

**ZULU WOMEN, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND CHRISTIAN FAITH:
DOES THE CHURCH HELP OR HINDER
THE SURVIVORS?**

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DATE: FEBRUARY 2005**

Submitted in partial fulfillment of academic requirement for the Degree of Master of Theology (Theology and Development) in the School of Theology and Religion, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg campus.

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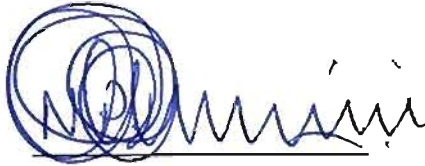
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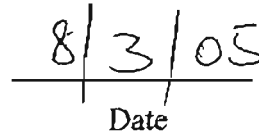
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Declaration

I declare that unless otherwise noted through the references, this thesis is entirely my own work.

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Nompumelelo P. Dlamini

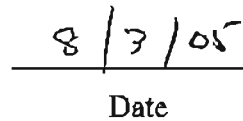
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Date

As a supervisor, I agree to the submission of this thesis.

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Dr Steve de Gruchy

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Date

Abstract

This thesis focuses on the impact of domestic violence upon Zulu women, and the role that the Christian faith plays in both helping and hindering the survivors. Through an examination of the relationship between religion and power, the thesis notes how the Christian faith can work both to legitimize oppressive structures and practices, and to provide a form of resistance or survival in times of difficulty. The way in which the Bible and theology deal with domestic violence is examined from this perspective.

The thesis builds upon earlier work on domestic violence and the church done in South Africa by a range of scholars, but provides new insights into the way that Zulu women deal with domestic violence and their relationship to the Christian faith. Research undertaken in Sweetwaters, outside Pietermaritzburg, identified the following eight concerns to be of importance for these women in terms of domestic violence: lobolo and women as property, unemployment and male frustration, alcohol, children and the wider family, the scandal of divorce in the Zulu community, lack of social support, the cycle of violence, and the impact upon women.

In terms of their relationship to the church, they saw Christianity as a power that both hinders and helps. In terms of the former this had to do with abusers in church leadership, theologies of blame, theologies of forgiveness, disinterestedness and silence, and sanctity of marriage. In terms of the way that Christianity helps, this has to do with prayer, bible reading, *manyano* and *izimvuselelo*.

In the final chapter the thesis suggests that if the church is to make a difference in the lives of the women who are facing the experiences of domestic violence, then it needs to both challenge the negative and strengthen the positive. This could involve working with young men, men and perpetrators, challenging culture where it abuses women, breaking the silence, legal education, affirming the spirituality of the women, counseling, networking, economic empowerment, and training *manyano* leadership.

Dedication

This piece of work is dedicated to my late loving and caring father with all the support he gave to his family despite all odds.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following people for developing the idea of this study:

KwaZulu-Natal Programme for Survivors of Violence women's groups that I work with, Suzan Rakoczy, Karen Buckenham and Bev Haddad for their great work done,

Dr Steve de Gruchy, my supervisor from the School of Theology (University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus).

I would like to thank Rev. V. Mnculwane and Mr C. Chagunda for their valuable comments on the draft papers. I am also grateful to Prof. F.N.M. Mazibuko for editing and proof-reading.

I would like to thank my colleagues for their understanding, and support during difficult times.

I would like to thank my fiancé for his interest and endless support and for drawing a map to show Sweetwaters area and also my dear loving mom and two sisters for their unconditional love.

Lastly, I would like to thank Dr Steve de Gruchy once again who supervised my work throughout this process. I am very grateful for all his comments and guidance in this research. I enjoyed and gained a lot from our discussions and thank him for his friendship.

Abbreviations

CWD - Catholic Welfare Development

DVA - Domestic Violence Act

FAMSA - Family and Marriage Society of South Africa

JAW - Justice and Women

KZN - KwaZulu-Natal

NGO - Non Governmental Organisation

PACSA - Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness

SANCA - South African National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependency

SSI - Semi - Structured Interview

TV - Television

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction to the Thesis

1.0 Introduction

Chapter one comprises of the background information, problem formulation, motivation, the hypothesis, the previous work done in this field, data collection methods, the limitation of the field of study and the ethical issues in implementing the research.

1.1 Background Information

For some time now, as a social worker by profession, I have been working with the KwaZulu Natal Programme for Survivors of Violence as an Adult Programme Manager. This is a Non Governmental Organization (NGO) based in Pietermaritzburg and Durban covering Midlands and Coastal region. It is recently known as SINANI meaning 'we are with you'. My role is to manage, facilitate and monitor designated adult projects in targeted communities that are affected by (political and domestic) violence. We seek to address their mental health, psychosocial needs, personal and community development and conscientize them about women's rights. We have workshops and weekly support groups where different topics are discussed. Such topics include survival strategies, breaking the cycle of violence, healing and reconciliation, women's empowerment, decision-making, problem solving and communication. Working with the survivors of violence during the research, made it clear to me that most survivors of violence feel comfortable receiving assistance by the church personnel. This has aroused some interest in me to venture into research about the role of faith and the church in domestic violence.

1.2 Problem Formulation

The issue I am focusing on is the experience of the survivors of domestic violence in relationship to three key areas within the church, namely:

(1) The local ministers and lay leadership

- (2) The supportive and caring community, for example, *Manyano* support groups
- (3) The survivors of violence personal piety, faith and religious practice

1.3 The Hypothesis

My hypothesis is that the church needs:

- (1) To take seriously the experiences of the survivors of domestic violence.
- (2) To not further discriminate against the survivors of domestic violence.
- (3) To support, love and care for the survivors of domestic violence.
- (4) To train careers and counselors who can offer guidance, reconciliation and counseling to survivors.
- (5) Contribute to a society in which domestic violence is eradicated.

I intend to explore this hypothesis through exploring the experiences of survivors of domestic violence.

1.4 Motivation

My Christian background has always raised questions in my daily life. What we normally read in the Bible is not what we see and hear in reality. The Bible states clearly in Gen 1 that God created man and woman in His image, thus giving them equality. But reality tells me that men seem to be more equal to God than women. This Biblical truth has been a source of problems in my work that deals with violence against women.

Domestic violence happens in Christian families and even in Christian churches, where we should take seriously the teaching from the Bible, which states that God created man and woman, equal. For a long time I have been asking myself why this is the case. In the atmosphere of distress and hopelessness brought on by domestic violence, the church is often the resort where people can regain their hope. The question then arises as to how this institution called the church helps or hinders violence against women. This question is what has pushed me to undertake this study due to my personal experiences as a woman and also from the

experience I have gained by working with women who are affected by domestic violence.

Violence against women has for long been viewed only as a problem for women, despite the fact that it involves men abusing women. It cannot only be women's problem. It should be viewed holistically. It is important to talk about domestic violence, as people need to know that women are *treated as objects in most cases*. It is therefore, imperative that women should be empowered so that they can reflect on their situation and end up taking proper liberating actions; yet, at the same time we need to educate the public and mostly men about the dignity and freedom of women as also created in God's image. "It is necessary to unearth the roots of the violence to which women are exposed if we are to combat it effectively" (Gnanadason 1996:4). I am aiming at producing research work that is not a private academic exercise but is aimed at empowering the survivors of violence.

1.5 Previous Work Done

There has been quite a bit of work done on violence against women and their marginalization both in the world and in South Africa. In South Africa, local work has been done to encourage different churches to break the silence about domestic violence. Two examples are the work by Susan Rakoczy entitled: *Silent No Longer: The Church Responds to Sexual Violence*, and by Karen Buckenham entitled: *Violence Against Women: A Resource Manual For the Church in South Africa*. The Institute for the Study of the Bible launched the *Tamar Campaign* in 1993 which promotes Bible studies on violence against women, to encourage church ministers to preach against women abuse and conscientize them to the fact that different kinds of abuse exist, and to suggest ways of dealing with them. This study will take this further by looking at how the Church can both help and hinder the survivors of domestic violence through a focus on twenty women who are survivors of violence.

1.6 Data Collection Methods

The focus of research is on two women's groups in Sweetwaters, Pietermaritzburg. A structured schedule was designed to be used during interviews that were conducted by the researcher.

Interviews were used in order to make it easier for respondents to respond to questions without being intimidated. Also, it is easier to respond to questions orally. Moreover, interviews allow for flexibility, can probe more than one answer, and non-verbal behaviour can be observed to assess the validity of the answer. Closed and open questions were used. The interviews were undertaken in Zulu, which is the first language of the women and of mine. The interviews were with 20 women who are in groups of the KZN Programme for Survivors of Violence that I work with. I then fed information back to the groups for discussions, and the women themselves did the reflecting to give more depth to the research and empower the women.

The interviews were conducted in *a semi-structured interview* (SSI format) (Wilson 1996:95). A SSI format is a one-to one situation where the researcher has a series of topics, questions or issues to discuss with the interviewee in his or her mind. Such issues or topics are general, rather than a set of standard questions asked in a set sequence, which is replicated in every interview.

1.7 The Limitation of the Field of Study

This research is focused on the survivors of domestic violence from two women's groups found in Sweetwaters.

1.8 Ethical Issues in Implementing the Research

Two important ethical issues inform this research. Firstly, voluntary and informed consent. Participants were asked to participate freely and voluntarily. They were informed about time, disclosure, given opportunity to ask questions prior and during the study, and they were able to withdraw from the study freely. Secondly, protection from psychological harm. This ensured that during analysis and presentation no particular name of the respondent is mentioned to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

1.9 Outline of the Thesis

In the next chapter I explore the reality of domestic violence looking at the types of abuse, the cycle of abuse, and the situation in South Africa. Then in chapter three I look at the way religion can function to help and to hinder the survivors of violence, with an examination of this theme in the Bible. In chapter four I present my field research under the title of 'Zulu Women, Domestic Violence and Christian Faith' using a narrative approach, I allow the stories of the women to inform our discussion and analysis. Thereafter, in chapter five, I discuss some strategies for the church in the light of my findings, arguing that the church can both challenge the negative factors and affirm the positive factors that surround domestic violence.

CHAPTER TWO

The Reality of Domestic Violence

2.0 Introduction

This chapter deals with the reality of domestic violence. It deals with data for South Africa, the Domestic Violence Act, language barriers, service of protection orders, the impact in terms of family life, the impact in terms of psychological health and faith, and the impact in terms of physical health.

2.1 Background to Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is a pervasive problem and a universal phenomenon cutting across cultures, religion, class and ethnicity. The World Health Report (1997) states that a third of all women in the world will experience violence in intimate relationships at some point in their lives. This is also the case in South Africa. Women's movements in this country grew out of the women's struggle for national liberation and unity in the face of apartheid. Many women were at the forefront of the fight to end apartheid, with the assumption that if they were free from racial subjugation, they would be free from gendered oppression and violence at state level, within our communities and in the home.

A Gender Advocacy Programme Discussion Document (2003: 3) indicates that the transition from apartheid to the new democratic South Africa highlights the protection, promotion and fulfillment of human rights based on dignity, respect, and gender equality which is at the forefront of this new democracy. Yet the Medical Research Council of South Africa in 1999 revealed that 1 in 4 women were the victims of domestic violence. These statistics for domestic violence indicate that freedom from racial oppression did not mean freedom from gender oppression for women. Human rights based on dignity and gender equality have proved unsuccessful in their impact on the high levels of domestic violence so far. It can be argued that these rights have not transformed the lives of women in a substantial way, as patriarchal values

and customs continue to dominate the social and cultural lives of men and women in our country.

Domestic violence is sometimes known as *family violence* or *wife assault* and is defined in different ways. What is commonly agreed is that it happens within the confines of the home (Buckenham 1999:49). In this thesis domestic violence will be used in a wider sense to mean the physical, sexual, psychological, economical and spiritual abuse (violence) inflicted on a woman by her partner. Domestic violence describes a situation where one party attempts to exert power and control over another party through the use of violence. [Domestic violence takes place anywhere including the home, a place of supposed safety and happiness and shelter from the difficulties of life.] Domestic violence affects the individual man and woman involved, their children, their families, their friends, their neighbours, their religious communities and their colleagues at work. Women from all different cultures, with all levels of education, from all income groups, from all religions and with different personalities can become victims of domestic violence. It is important to recognize that normal men coming from different cultural backgrounds and who have different life experiences, often abuse the women whom they claim to love (De Sousa 1993: 17).

Although domestic violence takes a number of forms, it has a specific history of being sanctioned through cultural and social norms that are rooted within patriarchal understanding. As Flood (1997: 2) states below:

Patriarchy, the institutionalization of male dominance in both the public and private spheres, is central in accounting for violence against women...Men's domestic violence in families and homes is only understandable in the context of power inequalities and gender norms, and can be seen as a development of dominant-submissive power relations that exist in 'normal' family life.

De Sousa (1991:18) states that for one to understand domestic violence, one has to understand the roles that men and women have in our societies because these roles affect what is expected of them and, therefore, how they behave. Society expects men to be strong, to control, to be firm, protective, to be assertive and to fight for what they want. They are socialized to assert themselves in the world, as they will be expected to be the head of their families and provide financial support for the families. On the other hand women are expected to be gentle, kind,

nurturing, supportive, and to accept what they have at their disposal. Women are socialized to think of others first before themselves and that they must provide emotional support for their family. The way men and women are socialized and take up their roles in society, has a great effect on how domestic violence happens. It can be argued that most men believe that power and control can be achieved through violence and as such in most societies it is generally accepted that a man can beat his wife, and a boyfriend can assault his girlfriend.

Sinclair (1985: 25-36) has the view that one characteristic common to both partners in an abusive relationship is a very traditional notion about the appropriate roles for women and men. The sense here is that both partners agree that in a marriage the husband is the head of the family who is the final authority. It is the husband's job to search and provide for his family and exercise control over it even using violence. The appropriate role for the wife is to be passive, dependent, get pleasure and identity from pleasing others especially her husband and she must not challenge his authority. The perception of these roles serves the establishment of the socio-economic order and sets up a situation conducive to violence in a relationship or in the family. The reality of domestic violence is that in an intimate relationship between a man and woman, in 95 out of 100 cases, the woman is the victim of domestic violence and the man the perpetrator (Sinclair 1985:14).

Usually the woman easily becomes convinced that she is to blame for any acts of domestic violence. She internalizes the blame, as the myths in society promote the idea that women provoke the violence. Most women in society grow up with the mentality that it is their responsibility to make the marriage work. Sometimes family members, friends, professionals, ministers and community members support this type of belief. In situations of domestic violence, the partner or husband asks continuously, "Why do you make me hit you? If you would do as I say, this would not have happened". This makes her to try harder, be gentler, more obedient and cook better meals. Buckenham (1999:99) says that since the woman (wife) is not responsible for the violence, her tactics have no effect and she feels more and more guilty. This guilty feeling for the man's violence and the community's reinforcement of those feelings let the man off the hook and allow him to perpetuate the violence with little or no repercussion (Keen and van der Sandt 1993).

disability and even death (Women's Interchurch Council of Britain 1995 and De Sousa 1991:13). The following three newspapers reports in a local newspaper in the space of just eleven days, confirms the above:

Pamela Superman was killed by her common-law husband Lawrence Anderson. He beat her with a pick handle. The son intervened. He said the man locked the house and made accusations then started beating her. "My mother lay on the floor while he was landing the blows on her. I realised that she could not take it any longer because she tried to run away from him but he followed her. We both screamed for help but my father kept on hitting us, especially my mother. At one stage I could not cry anymore and I watched my mother helplessly being beaten up and I was in pain." She died of head injuries, at home in her sleep that night (Natal Witness, 17.02.96).

A city woman was beaten so viciously by her boyfriend that her larynx, esophagus and cheek bones were crushed, she had multiple skull fractures, and her head had swollen to almost twice its normal size. "She lying on the floor, her head covered in blood, with her tongue out, and having great difficult breathing...It was apparent that White had jumped on her head..." (Natal Witness, 24.02.96).

A 19-year-old woman Nozipho Ngcobo was sjambokked through the night by her jealous boyfriend, until she died. After he threw an axe at her and tried to stab her with a knife, the family intervened. Then he dragged her to his house and beaten her throughout the night. A neighbour heard the commotion but did not want to get involved. In the morning, the boyfriend carried her on his back to the clinic. "She was so badly assaulted that the nurse could not put a drip in her. She was bleeding through her ears and face was beyond recognition" (Natal Witness, 28.02.96).

2.2.2 Sexual Abuse

Buckenham (1999:50) and De Sousa (1991:14) agree that physical abuse is often accompanied by sexual abuse, which is referred to as forced sexual activity. In this case women normally are beaten and then asked to have sex. Since they are too scared to say no, they just lie there and pretend as if nothing is wrong. Sexual abuse at the same time could be in the form of a rejection of the woman as a sexual partner. Some scholars argue that situations where women are forced to tolerate the presence of pornography in their homes and the use of it in their relationships can also be considered as sexual abuse.

2.2.3 Psychological/Emotional/Verbal Abuse

In psychological abuse the abuser may force the woman to do degrading things. These things include licking the dishes clean. The abuser may make threats such as suicide, threats to harm or kidnap the children, calling her with funny names, swearing at her, constantly criticizing her and undermining her in public and private (Buckenham 1999:50). The abuser makes the woman feel useless and that nothing she does is good enough. The woman would not be allowed to go out on her own because she cannot be trusted. The man constantly accuses the woman of not being faithful to him. The husband treats the woman as if she has no emotional needs and is only there to serve his needs (De Sousa 1991:14).

2.2.4 Economic Abuse

In economic abuse, the man uses money to undermine the woman in many ways such as: the abuser spends most of the money on himself and only gives her a small amount, expecting her to do more with the money than she possibly can. The abuser accuses the woman of stealing his money and accuses her of using the family's money for her own benefit (Buckenham 1999:51). In situations where the wife is working, on pay day the man will demand all the money to be given to him. If not the man would scream at the woman and beat her up (De Sousa 1991:14).

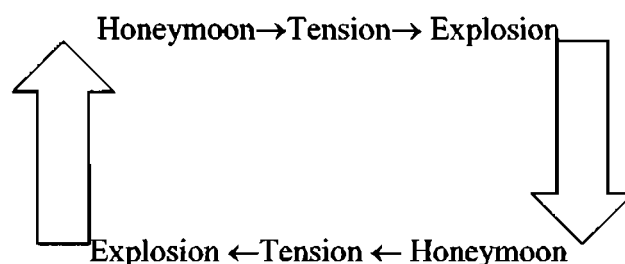
2.2.5 Spiritual Abuse

This is when a woman's faith is used to keep her from finding help, or leaving an abusive situation, by telling her that she must endure, submit, return and make sure she does not do anything to upset her husband. In the church context she is led to believe the abuse is her fault, and if she seeks to leave, she is not a good Christian, and will be condemned by God. The Bible is quoted to her literally, particularly passages that serve to 'put her in place', condemn divorce, or glorify suffering (Buckenham 1999:51).

2.3 The Cycle of Domestic Violence ||

There are usually three stages in domestic violence, which occur in what is called the cycle of domestic violence. This cycle describes a pattern of violence but does not explain why domestic violence happens (Women's Interchurch Council of Canada & Women's Interchurch Council of Britain 1995:36). The abused woman has little or no control over the cycle of domestic violence because the abuser controls every phase of the cycle. Abused women labour in vain when they think or try to stop the cycle of violence by being better wives and so on. It is only when the abused woman realizes that it is the man who controls the cycle that she will feel strong and more able to decide how to get out of the abusive relationship. It must be recognized that rational arguing in the midst of domestic violence is futile and it is better not to think that one can rationally persuade a person to leave her partner simply by pointing out the patterns. If persuaded, very often-abused women will agree initially to leave the abusive partner but sooner than expected they will return to the abusive relationship.

Most people wonder why abused women return or remain in the abusive relationship. Many women in abusive relationships love their partners such that they do not want to be separated, and yet at the same time they do not want domestic violence to continue. This places these abused women in a dilemma. As it will be seen in the three phases of the domestic violence cycle, the main components of the cycle involve love, hope and fear.



2.3.1 STAGE 1: Honeymoon/Calm Phase

This phase could be the first or the third one. Immediately after marriage, most couples go for a honeymoon as their first stage to celebrate their union. This is usually a happy moment to *

cherish and both partners have never ending smiles on their faces. The woman hopes this stage will have an endless point. As time goes on, however things start changing which brings tension * between the two partners. This phase could also be after the abusive phase and the man becomes extremely loving, kind and sorry for the abuse (Keen and van der Sandt 1993). The abuser will say things like the following:

- Sorry, it will never happen again.
- It only happened because I was drunk.
- I had a bad day at work, it will not happen again.
- I love you so much such that I cannot live without you.
- Please say you forgive me.
- We will go away on holiday.

The abuser may be genuinely sorry for what he has done and may not understand his own behaviour. According to Buckenham (1999:60), the abuser in this phase may seem like a different person, the one who fell in love with the abused woman. The abused woman knows that her partner has good points as well, and is not all bad as a person. She may choose to focus more on the good as a method of rationalizing the bad. The honeymoon phase that comes after the abuse is extremely confusing to the woman as she is trying to understand how someone who loves her can inflict such violence on her. The abused woman may feel compassion for the man and minimize his responsibility for his own actions. Guilt inevitably starts to hold the woman in the relationship. They both believe the abused woman is responsible for the man's future welfare, and, if she leaves, for breaking up the family. If the abused woman stays, it is not long before the loving behaviour gives way to domestic violence incidents. A new cycle of domestic violence begins. Overtime the cycle of domestic violence shifts. Calm periods become shorter; * tensions and violence increase. In some relationships, usually when the abuse has been happening for a long time, possibly years, there is no calm/honeymoon stage at all. These relationships move between tension build-up and abuse (Buckenham 1999:60; and Women's Interchurch Council of Canada & Women's Interchurch Council of Britain 1995:36).

2.3.2 STAGE 2: Tension Build up Phase

The abuser starts to verbally, emotionally or physically abuse the woman in small ways. Now the woman starts to feel tense. To change the situation for the better the woman tries to please the man by doing things such as cooking a favorite meal or keeping the children out of his way. The small instances of domestic violence increase and become worse as tension builds up. As tension increases, the woman becomes more passive while the man becomes more oppressive and aggressive. This situation can last from a few minutes to a month but all this time the woman will be having hope that things will change. When the tension reaches an intolerable level, the woman feels that an explosion in a man is inevitable (De Sousa 1991:48).

2.3.3 STAGE 3: Abuse Phase

The tension that built up in phase two erupts into domestic violence. The man abuses the woman badly. The woman cannot easily understand the situation and she thinks the man is out of control. This phase is very difficult and painful for the woman to open up because the man fully degrades her either by beating her, sexually assaulting, or injuring her. Often women in this phase are trapped in a relationship by fear. Women believe that the threats of the partner to kill her or her family will become a reality. This phase can last anything between a few minutes or a few days (De Sousa 1991:48). In this phase the man can kill the woman (or sometimes in reaction, the woman will kill the man).

Each of the three phases of domestic violence that we have noted, leads into the next one. The cycle will be broken only when the man (abuser) who controls the three phases will take responsibility for his behaviour and seek assistance, or the woman (abused) will leave the abusive relationship. The core of this domestic violence cycle rests on power and control, and many men perpetuating it will try to erode any aspects of control and power that the woman may have over her life. The abusive man does not think that the abuse is his fault but puts the blame on other things like alcohol drinking, work frustrations, his uncontrolled temper, the children's noise and other reasons. The abused woman very often pretends that the abuse did not happen or that it is not "too bad", because she wants to believe that it will not happen again. The

problem is that if there is no person to admit that domestic violence takes place, no person will do anything about it and thus the domestic violence will continue (De Sousa 1991:49 and Buckenham 1999:61).

Abused women need a greater understanding of what happens to them. They need to stop denying what is happening to them and to take the initiative to find the kind of support that will assist them to break the domestic violence cycle, thus exposing the abuser and freeing them from the abuse (Storm 1995:20-22).

2.4 Why Women Remain in an Abusive Relationship?

Despite the ordeals that women undergo through domestic violence, one might ask, why women choose to remain in such violent relationships. According to De Sousa (1991:22-23) women choose to stay in the abusive relationship because of emotional, economic and societal reasons.

In terms of emotional reasons she may not have the inner strength to leave due to her low self-esteem and the belief that she cannot escape before this powerful man or she may fear the future in the sense that she cannot manage to live by herself. She may still hope that the man will change because he normally says sorry after beating her, or she may still love him despite the abuse, because sometimes he is nice to her. Often she thinks there is something wrong with her, so that if she changes he might not beat her again. *

In terms of economic reasons for staying in the relationship, she may have no employment or money to live on once she leaves, or she may have fears to work for low wages due to a lack of skills and end up being abused by the employer. Likewise she may have small children to look after and so cannot find a full-time job and no money to employ a baby setter. She may have no other place to go due to the unwillingness or inability of the family to assist, or she may feel that she cannot expose her children to the difficult life they would experience once she leaves.

In terms of societal reasons, she may be told that she should stay by her family who says that she has a responsibility to make the relationship work again, friends who say that she should stay for

the sake of the children, neighbours who say that she will be a bad wife and mother if she leaves, or religious ministers who remind her of her marriage vows where she promised to stay with her husband 'for better and for worse'. She may also stop trying to get help because she knows that the police never answer her calls and that the court sees her as a 'bad' woman who nags her partner until he is forced to beat her. Or she may feel embarrassed to admit that she is abused and her marriage that is a 'failure'. Or perhaps she knows the resources available to abused women are few and limited and thus loses hope of ever finding help.

2.5 Domestic Violence in South Africa

At present there are conflicting national statistics in South Africa due to the nature of domestic violence that makes it very difficult to quantify the experience. The police are the most important role players to keep statistics. Among the cases that are reported, many of them are withdrawn and those that are tried are not recorded as domestic violence because even with the DVA of 1998 there is no crime called 'domestic violence' and police record such acts as assault. Many domestic violence cases are not reported because some women do not share their own stories of violence and suffering. The researcher argues that within this patriarchal society in which we live in, most women have become used to being placed second and are used to suffering as a normal way of living. This happens both at home and in society at large because of that they do not consider their own stories as important.

In some domestic cases, the abuser kills the victim (woman) or the woman in striking back, kills the abuser but the death is never on the statistics of domestic violence. Gender Advocacy Pamphlet (2003) estimates that as many as one in every six South African women is in an abusive domestic relationship. Mathews and Abrahams (2001: 8) indicate that a national representative study found that one in four women in South Africa have experienced physical violence by an intimate partner. Jewkes et al (2000: 421-428) states that sexual violence has also been described as widespread within South Africa, with high numbers of rapes reported to police compared to the female population. Jewkes and Abrahams (2001) point out that despite this research, reported rapes (to police and research studies) are but the tip of the "iceberg" with most cases going undetected.

“It is widely accepted that South Africa has one of the highest rates of domestic violence in the world”, (Miller 1994:130). For every six women in SA there is one woman who is regularly assaulted by her partner (Miller 1994:130). Bollen et al (1999:16-17) state that:

- 42% of women experience all types of abuse on an ongoing basis.
- 90% of them experience emotional abuse where they are humiliated and degraded in front of others.
- 90% experience physical abuse where they are being pushed and beaten.
- 71% experience sexual abuse where attempts to kiss and touch are followed by forced sexual intercourse and/or anal sex.
- 58% experience economic abuse where money is taken without consent.

Clearly, domestic violence leaves victims destitute and severely traumatized. It does not only happen to poor women, or to young women, or to women who behave in a particular way but can happen to anyone (Miller 1994:130).

2.6 The Domestic Violence Act (No.116 of 1998)

In South Africa in the month of December, we have 16 days of activism against violence against women and children. Domestic violence is well described as being a pervasive problem that affects women from all sectors of society as already seen in this thesis. In trying to deal with domestic violence problem, the government has committed itself to the eradication of domestic violence through the ratification of international treaties and the reformulation of the Domestic Violence Act, 1998.

The Domestic Violence Act, number 116, of November 1998 (DVA 1998) broadened the scope of domestic violence compared to the Prevention of Family Violence Act, 133, of 1993. The DVA 1998 definition of Domestic Violence provides for a range of experiences to be taken into account. Any act of domestic violence violates women's human dignity, and thus is a violation

of human rights embedded in the South African Constitution. The objective and purpose of this act is to recognize everyone's constitutional right to freedom and security of the person, to be free from all forms of violence and not to be treated in a cruel, inhuman or degrading way.

Many women's organisations consider it being progressive because of how it protects women. The preamble to the DVA 1998 reveals the government's intention to eradicate domestic violence by "providing victims with the maximum protection the law can provide" and making sure that "relevant organs of state", such as the police, clerks of the court and magistrates, implement the act effectively. The Prevention of Family Violence Act 133 of 1993 only applied to those who were married by civil or customary law or those in common law marriages who had lived together. The definition of domestic violence that is in DVA 1998 includes parents and children, siblings, people in an engagement or dating relationship not living together and people in a same-sex relationship. The old act allowed judicial officers to exercise wide discretion in determining what behaviour constituted abuse because there was no definition of domestic violence. This is no longer the case with DVA 1998 (Chagunda 2004).

It is important to recognize, however, that there are a number of factors that impede the implementation of the DVA 1998.

2.6.1 Inadequate Budget //

Since the DVA 1998 became the law, there has not been a large enough budget to implement the law. There is inadequate budget allocation to cover the training of police and court officials to implement the DVA 1998, effectively. This hinders most police to know the tasks that they are supposed to perform, decisions that best protect victims of domestic violence, the victims' rights in terms of the act, and knowing special investigative skills with regard to domestic violence. A great deal of sensitivity and awareness is necessary to deal with domestic violence situations. Categories of "innocent" and "guilty" are not easily distinguishable as the perpetrator and the victim sometimes occupy the role of both innocent and guilty (Goldman 2000).

2.6.2 Language

Language creates a major problem to understand the DVA 1998 and how it can assist the victims of domestic violence. Even though there are eleven official languages, it is not at all police stations where all languages can be spoken. The police are often the first people where victims of domestic violence ask for assistance, and it is important that the conversation should be done in the victim's local language as required by the act. When the victim makes an application for a protection order, the police and the courts do not always have translators and staff available who speak the first language of the victim. The language of the forms is complicated (legal jargon) and the forms are mainly available in English and to a smaller extent, in Afrikaans (Pareeze et al 2001). This hinders the effective implementation of the act, but above all it demoralizes and dis-empowers the complainant (Chagunda 2004).

2.6.3 Time Span for Service of Protection Orders and the Breach of Protection Order

The service of orders and the time span involved to get an order is critical in contributing to the effective implementation of the DVA 1998. Sometimes once the application for an order has been completed it takes a very long time for the service of the application order to be given. This leaves the survivor of domestic violence unprotected and vulnerable (Chagunda 2004). There is a lack of clarity about what constitutes the breach of the Protection Order and guidance about how to deal with breaches. This creates difficulties in the sentencing of respondents. It happens very often that the complainant withdraws charges against the abuser because of fear, once the Protection Order has been granted because the abuser becomes more aggressive. Some complainants withdraw the case once they hear that the abuser will be sent to jail, as they are not sure where financial help will come from. This creates uncertainty and a sense of disempowerment by law enforcement officials (Mathews & Abrahams 2001:40).

2.6.4 Further Concerns

The following are addition reasons that impede the implementation of the DVA 1998:

- long distances to where survivors of domestic violence can get help such as police stations and NGO's serving the area;

- lack of money for transport and sometimes there is lack of taxis and buses especially in the rural areas;
- slow responses from the police;
- in some instances police officials themselves abuse their intimate partners so when the survivor of domestic violence reports, they do not see the problem;
- poor and expensive telecommunications services;
- few support services for domestic violence victims and few places of safety for women if *The Haven* they must leave their homes;
- pre-conceived notions about domestic violence effectively block adequate communication between the victim and the person helping the victim with the application for the protection order and the abuse of the act due to its wide definition.
- Police officers find that compliance with DVA becomes challenging when they perceive that complainants misuse the act. This makes them not to take seriously other cases of domestic violence. The implication for this is that an individual police officer will use his or her judgment on whether the particular case is serious or not (Goldman 2000).

2.7 Impact of Domestic Violence on Children

Children are the most vulnerable members of the family and the society at large. This is largely because children are dependent on their parents and other adults of the family and society at large for their holistic well-being. As they grow up, children will be affected by almost everything that happens around them be it positive or negative. Any acts of violence during the life of children will leave an indelible mark in their life even though each child will react differently.

2.7.1 Emotional Effects //

Usually children will suffer emotional effects first. This will be due to the tension phase in the

house whereby children are tense and worried since they do not know what the man will do in the abusive phase. Children suffer from stress, as they cannot relax. Living under stress can make it difficult for children to concentrate at school. Some husbands often use the way children behave as a way of starting a fight with the wife. The problem with this is that children think that it is their fault that their mother gets beaten. They feel guilty for this and even worse when they fail to protect their mother from the abusive father. Children are usually unhappy to live in the family where domestic violence becomes a way of life. This unhappiness leads them to serious depression that sometimes is accompanied with constant crying, nightmares and sleeping problems. Furthermore, the experience of stress and anxiety in abused women results in children not having attention and affection that they deserve (De Sousa 1991:78-79). *- self aware*

2.7.2 Physical Effects ||

The continued emotional stress affects children's bodies such that they will show their fears and feelings through illness such as headaches, stomachaches, nail-biting and vomiting. Some children become very aggressive. *psychosomatic pains/troubles*
emotional

2.7.3 Social Effects

⇒ dilemma in behaving.

Children who grow up in abusive families where happiness and peace are hardly found, become confused as to whether there are right norms which people should follow to be happy and live peacefully. This may affect their behaviour in such a way that lying and stealing may be the option chosen to seek for happiness and peace. Once children grow up in the environment where violence is the methodology of solving conflict, they will not learn the alternative ways of solving problems because violence will be used to get what they want (De Sousa 1991:79).

2.7.4 Lasting Effects

*→ drop in education (at school) = missing, lateness, drop, ⇒ no job, no future
→ Future sexual abuse for their partners.*

As mothers leave the abusive home for sometime and come back at another time, so too the children go with their mother. This means that those children switch schools often, or miss many classes or even find it very hard to cope at school. Children's performance may also drop

at school. In some situations, children drop out of school and go to look for employment. Because they may have left school so soon, they hardly have any qualifications to find a job that can give them good salary. During the honeymoon phase, the man makes so many promises. When the man fails to fulfill such promises, children start distrusting the man and by implication, other adults. This might plant in children's minds that they could do the same when they grow up.

Sometimes in abusive families, children witness their mother being sexually abused by their angry fathers. Children possibly will consider women as things for men's pleasure and children might consider sex as a violent act and a way of controlling women. Children's sexual relationship might be affected as they grow up because children learn how to behave by seeing how their parents and other adults behave.

Children from abusive relationships grow up with distorted information about relationships especially once they are married. Girls may grow up accepting domestic violence, believing that once married they must honour and obey their husbands and accept abusive behaviour. Boys may grow up believing that one day as an adult they would have the right to beat their wives or girlfriends (De Sousa 1991:79-80). They consider what their fathers do as examples to them, that a man should have control over a woman and a woman should always do what the man wants, and if this does not work, the solution lies in beating the woman. Boys grow up with the mentality that once their power is threatened, measures should be taken so as to remain in control. Domestic violence increases belief that power and control are achieved by violence in a family and society. In a society this results in an increase for legal and counseling costs and continuation of beliefs that people are not equal (De Sousa 1991:19).

off
the
page

Domestic violence becomes self-propagating, as it promotes the cycle of violence. The cycle of violence plays a part for people to accept violence in society and adhere to the different roles men and women play. Many times a woman is blamed and shamed. Domestic violence breaks up families and confuses children and above all denies women their human dignity, worth and the sacredness of being in the image of God. The church should be concerned with domestic violence because these women and children who become victims of domestic violence are part of

the body of Christ and also created in God's image. They deserve love, freedom and justice that Jesus Christ taught and lived for. The church should surely be concerned because domestic violence goes against the greatest commandment, "Love your neighbour as yourself" (Mark 12:13).

2.8 The Impact of Domestic Violence on the Female Victim

Domestic violence is particularly traumatic and destructive on the family structure and its functioning. Domestic violence affects women in all aspects of life, be it physically, emotionally, verbally, psychologically, sexually and economically. An abused woman becomes a prisoner in her own house with her own intimate partner. She suffers a loss of friends, family and human dignity. When a victim is abused physically, she has to seek medical attention, often lacking financial support to get adequate treatment. Abused women become prisoners in their own homes, the very place which should be a refuge. Normally abused women feel isolated, as family and friends withdraw their support to the victim (De Sousa 1991:27). Women's faith suffers severely as the abuse continues. Women's roles at home decrease due to depression and despair. Some abused women take medication to cope with the situation.

Some workingwomen quit their jobs because of domestic violence, and as a result they become trapped in poverty. Some women, due to poverty, very often have to make the difficult decisions not to send their children to school. This is due to their inability to pay school fees or to provide transport money for the children. The victim loses self-confidence, develops low self-esteem, feels helpless, angry and powerless as they see themselves trapped in an abusive situation, and they come to the conclusion that there is nothing they can do to stop the abuse (De Sousa 1991:28). Abused women such as those who sustained physical injuries, of which most were injuries to the head and face, feel as if it is not worth living anymore. This sometimes makes the victim commit suicide as the last resort (Koss et al 1991).

2.9 Domestic Violence and Masculine Identity

As we have seen the effects of domestic violence that are so dehumanizing and fatal, one can

genuinely say why is this largely a problem of masculinity? De Sousa (1991:79-80) argues that the problem is with masculinity because when boys grow up believing that one day as an adult they would have the right to beat their wives or girlfriends, they will actually do that. Boys by seeing how their fathers abuse their mothers, this becomes a lesson to them, as what man has to do to have control over a woman. Boys are socialized in that way that when a girl/woman does not do what he wants, she must be taught a lesson through beating. This becomes a social behaviour that young men learn to remain powerful and in control. A number of sociologists agree that social stress factors such as low income, unemployment, poverty and social isolation contribute to domestic violence because of social construction (www.lawlink chapter7). Nancy Chodorow (www.lawlink chapter7) argues that patriarchal ideology is a tool that legitimizes the industrial capitalistic system by socializing children to know the father's and mother's role in a society. The fathers take the role of dominant provider; boys are being psychologised in this manner and are prepared for a greater involvement within the workplace. The mothers are defined as passive nurturer and who have to spend more of their time in the family. Due to this reason, men are socialized to believe in their dominance within the home, they react violently to women who challenge them.

2.9 Conclusion

Domestic violence is a learned behaviour and not genetically determined. It is possible to eradicate such behaviour. One of the effective ways of overcoming it is through awareness programmes about legislation especially how it can help them. But this requires an adequate budget, enough resources, continued church involvement against domestic violence and a strong political will. Having read about domestic violence in the lives of the people, chapter three will be looking at domestic violence and Christianity, and the role that religion plays in both helping and hindering this violence.

CHAPTER THREE

Domestic Violence and Christian Faith

3.0 Introduction

Having shown that domestic violence is indeed a reality in our societies and that it takes place anywhere where people live, we now turn to see the ambiguity of religion in domestic violence. Religion functions both as a power that oppresses or hinders, and one that liberates or helps people. In the first section we explore this ambiguity by looking at how religion can function to legitimize oppression and injustice, and how it can also be used to challenge this oppression. Then we explore these two contrasting functions of religion in more depth. Firstly, by looking at how the Old and New Testaments and theology have served to hinder the survivors of violence, and then by exploring those aspects of the Bible and theology that help these survivors.

The gospel of Jesus Christ calls the believers to the recognition of evil, and in response, leads to taking real actions toward justice-making community. This could be echoed from Luke 13:16 “Ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the Sabbath day?”

3.1 Religion and Power

Charles Villa-Vicencio, in a discussion about the way Christianity functioned to both legitimate and challenge apartheid, speaks of two theorists who capture this ambiguous role of religion, Karl Marx and Max Weber. His discussion provides a helpful framework for our own thinking. Karl Marx perceived religion as a secondary social phenomenon and a product of the socio-economic circumstances of a particular society. According to Marx, it is human beings that make religion in a particular situation. This explains why Marx considers religious perceptions as the projections of the society, and a manifestation of the ideals and values of existing socio-economic interests. This type of thinking begs a question as to whose interests dominate the projections of that particular society since societies are all different. Marx has it that the ruling

class's interests and ideas dominate the projections of the particular society (Villa-Vicencio 1988:175).

It has to be understood that the ruling class interest and ideas are never left unchallenged by the oppressed classes. Despite this challenge, the ruling class ideas remain dominant due to the material and structural resources of the ruling class that control the media. Marx concludes that in the similar manner it is ruling class religion that is the dominant religion of a given society. Marx argued that religion was part of the superstructural legitimation of the existing socio-economic order: "Man has found in the fantastic reality of heaven, where he sought a supernatural being, only his own reflection" (Villa-Vicencio 1988:176). According to Marx religious suffering [of the oppressed] is at the same time an expression of real suffering and protest against real suffering. This was the genesis of his famous phrase, "religion is the opium of the people". In Marx's thinking religion ultimately directs the energies of the oppressed away from the causes of their oppression, to an illusionary escape from it.

The Marxian social analysis helps us to learn that the dominant religion of a given society becomes the carrier of the dominant ideas of that society. Thus the ruling class, to legitimate the oppressive order, would use religion as part of the ideological superstructure of society. This helps us to evaluate the role of the church in their respective societies. This way of looking at religion sheds some light about how dominant classes in religion (men) have used religious power to maintain and promote domestic violence.

Villa-Vicencio (1988:181) argues that theology is never neutral. "It reflects the social location, values and interests of those who are responsible for it. Until recently those responsible for the articulation of theological ideals as well as those responsible for the religious means of production have been almost exclusively members of the dominant class...whose interest it was to maintain the privileged location of the church within ruling-class structures. Until recently this kind of theology has been challenged by a theology done from the perceptive of the poor". This new theology shows that the oppressed/poor have power too and their particular theology arises out of the experience of the poor and the oppressed.

Learning from Marxian social analysis, people have inherent power to change the world from the way it is to the way it is suppose to be. Every person's power has to be used in building God's Kingdom on earth. This involves taking part in the liberating work of God. Religion is not supposed to be an element for the exploitation of one class by another but a source of renewal.

Max Weber developed his theory of religion as a source of social change providing a certain corrective to the Marxian understanding of social evolution. He found out that Israelite intellectuals were responsible for developing an alternative form of theology that could oppose and challenge the dominant theology communicated by state rituals. Weber uses "intellectuals" to characterize a certain group in ancient Israel [Levites, prophets and lay intellectuals] who were educated enough to be considered part of the ruling class, but who specifically took up the cause of the uneducated, the poor and the oppressed (Wittenberg 1996:236).

Weber did recognize that there are times when religion or a particular religious idea serves the upper classes as an ideology of legitimation and lower classes as a form of otherworldly consolation (Villa-Vicencio 1988:184). However, Weber's special interest was the study of religion as a source of social change and not serving to reinforce the existing order in society. It is interesting to note that Weber saw human made structures such as culture, an ideology, a political system or an ecclesial structure as so powerful that instead of them being the servants of their creators, the creators became their captives. This is well captured by Ruben Alves as the "arrogance of power" (Villa- Vicencio 1988:185) a notion that suggests that contemporary society is doomed to destruction not because of its weakness but because of its power. It follows then that people have become victims and trapped in the structures that they have made.

People in the ruling class find pleasure and security; but they are trapped within the limitations of the existing order; they become unable to see new visions. Their dreams are limited and contained by the dominant order. This explains why it is mostly the poor/oppressed ones who dream new dreams and see new visions. It follows then that it is the religion of the poor that gives expression to the dreams and aspirations of the poor and the afflicted. It is well put by Villa-Vicencio (1988:188) that people intoxicated with the order that exists do not see visions because vision is born of pain. The religious experiences of the poor and oppressed located on

the peripheral of dominant classes are ultimately the hope of renewal for both the church and the society.

Considering the contributions of both Marx and Weber, one would not be wrong to say that religion can be used as power to oppress or alienate and liberate or help or give life. Dominant theology that reflects the values of the dominant classes and the alternative theology reflective of the marginalized and dominated classes are both found in theology, often live together in the church. Villa-Vicencio (1988:190) provides us with a very good summary of these two positions:

Given the impossibility of separating theology from its social base, and recognising that these classes also dominate ecclesial structures that are shared with the dominant classes, it follows that ideas and programs of action representative of the poor are invariably found in the margins and on the edges of church structures. In many instances it is in the church on the margins of the institutional churches and outside of these structures-in the church of the streets-that the hope of Christian renewal is found. It is here that a different kind of piety is found, the liberating spirituality of the poor.

This ambiguous role of religion is clearly seen in the Bible itself. Weber (Villa-Vicencio 1988: 184), Wittenberg (1996:236) and Bruggemann (Mc Kim 1998:572) agree that to understand the texts produced in the history of Israel one has to understand the social historical contexts of those particular times. Bruggemann argues that the biblical texts point to a “conflict struggle” between the structure legitimization (Royal) trajectory and the embrace of pain (Mosaic) trajectory, which leads to confrontation (in Gottwald 1983:308). This is where Bruggemann links two models of speaking about God, where he mentions two trajectories, which are the royal and mosaic trajectories.

The Mosaic trajectory refers to the movement of protest which is situated among the disinherited and which articulates the theological vision in terms of a God who decisively intrudes, even against seemingly impenetrable institutions and orderings. The Davidic or royal trajectory tends to be a movement of consolidation that is situated among the established and secure and which articulates its theological vision in terms of a God who faithfully abides and sustains on behalf of

the present ordering (Gottwald 1983:308-309). The pursuit of this paradigm of trajectories from early Israel until current scholarship, informed as it is by sociological considerations is very essential in the way that it affirms that there is no disinterestedness in the text or in the interpreter. Such a paradigm permits texts to be understood more effectively in terms of their placement in Israel's faith, life and in the traditional process (Gottwald 1983:326)

Wittenberg (1996:236) expands this by further suggesting a method of conflict and opposition in the Old Testament. He holds that the Old Testament tells the story and that the texts make sense specifically to the community of faith that brings commitment to the scriptures, seeking to hear it as bread of life (Mc Kim 1998:578). Wittenberg (1996:236) puts it very clearly that the Biblical text is a story of an elite leadership and that of the poor and the oppressed. Basing on this, he argues that in treating the Biblical text, we have to take into consideration the context in which the insights were formulated. He concentrates on one central issue that is "the establishment of royal-imperial power and the resistance to that power, the establishment of the hegemonic theology on the one hand, which is challenged by a new type of theology on the other" (Wittenberg 1996:237).

Wittenberg suggests that to understand the text one has to use his proposed method of resistance and opposition, and this will give birth to the new theology that will be relevant to one's situation. He goes on stating that we can only make theology relevant to our situation if we concentrate not only on theological ideas or theological traditions but by taking into account the historical context, the various social groups and their struggles. He maintains that traditions that emerge are always derived from these particular backgrounds. Wittenberg argues strongly that this new process of resistance and opposition can give a true theological reflection because it will be telling the story of those in power – supporting the privileged upper class and that of the poor and the oppressed.

The different information by Biblical scholars provides the understanding why religion has been used to oppress (as Marx argued in above) and used as a potential for renewal (as Weber argued above). Some churches have used the Bible to justify domestic violence while others have also

used the same Bible to condemn domestic violence. Victims of domestic violence have used scriptures as a source of remaining in an abusive relationship while others have used scriptures to liberate themselves from the abusive relationship. Domestic violence is one of the products of women's unequal status and men use power acquired in many different ways such as religion to abuse and oppress women. It is generally perceived that men socially enjoy a higher status than women do and this gives them (men) the advantage to use their positions to abuse women for example in religious position.

It should be noted that most of the present religious leaders such as priests and pastors carry on the tradition that has been handed over from generation to generation which is grounded in the patriarchal cultures. Most religious leaders have been upholding the patriarchal family as divinely mandated. In the patriarchal family structure, the women of the family, both daughters and wives, and their sexuality are placed under the control of the male head of household. Religious endorsement of such social structures directly gives men power to control. Male pastors or priests automatically have power over the religious institution and thus the entire congregation.

Male church leaders have sidelined the alternative traditions in the Bible. For example, there are women who also had power, but they have not been emphasised much by male scholars as a way of suppressing them. The matriarch Rebekah acted contrary to patriarchal customs, when she had to further the divine plan by pushing her youngest son, Jacob, forward to receive the birthright. Moses, who eventually brought the enslaved Hebrews out of Egypt, survived childhood only because of women who circumvent the Egyptian Pharaoh's plan to kill all Hebrew male infants. Shiphrah and Puah, defiant midwives, disobey Pharaoh's order to kill all the Hebrew male children whose birth they attend. After his birth Moses' older sister, Miriam, arranges Moses' adoption by the Pharaoh's daughter and for him to be nursed by his birth mother. Miriam thus insures not only his survival but also his self-identification as a Hebrew. Women also played key roles in the religious development of Israel. In the book of Judges, Deborah, the only female of the twelve judges listed, is also the only one who follows Moses' tradition of actually presiding over the people of Israel as a judge.

Religion and power are intertwined in the sense that most founders were men, their closest followers were men, and thus its foundations are male dominated. This is why Marx said, "man makes religion". Villa-Vicencio (1988:175) depicted well Marx in saying that religion is a secondary social phenomenon and a product of the socio-economic circumstances of a given society. For Marx religious perceptions were the projections of society, simply a manifestation of the ideals and values of existing socio-economic interests. On the other hand, Weber saw the way that religion could function as a power for renewal. We have seen this also in the Old Testament where Bruggemann argues that the Davidic trajectory serves to legitimate structures of power, whereas the Mosaic trajectory serves to encourage the struggle against pain and oppression. Religion thus contains values or news for the rich or powerful or oppressors and the poor or powerless or oppressed. The ruling classes have found from religion the power to oppress and the ruled have found from religion the power to break free. This is part of our human nature as we strive to achieve our goals in life. The oppressed and the oppressor have power but it is used in different ways to achieve different goals (Mann 1986:5).

Domestic violence raises deep and disturbing questions for Christians. Some Christians are involved in different ways that perpetuate it. Most of the time the church has nothing to do with it despite of the mandate given by Jesus Christ to his followers. There are discrepancies between the justice and love the ministers of the church proclaim and the way the victims of domestic violence and those who work with victims and perpetrators of domestic violence perceive it. As we have seen above, there ought to be no room for women to be victims of violence whether physical, emotional or psychological or verbal, economical or spiritual. We are all created in God's image, and Jesus came to liberate us, so that all of us could enjoy peace and freedom. But reality shows that women are facing domestic violence in our communities and even in church where one could not expect this to happen. The faith community to actualize the Gospel of Jesus Christ has to be compassionate to the victims of domestic violence because the experience of such violence is so deeply violating and desecrating the deeper being. Any acts of violence in our communities' makes the world less like God's Kingdom.

We now turn to closer examination of how the Bible and theology does and can work to hinder and to help survivors of domestic violence. We first explore the way it can be a power that

hinders.

3. 2 A Power that Hinders

When talking about the power that hinders I am referring to the power that creates a wall between people, the power that creates obstacles. It relates to the Marxian understanding of religion, and to the Davidic trajectory we have examined above. Here I shall look into the Old and New Testaments as well as traditional theology.

3.2.1 The Old Testament

Many people consider the Bible as an important and integral part of their life. In fact, it has a major influence on their lives. When dealing with the Old Testament, we should bear in mind that the Old Testament should be understood as what God has made known about Godself, about human beings and about the world. Israel is the main area of God's disclosure in the Old Testament. It follows then that in Old Testament we encounter God as a God of history, who has made Godself known to people through specific events in history.

Wittenberg (1996:233) argues that the theology of the Old Testament is not an abstract body of knowledge which a person can learn by heart and pass on, but is a process in which one has to be involved, a way in which ever new decisions have to be taken, a response to the concrete challenges of history which cannot be divorced and abstracted from them. The Old Testament is to be seen as embedded in the socio-economic and cultural history of the Israelites. The Old Testament is intertwined with political power for it shows the ruling elites using religion to support and legitimate their own interests (Wittenberg 1996:234).

In the Old Testament we do find passages that indicate the existence of domestic violence. As a matter of fact it is found even in the homes where one could not think of the existence of domestic violence. Domestic violence against women usually happens to women or children by someone they know and trust. This can be seen from the first 22 verses of 2 Samuel 13 in the Bible where Tamar was a victim of domestic violence. Just as in our time, how people react to

domestic violence, the Bible shows similar behaviour. 2 Samuel 13 is a very good example.

But Amnon would not listen to Tamar; and being stronger than she, he forced her and lay with her...Her brother Absalom said to her, "...Be quiet for now, my sister; he is your brother; do not take this to heart." So Tamar remained, a desolate woman, in her brother Absalom's house (2 Samuel 13:14, 20).

Tamar was abused by her half brother Amnon with the help of his friend and the complicity of his father David. Tamar tried to resist her half brother who wanted to sexually abuse her, but Amnon over powered her, and he raped her. Tamar failed to bargain for her dignity. Tamar being a woman in a household where women were under the ownership of their fathers, or brothers or husbands, had little power or recourse to seek justice. When Tamar narrated this abusive story to her other brother Absalom, she was told to keep quiet and not to take it seriously but to get along with her life as if nothing had happened to her. Tribble (1984:52) argued that in the first house (2 Samuel 13:7a) Tamar was a beautiful virgin (13:1,2). In the house of her brother Amnon (13:7b,8) Tamar became a violated thing (13:14,17). In the house of her brother Absalom (13:20c) Tamar becomes a raped, desolate, despised, rejected and a woman of sorrows. King David, the father to Amnon and Tamar, sides and is sympathetic with his son and disregards Tamar. The two males (father and son) join to deny justice for the female (sister). This is one of the few-recorded ancient stories that show pain and humiliation women and girls experienced on daily basis. It indeed happens to trusting relationships, with someone they know and trust. This is echoed correctly in the following passage:

Listen to my prayer, O God, do not ignore my plea, hear me and answer me. My thoughts trouble me and I am distraught. My heart is in anguish within me; the terrors of death assault me. Fear and trembling have overcome me. And I say, "O that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest; truly, I would lodge in the desert; I would hurry to find a shelter from myself from the storm of abuse". If an enemy were insulting me I could endure it. If a foe were raising himself against me I could hide from him. But it is you, a man, my companion, my close friend, with whom I once enjoyed sweet company, as we walked together at the house of God [Psalm 55:1-2; 4-8; 12-13] .

The Tamar story reveals the disturbing familiar words that are often offered as advice to survivors of domestic violence: "Keep quiet". "Do not take it personally; he did not mean any harm; let us not upset the family; it was not so bad, forget it and get on with your life". In

patriarchal and violent context like the one in which we live in South Africa, the high incidence of domestic violence in the form of rape that is inflicted by men against women is logical considering the socialization of men.

A number of passages in the Old Testament show that patriarchy was indeed at work. Women are portrayed as men's property. The 10 commandments classify women as property together with children and cattle (Exodus 20:17). Teubal (1990) shows that Hagar, Miriam, Jezebel, Ruth and Esther are clear examples how women were treated as property and second class to men. The genealogy of the patriarchs after the flood (Genesis 11:10-32) is given from the male perspective. Women are just used as objects to give birth, especially birth to sons. Women who could give birth, had greater social status than barren women did (Genesis 16:2a; 16:2b; 12:16; 30:1-24) in such a patriarchal society.

3.2.2 The New Testament

Religion as a whole plays a formative role in expectations of marriage. Christian religious tradition has played a part to domestic violence over the centuries, even though it has contained seeds of liberation too. Ephesians 5 is often used to reinforce the idea that marriage is for life no matter what the case may be: "Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord". This chapter reveals the teachings on marriage about the morals of the home:

Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives should be subject to their husbands as to the Lord, since as Christ is head of the Church and saves the whole body, so is the husband the head of the his wife; and as the Church is subject to Christ, so should wives be to their husbands, in everything. Husbands should love their wives, just like Christ loved the Church and sacrificed himself for her to make her holy by washing her in cleansing water with a form of words, so that when he took the Church to himself she would be glorious, with no speck or wrinkle or anything like that, but holy and faultless. In the same way, husbands must love their wives as they love their own bodies; for a man love his wife is for him to himself. A man never hates his own body, but he feeds it and looks after it; and that is the way Christ treats the Church, because we are parts of his Body. *This is why a man leaves his father and mother and becomes attached to his wife, and the two become one flesh.* This mystery has great significance, but I am applying it to Christ and the Church. To sum up: you also, each one of you, must love his wife as he loves himself; and let every wife respect her husband (Ephesians 5:21-34).

The emphasis of such a passage has been on women to be submissive, listen and respect the husband. Victims of domestic violence very often argue, "I cannot leave my partner because it is against the Bible". The perpetrator often states, "The Scriptures say my wife should be submissive to me". The interpretation of submission has been to the benefit of the husband such that the voice of the wife has been silenced. This is so because the perpetrators take the biblical text and distort it to support their right to abuse. In Ephesians 5:21-34, the abusers only focus on verse 22 to justify their behaviour and they disregard other verses that refer to mutual submission of both husband and wife out of love for Jesus Christ.

Jesus' teaching on divorce in Matthew 5:31-32, where he tells the people that no man shall divorce his wife, is usually misunderstood. The passage has to be understood in its own context (Jewish law) where Jewish husbands were divorcing their wives for minor reasons, and turning them out of the house. The only support for the divorced woman was prostitution, thus divorce left her in a very hopeless situation. Jesus was defending women of his time. The phrase, "For better or for worse" is often taken to mean that women must remain in an abusive relationship no matter what. This understanding has been there in the church for centuries that a bad marriage is better than no marriage at all, and should be maintained at any cost. The idea that God has ordained a man to be the "head" of a woman in the marriage relationship sets up a pattern of dominance and submission. It is usually forgotten that abuse is what breaks up families and not divorce because divorce is often the public acknowledgement of what has already become fact (Buckenham 1999).

1 Timothy says in chapter 2 verses 11-15:

Let a women learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no women to teach or to have authority over men, she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve, and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet, a woman will be saved through child bearing if she continues in faith and love and holiness with modesty.

This is exactly what makes women to say that their partners have power in their relationship. This passage says that men have the sole authority. This results in women telling themselves that their place is in the kitchen and keeping quiet in order to cope with challenges and abuse. They know that they need to persevere, as they will be blamed if they quit. It is upon them to

make the relationship/marriage work and a woman should obey her husband.

The teaching of Jesus is also used to say that the woman has to forgive her partner endlessly to show that she is a Christian and she must not count how many times he hurts her. It is also argued that Jesus said if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn another one also. As the bible says, we should forgive seventy times seven.

3.2.3 Traditional Theology

From the ancient times women had no direct participation in what Plato calls *municipal administration* because it was the domain for men even though issues discussed concerned women. One central aspect of the distinction of gender-specific spheres consists in fact that women were generally excluded from holding public offices as senators, equestrians, or judges, as well as subordinate persons. They were not even allowed to belong to the most important political decision making body of the *ekklesia* in which women could neither vote nor speak (Daly 1985).

The Palestinian Jewish culture was one of the most patriarchal in the Mediterranean crescent such that women could play significant roles only at home or in the family (Daly 1985). The dominant impression left by our early Jewish sources is of a very patriarchal society that limited women's roles and functions to the home, and severely restricted: (1) their rights of inheritance, (2) their choice of relationships, (3) their ability to pursue a religious education or fully participate in the synagogue, and (4) their freedom of movement.

The male literary sources of ancient Judaism indicate both a class and gender perspective of a negative view toward women. The woman is "in all things inferior to the man," said first century Jewish historian Josephus 1974:622. Rabbi Judah, said "a man must pronounce three blessings each day: "Blessed be the Lord who did not make me a heathen, blessed be he who did not make me a woman, blessed be he who did not make me an uneducated person." (Wheaton 1990:93).

It is said that Jewish Rabbis in the first century were encouraged not to teach or even to speak with women. Jewish wisdom literature tells us "he that talks much with womankind brings evil upon himself and neglects the study of the Law and at the last will inherit Gehenna [hell]." (Mollenkott 1977:73). One reason for the avoidance of women was the belief that they could lead men astray: "From garments cometh a moth and from a woman the iniquities of a man" (Ecclus. 42:13). Indeed, men were often viewed as intrinsically better than women, for "better is the iniquity of a man than a woman doing a good turn" (Ecclus. 42:14) (Nicole 1984:1177). Considering the above view, it is not surprising that women enjoyed few legal rights in Jewish society. Women were not even allowed to give evidence in a court of law. Philo, the first century CE Alexandrian Jewish philosopher and biblical commentator, refers throughout his writings to women and female traits as examples of weakness. He argues that women ought to stay at home, desiring a life of seclusion (Nicole 1984: 1177).

The church as an institution does not promulgate domestic violence or the oppression of women, but it is the Biblical interpretation rooted in this patriarchal cultural context that encourages the oppression of women.

The church at certain times has used the creation story to subordinate women to men and to blame women for sin and evil. The church in some situations has focused on the value of suffering, easy forgiveness and self-denial results in destructive abuse of God's image found in women. Some pastors, instead of doing pastoral counseling and spiritual direction related to domestic violence, rush to state that God knows all things and that the painful things happen for a purpose as God uses pain for something good. If a woman finds herself in an abusive relationship the cure is prayer and endurance. Should the unfortunate thing happen that she dies due to the domestic violence, she will be considered a martyr for the Gospel. 1 Cor.3: 16-17 has sometimes being overlooked that even women's bodies are God's temples where the Holy Spirit dwells.

From the second century, women have been told that they are guilty for the state of sin and evil that exists in the world. Most church men have taken the Adam and Eve story, and changed it

from a possible explanation for the existence of evil, to a principle where women were “proved” to be tempters and evil creatures by their very nature (Withrow 1989: 2). Great fathers of the church had negative views of the women and they even wrote articles, stating how evil women were. One of such articles written by Tertullian, one of the great fathers of the church read as follows:

And do you not know that you're each an Eve? The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives in this age: the guilt must of necessity live too. You are the devil's gateway; You are the unsealer of that forbidden tree; You are the first deserter of the divine law; You are she who persuaded him whom the devil was not valiant enough to attack; You destroyed so easily God's image, man. On account of your desert – that is, death – even the Son of God had to die...

Other great fathers such as Augustine, Jerome and Aquinas also raised issues like these. Since the church has treasured tradition from first centuries, it follows that the teaching of these fathers has also prevailed until the 21st century in which we are. The church at present has continued to justify keeping women under control and telling them to be submissive no matter the case might be. Since this perception and teaching has been there in the church for a very long time, women have believed what the church has taught for so long, because these fathers of the church have been believed to have been inspired by the Holy Spirit and thus holy men. Whilst these fathers of the church were wise in some ways, their own prejudice and feelings toward women, got in the way of their logical thinking (Buckenham, 1999:94).

Women have internalized and treasured the teachings of the church in marriage for a very long time and as a result the church hinders the liberation of the survivors of domestic violence. The church with its traditional theology helps to deny survivors of domestic violence their return to full humanity as they continue to:

- forget loving themselves;
- forget respecting themselves;
- know that they deserve to be treated humanly;
- discover themselves as being subjects of their own history;
- create solidarity and cooperation in the search for solutions to their daily problems;

- motivate people and themselves in pursuit of their rights to citizenship and a dignified life;
- develop a spirituality in defense of all forms of life, particularly of those threatened with extinction;
- and feel guilty for nothing.

3.3 A Power that Helps

We have seen how religion functions to hinder the survivors of violence and even to promote such abuse. This is in keeping with the idea that religion is an oppressive force in society. However, we also noted in the introduction that religion could work as a power for renewal and for good. Now we turn our attention to that part of the Christian tradition, looking at the Old and New Testaments, and emerging theologies that help the survivors of violence.

3.3.1 Old Testament

According to the scholastics, church dogma contained correct interpretation of the Christian religion and that it was infallible. They deemed it to be true at all time and unchangeable (Wittenberg 1996:222-224). But, of course, it has since been discovered that even the Bible itself has ideology that results in political, cultural, economic, gender bias and other errors, therefore one cannot hold infallible a dogma that is based on a fallible text. As a matter of fact, Old Testament literature has been used to provide proofs and legitimize the ruling class. Voices of women and the oppressed have been silenced. One might not be wrong to state that from the history of Judaism that the society was always patriarchal in nature in which women were treated as subordinate beings, but some women managed to show that they were not as society portrayed them to be (Fewell and Gunn 1993).

There are significant religious roles for women in the Old Testament as indicated by the portrayal of Job's three daughters as those who spoke the language of angels in the 'Testament of Job'. We also have women portrayed as strong leaders in the Hellenistic Jewish story of Judith and in the rule of Salome Alexandra as queen in Judea (approximately 76-67 BCE). There is

also substantial non-literary evidence that shows that Jewish women often took initiative for their lives and activities in spite of the male orientation and domination prevalent in the culture. These positive roles and opportunities constitute Jewish evidence for the significance of women in ancient Judaism. Some aspects of the wider influence and power exercised by women in Israelite life may be evident in the Old Testament's literary presentations of women, which depicts them as more complex and forceful than their legal status suggests and gives them leading roles in some of the critical biblical dramas for example, Sarah and Hagar, Rahab, Deborah, Jezebel, Huldah, Esther (Bird 1974 and Teubal 1990).

The God of the Old Testament is a God of justice as we can see in Jeremiah 6:19-20 where God finds all religious practices such as sacrifices, prayers, incense, fasting and feast days detestable when they lack practice of justice (Teubal 1990). Amos (5:24) called for justice: "...let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream". God does not want God's people to be victims of injustice (Micah 3:1-3; Psalm 14:4-6).

God wants all people to be free "And now the very cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites out of Egypt" (Exodus 3:9). In situations when people in their victimization cried to God, God acted as it is written in 1 Samuel 9:16, "I have seen the sufferings of my people and their cry has reached my ears". God is shown as a God of justice and peace. God expected the Israelites to do likewise in all their future actions. God wants justice and peace to be a way of living in a society. This is why God created male and female equal, as the following passages reveal "So, God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:27). Male and female are created in the divine image, with no discrimination (Chagunda 2000:23-25).

3.3.2 New Testament

Paul (Gal. 3:28) was the first to declare that in Jesus Christ there is no male and female and thus there is complete equality between man and woman before God. Paul tells us about the 'New Creation' in 2 Cor. 5:7 and that this new creation is a new humanity where there is no

segregation based on gender or anything else. This new humanity is equally opened to all including women and is the definitive supersession of all barriers consisting of exclusive claims and privileges. Jesus speaks of the new humanity as a flock, which he gathers around him and for which he gives his life (Lk. 12:32; Jn. 10:14-15). He refers to it as the family of God (Mt. 23:8-9), as the banquet of salvation (Mt. 8:11) and as God's plantation (Mt. 13:24ff.). He continues equating it as a net that a fisherman casts into the sea to gather in fishes of all sorts (Mt. 13:47ff.), as the temple of God (Mk. 14:58), as the Assembly of God (Mt. 16:18ff.), and as the people of the New Covenant (Mt. 26:28). In the new humanity of God proclaimed by Jesus, women are equal in dignity and worth as that of men.

In the New Testament we inevitably draw the most essential theological sources for empowerment of women in ministry in the life example and teaching of Jesus Christ himself. As a prophet (Mk.6:4; Luke. 4:18; 13:32; 24:19), Jesus' mission was to confront his contemporaries with the will of God as revealed in history, and to call upon them to respond to its demands through a personal decision. Jesus restored women to their rightful place in the society, empowered and chose them to be his first resurrection messengers. The fact that Jesus is on the side of women should be our source of encouragement and empowerment as we continue to serve God and strive for a full and equal ministry. Nothing, perhaps, was more shocking for his contemporaries than the freedom with which he associated himself with women, considering the inferior position of women in Jewish society (Chagunda 2003:25-29).

From the very beginning of his ministry, Jesus made it clear that he came to liberate the poor and the oppressed (Luke 4:18-19). The sermon that Jesus gave in the synagogue at the beginning of his ministry, reveals the story: "He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of the sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, preach the good news to the poor". In Matthew 28:10, Jesus said, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers that they must leave for Galilee; there they will see me". Jesus did want his followers to continue living as prisoners anymore. In Mark 6:50, Jesus said, "Courage! It's me! Don't be afraid". In Mark 12:30-31, God gives us the greatest commandment, "you shall love your neighbour as yourself". Indeed this is the greatest commandment above all the commandments because if one obeys this

commandment, then one embraces all of them.

The gospel of Matthew (25:37-40) agrees with this commandment in the way that if we fail to treat each other humanly, we fail to treat Christ, "truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these...you did it to me". If the church is to be the church of Jesus Christ, then the church should be empowering its followers and others for freedom. This is as Galatians 5:1 puts it, "For freedom Christ has set us free". Jesus restored the freedom that the powerful had robbed the powerless people. The church received a mandate from God through the prophets and Jesus Christ to install justice where there is injustice and freedom where it is lacking. The gospel ought to challenge the church and its members because the church is one body with many members, for by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body...and if one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together (1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 26b). The gospel is the good news of Jesus to all the people. Jesus Christ's followers call God good because is a God of love who intended that all human beings should live in loving and just relationship with God and fellow human beings.

The perpetrator, who continuously abuses the woman for a number of months and even years, is equated to Satan who kept in bondage the daughter of Abraham. Luke 13:16 puts it as follows: "Ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the Sabbath day?". This question was put to the Pharisees who were not happy because Jesus had healed a crippled woman on the Sabbath day. This woman had suffered for eighteen years without any help. Domestic violence puts women in bondage and the Gospel of Jesus Christ calls us to be sorrowful for the trouble of others and seek redemptive measures.

By rejoining also on the woman the obligation not to initiate proceedings of divorce against her husband, Jesus implicitly affirmed the fundamental equality of man and woman as persons (Mk. 10:11-12). The same equality finds expression in his saying: "whoever does the will of God is my brother, my sister, my mother" (Mk. 3:35).

Mary-Mother of Jesus Christ

Mary the mother of Jesus Christ is a woman of power because she gave birth to Jesus and accomplished the work God had asked her to do; she pondered God's actions in her life, taking account of her son, her kinfolk, and her community. She can teach us about the power of deep reflection on the human relationships that are part of our world (Samariah 2003:4).

Samaritan Woman

Jesus' ministry among the Samaritans, those, who were outside the fold of Judaism, began with the leadership role played by a woman, the woman of Samaria (Jn. 4:3-42). Contrary to the accepted social norms Jesus freely engaged in conversation with her casually by a well side (Jn. 4:27). The woman, who had been confined to her own house, realized a sense of freedom after her encounter with Christ to face her own people and introduce Jesus to them. The initiative taken by the Samaritan woman was the fulfillment of Jesus' own missionary agenda of accomplishing the work of the father (Jn. 4:34). Definitely the fourth Evangelist exalts a despised Samaritan woman to the rank of a theologian, apostle and missionary, while he pictures the male disciples mostly as inactive, timid and slow in understanding. She is the one to whom Jesus reveals first that he is the expected 'Messiah' (Samariah 2003:6).

Mary Magdalene

On the third day, the first Easter Sunday, the women, especially Mary Magdalene, discover the empty tomb. Both in the Synoptic Gospels and in John's Gospel the women continue their place in the resurrection story. Whereas the men are the commanded, the women are the mourners, observers and messengers at the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. When Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene outside the tomb where he addressed her as "*woman*" a term of endearment or respect when used in address (Jn. 20:16).

Mary Magdalene is the woman who first discovered the empty tomb (Jn.20: 1-2) and who first received the apostolic commission to announce the Good News of Jesus' resurrection (Jn. 20:11-18). She saw the risen Christ first and bore witness to him (Mk.16:9-10). Mary's

proclamation to the male disciples saying. "I have seen the Lord" (Jn. 20:18), has apostolic significance (Samariah 2003: 7).

Other Women

Among the Gospel women, Anna and Elizabeth played vital roles in Jesus' birth narratives. Anna, the prophetess mentioned only in Lk. 2:36-38. She spoke in the Temple of the infant Jesus to all that were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem. Elizabeth mentioned only in Lk. 1, who was filled with the Holy Spirit and greeted Mary as the mother of her Lord. Some other women are mentioned in the Gospels like Joanna (Lk. 8:3 and 24:10), Mary the wife of Clopas (Jn. 19:25), 'the other Mary' (Mt. 27:61 and 28:1) and Susanna (Lk. 8:3) played important roles in the Jesus Movement. Thus women were empowered by Jesus during his earthly life and ministry and in return women contributed a lot for the spread of Christianity at its incipient stages (Samariah 2003:9).

3.3.3 Emerging Theologies

Considering that historically the world's major religions have been instrumental in limiting women's roles in society, many people view religion as inherently hostile to women's liberation. For some people, the affirmation of women's inherent inferiority is so integral to the dominant teachings of the world religions, that the religions themselves appear irreconcilable with all attempts to reach gender equity within society. Any understanding of religion's role in the lives of women is incomplete if religion is understood only as oppressive.

The Bible that is largely acknowledged as the pillar for Christians was born in a patriarchal life situation. As a result the experiences of women have been overlooked or ignored by the male interpreters. This has not left any choice by feminist Biblical interpreters but to find another approach that neither accepts blindly traditional interpretations nor ignores the Bible as a worthless book. Most feminists affected or those who have reflected on women's oppression have found a method of revealing the 'hidden' presence of women in the patriarchal Bible through a relevant and contextual interpretation of the same Bible. An emerging theology has to be a theology that has a systematic reflection on a religious experience, an encounter between God and human beings. Domestic violence and other types of oppression of women call for a

new biblical hermeneutics to make the scripture relevant to the changing situations (Schusseler-Fiorenza 1992).

Gender sensitization of the church is therefore critical and can act as a deterrent for perpetrators who might fear that the abuse of his family would be discovered. The silence from the church, which takes a powerful place in the lives of ordinary women and men, condones abuse and allows the cycle of domestic violence to continue. This might be attributed to the church tradition, biased interpretation of Biblical scriptures, lack of good understanding of the scriptures, domination of cultural values on gender roles or a deliberate way of putting women on the second class level. Since women's thoughts and needs are often neglected or disregarded in the churches, some women within the churches have been occupied in seeking new ways to know and to serve God in their contexts where domestic violence is a daily experience. This makes Buckenham (1999:95) argue that:

Our faith is not the faith we have been taught. It cannot be based on the negative thinking and the submission that the church has told us about for so long. We are developing our own relationship with God, in our own way and in our communities, whether we have an "official" priest or minister present or not. We are focussing on the strength of women, and the blessings that women have. It is a healthier faith, based on a graceful and loving God, instead of a God of punishment and anger. It is a faith that takes women seriously, talks in women's terms and opens up new, creative possibilities of communication and community. It is a faith of healing, instead of a faith of hurt, guilt and blame.

Generally, the church plays an integral role in shifting attitudes of women in society especially as in times of crisis and need, they turn to God. There is so much domestic violence happening in South African society, and many of the abused women belong to the church. Some of these abused women have positive experiences with their church while others have negative experiences. This triggers theological issues around relationships, the sacredness of marriage, suffering, forgiveness and freedom as they relate to the union, sexual and domestic violence. This makes Buckenham (1999: 9) to ask the following:

With regard to the Christian faith community and official Church doctrine, why is Christian theology, Biblical interpretation and tradition used to reinforce beliefs of a hierarchical ordering of relationship with men on top, when such beliefs clearly have consequences in setting up

relations of unequal power, skewed resources, hierarchies of importance and perceived dignity – all translating into death-dealing coercion and violence? Such theologies and hermeneutics based on hierarchies of race or class are theoretically no longer acceptable to most people, so why are they promoted and defended as ‘God-ordained’ when based on sex, even by some liberation theologians? What does it mean to a battered woman to hear from her church a message, which says her role is to submit to her husband? Or that divorce is not an option? Or a message that glorifies suffering and carrying one’s cross? What does it mean when she is told she must forgive her husband seventy times seven, and the abuse continues?

Feminist liberation theology has made some essential positive contributions. These include the attention to the invaluable role women have played in the church throughout Christian history; it has rightly pointed to the failure of many men in fulfilling their God-appointed roles of loving their wives as Christ loved the church. The last point would if adhered to, would have substantially diminished domestic violence. Feminist liberation theology serves as an indictment against the abuse and oppression that women have all too often suffered at the hands of men.

By equating the church with the ‘intrinsic power’ of women whom we have seen in the Bible as they tried to mould an egalitarian society in which men and women are responsible citizens, the church can help the liberation of survivors of domestic violence. Jesus’ attack on the traditional Jewish attitudes against women and his action for them is a remarkable paradigm for the church that is trying to equalize the status of both men and women so as to end domestic violence and empower those who have survived domestic violence. The church should follow Jesus’ movement that was a ‘counter culture’ movement, attempting for ‘new humanity’. Through our discussion on the teachings and activities of Jesus from the Gospels, we have seen what a vital role it can play for the peaceful co-existence of both men and women.

3.4 Conclusion

The key issue that has emerged in this chapter is the fact that the religion is a power that both helps and hinders survivors of violence. In doing so, I have covered religion and power looking at religion as oppressive for Marx and a potential for renewal, for Weber. I have also looked at how the Old and New Testament as well as theology have contributed to hinder the survivors of domestic violence. Furthermore, I have explored some indicators that help these survivors.

We are now in a position to move to chapter four with the aim of concentrating on the research itself in Sweetwaters, looking at key themes for Zulu women and domestic violence as well as Christianity. We will bear in mind our concern as to whether the church and the Christian Faith helps or hinders the survivors of domestic violence.

CHAPTER FOUR

Zulu Women, Domestic Violence and Christianity

4.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the fieldwork that took place in Sweetwaters area near Pietermaritzburg city. I will be outlining in detail what happened during interviews, information and findings. Whilst doing that I will be highlighting some of the key issues around two themes, that is, domestic violence itself and religion as a power that helps or hinder.

4.1 Research at Sweetwaters

One-on-one interviews were conducted in Zulu with survivors of domestic violence in Sweetwaters. I know these women through the KwaZulu-Natal Programme for Survivors of Violence that focuses on trauma work with communities. I started working with these women late 1999. I was visiting them once a week before starting to terminate my involvement with them in late 2003. I presently visit them on request.

A total of 20 women were interviewed. These women were randomly selected among the survivors of domestic violence whom I have been working with for four years. I chose to use the in-depth interview because of its capacity to create a safe space to allow an open discussion of such an emotional and sensitive experience. The interviews were conducted in their mother tongue language, Zulu, that is also my mother tongue. This enabled them to speak freely and from deep down their hearts. The women chose the time that suited them for the interviews. The women were open to the researcher because of belonging to the same culture, speaking the same language, being a woman and also because I had been working with them for a long time. This created a conducive atmosphere. In the course of the interview, most survivors of domestic violence were further traumatized due to the recalling of the experiences. Women who were older than the researcher were somehow reluctant to reveal more about how they suffered especially with sexual abuse. This might be because the issue of sex is not commonly shared

When sharing her life with a church member, the church member supported her and advised her not to take legal action, but to persevere. Many women who take legal action just add to their misery because the police/court did not take any action. She thinks having faith and trusting God kept her going. At least now the situation is better. However, she still feels that the church would be of great help in maintaining the situation and preventing fear of the unknown.

Mrs B is a 60 year old married woman born at Umsinga in Tugela Ferry. She is a Zulu woman who has four children ages 42, 40, 39 and 36. She has a house with five rooms and comes from the New Church in Zion. She has no education at all. She was working in her early days as a farm labourer and also as a domestic worker. Her present source of income is the pension grant from the government. Also her children are supporting her financially.

She suffered physical and emotional abuse under her husband who had paid lobolo for her. Her husband was an alcoholic and became very violent especially as he was worried about the fact that he did not have children. He is not a biological father to these children. This was worrying him that made him so aggressive. Money was the issue as he claimed not to be the father of children and the lobolo that he paid was seen as a licence to abuse her. The situation became better when children were adults and as he was getting older. He is now happy with her family even though the scars of physical abuse will remain forever.

She did speak to the Deacon about this and the Deacon advised her to keep on praying and fasting so that God can change this husband's behaviour. The Deacon's time to listen to her was also healing. The Deacon's advice really helped her to have a reason to be strong and carry on with life. It helped a lot speaking with the Deacon, as it was no longer a secret. At least she knew that she had somebody who knew her story.

Mrs C is a 62 year old married woman with six children. She was born in Bulwer and left

school in standard 6. She was working as a domestic worker and also in a factory. She lives in a 7-room house made of blocks, which is owned by the husband. She has six children ages 40, 38, 33, 30, 26 and 20. She is a pensioner and belongs to Old Apostolic Church of South Africa.

Family violence started in 1969 where she has experienced mostly emotional rather than physical abuse. The aunt of her children was emotionally degrading her at all times. This resulted in low self-esteem, and a lack of confidence, which then resulted to a relationship being broken. She suffered a lot after the relationship was broken down. After years she met a man that eventually became her husband.

By then she belonged to the Holy Church. She did speak to a church member who is also a relative. She gave her holy water [holy water for believers normally is used to bless people, bring good luck, baptize new members and chase away bad spirits among other reasons]. She was motivating her, giving her money for transport to come to church. For her, the church did help because through this church member she met other women who pray in groups for different reasons. Most of the time this group was having Bible study, where they could put into consideration their contextual problems and together find liberating ways. She made her story known to this prayer group and with her, they were praying together every Saturday. This prayer group brought hope and power in her life and the support that she kept on getting. She is happy now and her life changed for the better as she reads the Bible and sings.

Mrs D, a 55 year old woman who was born in Newcastle, left school in Sub B. She has worked in Howick- Cedara as a domestic worker. She is presently doing washing for people in her community. She lives in a 1 room that belongs to a certain family. It is made of mud. She is single parent with two children, born in 1981 and 1989. She belongs to New Church in Zion and has been severely discriminated by her family just because she was born of the different father than the rest of the children. It resulted in other relatives and children not accepting her. When she was growing up her male relative kept on abusing her verbally for five years saying

that she was nothing and ugly. What she can do is only to find a job in beer bar so that drunken men can by mistake sleep with thinking that she is beautiful. This started in 1977 and could not tell anybody.

She later told the pastor and his wife. Unfortunately nothing happened and she is still suffering. She has no inner peace as she does not have anything that she owns. She thinks the pastor can help to outline her story to the ward counselor, to motivate for the building of the mini government houses. She hopes this can happen as people respect pastors.

Mrs E is a 38 year old woman who was born at Umzimkhulu, left school in Std 5, and was working in a firm in Eastwood, Pietermaritzburg. Her husband is working and is a pastor. They have 2 children, 17 and 3 years old. She lives in a mud house with 5 rooms. It is owned by both of them. She has not been exposed to direct violence, but as pastor's wife of the New Central Church, people come to her with different domestic problems.

She normally advises women to pray hard so that the situation can change. The pastor's wife later shares women's domestic violence experiences with her husband, and also with other pastors' wives. However, she feels that the church could do more than prayer to help in domestic violence but what more the church can do, she has no idea. This is worrying her and she would like to know what more the church could do to help.

Mrs F is a 29 year old married woman with a one year old child. She has Std 10 and was born in Sweetwater. She has worked at a local butchery. Presently her husband is the one supporting the family. But when having extra needs, her parents do offer help. She lives in a 5 roomed house made of blocks and husband owns it. She belongs to the Methodist Church.

Things were going well before the marriage. The first incident happened soon after they were

together. He did not want the wife to go anywhere for a night or so without the husband. When she insisted going, the husband beat her until she could not manage to walk. The husband constantly told her that he is the one who proposed her and he bought her with lobolo that he paid to her family so she is his property. She was constantly reminded that she has to do all that the husband wants and that she must not upset him. She really experienced a number of incidences of physical violence and sexual violence.

She is not doing anything about this, as she knows of a woman who tried to take it up with the church leadership, and she was labeled as not having strong faith. She then wishes the church could have an open door with a good policy and that confidentiality must be administered and respected. This will motivate abused women to come forward to present their problems. One of her friends took her to the magistrate court to seek help and the court clerk told her to go to the police station. When she went to the police station, the police asked for a scar on her body as evidence of the abuse. She just gave up seeing that there was no way she get help because the legal system favours men and not women. She feels it is useless to live in a society where one cannot get any help.

Mrs G is a 39 year old married woman with 3 children, ages 16, 10 and 5. She left school in Std 8 and has never worked. She lives in a 4 roomed-mud house. She was born in Kranskop and comes from Pentecost Church. Her husband was supporting her but the only problem he was physically abusing her. Whenever the husband wanted to have sexual intercourse it had to happen even if the wife is sick. She always thinks that she was a sex object. When the wife tried to refuse sex, he would remind her that he paid lobolo so that he could sleep with her anytime when he wishes to. Such words always ended up with some beatings. The wife's body was full of scars. She said she did not enjoy her married life.

She was admitted in hospital due to the physical abuse. The nurse wanted to help but she did not like to disclose her family matters. She went back home, lived that kind of life until her husband died. It is sad that he died, but she is saying she lives happily now. She said she

couldn't understand why the intimate partner like husband could make a wife's life like being on burning fire. My own home was like a prison.

She did not think the church could have been of help as it was her only secret. She wishes the church could draft a plan to deal with family matters and have counselors within the church. Praying alone will not help survivors of domestic violence. Action should be taken for women to have some help and trust in the church.

Mrs H is a 33-year-old woman with one child of 7 years. She lives in a brick house and is supported by her husband. She belongs to the Apostolic Church. For the first years of their marriage, they lived happily. But as time went on the husband started to get upset with very small things. He would demand extra attention and when coming back from work he would shout at her about certain house chores like, she did not do thorough cleaning, or the food is not cooked well. He would say all the nasty degrading words.

In the beginning she could not tell any-one what was happening but later she told her neighbour. The situation got worse and finally told her parents. They were so disappointed about her marriage. They encouraged her to go for a divorce which was not easy and ended up not doing it. Instead they stayed separately and no longer keep contact.

She did not approach the church about the problem, as she wanted it to be her private matter, especially because her parents are well respected by the church.

Mrs I is a 32 year old married woman born at Esigodini and has Std 8, but has never worked. Her husband works well and he is looking after the family. She lives in a big house made of blocks. Her marriage is not going well. They stayed happily before the husband's mother came to stay with them. When suggesting anything from what his mother has said, he would

say she is opposing his mother. Any sign of opposition to what the husband's mother said costed the wife with some beatings. The beatings became worse as time went by. She has no control of the situation as they both go to church. It has been years with him and they have 2 children, ages 6 and 3 years old. They belong to the Presbyterian Church. She did not know what to say and even what the church could do if she reported the abuse since the church has been known by being oppressive by its leadership of which her husband is part of it.

She has been thinking of going to report to the police when the beatings are too much but other women's experiences with the police always let her down. Many women who went to the police used to be told that those are family problems that they can sit down and resolve. The police have other serious things to worry of.

Mrs J is a 49 year old married woman having Std 3 of educational status and born at Swayimane. She was working at a farm before getting married. She is presently a housewife. Her husband became abusive when drunk. He would shout and accuse her, calling her with dirty words. He would hit her badly that she would go sleep with neighbours.

She was emotionally drained and was endlessly stressed resulting to flashbacks of all things her husband did when drunk. She ended up drinking herself. Things became even worse. She was not looking after children. She was stealing money to buy alcohol instead of buying food for children. She could not think properly, either to do household chores before drinking. She was totally dependent on alcohol. Her husband was continuously beating her and saying she is a useless wife who drinks like a fish.

She did not think of the church for help but instead she visited SANCA for help for both herself and her husband. It was not successful on husband's side since he did not attend sessions as required. He started becoming weak as time went on. He was admitted in hospital and was told to stop drinking alcohol. He eventually stopped drinking and lives happily with their 6 children, ages 23, 21, 18, 16, 13, and 6 years. However, she is not sure how the church could have been of help here.

Mrs K is a 41 year old married woman born in Mbumbulu, Durban. She has no educational status and was working as a nanny in her community. She is a Roman Catholic Church member. She has been directly exposed to incidences of family violence involving shouting and beating. She cannot clearly remember when it started. These experiences were not caused by something she did. He was saying he paid *lobolo* for her, thus he can do, as he likes, as she is his property. The situation is not solved but better than before because children are older now. He fears them, as they are both boys. They are both 26 years old.

She has never thought such experiences can be reported at the church. She only knows that the church is for church service and praying, not for people's personal problems. She does not know how the church could have helped in her situation. For her as long as the pastor is conducting the church service well, availing him for funerals and weddings, she is satisfied.

Miss L is a 29-year-old single woman with one child who is 14 years old. She was born in Sweetwater and has Std 10. She has never had formal employment except piece jobs of sewing. Her boyfriend is supporting her financially. She lives in a house made of blocks that belongs to her mother, who is married to another man. She is a Roman Catholic Church member.

She has not seen much of Domestic violence. Her boyfriend beats her occasionally. He does that when she has done something not acceptable or has made him feel like a fool. It is not something that is serious and needing help. However, people should be encouraged to trust the church and make use of it.

Mrs M is a 37-year-old woman with 3 children, 21, 17 and 13 years. She was born at Umtata but is now living in Sweetwaters. She studied up to Std 5 and she was a domestic worker. She owns a 5-roomed house made of mud. Her first-born is working and supporting her. She

belongs to the Apostolic Church. Her husband was ill-treating her in different ways and beating her badly when drunk. He used to behave like that when he was drunk.

When sober he was an angel. This made things so confusing for her, as actually he was a nice person. He would beat her to hospitalization, but apologize the next day saying how sorry he is. He would be so sorry and having good things for her, including clothes. She would forgive him and after few days violence starts again. The problem went on and on without any difference at all. Mrs M did not take any legal steps, as she loves her man very much. She could not stand life without him around. She is still experiencing pains but she says it is fine because at least she knows that he loves her.

There is nothing that anyone could do. As a result she has told herself to be strong and face her problems as they were.

Mrs N is a 41-year-old woman who has been married for 22 years with no children. She did go to school but when she was able to write her name she was told to be out of school. She cannot recall as to when was that. She lives in a mud house with her husband alone. She was born in Greytown and she is a Roman Catholic Church member.

Her husband is jealous and possessive man. He normally accuses her of flirting and having a love affair. Verbal abuse and control is dominant. She is not allowed to work and he has slapped her on a few occasions. She thinks he behaves like this because she does not have children with her, except of the previous relationship.

She is presently bitter, and cannot forgive. She wishes somebody could help in the church, but knowing that she does not regularly go to church, he thinks the church cannot assist her. She feels the church can make a difference in the present situation.

Mrs O is a 31-year-old woman with 5-year-old child. She has Std. 6 and is a Methodist. She lives in a brick house with her husband and her mother-in-law in Sweetwaters. The husband controls her movement, what type of clothes she puts on and whom she associates with. Physical assault is frequent. When assessing things, she feels the situation is going to get worse, mainly because it is only 3 years of marriage and yet things are not good.

Things were normal before marriage. She was always happy and well looked after. She used to receive gifts for birthdays, special occasion like Christmas, visiting movies and having picnics together. They both do not come from poor families.

Things changed when staying together. The husband's sisters are very influential. They were saying Mrs O is not educated therefore she does not deserve their brother as her husband. It would have been better if she was a nurse and bringing money home. Instead, she is being supported by their brother. As a result, they do not get what they want as it has been before.

She likes to visit welfare but has not been able to get help. She has not thought of sharing this with somebody in the church. She does not feel all right about doing so.

Mrs P is a 30-year-old woman with a 2-year-old child, living in a mud house. She has Std. 8 and does not belong to any church denomination. Her husband has been abusing her physically over the last two years. He abuses her with objects blaming her of not behaving as a wife is supposed to. He calls her by mockery names and swearing at her.

She thinks this is perpetuated by the *lobolo* payment. Her family demanded huge *lobolo* from him. Mrs P was against this but she did not have a voice as this process is for adults of the family and relatives. This resulted in a tough situation whereby whatever she does is evaluated on the basis of the amount of money paid for her. When it is end of the month asking money for the grocery, he responds rudely by saying "why don't you go to your family for money?"

Moreover, she is expected not to make a mistake and always behave well.

This is affecting her deeply but she is stuck in her situation. She is a very shy person and it is not easy for her to challenge and talk about things, she said.

Mrs Q is a 30-year-old woman married for 5 years with a 2-year-old child. She has Std 7 and lives in a mud house. She was born in Edendale and now lives in Sweetwater. She left Edendale because her husband was assaulting her badly.

According to her, it was the mother-in-law who was not truthful that mainly caused it. The mother was totally against her son marrying her, saying there is a girlfriend that has got a child with her son. The mother wanted her son to marry that girlfriend as she was working too, unlike her.

Things got worse as Mrs Q is wearing spectacles, as suffering from severe headache. Moreover, she is suffering from the high blood pressure and cannot stand heavy household duties like washing, ironing and cleaning in the same day, especially when the weather is hot. This is due to severe beatings taking place.

The situation is a bit better now as she has obtained a protection order, which is helping in terms of law. She never thought of the church's intervention and is not clear as to how it can help given her situation.

Miss R is a 27-year-old woman, single with Std 10. She has no children and belongs to the Seventh Day Adventist Church. She knows domestic violence taking place in her extended family and it is a serious problem. It has gone too far with attempts of rape and murder.

It is about family members and this comes from way back of family conflict. Family members do not visit each other. They hate each other to the extent that when performing traditional ceremonies, they do not invite each other. However, it is not easy to talk about it, as the elders of the family are scared to talk about it. They are pretending as if there is nothing wrong. She believes the church can play a major role, mostly in mediation and reconciliation in the family.

Mrs S is a 42-year-old woman whose husband is an alcoholic and unemployed. It is not because he was not working. He was working but was fired as a result of misbehaviour and disrespect. She was then a soft target. When he was angry about not getting his money at work, he would come back home drunk, beating her and children. It was confusing that he did not have money, but drunk and asking oneself, where he was getting it. It was reported later that he was taking alcohol on credit.

They have 4 children and grandchildren and belong to the Methodist Church. They live in a brick house. She has got Std 8. When looking at the period she has been suffering, it is too long and unbearable. And she has thought of divorcing him several times, but it is hard as she is a well - respected community member and she is scared of the stigma attached to divorced women in the area. It is believed that divorced women have no good values and they want other women's husbands. However, despite of anything people say, she is prepared to take the risk. She just needs to gain inner strength to deal with the community's criticism.

She wishes the church could intervene. However, she is not sure how.

4.3 Key Themes for Zulu Women and Domestic Violence

Having heard the voices of these twenty survivors of violence, we can begin to analyze eight key themes that characterize domestic violence for Zulu woman.

4.3.1 *Lobolo* and Women as Property

Before starting this paragraph I would like to make it clear that there is a difference between *lobolo* and *lobola*, as part of the Zulu culture and a spoken language. *Lobolo* is *bridewealth* where cattle but mostly money nowadays and other things are given for the bride. *Lobola* is the whole process of the culture that involves the form of exchange and transition.

It has been indicated that marriage in Zulu culture is characterized by the *lobola* system in which a man transfers some designated property such as cattle and money to his wife's family. This is a source of domestic violence in the sense that men take as a licence to abuse. In the interviews Mrs P, Mrs K, Mrs G, and Mrs B demonstrate this. These interviewed women just give a tip of the iceberg. Since men pay this *lobolo*, they consider their wives as property and not their equals. This customary belief has to be dismantled by educating women and men together if women should be liberated from such violence. According to the statistics that we have seen in this paper, there are more domestic violence incidences where *lobolo* is involved.

At root a woman is considered as the man's property. He will do as he pleases, and the woman is threatened to be killed. It is also normal because a woman is stupid and she does not behave accordingly. If she does not like to be beaten she should prevent that by not upsetting a man. It is normal because a man is clever, always right and knows what he is doing. However, when a woman "... dares to retaliate with violence she is treated as mentally abnormal" (Gnanadason, 1996:8).

The reasoning behind *lobolo* varies within the Zulu culture depending on the family grouping. To some it is "child-price" in the sense that it is intended to support a patrilineal system of descent. To some *lobolo* serves as insurance when the man disappears, *lobolo* will be able to

assist the mother and children. To some men, *lobolo* means buying the woman so that she can become his property (this reason is largely embraced by abusive men). *Lobolo* to a greater extent makes women to be submissive to men no matter how bad, cruel and violent they may be. In trying to deal with domestic violence one of its most difficult features is the inability of many abused women to leave their abusive relationships and marriages.

The focus of attention on domestic violence is due to the fact that gender perceptions are at the basis of the factors that tend to motivate behaviours considered abusive. In Zulu culture *lobolo* carries the notion of male entitlement. Men tend to see their wives as sexual commodities. This contributes a lot to abusive relationship. The researcher noted that the vulnerability of females is one of the products of women's unequal status, and that men have power over women and use that power to abuse their partners. It has also been noted that the male power is further buttressed by the ascribed position of power that they hold in the family and that it is men who culturally take the initiative to propose to women.

4.3.2 Unemployment and Male Frustration

Unemployment makes people, both men and women, less human and to men it is the main source of frustration. The most negative effect is felt by women. According to the 2001 census, there are more women than men in South Africa, and the female population is on average poorer than the male population. Most South Africans are living in poverty. The causes of this poverty can be traced back to the periods of conquest of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and to nineteenth-century colonialism in South African history. Poverty is circumscribed by patriarchal and social institutions such family, religion and culture discriminate against women. Some men abuse their partners because they are frustrated that they cannot support the family, and the easiest way out is to transfer such frustrations on to the wife and children by abusing them. A girlfriend such as Miss L sticks with the abusive boyfriend because he is the one supporting her and Mrs S, whose husband was unemployed.

People would find a man respecting other people from his community and seen as a humble person, even at work. The findings have shown that by so doing, a man is suppressing his

feelings of anger and then he projects them on to his family, as they are a soft and easy target. From the interviews some women have thought of killing their partners due to battering taking place. A woman would think of people at large and her children, and decide to accept the situation as is. This shows that domestic violence is overwhelming against women.

4.3.3 Alcohol as a Problem

In most communities it is commonly known that alcohol is the source of many problems and has a great impact on the family life. However, alcohol intrinsically is not bad because it is not everyone who drinks who causes problems such as domestic violence. Some people drink too much such that they lose self control, while others drink with the intention of causing troubles. Since it is difficult to establish the intention of drinking, we note the impact that it brings upon Mrs B, Mrs J and Mrs S.

4.3.4 Children and the Wider Family

Children are supposed to be a great blessing from God and a source of intense joy for the family and the future of our humanity. The actions that do not recognize the rights and protect children's dignity cannot lead to a more just and humane family, for they go against the very values that determine objective moral categories. Mrs C, Mrs K and Mrs N illustrate this.

In other cases, it is because a woman thinks of her children. A few mentioned that their children will grow empty and emotionally damaged without father figure around. They stay for that reason. Also, the economic factor emerges where a woman feels that she will not have a means of survival as an unemployed person. And mostly abusers degraded women's dignity to make them feel that they are nothing, useless and no one will accommodate them. This creates the impression that abusers are doing women a favour as they are keeping them.

In other cases, a woman is unable to name exactly that violence does happen in her life. On one side, she is hoping that the situation will be better as the man gives promises. On the other side, some women are too proud to convince themselves that their marriages are not working well.

Others feel that they cannot cope with pressures of daily life alone.

From the interviews conducted, domestic violence also affects children in many different ways. Some children become quiet and unfriendly, or some children can be very active and noisy. Women also mentioned repeatedly that their husbands/partners are the result of the boys who grow up seeing their fathers and other men hitting women. They talked about this repeatedly as they confirmed that their husbands would say women are useless and “nothing”, and they regard women as children to do whatever with and anyhow.

Whilst the assumption is that domestic violence happens only among the poor and dis-functional families, the interviews show that this is not true. Some are not poor and these families function well in the leadership of the church. Many studies have shown that men who ill-treat their families are seen as gentlemen in public (Gnanadason, 1996:9).

4.3.5 Scandal of Divorce in Zulu Community

In most cases when a man and woman marry, especially in church, they promise/vow to God that they will be together until death separates them. Some couples happily upheld this while others remain faithful to such vows in pain and suffering such as domestic violence. Sometimes they are forced to stay together because they want to raise the children together, they want to support each other financially and the community's pressure can force people to remain together. In some communities once you are divorced, you become an outcast but more outspokenly, a scandal in the community because you have failed to remain strong to your vows. To avoid this labeling, one remains with the abuser. Mrs H and Mrs S make this scandal of divorce in the community clear.

The fear of attracting the scorn of the community and getting stigmatized makes abused women to keep silence. Some abused women do not have confidence in church leadership including pastors that they can protect them and help them accordingly.

Many women persevere continuously because they are responsible for house chores, as well as

supporting men psychologically and emotionally. It is thus the additional responsibility of a woman to absorb all pressures of the workplace so as not to disturb the home atmosphere. Despite all this women choose to stay. Millions of women "...around the world stay imprisoned in painful and sometimes even dangerous home environment " (Gnanadason, 1996:24).

4.3.6 Lack of Social Support – Police and Courts

The legal service that is mainly done by the police and courts especially with regard to domestic violence is supposed to pursue justice and protect the vulnerable. The protection orders and the time involved in obtaining an order are critical in contributing to the effective implementation of the Domestic Violence Act 1998. Once the application for an order has been completed, it can take a very long time for the order to be served. This leaves the victim of domestic violence unsafe and confused. It has been pointed out that the survivor of domestic violence withdraws charges against the abuser at a later stage because of fear, or for financial reasons if the abuser is also the breadwinner. Very often the police are slow to take any action in connection with domestic violence and sometimes the police state that such issues are family issues and thus can be resolved in the family. This in return demoralizes the victims of domestic violence such as illustrated by Mrs A, Mrs F and Mrs I.

4.3.7 Cycle of Violence

As it was seen 2.3, there are usually three stages in domestic violence, which occur in what is called the cycle of domestic violence. The abused woman has little or no control over the cycle of domestic violence because the abuser controls every phase of the cycle. Very often abused women, when advised by someone to leave their abusive partner, will agree initially to leave the abusive partner but sooner than expected they will return to the abusive relationship. Many women in abusive relationships love their partners such that they do not want to be separated, and yet at the same time they do not want domestic violence to continue. Mrs F, Mrs M and Mrs O confirm this.

4.3.8 Impact upon Women

It has been shown in 2.2 that the impact of domestic violence on women is so severe. Physical abuse is the most common form of domestic violence. Physical abuse very often ends in the women being admitted to hospital and is often accompanied by sexual abuse. Women normally are beaten and then asked to have sex. In psychological abuse the abuser may force the woman to do degrading things. The woman would not be allowed to go out on her own because she cannot be trusted. If she does go alone she would be accused of not being faithful to him. The husband treats the woman as if she is only there to serve his needs. In economic abuse, the man uses money to undermine the woman in many ways. A woman's faith is used to keep her from finding help, or leaving an abusive situation, by telling her that she must endure, submit, return and make sure she does not do anything to upset her husband. Almost all women interviewed illustrate this.

The sexual potential of a woman's body and her low status in society make her a ready victim of domestic violence. The practice of victim blaming is also seen in terms of what abused women gave as personality factors that act as triggers to domestic violence. The power relations among men and women make women more vulnerable to domestic violence. The cause of domestic violence is usually placed on women. Women are therefore expected to change behaviour in order to bring the domestic violence problem under control.

4.4 Christianity as a Power that Hinders

Having read the responses from women who participated in the interviews, there are five key issues that were highlighted.

4.4.1 Abusers in Church leadership

In every church there are leaders who are pastors/priests and the leaders of the church who run the daily affairs of the church. The congregation respects these people so much because they are vested with responsibilities of taking care God's people. As shepherds they are supposed to look

after their sheep with care and wisdom. As it happens very often, people misuse their power or out of ignorance they do not perform their duties well. Mrs D affirms this where the pastor did not take any action, Mrs E where the pastor's wife went to spread the news instead of keeping it to themselves, and Mrs F who has an experience of a woman who was labeled of not having enough faith once she narrated her story. Abusers in the Church leadership become the block to liberate the victims of domestic violence.

4.4.2 Theologies of Blame

As followers of Jesus Christ, suffering an injustice in any form must never be invisible to Christians for we are mandated to respect the dignity of every human being. Christians are called to let the light of Jesus Christ be illuminated among the communities even in the midst of problems. The theology of blame can move any sense of responsibility to heal, to act, to care, to give hope, and to view ourselves in a healing way. Mrs F confirms this when she was labeled of not having strong faith to persevere in the abusive relationship. A theology of blame becomes a power that hinders the liberation of the survivors of domestic violence.

4.4.3 Theologies of Forgiveness

It is not very easy to forgive and forget especially for the victim of domestic violence. Theology of forgiveness is the one of the pillars to build a strong family and community. Forgiveness is an act of will and not by force. Mrs M affirms the issue of forgiving her abuser while Mrs N shows how hard to forgive an abuser. Theologies of forgiveness are good virtues to pursue but these can also become hindrances to the liberation of victims of domestic violence if one does not confront the abusers.

4.4.4 Disinterestedness and Silence

It is not always easy to gather courage and reveal the abuse to other people outside the family. Some abused women choose to remain silent either because their husbands are well respected or thus do not want to embarrass the community or because they see that there is nothing that can

help them in doing so. This sometimes is a sign of losing hope in all the support system and the church leadership. Silence becomes the only option. Mrs G, Mrs K, and Mrs M confirm this. Disinterestedness and silence can become a blockage to the liberation of victims of survivors of violence.

4.4.5 Sanctity of Marriage //

God created man and woman in His image. These two once married becomes one flesh. Marriage is the union between man and woman and this has its origin in God, who is Love. Love effects and consecrates the real union. The partnership between the couple has to result in happiness and taking care for each other. This sanctity of marriage can be a hindrance to the liberation of victims of domestic violence in the sense that it would be used to stop any efforts to solve the problems of domestic violence. Mrs F, Mrs H and Mrs S confirm this.

4.5 Christianity as a Power that Helps //

I am now moving to the helping power of religion. I will be showing how religion functions for these Zulu women in a positive way through drawing attention to the following key issues: Prayer, Bible reading and resilience, support groups of *Manyano* and *izimvuselelo*.

4.5.1 Prayer //

Prayer that is the conversation with God plays a very important role in people's lives and more especially those in need and problems. For Christians, a prayer is a privilege purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ. A prayer makes a difference to those who pray earnestly. Through prayer people's burdens become light, strength is imparted, guidance is given, needs are met and hearts are softened. Just as Jesus prayed when He was in the difficulties during His passion, so too many victims of abuse pray when they are in problems. Prayer works as Mrs E, Mrs C, and Mrs E demonstrate. A key way that these women have survived the abuse is through using prayer. Prayer has been trusted by many victims of domestic violence as a very powerful tool to withstand the evils and pressures of the abusers. A woman will believe and stick to praying for

all her problems. They have recommended prayer saying they share all their frustrations with the Lord, nobody else, especially because there are instances where confidentiality is not kept. Also there is a strong belief that the Lord will answer their prayers one-day. Through prayer, God keeps the victims going in a positive way. Haddad (2001:6) confirms this:

Gogo Thokozile Cele asserts that God has helped her through her life as she struggled to survive. God has given her resources to persevere when there seemed to be no way in the desolation of poverty and suffering. God had enabled her literal survival in the face of near death. For *Gogo Cele*, and many South African women like her, God plays a central role in the struggle for literal survival. Poor and marginalized women understand that God gives them resources to survive against seemingly insurmountable odds. So *Gogo Cele* prays, joins together with other women, and chooses to live. This is the profound choice in which she acknowledges her human limitations in the fight against unjust social system while simultaneously harnessing the resources of God and other women. For *Gogo, Cele*, her spiritual and material realities are intertwined in the struggle for life. Prayer and practical strategies go hand in hand and express her lived reality of survival faith.

4.5.2 Bible reading //

It has to be noted that people's experiences in one-way or the other, shape the way they read and understand the Bible. Survivors of domestic violence situate the Bible reading in their context so that it can offer liberating possibilities. Some women such as Mrs A, Mrs B and Mrs C have shared that reading the Bible has made them to cope well with their stressors. It is mainly because the Bible has verses that support their spirit and make them accept their sufferings as they are and above all triumph. Bible reading are done individually or in-groups such as the *Manyano* groups or *izimvuselelo*. Contextual Bible study reading enables victims of domestic violence to tell their story. Examples could be the Tamar story that we have seen in this paper. Hearing such a story, it empowers the victims of abuse to tell their story and inform them that they are not alone and indeed that the abuse is not the end of the road. Contextual Bible reading becomes a Christian tool to liberate victims of domestic violence.

4.5.3 Manyano //

Manyano organizations are found in various church traditions in the country. Up to now they are only women groups that are geared to empower women and provide themselves with various

tools of survival in a patriarchal society that most of the times have been hostile to women. *Manyano* groups are very healing. The research by Haddad (2001:6) confirms this, "I suggest that this is most clearly expressed in the practices of the *Manyano* movement, an indigenous form of African women's Christianity". Especially because it is where women meet on their own with no men. It is where they feel important and in control of the process. They feel very much in charge of these support groups. This is what women would like to see continue happening in their practice as it boosts their inner self. The *Manyano* groups have become common places where women feel free to tell each other about their experiences. In these groups they contextualise the Bible reading so that it can reflect their reality. After Bible reading they normally end with prayers and singing praising God for the strength that get through fellow women. Mrs C affirms the importance of the *Manyano* groupings.

4.5.4 Izimvuselelo //

Just like the *Manyano* groups, so too the *izimvuselelo* groups, they play a very vital part in women's lives especially those undergoing some serious problems. The only difference is that *izimvuselelo* women pray, sing and worship throughout the night and may speak in tongues. Indeed it gives an individual/group the opportunity of praying, praising, and celebrating with fellow Christians. It also gives a feeling of togetherness in Christ and hope that problems will be overcome.

4.5.5 Forgiveness, Confession and Reconciliation //

Reconciliation might mean different things to many people as Hay (1998:14) puts it. For some it means, "forgive and forget; the painful process of confronting the evil perpetrated and the violence caused; confronting the evil-doers with their actions; facing the pain, loss, anger, and hatred of those who suffered; and facing the question of justice as part of reconciliation". To understand reconciliation in this paper, one has to see how forgiveness, confession and reconciliation forge together. Once we forge these words together we shall be able to perceive reconciliation as the establishment or recovery of the human dignity in every person. This has to do with a new or reinstated relationship but not a return to how things were before but essentially

a new or renewed reality (Hay 1998:14). Confession, forgiveness and reconciliation are necessary when there has been violence and disordering of the human relationship to God, who is Love. The message to the survivors of domestic violence is that reconciliation is about transforming dehumanizing domestic violence and its social consequences into the recovery of human dignity of the survivor (domestic violence victims). Hay (1998:15) argues correctly about this reconciliation when he says, “The Christian offer of forgiveness is possible prior to the repentance of the transgressor, and a degree of personal reconciliation is possible without the transgressor participating in the process, where reconciliation in this context means recovery of the victim’s dignity and humanity”. Where the perpetrator truly seeks forgiveness and desires to change it could be argued that Christianity in general supports the individual reconciliation in terms of domestic violence, as it is very often private and individually oriented. In terms of Catholic Christians the individual reconciliation takes place in a confession box and to the Protestant Christians it takes place as a private personal moment.

4.5.6 Positive Theology of Marriage



For Christians marriage is a sacrament. The intimate partnership of married life and love established by God is an act of personal consent, mutual self-giving and the bond is sacred. Pollock and Levierge (1985:68) argues that a man and woman who by the marriage bond are ‘no longer two but one’ help and support each other in an intimate union of their personal being and actions. Married love is caught up into divine love, enriched by Christ’s redeeming power and the Church’s saving activity, thus leading the married partners to God and helping them in their role of father and mother. Pollock and Levierge (1985:71) further state that married people should cherish and pray for loyal and generous love; faithfulness and unity; and they should make decisions thoughtfully together, considering their situation, the material and spiritual conditions of the time, the good of society and the good of the Church.

4.6 Conclusion

In summary, this chapter was about sharing different experiences of women from Sweetwaters who were willing to participate in voluntary research about their experiences of the church in

relation to their lives. Having seen in this chapter how survivors shared their sufferings and wishing to be healed, chapter five will look at strategies for the church in trying to help these survivors.

CHAPTER FIVE

Strategies for the Church

5.0 Introduction

We have looked at what the literature says about domestic violence and have read about women experiences in Zulu culture as well. We now examine the role of the church in helping survivors of domestic violence. We will consider different strategies for the church under the broad headings, “challenging the negative” and “strengthening the positive”.

5.1 Challenging the Negative

It is necessary to have multi-faceted approach to eradicate domestic violence. Fedler and Jacobs (2001:41) state that to eradicate domestic violence, the following should be considered: community-based programmes, research and education aimed at raising public awareness of the issue; training to ensure gender-sensitive law enforcement; and adequate health care, housing shelters, counseling, and support services. The most important of these is the need for a fundamental change in social attitudes and practices. Most scholars and researchers agree that collaborative effort by NGOs, CBOs, communities, the state, health services, the law and the church are essential in addressing violence against women (Carter 2001; The Association of Men Against Violence 2002). As it seeks to challenge the negative, the church could focus on the following three important tasks:

5.1.1 Working with Young Men, Men and Perpetrators

The church should be involved in working with the perpetrators of domestic violence to help and encourage them to change their violent behaviour. Boys and men should be targeted as a preventative strategy to challenge gender-based violence and change their mindsets towards women. Flood (2001) argues that masculinity refers to the meanings attributed to being male in

a particular context or society and includes the social organization of men's lives. Maisel (2000) in agreement with Flood states that masculinity refers to the ways in which individuals who are gendered as men behave in accordance with a particular set of ideas about what men are believe. Flood emphasizes the point that domestic violence by men is a social and cultural fact based on notions of masculinities and acceptable male behaviour.

It has to be noted that it is patriarchy that renders women subordinate to men and perpetuates male power and results in the male practice of domestic violence against women. Flood (1997) points out that domestic violence can only be eradicated through fundamental changes in notions of gender, particularly notions of masculinity and societal gendered power relations. "Ideas of masculinity are directly linked to violence and power, and men's violent behaviour maintains and perpetuates male power and control over women" (GAP Discussion Document 2003:12). It is very important that the church and other organisations should work with men so as to change their mindsets towards women to eradicate domestic violence as Flood (2001:3) argues, "if men do not change, then gender justice is simply impossible". Special focus should be on young men so that their socialisation should not be the masculinity that devalues women but the goal has to sensitize and raise men's awareness on issues of gender equity, power and gender-based violence in an attempt to challenge and transform patriarchal attitudes, values and behaviour. The church could do this in the following ways:

- By running encounters and supporting the formation of men's reflection groups in different parts of the diocese/parish and so on.
- By offering training workshops and courses for men (adults, adolescents and youths) indicating the evils/dehumanizing/immorality of domestic violence.
- By running and participating in public campaigns.
- By influencing public opinion by taking part in radios and TV programmes on matters of domestic violence and its effects.
- By writing articles for local, national and international publications.
- Gender-based violence should be addressed in Christian schools and included in all curricula.

5.1.2 Challenging Culture

As it has been seen in this paper that the constructs of cultures contribute a lot to domestic violence, the effective mechanism to stop such abuse would be the church to be involved in challenging culture with the aim of liberating women. The influence of culture is more vivid in *lobola* as it has been explained above that most men consider *lobolo* as a license to subordinate and abuse women. {Wherever possible the church should be involved so that *lobolo* to begin with should not be too expensive. This will lessen the anger that men have when the women whom they paid so dearly are not doing what the husbands want them to do. } The church despite of its failures or wrong perception, it is largely respected within communities. This will serve the purpose of influencing Christian marriages that no one will have his or her marriage be blessed in the church if the *lobolo* would be too expensive.

Buckenham (1999:115) states that the church as a powerful civil institution can discuss the problem of high *lobolo* as a priority at synod and policy meetings, lobby and advocate within its own congregations and the government at large to change attitudes and actions. If Christians can widely take part in practicing cheap *lobolo*, this gradually might have an influence on wider society where most of those Christians reside. Sooner, the communities start witnessing the drop in the *lobolo* price especially in the cultures such as the Zulu culture where *lobola* is regarded so highly and domestic violence is so bad.

Flood (2001) argues that masculinity refers to the meanings attributed to being male in a particular context or society and includes the social organization of men's lives and this can easily be challenged and changed. During the church gatherings and sermons, the pastors/priests should include mentioning or even preaching the devastating effects of alcohol. This has to aim at changing people's behaviour with the use alcohol.

5.1.3 Breaking the Silence

Silence does not pay. Women must summon up the courage to speak out. Women are longing for the church to be a supportive structure and a place of friendship, hope, fun and enjoyment

where people celebrate life and God. This is a challenge to the church. It should have courage and a will to challenge the causes of domestic violence, not a place to hide from and/or conceal real suffering. Women want to be free and feel safe in the church.

Many women have been discouraged to speak about their situations because they have been held responsible for domestic violence or blamed for staying in an abusive relationship. They are mostly not taken seriously. It is always advisable to allow the woman to talk freely, formally or informally. Informally with friends, formally with relevant therapists and/or counselors.

Support groups are essential to support and give women in communities the skills and knowledge they need to prevent domestic violence. This involves the promotion of self – esteem and economic status to avoid dependency. In these seminars the church can do sermons, bible studies and confirmation classes.

5.1.4 Legal Education

It is vital to know about the state's response to family violence so as to determine where gaps exist in preventative services and support legislation that provides needed services (Miller, 1994). It is also essential to offer seminars on the legal alternatives for abused spouses and family members.

The above mentioned indicate that women need to continue organizing themselves so as to have leadership that is inclusive of women. And to participate in and/or lobby decision – making bodies at local, provincial and national level leading to international level. By so doing, women will be informed of their current legal rights and how they can go about attaining these rights. However, women need to be continuously informed about their legal rights and to be reminded of the fact that they have rights as humans.

The church can offer spiritual and pastoral support for such women who are taking a leadership role in legal education and advocacy.

5.2 Strengthening the Positive

We have seen how the Church needs to challenge those negative things that were outlined above. It also needs to strengthen the positive. We now look at five important tasks:

5.2.1 Affirming Spirituality

Pollock and Levierge (1985:52-53) argues that the Church's aim being concerned with salvation and the things to come, cannot be fully attained except in the next world. But the Church is present here and now in the form of a body of people who form the growing nucleus of God's family. The spiritual values unite this family. It has to be known that the Church is aware that only God can answer the expectations of a person's heart. People are connected to God through the spirit. The spirituality within ourselves helps us to search for our relationship with God, self and others. Dwyer (1994:918) argues that from this perspective spirituality can be defined as the experience of the transcendent that is expressed in one's world. This spirituality helps people to realize that regardless of what any person can say, they are created in God's image thus all people are equal in God's eyes. No person should allow oneself to be dehumanized by another as if there are other people who are more equal than others. Provision of support, advice and counseling for abused women is vital (Glanz and Spiegel, 1996; 165) just as support and counseling for abusers is. This will help to decrease the level of domestic violence. Through *izimvuselelo* abused women become in touch with their inner being. This helps to open the space to reflect what empowering method they can embrace. It is therefore, very important to increase the number of women in different ministries, church activities and prayer services so that the affirming of spirituality may be enhanced.

5.2.2 Counseling

Victims of domestic violence need someone who can listen. This is confirmed by Mrs B and Mrs G who felt better after someone had time to listen. It helped a lot. A larger number of survivors of domestic violence state that once a counselor/priest/pastor has listened to them, this tends to minimize the effect of the abuse. This is not mentioning the mere fact that somebody

knows the story. Counseling in this regard helps to put their minds at ease since normally victims of domestic violence are skeptical what the counselor/pastor/priest will do with the information that they were abused. If abused women do not receive counseling they have problems of mixing with others. They would rather isolate themselves. By so doing, they depend to a greater extent a person who abuses them (in a situation where the abuser is an intimate partner).

5.2.3 Networking

The media often portrays violence as the only solution to any kind of conflict. Thus violence in the media affects us in many ways. At first we are repelled by it. But slowly as we watch more and more we actually become numb to it. Thus, networking with the media can make a huge difference, as it does have successful stories. The Church can collaborate with the media. For instance, those talk shows pastors are involved in on Sunday mornings with Radio *Ukhozi*.

Networking with government departments, non-governmental organizations, community based organizations, and volunteers as well as funders that have been long working with women and gender based violence, is very vital. Such organizations like Department of Social Development, Midlands Women's Group, LifeLine/Rape Crisis, Childline, Women in Action, Victim Support Centers, Justice and Women (JAW), FAMSA, KZN Programme for Survivors of Violence, PACSA gender desk, School of Theology, Women and Parliament, and many more. This can be done through an exchange of a list of network organizations, forums and joint community events like celebrating national women's day.

The above mentioned will help in starting community intervention programmes like family violence community response teams, for instance, health professional, pastoral counselors, and legal systems, social agencies and many more.

5.2.4 Economic Empowerment

Statistical evidence supports the theory that "... wage equality, family support, welfare and

other social services decrease the level of violence” (Park et al, 1993:183). This shows that women’s economic alternatives should be improved as studies show correlations between abuse, unemployment and economic stress (Miller, 1994).

Poverty limits women’s life chances, often giving them few options other than household and reproductive labour. Poverty increases women’s economic dependence on men, making them more vulnerable to abuse and less capable of escaping abusive relationships. As women are typically responsible for caring for children and other dependants, their poverty and vulnerability also has important implications for other household members.

Poverty contributes to the high rate of domestic violence by entrapping women in abusive situations. During interviews it was clear that most women in abusive relationship say, “I can’t leave him because I have children to look after and he brings in the money”. Economic vulnerability erodes alternatives available to women facing domestic violence. And domestic violence against women intensifies in the climate of frustration bred by high poverty rate. Financial stability would allow women to become independent from such situations.

The church should establish, or where already existing should intensify, women’s economic empowerment programmes. A good example is the 5 in 6 Project run by Catholic Welfare Development (CWD) that runs the economic project called the ‘Daily Saving Model’, which is associating women’s inability to leave as a result of the poverty trap. The reasoning behind the project is rooted in the notion that women are unable to leave abusive situations because they are economically dependent on their partners. The Daily Saving Model aims to address this need and empower women to be self-sufficient. The argument is that chances for women to save money will lead to women coming together and talk about domestic violence, and find solutions as Maisel (2000:5) points out:

If violence against women is to end in any country, women on a grassroots level need to be together, and they need to feel a grievance around which they can organise. The most robust way is to organise exchanges where women can learn how to collect money everyday.

The church should invest much in grassroots communities just as the Daily Saving Model did in order to make a difference. Maisel (2000) claims that the model has been successful in terms of creating community networks and thus reducing women's fear as a result of the isolation they experience when in abusive relationships. The church ought to be involved in developing job creation projects for women to become self sufficient in the face of little resources and cultural practices that devalue women and very often create a conducive climate for men's violence.

5.2.5 Training Manyano Leadership

We have seen that women have little trust of the church leadership. This is why the formation of *Manyano* groups is necessary. However, it does not end there. Training for *Manyano* church leaders is important for effective prevention programmes in church, schools, youth groups and adult groups. It is essential to look into this as interventions are required at all the levels ranging from personal level changes in perception and behaviour of gender and gender roles, to addressing the historical and social realities of a deep rooted patriarchal society. This is vital to be looked at because "women's sense of security in their neighbourhoods is low and many feel unsafe within their own homes" (Bollen et al, 1999:73).

This may help to break the cycle of violence. A woman/victim would be empowered to face the reality instead of justifying responses to her situations (Park et al, 1993:186).

5.3 Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen the importance of the Church to challenge the negative and strengthening the positive in dealing with domestic violence. It has been argued that it is necessary to have many ways of dealing with domestic violence. Partnerships among government, institutions, communities and faith-based organizations are very critical in eradicating domestic violence. Survivors and perpetrators of domestic violence both need help. It is therefore essential for both girls and boys to be taught better ways of their social roles in the family and society. Since culture plays a very big role in how female and male are socialized, the Church should take advantage with the respect that is given to it, to contribute to the

transformation of culture especially the views over *lobola*.

Whenever mechanisms are put in place to deal with the survivors of domestic violence, the point should be emphasized to help them to break the silence as they will be encouraged to speak out; educate them about legal issues concerning domestic violence; there should be enough effort to affirm their spirituality; there should be enough provisions for counseling; networking with the media so that domestic violence can be demonized and inform the survivors of domestic violence that there is help available. Since women who are economically dependent on their partners are the most victims of domestic violence as they have nowhere to go for financial assistance, they must be economically empowered whenever possible. The Church always remembers the importance of inner healing and thus it must encourage women to join women groups such *Manyano* where only women can share and pray together.

CHAPTER SIX

Summary and Conclusion

6. 1 Summary

In chapter one the background information, problem formulation, motivation, the hypothesis, the previous work done in this field, data collection methods, the limitation of the field of study and the ethical issues in implementing the research have been outlined. In chapter two it was shown that domestic violence is a learned behaviour and not genetically determined. It is therefore, possible to eradicate such behaviour. This chapter further indicated that the effective way of overcoming it is through legislation, awareness, education and that the Church's involvement against domestic violence and a strong political-will cannot be undermined. Chapter three dealt with the fact that religion is a power that both helps and hinders survivors of violence. This was explicitly shown through the works of Marx and Weber. The Old and New Testament have also been used to indicate that.

Chapter four discussed the research in Sweetwaters, looking at key themes for *Zulu* women and domestic violence as well as Christianity. The research showed different experiences of women with their effort to get help from different sources including the Church. In the final chapter we have seen the importance of the Church to challenge the negative and strength the positive in dealing with domestic violence. It has been argued that it is necessary to have many ways of dealing with domestic violence such as building partnerships among government institutions, communities and faith-based organizations all of which are very critical in eradicating domestic violence. It has been pointed out that both survivors and perpetrators of domestic violence need help. The Church is well situated to deal with both groups in the effort of bring forgiveness, confession and reconciliation. It is important that organizations in the partnership should help economically empowering the needy women.

6.2 Conclusion

The relative silence in the church's official teachings on domestic violence has led some people to argue that the church does not care about domestic violence. Some have stated that the church encourages violence against women through its biblical interpretation and practices. Religious writings and traditions have to some extent hindered the liberation of women from domestic violence, through the view that women should submit to abuse from men.

In this sense the church as an institution clearly condemns domestic violence even though certain biblical interpretations may seem to condone all sorts of gender-based abuses. The church continues to support programmes aimed at combating domestic violence and offers its resources to both victims and perpetrators, since both groups need Jesus' strength and healing. In dealing with domestic violence, the church teaches through scripture that the theme commencing in Genesis is that men and women are both created in God's image. A correct understanding of the scriptures leads to a relationship based on mutuality and love. In this sense the church has helped to liberate the victims of domestic violence.

A good number of survivors think that the church can help in domestic violence as some look for answers to their problems from the church. Other survivors turn towards the feminist movement or relevant welfare/health organizations. It is part of human nature that when a person is in trouble she will look for answers or anyplace where she will receive some attention and healing. The church has the greatest potential to heal the inner pain. This is the recommendation for the church to focus on counseling as well.

The church uses the same Bible to express the difference between men and women and how they have to relate to each other. The tradition of the church that is treasured so greatly has got elements that support the subordination of women as well as the liberation of women. This is not easy to isolate and thus creates the big ambiguity. The church can help the survivors of domestic violence because it is well situated in terms of the abusers and the victims of domestic violence as both belong to the same church of God. Since abusers and victims respect the church, it will be fitting for the church to help.

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8.0 APPENDIX

8.1 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

SECTION 1

PERSONAL DETAILS

1. How old are you?
19-30 years
31-45 years
46-60 years
61 and older
2. Place of birth?
3. Educational status?
4. Employment history?
5. What is the main source of income?
6. Social circumstances (what is made of, and who owns it)?
7. Number of children?
8. Ages of children?
9. Marital status?
10. Church denomination?

SECTION 2

EXPERIENCES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

11. Have you ever been directly exposed to one or more incidences of domestic violence?
12. If yes, name them.
13. When did it start?
14. Was this caused by something you did?

15. Was it caused by something someone else did?

16. Is the situation solved?
(How are things today?)

17. Did it turn out all right for you?

SECTION 3

WOMEN'S OWN EXPERIENCE OF THE CHURCH

18. Did you ever take this issue up with the church leadership?

19. Did you ever share it with other women in the church?

20. What was the reaction?

21. Did the church help or made it more difficult?

22. If it did, what is it that is good or bad?

23. What do you think the church could do to help you?

8.2 MAP OF SWEETWATERS