.

Schussler Fiorenza's methodology outlines that biblical traditions are indispensable because they document women's history. However, she is critical of the androcentric language, the form and content of these traditions for parts of them are liberating while others have subversive elements. Therefore, she does not accept all of them. She advocates a feminist, critical hermeneutics of liberation engendered by the Woman-Church.

Ruether's feminist hermeneutics advocates a selection of usable principles from various sources. She searches for elements viable for women's liberation from sexism, patriarchy and male domination.

Soelle combines mysticism, feminism and liberation theology. She does this to demonstrate that women can attain their freedom from patriarchy, sexism, and economic oppression if the Bible is transformed from oppressive elements.

Moltmann-Wendel envisages a new community of men and women in order that Christianity transcends sexist, patriarchal and matriarchal categories and should aim at new vision of equal discipleship in Christ.

The Concerned African Women Theologians make their study of religion and African Culture their main concern. They seek to articulate their own experiences and understanding of God as African women who want to make their contribution to theology.

**PART II: HISTORY OF INTERPRETATION OF THE THREE PARABLES Lk  
10: 25-37; 15: 8-10; 18: 1-8.**

**3. Androcentric Interpretation of Lk 10: 25-37.**

**3.0. Introduction**

This section presents historical interpretations of the three parables. It also raises questions as to how far it could be said that these parables are androcentric in their presentation. At the same time we want to discover how far it can be maintained that Western scholarship should be regarded as normative.

In the process of studying the parables, it would appear that scholars throughout Christendom have not been aware of the significance of the issue of ontology and interpretation as a language problem whose mechanical processes have to be observed before attention can be paid to any other issues connected with the nature of parables. This is because the parables have the capacity of imparting to their hearers something believed to be of Jesus' vision and of the power of God at work in the experience of the men confronted by the reality of his proclamation. Hermeneutics becomes the central issue in the interpretation of the parables." For the understanding of the parables the dynamic interaction between text and interpreter is necessary



(Kissinger 1979: 172). This is a philosophical issue which later scholars, like Gadamer (1977) and Thiselton (1980), have come to realize and point out. They raise the point of "bridging the gap between two horizons (two world views) before their fusion can take place" (1980: 13). In the case of the interpretation of parable, there exists the horizon of the world of the First Century Palestinians who saw their own culture reflected in the parables. They could, therefore, understand the author's intent in telling that short narrative. The other horizon is that of the contemporary reader of the same parable who is foreign to the parabolic nature of the first century Christian setting and cultural background.

Parables have undergone a whole spectrum of interpretations throughout Christendom. Jesus comes from a rural setting in Palestine but the parables were recorded in an urban, Gentile environment. In general it has been interpreted as proclaiming general religious or ethical injunctions or as proclaiming the reign of God. The parable has challenged scholars ceaselessly to search for new paradigms of interpretation. Three scholars Irenaeus, Luther and Linnemann are selected to represent the historical parabolic interpretation of their time and period in the Christian Church. The sexist language they have used will be maintained to prove the point.

### 3.1. Irenaeus

Irenaeus, as the first of the outstanding post-New Testament theologians, emphasizes in *Adversus Haereses*, (Bk II, xxvii) that the Bible can easily be understood by anyone endowed with a sound mind and devoted to piety and the love of truth. In a section devoted to the Holy Spirit and Jesus, Irenaeus refers to the parable of the Good Samaritan. He observes that while man has an accuser, he also has an advocate. The Lord has commended man to the Holy Spirit. Man had "fallen among thieves", but God has compassion upon him and "bound up his wounds, giving two royal denaria; so that we, receiving by the Spirit the image and superscription of the Father and the Son, might cause the denarium entrusted to us to be fruitful, counting out the increase to the Lord" (Bk III, xvii:3). Thus, the parable is allegorised in spite of the fact that Irenaeus insisted that the parables are clear and that their message is evident to any rational person.

Irenaeus demonstrates the androcentric interpretation and allegorisation of the Good Samaritan by his employment of the term 'man'. The way he uses it in this parable does not just refer to one individual person who is anonymously mentioned in the parable as having fallen among the robbers. It is employed rather to represent all humanity. This 'man's' falling among thieves is explained in terms of human

predicament. This type of interpretation is androcentric since men in this parable are regarded as normative.

### 3.2. Martin Luther

Luther, employs allegorization in his sermons. Ebeling gives an example of Luther's sermon on Luke 10:23-37 which bears characteristics of allegorical preaching: Adam falls into the hands of robbers (the Fall and its consequences). The priest and the Levite (different stages of the history of salvation in the Old Testament) do not help. The Samaritan (Christ) fulfills the double law of love and cares for the half-dead with oil (grace) and wine (cross and suffering), sets him on his own beast (Christ as a beast of sacrifice), and brings him to the inn (the Church).

Luther also employs the androcentric allegorisation in the sense that the maleness of Adam, the priest, and the Samaritan is emphasised. No where does Luther show that women are represented in a specific manner.

### 3.3. Eta Linnemann

Linnemann approaches this parable from three perspectives. The first is the historical background of the question of the scribe "who is my neighbour", secondly, from Jesus' point of view, namely, his answer and what it means.

Lastly, she examines it from an historical-textual perspective.

In the first part of her exposition of this parable, Linnemann draws the reader's attention to the way the scribe addresses Jesus. The scribe calls Jesus "Rabbi" (teacher), thereby meaning that he recognizes him as one who could be of equal status to him. However, following the invisible principle of exclusion and inclusion that draws a line between who should be "included" in the Rabbi's circle and who is to be "excluded" from it, the scribe directs the question to determine where to locate Jesus as a newcomer. Therefore, the question is meant to test the new Rabbi's intellectual knowledge.

According to Linnemann, Jesus tells the parable of the Good Samaritan as an illustration of the correct attitude of the Samaritan, in contrast to that of the cult officials towards the wounded man. As the officials belong to the upper classes and particularly are in the public eye, it does not surprise the hearers that the story presents them as unmerciful, because the priesthood had a bad reputation at the time of Jesus.

Despite the fact that Linnemann is a woman, her reading of the parable of the Good Samaritan does not reflect that she is aware of the androcentric nature of the text. She

preoccupies herself with the assessment of one man by another. We saw how the lawyer assessed Jesus in trying to locate him within the Rabbinic circle which is exclusively males' domain. She does not address the androcentric nature of that very assessment, for at the end of the day, as a woman, she is not aware that that assessment was meant for the profit of males only. Women were excluded from becoming lawyers and rabbis in the Jewish male centered world. She does not address the centrality of maleness in this parable where all characters are males who are regarded as depicting the normative behavior of humanity. Humans are bad if they act towards one another like males such as the robbers, the priest and the levite towards the wounded man. Humans are good when they act like males (such as the Samaritan towards the wounded man). The correct conduct of the Samaritan exemplifies the correct conduct of another good man Jesus. Thus, Linnemann distinguishes herself as a true disciple of male biblical scholars: Julicher, Fuchs and Erbeling since her interpretation of this parable is no different from that of Irenaeus and Luther in its androcentric character.

### **3.2. The androcentric interpretation of Lk 15:8-10**

#### **3.2.0. Introduction**

Luke has juxtaposed the parable of the Lost Sheep (Lk 15:1-7) and that of the Lost Coin (Lk 15:8-10), to be followed by

the parable of the Lost Son (Luke 15:11-32). By grouping these three parables together, Luke has established the original "Sitz in Leben" of these three parables in this chapter. We are made to understand that they are told in answer to the negative response by the Pharisees and the scribes who murmured when they saw the tax-collectors and sinners coming closer to Jesus in order to listen to him.

### 3.2.1 Tertullian

Although this parable did not receive the same publicity and celebration as the parable of the Good Samaritan, it has, however, attracted some recognition throughout the history of parabolic interpretation. Among the patristic scholars, Tertullian, for example, adopts a somewhat freer understanding of the parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin. Tertullian argues in (*Against Marcion* Bk IV xxxii) that to rejoice over the sinner's repentance, that is, "the recovery of a lost person, is the attribute of God, whose wish it is that the sinner should repent rather than die."

Tertullian does not isolate the parable of the Lost Coin from that of the Lost Sheep. At first glance we might view his interpretation as being inclusive linguistically because for the sinner he uses the term the 'lost person'. However, Tertullian does not address the brevity, and the way it is introduced and the location of the parable in

chapter fifteen. The androcentric character of the parable of the Lost Coin lies in the fact that it is very short compared to the other parables in the same chapter. It is also introduced as accompaniment to the preceding parable of the Lost Sheep. This structural element makes it impossible to discuss the parable of the Lost Coin in its own right. The implication of subjecting the Lost Coin to the Lost Sheep unconsciously reveals the androcentric mind-set and patriarchal social structure of the male-dominated world view of the First Century Palestinian community of Luke. In this community, males dominated women and women always took the inferior and second position.

### 3.2.2. Rudolf Bultmann

Bultmann devotes a section to the characteristics and development of the parabolic material. In his work, *Die Geschichte der Synoptische Tradition* (1921) The parable of the Lost Coin is employed in order to distinguish the "Gleichnisse" (similitudes) from "Bildworte" (word-pictures) and figures. The Lost Coin and the Lost Sheep are instances of a similitude that are put alongside another to stress a point in both parables. It provides a parallel structure in which the same idea is clothed in new material. Bultmann regards Luke's style of doubling as "a very old and widespread instrument of the storyteller's art" (1921: 166). Bultmann also raises a plausible point when he argues that

it is possible that Jewish material has been introduced into the synoptic tradition. Therefore, one must ask whether some of the synoptic parables have not been taken by the Church from the Jewish tradition and put into Jesus' mouth. The Lost Coin, for instance, is one example of those viewed as analogous formulations to that of the Lost Sheep

Bultmann unconsciously supports the arguments being made by the present researcher: namely, that locating the parable of the Lost Coin emphasizes the androcentricism of the parable of the Lost Sheep. He admits that Luke 15 is par-excellence androcentric because the Lost Coin is an emphasis of the Lost Sheep the idea of which is highlighted in the parable of the Lost Son in the same chapter. He strengthens the point made by this researcher about Tertullian's interpretation. The locating of the Lost Coin after the Lost Sheep to be followed by a longer parable of a Lost Son, demonstrates the argument raised by feminist theologians. They argue that the Bible minimises or undermines women stories in the way they are presented. The Lost Coin is one example where woman's activity is outnumbered by the activity of two males, one, in the Lost Sheep and the other the father in the Lost Son. Preachers on Luke 15 therefore, often emphasize the Lost Sheep and the Lost Son and overlook the Lost Coin. Males still occupy central position in this chapter and the woman is referred to as an afterthought - emphasising the argument started in



the Lost Sheep and reaching its culminating point in the Lost Son.

### 3.2.3. Mary Ann Tolbert

Mary Anne Tolbert in *Perspectives On The Parables* (1979) finds several discrepancies in the gospels' presentations as used by various evangelists. Some of the issues of disunity relating to the parable of the Lost Coin are discussed as a demonstrative of the way she makes her point.

Tolbert points out that the difficulty involved in deciding upon a single gospel interpretation for an individual parable is that many of the parables appear in two or three synoptic gospels, often in quite different contexts. The parable of the Lost Coin (Lk 15: 8-9) is grouped with the Lost Sheep (Lk 15: 4-6; Mtt 18: 12-13 and in Thom 98: 22-2). In Luke the parable of the Lost Sheep is introduced by three verses concerning the disapproval by the Pharisees and scribes of Jesus' practice of receiving and eating with sinners (Lk 15: 1-3). It is followed by a verse in which Jesus emphasizes the rejoicing of the shepherd by comparing it with the joy in heaven over one repentant sinner (Lk 15: 7).

A second parable, the Lost Coin, follows. This parable concerns the joy of a woman who finds a coin she had lost

(Lk 15:8-9). The Lukan context clearly hinges on a comparison of the one Lost Sheep with the sinner who at last repents.

Tolbert rightly addresses the discrepancy encountered by reliance on a single gospel interpretation for a single parable which may be found in other gospels under various contexts. Nonetheless, she too, falls victim of the androcentric interpretation of Western scholarship. She does not challenge the discrepancy of the length and location of the Lost Coin amidst two parables of greater length. She does not reckon what would be the effect of the Lost Coin on the minds of the Jewish males if this parable were to stand on its own right. How would they feel about themselves? As the parable is read where it is now in (Lk 15: 8-10) the position of a woman is like a drop in male's ocean of the parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Son. Tolbert is not suspicious of the ethos governing the First Century Palestinian Christian community regarding the marginalization of women. She is not aware that, by and large, Luke has faithfully been loyal to that marginalization of women by saying so little about the woman in the Lost Coin while at the same time saying a lot more about men in the two parables of the same chapter. This is one of the many devices that males have used to marginalize women in the Bible.

However, Tolbert does change her position when she challenges the patriarchal hermeneutics in one of her later works. In "Defining the Problem: The Bible and Feminist Hermeneutics" (1983) Tolbert explores the influences of various definitions of feminism on the formulations of feminist hermeneutics. Some clarification is gained concerning what feminist reformists are doing, and what they need to do in relation to the Bible.

She uses the parable of the Lost Coin to indicate that feminist readings are discovering the lost coin (women stories and experiences) within Christianity. Although it is joyous and a cause for rejoicing to recover the one coin, the other nine coins of patriarchy still seem overwhelming. When one recovers the liberation themes of the Bible, one recovers the importance of women characters within the text, and the history of women in early Christianity and their rightful role in Church history. As Tolbert notes

Even with all that material, one finds but one coin in ten, and what can be done with the other nine, when all the recovery is done, is it enough to live with? Can feminists remain satisfied with the discovery of the occasional or exceptional in a patriarchal religion? Is it still possible to stay within the Christian tradition? (1983: 124).

We will not address the issues Tolbert raised in this study, except to point out that staying within the Christian

tradition is the only alternative if we want to transform its canonical texts.

### **3.3. Androcentric Interpretation of Lk 18:1-8**

#### **3.3.0. Introduction**

The third gospel identifies itself also as having specific salient features that are properly Lukan. One of these features is the stylistic device which I touched upon in the previous chapter. I have to emphasize this issue because it enables Luke to expose his concerns and points of special interest. While he uses his skills to expose his concern for the materially poor and those marginalized socially, the writer in Luke also employs it to bring out contrast between the social world view of the rich and the poor. The poor, the needy, and other social rejects are made heroes in his narratives. However, the rich, the urban elite, the political and religious leaders, are not confronted nor condemned for being wealthy per se, but for failing to recognize their responsibility in sharing their wealth with the poor. As to the reality of the two worlds existing side by side, the parable of the Unjust Judge and the Widow (Luke 18:1-8) serves as the example.

This parable also proves that Luke's use of parables as opposed to other synoptic writers, namely, that he does not

use them in the singular, but uses the parable most extensively as an introduction, facilitating interpretive contexts for his readers.

When taking stock of the scholarly attention that the parables of the Good Samaritan, the Lost Coin and the Unjust Judge and the Widow have received, we realize that the latter has received the least notice. In the history of parabolic interpretation it is not mentioned until the nineteenth century, when Bruce's *The Parabolic Teaching Of Christ* (1908: 1-9) lists it under the theoretic or didactic parables which relate to the nature of the Kingdom of God. His focus is on the Friend at Midnight and the Unjust Judge. "Both concern the delays of providence in fulfilling spiritual desires, or to perseverance in prayer" (Kissinger, 1979: 69). Bruce laid great emphasis on the role played by the Unjust Judge in the parable and ignored the Widow's part who is the heroine of the parable.

### 3.3.1. Archibald M. Hunter

Hunter, in his classification of this parable, is curiously sexist for, in his third grouping of this category, he is oblivious of the two-towered character of this parable. This third grouping, "The Men of the Kingdom" (Hunter 1960: 42-3) ignores the widow's participation in the parable. These parables, Hunter feels, describe the qualities necessary for

those who would enter the Kingdom. Such persons must be ready to "count the cost" and to sacrifice everything for God's cause, "They are summoned to a victorious faith and to obedient service. But of paramount importance is their willingness not only to hear Jesus' teaching, but to practice it" (1960: 42-3). Thus, the widow, the main character in this parable, whose behaviour generally typifies how a disciple should pray, is not discussed at all. Instead, her foil, the judge, is the man of the Kingdom.

Hunter depicts a sexist stance towards the parable of the Widow and the Judge because he does not only interprets the parable from a male point of view but even excludes the main character, the widow. This suggests that Hunter takes for granted the normativeness of the male world which is operative in his "Men of the Kingdom" (Hunter 1960: 42) even when a woman plays a central role in this parable.

### 3.3.2. Eta Linnemann

Eta Linnemann lists the parable of the Unjust Judge and the Widow as a characteristic parable proper with a typical beginning ( "In a certain city, there was a judge"). In her reading of the parable, Linnemann stresses the victory of the woman's persistence, for again and again she goes to the unscrupulous judge to beg him to give her justice (Lk 18:

3). "It is very important to the narrator to show that it is her persistence alone that leads to the judge's change of mind and that all other motives are excluded" (1966: 120). Mistranslating give the impression that the judge also feared acts of violence by the desperate woman. She indicates that (Lk 18: 4) should be translated as: Though I do not fear even God, and do not dread any man - because this widow is pestering me, I will give her justice, "so that she does not keep on coming whining to me".

The parable ends with the introduction of the "how much more" principle preceded by (Lk 18: 6) "Hear what the unjust judge says". The focus of the listener is moved away from the substance of the parable's meaning and introduces a different theme. Thus, the words of the central figure in the parable become a transparent expression of what is meant to be said through the parable.

I am struck by the fact that Linnemann, as a contemporary female scholar, is so loyal to the male-dominated theology so that she fails throughout her book, *Parables of Jesus* (1967) to refer to feminist hermeneutics of doing theology. She fails to interpret any of the parables she has discussed from women's experience of feminist perspective. She so faithfully promulgates Heidegger's, Fuchs' and Jülicher's theological approaches to the parabolic interpretation that she forgets to approach

these parables from her own experience as a woman who is aware of a change of woman's position in the world since the early sixties. She is uncritical of the sexist, androcentric language of the parables in the gospels and does not question the normativeness of the males' point of view so obvious throughout the history of parabolic interpretation.

She does not interpret this parable from the widow's point of view which would take her deeper into the contemporary issue of single mothers especially widows even in her own country. She is at distant from the widow as some male scholars of her school of thought who are not yet ready to regard various liberation theologies as valid alternative theological or hermeneutical paradigms. We would expect that she might at least show that she is aware of other paradigms of doing theology such as the liberation, or feminist approaches to theology. She unconsciously participates in what feminist theologians complain of, namely, that women are historically forgotten and are ignored.

### 3.3.3. Mary Ann Tolbert

Tolbert employs the parable of the Unjust Judge and the Widow as yet another instance of the gospel parables' inconsistency. This is rooted in the fact that many of the parables are not part of a triple or double tradition for they occur in only one gospel, in only one setting. Within



this category we find the Good Samaritan, and the Unjust Judge in (Lk 10: 30-5 ; 18: 2-5). Matthew presents the parables of the Ten Maidens (25: 1-12) and the Unmerciful Servant (18: 23-34) among others. Yet even these single-context parables often provide thorny problems for the interpreter. Some of the contexts into which they have been placed seem at odds with the parable stories themselves, and the summaries attached to them are often contradictory.

In the parable of the Unjust Judge for example, the verse which introduces the parable (Luke 18: 1) states that the story is intended to encourage the disciples in constant prayer, thus implying a comparison between the disciples and the widow. Jesus' remarks after the parable, on the other hand, clearly indicate an emphasis on the relation between God and the Unjust Judge. Hence, the verses following the parable shift the reader's focus away from the suggested one in the introductory verse. The parable of Jesus explained in Luke 18:6-7 has nothing to do with the prayers of the disciples or the entreaty of the widow; rather it has to do with the inevitability of God's justice.

Tolbert, like Linnemann, fails to realise the androcentric nature of the parable of the Widow because she does not read the parable from the widow's experience of being oppressed by the corrupt system that empowers a judge. She is a woman without any protection nor inheritance from

her husband. Tolbert raises the issue of God's justice which does not guarantee that the widow will be a beneficiary of that justice. Feminist theologians are disillusioned by the term 'justice' for history has shown that the same proponents of justice do not necessarily include women's liberation from male androcentric and patriarchal oppression.

#### 3.3.4 Summary

This chapter has attempted to highlight the androcentric and sexist elements of interest reflected in traditional interpretation of the three parables. All three scholars: Irenaeus, Martin Luther and Linnemann have accepted the Lukan presentation of the parable of the Good Samaritan. Maleness in the parable represents the normative conduct of human beings. All three do not question the absence of women in the parable.

Following the reflections made on the parable of the Lost Coin, the subtleties of androcentric scholarship and interpretation are exposed. Tertullian, Bultmann and Tolbert have ignored the patriarchal and androcentric elements of (Lk 15) in which the Lost Coin is subjected to the male world of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Son. Tolbert, however, shifts her position towards parabolic interpretation, for she employs the Lost Coin and portrays the seriousness of

patriarchal and androcentric biblical tradition and the history of interpretation over and against recovered feminist traditions.

In the *Lost Coin*, Hunter brings out these elements clearly in that he not only includes the parable of the widow and Unjust Judge in his category of parables under the title "Men of the Kingdom" but also completely ignores the presence of the widow and her role in the parable. Linnemann and Tolbert on the other hand, address the problem of inconsistencies in the presentation of the parabolic texts by various evangelists. Nowhere do they attempt to discuss the parable from the point of view of the widow. The widow, as in the traditional way of interpreting this parable, symbolizes typical behaviour of a disciple who combines prayer with action.

**PART THREE: ANALYSIS OF THE THREE PARABLES: LK 10: 25-37;  
15: 8-10; 18: 1-8.**

**4. ANALYSIS OF LK 10:25-37; 15: 8-10; 18: 1-8.**

**4.0. Introduction**

The parables of the present study are typically Lukan because they are found in the so called Luke's "Sondegut," that is Luke's special section. They will be interpreted from a Lesotho African woman's world view.

**4.1. ANALYSIS OF LK 10: 25-37.**

The parable of the Good Samaritan needs no introduction. Since the beginning of the Christian era, this parable has been the subject of innumerable studies and commentaries. The following interpretation is an attempt to analyse the parable from an African woman's world view.

**4.1.1. Structure of Lk 10:25-37**

The following structure is proposed by Mazamisa (1987:128-9) and is adopted in this study.

- A.1.1      And behold,  
              a certain lawyer stood up to tempt him  
              saying,  
              "Teacher,  
              what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

- A.1.2       And he said to him,  
              "What has been written in the Tora,  
              how do you read?"
- A.II.1       And he answering, said  
              "You shall love the LORD your God  
with all your heart  
              and with all your soul,  
              and with all your might,  
              and with all your mind,  
              and your neighbour as yourself."
- A.II.2       And he said to him,  
              "You have answered correctly.  
Do this  
              and you will live."
- B.I.1        But he, wishing to justify himself  
              said to Jesus,  
              "And who is my neighbour?"
- B. II.1a     And Jesus replied  
              and said,  
A certain man was going down  
              from Jerusalem to Jericho.
- B.II.1b     And he fell into the hands of robbers  
              who stripped him down  
              and beat him up.  
And they went away leaving him half-dead.
- B.II.2a     And coincidentally a certain priest  
              was going down that some road  
And he saw him,  
              but he passed by on the opposite side.
- B.II.2b     And similarly also a Levite  
              who came by the place  
And he saw,  
              but he passed by on the opposite side.
- B.II.2c     And a certain Samaritan  
              who was journeying  
              came upon him.  
And he saw,  
              and was filled with compassion
- B.II.3a     And he went near  
              and he bandaged his wounds  
              and he poured oil and wine on them.  
And he let him ride  
              on his own beast  
and brought him to an inn  
              and took care of him.

- B.II.3b     And the next morning  
               he took out two denarii and gave the inn-keeper  
               and he said,  
               "Take care of him.  
               And whatever extra you spend  
               I will reimburse upon my return."
- B.III.1     "Who of these three  
               do you think proved to be the neighbour  
               of him who fell into the hand of the robbers?"  
               And he said,  
               "The one who did mercy/solidarity to him."
- B.III.2     And Jesus said to him,  
               Go,  
               and do likewise."

This structure is based on the colometric approach that has been developed by De Moor (1978: 119-139) in the interpretation of ancient West Semitic poetry. However, Mazamisa maintains that the parable is not poetic but narrative. Colometry can be successfully applied on narrative texts. An example of this exercise is J.P. Fokkelman's application of it to 1 Kings (1-2), which are basically narrative texts (1988: 468-517).

#### 4.1.1.     The Macro-structure of Lk 10:25-37

The macro-structure according to Mazamisa (1987:130-1) is easily identifiable, namely,

A.     Dispute between the lawyer and Jesus. This is presented in A.I.1 to A.I.2 in the form of two questions and their two answers.

1. The lawyer: What shall I do to inherit eternal life?
2. Jesus: What is written in the Law?

#### Two answers

1. The lawyer's answer is in A.II.1 and comes as a quotation of the Law. Whereas Jesus' answer stretches from B.II.1a - B.III.2 ending with an imperative statement 'Do this and you will have life.'

#### B Solidarity with the neighbour

In B.I.1 the lawyer asks: "And who is my neighbour? Jesus responds by telling a parable. He does not give a direct answer to a direct question. One suspects the motive of the lawyer and probably this is the reason for not giving him a direct answer. There is something strange that a non-lawyer should be asked to interpret the Law.

The second question is directed to the lawyer in B.II.1 "Who of these three could be a neighbour to the man who fell among robbers?" It does become clear, therefore, from this pericope that there are two sections, that is verses 25-9 and verses 30-7. However, Luke succeeds to unify them to create a cohesive whole.

#### 4.1.2. Exegesis of Lk 10: 25-37.

The episode A.I.1. to A.II.2 is found both in Matthew 22: 34-40 and in Mark 12: 28-34. In both Matthew and Mark the question " Which is the greatest or the first of all commandments?" is the same. However, in Matthew it is asked by the Pharisee while in Mark it is asked by one of the scribes. Luke puts the question in the lawyer's mouth but there is a slight difference between Mark's scribe and Luke's lawyer for the later is ego- centric: "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" In both Matthew and Mark Jesus replies directly and immediately. In Luke Jesus answers a direct question by posing another question. Yet the similarity between Mark and Luke is that the question is addressed to Jesus by a scribe or a lawyer.

Scholars like Schneider, Schmidt and Klostermann maintain that Luke edited Mark. The example is the use of 'lawyer', "scribe", "teacher" and the omission of Deut. (6:4) by both Luke and Mark. Yet another hypothesis proposes that Luke edited an episode that existed in Q since it \*demonstrates some similarities with Matthew.

The teaching of the double commandment "love God", "love your neighbour" in A.II.1. was common place in the time of Jesus as it was attested also by Jewish literature in the same period. In the Testament of the Twelve



Patriarches, for example, in the *T. Issachar* (5.2) it reads: "Love the Lord and the neighbour." The double-form is also attested in *Did.* (1: 2), in *Barn* (19: 2&5). Therefore, the main difference between Luke and Matthew on the other hand is the question about eternal life and on the other hand, that of the Law. When the lawyer asked the question: "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" in A.I.1., it was a heated question in that tradition. However, the focus of the dispute between Jesus and the lawyer has something to do with "life", "do" and the "Law" and Luke's self-understanding of the Law" (Mazamisa 1987: 132).

#### 4.1.2.1. The controversy between the Lawyer and Jesus

According to Mazamisa (1987: 132), Luke introduces the discussion with a familiar conjunction *Kai* which is predominantly pre-Lukan. While Matthew locates the anonymous Pharisee (who approached Jesus with a question) among his social groups, Luke describes the lawyer in A.I.1 as "a certain lawyer who wanted to justify himself." Thus, Luke portrays his bias towards the lawyer. What comes across strongly from the way Luke has depicted the lawyer is the latter's excessive complacency born out of his egoism: "Whereas the lawyer directs his question towards Jesus in order to tempt him and prove his authoritative position against Jesus whom the lawyer regards as a "self-imposed lawyer from nowhere, Jesus' answer in A.II.2 shows the

lawyer that he is, in fact, the real teacher of the Law. His answer refutes the lawyer's hidden agenda of the "principle of reciprocity." According to Mazamisa, this operates under the assumption that "whatever one does in this life in the form of rendering service especially to the poor and down-trodden without expecting reward now, qualifies one for a beatific afterlife. The idea of doing something for the sole purpose of getting reward, is castigated by Luke" (1987: 133).

#### 4.1.2.2. Solidarity with the neighbour

The second question B.II.1 is about the neighbour: "And who is my neighbour?" Jesus' reply (B.II.1a to B. II.2b) creates a climate in an ideal Jewish tradition of how true Israelites, a priest and a Levite behaved towards a man who fell into the hands of robbers. Luke seems to set a contrast between world view of religious leaders of the first-century Palestine with that of the unidentified man fallen among the robbers. What is the difference between the robbers and the religious leaders as far as the fallen man is concerned?

In B.II.2C to B.II.3b Jesus in Luke portrays a contrasting world view of a Samaritan to that of the ideal religious Jewish leaders who despised Samaritans because of their way of life and religious beliefs. Jesus tells the parable which reverses the order of the day for the lawyer.

The Samaritan emerges as the "doer" of the Law rather than the priest or the levite, who emerge as villains.

According to Mazamisa (1987: 142) the word "neighbour" which is rendered with plesion in the LXX and *Kai* in the Hebrew, has no suitable equivalent in modern European languages. In Greek it means "the person next to me," a "fellowman." In Hebrew it has various meanings such as "beloved," "friend," "comrade"... (Mazamisa 1989: 144-5) argues that in the old Jewish tradition, there were various religious groups so that even the term "Pharisee" was not a monolithic religious block. It is therefore, difficult to identify to which religious movement the Pharisee in Matthew, the one who asked Jesus the question, belonged.

However, in the parable of the Good Samaritan it would appear that the idea of the Essene doctrine of double predestination and their hatred against the enemy is portrayed. Therefore, on the basis of having various religious doctrines, it may be concluded that "in the debate with the lawyer, Jesus presents, and at the same time, radicalizes the standpoint of the semi-Essene group that was opposed to the mainstream doctrine".

According to the teaching of Jesus a person has to love sinners, while according to Judaism a person has to hate the wicked."So the hallmark of Jesus' teaching is positive love

whereas in Judaism love is presented through its negative, hatred" (Mazamisa 1989:145). Thus, the conduct of the ideal representatives of Israel, the priest and the levite who pass the fallen man among the robbers have conducted themselves according to the above principle of loving those who love their friends and hating their enemy. Whereas the marginalized, Samaritan who is regarded by the Jews as "unclean" shows solidarity with the man fallen in a ditch who is without name, identity, nationality or status. The Samaritan is showing solidarity with the man fallen in a ditch and identifies himself with him as a human being and exemplifies correct human conduct towards one another.

The Samaritan's conduct contradicts the social standards between the world view of the Pharisees who belong to the same group religious leaders as the scribes and lawyers and the world view of the marginalized groups. While a typical rabbi found it proper to give God thanks three times a day that God did not make him a gentile, a woman, or uneducated man, a so-called "profane" gentile, a Samaritan "becomes a comrade of God due to the fact that he draws near a needy and abandoned neighbour" (Mazamisa 1987:156).

After telling the parable of the Good Samaritan Jesus hits back at the lawyer's self-centredness in B.111.1 by directing a question to him: "who of these three do you think proved to be the neighbour of him who fell into the hand of

the robbers?" Jesus then commands the lawyer: "Go and do likewise". Luke is thus advising his audience concerning fulfilling the law by doing an act of solidarity without expecting reward. The same principle of solidarity with one's neighbour is expressed in Lk 14: 12-4.

According to Mazamisa the theme of beatific or perdition afterlife is one of the central themes in Luke's theology (1989: 144-5). Jesus proves to the lawyer that knowledge of the Torah does not mean that one is already fulfilling it.

#### **4 1.2.3. Hermeneutical Considerations on Lk. 10: 25-37**

I will now employ the social scientific approach to the parable of the Good Samaritan. The theoretical perspectives are of those of a conflict and of symbolic interaction models. My symbolic world is the world of a Mosotho woman. An amount of conflict does exist in the Lesotho context because of the diverging symbolic worlds within the same social realities. I seem to be breaking new ground by attempting to discuss her hermeneutical considerations on this parable from a Mosotho woman's perspective.

Luke locates the parable of the Good Samaritan within the dangerous village context of Northern Palestine. The country side can be compared to that of Lesotho in several

ways. Lesotho has many bare mountains and hills. The countryside can be equated to that of First Century Palestine in the element of insecurity. Evidence for this is indicated by various names of places like "Molimo Nthuse" (Help me God), where to pass alive in that perilous area was almost inconceivable, or "Ha Meritsana soee!" indicating a place where one's hair stands on end because of the sensation of danger lurking around as one passes alone in that area. "Khalong La Baroa", Bushman's Pass, is also one of those places where mysterious killings of prominent individuals by one government after another took place in recent years. The chances were that the victims were either murdered by legitimate rulers or normal robbers. A local chief is often to be blamed for many a ritual murder. The point I am trying to emphasize here is that besides the fact that parabolic language is so common in Sesotho. Basotho feel very comfortable when they hear the parable of the Good Samaritan. As soon as one hears that a man fell among thieves or robbers (Lk 10: 30-31), it is easy to imagine and understand where and how it could have taken place.

The lawyer's question (verse 29) of "who is my neighbour?" is also strikingly important within the Lesotho situation. To answer that question one needs to realize that even to a Mosotho that question is most basic in the sense that the Basotho are community-minded. The term "Mohaeso", meaning, "my neighbour", in the Sotho situation

is not as clear cut it as in the Jewish world of the lawyer who asks this question with the hope that religious and national ties are sufficient qualifications for inclusion into the inner circle of Jewish male neighbours. The Basotho's understanding of "Mohaeso" is threefold.

The first meaning of "Mohaeso" explains the nature of the nation. Lesotho is unique because of its common language and the fact that the Basotho have a deep sense of their own identity. According to Lapointe "this unique identity of the Basotho is explained by a combination of historical factors, together with its geographical situation and original structures" (1986: 4). One of these historical factors was the creation of this national unity by Moshoeshoe I. In 1830 he unified a great number of tribes into a cohesive group to which the name of nation justly applies. Hence "Mohaeso", my neighbour, can be national as any other nations which celebrates the memory of a time when individuals not belonging to the same blood, culture or language because of the danger of being annihilated by greater and more powerful nations, united and formed one nation. The tribes Moshoeshoe I united gave up their various dialects and cultures and became one.

The second understanding of "Mohaeso" is the one maintained within one of these tribes which were amalgamated. While at one time they may have lived in one

part of Lesotho, and now are scattered all over the country. They still feel they have the same blood and roots. For the sake of trying to maintain that bond, greeting on a first meeting between two people is very time consuming. The ancient Basotho had a riddle told in the form of a question leading to the ultimate answer: "U mang?", "Who are you?" Each time the same question is asked, the answer is different until the final question is asked, "Thella he!", which literally means "slip down". But the one answering understands that what is required is to recite the praise poem of her clan which is based on one's totem, so that Bataung (Lion's clan) Bakoena (royal, crocodile clan) can still recognize themselves as neighbours and as belonging together. The immediate members of the family, however, are often a mixture of more than one of these tribes. And since marital ties are also regarded as occasions for creating neighbourliness, such relationships keep on extending. One hears people saying, "we are related through intermarriage". That relationship is also taken very seriously.

The last concept of neighbourliness is that of neighbouring states which have always had friendly relations with Lesotho. This kind of relationship is clearly indicated in the Sesotho classification of nouns. As in all Bantu languages have the first group of nouns pertain to human beings. These nations are also classified under class one because they have the same moral and social aspects and



habits as Basotho people. The Basotho believe these nations, like themselves, are characteristic of normative human conduct. For example, Motswana - Batswana people from Botswana are classified under class one where we find Mosotho and Basotho. Zulus, Whites and other tribes, on the other hand, have been either unfriendly, deceptive or have different features from Basotho's like the Whites with long hair, the Boers and British who were not playing a fair game with Basotho, are found in class three and four of noun classifications. In the Basotho mentality the latter have peculiar characteristics. Thus we have, for instance, Lezulu - a Zulu, or Lekhooa, (a White man), Makhooa (Whites). If one is white but is behaving like a human being (motho), straight and kindhearted, one hears Basotho commenting about such a person: "Enoa ha se lekhooa ke motho" (This one is not a white, this person acts humanly).

In the case of the relationship between the Jews and the Samaritans it is evident that since the relations were always tense, certainly in the Lesotho context they would be classified with those people with queer characters of class three and four where Zulus, Whites and mad people "lehlanya" (one insane person) and "mahlanya" (many people with mental disorders) are dumped together, but are not in the first group.

It is not easy for a Masotho to pass a fellow human being in a helpless situation as did the Priest and the Levite. The ancient Basotho are people-orientated rather than ritualistic in an inhuman sense. Anyone passing a helpless person will be found out. Hence, that person has to do something about it, "a hlabe mokhosi" which means, figuratively speaking, "blow the trumpet, go to the chief, police or to anyone who can help and report the incident at once." If one is silent or ignores it, once it is found out by the public that the person saw a helpless human and did nothing, then that person behaved inhumanly. Therefore the person must shout so that everyone in the village will be bound to come to the scene. When such an alarm sounds, one hears people saying "let's go and see it for ourselves, "se-bonoang, se bonoa ke bohle" [what is to be seen must be seen by all]. Such an alarm can be made for happy events too, for instance, when a woman gives birth to a good looking baby girl, the baby gets the name "Se-bonoang" because all villagers came rushing to see this unusually beautiful baby.

The parable of the Good Samaritan is composed of all male characters: the man in the ditch, the Priest and the Levite who are the ideal members and pillars of the Jewish society and then the Samaritan. The latter eventually reverses the social order and the expectations of the Jewish society. Despite coming from the socially marginalized of the despised Samaritan world, the Samaritan becomes the hero

in the parable. The Jewish world expects nothing good to come out of Samaria. Luke indicates that those who by social and religious standards are supposed to be heroes by doing mercy and justice to the wounded are the villains of the parable. If Jesus stands as the male teacher, challenged by the model of the society, the scribe who holds the conversation with him, then we have before us a perfect illustration of a male-dominated world which is normative in this parable.

Although Luke is regarded justly as the one evangelist who is pro-women in the sense that he mentions a greater number of women and that he mentions them by their names, the present parable does not show evidence of that notion because the characters in the parable are all males. This male world is not to be taken as an accident nor lightly because Luke's portrayal of this patriarchal world is the norm of the Jewish world of the first century Palestine. This aspect is also illustrated in the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Lk 18: 10-14). While reflecting the social contrast between the world view of the Pharisees who belong to the same group of religious leaders as the scribe of the Good Samaritan, the parable also reflects the emphasis laid on the normativeness of the male world. Both the Pharisee and the tax collector are the two men who go to the temple at the same time (Lk 18: 10). Similarly the Talmud prayer reads:

I give thanks to Thee, O Lord my God, that Thou has set my portion with those who sit in Beth-ha-Midrash (the house of study) and Thou hast not set my portion with those who sit in (street) corners" (Scott, 1989:95).

This attitude of thanksgiving is not to be viewed as self-righteous or boasting. According to Scott, for a rabbi it was normal to give thanks and praise three times a day to God because he was able to study the Torah (1989:95). A similar prayer of thanksgiving from Tosephta reads:

R. Judah said: "One must utter three praises everyday. Praised (be the Lord) that He did not make me a heathen, for all the heathen are as nothing before Him (Is. 40:17); praised be he, that he did not make me a woman for a woman is not under obligation to fulfill the law; praised be he that he did not make me ... an uneducated man, for the uneducated man is not cautious to avoid sins" (Linnemann, 1975: 59; Scott, 1989: 75).

It is not surprising that the Pharisee in Lk 18: 10-14 bases his prayer on these rabbinic traditions and therefore thanks God that he is not like the rest of men, robbers, swindlers, adulterers or even "this tax collector". It becomes obvious that the world view depicted in these three parables is centred around males. It appears to be the same world view depicted in the parable of the Good Samaritan. The only time a woman is referred to in the prayer from the Tosephta is to indicate the misogynist tendencies harboured by the male world for "she is not under obligation to fulfill the law", implying that she is to be excluded from identifying God's image in herself.

Hence the parable of the Good Samaritan is the epitome of the patriarchal system, since what is at stake is not just the characters in the parable, but also the role of Jesus in the parables as the patriarchal Christ, who is the redeemer of the normative, male-dominated human world. As Ruether quotes Aquinas,

only the male represents the fullness of human nature whereas woman (she is made invisible in this parable) is defective physically, morally, and mentally. It follows that the incarnation of the *logos* of God into a male is not a historical accident but an ontological necessity. Just as Christ has to be incarnated in a male, so only can the male represent Christ (Ruether, 1983:126).

Ruether goes into great detail to illustrate how patriarchalization of Christology took place over the five centuries during which the Christian Church itself was transformed from a marginal sect within the messianic renewal movement of first century Judaism into the imperial religion of a Christian Roman empire (1983: 122-6). Evidently during the period of the development of the patriarchal and sexist language we find in the parable of the Good Samaritan today, women's existence and her spiritual experiences were swallowed up by historical forgetfulness and covered up by androcentric language.

While patriarchy defines women not only as "the other", but also identifies subjugated peoples and races as "the

other" to be exploited and dominated in the service of powerful men, the parable of the Good Samaritan elevates the status of one group of subjugated people, the Samaritans.

However, reading it through the eyes of African women in the context of the South African situation, the invisibility and forgottenness of women in this parable has a triple effect on me. Patriarchy defines women not only as "the other" of men but also as subordinate and subjected to be propertyed by men. Patriarchy conceives of women's and coloured people's "nature" in terms of their function for the patriarchal society, which, like the patriarchal household of antiquity, is sustained by female and slave labour.

By ignoring and leaving women invisible, the parable does not bring good news to African women who are already culturally disadvantaged, poor materially and are doubly and triply oppressed in the capitalist patriarchy of the South African regime whose arms are extended into Lesotho. "Patriarchy does not, however, just determine societal structures but also hierarchical male structures of the Catholic Church, which supports and often sustains the patriarchal structures of society that specify women's oppression, not just in terms of race and class, but also in terms of heterosexuality and motherhood" (Ruether, 1983:123). African culture concerning women is no better.

African women's critical liberation theology does not begin with statements about God and revelation but with the experiences of women struggling for liberation from patriarchal oppression. Their theology is based on their experiences. Judith Ann Diers in "Freeing Liberation Theology" (1992: 74) presents some strong statements about the Circle's theology. She states that one of the women of the Circle, Oduyoye indicates that she draws her strength from the women in the Bible who set out to the tomb on the day of resurrection knowing that they might not overcome, and yet they went, determined to make the effort with the hope that the outcome was in God's hands. With that hope Oduyoye considers the emerging Circle as a resurrection: women theologians are rising up and espousing a "liberation theology" in their own terms for theirs is radically different from that envisioned by the Latin American men. Recognising the limitations of class analysis, the women have developed a more wholistic approach to that includes a critique of culture.

We find that in their reflections, African women find they relate more to the biblical context than to Western culture. "The cultural expressions especially of the Old Testament often stir something in us" explains Josephine.

The idea of the family being together as a communal spirit - we still have that very strong. Then there is

the importance of land. Even daily life - fetching water, conversations at the well, make more sense. (Josephine as quoted by Diers 1992: 74).

Ann Nasimiyu-Wasike also quoted by Diers expresses the need that the Bible should be read critically. She says that African women need to give it a new hermeneutical suspicion. The Bible was written in a patriarchal cultural setting. So women must determine what is and what is not liberating in the Bible.

The parable of the Good Samaritan can only be redeemed, like the whole Bible, from being male-dominated and patriarchal if

feminist scholarship insists on the reconceptualization of the intellectual framework in such a way that they become truly inclusive of women as subjects of human scholarship and knowledge on the one hand, and articulate male experience and insights as a particular experience and perception of reality and truth on the other hand (Fiorenza, 1984: 33).

How difficult it is for women to sustain hope in a God the father symbolized by the Good Samaritan and in Jesus the male saviour over and against their own experience of patriarchal oppression. However Mercy Oduyoye confesses that she has no problem with calling God the father as such because depending on the circumstances one is happy to rely on a heavenly Father. However what becomes problematic for her is the fact that males want to be God themselves. (public lecture University of Cape Town, October 20, 1992).



Other women however articulate their problem with sexist symbols of God and Jesus in the following lines of a poem written by a fellow Catholic woman during a workshop on feminist theology:

My mother Mary was like the original Mary in many ways.  
 When she was just a little girl  
 she submitted to being raped by her father.  
 When she was married  
 she submitted to being beaten by her father.  
 When she had emotional problems  
 she submitted to shock treatment by her psychiatrist.  
 When she was physically ill  
 she submitted to surgery by her surgeon.  
 Now she is dead. I hope God is not a father.  
 (Joan Wyzenbeek, in *Womanspirit*  
*Bonding*, Grailville, 1982).

As Fiorenza expresses it, the pain and anguish that patriarchal liturgies and androcentric God-language inflict on women can only be understood when theologians and ministers realize the patriarchal dehumanization of women in our society and Church (1984: 36).

#### 4.2. ANALYSIS OF Lk 15:8-10

##### 4.2.0. Introduction

The parable of the Lost Coin emerges as one of the shortest ones found in Luke. Luke presents this parable as a direct continuation and elucidation of the parable of the Lost Sheep. What makes us presume this, and what makes the chapter so credible in that Jesus indeed told this parable,

is the introductory connecting word "Or". Jesus' use of parables was similar to other Rabbis of his contemporary world. Dibelius (1936), Kelber (1983) and others all locate Jesus in his historical socio-cultural and religious "Sitz im Leben" of the oral nature of Jesus' parables and of Jesus himself. They maintain that

Jesus left nothing written, that this was not exceptional in the case of prophetic persons of the Orient who are accustomed to pass on orally the traditions. Hence, the oriental teacher, prophet or narrator employs such forms as have been customary among these people from time immemorial, namely, proverbs, parabolic narratives, riddles, fairy tales, and so on. (Dibelius, 1936: 27-33).

The structure of this parable is less precise and simpler than that of the Lost Sheep.

#### 4.2.1. The structure of Lk 15:8-10.

The structure that follows is proposed by Bailey (1976) and is adopted in this study as it is one of the latest versions translated from LXX. Bailey's translation is chosen because he emphasises the cultural aspect of the parable and how it fits into Lukan village scenes. This facilitates the discussion of the parable from the African context of the Lesotho village situation. According to Bailey (1976: 156) the parable of the Lost Coin portrays the following structure:

Or what woman, having ten silver coins,

A if she loses one coin

B does not light a lamp and sweep the house  
and seek diligently until she *finds* it, and *finding*

C she calls together her friends and neighbours  
saying, '*Rejoice with me*

B' for I have *found* the coin

A which I had *lost*'

Even so, I tell you, there is *joy* before the angels of God  
over one sinner who repents

Bailey says that the major semantic relationships are as  
follows:

Introduction- a woman with ten coins

A one is *lost*

B search until she *finds*.

C *joy* in community over restoration

B because she has *found*

A what was *lost*

Application is *joy* over one sinner that repents.

#### 4.2.2. Exegesis of Lk 15:8-10.

Bailey identifies several similarities and differences  
between the structure of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin.  
While the Lost Sheep is expressed in three stanzas, the Lost  
Coin is made up of one only. However the stylistic literary  
form is common to both in the sense that the key verbs of  
*losing* in A, *finding* in B and *rejoicing* in C are found in

both parables. The reversal of A and B takes place in C which is joy experienced when what was lost is found. Application of the parable is in both the same which is joy over one sinner who repents.

The social position of women in the first century Palestine is hinted at indirectly by Bailey. He argues that "the introduction is shortened to 'which woman' because to have said 'which woman of you' to a group of oriental men could have been unpardonable insult" (1976: 157). Jeremias commenting on the same issue of the position of women in the first century Palestine seems to confirm Bailey's statement when he maintains that Eastern women did not participate in public life. "This was true of Judaism in the time of Jesus, in all cases where Jewish families faithfully observed the Law (1962: 358). The point becomes obvious that if women were to take part in public life, they could have been addressed directly as 'which woman of you?' However, 'what woman' indicates that Luke establishes a fact that women could not and were not to be addressed in public, but that men could talk about them in public. Yet on the other hand, it was rare that a woman could play a role model as happens in this parable.

While with the Lost Sheep a shepherd goes out into the field in search of one of his lost sheep, in the Lost Coin a woman's limited movement in the village is indicated in that

her area of searching for the lost coin is confined within her household. This brings out the cultural position of women as well as the economic aspect of a rural village situation where cash was very precious to the woman so that "the lost coin is of far greater value in a peasant home than the day's labour it represents monetarily" (Bailey 1976: 157).

#### 4.2.3. Hermeneutical Considerations of Lk 15: 8-10.

This parable of the Lost Coin seems to take us back to the world of the Galilean village where the significance of the woman's desperate search finds its locus. Scott (1989) draws our attention to the fact that in the ancient Mediterranean world everyone had a social map that defined the individual's place in the world. The map told people who they were, who they were related to, how to react and how to behave (1989: 79). Presumably the woman who, having lost one coin, could upset everything in the house and could light a lamp in a thorough search for it, represents a poor woman from a peasant village whose economic means are rather desperate. Therefore, losing even one coin is a matter of life and death for her; she has to find it there and then.

This parable is another example of a characteristic peasant society of Lukan Galilee but also of African societies like that of Lesotho. Pressured on all sides,

peasant societies develop systems that relieve the pressure as much as possible, so an individual or a family is never left isolated. The problems, rhythm of life and joys big or small, become those of every family in the village (Wolf, 1966: 80). Reliance on village solidarity is not based on a romantic impulse or friendship but on the harshness of peasant life (Foster, 1967: 297). Villagers cooperate on the basis of formally defined ways such as work exchange. Therefore, if a woman like this, after finding the lost coin, finds enough cause for rejoicing, she calls friends. This means that in this village, people were economically so low that what helped them rise above their situation was their solidarity.

The parable is also appropriate to the Lesotho situation where, in many rural villages, many old women live in similar situations to the woman in the parable, where living in a small hut is the norm. Such woman does not mind spending days looking for a ten-cent piece.

In a peasant society there lies an understanding that joy comes out of any form of suffering which must be overcome. This parable of the Lost Coin is a source of encouragement to communities from oral cultures who struggle for existence on a daily basis. If the message it conveys is to show the total commitment God makes in order to see a sinner repenting, then it is a source of liberation. If it

could be discussed in any political or religious assembly in Lesotho, more insights would be derived since the majority would be speaking from their own experiences.

The parable of the Lost Coin appears to be one of the shortest parables of Luke's Jesus. Of the three parables found in Luke 15, it is the most difficult to analyze critically because of its brevity and also for the fact that it is the story of one person complementing the previous parable of the Lost Sheep. It is not easy to find out why it is not made to stand in its own right.

I am inclined to believe Bultmann who maintains that it is one of those parables that have been amalgamated into the early Church from Jewish society. If that is the case, then one can understand that with the misogynist tendencies of the Jewish patriarchal community, it would be normal to subject a parable referring to woman's activity to that of a shepherd searching for a lost sheep.

Another plausible possibility is that Luke must have known the lost sheep traditions from Matthew 18: 13-14, and wished to add his own source about the parable of the Lost Coin, but he still felt obliged to subject it to the normative male-dominant parable of the Lost Sheep as well as to the parable of the Lost Son. These two parables, the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin do not emphasize the commitment

of the shepherd nor the woman's activity. Rather, the consequences of their labour is what is stressed. The joy will be there when they have sought and found the lost sheep and the lost coin. God's activity is not implied in the process of finding, and to juxtapose the woman and the man in the two parables does not give us a chance to see the woman in her own right, especially when her story is presented with "Or again." The general interpretation by traditional scholars, however, is always to emphasize the sameness of the losing, the seeking, and the finding, whose sequence is similar to joy in heaven when one sinner repents. Luke recognizes the woman's behaviour in the same vein as male's activity as one would have thought to be appropriate to the parable.

Fiorenza regards the double simile of the searching of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin as an indication that the creator God accepts all members of Israel, especially the impoverished, the crippled, the outcast, the sinners and the prostitutes as long as they are prepared to engage in the perspective and power of the *basileia*. She maintains, however, that the inclusive graciousness and goodness of God is spelled out again and again in the parables. Hence the double simile of the shepherd searching for the lost sheep and of the woman searching for her lost silver coin in all likelihood have already been taken over by Luke from the Q source in its present form. The Q community uses these



similes to reply to the accusation that "Jesus receives sinners and eats with them" (Luke 15: 2: Cf. Mark 2: 166 for a similar accusation), justifying it with the application that "in heaven there is joy over the sinner who repents". The original form of the double story was probably more of a parable than simile, since it did not include this explicit "application" to the situation of the community, like the original story. This application stresses the joy of finding the lost but no longer emphasizes the search (1983: 131).

If Jesus told the parable, it would have jolted the hearer into recognition: this is how God acts - like the man searching for his lost sheep, like the woman tirelessly sweeping for her lost coin. Jesus thus images God as a woman, desperately searching for her money; Jesus articulates God's own concern, a concern that determines Jesus' own praxis for table community with sinners and outcasts. The parable then challenges the (Jewish) hearer: "Do you agree with the attitude of God expressed in the woman's search for her lost "capital"?" (Fiorenza, 1983: 131).

This last point made by Fiorenza, that the parable of the lost coin is a challenge to the hearer in that it tests the hearer's agreement with the attitude of God as imaged by a woman in the search for the lost coin. This is where I differ with both Luke and Fiorenza. My contention is that

if, within the social standards, males are normative human beings and females are "second class" humans, the challenge would be proper if the image of God as a woman were allowed to speak for itself without the image of the shepherd, because his image blends with that of the woman. We cannot give the parable of the Lost Coin its due respect because it is inseparable from the Lost Sheep.

As shown earlier, the misogynist attitude of Jewish society cannot allow us to place both a male and woman as if they were equals since society is of the opinion that a woman is ontologically more sinful than a man and is the one who suffers subjugation as well as being man's property. If the question were to be asked frankly to the shepherd in front of the woman who in his eyes is meant by the term 'sinner', he would automatically point to the woman, not to himself, because three times daily he thanks God that he is not created a woman, for a woman is not required to obey the law, while he is superior to her ontologically.

It would seem to me the obvious shift of emphasis onto the "joy" to be experienced, rather than on the search itself, is due to the subtle patriarchal reluctance of the Jewish and first century scholars to place a woman on equal footing with the shepherd. We are also aware that double standards are clearly operative when it comes to laws that concern matters of marriage and sexuality, as well as laws

that concern the religious life of women. Women were required to be virgins when they married, while men were not (MacHaffie, 1986: 8). John 8: 1-11 clearly illustrates this point. Thus, in the case of adultery, identical penalties of death on both men and women were imposed. In the case of the adulterous woman, it had been suggested that since only the female offender could become pregnant, she would be caught and punished many more times than her male partner. If Jesus had not intervened, she alone would have been stoned to death. Consequently, for Luke to juxtapose the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin and the Lost Son together, makes a woman's position much more vulnerable, for it seems to say a woman too can be forgiven, while the male sinner takes it for granted that the woman is more sinful than he is. Therefore chapter fifteen still treats the woman in patriarchal terms. She is still the "other" to the male, whether he be the shepherd searching for his sheep, the father searching for his lost son, or the lost son himself. This does not alter the Jewish male mentality towards a woman. This would be different if it were the first parable to be recorded or to be written somewhere where it would stand out.

Fiorenza does not challenge this order and dependence of the Lost Coin to the Lost Sheep because she sees it as expressing the inclusiveness, graciousness and goodness of God who is good to the crippled, the outcast and sinners

without questioning who was implied by the term "sinner", and why. The three cited prayers from the Talmud, Tosephta, Luke 18: 9-14 and John 8: 1-11 provide enough evidence of this attitude.

Opting to study these parables from the African woman's perspective helps me to go deeper into the subtle ways patriarchal society functions because the African culture, the South African apartheid rule and the Catholic Church all operate along the same lines. African women have developed a sixth sense where matters of oppression, subjugation, racism and class distinction are concerned. These are areas from which Western theologians are estranged. For instance, a lady teacher in Lesotho was telling me that she has observed that cultural oppression and subjugation of women by society starts when a child is born. As a mother of both girls and boys, when friends and relatives come to behold the baby, distinctive remarks are made for a baby boy and for a girl. For a baby boy it goes "mona u itsoaletse ntatao." Here you have given birth to your own dad. This is already an indication that this boy, when grown up, will play a fatherly role, a protector but above all, a patriarchal authority over her. Throughout infancy, adolescence and manhood, this boy is brought up and trained towards this end.

If the baby is a girl, the mother is hailed as "ke seo sekha-metsi, ha u sa tla sokola!" This child is a water-fetcher, a help-mate to you. This is a proverbial way of spelling out the functional role the society expects of her, namely fetching water for the household, cooking and doing all the menial labour that women are expected to do. Hence the proverb "mosali o ngalla motseo" meaning that when a woman is disgusted with her husband she is not socially expected to lock herself up but has to go to the pots and cook for the very man who has battered or abused her. Barth confirms this attitude towards women when he poses a question which he himself answers. "Why must a woman take a second place when man stays in his first place? She must accept this order as the right nature of things through which she is saved, even if she is abused and wronged by the man" (Barth, 1975: 4).

However, the fact that the mother is the one who deserves credit for having given birth to either baby is completely forgotten, just as the emphasis of the parable is no longer given to the woman searching but to the joy derived therefrom. In the South African situation the discrimination against a Black woman who is oppressed by the White boss, the White mistress, the Church with its male ministers, her own culture and her own sons as well, also starts at birth when she is registered and identified in terms of her colour. These are some of the subtle ways of

exercising discrimination towards a Black woman, which appear so harmless, like the Lukan parable of the Lost Coin logically following the parable of the Lost Sheep and thus making it impossible to discuss it in isolation in order to come to grips with its impact and challenge to the male-orientated society of the first century Palestinian Christian community. McKenzie's comment on the New Testament's use of women in the gospel is very true and applicable in this context. He says that:

In the New Testament, attitude towards women is hardly revolutionary in the proper sense; yet it proposes principles which are in opposition both to the social and legal depression of the East and the excessive emancipation of women in Rome (1965: 936).

#### 4.3. ANALYSIS OF LUKE 18:1-8

##### 4.3.0. Introduction

Luke presents the parable of the Widow and the unjust Judge as final touches on Jesus' teaching about the coming of the Son of Man (Lk 18: 20-37). Invariably the parable is told in order to spur the disciples to continue praying until the parousia so that they should not lose hope. In this parable the writer of Luke also exposes his concerns for the materially poor and those socially marginalized. The writer in Luke employs the parable to bring out contrast between

the social world view of the rich and the poor represented by the unjust Judge and the Widow.

#### 4.3.1 Structure of Lk 18: 1-8

The analysis of the structure employed is based on the colometric approach. The justification of this approach is based on the fact that the text of this parable is more narrative than poetic. The structure of this parable has affinity with the structure of the parable of the Good Samaritan. The parable depicts the following pattern:

- A.1.1. And he told them a parable,  
to the effect that they ought always to pray  
and not lose heart.
- A.1.2. He said,  
In a certain city there was a Judge .  
who neither feared God nor regarded man;  
and there was a widow  
in that city who kept coming to him  
and saying,  
"Vindicate me against my adversary."
- A.1.3. For a while he refused;  
but afterwards he said to himself,  
"Though I neither fear God nor regard man,  
yet because this widow bothers me,  
I will vindicate her,  
or she will wear me out  
by her continual coming."
- B.1.1. And the Lord said,  
"Hear what the unrighteous Judge says.  
And will not God vindicate his elect,  
who cry to him day and night?  
Will he delay long over them?"
- B.1.2. I tell you,  
he will vindicate them speedily.  
Nevertheless,  
when the Son of Man comes,

will he find faith on earth?"

#### 4.3.1.1. The macro structure of Lk 18: 1-8.

The macro structure is as follows:

- A.1.1 Purpose of the parable  
-praying continually without losing hope.
- A.1.2. The unjust Judge and the Widow  
Portrayal of character  
-Judge's character: ungodly and inhuman.  
Widow: persistent and hopeful
- A.1.3. Judge's change of heart.  
-he becomes godly and human
- B.1.1.  
& Application of the parable.
- B.1.2.

#### 4.3.2 Exegesis of Lk 18: 1-8

The presentation of A.1.1. is a characteristic Lukan stylistic device. The writer introduces the parable as counterpoint to the parallel issue raised in the previous passage. Thus, in A.1.1. "he told a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart".

Luke locates the two characters in the parable, namely: the judge and the widow, in the same city. Luke employs the parable to demonstrate unequal living conditions between the rich and the poor, whose world views are different from each other. The contrast between the social world views of the rich and those of the poor are represented by the anonymous unjust judge and the widow. What goes on between this judge



and the widow could be taken as one of the many cases in the same city.

In order to illustrate the low moral standards of this particular judge, Luke has used the double characterisation as one "who neither feared God nor regarded man". We get a sense of an individual who is amoral, yet he is in a leading social position. He is expected to stand up for justice and execution of the Law according to God's moral standards. Indeed, this fear of the rule of God was expected of a judge. His self-interest and self respectability are the only motives that will drive him to listen to the widow's repeated pleas to take up her case and do something in her favour.

A widow is the second character in the parable. She typifies par excellence the needy person. She has come repeatedly to the judge to seek his help in avenging her enemy. In the Mediterranean World women were disadvantaged in every respect. They had no socio-legal rights. Luke brings out this issue clearly by pitching the elite judge against a member of the lowest social class. The judge has power, wealth, legal right as a male professional. The Widow on the other hand is powerless, without wealth, legal right and, as a woman, devoid of religious power. With regard to the Torah a woman was inferior to a man. "She was subject to all the *prohibitions* of the Torah ... and to the whole force

of civil and penal legislation, including the penalty of death" (Jeremias 1962: 375).

This was the position of every woman in the Jewish community during the time of Jesus. Widows were in a more degrading socio-legal position than the rest of womanhood. If a man died without leaving a son, his wife remained the property of her husband—one who could be sold into slavery to repay the crimes he might have committed. She was bound to wait for his brother(s) to propose levirate marriage to her or to publish a refusal to do so. She was legally unable to make any move or to remarry if her brothers-in-law disallowed this. Luke does not indicate the exact position regarding her brothers-in-law's decision about her. However, her repeated naggings to the judge and her sense of hope indicate that she was in a desperate position. According to Marshall "the widow was not demanding that her adversary be punished, but that she be given the payment of whatever was due to her" (1978: 672).

In A.1.3. the judge ignores the repeated pleas of the widow. Various scholars, (Scott 1989) amongst others have speculated on possible reasons for the Judge's reluctance. Some argue that this was done out of laziness. Marshall and Jeremias (1963: 153), maintain that perhaps the judge could not act against the widow's powerful opponent and his bribes. The decisive soliloquy in A.1.3. is described by

Marshall (1978: 672) as properly Lukan, and reveals the judge's decision to listen to the widows's pleas out of fear for what the widow might do. Here there is similarity between A.1.2. "...who neither feared God nor regarded man" and A.1.3. "...I neither fear God nor regard man"... This emphasises what was said about the judge in A.1.2. In B.1.1. which follows, the selfish decision made by the judge in A.1.3 is seen through the eye of Jesus. However, one might expect, perhaps, to see B.1.1. as application of the parable. It is not. Jesus' comments locate the judge within the context of "this present evil age, and thus, stands in contrast to God" (Marshall 1978: 672). Those who do not receive the hearing now, that is the widow and the orphan, have an ultimate judge who will rectify their cause. The protection of the widow, therefore, is an example of God's caring for God's people.

According to Scott the result of the judge's vindication of the widow may have been just, but his intentions were not motivated by honour and justice. However, the parable bypasses the implied metaphor of God as a just judge in favour of the widow's action. He argues that

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Her continued wearing down of him becomes a more viable metaphor for the kingdom. The kingdom keeps coming, keeps battering down regardless of honour of justice. It may even come under the guise of shamelessness (Scott 1989: 185).

This hints also at the "gal wahomer" (how much more) concept in the unjust judge - that is, if the unjust judge reviews the widow's plea out of selfishness, how much more will God answer the prayers of those whom God loves and cares?

In B.1.2. Luke presents what may be regarded as the application of the parable. God is contrasted with the judge in that his chosen ones cry to him for help day and night but he puts their patience to the test by not answering immediately. They may wait for a long time, but later they will realize that it was in fact, for a short while. This idea of waiting suggests a time of tribulation for the faithful in which they may be tempted to lose hope and faith because their prayers are not being answered. God will nevertheless vindicate them.

Blomberg is of the opinion that the unjust judge or the persevering widow "affords a classic example of a two-towered ('zweigipfelig') parable whose very title is debated depending on which of the two characters is seen as the dominant one "(1991: 74). However, the point about prayer has brought unrelated issues of importunancy, honour, shamelessness, God's willingness to give good gifts to his children, for their persistence and boldness.

Luke seems to indicate that, at the end of the day, what matters is not the reasons for doing justice but rather

the end result achieved. The judge has achieved a change of heart, and becomes godly and human while the widow, through patience and perseverance achieved what she wanted for she is avenged.

I now apply conflict and symbolic interactionist perspectives advanced in the analysis in the parable to the world view of the Lesotho context particularly as seen through the eyes of a Mosotho woman. The purpose is to identify tensions and conflict that the widow faces within this social context and to evaluate what creative images they have and which might be appropriated for the community in the light of the widow in the present parable.

#### **4.3.3. Hermeneutical Consideration of Lk 18: 1-8**

The parable of the unjust judge and the persistent widow has, in a way, laid roots for the struggle of women worldwide, and especially in the so-called Third World, where women are fighting for their liberation and attempting to build a wholistically new humanity. The question facing women theologians is how to convince their male counterparts that they can objectively reconstruct biblical hermeneutics? How can they empower other women to break the mind-set that induces them to assume an inferior role to men?

On African soil and also in other parts of the Third World, this might be a problem since the situation of women and the nature of Christianity in Africa are both shaped by the histories and cultures that have moulded contemporary Africa. Among other issues connected with single women in Africa, widowhood occupies a central position. In "Attitude towards single women in Africa," Chipso Mtombeni states that "in African societies, a widow stands the risk of being suspected of having been the cause of the death of her husband" (Mtombeni in Oduyoye 1990: 128). According to Mtombeni some widows are accused of having killed their husbands for financial reasons. In Lesotho, husbands working as migrant labourers in South African mines, often die as a result of mine accidents or through miners tribal wars which have nothing to do with their family relations. However, when such deaths are reported back home the shocked wives are often suspected by the society to have had a hand in the death, specially through witchcraft.

Mtombeni maintains that other widows are suspected to have caused the husbands deaths in order to engage in prostitution or simply as a way of freeing themselves from marital life. "I believe this may be part of the reasons for the provision in several African cultures that the widow is 'inherited' or remarried to the brother or cousin of her husband." (Mtombeni in Oduyoye 1990: 128).

Mtombeni is aware that widows do receive some empathy from the community because their dilemma is beyond control. However the community has to put up with it especially if it is a young widow. The feeling is that this young widow should remarry her in-laws in order to raise children in the name of the dead husband. If she does not then she will be a problem to the society by interfering with other people's marriages.

Mtombeni also argues that people in society are the same as in the church. Nevertheless, when the church looks at widows it does not judge them as society is likely to do. Both church and society should respect widows. The church in fact, advocates the giving of donations to widows (see 1 Tim. 5:33).

When "situating women's lives in the realities lived by all of Africa's people - women and men - and within which the Church operates, we realize that the Christian Church has suffered and is suffering from a growing cultural alienation. Evangelization has not been that of cultural exchange but of cultural domination or assimilation" (Fabella and Oduyoye, 1989: 3). But it may not be overlooked either that African traditional society was, by and large, not as fair to women as we would like to think. "Sometimes women were regarded as second hand citizens; often they were used and handled like the personal property of men,

exploited, oppressed and degraded" (Edet, 1986: 19-23). That women are regarded as second hand citizens is testified to by a number of women in Africa besides Rosemary Edet. One lady in Lesotho told me that the plight of women under Sesotho culture is highly visible at the funeral of one's husband, when a woman will be warned never to take a decision without consulting her eldest son, her husband's brother and the chief. Whereas at the funeral of a wife, nothing of the sort is said. Her husband knows he has the chief as his patron and protector and is not even obliged to consult him all the time.

Widowhood, symbolizing the "needy" socially, is also a practical phenomenon in Lesotho. Widows, like those of the Jewish community, are expected to be protected in Lesotho by the in-laws and the chief. Yet that protection is never given gratis without her giving bribery of one form or another. I have read several books on Basotho's customs and beliefs, one of which is Sekese's *Mekhoa le Maele a Basotho* (1968). Nothing is recorded on widows in that volume, yet oral tradition has it that widows are special objects of social concern. Unlike in the Jewish culture, where once their husbands died, their property was taken away from them, in Lesotho widows are known to have fought for their rights and property if any callous chief, judge, or in-laws attempted to deprive them of their fields, animals and houses. This goes to show that literary texts which Western



scholarship relies heavily upon cannot and will never serve to replace the oral tradition of any society. Kelber is right in maintaining that both should be maintained as separate modes of communication.

The present parable appears to Blomberg, and others, as two-towered (zweigipfelig). which means, depending on which side the interpreter stands or wants to emphasize, it will be correct. This is because the first part of the parable emphasizes the activity of the widow to the extent that one gets the impression that the parable is saying that Jesus wants his disciples to pray with consistency, with perseverance and persistence.

The second part (18: 6-7) seems to say to the interpreter that the conduct of the judge is also commendable because it helps to test the sincerity of the widow's prayer. At the same time it lays emphasis on the fact that in the final analysis it matters little whether the motive is noble or not, as long as the end result is achieved. So whether it took the judge a long time to make up his mind to help the widow, no fuss should be made for a long time as eventually he did help her. So if it is a matter of giving the woman credit for her persistence, the judge too deserves it because both achieved what had to be done even if it was through parallel means. This also explains why classifying or naming of the parable becomes

problematic. Sometimes it is called the parable of the Unjust Judge and sometimes the parable of the Persistent Widow. This shows that while Luke definitely elevates the status of a woman by making her the central character in the parable, he places her on equal footing with a male, a subtle way of denying her full recognition. This is why Fiorenza also points out that "the glorification as well as the denigration or marginalization of women in Jewish texts is to be understood as a social construction of reality in patriarchal terms or as a projection of male reality" (1983: 108).

Fiorenza adds that widows and orphans were the prime paradigms of the poor and exploited. Yet in Christian consciousness and theology "poor Lazarus" (Luke 16:19-31) but not the "impoverished widow" has become the exemplification of poverty. Therefore we have neglected to spell out theologically Jesus' hope for women who are poor and destitute (1983:141). We see Jesus' stance on behalf of the poor and widows as in this parable. But it is also evident that the widow's persistence as representative of this social class does not explicitly articulate social change, nor does it address the structures of oppression critically. The Unjust Judge, for instance, could get away with murder if he were to deal with many more women, more docile and more easily yielding than this widow.

The above facts strengthen Lucretia Mott argument that

the time has come for woman to read and interpret scripture for herself...We have been so long pinning our faith on other people's sleeves that we ought to begin examining these things daily ourselves, to see whether they are so; and we should find in comparing text with text that a very different construction might be put on them (Kraditor, 1968: 109).

Women doing theology in Africa are entrusted with the major task of building the Church of Africa by rethinking the basic approaches to the theology of the Church since, according to our experiences, the one scandal of male predominance which obscures its full symbolic presence codifies the cultural oppression of women. The ironical part of it is that the Church is customarily referred to as female while the whole structure and hierarchy are predominantly male. No wonder the symbolism of giving birth and the female womb-essence means very little in the Church. While drawing on feminist theologians from other continents, we want to revive women's experiences of widowhood from a cultural point of view which is different from the male's experiences on the societal level and see how, through re-reading this parable, we could collectively empower widows and other women and balance the masculine lopsidedness of Western scholarship.

Women theologians in Africa want the Church to reflect the feminine face of God as traditional religion tries to do

through the institution of the priesthood as a function for both women and men. Widows in African cultures are actively engaged in the healing ministries and giving young mothers principles of wisdom, counselling and organizing for community tasks and prayers. African woman's endurance, commitment, selflessness and spiritual and physical motherliness are qualities necessary for genuine Christian life and the growth the Church in Africa has to accept. Through reading and re-reading this parable of the widow and the judge, I can see the truth of the Sesotho proverb which reads: "Khutsanà mosali ha e bonahale." A widow always looks so well after her children that no one ever realizes that they are fatherless. The simplest and most basic meaning of woman's power is the one echoed by Ntosake's Shange's dramatic statement: "I found God in myself and I loved her fiercely", indicating that female power is strong and creative (Christ, 1976: 273). If the parable is meant to encourage the disciples to pray always, the African woman is that disciple who has been subjected to various levels of social, cultural, religious, sexist and economic oppressions.

#### **4.4. Summary**

This chapter has demonstrated an African woman's perspective of interpretation of the three parables. In the Good Samaritan, it has been established that the controversy

between the lawyer and Jesus was a contemporary debate and is documented in other traditions as well. Fulfillment of the Law does not necessarily mean its knowledge but depends on showing solidarity with one's neighbour regardless of race, class or sex. Some African women find the image of God as Father problematic while others do not. Reading the parable with new hermeneutic of suspicion is what women are encouraged to do in order to determine what is liberating in the parable and what is not from it.

The parable of the Lost Coin has been located within its context of the whole of chapter fifteen of Luke. At the same time it has been located within the cultural setting of the first century Jewish community where women were not seen in public life and were thus culturally marginalised. This aspect is similar to the Lesotho situation where women are oppressed by cultural laws in many subtle ways. However, the researcher is of the opinion that the parable may have been originally spoken by Jesus but that it fell into the hands of the androcentric patriarchal scholarship and no one ever questioned its interwovenness with the parable of the lost sheep. While acknowledging that Luke made a breakthrough in using an image of a woman to represent God's concern for sinners, I find that he undermined that breakthrough himself by subjecting it to the parable of the Lost Sheep to be followed by the Lost Son.

The parable of the Unjust Judge and the Widow exemplifies Luke's concern for contrasting social issues between the rich and the poor. Tension existed between the world views of the Judge and that of the Widow. Her continual pleas for justice to be done to her creates a new world of hope for the marginalized members of society. Within the Lesotho context widows experience similar type of tension caused by cultural oppressive laws against them.

Symbolic interaction approach can be utilized by women in Africa and Lesotho to claim symbols of their child-bearing, womb-presence of images of healing and motherhood for themselves and for their interest. Bible stories and parables like the present one empower them as part of their experience.

Theologians encourage the Church to read the bible including the gospels with the feminist hermeneutics of suspicion, reconstruction and critical liberation perspectives. Their contention is that the bible texts are androcentric and therefore women stories and experiences are not accurately represented. African women theologians have to re-read the parables from their African realities of how they experience the Church within their context and how this parable can lay the foundations for exploring the feminine aspect of God.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The purpose of the thesis was, firstly, to prove that traditional biblical hermeneutics is androcentric. Secondly, it challenged androcentric hermeneutics through the introduction of female voices in the interpretation of the three Lukan parables: Lk 10: 25-27, 15: 8-10, 18: 1-8. Voices from the First World and from African women theologians from the Third World were introduced in the discussion focused on the three parables.

Focusing on the three parables has proven that traditional male scholars have been unconscious of their androcentric, patriarchal and sexist approach in biblical studies. The interpretation of the three parables from a feminist perspective has highlighted this fact.

The androcentric character of biblical hermeneutics is also promoted by Luke's presentation of the three parables. Despite the fact that Luke highlights the marginalized members of the First Century community, he has written these parabolic traditions from unconscious but evident male perspective which is also proven in the thesis.

To uncover historical androcentricism in biblical hermeneutics, the hermeneutics of feminist biblical scholars has introduced. These scholars point out the role of women's

perspective and women's experience in biblical scholarship. Women have provided a "second wing" to male-dominated theology.

Feminist hermeneutics has succeeded in challenging traditional, androcentric biblical approaches. However, in future it still needs to be developed. While some feminist post-Christian theologians plead for excluding biblical traditions, those remaining within the Christian tradition view their different methodologies as an enrichment for feminist theology. An African women's theological perspective, though it highlights some weaknesses within traditional hermeneutics, needs to develop and improve analytical skills. Women have also to recognise their symbolic worlds and to articulate them.

Feminist hermeneutics has, nonetheless, succeeded in concluding that some biblical texts are androcentric, even oppressive to women. This approach has enriched a predominantly male discipline. It appears to be inclusive and aims at liberating both females and males from the shackles of an unconscious and yet oppressive androcentric hermeneutic.



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