

A FEMINIST CRITIQUE OF PASTORAL COUNSELLING: TRANSFORMING
PASTORAL COUNSELLING INTO A LIBERATIVE PRACTICE AND AN AGENT
OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

BY

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ABSTRACT

Feminist critique has become a central feature in most academic disciplines and has contributed to the radical transformation of these disciplines. As a critical tool, located within the feminist movement, feminist critique has forged its own identity that is linked to a number of fundamental principles that have become its trademark. All these principles cluster around the central goal of feminism that is its commitment to the universal liberation of all women and the creation of a society free from all forms of oppression. Feminists differ in their analysis of the causes of women's oppression and the means to end such oppression. These differences however do not interfere with the central commitment of the movement. The universal feminist movement is also diverse and may in some cases appear as separate movements with no connection, but on closer examination these movements are all linked to the fundamental goal of feminism.

Theology is one of the disciplines that has been transformed by feminist theologians. It boasts of scholars from every continent which bring in dynamism within theology. There is a proliferation of material from feminist scholars covering just about every aspect of Biblical studies, ethics and systematic theology. There is also a great diversity among feminist theologians which provides a critical edge to the discipline. Unfortunately, this tremendous growth in feminist theology has not translated itself into the practical fields of theology such as Pastoral Counselling, Christian Education, Pastoral Care, Homiletics etc. All these fields represent applied theology i.e. the areas where theological systems and doctrines are applied in real life situations. Ideally there should be constant interactions between these two divisions of theology i.e. the theoretical and practical studies in order to critically monitor the effects of theology in practical situations. Unfortunately, there

seems to be a gap between them and this is evidenced by the lack of integration of feminist principles into these practical fields. Pastoral counselling is the focus of this dissertation and has as yet to benefit from the input of feminist theologians. Probably it is taken for granted that when theology changes so should its practice, that the transformation of theology automatically results in the transformation of its applied disciplines. This is an unrealistic expectation because these disciplines have developed into separate fields and to move from one field to another requires commitment and effort - it will not just happen!

The lack of feminist input into Pastoral Counselling has been unfortunate because the knowledge base on which pastoral counselling is based on has remained unchallenged and worse still has failed to keep up with the changes that are taking place in society especially with regards to the changing roles of women. The result has been a gap between Pastoral Counselling and progressive sectors of society which are promoting the equality of women. This should not be the case because there are valuable resources from feminist theology that could equip pastoral counsellors with the knowledge required to deal with these issues. This is indeed unfortunate because not only is pastoral counselling out of step with feminist issues in society but has been found lacking in the development of appropriate counselling specifically geared to meet the needs of women especially the growing number who are victims of violence. Violence against women has become a world-wide “epidemic” which requires a response from the church. Since it is through pastoral counselling that victims of violence, encounter the “church”, how the church responds to them through counselling is evidence of whether pastoral counselling is a liberative tool and an agent of social transformation.

Pastoral Counselling will be subjected to this test not only to reveal its weakness but also to point out its potential to be a liberative tool and agent of social transformation.

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CHAPTER ONE

1. TRANSFORMING PASTORAL COUNSELLING - THE CHALLENGE

1.1. Introduction

Pastoral counselling as a discipline has often been described as applied theology because it represents the practical aspect of theology. Within theological studies it is often seen as a “soft” subject compared to “real/concrete” subjects like Biblical Studies, Systematic Theology and Ethics. This perception comes from the belief that pastoral counselling is a passive ministry, engaged in private problems of parishioners and far removed from the world of politics, economics and social issues. The actual practice of counselling i.e. listening to problems, providing feedback to clients etc gives the impression of a practice far removed from social realities. Pastoral counselling is seldom linked with social activism, struggles for justice and politics.

I would like to argue that the definition of pastoral counselling should not be limited to its current status as an apolitical activity but to its potential state because of its potential for transformation. This potential for transformation opens the way for pastoral counselling to be redefined. I have chosen to redefine pastoral counselling in its potential state, as a liberative tool and agent of social transformation. The tools for transformation will come from the response that pastoral counselling will give to the issues raised by feminist and women victims of violence. I believe that it is in response to these issues will see the start of a transformation process within pastoral counselling.

Before going on to discussing about the contents of this dissertation, I would like to locate the context and contents of the subject matter as being both Western and African.

1.2 Overview of the dissertation

In line with the above goals, the dissertation will explore many themes related to the transformation of pastoral counselling.

Chapter Two will explore some of the critical issues surrounding the general practice of

counselling before discussing the distinctives of pastoral counselling. The two theoretical basis of pastoral counselling namely theology and psychology will be introduced and critiqued from a general perspective. The African and women's context will also add their voices to the general critique of pastoral counselling.

Chapter Three will focus on the feminist critique of pastoral counselling which constitutes the central thesis of the dissertation. The chapter will begin with a brief introduction to both western and African feminism highlighting the critical areas that each one addressed. Then the discussions will focus on feminist critique of both theology and psychology which will raise a number of issues that need to be addressed if pastoral counselling is to be a liberative tool for women. The chapter will end with a brief discussion of feminist therapy which is an example of an alternative way of doing counselling. Another theme that runs concurrently through the chapter, is the issue of violence against women. This serves as an example of the link between oppressive ideologies and social practice.

Chapter four will continue the discussion on violence against women, beginning with a critical overview of the issues surrounding violence against women together with a feminist analysis.

How theology and psychology have historically responded to the problem of violence against women specifically domestic violence, occupies a major section of the discussions. A brief discussion on the work and ministry of the Gender Desk of the Pietermaritzburg Agency for Social Awareness (PACSA) provides an example of how justice, theology and advocacy are combined in a practical way to address the problem of violence against women. The critical analysis of PACSA is done with reference to the importance of rituals as illustrated in a case study that will be discussed.

Chapter 5 is the conclusion and brings to the fore, the challenges that have come from the discussions. These challenges are posed to pastoral counselling as a call to transformation.

CHAPTER TWO

2. CRITICAL OVERVIEW OF PASTORAL COUNSELLING

2.1. INTRODUCTION TO COUNSELLING

The overarching framework for pastoral counselling is the discipline of counselling. Before proceeding to a formal definition of counselling, one needs to look at the commonly held view of counselling. The general or common sense understanding of counselling incorporates the following characteristics namely; a person in distress who approaches another person either a professional or a layperson for help; a special relationship is then established which occurs for a specific period of time and is characterised by amongst other things, confidentiality and mutual trust; the goal being to try to solve the problem/s of the counsellee and lastly, the counsellor is recognised as either having special skills or wisdom that will assist the counsellee in solving their problems. The focus is generally on intrapsychic issues ie what is going on inside the counsellee for example, their feelings, distress and perceptions of the problem. In response counsellors will use their skills and experience to assist the counsellees in resolving the problem at hand. Counselling therefore is seen as both client and problem centred. The next question to ask is how the general understanding of counselling compares with the formal definition of counselling.

2.1.1 Definition of Counselling

Two definitions of counselling will be discussed. The first definition defines counselling as

a nonmedical discipline, the aims of which are to facilitate and quicken personality growth and development.....and to provide comradeship and wisdom for persons facing the inevitable losses and disappointments in life. Persons seeking counselling are usually suffering internal and interpersonal conflict. They feel the need to talk to a competent person who is not emotionally or socially involved in their lives. A counsellor provides objectivity and privacy. It is a formal relationship between a counsellor and a counsellee ie conducted within specific time limits and at a discreet and private place. (Oates 1974:9)

and the quote below describes the purposes of counselling as being to,

empower the client to cope with life situations, engage in growth producing activity and make effective decisions. As a result of counselling, the counsellee increases his or her control over present adversity and present and future opportunity (Patterson and Eisenberg 1983:1)

From the above quotes it is clear that the common sense understanding of counselling is fairly accurate. Counselling is generally characterised by the following factors; a focus on the individual counsellee i.e. is client centred; dealing primarily with intrapsychic issues facing the counsellee i.e. is problem centred; occurs within a special professional relationship ie the counsellor is a professionally trained individual with special skills that should assist the counsellee and that the relationship between the counsellor and counselled is temporal i.e. occurs within a specific time and setting. One of the main goals of counselling is to empower the counselled to be able to, not only deal with their immediate problem, but to learn from their experience. This professionalisation of counselling is a modern phenomena that has resulted in a “fragmented” form of counselling caused by specialisation. For example the physical needs of an individual are catered for by a medical specialist, the social issues by a social worker and spiritual needs by the religious community. This is a far cry from and a form of discontinuity from the holistic counselling models of former times and still found in non western societies.

The holism found in these traditions of counselling combines the spiritual, physical, social and intrapsychic so that the counsellor’s intervention included all these factors. For example in African societies the traditional healers not only prescribe herbs, but also serve as spiritual guides and agents of reconciliation between the client and the community.

2.1.2 Critical Issues in Counselling

The lack of holism in many forms of counselling has meant that other aspects of life such as socio-political, economic context and gender, race and class have been largely ignored. Alternative theories of counselling such as cross-cultural counselling, feminist therapy, Radical Social Counselling and family systems counselling have arisen as forms of protest against the narrow focus of mainstream counselling. These movements have challenged and broadened the scope of counselling. From the wide range of issues raised by these alternative theories, only three will be discussed.

Firstly, the need for counselling to incorporate the social context into the counselling process. There needs to be a recognition that no person exists in a vacuum insulated from society i.e. there are no genderless, apolitical, cultural and context-free persons. Many of the so called private problems can often be traced to the context and by labelling problems as private, counselling effectively renders the context blameless and neutral. “The professional commits a political act by failing to encourage a client to examine or confront the environment...the professional has made a contribution to the strengthening of the status quo” (Hutchinson & Stadler 1975:12). This quote buries the myth that counselling is a politically neutral activity.

The context of the individual includes not only the socio-economic, cultural and political aspects but other “hidden” aspects like ideologies and power relations that operate within the society. An example of a “context” that links all these aspects together is group membership. Every person belongs to at least one particular group, which means that group membership forms part of the identity or context of everyone and no understanding of an individual is complete without taking their group membership into account. For example, a Black woman is a member of at least two groups who have a history of oppression i.e. she belongs to the “Black

Race” group and also to the “female” group. Consequently, the problems of a Black woman cannot be separated from the problems she faces as a member of each of these two groups. Similarly, a Black African cannot be understood without reference to the history of the African race of which s/he is a part of.

For Africans, the concept of individualism is a modern phenomena that is not found in traditional culture. Traditional African understanding of persons has always been “in community”. Community is not restricted to one’s family or kinship but to the; ancestors or the “living dead”; spiritual beings and nature. Hence connectedness, interdependence and oneness are some of the characteristics of the holistic African world view. This holism as already mentioned is found in African forms of healing and counselling. The infiltration of counselling models which centre on the individual should be critiqued not just by African tradition but by other forces operating within the African context such as urbanization, westernization and the erosion of African cultural values.

Secondly, the need to critically analyse the goals of counselling. A counselling model that focuses only on the individual and excludes the wider context, will aim for individual change that leaves the context intact i.e. the individual has to adjust to the context. This , as already mentioned above, is a political act, which ensures that the status quo remains unchallenged. Certain aspects of Christian spirituality and counselling fall under this category as illustrated by the following quote:

To the extent that prayer and meditation and books on spirituality actually help to cope with the distresses of life that arise out of unjust social conditions, without challenging those conditions themselves, to that extent they act as a sedative which distracts attention from the need to dismantle the structures that perpetuate the misery.....The social and political policies that make for starving children, battered women and the evils of rising facsim are still there unchallenged as people learn through prayer to find the tranquillity to live with corrupt political and social structures instead of channelling their distress and anger and anxiety into energy for constructive change (Jantzen 1995:20).

This quote emphatically points out that to focus only on the internal well being of an individual without examining the contextual issues that could be responsible for their problems, may appear on the surface to be helpful but is illusory because it fails to confront the social structures that contribute to the problems. The contextual issues that contribute to the internal distress remain unchallenged because the person is effectively encouraged to adjust to the context. The effect of such adjustment is to “numb” the person’s sensitivity to the contextual causes of their distress.

Consequently, the adjustment model of counselling merely preserves the status quo and protects the institutions of society (Hutchinson & Adler 1975:1).

Lastly, the need to examine the generalisation or standardisation of human experience. Most counselling theories and practices claim to be based on “human experience” that is common to all people. This raises a number of critical questions such as: who defines what is normal human experience? What criteria is used? Which segment of the human population is mostly used as samples from which normative behaviour is defined and thereafter applied to the rest of the population? Are there generic human beings? Which groups are excluded from experiments dealing with human behaviour and why is that? What is the ideology behind the body of knowledge that has been accepted as authoritative on human experience especially in the field of psychology? The purpose of these questions is to clarify some of the critical issues that need to be addressed if counselling is to assume its rightful role as a liberative tool for all people.

Most of these issues will be raised and discussed throughout this dissertation. In the context of this section, it is sufficient to merely highlight these issues, as part of the background to the discussions on pastoral counselling.

The purpose of providing an introduction to counselling is to articulate the wider context of pastoral counselling. As one of the disciplines within the field of counselling it is important to reiterate that pastoral counselling shares the discipline of counselling

with a number of other professions particularly the psychiatrist, the social worker and the counselling psychologist. Each profession brings to the task of counselling a different kind of training experience, both theoretical and practical (although there are some important similarities here, too), and each individual within the professions brings his own unique individuality and experience; but there are many similarities when the actual practice of counselling is studied (Jernigan 1961:194)

From the above quote it is clear that each counselling discipline has its own distinctiveness and furthermore that within each discipline are variations caused by differences among individuals. These differences however do not mean that each discipline is entirely separate from the others, there is some exchange between some disciplines eg psychology and pastoral counselling. In some cases referral brings about teamwork for example pastors may refer their counsellor to a psychiatrist or social worker and together they will assist the person. Nonetheless there are some fundamental differences between the disciplines that gives each of them their distinct identity. Pastoral counselling is no exception, it too has its own distinct theory and practice. The next section will define and discuss the distinctives and other issues in pastoral counselling.

2.2 PASTORAL COUNSELLING

2.2.1. Definition

Having just defined the discipline of counselling, it is clear that the word “pastoral” before counselling forms the key to understanding the uniqueness of pastoral counselling. This is because in pastoral counselling it is the pastor who counsels (Jernigan 1961:195). Nowadays, the term pastor is generally used to refer to the ordained clergy i.e. ministers and priests of most denominations. The term pastor is also an inclusive term, because ordained clergy perform numerous duties besides pastoral counselling and in most cases pastoral counselling falls under the category of Pastoral Care. This modern understanding of pastor differs in some respects from the traditional understanding.

The traditional understanding of a pastor was derived from the shepherd motif found in both the Old and New Testament. As a shepherd, representing God, the pastor’s responsibility included disclosing “God’s loving protection and guidance” (Hunter 1990:827) through the ministries of healing, sustenance, guidance and reconciliation (:827). Today, this pastoral function is incorporated into the ministry of all ordained clergy. Pastoral Counselling therefore represents one aspect of pastoral care.

Defining pastoral counselling is not easy as there are many different ways of understanding what pastoral counselling is. The two quotes below will capture some of the key characteristics of pastoral counselling. Pastoral counselling is,

a specialised type of pastoral care offered in response to individuals, couples or families who are experiencing and able to articulate the pain in their lives and willing to seek pastoral help in order to deal with it. A pastoral counsellor is a person with commitment to and education for religious ministry who is functioning in a appropriate setting for ministry and accountable to a recognized religious community. The criteria for pastoral

counselling has more to do with the person and accountability of the counsellor than with the methods for the counselling (Hunter 1990:849)

and also

Pastoral counselling is a unique kind of relationship between the person and counsellor, a relationship which implies and introduces God as a third party. Obviously this is not to say that counselling skills, as modern psychology has developed them, are absent from this relationship.....It is rather counselling within a divine framework and perspective. This, as I see it, is why it is called pastoral counselling, and why such counselling has in fact a unique quality that is particularly its own (Curran 1959:22).

The above quotations provide some of the important characteristics of pastoral counselling which will be listed below i.e. pastoral counselling

- is a form of counselling with similar goals as that of counselling in general,
- emphasises the centrality of the transcendent i.e. recognises God's presence and activity as central to the process of counselling. This transcendent component brings into pastoral counselling spiritual resources such as prayer, confession, repentance, scripture, that contribute to its distinctive character.
- is linked to the definition and identity of the pastor which is what distinguishes her or him from other counsellors in the secular field
- is accountable to the particular religious community which the pastor serves
- occurs within the broader ministry and purpose of the church. Pastoral counselling is only one of the many ministries of the pastor and does not function independent of the broader aims of the church which the pastor serves.
- uses and integrates skills and theories from other human sciences especially psychology.

From the above list of qualities, only three will be discussed namely because all these relate to the broader issues that will be discussed in this dissertation. These are the identity of the pastor;

the emphasis on the transcendent and the integration of skills and theories from the discipline of psychology.

2.2.2 Distinctives of Pastoral Counselling

a) Identity of the Pastor

The identity of the pastor, as already mentioned, is a key factor in distinguishing the pastoral counsellor from other counsellors. There may be differences among Christian traditions but there are some similarities and it is these general similarities that will be discussed. Only six of these characteristics will be discussed.

Firstly, pastors “function as symbols” (Grenz and Bell 1995 :86). As a symbol of a particular religious community, a pastor “represents religious truth, the spiritual way of life and perhaps even the reality of God” (:87). This position of spiritual authority not only gives pastors considerable power over their religious communities but places undue pressure on them to be “super human”. In their capacity as symbols of the church, pastors are seen as representing God.

This has a profound impact on counselling because the pastor is invested with power over the counselled and the counsellee is always in a vulnerable position i.e. subordinate to the pastor.

This powerful position of the pastor paves the way for the abuse of power and the rising incidence of sexual abuse of female counsellees by pastors is one example of the abuse of power.

The symbolic representation of the pastor in the eyes of the counselled always makes the latter vulnerable to the pastor. This power imbalance is one of the issues that pose a challenge to the transformation of pastoral counselling.

Secondly, pastors are accountable to the religious communities which they serve and this includes theological accountability (Hunter 1990 :850). Although pastors have freedom to act, this freedom operates within the specific theological framework of the traditions of their religious community. The relationship between theology and counselling is important because “counselling needs for its identity as a science and art, the justification that comes from a theological foundation. Without this grounding pastoral counselling is deprived of its uniqueness as a distinctive form of counselling” (Estadt 1983 :19).

Thirdly, for pastors, counselling is neither a distinct ministry nor is it the only duty of the pastor, it is part of the overall ministry of the pastor which is guided by the larger goals of their church.

A pastor is thus different from professional counsellors who only focus on counselling.

Two other ways in which a pastoral counsellor differs from secular counsellors is that, s/he does not charge a fee for her/his services because as already mentioned, pastoral counselling is but one of the many functions that the pastor performs in service of her/his church. Pastoral counsellors can approach their members who have problems i.e. they do not act only when they are approached, they can be proactive.

Fourthly, pastors do not have the “ethical neutrality enjoyed by the private counsellor” (Oates 1974 :21). Pastors are expected to give ethical responses to problems as well as provide moral guidance. This assumption is taken for granted by anyone who specifically chooses a pastor as a counsellor. Part of the task of pastoral counselling is to help “persons formulate and test out the validity of their decisions. This process will demand great resources of moral and ethical standards” (Estadt 1983 :24).

Fifthly, pastors especially in Africa are recognised as religious and community leaders and are expected to speak on issues affecting the community. In the counselling session, the pastor is able to witness first hand, the impact of the wider context on the personal lives of individual persons. This enables the pastor to take up his/her prophetic responsibility ie to speak and write to “public audiences on behalf of the suffering people he serves privately” (Oates 1974 :21).

Lastly, the pastors bring certain assumptions that differentiate them from secular counsellors. These assumptions are theologically informed and reflect the belief system of the faith community which the pastor serves. For example assumptions about human nature and what constitutes change are derived from theology rather than science. Certain concepts such as sin, repentance, salvation, confession form part of the assumptions that are unique to religious forms of counselling.

b) Emphasis on the transcendent

As already mentioned in the definition, pastoral counselling unapologetically affirms the presence of God in the process of counselling. God is the third person in the counselling relationship which effectively shifts from being a dialogue to being “a trilogue” (Oates 1974 :11). Similarly, pastors have at their disposal, spiritual resources from their respective religious traditions which they can, at their discretion, use during counselling sessions. These resources include the Bible, prayer, sacraments, confession, fasting . As already mentioned, traditional pastoral counselling focused on four dimensions namely, healing (physical, spiritual and emotional); sustaining (spiritual growth during suffering); guiding, i.e. helping individuals to “choose between alternative causes of thought and action as their spiritual implications are weighed and reflected on” (Bridger and Atkinson 1994:34) and reconciliation with self, God and

others (:33). Central to this process, was the use of spiritual resources and acknowledgement of God as actively involved and committed to the welfare of the counselled. The spirituality of the pastor was seen as the determining factor of effective pastoral counselling.

Unfortunately, the misuse of some of spiritual resources especially prayer and the Bible has led to the “secularisation” of pastoral counselling resulting in the pre-eminence of psychological theories over spiritual resources. This is an unfortunate development because it is the use of these spiritual resources that distinguishes pastoral counselling from other forms of counselling.

To lose the spiritual dimension is equivalent to losing the identity of pastoral counselling.

Part of the transformation of pastoral counselling will involve the reappropriation of spiritual resources so that these become an integral part of the counselling process.

c. Integration of psychological skills and theories

The incorporation of psychological theories into pastoral counselling has received mixed responses. On one end of the spectrum are those who reject psychology as unChristian and therefore will have nothing to do with it and on the other end of the spectrum are those who reject theology in favour of psychology. In between are those who try to integrate the two (Bridger & Atkinson 1994:41). The trend in pastoral counselling seems to favour the integration of the two disciplines of psychology and theology. As there are many psychological theories that have been incorporated into pastoral counselling, this section will briefly focus on two of these namely psychoanalysis and human development theory. There is so much diversity within each of these theories that the discussions will simply highlight some of the defining characteristics. One other theory that has gained momentum in pastoral counselling is the family systems theory which will be discussed in chapter four.

The first theory to be discussed is psychoanalysis. Psychological theory and practice especially from psychoanalysis has transformed the theory and practice of counselling. Psychoanalysis was pioneered by Sigmund Freud. It is a “method of treatment that attempts to bring hidden impulses and memories which are locked in the unconscious to the surface of awareness, thereby freeing the patient from his or her disordered thoughts and behaviours” (Nairne 1996:553). Part of the methodology developed by Freud includes “free association” and dream analysis. Free association

refers to the relative suspension of conscious control. The patient in psychoanalytic treatment is asked to express in words all thoughts, feelings, wishes, sensations, images, and memories without reservation as they spontaneously occur. This requirement is called the fundamental rule of psychoanalysis (Moore & Fine 1990:78).

To create a context that facilitates free association, is a skill in itself, because the counsellor has to learn and be able to apply skills such as active listening, non-judgmental empathy and unconditional acceptance. It is from this practice that counselling skills such as active listening, attending, accurate empathy, non judgemental attitudes were developed. These skills have been refined and now form the backbone of counselling skills (:798).

Dream analysis, on the other hand has not been easily integrated into forms of counselling outside of psychoanalysis. There are however, pastoral counsellors who use Jungian dream analysis but this is not widely practised. Perhaps one of the reasons could be the complex process that is involved in the analysis and interpretations of dreams. Yet dreams have a significant role to play and the importance of dreams is recognised in African and other non-western cultures. Dreams also play a significant role in many of the narratives in the Bible. It is obviously an area that explored and its potential recognised.

Prior to psychoanalysis the method of counselling was that counsellors especially ministers and doctors “heard the problem, proceeded to make a diagnosis or a moral judgment and then laid out the solution in terms of medical or spiritual cure” (Byrne & Houlden 1995:797). This advice giving type of counselling which places the burden of solving the problem squarely on the shoulders of the counsellor is still present in the minds of many people when they approach professionals for help. Most “agony pages” in popular magazines, promote this type of counselling. Readers send their problems to the magazine and an expert gives them a solution. Similarly when people approach professionals such as social workers, clinical psychologists, doctors etc, they expect to be given solutions to their problem. Given this milieu, it would seem that the “advice giving” understanding of counselling still has a stronghold in the minds of many people. The position of the pastor as an authority figure, raises these types of expectations from people.

Consequently, the incorporation of new methods of counselling from psychology has to take cognisance of the context and expectations of the community where the pastoral counsellor works. The validity and effectiveness of these models in non-western society have still to be researched and documented.

The other field of psychology that has made a significant contribution to pastoral counselling is the area of human development. These theories have contributed to a greater understanding of human experience at different stages of the life cycle. For example the explanation that certain types of behaviour characterise different stages of human development provides a framework within which to understand what is “normal” behaviour during a particular stage in life. Some aspects of teenage behaviour such as rebellion have been found to be part of the

normal phase that teenagers experience during their transition to adulthood. Other areas in which these theories have been helpful are:

- a. in the designing of intervention programmes whose aim is to tackle the developmental crisis before these become a problem e.g. youth programmes that deal with sex education
- b. in the development of creative counselling methods such as family and group counselling that are linked to (a) above such as peer group counselling which has proved to be effective in teaching teenagers about safe sex
- c. in avoiding the “Christian temptation” to spiritualise problems. While it is true that questions of spirituality are central in pastoral counselling, there is always the real danger of imposing spiritual issues on all problems.

The incorporation of these skills and theories has resulted in pastoral counselling developing into a specialised discipline especially in western countries. Hopefully this trend will filter into the African context because pastors have to deal with increasingly complex problems faced by people living in the context of urbanisation, globalization and breakdown of cultural values.

It is also important to critically reflect on how the incorporation of psychological theories impacts pastoral counselling. This process has had both advantages and disadvantages. The advantages are obvious and these include a deeper understanding of the wider issues of human development that influence persons; effective skills and techniques that can be used to facilitate change and growth in counselling and an ongoing body of research into contemporary issues and theories of intervention. The disadvantages are more subtle. These include the incorporation of “hidden” ideologies, presuppositions and assumptions of theories and practices that are often undetected but are nonetheless powerful influences on counselling. Some of these include the following four

issues.

Firstly, the centrality of individualism. Individualism in counselling has already been discussed, here the emphasis will be on the ideology of individualism in psychological theory. Individualism as a social philosophy has become the central paradigm for understanding the nature of human beings and therefore is a paradigm for psychology (Bridger and Atkinson 1994:94). This focus on the autonomous individual in psychology has resulted in the “centrality of one to one model of counselling” (:93). Although, as already mentioned, there are other theories that focus on the individual in context, the dominant paradigm for most psychological theories is the autonomous self-contained individual. Psychology’s emphasis on individualism is political because it reflects the values of liberalism which are dominant in western society. As already discussed, individualism does not fit into either African or Biblical worldviews.

Secondly, the use of classification systems to identify and categorise behaviour in terms of what is “normal” or acceptable behaviour and what is “deviant”, abnormal or unacceptable behaviour.

The problem that arises out of the use of classification systems is the practice of social control i.e. how these classification systems are used to control behaviour and enforce conformity. Social control is the “means by which society secures adherence to social norms specifically how it minimizes, eliminates or normalizes deviant behaviour” (Conrad & Schneider 1980:7). Social control is maintained through the labelling of unacceptable behaviour as deviant. Deviant behaviour is essentially a “social judgement on behaviour ie system of social categories constructed for classifying behaviour, persons, situations and things” (:6) Deviance itself is “socially created by rulemaking and enforcement usually by powerful groups over people in less powerful positions” (:7) Critics of psychiatry and psychology have pointed out that the act of

labelling and classifying behaviour is in itself an effective tool of social control. By determining which behaviours are “normal” or “abnormal” these disciplines effectively serve the interests of the dominant group in society.

This means that groups outside the dominant group are controlled through the imposition of standards of normality that are derived from the dominant group. For example, psychology as a eurocentric discipline often promotes ethnocentrism by judging non western persons using western classification systems. Similarly, psychology as a male-centred system uses classification systems that ensure that women conform to culturally appropriate behaviour by labelling non-conformist behaviour as deviant.

Pastoral counselling can and in some cases has assimilated some of these assumptions into its theory and practice, resulting in its development of ethnocentrism, classism and sexism. These themes will be developed further in the next two chapters.

Thirdly, the danger of focusing on one aspect of human experience. Many of the theories in psychology tend to focus on one aspect of human experience at the expense of other aspects. For example, some theories of psychoanalysis tend to focus exclusively on the intra psychic processes and exclude the context. Other theories like family systems theory tends to focus on the family systems and exclude some of the issues from the wider context in which the family exists such as power relationships between women and men. However, there are shifts towards a more eclectic and holistic practice within psychology e.g. ecological theory, community psychology and feminist therapy. The point being made here is the need to avoid all forms of reductionism.

Lastly, the problem of universalisation and standardization of human behaviour. Earlier on in this chapter, questions were raised about the issue of standardization of human behaviour. Some of the questions will be answered here. The question of who makes decisions on theories of human behaviour will be tackled first. It has been noted that

majority of influential contributors to the theory and practice of mainstream psychology and psychiatry were white middle to upper class men...little attention given to women and other minority groups” (Richards and Begin 1997:44)

They believed that their “therapies and theories could be applied equally effective to all clients regardless of the client’s gender, race, religion or lifestyle” (:45). The underlying assumption is that the white middle-class male is a representative of humanity. Herein lies the seeds of sexism, racism and classism that are found in these theories. African and feminist critiques of mainstream psychology have identified these three ideologies of racism, classism and sexism as an inherent part of psychological theory. A more detailed discussion on feminist critique of psychology follows in the next chapter.

From the above it is clear that some of the problems facing the discipline of pastoral counselling come from its uncritical incorporation of psychological theories which as we will see later, come from a completely different set of presuppositions. These issues will be further developed in the section that deals with the relationship between pastoral counselling and psychology.

The desire to incorporate psychological theories has in some cases overshadowed the principal partner of pastoral counselling namely theology. The discipline of Pastoral counselling as it stands today is informed by both theology and psychology. The next section will continue the

discussions on how these two disciplines impact pastoral counselling.

2.3. A CRITICAL OVERVIEW OF THE ROLE OF THEOLOGY AND PSYCHOLOGY IN PASTORAL COUNSELLING

2.3.1 THEOLOGY

a. Introduction

The lure of psychological theories has caused a tension between theology and counselling. This is a contradiction because it is theology that gives pastoral counselling its distinctiveness and vice-versa. This division between pastoral counselling and theology is reflected in most seminaries and schools of theology where the different disciplines such as systematic theology, Biblical studies, ethics, practical theology etc function as distinct and separate entities. This is unfortunate because it is the exchange between the theoretical and practical subjects that enrich and critique each other. Pastoral Counselling is one form of applied theology and needs all the other “academic” disciplines to enrich and critique it and vice versa. The importance of pastoral counselling as one of the essential disciplines for the transformation of theology, especially in the African context is shown by the following quote:

Pastoral Counselling with case studies drawn from individual and family stories could become one of the better instruments for the emergence of African Christian theology which can free the churches from the colonial and western captivity syndrome (Ma Mpolo 1991:26)

b. Definition

The word theology is derived from two Greek words i.e. “theo” which means God and “logos” meaning the word. “Theology is thus discourse about God” (McGrath 1994:117). This rather simple definition seeks to condense a huge area of study into a nutshell! Theology includes the following:

- systematic and analytical study of the “nature, purpose and activity of God” (:118)
- the formulation of the doctrines of the church which cover such issues as the nature of human beings and their world; sin and salvation; definition and role of the church; eschatology; systematic theology; person and work of Jesus Christ; interpretation of the Bible; ethics and morality etc
- the diversity of the church represented by the multiplicity of denominations indicates that theology is not monolithic. Each tradition or denomination has its own theology.

From this definition it is clear that theology is a human construct which seeks to systematise and conceptualise the issues of faith and is very much linked to the definition and function of the church. The sources used in the formulation of theology include not only the traditionally recognised sources such as the Bible, church history, reason, philosophy, tradition etc but also the use of critical tools such as historical-critical tools, redaction criticism, form criticism, post modernism, Marxism etc (McKinlay 1996:21-3). The latter have transformed traditional methods of doing theology. Some of these tools have been used by oppressed groups to identity and challenge oppressive interpretations of texts in the Bible that have been used to justify their oppression e.g. feminist theology.

As already mentioned, there are many diverse methodologies used in the interpretation of the Bible and how a particular tradition interprets the Bible has a profound effect on their theology and subsequently their practice of pastoral counselling. For example Evangelicals generally believe in the inspiration and authority of Scripture i.e that the bible is inspired by God and is authoritative in all areas of life. Biblical texts are often interpreted in their literal form. Two examples will be discussed to illustrate the connection between biblical interpretation and practice. The first example concerns the literal interpretation of Romans chapter 13 by most

evangelicals during the apartheid era. The practice of this text resulted in an apolitical and “neutral” position by most evangelical churches which surmounted to an uncritical support of the apartheid government. The other example has to do with the position of women. According to *The Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, the roles of the husband and wife are clearly set out in the Bible, the husband is the head of the family “the husband’s leadership and its authority is a God-given responsibility to be carried out in humility” (Elwel, 1996:521) and the wife “recognises the God-given leadership with regard and deference” (:153). Pastoral Counselling in this context serves to validate and re-enforce this theology and one can almost predict the pastoral response to couples facing marital problems. The situation becomes critical where there is abuse and violence within the marriage. The link between theology and violence against women especially domestic violence within the home will be discussed in Chapter Four. The point being made here is the connection between theology and pastoral counselling i.e. that pastoral counselling does not exist in a vacuum, it is informed and guided by the theological belief system of the religious community which the pastor represents.

2.3.2 PSYCHOLOGY

Some of the issues surrounding the relationship between pastoral counselling and psychology have been discussed in the previous section. The purpose of this section is to look deeper into psychology itself by examining the historical context that gave birth to psychology. Through this analysis, the ideological base of psychology will be explored so as to gain an insight to the assumptions that inform and shape this discipline. Some of these assumptions like individualism have been discussed. This section will try to uncover some of the other assumptions as a way of identifying areas of continuity and discontinuity between psychology and pastoral counselling.

Firstly a concise definition of psychology. Psychology is the “scientific study of behaviour and mental processes and how these are affected by an organism’s physical state, mental state and external environment” (Wade & Tavris 1990:7) The key word is “scientific”, psychology recognises itself as a human science rooted in scientific methods of acquiring knowledge such as observation; analysis; setting out hypothesis and being able to predict with some measure of accuracy (Nairne 1997:30).

The development of modern western psychology and psychiatry took place during the latter part of the 18th Century to the early part of the 20th Century. The context of this period was characterised by the scientific “challenge of religious authority, tradition, worldview and truth” (Richards & Begin 1997:23). It was also a period of unprecedented scientific discoveries that transformed every aspect of life. Philosophers of the enlightenment changed the way people thought of the world and life in general. Religion lost its power as an authority in human affairs. New forms of government and political theories were introduced. Darwin’s theology of evolution further marginalised the Christian world view. The outcome of this was the “prestige of science and the decline of religious explanations regarding origins and the nature of the universe and human beings” (:24) It was during this time that psychology sought to establish itself as a science. The scientific world within which psychology was aligned with was characterised by, “naturalism, determinism, universalism, reductionism, atomism, materialism, mechanisms, ethical relativism, ethieal hedonism, classical realism, positivism and empiricism” (:24) These “isms” became part of the adopted philosophical foundations for psychology and other human sciences. Of particular interest to this paper is the early psychologists’ view of human beings because some of these theoretical assumptions are still dominant today. Some of the central “isms” that informed their view of human beings were:

- a. Determinism is the assertion that “human behaviour is caused by forces outside of human control”(Richards and Begin 1997:30)
- b. Reductionism and atomism theories maintain that “all of human behaviour can be reduced or divided into smaller parts or units”(:30)
- c. Materialism’s assumptions about human nature are that “human beings are like machines composed of material or biological parts working together”(:30)
- d. Empiricism which asserts that the only valid vehicle for acquiring knowledge is through “sensory experience” (:31)
- e. Universalism is related to ethics and morality and is a belief that “natural laws including laws of human behaviour are context free; they apply across time, space and persons. A phenomena is not real if it is not generalisable and repeatable” (:30)

These assumptions differ radically from the general Judeo-Christian beliefs which affirm the dignity, agency and free will of human beings which assumes that human beings are accountable for their actions because they are able to exercise choice; the multiplicity and diversity of human experiences as opposed to reductionism; the reality of the transcendent i.e. spiritual knowledge which is knowledge outside the realm of the five senses; the existence of universal ethical and moral standards i.e. moral absolutes; a more holistic understanding of humans and the connectedness of human beings as opposed to individualism.(:30).

Similarly, the African world view differs from the scientific world view as will be seen in the following quotation:

The African cosmology is perceived and lived as one composed of seen and unseen spirit-beings. They constitute life-forces which constantly interact with, and thus influence the course of human life for good or for ill (Mbiti 1970; Ela 1977; Mahaniah 1981); the departed ancestors are part of this constellation of living spirits. By virtue of being part of the extended family and living in the proximity of God the creator, the ancestors are endowed with special powers.....As those who sanction the moral life of both individuals and community, the ancestors punish, exonerate, or reward. Thus, the health of the living depend to a great extent on their relationships within the extended family and with their ancestors who mostly communicate their wishes through dreams (Mampolo 1991:23-24)

From the above quote, the emphasis on the spiritual realm, community between the living and the living dead and the relationship between the two form the basic structure of a traditional African world view. However with the transformation that has happened in the African continent it is important to add some more features that are equally important to the African world view. At least two of these deserve special mention. The first one relates to the socio-political and economic context such as the imposition of capitalism, widespread poverty and unemployment; inability of most African governments to meet the basic needs of their people such as health care, housing and education and political instability resulting in wars, refugees problems etc. The other aspect relates to the social context which is characterised by social upheaval caused by westernisation, urbanisation, education and the erosion of African culture and values. the collapse of includes political and economic forces i.e. colonialism, imperialism and the imposition of the capitalist economy. The second factor is sociological and includes the social forces that have transformed African life and culture such as urbanisation, westernisation, industrialisation and globalization. Any understanding of Africans needs to be informed by these issues. Africa is not a unified entity and there are many variations that exist. This recognition of diversities means that reference to the African contexts should be in plural i.e. to speak of the African contexts rather than the African context.

It is not only Africans that have a different worldview to that of mainstream psychology, women too experience the world from a different perspective. The next two chapters will examine how women's experience of difference has enabled them to recognise their oppression through their critique of the world systems such as psychology and theology. In addition their experience of violence has concretised their oppression and given them a vision for a transformed world. It is from the experience of women, that principles will be drawn for the transformation of pastoral counselling into a liberative tool and agent of social transformation. Before proceeding to the next chapter, it is important to briefly introduce some of the issues for pastoral counselling within the African context(s) and with women.

2.4. PASTORAL COUNSELLING PRACTICE

2.4.1. PASTORAL COUNSELLING IN AFRICA-a brief introduction

Masamba Ma Mpolo one of the leading African pastoral theologians summarised the position of pastoral counselling in Africa as follows

pastoral care and counselling were the most neglected areas of the office of the pastor in the missionary area. Tax collection, condemnation of sinful acts, judgements passed on traditional family arrangements and traditional rites were some of the main pastoral activities of the church the tendency towards moralization and clericalization is still reflected in many churches when communion is specially celebrated (1991:26)

From the above definition it would seem that among traditional mission churches, pastoral counselling as a distinct ministry of the pastor, was neglected. In the process of rectifying this situation, pastoral counselling was introduced in most seminaries, bible colleges and schools of theology. Unfortunately most of the written material on pastoral counselling is Western. The challenge therefore is to develop models of counselling that are informed by the African context

it all its multiplicity and diversity.

Pastoral Counselling in Africa faces a dilemma because within African societies there are already established systems of dealing with problems for example traditional healers, elders and members of the extended family. The pastor is an “outsider” in that s/he does not belong to neither the structures of healing within the community nor to the extended family. In a study conducted by Daisy Nwachuku on “Perceptions on family counselling in present Nigeria”, she found that “about 48% of the sample show a preference for couples crisis resolution through the help from a “significant other” in the extended family, as opposed to 37% who would prefer getting help from a specialist counsellor” (Ma Mpolo & Nwachuku, 1991:106). What is even more surprising is that only “13% of the sample who although themselves were church wedded would seek the help of a pastor for crisis resolution” (:106)! Although one cannot generalise the research findings, nonetheless these give some indication of the challenges that face pastoral counselling in Africa.

Another practical problem for pastors in Africa is the heavy work load. It is common practice that the pastor is responsible for more than one congregation. There are instances where pastors are responsible for more than five congregations. In addition to this heavy load are the multiple roles of pastors. These practical problems often result in pastoral counselling becoming sidelined. This is one of the challenges that pastoral counselling has to deal with in Africa.

One other challenge concerns the training of pastoral counsellors in Africa and the need to locate theory and practice within the African context. As already mentioned there is no specific African context, hence the need to locate theories within specific contexts. Contextualisation involves

two aspects. Firstly, the need to engage with not only African traditional beliefs e.g. beliefs in witchcraft and sorcery which “form the most important cosmological and medical etiological category of the traditional African systems studies thus far” (:24) but also to critique these in order to identify both oppressive and liberative elements in traditional belief systems. This is especially pertinent for women. The second aspect of contextualisation is the need to engage with contemporary society which is being radically transformed by globalization, structural adjustment programmes, poverty, social instability and disintegration of cultural beliefs and practices. It is in this world with its painful realities that pastoral counselling needs to locate itself in. There is a temptation to focus on the past and try to uncritically bring old traditions to inform the present. While this has some validity, there are some problems that require new and creative thinking. The observation by Jesus in Matthew 9:16-17 is relevant and will be quoted in full

No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. Neither do men pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved (NIV)

This text in a nutshell presents one of the main challenges to pastoral care and counselling in Africa. To formulate new ways which are “rooted in biblical and theological traditions as well as African psychology, psychiatry, world-view and religious thought” (:27).

2.4.2 PASTORAL COUNSELLING OF WOMEN - an introduction

“The majority of persons who seek and receive pastoral counselling are female. This remains true regardless of geographical or denomination setting” (Justes 1992: 279). Similarly, one can safely say that the majority of church members are women. Interestingly, over 90% of pastors are male. The question to ask is why women more than men seek out counselling. Two other

questions need to be asked in order to clarify the issues. The first question is whether there is something inherent in the nature of women that predisposes them for counselling. This question locates the problem within women themselves. The second question focuses on the society that produces women, what, one may ask are the dynamics in society that produce women? Related to this question is how is it that such a problem is universal? Two issues arise from these questions. The first one has to do with the differentiation and definition of females and males i.e. gender and the second has to do with the ideological constructs that inform the understanding of these differences.

Firstly, what is gender? Gender refers “to the socially constructed and culturally defined differences between men and women” (NALEDI) . In other words gender is not intrinsic to human nature but is socially constructed and defined in such a way that one’s role, identity and position in society are determined by one’s sex. Below are some gender related concepts:

Firstly, the concept of gender roles. Gender roles refer “to the behaviour patterns and attitudes that are seen as appropriate or typical for a male or female of a specific society” (Louw 1998:287). The acquisition of gender roles is through socialisation which includes two important features namely differential re-enforcement and observation and modelling learning (Louw 1998:291). Through the process of differential re-enforcement a child is encouraged and rewarded for “gender appropriate behaviour and punished for gender inappropriate behaviour” (:291). Through observational learning and modelling, children learn gender roles from what they see in society through the family, media, television etc and they model the behaviour of adults of their gender (:292).

Secondly, gender is a classification system of power relations (Crawford 1994:1009). Men generally as a group are more powerful than women. Both women and men internalise their position of power for example women internalise their “devaluation and subordination”(1010). This power imbalance is ideological and has contributed to the oppression of women world wide.

Thirdly, gender classification is sustained and re-enforced through gender stereotypes. Gender stereotypes are “inaccurate beliefs that certain characteristics and activities pertain only to a specific gender” (Louw 1998:287). The strength of stereotypes is in their being internalised and accepted as the norm. There are two other negative outcomes of stereotypes. Firstly, that stereotypes are prescriptive i.e. “suggest how people within a certain group “should” think, feel and act” (Collins 1998:101). Secondly, stereotypes can be classified as agents of social control because they “exert, maintain and justify control of behaviour thus limiting freedom and outcomes” (:102).

Lastly, gender is permanent. Most states in life are temporal for example childhood, adolescence but gender remains constant throughout one’s life. This has profound effect in that one is identified with their gender in all contexts and throughout one’s life. Gender becomes an integral part of self concept. For women in particular, gender is an oppressive system that pronounces on them a life sentence of oppression. The reality of gender oppression will be discussed in the next two chapters.

One of the challenges that gender oppression has brought to women, is the need to identify and name the ideologies within society that create, sustain and legitimise gender oppression. One ideology that is mentioned in the same breath as the oppression of women is patriarchy. Patriarchy is “the system of male domination and control at all levels of society based on these socially constructed notions of gender, gender roles and gender relations” (NALEDI). Patriarchy is supported by two other ideologies namely androcentrism and sexism. These inter-related systems will be discussed further in the next chapter. For now it is important to note that gender oppression does not exist in a vacuum or by accident, it is created maintained by human beings and therefore can be challenged and transformed. the abovementioned systems. A more comprehensive analysis of patriarchy will be discussed in the next chapter. For now it is important to make the link between the private problems of women and the social context which determines their identity and role.

It is in the context of patriarchy and gender roles/stereotypes that pastoral counselling of women occurs. Unfortunately,

Theology and psychology shaped a pastoral care and counselling based on experiences of men- mainly Western, White, middle-class, well-educated, well-cared-for men. Many of the men were either not married (the Roman Catholic pastors), or married to a housewife (many of the Protestant pastors). They were blissfully unaware of the male bias in many psychological theories and in traditional theology (Bons-Storm, 1996:18)

To what extent theology and psychology is shaped by this male bias is the topic of the next chapter. For the purposes of the current discussion it should be noted that women’s experience is not uniform but is shaped by different variables such as class, race, sexual orientation, age, education etc. However these diverse experiences of women should not detract from the fact that women as a group need a special type of counselling that will act as a liberative catalyst in their lives. Before looking at liberative counselling for women it is important to examine what

is it in the current theory and practice of pastoral counselling that needs to be transformed (ie the oppressive elements) so that this ministry can become a liberative tool for not only women but humankind as a whole and an agent of social transformation. The next chapter will focus specifically on examining the ways in which the theoretical basis of pastoral counselling namely theology and psychology have contributed to the oppression of women.

2.5. Conclusion

The discussions on counselling have challenged the long-held notion that counselling is an apolitical activity. This widely accepted paradigm of counselling which focuses exclusively on the individual's internal problems and advocates adjustment as the goal of counselling, has been shown to be political because by ignoring the social context, it serves those in power by maintaining the status quo. Although there are challenges to this paradigm from within and outside psychology, it retains its dominance within psychology. Consequently, part of the critique of pastoral counselling has been linked to the adoption of this paradigm. While affirming the distinctiveness of pastoral counselling, a critical analysis of two of its theoretical basis namely theology and psychology has revealed elements of ethnocentrism and sexism. These issues are particularly relevant in the African contexts because ethnocentrism disregards the African context and sexism marginalises and oppresses women. The call for the transformation of pastoral counselling so that it takes its rightful place as a liberative tool and agent of social transformation constitutes the only appropriate response to this crisis.

CHAPTER THREE

3. FEMINIST CRITIQUE OF PASTORAL COUNSELLING

3.1. Introduction

The previous chapter was an introduction to some of the key issues surrounding pastoral counselling. Two contextual issues were briefly discussed in order to contextualise the debate into the African context as well as to introduce the issues surrounding the pastoral counselling of women. The primal focus of this chapter is on the latter but not at the expense of the former i.e. in the discussions on the position of women in pastoral counselling the African context will be a key reference point. Another theme that will begin surfacing in the discussions will be on violence against women and how this endemic world wide phenomena poses a radical challenge to both the theory and practice of pastoral counselling. The quote below sets the framework for the discussions surrounding the issues of women in pastoral counselling.

Pastoral counselling is rooted in both psychological theory and theological tradition and reflection-however varied the balance between these two sources may be. Both of these fields have been shaped and defined from male perspectives. The view of women in each has been reflective of a male point of view. Definitions of female by theology and psychology have reflected the female defined according to the male. Both fields have exerted powerful influence on the shaping of women in terms of women's self understanding and self image as well as in terms of theoretical perspective of women (Justes 1991 :280)

The above quote links the position of women in pastoral counselling to the assumptions about women found in the disciplines of theology and psychology. It seems that both disciplines are guilty of male bias and marginalisation of women. These disciplines, however, merely reflect the existing male-female relationships of domination and subordination that are found in society.

This rule by men or patriarchy has been linked to the perpetuation and legitimization of all forms of violence against women such as “rape, wife-battering, child-abuse, sexual exploitation of women, second-class citizenship, and many more injustices against women” (Fiorenza 1996:9). A critical tool is required to expose the extent of women’s oppression, how this is linked with violence against women and to provide a vision for the transformation of society so that all forms of oppression will be eradicated. As already noted in the above quote, both theology and psychology have, especially in the western world, played a significant role in the construction of gender. Consequently, a critical tool is required to expose the elements within these disciplines that perpetuate and legitimize the oppression of women in society. What complicates the issue even further is that, for Africans, a deeper analysis is required to expose elements of ethnocentrism and racism that lie beneath the surface of these disciplines. Although there are many theories of liberation that could be used, the feminist theory has been chosen because it is one of, if not the only critical theory that places gender analysis at the centre of its analysis of society. It is not only a gender theory but

it is a critical paradigm which has its roots firmly planted in the social/political and at the same time widely applicable as a paradigm in considering and criticising other forms of oppression apart from the patriarchal (Rutledge 1996:11)

The above quote makes it clear that feminist scholarship transcends women’s issues and enters into the realm of liberation and transformation of society. Feminism began as a women’s protest

movement in the West, it has developed into a critical theory which has made inroads into most academic disciplines and has contributed to the transformation of most of these disciplines. Similarly feminism itself, has also been subject to the same critical analysis that it uses on other disciplines. This critical analysis has been carried out by African and other non western women to expose some of the ethnocentric and racist biases present in western feminist theory. An example of a Western white feminist response to these criticisms is found in an article by Sue Morgan entitled "*Race and the appeal to experience in Feminist Theology*". The quote below summarises her response,

Thus, women scholars who are highly sensitised to issues of gender can be quite ideologically blind to issues of race and/or class, exhibiting a similar form of myopia to that of their male counterparts, i.e. the tendency to describe the white western or euro-american, middle-class experience as a universal norm (1995:19)

This insightful analysis is part of the dynamic and often contentious interaction between western and non western forms of feminism and that gives feminism its cutting edge. This interaction will characterise the discussions in this chapter. The next section will set the background for the rest of the chapter by firstly defining western feminism, critiquing it and then engaging it with African women scholars, before going on to the specific critiques of theology and psychology.

3.2. Introduction to Western Feminism

Unfortunately today, feminism has become, to use Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza's term, an "f-word" (1996:xvi). Feminists are perceived to be women who are militant, single, men-haters, lesbians, fanatics etc in other words women who are not "real women" (:xvi). It is no "wonder that women do not want to be brushed with the label "feminist" " (:xvi). One of the results of such negative connotations is the belief that feminism divides women into two "neat" categories

of “real women” on one side and “feminists” on the other. The stereotypical characteristics attached to a “real women” are mostly those in line with the accepted definition and role of women in society eg housewives and caregivers. The fallacy of this stereotype is seen in the presence of these “real women” in “feminist circles”!

As a western ideology seeking to represent women globally, feminism has met with both resistance and guarded acceptance. The resistance to feminism from African and other non western women does not lie primarily in its negative connotations but from its assumption that the experience of middle-class, western white women is representative of women’s experience across cultures, race and class. As Sue Morgan, states,

there is insufficient awareness of the diversity of women's racial and cultural identities and that the assumption of a universal notion of womanhood has been at the cost of obliteration of difference (1995:19)

It is this assumption by western feminism that their experience is representative of the universal experience of women that has created a division between them and non-western feminist. The failure by Western feminists to analyse other issues outside their context such as race, class, culture and histories of oppression has led some African women scholars (both in Africa and America) to reject the word “feminist” and replace it with “womanist” as the latter is perceived to represent the particular experience and goals of Black women. It is interesting to note that the change of name has not exempted the womanists from experiencing almost the same negative stereotyping as their western counterparts. African women scholars have found that African society especially men in general have been in the forefront of criticising feminism as a western import which seeks to destroy the strong cultural base in Africa (Oduyoye 1995:87). Some would go as far as claiming that African women are happy as they are and are not oppressed, ie

“ African women are precious say the African men, they know their place and keep it. Should an African woman disagree with this assessment she becomes an imitator of western women ...” (:81)(Ogindipe-Leslie 1994:214). Other stereotypes abound of African women who embrace any form of feminism for example that they are single, divorced, frustrated women who use feminism as a platform to vent their frustrations about men. The image of a feminist being a single, educated, frustrated woman continues to be one of the dominant stereotypes. Being accused of imitating western women is not the primal reason why African women scholars are reluctant to go all the way with feminism, the reason is linked with racism but goes deeper into history. It relates to the experience of being colonised, the experience that amongst many other things rendered everything African inferior and sought to impose western worldviews on Africans in the name of civilisation. It is also a history where the white woman as a member of the oppressor group, was also an oppressor. This memory of the effects of colonialism keeps African women scholars on guard, so that while accepting the claim by western feminists that the oppression of women is a world wide phenomena, they want to speak for themselves out of their own particular context. One other aspect from radical western feminism has been the link between feminism and lesbianism. These sexual politics have been resisted by African women who want to form their own agenda which prioritises the liberation of the continent from all forms of economic, political, cultural and religious oppression.

The two contrasting forms of feminism ie African and western will be the two voices that will be “heard” throughout this chapter. As will be discussed further, there is no one voice for either western or African feminist/womanist experience, but multitudes of different voices, with different texts but singing the same “refrain”, ie the liberation of women and transformation of society.

This brief introduction to some of the dynamic and contentious issues in feminism serves as an introduction to feminism. The next section will begin by defining western feminism in general, then summarise some of its important thesis before critiquing it and lastly to highlight some of the issues that are being raised by selected African women scholars. The aim of this section is to provide the background to the underlying assumptions of the feminist critique of pastoral counselling. The rationale behind this is the recognition that the critical work of feminists in both theology and psychology falls within the parameters of the broader feminist scholarship.

3.2.1 Definition of feminism

Before presenting a definition of feminism it is important to locate the context that gave rise to it. This context was the women's movement for liberation linked to other justice issues such as abolition of slavery in the USA and women's rights in England. It spread through to the western world and spearheaded the struggle for equality for women which continues up to date. This does not mean that women's movements were absent from the two-thirds world but that these were overshadowed by the liberation struggle against colonialism which was being waged at the same time. Women's Liberation Movements in Africa surfaced after the acquisition of liberation by African states and they struggle for the equal rights of women, a struggle similar in principle to that of western feminist.

Western feminism as already noted has developed into a formidable movement that is making inroads into mainstream thinking but has still a long way to go before it achieves its goal. Similarly, African and other non western liberation movements for women are also engaged in a struggle to make inroads into mainstream culture and they too still have a long way to go. The

struggle for liberation and equality of women is a universal phenomena.

Finding a definition of feminism that captures its multifaceted nature is not easy but the definitions below capture some of the essential aspects of feminism

Feminist theory in all its diversity begins from the conviction that the social, political and cultural arrangements that shape women's lives are unjust. Biological sex is a major determinant of people's status, power and opportunities in all known societies with women systematically subordinated to men. Feminist aim to understand and end these patterns of subordination (Kiss 1998:487)

and also that it

unveils the patriarchal functions of the intellectual and scientific frameworks generated and perpetrated by male centred scholarship that makes women invisible or peripheral (Fiorenza 1996:168)

and lastly it should be noted that

feminist studies are evolving, and is not unimpeachable. It should not be seen as a complete and discrete corpus of thinking nor as blue printed guidelines for action. There are many differences in perception and formulation as well strategies (Govinden 1991:276).

The above quotations do not exhaust the full meaning of feminism but serve as a pointer to some of the essential defining characteristics of feminism. The next section will pick up on some of these defining characteristics of feminism.

3.2.2 Defining Characteristics of Feminism

Six characteristics of feminism will be discussed and these are drawn from the above definitions. Firstly Feminism is about justice for women. One of the fundamental premises of feminism is the belief that women suffer injustice because of their sex. The injustice is entrenched and perpetuated by gender roles which assign different roles for females and males. Gender analysis

has revealed that gender is constructed by society so that "women are made not born" (Fiorenza 1996:168). This gender-linked discrimination is unjust and feminism's "most basic contribution to understanding of justice has been to show that the status of women raises issues of justice in the first place" (Kiss 1998 :492).

Feminist have also coined the slogan "the personal is political" to illustrate the intersection between the public and private world. Most experiences of injustice experienced by women did not, until recently, be recognised as justice issues because there were considered personal and private e.g sexual harassment and domestic violence.

Secondly, feminist is an analytical and intellectual study of the causes of women's oppression. Three ideologies have been identified as fundamental to any understanding of women's oppression. These are patriarchy, androcentrism and sexism. Patriarchy has already been defined in the previous chapter; androcentrism refers to the identification of humanity with maleness ie "because the male norm and human norm are collapsed, it is assumed that the generic masculine habit of thought, language and research is adequate" (Gross 1996:9). Sexism refers "broadly to the entire range of ideologies, structures and institutional practices that uphold and enforce the dominance of men as a group over women as a group. Sexism is as pervasive as patriarchy and appears in just as many different forms and guises (Tatman 1996:213)

One of the central issues which link patriarchy with violence against women is the issue of power. Patriarchy, androcentrism and sexism are basically about issues of power relationships between males and females. The inequalities in power relations create conditions for the abuse of power which is primarily what violence against women is based on (Poling 1991:29).

Violence against women expresses a “collective culturally sanctioned misogyny which is important in maintaining the collective power of men” (Cameron & Fraser 1994:267). The next chapter will explore the subject further but suffice to point out some of the destructive consequences of ideologies that maintain the unequal power relations between women and men.

Thirdly, feminism is not monolithic. The definitions quoted above make it clear that there are diversities within feminism and that it has become appropriate to speak of feminisms rather than feminism (Fiorenza 1996:xvii). The diversity is necessary because "no one person can speak for all genders, races, classes or sexual orientations and no one should try to do so" (Gross 1996:51) One of the concerns is that too much diversity might lead to a fragmentation of feminism that will ultimately weaken it but as Fiorenza notes , the diversities are loosely linked and come “together in their critique of elite male supremacy and hold that gender is socially constructed rather than innate or ordained by God” (:xvii). How feminism deals with differences within its organisation will ultimately determine its future.

Fourthly feminism is not simply “rhetoric against male supremacy” but goes beyond this and embraces a bigger vision that incorporates all aspects of life ie socio-political, cultural and ecological dimensions. Feminism is essentially about an alternative society free from all forms of oppression. This struggle for liberation is central to feminism as the quote below sums it up

All feminist perspectives are radically critical of current conventional norms and expectations and advocate more degree of change in social, academic, political, religious and economic institutions to foster greater equity between men and women (Gross 1996:22)

Fifthly, feminism takes women's experiences as its starting point i.e. the key source of reflection and formulation of theory. "Feminist scholarship stresses and requires first and foremost the study of the actual lives and thoughts of women" (Gross 1996:81). Since the existing body of knowledge is androcentric, the challenge for feminist scholars has been the construction of knowledge where women are subjects and not objects. This should not be interpreted to mean that feminism intends to replace mainstream knowledge which is basically "malestream" (Fiorenza 1996:xvii) with women's knowledge but rather that feminism seeks for an alternative vision of knowledge that incorporates the experiences of all persons.

Lastly, feminism is a dynamic theory that is ever changing and evolving. This dialogue and conflict not only between western and non western feminists, but within western feminism itself, produces challenges and new ways of thinking that bring the element of dynamism into feminist theory. Consequently, not only is feminism diverse, it is constantly redefining itself ie it has a "constant current of redefinition and self critique running through it... a resistance to final definition" (Rutledge 1996:14). Thus the script about feminism is constantly being redrafted. This is one of the strengths of the movement.

However, like any other movement, feminism has its weaknesses. The next section will examine some of the criticisms levelled against feminism in general.

3.2.3 Critical analysis of feminism

The critiques levelled at feminism come from both within and outside the movement. Only four of these critiques will be discussed. These are as follows:

Firstly, the general tendency of feminism to "overgeneralising about women's position not only across cultures but within one's society" (Edwards 1988:60). This has in some cases led to the essentialising of women i.e. attributing women with fixed and identifiable characteristics which often reflects the attributes of Western middle-class white women (Nicholson 1998:295). On the other hand generalisations are important for the theory and politics of feminism, the issue is not about doing away with differences but acknowledging these within a broad framework of commonalities. This is possible when all the voices of women are given equal value.

Secondly, the portrayal of patriarchy as a monolithic structure that has the same effect on all women across different cultures, race, religion, class etc (Edwards 1998:60) is problematic. The problem is that "what constitutes power, domination and resistance differs from culture to culture....it is difficult to determine confidently the nature of patriarchy and women's subordination in each and every culture" (Rutledge 1996:12). Equally true is another generalisation about patriarchy namely that "all things patriarchal are viewed with suspicion perhaps even as evil" (Glaz and Moessner 1991 :51). One outcome of this perception is a type of dualistic and reductionist thinking ie that all men are responsible for women's oppression and have power over all women. Women and men are seen as fitting in discreet categories of the oppressed and oppressor. This categorisation is reductionist in that it does not take into consideration a range of other factors such as race, religion and class.

Thirdly, in their zeal to highlight women's oppression feminist have in some instances unintentionally discredited women by portraying them as victims ie "powerless, down trodden and pathetic... at the mercy of those with power and authority to decide on their fate" (Edwards

1988:60). While it is liberating for women to realise that gender is socially constructed not biologically determined, there is a real danger of moving to the other extreme of simply blaming society for all the problems encountered by women and viewing women as helpless victims (Glaz & Moessner 1991:51).

Lastly, feminism as a liberation struggle for women has tended to exclude men. This exclusion of men has in some cases been counterproductive because it perpetuates "gender determinism, a sexual ghetto mentality, mutual suspicion and misunderstanding and a thousand other unwelcome phenomena which rightly belongs back in the bad old days of uncontested patriarchy" (Rutledge 1996:9).

As a self-critical discipline the above criticisms should serve as a corrective and opportunity to expand the vision and scope of feminism. These criticisms should not detract from the valuable contribution made by feminism and neither do they represent a rejection of it. This brief critical analysis of western feminism is important because it serves as a reference point for other feminisms especially those from the two-thirds world. The term "reference point" does not mean uncritical duplication of western feminism or a hierarchical relationship between feminists but refers to the fact that in the process of developing their own liberation movements, non western women need to learn from their western counterparts so as to avoid making the same mistakes.

African women scholars together with their non-western counterparts are actively involved in articulating their own experience of oppression and formulating a vision for their continent. As with western feminism there is no only single voice that represents African women and neither is there a generic African woman whose experiences translates across the whole continent. There are multiple voices among African women scholars and the next section will capture the issues

raised by some of these scholars.

3.3. Introduction to African feminism

It is important to heed to the warning of generalisation and to avoid viewing the African context as uniform and the African woman as part of that uniformity. The discussion on the contributions of African women scholars to the feminist debate will focus on only three "secular scholars " because African women theologians will be discussed in a later section which deals with the feminist critique of theology. The contribution from the scholars will be complimented at the end of the section with a brief analysis of the Gender Commission in South Africa, which is a commission that has been set by the African led government, to address gender issues. This section will highlight some of the “women’s” issues that are being grappled by African women scholars. The discussions will not attempt to cover everything that each scholar has said but will highlight some of the main points being raised. The three women scholars are Sophia Oluwele; Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie and Christine Obbo. Each scholar will be discussed separately and only three issues from each one will be discussed.

Firstly Sophia Oluwele. In her chapter entitled “*Africa*” found in the *Feminist Companion to Philosophy* she gives a comprehensive overview of some of the problems that confront feminist and others interested in gender work in Africa. She points out the indispensable role of philosophy in any analysis of the relationship between the sexes . Philosophy as a discipline seeks to find out the existing belief systems that inform the world view and behaviours of members of a particular group. Without this fundamental step of uncovering the philosophy of any particular group, there is no hope of change. The quote below summarises this point

unless the basic ideas, beliefs and principles of human existence upon which African principles of organizing society are founded are identified and adequately analysed it may be difficult to change the present social attitudes of men towards women's rights in politics, economics and other social spheres of human life (1998:106)

In other words one of the starting points for African women scholars is to engage in thorough research, that will result in the documentation and subsequent analysis of the basic ideas, beliefs and principles of human existence upon which “ the principles that organise their particular community are based on. The obvious problem which has also been highlighted by Oluwele is the lack of written texts which clearly set out the belief systems of the society. In this area the western feminist have a clear advantage. However, the power and reliability of oral transmission should not be underestimated and fortunately, there still exists even in fragmented forms oracles, proverbs, rituals etc which are rich in meaning and are valuable resources for research. This research needs to be done by “insiders” ie people who belong to the community and share their language and belief system.

The danger of “outsiders” doing the research, is evident from the misrepresentation of Africans found in most writings by westerners such as missionaries, colonialists and other social scientists. The detrimental effects and negative stereotyping of Africans as a result of these writings is a topic on its own but suffice to say that much harm has been done by outsiders writing on behalf of Africans. As already mentioned one of the unfortunate outcomes of western feminism as the universal champions of women's rights has been that “authentic African views about the male-female relationship in their societies became blurred by western ideology and assumption of uniform impact of sexism “ (:104). African women need to analyse male-female relationships apart from the western paradigms in order to discover African forms of sexism and

patriarchy.

The second scholar is Molaria Ogindipe-Leslie from her book entitled "*Recreating ourselves: African Women and Critical Transformation.*" She writes from a Nigerian perspective where she states that

right-wing women, most men, and apolitical women, like to quip that African women do not need liberation or feminism because they have never been in bondage. Progressive, political and left-wing women, however, are saying that African women suffer subordination on two levels; as women and as members of impoverished and oppressed classes where women are in the majority (1994:214).

Ogindipe-Leslie identifies herself with the latter group! In the above quote, she highlights the division that feminism has brought into the African society. The background for this division is that the liberation struggles throughout the continent united women and men against a common enemy ie colonialists. With the attainment of liberation and independence, it was assumed that everyone was free. The claim by women that they are being oppressed in a "free and liberated society" seemed outrageous. It is this claim that has made feminism a divisive issue in Africa.

This has not weakened the struggle for liberation by African women, on the contrary their resistance continues to gather momentum and is posed to continue as long as women feel that they are being oppressed because of their sex.

Although the experience of oppression by western feminism has provided a framework for identifying and acknowledging women's oppression in any society, there are as already mentioned different aspects of women's oppression that depend on their context. One such example is given by Ogindipe-Leslie and has become a re-occurring theme in discussions of women's oppression in the two-thirds world and that is the "feminization of poverty". This

concept recognises that poverty is engendered i.e. most of the world's poor are women. Consequently the oppression of women even in non-racist societies is multiplicative i.e. it goes beyond patriarchy to include economics, politics and culture.

It is this commitment to a particular African brand of feminism that the author proposes a new name ie STIWANISM which stands for Social Transformation Including Women in Africa! She shares with western feminism the view that the overall goal of feminism is the transformation of society but she goes further and introduces a distinctive feature of African forms of feminism namely the involvement of men. This inclusion of men is not a sign of weakness by African women but a calculated and informed decision that is based on the belief that “in order for us to attain a more successful completion of the work of humanizing society” (:230), men have to be part of the process.

The last scholar is Christina Obbo from her book based on her research of women in East Africa entitled “*African Women: Their struggle for Economic Independence*”. Her research covered a wide range of issues and findings that contribute to a greater understanding of what women themselves are saying. Unfortunately due to the constraints of this thesis only three of these findings will be discussed.

Firstly, that the women's demands, both in urban and rural areas,

paralleled the rhetoric of western feminists. They too wanted fair and equal treatment in their homes particularly with regard to the products of their labour. Some too asserted their individuality through the decisions they took regarding sexuality and childbearing and often resulting in the total rejection of marriage” (1981:156).

She also states that it is this feminism from the grassroots that is linked to practical “bread and

butter issues” that will transform Africa rather than the rhetoric of educated women (:158). It is well documented that the backbone of most revolutionary or liberation movements are the peasants or the grassroots people. Latin American liberation theology is one of the most influential theologies of our time and exerts a powerful influence all over the world. The origins of this movement can be traced to marginalised and poor families who began to engage theology to their context and in the process revolutionised theology. This example serves to not only support the claim made by Obbo but to alert African women scholars to the danger of moving away from grassroots women.

Secondly, that one contributing factor to the lack of “collective rebellion of women against the publicly sanctioned domination of men” (:156) , is the close community relationships of “affection” that occur between women and men for example, between husbands and wives, mothers and sons, sisters and brothers etc. These multiple relationships that women have with men which in most cases are affectionate make it difficult for women to go publicly against men in general. That is why for most African women scholars, the inclusion of men is important to the realisation of their vision of a continent free from all forms of oppression.

This reality about women’s affectionate relationships with men has been overlooked in most western feminist scholarship resulting in women finding themselves in a double bind of both loving their male “oppressors” and at the same time being told that they ie males are responsible for their oppression.

Lastly, that the “economic emancipation which broadens the scope of a woman’s decision

making power seems to take a psychological toll on men” (:151). Most men seem to fear that they will lose “control over women” (:151) and that women’s independence is a “betrayal of traditions which are often confused with women’s roles” (:143). The impact of the changing role of women in society on men requires further research as part of the quest to create a transformed society. Some might argue that such a study is unnecessary and that more time should be spent on issues pertaining to the liberation of women. However, men are part of women’s world and cannot be ignored, perhaps one way forward is a simultaneous study of both women and men. One disturbing aspect of female and male relationships is the escalating violence against women. This is a phenomena which is rampant throughout the world and cuts across barriers of race, class, religion and culture. Could it be possible that there is a correlation between the levels of violence against women and the growing emancipation of women?. This question is part of the multifaceted nature of violence against women, which will be tackled in the next chapter. Violence against women in any form must find itself on top of the feminist agenda for the next millennium.

The contributions from the three scholars give an indication of the range of issues that need to be addressed by African women scholars in order to come up with a distinctly African version of feminism. This section will be concluded with a brief look at the work and problems faced by the Commission on Gender Equality in South Africa. The setting up of such a commission in a liberated democratic country is a radical step in the right direction because it recognises the reality of women’s oppression and serves as an example of how endemic women’s oppression is. The job of the commission has not been easy as will be seen in the brief discussion below. The rationale for including the Commission on Gender Equality is to illustrate the fact that the overthrow of oppressive colonialist governments in Africa only served to remove one form of

oppression. The removal of racial/colonial oppression made way for other forms of oppression to come to light and women in particular together with other groups such as the disabled, albinos and other marginalised group became acutely aware of their exclusion from the “fruits of liberation”. The Commission on Gender Equality was set up in response to women’s experience of being oppressed.

3.4 The Commission on Gender Equality

In answer to a question enquiring why a democratic country like South Africa needs a Gender Commission, “*The Women’s Handbook*” ‘s response is as follows,

We need the commission in South Africa because at the moment men and women are not treated equally and fairly. Our new Bill of rights says that no law can treat a women differently to a man, but in many places women are still treated differently, such as in schools, at work, at home, by government officials and even by other women. The commission works to make sure that women are treated equally in all parts of their lives (1999:16)

Some of the work of the Gender Commission is in the area of education and conscientisation of women, so that they become aware of their rights and also what avenues to take if their rights are violated. It also serves as both a watchdog on all laws to ensure gender equality and also it recommends “new laws that help with gender equality” (ibid).

There are a number of problems that make the work of the Commission difficult such as:

- a. Lack of funding. It is the least funded Commission in South Africa and its employees are “paid less than the commissioners working on other commissions” (:17). A subtle way of undermining the work of the commission.

- b. Opposition from some members of the public who think that the commission is a “waste of money” and others feel that it should be a department within another commission such as the “Human Rights Commission” (:17).
- c. General apathy and feelings that the commission is irrelevant “Many people (men and women) do not see the need for gender equality. Other people think that men and women are treated equally and that there are no problems (:17)

The above problems being experienced by the Commission on Gender Equality, only serve to highlight the tremendous task which lies ahead of the Commission. This work is shared by women all over the continent who are committed to the upliftment of women and eradication of all forms of oppression.

This brief overview of both western and African feminism provides an important background for the next section which deals with the focus of this chapter namely the feminist critique of pastoral counselling. The critique will focus on theology and psychology, the theoretical base for pastoral counselling.

3.5 FEMINIST CRITIQUE OF THEOLOGY

Feminist theology operates within the broader feminist vision as articulated above and at the same time has its own distinctiveness. The diversity found within feminism is also found among feminist theologians. They differ in many ways but one area which forms the most basic division among feminist scholars is on how they deal with the androcentric and misogynist texts that are in the Bible. There is very little debate about the existence of such texts in the bible as most

begin their readings of the Bible with the stance that the societal context for the scriptures is patriarchy; the view that political, social and economic power is hierarchically structured and male orientated (Fiorenza 1996:7)

The Bible not only contains androcentric texts as noted above but misogynist texts as well. Misogyny or hatred of women in its obvious form is expressed in the pervasive violence against women found in society but "more subtle is the underlying assumption of women's inferiority to men; this assumption is the foundation of Christian doctrine on women" (Rossi 1996:145) An example of a text that supports misogyny and is used to demoralise women is the creation myth which is the "source of misogyny" (:145). It is used in both the Old and New Testament to legitimise both the inferiority and subordination of women to men and their exclusion from leadership in the church. What is more subtle is the use of biblical texts to ascribing certain negative characteristics as inherent to all women. The chart below is an illustration of some of these texts.

TEXT	IMPLICATIONS FOR WOMEN
<p>1 Timothy 2:12</p> <p>"I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man: she must be silent for Adam was formed first, then Eve."</p>	<p>This text has been used to justify the exclusion of women from church leadership as well as to legitimise their inferior status and subordination to men as part of the natural order set by God. The creation myths have been used to justify and naturalise this position.</p> <p>(Harris 1984:41)</p>
<p>1 Timothy 2:14</p> <p>"And Adam was not the one deceived, it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner."</p>	<p>This text has been used to infer certain characteristics to women such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. gullibility ie easily deceived or morally unstable b. temptresses ie they have the power to tempt men and are "dangerous". This has been used to "justify" rape on the grounds that women provoke men's sexuality. c. are the source and cause of sin. d. are weak ie weak mentally, morally and physically and in need of male care <p>(:80-95)</p>

Church history also reflects misogyny for example in the writings of one of the Church fathers, women are referred to as the “devil’s gateway” (Rossi 1996:145)

It is how to respond to texts like the above and the history of misogyny in the church that divides feminist theologians into two camps and there is a wide range of diversity within each camp. The two camps are, the revolutionaries or post Christian feminists and the revisionists or Christian feminists. The post- Christian feminists believe that the Bible and the church are so hopelessly patriarchal and sexist that they cannot be redeemed and that liberative spirituality for women is found outside the church eg Mary Daly. The quote below reflects this assumption,

Christianity is irredeemably sexist and that the only viable solution is to abandon the tradition completely and forge a new religious consciousness based on women's contemporary religious experience (Slee 1996:225)

On the other hand Christian feminist remain within the Christian tradition because they believe that such texts can be deconstructed and re-read so that the liberative aspects can be exposed. This is not without its difficulties and Christian feminist face the daunting task of simultaneously acknowledging that Christian tradition is "guilty of the structural sin of sexist-racist patriarchy which perpetuates and legitimates the societal exploitation and violence against women" (Fiorenza 1996:9) and at the same time be able to convincingly show that "Christian faith, tradition and church are not inherently sexist and racist, if it wants to remain a Christian theology," (:9). For Christian African women theologians, the issue is further compounded by a history that links Christianity with colonialism, racism , capitalism and sexism. The quote below states this point succinctly,

The condition of black women is the worst when compared to those of other oppressed groups (white women and black men). The latter can act as oppressor and be oppressed. While black men may be victimised by racism, sexism allows them to exploit and oppress (black) women. Likewise, white women may be victimised by sexism but racism allows them to exploit as well as oppress black people (Masenya, 1994:67)

These multiplicative layers of oppression experienced by Black women not only justify the creation of a distinctive feminist theology for Black women but also poses a challenge to mainstream western feminist theology to allow itself to be transformed by the experiences of Black women. One such theologian who takes the experience of Black women seriously in the formulation of her theology is Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza. She makes this statement about feminist theology, namely that

feminist theology does not begin with statements about God and revelation but with the experience of women struggling for liberation from patriarchal oppression its universal character comes to the fore in the voices of women from different races, classes, cultures and nations (1996:7)

Although Fiorenza is open to the experiences of non-western women, she is aware of her own context as a white, American, Catholic Christian woman (:6) and does not claim to speak for all women. African women theologians need to speak for themselves. In order to bring the two together, the discussion will begin with a brief introduction to the main thesis of Fiorenza's feminist theory and then the voices of Black women theologians who will bring their own distinctiveness to the debate. Together they will illustrate the role of theology in the legitimization and perpetuation of violence against women However before discussing Fiorenza's theory, it is important to locate her within the Christian Feminist Scholarship.

Christian Feminist scholars, as already mentioned face the formidable task of simultaneously recognising the misogyny in the bible and Christian tradition and at the same time proclaiming the liberative aspect of these traditions. There are basically three approaches that Christian Feminist scholars take. Each of these will be discussed briefly, so as to locate Fiorenza's theory.

The first approach "salvages and emphasises the positive elements of texts about women" (Dines

1996:18) and displaces or marginalises the texts that uphold the oppression of women. For example this approach would emphasise texts that teach the equality of sexes such as Galatians 3:38 and marginalise texts that promote the subordination of women like 1 Timothy 2:12-15 (:18). One weaknesses of this approach is that it does not directly address texts that promote the oppression of women.

The second approach is more thematic and is similar to the appropriation of the bible by liberation theologians. For example themes of liberation found throughout the Bible are emphasised and prioritised like the prophetic message of liberation which is the focus of feminist theologian Rosemary R Ruether (:18). One of the dangers of this approach is that by organising the Bible into a specific principle or theme for example the liberation of women, a separate canon is created. Thus the result is “a canon within a canon” (Fiorenza 1996:140) which focuses on the selected theme and ignores or foregrounds the other texts that do not support that theme.

The last approach is the “reconstructivists” school. This approach insists that androcentric texts in the bible are biased and have “omitted or distorted the real situation of women” (Dines 1996:19), and that through the use of historical critical tools together with extra-biblical material gathered from other disciplines the hidden ideologies behind the texts can be uncovered. The advantage of this approach is that it “utilises and makes sense of all Biblical material including objectionable parts without accepting their premises” (:19). Even though this approach is highly critical of the Bible, it nonetheless maintains its belief in the liberative potential of the Bible (:19). The feminist theology expounded by Elisabeth Schuller Fiorenza falls into this category.

Having located Fiorenza within the spectrum of Christian Feminist scholars, it is now appropriate to discuss the distinctives of her feminist theology which she calls “a critical feminist theology of liberation.” Her theory has the potential to play a significant role in the transformation of pastoral counselling because it is both theological and focused on the transformation of society through the liberation of all persons especially women.

3.5.1 Critical feminist liberation theology by Elisabeth Schüller Fiorenza

Although Fiorenza’s context is within the Catholic church, her theory has the potential for universal application. Her feminist theology is characterised by thorough scholarship and incisive critical analysis. Similarly, her writings are quite extensive and are not within the scope of this thesis. A full analysis of her work is beyond the scope of this dissertation and in order to do justice to her work, the discussions will only focus on some of the main points of her feminist theology which she calls, “a critical feminist theology of liberation which is indebted to historical-critical, critical political, and liberation-theological analyses and is rooted in my experience and engagement as a Catholic Christian women” (1996:6.). Only five characteristics of this theology will be discussed.

Firstly, this critical feminist theology of liberation is first and foremost a critical theory. It is committed to exposing the ideological base of Christianity that sustains and justifies the oppression of women. This is accomplished through the use of a cluster of hermeneutical tools, some of which are the following:

- i. hermeneutic of suspicion which recognises that the Bible as a text is androcentric, sexist and patriarchal and that any reading of the text must begin with this assumption.

- ii. hermeneutic of remembrance focuses on the liberative elements of the Bible by recovering the history and stories of liberation that have been submerged in the patriarchal texts (:62)
- iii. hermeneutic of “creative imagination and ritualisation” is one of the responses to the above hermeneutics because it enables oppressed groups such as women to read the text in a liberative way and create rituals that affirm their equality within the church (:75)

The question of the authority of the Bible is central in the appropriation of texts by women. In most Christian traditions, the Bible is accepted as the word of God which is authoritative in all spheres of life. Many women have as a result of this belief internalised their oppression and subordination as part of the will of God because it is written in the Bible. Some feminist scholars as already mentioned have tried to deal with this problem of the authority of the Bible by quoting texts that support the liberation of women.

Critical Feminist theology of liberation critiques this apologetic interpretation of Scriptures and moves beyond the debate of either accepting or rejecting the authority of the Scripture. In transcending this debate, Schussler Fiorenza points out that the Bible should not be viewed as a fixed canon, dictating norms for all time but rather as a “prototype of biblical faith and community” (:76). Understood this way, the Bible becomes an open ended text open to the challenges of the community of faith. Consequently, the formulation of Christian faith moves away from the Bible per se to the “democratic community” that “can call into question and assess biblical texts and their worlds in the light of contemporary liberation struggles” (:152). This has important implications for women because it frees women so that they can use their experience to interpret what is liberating for them from the Bible, without being bound to a particular

“universal” interpretation.

Secondly, this theory is essentially a Feminist Theory. As a feminist theory its point of reference is not "traditional theology or ecclesia spirituality but in terms of women's struggle against societal, cultural and religious patriarchy" (:6). Herein lies its solidarity with the aspirations of the feminist movement in general. Its focus like feminism is on women's experience of oppression in all areas of life caused by patriarchy and a commitment to the struggle for the liberation of women and other oppressed persons. Fiorenza has expanded her definition of patriarchy, so that it is in solidarity with African and other non-western women. She states that “an understanding of patriarchy solely in terms of male supremacy and misogynist sexism is not able to articulate the interaction of racism, classism and sexism in Western militarist societies” (1996:163). She incorporates the principle of multiplicative oppression in her theory ie an understanding of the multidimensional nature of oppression and its corresponding multiple effects of women. Also as a feminist, her theology is rooted in the diverse experiences of women of different cultures, nationalities and religion. Such a theology “ must articulate the quest for women's dignity and liberation ultimately as the quest for God” (:8).

Thirdly, this theory locates itself within the broader context of the liberation movement. Its claim as being a liberation movement lies in the fact that it has been developed in interaction with liberation movements and feminist theories of the two thirds world. However it does not uncritically accept liberation movements but challenges these to “address the patriarchal domination and sexual exploitation of women” (:8) within the liberation movements themselves.

At the same time her theology embraces the vision of liberation movements namely the freedom for all from all forms of oppression. The “all” including women. The goal of feminism

is both simple and profound ie “feminism is the radical notion that women are people”. The oppression of women is not just women’s rights but human rights!

Fourthly, this theory is essentially theological. It is not only critical and feminist, it is theological and represents a new way of doing theology i.e. it sees "itself as a different way and alternative perspective for doing theology" (:11). As already mentioned, mainstream theology is steeped in patriarchy, androcentrism and sexism, feminist theology on the hand

is not limited to women’s interests and questions, but understands itself as a different way and alternative perspective for doing theology. At the same time it insists that the androcentric-clerical theology produced in Western universities and seminaries no longer can claim to be a Catholic Christian theology if it does not become a theology inclusive of the experiences of all members of the church, women and men, lay and clergy (:11)

Lastly, it represents a vision of a transformed church and society. It is a vision of transformation of the church and society in all its dimensions. One way for the transformation of the church is through the creation of a women's church which does not mean a separate church but a church in which women are treated as equals i.e. "it means simply to make women visible as active participants and leaders in the church, to underline women’s contributions and suffering throughout church history and to safeguard women’s autonomy and freedom from spiritual-theological patriarchal controls” (:10)

These five points do not exhaust the range of issues covered but Fiorenza but serve to highlight those aspects that directly affect the practice of pastoral counselling.

As already mentioned Fiorenza feminism will be critiqued by three African scholars namely Sr

3.5.2 African Response: Teresa Okure, Teresa Hinga and Mercy Oduyoye

The scholars start with the assumption that the African context in its multifaced diversity and history of colonialism creates a context and world of experiences for African women that are different from western women. While not rejecting western feminism outright, the authors believe that African women can speak for themselves (Okure 1998:77; Oduyoye 1995 :172; Hinga 1996 :37). Some of the causes of women's oppression are outlined below:

- a. colonialism and imperialism which were responsible for the oppression of the African people as a whole. The voice of the African woman was "unheard since it is assumed that their voice is included in that of men" (Hinga 1996 :37). This androcentrism has further marginalised African women.
- b. certain aspects of African culture which are patriarchal, androcentric and sexist (Hinga 1996 :39). The task of identifying these aspects is crucial for African women theologians but it is complicated by the fact that the patriarchal system of western societies have "fuelled the cultural sexism of traditional African society" (Oduyoye 1995 :183).
- c. the impact of Christianity and the contradictions experienced by Africans. One example is the problem of double tension ie "one hand Christianity is part of colonialism, racism and sexism. On the other hand the gospel of liberty motivated the struggle for liberation and recognition of injustice in the church and society"(Hinga 1996 :41). This experience is similar to the one faced by all feminist theologians namely how to confront the detrimental effects of Christianity without loosing sight of its contributions to the well

being of society.

- e. the need to include the voices of all women not just academics and to make every effort to "include experiences of grassroots women in theologising and to resist privileging experiences of elite women as normative for theology" (Hinga 1996: 42). It is the same criticism that was levelled against western feminism ie to avoid generalising women's experience because there is no "generic woman"!

Having just outlined some of the key problems identified by these scholars it is equally important to list their vision or challenges for a distinctively African woman's contribution to the transformation of theology which will set the scene for the transformation of society. Such a theology would have among its distinctives the following;

- a. a commitment to the eradication of all forms of oppression against women through the two pronged critique of both African culture and Christianity (Hinga 1996:39) Two widely held misconceptions that have been used to discourage feminism in Africa are related to both Christianity and African culture. The first one related to Christianity is that Christianity brought liberation to African women ie freed them from their oppressive culture (Oduyoye 1995 :172). The second misconception is that pre-colonial Africa was an egalitarian society characterised by equality between the sexes ie African culture is gender-free.
- b. a commitment to the empowerment of women both economically and politically. Economic and political marginalisation are some of the root causes of many of the problems faced by African women (Hinga 1996 :42). In other words African women theologians want to move from rhetoric to action.

- c. a commitment to inclusiveness ie to include men in the struggle for women's liberation.
- This is a distinctly African approach which is also found in the womanist theology of African Americans. The rationale for inclusiveness is based on three reasons. Firstly, the African context with its economic, political and social problems makes both men and women victims. In this context, the struggle for the liberation of women "must occur in the context of the struggle of liberation of the whole continent" (Okure 1998:78). Secondly, the communitarian nature of the Bible and inclusiveness of Jesus. The Bible according to Okure is a "community book" (:78) ie addressed to all members of the community and it is only when the community as a whole engages in critical reading of the Bible especially through the eyes of women. Such communal readings will not only sensitise the community to the problems encountered by women but have the power to transform attitudes towards women (:79). Lastly, the vision of African women theologians is to "bring through theology a new humanity redeemed in Christ" (:78) that includes both women, men and children.

The feminist critique has despite its contradictions exposed the gender relations not only in society but theology. It has shown the multi-layered oppression of women and how this links to the violence against women by men. One of the major challenges for feminism in general and Christianity in particular is how it deals with violence against women. Violence against women is also a measure of the extent of justice and democracy in any given society.

The next section will also put the feminist critique to the test as it investigates the position of women in the discipline of psychology.

3.6 Feminist Critique Of Psychology

Feminism within the discipline of psychology falls within the framework of general feminist scholarship. It is also diverse and reflects the different emphasis of the scholars. Like their theological counterparts feminists in psychology also fall into two general groups which in themselves are diverse. The first group is similar to the post Christian feminist in that it believes that there is no place for women in the traditional mainstream theories of psychology. They argue that the "pervasive male bias in psychology has created bodies of knowledge that are scientifically flawed, that are inaccurate for or irrelevant to half of the human race" (Hydes & Frost 19 :24). The other group like its Christian feminist counterpart maintains that psychology is potentially relevant for women because the existing androcentric theories can be challenged and transformed to include women (:24).

In dealing with the feminist critique of psychology, the three areas most targeted by feminist will be discussed with contributions from different scholars. Instead of focusing on one scholar, the discussions will target those areas that elicit feminist critique and which form the basis of psychological theory. The three areas are epistemology, methodology and methods (Vindhya 1998:61).

3.6.1 Epistemology

Epistemology as a science covers both the "origin of knowledge and how it is acquired" (:62). In the previous chapter the scientific nature of psychological knowledge was discussed and critiques from a general perspective. In this section psychological epistemology will be critiqued from a feminist point of view.

The first critique levelled against psychological epistemology is that it is "masculinist". Masculinist epistemologies are androcentric ie are "systems of knowledge that take the masculine perspective unself-consciously as if it were truly universal and objective" (Kaschak 1992:11). Contrary to expectations, the goal of feminism is not to promote "the needs and experiences of women as normative or universal but as making visible the varying experiences and perspectives that masculinist thought denies" (:11).

Two example of the embeddedness of masculinist thought in psychology can be found in the psychoanalytic theory founded by Sigmund Freud. While it is acknowledged that there exists a body of different interpretations and schools within psychoanalysis, this does not detract from the "phallocentric" nature of his theory. Freud's theory also "takes male experience as the universal norm considering the possession or lack of a penis the central element in the psychological make up of all people" (:15). The second example of masculinist psychology is the taxonomic approach ie "obsession with categories" (Ussher & Nicolson 1992:43). One of the weaknesses of the classification system is that these lead to dualistic thinking ie either one has the disorder or doesn't (Kashack 1992:165).

The second critique is the portrayal of "human beings as essentially independent from socio historical circumstances" (Vindhya 1998 :65). The intra psychic emphasis of psychology has already been dealt with in the previous chapter. Of particular interest is that women's problems are diagnosed without considering the effects of the different multiple oppression experienced by women. Without gender analysis especially awareness of the effects of oppression on women, "psychology pathologies women by identifying their lack of social power and naturalising their subordinate position" (:61).

As already mentioned in the previous chapter, the exclusion of the transcendence or spiritual realities alienates western psychology from African experience. In most African traditional practices the diagnosis of any problem whether it is physical or psychological includes the "socio-psychological and spiritual significance" (Ma Mpolo 19 :24). This differs considerably from the classification systems of the west.

The third and last critique is the body of knowledge that has been gathered through the long history of psychological research on sex differences. It is this body of knowledge that has informed society of what constitutes differences between the sexes and the characteristics of each sex. This branch of psychology is called "differential psychology" and has many publications that outline the differences between men and women. One theory which has been influential in formulating the differences between the sexes is the biomedical theory. This model links the "female biological capacities to become pregnant, give birth and lactate"(Nicolson, 1992:59) to her "vulnerable emotional instability and essentially passive and nurturant nature" (ibid). It is also a deficit model in that it portrays women as inferior to males in every sphere. This theory has been supported by extensive studies that have demonstrated that "women's abilities have been deemed deficient behavioural, cognitively and emotionally" (Vindhya 1998 :60).

The issue of the differences between the sexes is a subject of contention even among feminists. On one end of the spectrum are those that maintain that there are no differences between the sexes, that the differences are socially constructed and can be eliminated in order to create a gender-free society where women can participate as equals. On the other side of the spectrum are those who believe that there are differences between males and females and that there are

certain clusters of characteristics that are inherently male or female. The former group is classified as the social constructivists while the latter is the essentialist. Between these two extremes lie different groups. Although these groups are divided in their understanding of the means and ends of ending women's oppression, they are united by their commitment to the equality of humankind and the eradication of all forms of oppression.

A corresponding issue relating to difference is how difference between the sexes is perceived. In the biomedical theory above, differences are treated as deficiency. Since the woman is different to male and males are the standard of humanity, it is the woman who is deficient. One notable scholar who has worked on the issue of difference is Carol Gilligan. Her studies on ethical decision making process have resulted in the identification of "a cluster of personal characteristics identified with women such as the popular notion of women as relational and as disposed to viewing relationships and care of others as primary to a sense of self " (Glaz & Moessner 1991:50) She also went a step further by giving value to these characteristics. While this is a valuable contribution it tends to lean towards the essentialist camp ie generalising women and not acknowledging the diversity among women. The weakness of any form of study that tries to define women or men is that it can lead to "another form of bondage that women need to live up to" (ibid). One way around this could be to avoid naturalising any research findings and acknowledging that it is but only "one of the many possibilities".

Essentialising women has contributed to the social control of women because it sets a criteria by which women must measure up to. Psychology as already discussed in the previous chapter, reflects the social system that is part of its context, because it "ensures that women conform to a particular role which doesn't threaten the status quo" (Usher & Nicolson 1997:57). Those

women who deviate from the norm are given appropriate labels.

3.6.2 Methodology

As already discussed in the previous chapter, one of the fundamental principles of mainstream psychology is that it is "value free" ie neutral. This claim is part of the scientific ideology. By claiming to be value free psychology "predisposes the public to accept psychology's assertions uncritically to regard them as apolitical truisms rather than as socio-historically conditioned statements. By promoting a depoliticised image of psychological findings the image has in fact served to promulgate the reigning ideology of the status quo " (Vindhya 1998 :66) The status quo that is of concern here, is the use of psychological epistemology to legitimise and sustain the oppression of women.

3.6.3 Methods

The methods employed in psychology reflect the values and epistemology of the discipline. The prominence of laboratory methods and "manipulation and control of variables so as to discover universal laws of behaviour" (Vindhya 1998:69) reflects the de-contextual nature of the discipline. Since it is mostly in the laboratory that conclusions are made on principles of universal behaviour, it is also assumed that the practitioner is also a neutral individual who is able to be at the time of the experiment without gender, race or class ie a de-contextualised person. The contextual variables of the participants are controlled for and in the end one has an experiment that is "pure".

Feminist and other scholars have, as already pointed out in the previous chapter, the fallacy of

the existence of a value-free discipline. Feminist critique have linked this fallacy with the power of experts which is supported by such factors as "impenetrable language and illusion of objectivity," and the "mystification of professional training attributing to psychologist omnipotent powers" (Usher and Nicolson 1992:46).

It is appropriate to mention that laboratory experiments are not the only methods of study used in psychology but that they occupy a place of prominence. In some disciplines within psychology such as behavioursim, the study of behaviours of animals such as rats have been used to make conclusions about human behaviour. The assumption is that

universal behavioural principles, which apply not only to all people but across species are sought and considered discoverable by controlled, objective, scientific observation by identifying and manipulating the smallest possible separate or linked units of behaviour. From this perspective, complex human psychology can be reduced to a set of fully knowable and determinate behavioural principles (Kaschak, 1992:13).

This brief overview of certain aspects of feminist critique has served to highlight some of the key gender issues in psychology. The next section will discuss the response feminist therapy as one of the practical responses by feminist, in their effort to confront the oppression and implement their vision to liberate women from their oppression. The subject is also vast and the discussion will limit itself to a brief overview of feminist therapy especially its characteristics, methods, goals as well as a critical overview of its practice.

3.6.4 Feminist Therapy

Right from the onset it is important to note that feminist therapy is a western phenomena and there are not as yet documented parallels in Africa. This however, does not mean that there are no African parallels of feminist therapy, but that these have yet to be documented. The purpose

of including this form of therapy is to understand it and critically assess its validity for African women.

Feminist therapy began in the early 1970s “in the oppositional spirit of the Women’s Liberation Movement (Marecek & Kravetz 1998:19 and also “grew out from women’s personal and political dissatisfaction with their abuse, misrepresentation in psychiatry” (Watson & Williams 1992:214) The aim of feminist therapy was not to develop another theory or align itself with any therapy but to transform existing therapies by introducing a “new set of values” (ibid). In other words feminist therapy represents both “an approach to therapy” and a “philosophy of practice rather than a prescription of technique” (:214). As a therapy that is feminist, its main criteria is to ensure that its main beneficiary is women and its target is social transformation. The next section will discuss some of the essential components of feminist therapy.

a. The distinctives of feminist therapy

Feminist therapy represents a radical re-definition of counselling. The following four principles constitute the distinctive characteristics of feminist therapy.

Firstly, feminist therapy is committed to the principle that the personal is political (Gilbert 1980:248). This commitment represents one of the fundamental aspects of feminist theory. By claiming that the personal is political, feminist therapy is committed “bringing society into therapy, to working with women’s experience of sexual inequality” (Watson & Williams 1992:215).

Secondly, feminist therapy is committed to egalitarian relationships between therapists and clients (Gilbert 1980:249). This represents a rejection of the hierarchical relationships and unequal power relationships between therapists and their clients which is found in traditional counselling. Equally important is the recognition that the imposition of feminist goals and beliefs on clients is a form of abuse of power (Marecek & Kravetz 1998:23). One way of levelling the power relationships that is unique to feminist therapy is the concept of appropriate “self disclosure” which allows the therapist to share from her own experience.

Thirdly, feminist therapy is committed to social transformation through advocacy work that targets those institutions and practices in society that contribute to the oppression of women. It is not a reactive therapy which merely responds to individual problems of women, but is proactive and explicitly political.

Lastly feminist therapy is committed to the empowerment of women. This is done through a three pronged approach. Firstly the commitment to work with women’s experience i.e. validating female experience by accepting that the client is an expert on her life and that her experiences are valuable to the counselling process (Gilbert 1980:248) The second aspect includes empowering women through; supporting her “inner resources and capacity for self healing (Butler 1987:16); encouraging self nurture (Gilbert 1980:249) and enabling her to hold the therapist accountable to her empowerment. The last aspect of empowerment involves training in social skills such as “assertiveness” and “conscious raising” i.e. educating women on gender issues.

After almost a decade of feminist therapy, feminist therapies have evaluated their practice and have made the following critical observations;

- a.. that years of assertive training for women had very little impact on society's view about women. In fact this method has proved to be detrimental for women in two significant ways. Firstly, it assumed that women were "deficient" ie they were lacking in something and that they needed to change. Secondly it was assumed that if women changed and became assertive, society would "change their attitudes towards them" (Watson & Williams 1992:220). Unfortunately, the latter has proved untrue and for most women, assertiveness training has only met with resistance from society and further marginalising them.
- b. it was also discovered that no amount of change by women themselves would change society, change would come through challenging "male monopoly of power in order to create an environment receptive to strong assertive women" (:220)
- c. It became apparent that skills, resources and more information were not sufficient to counteract the impact of inequality experienced by women(:220).
- d. and finally the ever increasing incidents of violence against women all over the world is evidence of this backlash.

The above observations do not paint the whole picture of the impact of feminist therapy. There have been many positive outcomes but the battle is still far from being won. As African women we can learn from our western counterparts and avoid 'reinventing the wheel'.

Feminist therapy offers pastoral counselling tools that have the potential to transform its method

of counselling so that it can be liberative. These challenges will be discussed in Chapter 5.

3.7 Conclusion

The main thrust of this chapter has been to outline the feminist critique of the two main disciplines that inform pastoral counselling namely psychology and theology. The discussions incorporated the contributions from both western and African feminist scholars. Although there are clear areas of differences and contention, the “feminist factor” that is the recognition of the oppression of women and commitment to its eradication form a loose bonding between the two. This chapter also introduced the issue of violence against women. The measure of theology and psychology’s commitment to women will be evident in their response to the issue of violence against women. Pastoral counselling as the practical arm of theology or “the visible manifestation” of theology will also be tested by this issue. The way forward for pastoral counselling has been shown by feminist therapy which has the potential of transforming pastoral counselling into a liberative tool and agent of social transformation. The issue of violence against women will be discussed in the next chapter and poses a challenge to pastoral counselling.

CHAPTER 4

4. THE CHALLENGE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

4.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, feminist theories were used to critique theology and psychology in order to analyse the relationship between pastoral counselling and women. In both disciplines feminist critique was able to expose the role that patriarchy, androcentrism and sexism has played in shaping these disciplines in such a way that they contribute to the oppression of women. The realisation that there are elements within pastoral counselling that contribute and sustain the oppression of women makes the injunction to transform pastoral counselling into a liberative tool and agent of social transformation an imperative. One area of women's experience that makes this imperative urgent, is the escalating violence against women that has become a worldwide phenomena. Violence against women transcends class, race, ethnicity thus it unites women across the globe in a common struggle. While violence is acknowledged as something that affects men, women and children, there are however various forms of violence that are inflicted on women because they are women. It is the latter violence that brings to light the nature and the destructive consequences of gender.

Feminist critique will once again be used to probe deeper into the issue of violence against women because there are many unanswered questions like; why there is so much violence directed against women as a group worldwide; what forces in society contribute to the practice of this type of violence; why it continues unabated and whose interests are being served by its continuation etc. Although there are no simple answers to these questions, answers need to be sought. Pastoral counselling as a discipline that represents one of the "caring arms" of the church

needs to respond to these issues. How pastoral counselling responds to the reality of violence against women will be one of the determinants of its potential to be a liberative tool and agent of social transformation. Clearly nothing less than the transformation of society is required to eliminate all forms of violence and specifically violence against women.

Accordingly, the central focus of this chapter will be on the issue of violence against women particularly domestic violence and how this issue poses a challenge to pastoral counselling. The rationale for this challenge comes from the belief that the issues surrounding violence against women have the potential to transform pastoral counselling into a liberative tool and agent of social transformation. This chapter will, therefore, lay the foundations for the next chapter which will take up the issues raised by the problem of violence against women and how these can be used to transform pastoral counselling.

Consequently, the discussions in this chapter will begin with a general overview of some of the issues surrounding violence against women in general, then go on to focus on one aspect of this violence namely domestic violence and how this form of violence has been dealt with by the church (theology) and psychology. These discussions will form the background for the discussions on the work of the Gender Desk of the Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness (PACSA). This will then be followed by a brief critical analysis of PACSA, which will be linked to the use of ritual as a resource in empowering victims of violence. The chapter will then end with a brief summary.

4.2. Violence Against Women - Some of the issues

4.2.1 Introduction

Violence against women is a global phenomena that covers a wide range of practices including war crimes of rape, cultural and legal discrimination, domestic and sexual violence, psychological abuse, to any act that discriminates against women. The devastating effect of this violence is evidenced by the fact that “gender violence is a greater cause of death and disability among women aged 15 to 44 than cancer, malaria, traffic accidents or war” (Radlett & Mirsky 1998:1). Statistics by the World Health Organization have shown that “at least one in five women in the world has been physically or sexually abused by a man at some time in her life” (:1). One of the distinctives of gender violence is that women are vulnerable to violence at every stage of their lives. For example in the prenatal stage, violence in the form of battering during pregnancy leads to miscarriage and mass rape during wars leads to unwanted pregnancies; in infancy, most victims of physical, emotional and sexual abuse are girls; in childhood some cultures practice genital mutilation and child prostitution in some countries has become part of the tourist trade e.g Thailand; in adolescence for example there is the danger of date rape; in marriage too there is the threat of domestic violence and in their final years, the abuse of widows and old-women (:2) Some of the consequences of gender violence include severe physical injuries; homicide i.e. women are most likely to be murdered in the family or by their intimate partners rather than strangers (:2); and psychological problems such as severe depression (:2).

In response to this violence, the International Community has, through the increased pressure from women’s organisations worldwide, made some milestone resolutions addressing the issue of violence against women. Some of these include; the declaration at The World Conference on

Human Rights in Vienna 1993 that “women’s human rights must be protected not only in courts, prisons and other areas of public life but also in the privacy of the home” (:12) and the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing China specifically dealt with the issue of violence against women and released a statement that “violence is an obstacle to the achievement of women’s human rights” (:12). In South Africa as already mentioned in the previous chapter, the government has set up the Gender Commission as an indication of their commitment to the eradication of all forms of discrimination against women. What constitutes violence against women will be the subject of the next section.

4.2.2 Feminist Analysis of Violence against Women

A lot of research has been carried out to find out the aetiology of violence against women. Some research especially in the West has tended to focus on the personal characteristics of both perpetrators and victims of violence. This focus tends to ignore other factors that contribute to this problem such as the social context and the gender relationships operating within the society.

Feminist scholarship, in particular has been instrumental in formulating a more critical understanding of gender violence. The two quotations below exemplify some of the salient features of this violence.

The low social status of women and the consequent power imbalances between women and men are the underlying reasons for harmful and discriminatory practices and physical and sexual violence against girls and women in all societies. The responsibility for this injustice and violence lies not only with the immediate family but also with each community, religious organizations, health and social service professionals and law enforcers, where they exist. In the final analysis what is required is change at the deep level of gender relations (O’Connell 1994:85).

The above quote highlights some of the essential defining characteristics of violence against women. Five of these will be discussed below.

Firstly that violence against women is linked to patriarchy, which as already discussed creates amongst other things a gender hierarchy that places men above women. The dominant position of men under patriarchy enables them to

- a. exercise choice, because in “patriarchal culture men have the choice of being rapists of using their power to destroy women and children” (Poling 1991:157). Women and children do not have this choice. Although many men have chosen not to exercise their power through violence, the principle is that they have a choice.
- b. keep silent as they have the “option of silence because they are not in danger from sexual violence as women” (:157). While there is evidence of female violence against men, it is considerably less than male violence against women. Rape is one of the most prevalent sexual crimes against women. It is also “one of the most insidious forms of social coercion because rape is a constant reminder to all women of their vulnerable condition” (Humm 1989:234).
- c. avoid being involved in confronting the injustice of violence against women because “men in patriarchy collude with one another at the expense of women, even when injustice is done against women” (Poling 1991:157). It is worth noting that there is a growing number of men that are involved in the fight against violence against women,

this however tends to be the exception rather than the norm.

Secondly, violence against women is rooted in the unequal power relationships between women and men. This power is evident both in society and in the family (Ieda 1986:168), as a result “women are vulnerable to assault and manipulation because of the power of men” (Poling 1991:23). As the dominant group, men’s power is supported by institutions and ideologies such as the family, culture and the church because “patriarchy supports a social structure of roles, relationship and institutions that makes ownership of women by men possible, natural and morally just” (Nason-Clark 1996:518).

Unequal power relations lead to the abuse of power where power becomes a means of control of others especially subordinates. For example, violence against women is a form of social control because “the fear of violence both compels and constrains women to behave or not behave in certain ways.....it affects what they can do, where they can go and with whom they can go with” (Maynard & Winn 1997:178). In domestic violence, power manifests itself in economic, social and emotional control which results in victims being unable to leave the abuser. Most research done on why women choose to remain with abusive partners cite economic dependance as one of the main reasons given by women. Social control occurs because most women have been socialised to depend on their husbands for their identity (Hartman 1986:72) and fear being alone (:72). Emotional control happens when the abuser justifies his actions by blaming the victim and making them feel that they are the cause of the violence. Abusers therefore use their power to “control and manipulate victims perceptions of reality” (Finkelhor 1983:20) and the outcome is that victims blame themselves by identifying with the rationalisations of the abuser (:20).

Thirdly, violence against women does not only occur “out there” i.e. in dangerous places by strangers but often happens in the home and is perpetrated by those close to them eg male relatives and friends. The belief that violence against women only occurs in public areas has been exposed as a myth used to protect the institution of the family. The family has often been believed to be a safe place for women and children but the increasing reports of domestic violence and child abuse have revealed that the “ideology of the family is one of the structures of domination and control that create the conditions of the abuse of power” (:29). Domestic violence has brought to light the other side of the family and has revealed that “the most violent group to which women and children belong is the family” (Garma 1991:126) (Thistlethwaite 1996:151). However, this feminist critique of the family should “not be read as a blanket condemnation of all aspects of family life and neither is it an attack on those who live in families” (Jackson 1997:325) The purpose of feminist critique is to challenge some of the assumptions held about the family which perpetuate violence against women and are therefore oppressive. One such assumption is the “domestic ideology which defines the home as woman’s natural sphere” (:327) and places the burden of keeping the family together on women. This pressure on women has not only sustained domestic violence but has been responsible for the numerous problems related to women’s mental health eg research has found that “more married, widowed and divorced women than single are among the seriously mentally ill” (Hansen & Harway 1993:75).

In traditional African society the family was and in some instances is still an inclusive concept and transcends the Western model of the nuclear family. The traditional family provided

networks of relationships that enabled marital problems to be resolved. The breakdown of traditional support systems especially in the urban areas and the introduction of the nuclear family has deprived the family of its support network. The increased divorce rates and domestic violence amongst African families has begun to change the face of the family. These problems are compounded by other problems such as poverty, AIDS, unemployment and breakdown of traditional culture. The African family too is in crisis as family violence and abuse of both women and children continues to escalate.

Fourthly, violence against women is a crime and as such becomes an issue of justice and human rights. Unfortunately society has had to be pressured into accepting the criminal aspect of all forms of violence against women including domestic violence. The criminalisation of violence against women has brought its own problems as women continue to experience further victimization by law enforcement agents. In their book entitled "*Violence Against Women in South Africa*" the Human Rights Watch/Africa and Human Rights Watch Women's Rights Project found that "South African women victims of violence, regardless of race continue to face a judicial and police system which is often unsympathetic and hostile to women seeking redress" (1995:3). Some of their experiences include; hostile treatment from the police (:3); conciliatory response from police i.e. trying to resolve problems rather than laying a criminal charge on the abuser especially in cases of domestic violence (:63); ignorance of the law by police (:91) mistreatment of rape victims and for raped women justice heavily depends on "whether she fits the court's image of a raped women" (:98) i.e. she becomes the victim of the stereotypes of raped victims held by judges, magistrates and prosecutors.

The criminalisation of violence against women especially those forms of violence traditionally labelled as private such as domestic violence is important because it sends out a strong message to the community that domestic violence is a serious crime (:65). The quote below underscores this point,

the criminal process indicates that the victim is entitled to the state's protection as much as any other victim of violence, and that the perpetrator is personally responsible for his actions. Treating domestic violence as a crime has an important symbolic role, demonstrating that society does not tolerate abuse of women (or men) by their partners (:65).

Lastly, the practice of victim-blame is one of the most powerful weapons of keeping victims of violence locked into feelings of “shame, self-doubt and self-hatred” (Jacobs 1989:269) because they “feel a sense of guilt and responsibility for the attacks of violence against them” (:269).

Rape victims for instance are often made to feel that they in one way or the other they contributed to the rape. Victims of domestic violence also share this type of self-blame. for example, in cases of domestic violence, when violence occurs for the first time, most women “look internally to determine how they caused violence” (Ieda 1986:170) and believe that if they change the abuse will stop (Finkelhor 1983:20). This self-blame not only originates from the victims but is reflected in society where myths about domestic violence often place the blame on the victim.

Self-blame drives many victims to focus on changing themselves in the belief that when they change their behaviour which they believe caused the violence, the abuse would automatically stop. Unfortunately, this desired outcome does not often materialise and “with each failure, subtle changes occur in the woman's psyche until all motivation to avoid the battering seems to disappear and the woman becomes passive” (Garma 1991:130). The outcome is a condition called “learned helplessness” where the victim feels completely powerless and unable to do anything about her condition (:130). Other feelings by victims include ambivalence ie “hating

the abuse but craving the attachment” (Hartman 1986:72); “incredible allegiance to their abusers” (Finkelhor 1983:20); depression, betrayal, suicidal thoughts and self contempt (:21); and helplessness caused by lack of information about abuse (Hartman:72).

From the foregoing description it would appear that victims of violence are passive sufferers.

Research has revealed another side to these women namely their “strength, persistence and survival skills”(Ieda 1986:171). Another “power base” for women has been the formation of support groups where women support and empower each other eg Rape Survivors Groups; Domestic Violence Support groups etc. This solidarity among women has played a major role in breaking the silence surrounding issues of violence among women and has transformed women into agents of social transformation. Many women’s groups have been instrumental in ensuring that discriminatory practices against women are outlawed. The next section will look at how women’s group have become an empowering response to violence against women.

4.2.3 Women’s response - support groups

As already mentioned above, women’s support groups have been one of the most empowering responses to violence by women. The focus of the discussion will be on highlighting some of the significant features of support groups that make them empowering to women, especially survivors of violence.

Firstly, most support groups are comprised of members who share similar experience i.e. a “minimal entry requirements”! (Hartman 1986:68). This is important because it provides a “unique opportunity for participants to assess themselves, validate experiences and perceptions, attempt personal, behavioural and attitudinal changes, express feelings and receive feed back” (Walker 1987:3). Often victims of violence feel isolated from other people because of their

“extreme sense of shame and humiliation” (Finkelhor 1983:21) which they try to hide from outsiders. In the group, their isolation is broken as they hear “their” stories, pain and fears in the experiences of other group members. This personal sharing which is the goal of the group, is not only therapeutic, it is empowering and creates community i.e. a safe place for women to work through their pain..

Secondly, members of the groups are at different stages of their journey to recovery . This is a valuable resource for new members because they witness first hand the struggles and triumphs of women in similar situations to. These living testimonies provide inspiration and courage to group members. The group members who are further on provide valuable support for newcomers and newcomers also spur the others on as they are reminded of their own pain. This mutual upbuilding and empowerment creates interdependence and commitment to the group by the members (Hartman 1986:74) .

Thirdly, women’s groups often explore issues about being female, which leads them to examine stereotypes and social and cultural factors that define them and contributed to their experience of violence (Walker 1986:6). It is from such experiences of solidarity that empower women to move into the public sphere and lobby for change. The success of these support groups can be seen in the pioneering work that women are doing all over the world. Here are a few examples from South Africa; a Specialised sexual offences court has been set up in Cape Town; in Newcastle a “Crisis Centre” has been established in one of the hospitals to offer support and counselling to women victims of violence and in Pretoria at the Sunnyside Police Station a trauma centre has been established for women (Human Rights Watch 1998:5).

Another outcome of the above process i.e. becoming aware of gender oppression, is the experience of anger and rage. Support groups provide a safe place for expressing anger and finding creative methods for channelling it. In the African context it is interesting to note that women's anger against oppression during the liberation struggles that took place throughout the continent, was given recognition and status resulting in women being recognised as equal members of liberation movements. However, when women express the same anger against their oppression by men, their anger and struggle is often trivialised and rejected. Support groups therefore play a significant role in validating and consolidating women's anger.

Lastly, the bonding of women, restores the trust and "rediscovery of pleasure and fulfilment in interpersonal relations with other women" (Walker 1986:9). There are many factors within society that work against solidarity among women such as classism, racism, tribalism and patriarchy. The return to solidarity and in some cases "sisterhood" provides women with a strong support base for not just solidarity but the creation of a common vision to build a society free from all forms of oppression. This eschatological component of women's movement poses a challenge to pastoral counselling to move beyond the counselling session to the social context ie engage in the transformation of society.

The next section will discuss how pastoral counselling which is informed by theology and psychology has tackled the issue of violence against women, with special emphasis on domestic violence.

4.3. Theology and domestic violence against women

Religious beliefs play an important role in determining how religious women respond and understand domestic violence. As already mentioned in the previous chapter, theology has been

guilty of not only colluding with society in the oppression of women but has provided the necessary legitimization through their interpretation of various texts. These texts together “construct a sacred canopy that compels victims to accept their sufferings without resistance” (Fiorenza 1996:51). Some examples of these texts are as follows;

Firstly, those texts that teach and absolutise the subordination of wives to their husbands such as Ephesians 5:22-24. Apart from endowing the husband with power over their wives, these texts provide a fertile ground on which “seeds of wife battery”(Nason-Clark 1996:518) find root and thrive. In addition these texts help to create “appropriate victims” (Adams 1993:75) i.e. those people who being a victim appears “to be natural and inevitable” (:75) such as women and children. Appropriate victims are created by these texts which affirm male power as divinely ordained i.e. “that God ordains men’s authority in marriage and women’s and children’s subordination”(:75).

Secondly, those texts that are used to glorify suffering. Most of these texts relate to the sufferings of Christ, who is set as an example for all those who suffer. Two examples of texts that refer to the sufferings of Christ will be discussed with reference to their implications for victims of domestic violence. The first text is Isaiah 53:7 “He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth, he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth” (NIV). This text has been used to glorify suffering by promoting self sacrifice and submissiveness as appropriate responses to suffering (Brown & Parker 1995:38). For victims of domestic violence, this text encourages them to stay with the abuser and to see their submission as part of their Christian response to suffering or even a test of their faith (Burnett 1996:148). The second text is Hebrews 2:10 “In bringing many sons to

glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering” (NIV). This text has also been used to glorify suffering by linking suffering to the will of God and the accomplishment of God’s purpose (Brown & Parker 1995:40). For victims this text can be seen as encouraging them to endure their pain and accept their suffering as a gift from God who will ultimately bring good out of it (:41).

One other negative aspect of glorifying suffering, for victims of domestic violence, is that it links love with “suffering, sacrifice and selflessness” (Glaz & Moessner 1991:208). Research has shown that Christian women in general stay longer in abusive relationships as they are encouraged to “find meaning in their abuse rather than resisting abuse” (Adams 1993:77).

Thirdly, those texts that absolutise certain Christian values or ethics to the detriment of victims of domestic violence e.g. forgiveness. Forgiveness is one of the central virtues in Christianity. Texts like Luke 17:4 “If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, “I repent”, forgive him”(NIV), and Matthew 6:14 “For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you”(NIV) have been used to absolutise the practice of forgiveness. In the language of liberation theology, these texts represent cheap grace because they preach forgiveness without justice. Similarly, forgiveness without justice for victims of domestic violence trivialises and cheapens their suffering. Justice for these victims includes ensuring that perpetrators are held accountable for their actions by the church, society and the state (Adams 1993:79) and that measures are put into place to ensure that no further abuse occurs (:79). The use of these text to get victims to forgive their abusers perpetrates and glorifies suffering.

Lastly, those texts that “glorify marriage and the family”. Marriage is one of the most important institutions in Christianity and the Bible is the main source for the definition, purpose and function of the family. One of the enduring portrayals of the family especially, the Christian family, is that it represents heaven on earth, a place of joy, love and happiness based on following God’s prescribed rules and roles for each member of the family. The purpose of the church is to “preserve marriage at all cost” (Cooper-White 1996:13) and maintain the sanctity of marriage. While this is commendable, the magnitude of the problem of domestic violence both inside and outside the church has shown that the family has become one of the most dangerous places for women and children. Faced with this challenge most churches and clergy often tend to minimize the problem while continuing to hold on to the myth of the ideal “happy Christian family” (Cooper-White 1996:4).

Research work has confirmed the prevalence of such beliefs among Christian women. In their eight year extensive research which focused on victims, abusers and pastors in Protestant churches in America, James and Phyllis Alsdurf documented their findings in their groundbreaking book entitled “Battered into Submission: the tragedy of wife abuse in the Christian Home”. Some of their findings include the following:

- a. Most victims experienced feelings of “guilt, condemnation and responsibility for the conflict” (1989:20) after pastoral counselling. Guilt was one of the dominant emotions experienced by victims who felt responsible for their abuse; their feelings of anger were submerged as they were often encouraged by her pastor, friends and family to forgive the batterer (Garma 1991:133).
- b. Almost all the victims received counselling that focused on them ie their need to change but not on their abusive husbands (:23). The patriarchal “worldview taught by the church

subjugates the woman to the authority and control of the man through the patriarchal language of its Scripture, ritual, hymns and theology” (Garma 1991:133). Abused women together with others believe that the patriarchal “ideologies come from God and are therefore true” (:133). Victims felt trapped in a pattern of learned helplessness and feelings of powerlessness. The cycle that leads to learned helplessness is inevitable because through it the victim feels unable to cope.

- c. Many of the victims developed a “missionary syndrome” (:35). These women not only believed that they were “entirely responsible for their husbands emotional and spiritual well being” (:35) but also saw their abuse as an indicator that their husbands needed their help.
- d. Certain texts were repeatedly used to convince them to stay in abusive relationships as part of their Christian duty especially the texts on submission (Ephesians 5:22) and the sacredness of the family and marriage.
- e. Victims were consistently blamed for causing the violence to take place and there was very little said on the accountability of husbands (:84).

The above discussions provide the background for the feminist critique of the church’s (theology’s) response to domestic violence.

4.3.1. Feminist critique

Feminist critique of the church or theology’s response to domestic violence will focus on three major areas of concern.

The first area of concern is, the church's inability to "name the violence" (Nason-Clarke 1996:524) i.e. the failure to create a theology that addresses the issues of violence within the family. The only theological framework which the church has is that of an ideal Christian family (Cooper-White 1996:13) and as a result domestic violence is often referred to as "family violence" (Nason-Clarke 1996:525) which effectively categorises domestic violence as a private family problem. Among some conservative Protestants, domestic violence is spiritualised so that it is defined in spiritual terms so that violent aggressive behaviour in marriage is seen as "a function of misconceptions about God's design for marital bliss" (:525). Both approaches i.e. privatising and spiritualising domestic violence fail to name the problem and also to hold the abuser accountable for his actions. Feminists on the other hand; clearly name the problem as "male violence against women linked to unequal power relations" (:524); offer no excuses for men (Cooper-White 1996:5) and are thus "sensitive to any naming that downplays or obscures the identity of the male perpetrator" (Nason-Clarke 1996:525). In addition, feminists point out that the failure to give an appropriate name for the violence is ideological and serves the following functions:

- it serves as a protective device that perpetuates the violence. Since the violence is not appropriately named, it continues unabated and unchallenged (Adams 1993:73)
- avoidance of assigning responsibility. The message that false naming sends to the perpetrator is that "he has still not been "found out" "(:74). When the violence is not named, it is almost impossible to name the perpetrator and hold them accountable for their actions. Without accountability, "violence escalates"(:74) because violence can only be halted when abusers are held accountable (:74)
- creates denial of the extent and severity of the problem (:73) thus preventing ways of confronting and dealing adequately with the problem.

How a problem is named has implications on the solutions that are sought. Since the church either spiritualises or denies the problem, this will be reflected in their counselling methods. For example if the problem is interpreted as spiritual, then the counselling will focus on finding a spiritual solution. Feminists argue that spiritualising domestic violence fails to deal with the real issues.

The second area of concern is the central role of reconciliation held by the church in general and practised by most pastors (Nason-Clarke 1996:525). Reconciliation between the abuser and abused is one of the main goals of pastoral intervention and it is often seen as a “desirable and attainable” (:526) goal. This optimism by pastors is based on the definition of abuse in spiritual terms so that the abuser’s actions are related to his relationship with God e.g. abusive behaviour by the abuser is interpreted as a “sign of his struggle with the life of faith” (:526). Feminists argue against the practice of reconciliation without justice. The experience of revictimisation by victims after returning to their abuser “mitigates against optimism of reforming abusive relationships” (:526). The issue of justice is central for feminists because of their understanding that domestic violence is a crime and the perpetrator must be held accountable for his actions.

The church on the other hand is reluctant to engage in justice making because of their view of domestic violence i.e. private family issue and their commitment to Christian values such as forgiveness and reconciliation.

The last area of concern is the failure of the church and theology to take a public stand against domestic violence and all violence against women. Only a public confession of their complicity in perpetuating domestic violence and commitment to naming and working for its eradication

will do justice to the many Christian women that suffer in their homes.

The only legitimate reason for women to remain in the church will be if the church were to condemn as anathema the glorification of suffering. Only if the church is the place where cycles of abuse are named, condemned, and broken can it be a haven of blessing and a place of peace for women (Brown & Parker 1995:38)

4.3.2. Feminist theology and domestic violence

Feminist theologians not only embrace the above concerns but have to deal with the dilemma of Christian women who are victims of domestic violence. Their dilemma lies in the simultaneous experience of both oppression and liberation in the church. It is this experience that Christian feminist theologians in their diverse ways seek to address. In the last chapter the focus was on the feminist theology of Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza. Since it is not possible to outline all the major contributions of feminist theologians, the work of Fiorenza will again be used as an example of how feminist theology responds to the issue of violence against women including domestic violence. Fiorenza's hermeneutics has already been discussed in the previous chapter and only one of her principles will be highlighted as an example of the effectiveness of her methodology in practical issues facing women. This the hermeneutic of remembrance.

Carol J. Schlueter in her paper entitled "Revitalizing Interpretations of Ephesians 5:22" discusses this hermeneutic principle and suggests some liberative practical applications of this principle. She locates this principle in the context of her discussion on the use of Ephesians 5:22 to control women's behaviour because this text "continues to be used overtly and covertly to legitimise current practices of oppression of women in churches and societies and commentators are still affirming the passage as a model of women's behaviour" (1997:318). Her main argument is that texts which have and are still being used to legitimise the oppression of women,

can be revitalised by using a method of critique, which interprets these texts in the context of other texts that affirm the value of women eg Galatians 3:28. In her discussion of liberative feminist hermeneutics, she includes the hermeneutic of remembrance. The significant of this hermeneutic principle is that through its use, texts in the Bible that are oppressive and liberative can be used to affirm women's struggle for justice. For example, the text about the rape of Tamar (2 Samuel 13:1-21), which reveals the oppression of women needs to be remembered

in order that the sufferers are not forgotten, than an acknowledgement and condemnation be made of the abuse of women today, and that healing might begin to happen when women hear their faith community address this tragic social situation (:325)

In addition, texts that deal with "women's visions and acts of courage are remembered as inspiration"(:325)

There is no doubt that feminist theologians have played an important role in exposing the oppression of women in Christianity and its negative result such as legitimization of the subordinate position of women that has contributed to the ongoing violence against women. At the same time feminist have contributed to the liberation of women by their hermeneutists which not only reveals the oppressive nature of the Bible but recovers some of the liberative aspects that can be used by women in their struggle for justice.

The next section will look at some ways in which domestic violence has been dealt with in psychology. As already mentioned, psychology is one of those disciplines outside of theology that strongly impact on pastoral counselling.

4.4. Psychology and domestic violence

There are many theories within the discipline of psychology that deal with the subject of

domestic violence. This section will confine itself to four psychological theories that are mostly used in pastoral counselling. The discussions will be based on an article by Pamela Cooper-White entitled “*An emperor Without Clothes:The Church’s Views About Treatment of Domestic Violence*” and how texts have been used by religious communities “. The table below will summarise these theories.

NAME OF THEORY	MAIN PREMISE	CRITIQUE
Psychodynamic (Freud) or Psychoanalysis	“battered women are masochistic” (1996:6) Masochism of women exhibits itself in “self sacrifice, self-degradation, self punishment and suicidal behaviour” (Palmary 1999:7)	a. Theory blames the victim. i.e. locates the cause of battering within the victim b. Pathologises women by assigning labels for their behaviour eg schizophrenia (:6)
Family Systems theory	recognises the “shared responsibility for dysfunction in the family” and counselling or treatment involves all the members of the family (Cooper-White 1996:6-7)	a. Theory does not take into account gender imbalances of power and “assumes that all members of the family have equal power” (:7). b. Perpetrator is not held accountable.
Co-dependancy theory	states that the past experiences of violence cause victims to unconsciously choose abusive relationships and also “provoke violence” (:8). This is done by victims in order to resolve past traumas.	a. Attaches blame on victim and focuses on “the women’s need to change” (:7) b. Attributes victims with pre-existing traits that “predisposes her to becoming a victim” (:7)
Transactional Analysis	Seeks to integrate spirituality with psychology by encouraging among other things androgyny and the belief that suffering has spiritual value (:8-9)	a. Androgyny re-enforces gender stereotypes b. Spiritualising of suffering leads to glorification of suffering which encourages submissive endurance. (:9)

From the above brief analysis it would seem that the sample of theories, with the exception of the family systems theory, tend to focus on the self. Research studies informed by these theories focus on finding the characteristics that are typical of both the perpetrator of violence and the victim. This focus while valid in some respects tends to be reductionist, in that it condenses the problem of domestic violence into “a problem of self” (Palmary 1999:9).

.....they are all concerned with the clients sense of self; their identity. It is assumed that there is a discrepancy between their present self and their desired self. This self is changeable and fluid and the aim of therapy is thus to guide the person towards their desired self. This is done initially through the self-scrutiny of the individual who evaluates himself/herself according to a norm and, as a result, perceives himself/herself as lacking in some way (:9)

This focus on the self is based on a deficiency model of understanding the difference between what the person is and what they ought to be. The difference is understood to represent a lack or deficiency in the required attribute. In response to this lack, psychological tests are often carried on the perpetrator or victim in order to identify the internal characteristics which are said to be responsible for their behaviour (:12) For example some research on batterers has found the following characteristics about batterers ; the “batterers’s learned behavioural responses “ ie the history of previous violence could be used to determine future violent acts (Walker 1983:37); their family background especially “strict father and inconsistent mother” (:38) and that most batterers had specific traits such as insecurity, possessiveness, charming, and were less educated than their wives (:39).

Similarly research on abused wives has found them to be; compliant to traditional sex roles i.e. submissive to husband (Wardell et al 1983:76); “provocative wife” i.e. her disposition eg nagging was responsible for the violence (:76) and possessing these qualities i.e. dependant,

immature, clinging hysterical and masochistic (Jansen 1989:76). From this research it would appear that battering is provoked by victims and that they are therefore responsible for their abuse (:76).

The family systems theory on the other hand moves away from the individual focus to the focus on the systems of communication within the family.

For family systems theorists, the term family violence is more appropriate as the abusive family is seen to be a closed information system in which violent behaviour serves to maintain equilibrium in the family.....The behaviour of each person affects that of the other. Neither party is blamed for the violence because they are thought to know no better.....(Palmary 1999:18)

To their credit, family systems theorists recognise that the family context influences the behaviour of its members. However as already seen, this theory has been criticised by feminist for its claim of being gender neutral (Howard 1986:96), ahistorical and failure to recognise that the family is linked to the wider context ie not an independent system but “perpetuates culturally dominant notions of the proper place of men and women”(:99) The theory is also ethnocentric in that it is Eurocentric in its assumptions of the nature of the family ie nuclear family comprised of two biological parents and their children.

Similarly, feminist critique which focuses extensively on the social context and gender relations does not provide all the answers for example it cannot explain the differences among men i.e. why some men, in fact the majority of men do not abuse their power and act violently towards women. The statistics quoted say that one in every 5 women are abused, why then are the other four not abused by men who are in intimate relationships with them. It would seem that what is required is a theory that integrates all the aspects of life i.e. a multidimensional theory.

This brief theoretical section provides the background and theoretical framework for the discussions on the work of PACSA, with particular emphasis on the Gender Desk.

4.5. Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness (PACSA)

4.5.1 Introduction

Before looking at the work of PACSA, it is necessary to outline the reasons for the choice of this project. I will cite three main reasons. Firstly, this organisation has a history of struggle against injustice in all its forms. During the apartheid era it was part of the resistance and even now in the post apartheid era its justice work continues as other levels of oppression appear such as the oppression of women, children and the poor. Secondly, their commitment to justice is theologically informed ie is based on Christian principles and as such has become the prophetic voice of the church. Its ecumenical stance means that it is representative of the church community and has earned the right to address the church in its diversity. Lastly its commitment to social transformation of society through partnership with churches and other organisations makes it a valuable resource for the transformation of pastoral counselling into a liberative tool and agent of social transformation.

PACSA's own self definition confirms the above i.e.

PACSA is an ecumenical non-governmental organisation committed to the just transformation of our society. Recognising that our nation's history is characterised by systems of unequal power and exploitation, especially in respect of gender, race and class, that we are struggling with this legacy in the present, we are committed to: processes of peacemaking and democratisation; equitable and sustainable distribution of resources; affirming the rights, dignity and contribution of all members of our society
(PACSA Pamphlet)

PACSA was started in 1979 in order to provide a platform for a Christian response to the political crisis during the apartheid era. Its offices are located in Pietermaritzburg and their work is limited to the Midlands area of Kwazulu-Natal. PACSA considers itself as a partner with other similar organisations local, nationwide and international. Most of its funding comes from within and outside of South Africa.

In their Newsletter No. 79 July 1999 commemorating their 20th anniversary they identified the most important elements of their identity, which includes the following,

Prophetic action which denounces injustice in its many forms and announces signs of new life and liberation; A spirituality of healing which seeks to deal with the legacy of violence and abuse that infect our social relations and a restoration of the full dignity and role of women in the structures of the church and society. PACSA's next twenty years will involve a greater involvement and interaction with this process of becoming a transformed church in a transforming South Africa (:2)

PACSA's commitment to the "full dignity and role of women" is evidenced in the work of their Gender Desk which has initiated a project called "Violence, Women and Church Project". The text that was chosen to reflect their central theme is John 10:10 "I came that they might have life and have it in abundance". The next section will discuss this project.

4.5.2 Violence, Women and Church Project

This extract from their pamphlet describes the aims of this project, namely to:

empower women, provide information to women and men about violence against women; engage with theological and religious questions concerning male-female relationships and raise awareness of gender socialisation and power relationships which oppress women. The vision is to change destructive beliefs, transform society's behaviour to create a society where there is life for all (PACSA)

The issues raised by this project reflect and concur with many of the issues that have been raised

by feminist scholarship and discussed in this paper so far. The goals and theological commitment of the project are informed by their vision of a transformed society for all. Essential to this transformation is the eradication of all practices that oppress women, therefore the liberation of women is the key to social transformation.

The practical component of the project involves the following aspects

workshops with clergy church leaders, congregations and theological students; runs workshops with youth, men and women's groups; outreach to communities in Kwa-Zulu natal Midlands; works with churches and other organisation-counsellors, justice department and police and is a member of the KZN network on violence Against Women; provides information and training material on violence against women; produces "Women in God's image" a biannual newsletter on women's theology and spirituality in South Africa;

Unfortunately due to the extensive nature of the project only two aspects of this project will be discussed namely the vision of the two women who are involved in this project and an analysis of one of their information sheets entitled "Domestic Violence Part 1- Wife Abuse. PACSA Factsheet No. 45 November 1998".

The discussions on the vision of the two women working in the project is in keeping with feminist principles of locating people in their context and making their values explicit. The two women are Karen Buckenham and Lihle Dlamini and the profiles on them represents a summary of interviews that I had with them.

Karen Buckenham, is a native of Canada who has decided to make her home in South Africa. Her work comes out of her own life experience of abuse and spiritual journey that led to her recovery. Theologically she is committed to a wide range of feminist theological thought. From her own and other women's experiences she identified two crucial factors that play a decisive

role in the recovery of women survivors of violence. These are spirituality and justice making.

She described the journey to recovery as essentially a spiritual journey because through it the person discovers God and finds the courage to engage in justice making. The importance of justice making stems from the ethical need to hold the perpetrators accountable for their actions and to remove the self blame that is characteristic of victims. The role of the church, therefore, is not only to provide support for the women but to actively engage in advocacy and justice work on behalf of women. These values are reflected in the publications that are written by Karen, one of which will be the subject of a later discussion.

I found the emphasis on spirituality and justice significant because often the two are seen as mutually exclusive. In the section entitled “Theology and Domestic violence against women”, the findings of the James and Phyllis Alsdurf show the tragic consequences of separating spirituality and justice in counselling victims of domestic violence. Spirituality without justice perpetuates violence against women, does not hold the perpetrator accountable and lays the blame of abuse on women.

The other woman in this project is Lihle Dlamini, a South African, Zulu woman who according to her own self definition, is a woman that was brought up in a culture that defines women as subordinate to men and whose sole function is to serve and care for men and their families. It is this definition of women that according to Lihle makes women vulnerable and accept abuse as part of their lot in life. It is this lack of identity of women outside the family that concerns Lihle. She also pointed out that the church too socialises women to accept their cultural roles as God given. Part of her mission, through her job is to create opportunities for women to be able to talk about their experiences. Workshops have proved to be valuable because they provide a

context where women can share their experiences as well as be exposed to issues regarding oppression and abuse. Since there are no “answers out there”, Lihle believes that the search for creative ways of dealing with oppression must be done in partnership with women. Another area which concerns her is the need for alternative theologies for women that are liberative and relevant to the African context. As part of her commitment to this she has enrolled as a theology student at the University of Natal. She feels that as most of the women attend church, they need to hear other interpretations of the Bible that will be liberative for them. Her work on violence against women has led her to identify other oppressed groups of women such as widows. This new development has already met with opposition from some political leaders who want to cling to traditional culture at all costs and feel threatened by women seeking to take charge of their destinies and confront their oppression.

Lihle’s emphasis on women’s experience as the starting point of the struggle against oppression, is in line with feminist thinking which seeks to empower women by taking their experiences seriously and trusting them to struggle for answers. The struggle against oppression is inclusive ie it does not only focus on one aspect of oppression such as domestic violence but recognises the multiple levels of oppression that women are confronted with. The opposition being experienced by the widow’s group serves to highlight the extent that the dominant group is prepared to take in order to hold on to their power.

These profiles on the women involved in this project are essential to the understanding of the work and vision of this project. I found the commitment of both women to this project extraordinary.

The second aspect to be discussed focuses on one of their publications namely, the factsheet on

domestic violence. I have chosen this publication because it represents one of the practical ways of confronting the issue of domestic violence against women. Below is a summary of the key points from the analysis of the *Factsheet*.

- a. It is a comprehensive overview that provides all the essential information that one needs to know about the subject of domestic violence such as; definitions; statistical information on its prevalence in South Africa; stories about women who have experienced battering; describes the cycle of violence; confronts the myths surrounding society's understanding of violence; challenges some of the religious beliefs that re-enforce domestic violence; outlines issues that require action from the church and finally provides practical advice for victims of domestic violence (PACSA 1998).
- b. It contains liberative texts from the Bible. The three texts in this fact sheet have different messages to women. The first text John 10:10 affirms the commitment of Jesus to life and life in its fullness. Christian women in general are used to texts that emphasis their subordinate position in relation to men especially in marriage eg Ephesians 5:22. For those women experiencing domestic violence such texts are even more oppressive. Consequently, the message of John 10:10 is liberative for all women and provides battered women with courage to find ways of ending their oppression.

The second text is from Psalm 55:4-8; 12-13. This is a lament psalm which expresses the intense feelings of the psalmist who suffered in the hands of a close companion. This experience resonates with that of women experiencing domestic violence because like the psalmist their pain is inflicted by someone close to them.

It is not enemies who taunt me-
I could bear that;
it is not adversaries who deal insolently with me-
I could hide from them.
But it is you, my equal,
my companion, my familiar friend
with whom I kept pleasant company;
we walked together in the house of God with the throng
Psalm 55:13-14

The third text is Luke 4:18,19,21, in which Jesus states his mission,

“The spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because God has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor
God has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour”
Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing”.

From this text, the work of Jesus is essentially one of a liberator and champion of justice.

This indeed is good news for women who are used to texts that re-enforce their subordination and encourage them to be passive in the face of injustice. The presence of God’s spirit as presented in the above texts is evidenced by engagement in liberation movements and fighting for justice. This is indeed a revolutionary text for women in the church.

The last text is Deuteronomy 30:19 which reminds women that they have a choice, their lives are in their hands and they can choose life.

The choice of the texts is part of reclaiming the liberative aspects of scripture for women who have suffered religious abuse which has resulted in their oppression both in the church and in society.

2. The factsheets are distributed freely and are written both in Zulu and English which

makes this valuable resources accessible to many people. One of the limitations of written material is that it excludes semi-literate and illiterate groups of people

- d. The section entitled “Issues for the Church” is representative of the issues that affect women within the church and provides a valuable resource for theological reflection for both churches and training institutions. For pastoral counselling in particular, these issues have a bearing on the practice of pastoral counselling so that it can be a liberative tool and agent of social transformation.
- e. The advise to women experiencing domestic violence contains information about other organisations that deal with the same issues. This networking component is very important because there are aspects like counselling that the project has not been able to do and by networking they can make referrals to relevant organisations. Through networking the project is able to be more focused and avoid duplication of services.

There is no doubt that the factsheet as representing the publications of this project, is an effective way of bringing the issue of domestic violence to the attention of the church and society.

4.5.3 Critical Analysis

The three issues that will be raised in this critical analysis are more of a challenge to PACSA rather than a form of criticism.

Firstly the use of statistics. Statistics are important because they “challenge the official social line that sexual abuse and rape are rare” (Bell 1993:22). This myth has been used to represent women who have been raped as failures because they are supposedly the exception (:23).

Statistics have challenged this and other myths by revealing the magnitude and “normality” of violence against women. While statistics have played a role in revealing the extent of the problem of violence against women, there is a danger that needs to be constantly guarded against. The danger lies in the strength of statistics ie numbers. Numbers can end up defining a problem i.e. something becomes a problem because it affects many people. When numbers become the issue, the debates could shift to the discussion of numbers rather the problem itself. The problem should always be the focus so that statistics should not be the judge of the seriousness of any problem for example rape is a serious crime whether it happens to only one women or millions of them.

Secondly, the advocacy work is important especially in the legal fields where new laws can be passed which alleviate the sufferings of women. One of the major disadvantages is that once authorities have passed a law in favour of women, they may be tempted to feel that they have done their part and it is now up to the woman to ensure that she takes advantage of the law. Should the woman be unable to do so, the blame is once again on her. The change in the law should be part of the multidimensional intervention network that supports women on every level.

Lastly, the general focus appears to be on a “cerebral” level e.g. providing information, running workshops, encouraging theological reflection and advocacy work. This is significant as it provides the framework for dealing with violence against women. It may be argued that the spirituality aspect is reflected in the publication of the Magazine “*Women in God’s Image*”. Again the emphasis is on sharing information about experience and spirituality. The “affective” component appears to be foregrounded. This critique is more of a challenge to explore other dimensions of empowerment for Christian women especially related to spirituality. One resource

for spirituality which is part of the tradition of the church is ritual. Feminist spirituality outside of Christianity, has tapped into this valuable resource and has produced various rituals aimed at empowering women. African women, in particular come from a tradition where rituals play a significant role in dealing with life issues in the community. African Initiated Churches have recognised the therapeutic and empowering role of rituals and have created their own rituals eg healing rituals. One of the important roles that rituals play is that they allow the participants to engage fully in the ritual ie with their minds, emotions, spirit and body.

The question to ask in the context of the discussions on violence against women, is whether rituals can be used to liberate and empower women. A study conducted by Janet L Jacobs found in her article entitled "*The effects of Ritual Healing on Female Victims of Abuse: A Study of Empowerment and Transformation*" offers valuable insights on the effectiveness of rituals in the empowerment of women survivors of violence..

The purpose of Jacobs was research to "investigate the process of empowerment through spiritual healing" (1989:266). She studied a spirituality group of twenty-five (25) women aged between 22 and 38 and all of whom were victims of violence (5 were incest victims; 8 were rape victims; five battered -domestic violence and 7 victims of psychological abuse). Their participation in the spiritual ritual was in conjunction with both medical and non medical therapy i.e. they did not rely exclusively on their spirituality. There was a strong feminist influence in both the organisation of the group (i.e it was egalitarian and non hierarchical) and its spirituality i.e their focus was on a female divinity as "image of female strength and power" (:267).

There were three stages to the ritual. The first stage focused on the acknowledgement of victimisation. The ritual for this stage required the women to write down the nature of her abuse on a piece of paper, read it out loud and throw the paper into a fire. The women reported having experienced a bonding with each other through the sharing of their pain (:269) and the hearing of each other's pain released them from the feelings of isolation as they realised that their pain was not unique to them. The second phase of the ritual focused on the release of anger. During the ritual each woman wrote the name of the perpetrator on an egg and smashed it against the wall shouting out their names and expressing their anger (:267). This stage was also experienced as significant because it provided "a social structure in which to experience intense emotions that have no other space for expression" (:270). It also provided a safe place for the women to "express feelings of anger without fearing doing harm to themselves and others" (:270) and also without any fear of retaliation. This expression of anger has therapeutic value as it validates

female anger, especially in response to victimization. Such validation has the twofold effect of releasing emotion while increasing the victim's sense of personal power and competency.Confronting anger in self and others in a ritualized context appears to provide the safe environment necessary for the arousal of emotion. (:270)

The last point of the quote underlines the importance of communal rituals because for those women who had repressed their anger, they were able to release it by watching others express their anger (:271)

The third and final stage involved the use of guided meditation and visualization to give the women strength and power to face their perpetrator and move on. The women were encouraged to each "identify with a personal image of female strength and power" (:272) This enabled the women to individualise their transformation by selecting symbols that were empowering to them. These images allowed the women to image themselves transformed into "objects of power" who

could actually confront their perpetrator. This experience enabled the women to visualise themselves in new ways and no longer be tormented by their perpetrators. Follow up studies on the women revealed the need for sustaining their empowerment through re-enforcement of the messages of the ritual. Jacobs summarises her research as follows:

The findings of this study suggest that women-centred rituals are effective in reducing fear, releasing anger, increasing one's sense of power and improving the overall mental health of those who have experienced the trauma of victimization.

This research by Jacobs provides valuable information and motivation for creative rituals by women for women within the church.

The findings of the above concur with some of the visions of a feminist informed liturgy which will be discussed further in the next chapter as it poses a challenge to pastoral counselling.

The challenge that to pastoral counselling has been set in this chapter and the next chapter will pick up the key issues so far and chart the course for the future.

4.6 Conclusion

The main purpose of this chapter was to focus on violence against women, as one major manifestation of the oppression of women. As the nature of violence against women is multiple and varied, the focus was on domestic violence. Psychology and pastoral counselling were critiqued according to how they have historically dealt with the problem of domestic violence.

Unfortunately victim blame was the major theme in both disciplines. Theology in particular, failed victims through some of its theological responses such as the glorification of suffering and imposition of values such as forgiveness and love which have proved to be detrimental to the recovery process of the victims. The work of the Gender Desk of PACSA highlighted some of the key issues that need to be addressed if theology is to identify with victims of violence. The case study on ritual highlighted the need for spirituality and expressions that are liberative. The

existence of widespread violence against women both in society and in the church poses a challenge to pastoral counselling. It is as pastoral counselling responds to challenges in society that transformation will begin to occur. Transformation does not occur in a vacuum and neither is it an abstract concept. The next chapter will pick up on some of these challenges.

CHAPTER 5

5. CONCLUSION

5.1. Challenges to Pastoral Counselling

5.1.1. Introduction

The last three chapters have raised a wide range of issues that together provide a valuable resource for the transformation of pastoral counselling. The focus of this dissertation is primarily on finding ways in which the discipline of pastoral counselling could be transformed so that it could take its rightful place as a liberative tool and an agent of social transformation.

This goal is based on the presupposition that liberation and social transformation are fundamental principles of pastoral counselling. The feminist critique has been instructive in its analysis of pastoral counselling and has revealed the existence of oppressive elements towards women which have weakened the liberative component of pastoral counselling. To further compound the problem, the inability of pastoral counselling to deal with the issue of violence against women has further weakened its position. Feminist theology has come to the rescue by highlighting the liberative component of the Bible which opens the doors for pastoral counselling to redefine itself within feminist theology and in particular within African feminist theology. These issues have posed a number of challenges to pastoral counselling. These will be summarised into four areas.

5.1.2 The Four Areas Of Transformation

As already mentioned, there are four areas within pastoral counselling that form the basis of transformation.

A. The Current State of pastoral counselling

The first step which is required for transformation is for pastoral counselling to engage in a critical self analysis that will result in the public confession of sin through the acknowledgement of elements within the discipline that have been instrumental in the oppression of women. This public acknowledgement needs to be supported with a clear rejection of the theological basis that support the oppression of women as “heresy”. The model for such a process is the one undertaken by Concerned Evangelicals who publicly confessed that the state theology of their churches based on Romans 13, and which required them to support the apartheid government, was a heresy and they publicly rejected the doctrine and committed themselves to the struggle for liberation. Similarly, church leaders from different denominations which have theologically supported the oppression of women, could come together, confess publicly their rejection of texts that support the subordination of women and publicly confess their sins to women and make a commitment to join in the struggle for against all forms of oppression and violence against women. Women need a KAIROS document from the churches as a sign of the church’s commitment to them.

B. Dialogue with Feminist Theology

Feminist theology even in its diversity offers a valuable tool to the theory of pastoral counselling especially in the area of spirituality. Many women, despite the oppressive elements within the church continue to find comfort and strength from the Bible. Problems often raise questions that deal with spiritual issues such as the nature of God, the meaning of certain texts and the use of spiritual resources such as prayer, fasting and meditation. Most women have heard theologies that have supported their subordination, glorified their sufferings and emphasised the inherent nature of their sinfulness which has been linked to their sexuality. Images of God presented to women are mostly male and even the maleness rather than the humanity of Christ has been emphasised. In this context, Pastoral counselling in dialogue with feminist theology has an opportunity to present alternative liberating messages to women in their congregations, in counselling sessions and ultimately in the community. through feminist readings of the texts, to bring liberative messages to women that will affirm their dignity as whole persons focused on their sinfulness.

C. Dialogue with Feminist therapy

Traditional counselling methods have been discussed and shown to be based on power relationships between the therapist and client and promoting adjustment models of change. In addition the focus was on the individual without considering the context. Feminist therapy as a method of counselling can contribute to a liberative practice of counselling. Some of the principles like bringing the context into the counselling session are important especially in the counselling of women and other oppressed groups. This also implies bringing the counsellors context, values into the counselling session and making these explicit. Counselling women for example requires the counsellor

especially if it is a male to examine the assumptions about women that he brings into the counselling session. The egalitarian approach is also important because the pastor by virtue of his/her status commands a great deal of power which is re-enforced by the counsellees own perspective of the pastor. The egalitarian approach challenges pastors to find symbols or texts in the Bible that promote equality e.g. priesthood of all believers and new models of leadership based on service and partnership. Feminist therapy is not prescriptive, it provides guidelines within which to work thus giving the pastoral counsellor room for creative ministry.

D. Dialogue with the Community

The second aspect of the vision for pastoral counselling is its responsibility to the community at large i.e. to be an agent of social transformation. Since Pastoral counselling usually occurs in a private place either at the home of the counsellee or the office of the pastor, there may be a perception that its ministry begins and ends in the counselling room. The social dimension of problems has been one of the central messages of feminist critique and that is that private problems are connected to social issues within the context of the counsellee. Counselling, which only addresses the private world of the counsellee and ignores their context, has been shown to be political in that it sustains the status quo. Counselling therefore is a political activity and the pastoral counsellor has the choice of determining the nature of its political activity. A vision of social transformation is required to determine the political activity of pastoral counsellors. The work of PACSA has been exemplary in its social location which is the struggle for justice; its theological commitment and its vision of a society free from all forms of injustice. This is another valuable resource available for pastoral counselling's search for a social vision informed by theology and committed to the transformation

of society.

5.2. Conclusion

The challenge presented by feminist critique presents an invitation to pastoral counselling to join in the struggle for the liberation of women and to realise that this is a call to transform the world, for nothing less than the radical transformation of society is required to liberate women. Pastoral counselling has yet to respond.

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