

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

From ancient times patriarchal structures were only ruled by men for women, the family and society and it was an acceptable common practice. The only bad part of it was that it was used to promote women abuse and oppression. Our media report on a daily basis how men, because of the patriarchal system, abuse and even destroy the lives of many women. Therefore, if the headship of man implies that he has an unquestionable authority over women, the constitution of our country on gender equality plus the biblical message about how men and women should live, become a serious problem to be addressed. Phiri says:

“Because of patriarchy, women who had their own plantations in Kachikoti village (Malawi) are criticized as wanting to become men.” (1975:171)

The feminist movement scholar Fiorenza indicated that the church is also accepting patriarchy in order to oppress women. She said:

“The official church teaching argues that women cannot fully participate in the leadership of the church because Christ and Apostles did not ordain women. Therefore the tension between the democratic-charismatic and the

patriarchal-hierarchical model of the church comes to the fore in the linguistic notion of the word ‘church’.” (1992:17)

1.2 BACKGROUND

As a Christian servant the researcher did not have good experience when it comes to the issue of African male traditions that over-dominate women to such an extent that women are deprived of a life of freedom in our free country, South Africa. The author will share three stories that challenged his pastoral work in Giyani and Malamulele.

At times the researcher in this chapter will use the personal pronoun “I” instead of the academically accepted third person, in order to share his personal experience about the problem more clearly.

I became concerned when one of the women in my congregation revealed the story of her problems. This is somebody I know well as she attends the church where I am privileged to be pastor.

The story is that her husband, who is an elder in our church, who is having an affair with another woman who is also a member of the congregation. She told me that the relationship had developed more than five years ago, and that she knew about the affair for a long time. When asked why she didn’t take the issue to the church council for disciplinary measures, her answer was that as long as the man was still her husband

she would never do that since she respected him to the extent that she would do everything to protect his dignity, even if it means to die and not having dealt with this problem.

When she explained further, she indicated that it was indeed a serious problem, but she was willing to live with it. I later found out that the main reason was that her husband would either beat her or divorce her if she shared the story with anyone. The main problem of this woman that caused her not to complain, was her economical dependency on her husband.

The second story is of a woman whom was visited by the researcher in Giyani Township, who indicated that she was not free to receive any visitor in her own town house, because of her boyfriend. I concluded that this man was a boyfriend because they were not married, but he sometimes visited her and that he had a wife and house in the same township. She said that whenever this boyfriend saw a male visitor with her, he always was suspicious that she might have other boyfriends, while he had many extra-marital affairs himself. His extra-marital affairs were not a problem to him because he was a man. This reminded the researcher about Van der Walt who said:

“The wife was literally locked up in the house. She had to be seen in public as little as possible, because she would join

with her innate cunning, seduce the innocent men.”

(1988:21)

This is very true in some African townships, some women are in relationships that oppress them. This restlessness of being afraid at all times was upsetting her. As we were talking I realized that she was restless. As cars were passing by she was watching if it was not her boyfriend. When I asked her what her fears were all about, she related the fact that she was afraid that if her boyfriend would find us in her house, he was going to abuse her after we left. When I asked about her frequent absence in the church services she replied that this boyfriend sometimes denied her to go to church services because he suspected her of seeing other men. She said she was sometimes kicked in front of her children and he also confiscated her cell phone so that no other men can phone her. This type of abuse and oppression ruled her life even when the boyfriend was absent.

The other problem faced by this woman was her high blood pressure. The doctors advised her not to use contraceptives because they could cause more damage to her life, but as a result of the abuse she was afraid to ask him to use condoms. She was very open to say that she could not tell him to do so because he might desert her and she would be left alone, without financial help. In other words, she rather suffer the consequences instead

of saying anything whatsoever that can hurt the man. It is better that she is hurt than hurting him because he is a man. I realized that I was dealing with deep and traumatic abuse. Fiorenza articulates this kind of problem to the issue of patriarchy. She says:

“Patriarchy is the root of violence against women. The treatment received by Hagar from Abram is one of the simple examples.” (1994:1)

My ministry is surrounded by these women who fear men and are abused daily. The worse part is that some of their partners profess to be Christians. The third story is a daily reality because some of the preaching points of the church in which the researcher is serving are now closed because of the inferiority complex of women. When the researcher tried to investigate the problem he found that the women in the closed churches claimed that they cannot go to the church without a male preacher every Sunday because they had been taught from long ago by missionaries that the Bible wanted only men to take the lead in the church. When the researcher tried to investigate further, the elders of the church confirmed that that was the way things should be.

They believed in men being the head of a woman. On the other hand it was overlooked that these congregations were only composed of women, which made it difficult for them to have a male preacher every Sunday,

except when one traveled to visit them from another village. According to Ruether (1983:108), patriarchy is clearly a universal political structure which privileges men at the expense of women. The failure of the above women to preach or take a lead in the church also reminds me of the church which Ruether speaks about when she says:

“Dwight Hopkins tells us that when black women began to enter seminaries, they were faced with some African American men who resisted their ordination, denied black women’s calling by God, and in some cases abused them.”
(2002:197)

The church in which I serve is a true reflection of this American church. There is still a strong denial of women who may wish to be ordained in a church’s leadership position like a simple church elder.

Kimathi on the other hand says:

“This worldview indicates that men are more important than women and consequently, sons are valued more than daughters.”(1994:12)

while Clement says:

“The myth of feminine inferiority complex has become more widespread belief. In most human cultures women are

considered lower human beings than the male, less wise and less intelligent than men.” (1971:21)

The above quotations remind the author of a Sotho saying: “Libitla la mosadi ke bohadi”, meaning “the grave of a woman is at her in-laws” (Baloyi, 2001:41).

All the stories and quotations above indicate the seriousness of the problem of women abuse as a result of the patriarchal system which put men as superior people while women are inferior. The reader may realize through the abuse statements shared by women that male dominance is still a problem among African communities both in the church, and at home and in the society where women live.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

This issue of patriarchy is a major problem in the northern part of South Africa, especially amongst the Tsonga-speaking people in townships of Giyani and Malamulele. The main problem is that many Christian women believe and accept it, while some Christian men use the Bible in order to enhance this issue. The question to ask is: “Why do men who are Christians continue to abuse their wives in the name of Christianity and Bible?”

1.4 RELEVANCE AND AIM OF THIS STUDY

Since the stories above are true problems and occur in our country, this research becomes important because of:

- The constitution of our country which has the bill of rights that states: “No person may unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, in terms of subsection (3), including race, gender, sex, pregnancy etc.” (South African Constitution, 1996:7).
- The raising and multiplication of broken families and “fatherless” children, which is sometimes a result of abuse of women.
- The fact that most women are leaving some of the mainline churches which prohibit them to take leadership roles, to join Pentecostal churches which affirm them. Therefore, this is a trauma that is facing our society today and need to be addressed with a careful understanding of what the Bible says about women, especially because our country cannot really preach human rights in a free society while many women are still oppressed and violated daily.

The gist of this study is to:

* Help the pastors and church leaders to teach church members in order to accept each other as equal partakers in the kingdom of God, regardless of gender.

* To help women to build their self-esteem so that they can be ready to accept themselves as equal partners with men in the home, church, work and society.

* To help and liberate men through biblical messages from the bondage of seeing women as inferior people.

The traditional understanding of “man’s headship” amongst the African people does not stand the test of the biblical message on headship; hence we have this as a serious problem. In other words, misinterpretation of scripture has become a major stumbling block.

When I was ordained a minister in 1999, I realized that the church I was supposed to serve had a small number of men, while it was filled with women. The most worrying factor is that this church does not even ordain women. The second observance was that there was a real need for many people to serve in the offices of the church. On the other hand, I find that women were the people who were always available whenever there was work to be done in the church. Why did the church then deny ministry to the majority of these people. The other thing realized was that these

women worked harder for the church than most of the men, but they were restricted because they were not allowed to exercise their role as office bearers of the church.

It became more painful when I realized that in some preaching stations women would gather for a Sunday service, but end up going home without having a service because they would claim that the male preacher failed to come. I personally taught women that they should preach on Sundays whenever they meet without waiting for a male preacher and the services are now going on with women on the pulpit in some preaching points. The few men started complaining because I was violating the concept of men as head of the family. But it is still a problem because we still have traditional men who do not feel comfortable when a woman preaches. When I read Desmond Tutu's *Crying in the Wilderness*, I realized that he had the same problem than me. He says:

“I am sure the church has lost something valuable in denying the ordination to women for so long.” (1982:149)

The problem continued in two of our preaching stations as they were closed because women were afraid to preach, while the men who dominated them failed to come to church to reach them because of the distances and shortage of traveling allowances from the church. The

question that bothers me is: How long will the church suffer while there are women who could lead?

1.5 RESEARCH GAP

Patriarchy had been a problem for different societies many years ago. Some scholars and theologians used the Bible, culture and other literature to support feminine subordination in view of patriarchy. There were also many scholars who objected to patriarchy; hence we find researches about patriarchy in our libraries today. For instance, Tracy Steven did a good research in her article “How patriarchy actually prevents abuse” (*Christianity Today*. 47:2 (2003)). Dirk Buchner, Pieter Botha and others contributed on this issue. All these efforts are acknowledged and appreciated.

Therefore, after these many researches, the issue of ‘patriarchy as a stumbling block to the rights of serving God as equals (men and women)’, especially amongst the mainline churches in Limpopo, remains outstanding for my research. The intention of the study is not to deal with the issue of patriarchy in general, but specifically as a hindrance to help both men and women of our congregations to share the “priesthood of believers” equally without gender restrictions.

1.6 PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

In this chapter I indicated through researches and experience that patriarchy is a real problem that Christian women are faced with, especially in their homes, society and the church in some parts of the Northern Province. It was also clear that that problem is found amongst many African people, from different perspectives of life of course. From problem statement to the research gap the need for this study has become more visible. Therefore, the next chapter will concentrate on methodology of liberation theology, based on James Cone.

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER DIVISIONS

Chapter 2 - Methodology

This chapter reviews the methodology of liberation theology of James Cone.

Chapter 3 - Biblical view of headship

This chapter uses exegetical remarks on some problem verses that help to understand how God want men and women to relate in spheres of Christian life.

Chapter 4 - African view of man's headship

This chapter uses African books, newspapers, speeches and films that help us to uncover the view of African women from the eyes of African men.

Chapter 5 - Possible comparison between African and biblical views of man's headship.

This chapter tries to compare the two views in order to draw the lines of differences so as to get to know how the victims can be helped.

Chapter 6 - Pastoral counseling

This chapter gives pastoral guidelines that can equip pastors, and African men and women to deal with the pandemic of women oppression both in the church and home.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The issue of oppression of women brings to mind the problem faced by slaves in the USA. As preachers were dealing with this issue, some came up with the methodology of liberation as a way of addressing the problem.

The author will explore and use the liberation theology of James Cone as the methodology of this research in order to unveil the traditional structures which dominate women, and analyze them as a way of liberating both patriarchal structures and women who are abused. Cone is one of the forerunners of the liberation theology which turned to liberate people from oppression or domination. Before coming to James Cone himself, it is better to have the following little background that seeks to address the issue of abuse and oppression among men who stick to patriarchal structures.

2.2 SHORT HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Liberation theology was started in the Latin Americas during the times when the oppression of black Americans was taking place. In the midst

of oppression, McGovern Marxism helped to bring liberation theology into being and he says:

“The use of Marxist analysis, the stance of liberation theology with respect to socialism, capitalism and democracy. Most often the analysis focused on dependency theory, but the references to Marxist analysis occurred frequently enough in the writings of some liberation theologians (1989:xi).”

That awareness started to open a way of tackling oppression and abuse by those in power.

It all started after Europe began its conquest of what is now called Latin America with Christopher Columbus’s discovery of the West Indies in 1492 Vatican soil. The Vatican 2 and the general conference that was held in Medellin (Columbia) in 1968 did not actually produce Liberation theology according to Ferm, but the liberation theology emerged from the lives of the poor and oppressed in Latin America and, in particular, from the basic Christian communities of the dispossessed (Ferm, 1986:11-12).

Whenever there is a violation a methodology is needed in order to change the experience that oppresses the other. Theologians struggled to come up with solutions of addressing the issue.

From then some priests in the likes of Camilo Torres (from Columbia) and Dom Helde Camara (from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) tried to establish some basics of the so called liberation theology as a way to overcome the oppression that the people, including Christian communities, were experiencing. Later on came another man called Gustavo Gutierrez, who was a classmate of Torres while studying sociology together in Louvain.

The theology of liberation according to Gustavo, who is in line with Cone, became the answer to the question; what is the proper role of theology and of the theologian in the attempt to be faithful both to the Christian Gospel and to the poor of Latin America? He also suggests a vision of theology drawn from Augustine's *City of God* in his attempt to relate the Christian faith to the everyday lives of the Christians of his turbulent times (Ferm, 1968:17).

The above background challenged the author's ministry in the midst of patriarchal structures that were destroying women.

The researcher supports the main aim in which all the above-mentioned theologians or scholars meet, which is:

“Theology must try to answer the problems which are at hand (Ferm, 1968:17).”

In Latin American context it was oppression and poverty, while in Giyani and Malamulele it is women domination by men. If theology could only solve the past problems and address the community that lived twenty years ago, then it would not be our theology that seeks to liberate people today. Theology must always address problems faced by those who have lost their human rights. In other words, it must relate to our own circumstances today as was the case in those American times. Cone articulates it better by saying:

“Theology must *relate* the message to the situation of the church’s involvement in the world but not to retell the biblical story.” (1985:5)

Coming to Africa, liberation theology became more concerned with the racial oppression, especially in the times of apartheid. Then the portrait of oppression in South Africa that erupted after the Holland people landed in the Cape in 1652 caused the emergence of the black consciousness. This is where pioneers like Steve Biko, Bishop Desmond Tutu, Manas Buthelezi and Allan Boesak come in. Here some of Boesak’s views about liberation theology that sought to address the situation in South Africa are quoted:

“What does it mean to believe in Jesus Christ when one is black and living in a world controlled by the white racists?”

And what if these racists call themselves Christians also?
Yahweh is the liberator God, and Jesus is the one who
affirms liberation for the oppressed. To confess Jesus as the
Black Messiah is the only true confession of our time.”
(Ferm, 1986:66)

To mention some African scholars in the field of liberation theology, there are people like John Mbiti of Kenya, Kwesi Dickson of Ghana, Charles Nyamiti of Tanzania, Engelbert Mveng of Cameroon and many others who were addressing the problems faced by their own people. All these people tried to understand and apply the Word of God in their own situation, where most communities were under oppression, poverty and colonization which needed to be liberated.. The sixteenth century saw the rapid expansion of Christian missions as Spain and Portugal conquered more and more of Latin America. Despite colonization, the church became champion of speaking on behalf of the oppressed. In view of the above, let us now analyze the methodology that seeks to liberate women.

2.3 THE CONCEPT OF “LIBERATION THEOLOGY”

The methodology that will be used will be based on Cone, who seek to liberate those who are oppressed. Cone’s definition of liberation theology is as a discipline that seeks to analyze the nature of the Christian faith in the light of the oppressed which arises chiefly from the biblical tradition

itself. God, according to him, is God who dealt with His people from situation to situation. He never ignored difficulties of His people from time to time. In other words, when one addresses the concept of liberation theology, one of the main questions must be “what does God say about this situation or problem of oppression?” The other thing he says about the definition is that he takes liberation theology as:

“Making right from what man (sic) made wrong.” (Cone, 1986:2)

In other words, human being’s fall put many things upside down, including the way males live with females and also how husbands treat their wives.

Secondly, Cone sees liberation theology as freedom to be in relation to God, to self and to the community of the oppressed. That is why Cone emphasizes:

“Any statement that divorces salvation from liberation or makes human freedom independent of divine freedom must be rejected.” (1975: 141)

Therefore, liberation theology engages itself to bring back the order which was there before man brought disorder. According to the author, Cone is of the idea that liberation theology must correct what man had

wronged. Still in line with Cone, Muzorewa (1989:53) explains or sees liberation theology as an account of how the believers are set free from both third world oppressive structures inherited from colonialists and some created during the neo-colonial era and western theological as well as political domination.

The researcher agree with both Cone and Muzorewa in this aspect because there cannot be any reason to even speak about theology, if theology does not address the people of today with their problems and situations. To explain more about liberation theology Becken's (1973:4) view is that the experiences made by one section of mankind are definitely of importance in all other sections. Therefore relevant theology must be a theology and in presenting Christ it must be meaningful and relevant to the people in their situations. The researcher's argument is that if God is an omnipotent God, then He knows our situation of today. Therefore he has something to say about it. The researcher wants to summarize the definition of liberation theology by saying that it is a study of God's word that is directed to reality; where we must try to find out how God is dealing with our present problems. He spoke of course with the Israelites during the time of Moses and others, but He must be speaking to us today, addressing our situation through His word. May be, to make my point clear, let us take for instance the times of Old

Testament prophecy: each and every prophet that was sent to speak to God's nation was given instructions by God.

These instructions were related to the problems of that time. In many times when the people of Israel were in the hands of their enemies, especially the time of the bondage in Egypt, God used someone like Moses to liberate them so that they can freely serve their God in Canaan. God's intention when creating human beings was neither slavery nor oppression; hence He wants us to be free to serve Him. That is what Paul (Gal.5:13) said to the Galatians:

“As for you my brothers, you were called to be free. But do not let this freedom become an excuse for letting your physical desires control you. Instead let love make you serve one another.”

Any type of oppression must be dealt with by the God of creation, and that is all about liberation theology. During the times when Cone and others wrote about liberation theology, Latin America was torn apart because the people were trying to voice their anger at the American whites who oppressed them. That is why Cone (1989:131) says that black theology is the removal of the oppressive ideas from black community. Then this must be a theology also, that helps to remove the oppression of women by men. In agreeing with Cone, if theology fails to remove the

ideas which oppress people, then such a theology does not achieve its goal.

2.4 ITS MAIN FOCUS AND AIM

Russel (1974:85) sees liberation theology's aim as a search into tradition and history which is necessary to operate at all interlocking levels of investigation and interpretation in order to provide a way of escaping a fated world in which the future has been closed off by the established traditions of certain men.

The statements above introduce the reader to what liberation theology is all about. It intends to rescue the groaning society as a result of certain men's abuse of power and knowledge. Boff also supports Cone's liberation theology by saying that liberation theology must have both the historical and the contextual theology. He goes on to say:

“It emerges as a service of expression and explanation of faith, hope and charity of the community of Christians. It must answer practical questions like, what does God say with this situation today, what does this mean for reality today, what is the meaning and significance of this theme, or this truth, for the oppressed of our continent?” (1986:5)

In other words, liberation theology must aim at recovering the image of God in the oppressed people because they are also created by the God of life. The author disagrees with the theology of Arian that says that God created everything and left it in the hands of human beings in order to take 100 percent control. He strongly concurs with Boff's theology that seeks to restore God's sustenance over His creation, hence every aspect of the universe (including poverty, colonization and oppression) are part of His concern. This becomes clearer if we understand what De Bruyn (1993:228) says about "Stewardship of God". He says:

"A steward is someone appointed to look after someone else's possessions, and who has control of it. The steward has to keep in mind that he (sic) may never use his (sic)position to enrich himself (sic) unlawfully, he should rather see to it that the owner is enriched. As a steward, man has to regard his possessions as gifts from God. 'The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world and all who live in it' (Psalm, 24:1)".

If theologians are also stewards of God, there cannot be any reason to excuse themselves from seeing that even the theology of the day make efforts to see God addressing His nation in its own circumstances and situations, where liberation theology comes to rescue. Therefore, as

stewards, man ought to care for their partners which are given to them by God.

2.5 JAMES CONE'S THEOLOGY

2.5.1 Cone identifies himself with the community of the oppressed as God takes side with the poor

In other words, preachers ought to be the voice of the voiceless. The point of departure of Cone's theology is the Old Testament history of revelation, especially the historical event when God took the Israelites out of the bondage in Egypt. In his "God of the oppressed" he says:

"The Exodus was a decisive event in Israel's history, because through it Yahweh revealed Himself as the Savior of an oppressed people. Israelites were slaves in Egypt, thus their future was closed. But Yahweh heard their groaning, and remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, he saw the plight of Israel, he took heed of it. When Israel saw the great power which the Lord had put forth against Egypt, they put their faith in Him, and responding with a song to the Lord as we read in Ex.15:1." (Cone,1975:63)

Here Cone reminds us of God who takes sides. God in this way became one with the suffering community and He stood by their side. His theology will help to liberate women who are oppressed by African structures of dominance. No one can try to liberate the oppressed unless he/she first takes side. There can be no liberation if we want to remain neutral.

This part of history forms the backbone of Cone's theology when trying to apply this message to his own situation of affliction in the USA. God's call and election of Israel is related to its oppressed condition and God's own liberating activity already seen in the Exodus. By delivering Israel from the bondage God is seen as entirely God of liberation, hence Cone will argue that the same God is God who wants to liberate black Americans from white oppression. In other words, the same God will take the side of the abused woman who suffer under the oppressive patriarchal structures.

If God does not address people in their own situation, theology would always be irrelevant in addressing their needs. That is why the author understands that the rise of the Old Testament prophecy was due primarily to the lack of practical solutions for injustices within the community. The very same injustices today are the sources of women abuse and domination; hence the cry of women is heard through feminist

movements and other liberal theologies. That is what Frazier (1975:415) indicates that women are depersonalized and abused in African communities. This process calls for practical theology to address the above structures.

The prophets of Israel were prophets of social justice, reminding people that Yahweh is the author of justice; hence the unjust were to be punished time and again. The fact that God pronounced judgments towards unjust rulers of the time indicates clearly that God has always been on the side of the oppressed. Cone was right in his theological departure because we must not be mistaken to think that God is only identified with those who enjoy life at the expense of others. God did not create either poverty or oppression nor did suffering in the beginning, but all these things come into being as a result of man's fall into sin and greed that lead to domination.

We cannot rule out that throughout the history God was always saving the poor and the wretched in the community. The reader must be reminded of the well-known story of a Samaritan woman at the well in John 4. Even though some people might think that God was supposed to liberate this woman from her sinful ways of life, and immediately turned her from being a prostitute into someone who invited people to Jesus (a missionary or evangelist), God's liberation work to the prostitute is very

clear. God, in Jesus, first identified himself with a woman. In other words He entered into her world, and liberated her.

The other liberation work was seen on the event of resurrection of Jesus Christ. James Cone has this to say:

“The resurrection event means that God’s liberating work is not only for the house of Israel, but for all who are enslaved by the principles and powers. In order to ease the pain of injustice on earth, the message of resurrection conveys hope and promises reward in heaven”. (1986:3)

Theology can never be a theology that helps people if it does not address their political, financial and social concerns. Kretzschmar (1988:82) contends: “The discussion on liberation theology will be incomplete if implications for the church are not mentioned, including the abuse of women. This kind of theology is always concerned with those in bondage, like the women in Giyani.

In the New Testament God identified Himself again with the victims of oppression and domination in the person of Jesus Christ. Cone goes on to say that the Jesus’ story is the poor man’s story because God in Christ became poor and weak in order that the oppressed might become liberated from poverty and powerlessness. Cone continues:

“Whatever is said about faith, hope and humility in Christ must be interpreted in the light of his identity with the poor for the purpose of their liberation”. (1975:90)

Pretending as if God is happy with all the situations in which His people find themselves is like limiting God of His mighty deeds. Theology must not only recite what God said to other people, but it must talk about people in their situations. When this is taken into consideration then people would understand the relevance of liberation theology in women’s difficulties. It is of course very wrong to only promise people about the beauty that they will experience in heaven, while neglecting their present experiences of life. Hence the researcher supports the idea of Cone when he discusses the sources of liberation theology as follows:

*First source is *human experience*. Life of humiliation and suffering towards the black Americans produced black liberation theology in the west; hence the same applies to all situations. If someone is in a particular problem, it is not only possible to ask one what God is doing with the situation, but it is also necessary and important.” (1986:32)

Therefore, preachers in this northern part of South Africa are failing to represent God when they do not challenge structures that suppress women to operate as full human beings.

Moltman (1984:14) shares the same view with Cone when he feels that the starting point for individual Christians is the experience of justification in his or her own faith. The author and Moltman share the view that the experience of liberation as related to commitment to human rights is an extremely important part of our lives.

According to Cone (1986:33) other sources of experience are history, revelation, scripture and tradition. On the other hand, liberation theology has three roots, according to Nash (1984:9), viz: Linguistic, political and nationalistic or ethnic roots. The Gospel of Jesus is the Gospel also for the oppressed in society, therefore the church of Christ cannot be for other people, but for the society (for all people).

*Passion - The dictionary meaning of passion is a very strong, deeply felt emotion. The researcher personally understands passion in this context as the way how one can feel what someone else is feeling. In other words, it is to try and get to someone's pain as if it is my own pain. (Oxford: 1996) According to Cone:

“There is no liberation movement that can take place effectively before those liberating others get to deeply understand what is taking place in the hearts and minds of the victims. This is not easy at all, but that it is the only appropriate response to this truth”. (1986:18)

In other words, to experience what the abused women feel is a very important starting point for their liberation. It is also a point of departure in doing pastoral care with women who are abused.

When defending his point of passion he says (1986:19):

“In liberation theology the liberator participates in passion in behalf of the oppressed. The oppressed humanity is the point of departure of Christ Himself. It is difficult for the oppressor to participate in this reality of liberation because of his identification with the unreality. This is what one must think before becoming a spiritual liberator of the oppressed.”
(1986:19)

Since liberation theology is theology of action, there must be solidarity between the liberator and the oppressed, in this case, men and women. That is why we must speak about the relationship between FAITH AND

PRAXIS. The practicing of what we preach is biblically supported by the scriptures saying:

“Not everyone who calls me ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but only those who do what my Father in Heaven wants them to do” (Matt.7:21).

The above quotation challenges pastoral care givers and preachers who continue to suppress women through patriarchal structures.

It is important to note that without getting the reality of how it pains to be oppressed, one cannot easily liberate those in chains. We have a saying in Shangaan that indicates that one cannot really know what takes place in the circumcision school before one gets there. One must first identify oneself with the oppressed community in order to work for their liberation. This is very much biblical when we analyze what Jesus Christ did on earth. He related to drunkards, outcasts, prostitutes and thieves. True liberation must come from the conviction of the heart in the first place, then to emotions, feelings and so on. That is why one must take time to live with the oppressed and try to understand their pain before getting to help them. That is why the language of liberation must reflect the experience of the people about whom we claim to speak. Since the research is involved with the oppression of women, the same Jesus who related to drunkards is also relating to the oppressed women. He never

promoted any type of abuse towards women, but he helped them to heal the wounds of the experiences of the past.

2.5.2 Afflict the oppressors and support the oppressed

The fact the God did not only stand on the side of the oppressed but also judged the oppressors, is a reality of that. In other words, the one who stands for liberation must be ready to condemn and fight against the oppressors in favor of the oppressed. One can indeed not liberate the oppressed without being against the oppressor. Cone says:

“The subordination of women in the black church is obvious that I sometimes wonder why any argument is needed to demonstrate it. When the issue is addressed to black pastors and bishops their response is often reminiscent of the white responses to the subordination of blacks and they say ‘women like it that way or women do not want to be pastors.’” (1982:122)

This statement indicates clearly pastors and bishops who do not want to condemn the perpetrators or are against them; hence they cannot really liberate women without fighting against them. God’s liberation of slaves from socio-political bondage. He inflicted His judgment on the people of Israel when they humiliated the poor and orphans saying:

“You shall not ill-treat any widow or fatherless child. If you do, be sure that I will listen if they appeal to me, my anger will be roused and I will kill you with a sword.” (Exodus 22:23-24)

God never withheld His actions against the people who victimized others in any form, hence liberation theology must emphasize that the liberators be strong against the oppressors. Even if the liberator is a male figure, he must be very vocal when denouncing the oppression of women, especially when addressing the oppressors. If care givers and preachers adopt this method of liberation, they will be able to work with men or women who are dominated by patriarchal structures. With the abuse in mind, let us now analyze the role of practical theology.

2.6 SHORT HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

Hesselgrave and Rommen, Bultman connects very well with Cone since he understands the theologian’s task to make the Bible believable and meaningful to modern man, and modern man (sic) cannot be expected to respond as people did in pre-scientific times (1989:140). This idea, plus other theories, helps theologians to see that despite making comments and thoughts about what the Bible says it is not enough; but they should also make it livelier and practical to people of the times, hence practical theology became an answer. If the Bible is meaningless to its readers,

then it is helpless because it will not assist people in their own concrete situations.

According to Chaffer practical theology is a discipline concerned with the application of the truth to the hearts of men (sic). Scheirmarker (In Burkhardt, 1983:55) argues that theoretical theologies (philosophical and historical theologies) cannot become theological until they are applied practical theology. Therefore, care givers are challenged to be practical when dealing with the issues of abuse and domination. (1993:189)

It is not easy to define what practical theology is because it is the most practical discipline that deals with the word of God directly to the reality of life. The author personally understands that every time one thinks of helping another person he or she intends to apply practical theology. The Dutch theologian, Dingemans, spoke about practical theology when he said:

“Whereas formerly practical theologians had first studied the Bible and the doctrine of the church in order to apply the results of their findings to the practice of the church, more recently, under the influence of social studies they have changed their approach: in recent decades practical theologians worldwide have agreed on starting their investigations in practice itself. Practical theology has

become description of and reflection on the self-understanding of a particular religious tradition.” (1988:83)

The author views this approach as taking a move from practice to theory, and then back to practice. When a systematic theologian asks critical questions about the way faith expresses itself in its language, the practical theologian asks critical questions about the way faith expresses itself in practice. The difference here is faith and practice. The author personally understands practical theology as the application of the word of God as preached behind the pulpit into real life situations. In other words, preachers (care givers) must apply their faith in practice.

Karl Bart understands theology as the systematic interpretation of God’s self-disclosure to the Christian church. (1936:47) The author wants to add that, in the process of this interpretation, a person also has an amount of responsibility, since he/she will be influenced by the situation and his/ her socio-historical background. The author’s belief is that if theology is successful, it must reach the understanding of human being as its audience. That is why the author is just partially in agreement with Bart, but he is in full agreement with Browning (1991:5-7) who goes further in explaining that theology is practical only by applying God’s revelation as directly and purely as possible to the concrete situations of life. The theologian must be able to move from revelation to the human situation,

from theory to practice and from revealed knowledge to application knowledge. The author is convinced that theology can be practical if we bring practical concerns to it from the beginning. Hyunchul (2004:40) named three approaches that emerge as new directions in practical theology, viz: Praxis-theory praxis, empirical orientation, and interdisciplinary integration and identification approaches.

Praxis-theory praxis has to do with applying God's revelation as direct and as pure as possible to life situations. Hesselgrave and Rommen (1989:88) quote Gutierrez who defined praxis as "the existential and active aspects of Christian life which include: charity of the gift of oneself to the other, spirituality, anthropological aspects, social life of the church and signs of time. This is a challenge to care givers in the northern part of South Africa. Let us now analyze the empirical theology.

Empirical orientation is when the research is done to relate the text and its context hermeneutically (Heitink, 1999:266). Pieterse (2001:14) also advises that to understand better the purpose of practical theology, people need to connect it with other theological disciplines. This is an important statement that forces us to integrate our experiences with practical issues.

2.7 GOD AS A LIBERATING GOD

According to Cone (1986:9) it is not possible for anyone to do Christian

Theology, apart from the biblical claim that God came in Christ to set the Captives free. God has chosen to disclose the divine righteousness in the Liberation of the poor. This indicates clearly that, according to Cone, God's main intention is to liberate his people, hence He is a liberating God. That is why he says:

“The oppressors and oppressed cannot possibly mean the same thing when they speak of God, for instance, God of the oppressed is a god of revolution who breaks the chain of Slavery while God of the oppressors is a god of slavery and must be destroyed along with the oppressors.” (1986:63)

To add to what Cone has said, that is the reason why some black Africans still identify Christianity with the culture of white people, because when the same oppressors brought the gospel to the blacks, they did not think it was the same God who allowed the whites to oppress them, and is now preached again to slave them differently. This resulted in the thinking that whenever we speak about God, God of the whites is not the same as God of the blacks, even though they are both called “GOD”. It is very difficult to identify myself with my oppressor and hence our language and interpretation in many things will not be the same. From the Old Testament God was known as a Liberator of the Israelites (blacks and oppressed women included). To make this

clear, Cone argues that liberation theology is biblical because people claim that God of the Exodus and the prophets of Jesus and the Apostle Paul is involved in their history, liberating them from the bondage.

He says:

“A theology derived from black sources would have to focus on Jesus as the beginning and the end of faith, because this affirmation is a summary of the black testimony that ‘Jesus picked me up, turned me around, left my feet on solid Ground.’” (1986:12)

He continued with his argument by saying:

“What does it mean to be black and Christian? If God is the Creator of all persons and through Christ He made salvation possible for everyone, why are some oppressed and segregated in the churches and in society on the basis of color? How can whites claim Christian identity, which emphasizes the love and justice of God and still support and tolerate injustice committed against blacks by churches and society?” (Cone,1985:6).

The reader will now understand why God wants to liberate women who are oppressed, but to understand this, the reader needs to learn from the process of how God liberated other oppressed people in the past. Here Nash’s (1984:9) explanation of the liberation in the story of Exodus is Important, because he sees God as a military triumph, where one might even say of God’s right hand that “dashed in pieces the enemy”. Liberation of Old Testament began in Egypt when God sent Moses to

liberate the Israelites from the bondage they were experiencing at the hands of Pharaoh. In the same vein care givers are challenged to liberate structures that dominates and oppresses women.

The act of this nature was both political and religious. That is why, even today, those people who say that Christians must not interfere with politics are people who do not carefully study the Bible. God is God of Israel, of the oppressed nation, and therefore from the side of Israel God used certain individuals (Moses and Joshua included) to achieve His goal of liberating His people from such oppression. Since God did not create oppression, the author believes He is not for oppressors, but against them that is what we read in Exodus when it says:

“Terror and dread fall upon them. They see your strength, O Lord, and stand helpless with fear until your people have marched past- the people you set free from slavery.”

(Ex.15:16)

When we read in Genesis which says:

“God looked at everything he had made, and He was very pleased”, (1:31)

we find that everything that God created was good, but oppression is not good, hence it was not part of His creation. It only came as a result of

human beings sinning against God in Genesis 3. In other words, we can never normalize oppression and bondage amongst human beings. They remain abnormal situations of life and therefore must be treated as such. The author believes that the God of the Old Testament is the God of liberation and it must remain the universal truth. God did not only liberate His people in the Old Testament, but He continued to be a liberation God even in the New Testament.

According to Segumelo, (in Cone):

“If I read the New Testament correctly, the resurrection of Christ means that He is also present today in the midst of all societies affecting His liberation of the oppressed.” (1976:31)

This is also Gonzalo’s view of the New Testament, who sees Jesus of the New Testament as the “liberator of humanity”. According to him:

“Theology is a reflection and meaning of faith from the perspective of the experience of oppression and domination, of conflict and rebellion. Jesus is the liberator of the wretched and the poor.” (1987:88)

Gonzalo experienced the situation of Indian oppression by the whites, where the white man kept the Indian under his boot and under his contempt. This is what the African women are resembling in our

situation. That is why we understand that liberation has strong social and political over tones. The belief is that Jesus is the liberator of individual souls from the tyranny of the devil, which also means chasing away the devil from a human heart, brought in by the error of old Adam. The fact that God became human in Christ so that we can be free in order to speak about God in terms of humanity and about the crucified and risen Lord, is a true implication that God is a liberator of all those who are under oppression (Cone, 1986:8). With the abuse in mind, let us now analyze the issue of domination of women by men.

2.8 LIBERATION THEOLOGY ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM OF MEN WHO DOMINATE WOMEN

The male dominance tendency escalated to an extent where even the initiation school uses it as a tool to make boys feel that they are superior to girls. One of the ways in which African society train men to be responsible is through initiation schools. The domination of women can be seen in the statement by Thieme (1970:3) who says:

“For as much as man (sic) is the image of God, the woman must be the glory of man.”

The power which men have at the initiation school teaches them to abuse women and let them feel as their inferior beings. There must be strategies developed in order to help men understand that the abusive barriers they have must be denounced and confessed as wrong and evil in the eyes of God.

It has always been our African custom to teach men right values from their childhood as they move into manhood. Many structures were used in order to educate men on how to oppress women in marriage, for instance, the initiation schools in the forests are full of such teachings. It has now become part of our culture to dominate and oppress women. When coming to religion, especially African based religion, it promotes the idea of domination and therefore culture clashes with Christian teachings of equal partnership. That is why it is still very difficult for many African men to accommodate women, especially in leadership roles of the community and church. The author agrees with Van der Walt (1994:154) who says that the liberation of the woman cannot take place without the man. In other words, men will need to be challenged and taught on how to treat women as equal partners.

Sometimes even the Bible is misused in order to promote the issue of male dominance in many areas of life. For instance, in Gen. 2:23 “the bone of my bones” is taken literally as if a woman is to be owned like

property because she is from a man's bone. Today the whole question has become aggravated because of the notions of equality between men and women, resulting from the so-called "feminist movement". Because some men believe that the masculine form of God used in the Bible support their idea, the feminist movement has a question to ask:

"If God is masculine, how can He stand and agree with the brutality that men are doing to women?" (Jones, 1973:96).

If the society had treated men and women as equals, there would have been no fundamental reason to object to the view that God is masculine.

The study must try to educate men in order to understand that women need to be treated as equal partakers of God's kingdom. They must realize that we do not have to devalue any person because of gender difference, but ought to treat everyone with respect and dignity, including women. If Jesus Christ, our Savior, was not hostile to women, who are we to misjudge and mistreat them? Women are taught in the church that Jesus came to the world as a male where he healed, taught and helped women to find their feet in Salvation, for example, in Luke we read:

"Sometimes later Jesus made a trip through towns and villages, preaching the Good News about the Kingdom of God. The twelve disciples went with him, and also did some

women who had been healed of evil spirits and diseases, Mary (Magdalene), from whom seven demons had been driven out, Joanna, the wife of Chuza, an officer in Herod's court, Susanna and many other women who helped Jesus and his disciples with their belongings" (Luke 8:1-2).

The rule of man over his wife in Gen.3:16 did not imply to forcefully push her around like a piece of property because that is not only dominance, but also abuse of power. That is why Mol (1981:129)

says: "Man should be a leader whose physical power is used to protect his wife and family, instead of abusing them." But then the problem arises when the male figure trembles and abuses the female. The author strongly concurs with Grant that Christ did not only have maleness on earth, but He also had humanity, since He came to liberate the human race in this world. It is irrelevant to use Jesus' gender in order to violate His main purpose in the world. It will be important to evaluate in the eyes of the women in the Bible, whether the biblical headship implies the violent situation which men are putting women in. The relationship between man and woman, as initiated by God in Eden, must be clearly understood by men, otherwise liberating the oppressor will become more difficult.

Men must be liberated from their traditional way of understanding women as their doormats. Violent men who mistreat their wives must be

brought to the salvation of Jesus Christ which does not allow them to see women as inferior people, since all people are equal before God. They need to be challenged therapeutically in order to understand that God sees us as equal partakers in His kingdom. In other words, they need the gospel that will help them understand that God is present even in their own circumstances and that He can also liberate them. Let us now address the issue of inferiority.

2.9 LIBERATING WOMEN FROM THE BONDAGE OF INFERIORITY COMPLEX

The discussion on liberation theology will be incomplete if implications for the church are not mentioned, including women in the church. That is why, for Kretzschmar (1988:77), liberation theology must be seen as an aspect of the gospel and an attempt to emphasize God's concern for the oppressed. Therefore liberation theology will cease to be called a theology if it is not tasking itself with an issue of trying to unfold those hidden secrets that are used in order to make some others inferior citizens to some people.

According to Olasky (1988:106), where liberty is honored and protected, people do not need rubber stamps on permits for many of the ordinary affairs of life. When prophets of God denounced any form of oppression they were not speaking about the situation which confronted the people of

the time. The Israelite community of the period before the feudal dictatorship of the city-states of Canaan, was forced to retribalize and regroup as an alternative, while the prophesy of the time gave hope and denounced the dictatorship. It is therefore the only true message to speak about liberation towards the people who are oppressed. That will not only help the oppressed community, but it will also help the leadership of the time by avoiding unnecessary uprisings (Mosala, 1989:104). The author believes that if women were handled as equal partners to men, from Latin America and all over the world, the feminist movement would not have been there.

James Cone's (1975:17) idea is that one's experience is the source of theology. He set an example of black theology that came as a result of black people's experience of oppression in America. If someone is enslaved, his/her experience about everything (including God) is a different one from other people. For instance, the understanding of the gospel of God by the victim of oppression is different from that of a free person. Likewise, the experience of women about God in the situation of being victimized by men, also resulted in the so-called "feministic theology" and brought a response to their oppressive situation. We need to rethink now about how God can liberate women, hence liberation theology comes into the rescue. This theology must reflect upon what it

means to be a woman. Cone went on to say that the theology must uncover the structures and forms of women experience, because the categories of interpretation must arise out of the thought forms of the women's experience itself.

Cone understands liberation as:

- *Freedom to be in relation to God.
- *Freedom in relation to self and the community of the oppressed.
- *The project of freedom in hope. (1975:141-146)

Cone's concept of liberation must also aim at reconciliation. The pastoral services must be ready to prepare the oppressed for reconciliation with their oppressor after such a liberation. Cone says:

“It is just like when one is saved, He or She must be prepared to reconcile with God.” (1975:147)

In joining Cone the author will add by saying that if indeed God delivered Moses and the Israelites from bondage in Egypt, Daniel from the lion's den and his three friends from the burning fire, He is indeed a liberating God and is capable of liberating women. This means that any form of victimization is not accepted in the eyes of God. It is therefore important for us to firstly take into consideration the pain and action that is caused by oppression of some kind, so that we can try to come with a pastoral

healing of such a pain. Liberation will be an unfinished story if the concept of “hope” to the victims is not explained. In other words, the message of hope must become the climax of the liberation struggle of the oppressed. Even when people are still in the struggle, they need to be encouraged to hope for the good things thereafter. In the American struggle the victims of oppression used to sing the songs of hope which instilled them with hope in order to overcome their afflictions. Cone mentions that one part of their song said:

“The ship of Zion is coming with Jesus as the captain to carry us home ...” (1975:56)

Therefore therapy can be a place where hope is created. Both the therapist and the help seeker can work on issues that will finally build hope and courage in women who are oppressed.

The author lastly wants to mention that liberation without reconciliation between the two parties cannot help the oppressed to face the new future of freedom with responsibility. If the story of the exodus is a paradigm for the Old Testament conviction that God takes sides, the story of Jesus’ sermon in Nazareth is a paradigm for the New Testament conviction that God brings liberty to the oppressed. Brown summarizes his conviction by saying: “To know God is to do justice.” (1978:94)

The well-known story of Abraham who was separated from his people, where domination of a community, culture and tradition would continue with the Babel and its sequel, indicates a divine liberation. Therefore Abraham was liberated from all those traditions in order that he may serve God freely in his promised land.

The author thinks that the reason why many women proudly accept mistreatment and beating from men is because of their belief, which has also been taught from their childhood, that they are inferior to men. They are taught from their initiation schools that they should never show any sign of revolting against men. One old man shared with the author the reason why male initiation school is conducted in the forest. He said it is to teach men that they will work far from their homes, hence they will only come home for short times. A total misunderstanding of the role of men in the community.

On the other hand, the initiation of women is done at homes in order to strengthen the idea that a woman must stay at home and do the entire domestic work. A process of oppression developed through this way of thinking. The author also experienced as a young boy, which since he was the only boy in the family, though he was the youngest of all his siblings, that his father would come back from work and ask him about the past day, but he never asked his mother or sisters. By this the author wants to

indicate that from childhood, Africans teach their young girls to obey men unconditionally while boys are taught to be bosses from a very early stage (Graham, 1953:37).

If we can try to solve this problem right as it is today, without analyzing and looking back to where we came from, we may find ourselves contradicting the education of our children at home. The author's belief is that this liberation must start right from when we are still young and under the care of our parents and guardians. That is why our fathers, mothers, teachers and so on must be responsible for this change. Then the community will respond in treating women better.

Women must also be liberated biblically, by being taught what exactly was taught wrongly by other preachers who advocated that even in the church, men alone must take the lead while women become passive spectators. Even today we still have churches where women are not allowed to say a word, even when they are more gifted than the men in that church. For women to stand up and redeem themselves in this situation, the teachings of what love is, like Paul taught in Ephesian letter when he said:

“Husbands, love your wives like Christ did do His church.”

(Eph,5:23)

must be processed differently to the people. Pastors has done a good job by bringing people to churches and to faith in Jesus, but we still have a lot to do for the liberation of women whose rights are in the constitution of our country which says: “Everyone has a right to freedom of expression”, (S.A. const. 1996:9), but not yet in their lives. The commitment of women to Jesus Christ whom the church is preaching on a daily basis requires the liberation also of African women in order that they may be free to serve God. Kubi and Torres (1983:149) argue that children, husbands, friends and colleagues will almost always be obstacles in the commitment of women to Christ. Women, by understanding their roles in homes, society and church will start seeing that their roles differ from those of men, but they are equally important for human life. Because of this feeling of low esteem, some keep quiet even when their voice would make the difference in difficult situations. God did not create them to be inferior to men, but to be equal partners who will cherish each other. That is what He means saying:

“It is not good for the man to be alone, I will make a suitable *companion* to help him” (Gen.2:18).

Women must be liberated in order to come out and break their silence concerning their being subordinated to men. It also needs them to understand that the biblical message of submission and headship does not mean that they are slaves or people without say even when things are difficult.

2.10 PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION ON THIS CHAPTER.

This chapter concentrates on the image of God which is revealed by God to men and women. Through the fall man started to dominate the woman. African structures use this process even in the church. In the next chapter the author will concentrate on the biblical passages that are misquoted. Proper exegesis will be done in order to correct the wrongs done by African preachers who are not educated.