



**A Feminist Theo-anthropological Analysis of the Rape of
Burundian Women in the HIV Context**

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this study is on rape in the context of HIV infection in Burundi. The study argues that there is an interplay between the rape of women and HIV infection. It recognizes that culture and socio-political factors create an environment that encourages the rape of women and young girls in Burundi, leading to HIV infection. The study identifies a number of socio-cultural and political factors contributing to the rape of women and young girls in Burundi. It argues that these traditional practices and beliefs are rooted in patriarchal structures within the home and religious institutions, which pose a challenge to an effective response to rape and HIV infection among women and young girls in Burundi. It, further, seeks to demonstrate that theological traditions created a negative perception of the anthropology of women and relegated them to a subordinate position in the church and society.

In order to restore the dignity of women and young girls, the study presents a perspective on the theological concept of *imago Dei*, which emphasizes that women and men are both equally created in the image of God. This perspective argues that men and women must live in an equal relationship which must influence all aspects of life. This approach, centred on a feminist relational anthropology, aims to redress harmful socio-cultural and theological traditions that expose women and young girls to rape in the context of HIV infection.

DECLARATION - PLAGIARISM

I, Esperande Bigirimana, declare that:

1. The research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research.
2. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
3. This thesis does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
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 - a. Their words have been re-written but the general information attributed to them has been referenced;
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Name of Student: Esperande Bigirimana

Signature:

Date:

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to women and young girls who have been culturally marginalized, exposed to rape and sexual abuse and ultimately to HIV infection. Furthermore, this dissertation is dedicated to all men and women of good will who hunger for the elimination of women's sexual abuse and thirst for justice and peace and the integrity of women.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introducing the Study

1.1 Background to and motivation for the study

Rape of women and young girls is a serious problem within Burundian society and is rapidly on the increase. Burundi is known for social conflict and wars over the past two decades. Women and young girls have been the direct victims and casualties of the war. Rape has been described as the dominant cause of HIV infection among women and young girls in Burundi. In addition, Burundian society and the church are constructed around a strong system of patriarchy. Therefore, men are powerful, making women vulnerable to rape and ultimately to HIV infection. The researcher, a citizen of Burundi, has observed that Burundian society does not regard rape as a serious and violent act. I am motivated to undertake the study for two reasons. First, there is an increasing incidence of HIV amongst women and young girls in Burundi, due to rape. Secondly, studies on rape in Burundi and how it affects women in the context of HIV infection are limited, especially from a theological perspective (Niyonizigiye 2012:3; Le Roux 2011:10-23). The incidence of both rape and HIV infection continues to grow given the civil war, socio-cultural, and also religious factors in Burundi (Niyonizigiye 2011:15; Niyongabo 2011:10; Cohen 2011:7; Amnesty International 2007:16). The strongly patriarchal society has led to the increased marginalization of women and young girls, rendering them vulnerable to rape and other sexual violence, as well as HIV infection (Kanyoro 2002:17-20; Oduyoye 2001:18; Amnesty International 2004:7-30; Zicherman 2008:15). Meanwhile, the church, as a patriarchal institution, has been slow in responding to rape in Burundi, both in terms of its theological response and in terms of action (Le Roux 2011:17, Niyonizigiye 2011:12). This requires new theological insights from feminist theology which offer theological tools to deal with this crisis. This is particularly so in the area of anthropology. Feminists argue that women are seeking “to pursue anthropology that makes women and men co-responsible for the well-being of the whole community” (Oduyoye 2001:62). This study, therefore, seeks to understand how a feminist theo-anthropological approach can offer a framework that can guide the response to rape in Burundi within the HIV context.

1.2 Key Research Question and Sub-questions

The key research question for the study is:

What is an appropriate feminist theo-anthropological response to rape in the context of HIV infection amongst women and young girls in Burundi?

In order to answer the key question effectively, the following sub-questions are identified:

- What is the relation between the prevalence of rape and HIV infection in Burundi?
- What are the socio-cultural and political factors that expose women in Burundi to the vulnerability of rape, leading to HIV infection?
- What is the theological tradition of the Burundian churches with regard to women generally, and rape in particular?
- What should be the theo-anthropological response of the churches to the increasing levels of rape amongst women and young girls in Burundi in the context of HIV?
- What are the practical implications of this theo-anthropological response in reducing the incidence of rape of Burundian women in the context of HIV?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

First, the study seeks to outline the prevalence of rape in relation to HIV infection in Burundi. Secondly, the study seeks to identify the key socio-cultural and political factors that make women vulnerable to rape in the context of HIV infection. Thirdly, the study seeks to present an appropriate feminist theo-anthropological framework to guide the response to rape in the context of HIV infection. Fourthly, the study presents the practical implications of a theo-anthropological response to rape in the context of HIV in Burundi.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

In traditional Burundian society, rape is not regarded as crime: it is a man's right to have sexual intercourse with a woman. There are cultural proverbs which explain that in Burundi tradition, women have no choice of a sexual partner (Niyonizigiye 2011:15, Niyongabo 2011:10). In addition, gender inequality has many harmful effects and it is one of the contributing factors to the rape and sexual abuse of women in Burundi. In Burundi, like elsewhere in Africa, war has created a climate where the rape and sexual abuse of women and girls has been done by soldiers or rebels and other men who take advantage of the absence of

law enforcement (Cohen 2011:7; Nobert 2012:20; Baaz 2009:53). It is against this background, I believe, that both church and society have a mandate to advocate for the restoration of the dignity of women. The study argues that the restoration of women's dignity begins with addressing both socio-cultural factors and gender-insensitive theological traditions that support gender inequality and expose women to the vulnerability of rape and ultimately to HIV infection. This study presents a theoretical framework that focuses on the theological concept of *imago Dei*, which emphasizes that we are all created in the image of God.

The term *imago Dei* is the notion that human beings are created in the "image" of God and that they have "something about our creator" (Gonzalez 2007:124). This concept is based on Genesis 1, with an emphasis on both men and women being created in the image of God (Gonzalez 2007:110). However, the doctrine of *imago Dei* has been interpreted differently throughout church history. The Christian theological tradition has in the past defined *imago Dei* "in a manner that degrades women. On the one hand, men are often viewed as the true reflection of God's image. On the other hand, women reflect the image in a deficient or secondary manner, as they are often seen as initiators of sin in the world" (Gonzalez 2007:161). Feminist theologians have responded to this patriarchal construction of women by revealing the biased and flawed manner in which women's nature is depicted within this Christian tradition. This understanding of humanity, feminists argue, not "only denies both male and female their fully humanity, but also is contrary to the authentic Christian message" (Oduyoye 2001:57). Mercy Oduyoye, an African feminist theologian, emphasises that "justice, caring, sharing and compassion, even in a hostile world, is the expression of the divine image that all human beings are expected to reflect" (2001:76).

The reasons for choosing a feminist understanding of the concept of *imago Dei*, the framework for this study, is first, that the church is challenged to rethink and combat oppressive structures and practices instituted against women. Secondly, this perspective redresses the understanding that the "distinction made at creation between men and women is not a mechanism of subordination but is intended to strengthen the human family" (Bongmba 2007:47). This means that all cultural and religious practices that oppress women are an admonition of the image of God (Bongmba 2007:47). Feminists have also focused on a Trinitarian understanding of the *imago Dei*, leading to a relational understanding of anthropology. It is through this understanding that practical implications can be drawn for the church in the context of rape leading to HIV infection in Burundi.

1.5 Research Methodology

This is a non-empirical study that relies on a literature review of books and journal articles. In meeting the objectives of the study and in order to gain theoretical knowledge and background on the issues being researched, the study will also make use of secondary sources of information such as newspapers, articles from the internet, and other unpublished sources of literature. In order to adequately address the research questions of the study, the researcher will take four key steps. First, the study will begin with analysis of the socio-cultural and political factors that expose Burundian women to the vulnerability of rape. Secondly, the study will explore theological traditions that compound the vulnerability of Burundian women to increasing levels of rape. Thirdly, the study presents Gonzalez's theological framework of *Imago Dei* as a gender-sensitive theological framework aimed at redressing the increasing levels of rape amongst women in Burundi. This step offers a critical analysis of why the *imago Dei* is used as an appropriate theological framework in response to the research problem. Fourthly, the study presents feminist relational anthropology as a practical response emanating from the *imago Dei* theological doctrine. The aim is to relate critically the study findings to existing knowledge in the context of rape and HIV infection amongst Burundian women and young girls. Finally, the study presents a summary of the study and gives recommendations for further research.

1.6 Outline of the Study

Chapter Two is an examination of the socio-cultural and political factors that expose Burundian women and young girls to rape and HIV infection.

Chapter Three discusses Church tradition that denies the full humanity of women and, thus, compounds their vulnerability to rape and HIV infection. It outlines the patriarchal interpretation of women's humanity.

Chapter Four presents the concept of *imago Dei* as a gender-sensitive theological framework aimed at redressing the increasing levels of rape and HIV infection amongst women and young girls in Burundi. The chapter outlines a perspective on the *imago Dei* that affirms that male and female are created equally in the image of God. Chapter Five explores the implications of the idea that human beings are created in God's image and argues that relational anthropology means we are all inter-related, both men and women, to each other and to our Creator. Chapter Six summarizes the study and makes recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

Rape in the context of HIV infection in Burundi

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the background, focus, and purpose of the study. As previously stated, the study aims to determine the impact of Burundian culture on the rape of women and young girls. This chapter, however, takes a critical approach in deconstructing the impact of gender inequality in the social, political and economic setting of Burundi. The main argument put forward in this chapter affirms that the patriarchal society which places women at the bottom of social class is the root cause of the increasing rape of women and young girls in Burundi. Let us begin by establishing a statistical update of the incidence of rape in Burundi.

2.2 Rape in Burundi

Many Burundian women, irrespective of their colour, race or age, have been raped, but their cases are seldom reported to the police. Women who report their cases mostly incur humiliation (Amnesty International 2007:16). It is difficult to determine how many cases go unreported and untreated because rape victims hope to avoid revenge and feelings of shame. However, *Medecin Sans Frontieres* (MSF) Belgium (2009:12-21) reported that from 2004 to November 2007, there were 5,466 cases of rape, an average of 1,366 victims per year and 27 victims a week (2009:12-20). In 2005, Iteka League (2006) and MSF Belgium (2009) reported 1,791 cases of sexual violence, an average of 34 victims a week. In 2006, they reported 1,930 cases of sexual violence, an average of 37 victims a week, which marks a significant increase compared to the previous years (MSF 2009:7-20; League Iteka 2006:204).

The same year, a study done by *Operations des Nations Unies aux Burundi* (UNUB) indicated that 60% of reported rapes concerned children and 24% of the rape victims were younger than eleven years old. From January through September in 2010 *Centre Seruka* reported an average of 121 new rape cases per month: 64% of victims were under age 18; 43% were under age 13; and 18% were under age five (*Centre Sekura* 2010:9-15; ONUB 2010:20). Most women are silent because talking about sex or rape is a cultural taboo in Burundi (Rackley 2005:20; Le Roux 2011:27). The data above is not reliable because there is no official data on rape in the country. In addition, there is no official organization in

charge of documentary accounts of rape in Burundi, with little assistance from police and medical practitioners. Amnesty International is one organisation that has attempted to develop accounts of rape. The following are examples from an Amnesty International report (2007: 17). Josephine, a victim of rape, was interviewed. She was eight years old when she was raped. Her parents died and, left alone, she learned to fend for herself in the hills 20 km from Makamba, a city in southern Burundi. She says:

One night her neighbour, a former soldier, crept into her hut and attacked her. "I didn't scream because I was afraid my neighbours would mock me," she says. "When I was five months pregnant, the rapist came back to kill me with an ikiziriko [rope]. I screamed and my neighbours came to help. I bled for three days." Josephine's baby was stillborn. She has recently given birth to a healthy baby boy – also the product of rape (2007: 17).

The story of this victim not only explains the suffering that she went through during the rape but it also displays the cultural hatred for the victim. Amnesty International also interviewed a 28-year-old woman from Bubanza. She says:

"In 2003, I was raped by two unidentified soldiers who attacked me when I was looking for fire wood. I had a child from the rape but it was born dead. I would have liked to have a husband and children, but I have lost all hope now. Each time that a man finds out that I have been raped, he leaves me." She told Amnesty International and ACAT delegates that she would have liked to have received medical treatment and pressed charges against the perpetrator. She told the two organizations that she was not aware at the time of what action she could have taken. Her mother spoke to the Chef de Quartier who did nothing to help her or tell her how she could press charges (2007:17).

The exploration of this testimony of women victims' journeys through rape provides evidence that women and young girls in Burundi are, indeed, raped and subjected to humiliation. Despite the traumatic experience of rape, the act is humiliating to the family and the entire community: the victims are not welcome back home and no one can marry a victim of rape.

In addition, the East African Community (EAC) report (2009:15) indicates that Gender inequality, gender-based violence and rape increase in risk across age and socio-economic groups. These gender-based rapes and acts of violence are usually committed at home, the workplace, school, or in the fields, according to the study, which states that perpetrators use "cunning, strength, weapons or abuse of authority" (2009:15). To understand more deeply the

problem of sexual violence and rape, the Amnesty International report (2007:20) asserts that the civil war in Burundi “exacerbated this violence, which continues today, with near total impunity. Data on the prevalence of sexual violence are available, but not collected in a coherent and coordinated manner. There is also significant underreporting of violence due to a number of factors” (2007:20). In addition, discussion about sex is taboo in Burundian society. As sex is not talked about, neither is sexual violence. Secondly, stigmatization of the victim can lead to her exclusion from her family home. As well, the acceptance and normalization of the crime, the ignorance of the fact that sexual violence is a crime, the lack of victim protection, the lack of access to legal services, the distrust of the police and negative attitudes from service providers in general discourage victims from denouncing the crime. Widespread impunity discourages women from trusting and using the legal system (Amnesty International 2007:20). Besides, the society views sexual issues as taboo: cultural practices and beliefs encourage women’s dehumanisation, leading to rape.

2.3 Cultural practices as first wound for women, leading to vulnerability to rape

The U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief 2012 report on Burundi (PEPFAR) indicates that “Burundi’s discriminatory legislation, stereotypes and prejudices against women all contribute to attitudes that value girls less than boys, impede girls’ education, and put women in a secondary position within their homes. They also contribute to the exclusion of women from inheriting land and obtaining jobs, and participating in decision making at all levels” (2012:39). This deeply rooted gender inequality provides a breeding ground for high levels of rape and sexual violence in Burundi. In addition, Rackley (2005:33) argues that poverty is one of the contributing factors to rape and sexual abuse of women in the post-conflict era in Burundi (Rackley 2005:33). Injustice towards women in Burundi, like elsewhere in the great lake region, starts right from their houses: women in Burundi culture have no right to inheritance. This makes the future of any woman in Burundi uncertain, no matter how rich the family might be. The life of a woman depends on the man who marries her. As women are considered incapable of making a life of their own, this not only make them sexual objects but takes away their respect and dignity, leaving them vulnerable to sexual violence. Niyongabo argues that in Burundi “women are more likely to be touched by all forms of violence because they often live in dangerous and risky areas. This is illustrated by high levels of rape and underage or forced marriages - often due to the need for economic survival or the desire to improve socioeconomic status” (2012:16). In other words, poverty in general and a lack of essential resources traps women in cycles of violence, where they are

reliant on men, who have full control of resources. Furthermore, the EAC report indicates that “the socio-economic situation of women in Burundi, on top of the lack of production means (credit, land, etc.) and skills facing women is due to patriarchy that gives more power to men than women”. Many women find themselves living in displaced camps because of war (EAC 2009:21). Besides living in displaced camps, UK Borders Agency (2009:15) asserts that “women, especially widows and young girls, are easy prey of perpetrators of different forms of violence, including sexual violence, rape, domestic violence, economic violence and many others” (2009:15). This situation exacerbates women’s rape, which needs intervention beyond women’s capacity. The law forbids rape, “which is punishable by up to 20 years' imprisonment, but does not specifically prohibit spousal rape” (UK Borders Agency 2009:18).

In addition, Rackley highlights that widows and unmarried women are targets of rape and sexual violence (2005:36). It is, therefore, very hard for many widows and unmarried women: not only does the culture force them into unwanted marriages, like when their brother in-law has to take over, but in the absence in brothers-in-law widows are still exposed to sexual violence and rape. Widows in Burundi go through tough experiences when they are rejected by both in-laws and their own parents. The identity of a woman is reflected through her husband: women without husbands in Burundi culture are not fully human and are neglected and undermined by society. As expressed above, respect for women in Burundi culture is earned from husbands: women on their own are just sexual objects. This might explain why, in Burundian culture, women prefer to die in abusive marriages rather than divorce. No matter how financially secure the family of a widow or divorced woman might be, the women cannot afford to go back home. First, a woman whose marriage is destroyed or whose husband dies gets a new name when she goes back to her home: “*Igisubiramuhira*”, “the rejected one”. This name, in general, means failure. It emphasizes bad behaviour by these women. In many cases, they are accused of killing their husbands. In others, even though the husband is the reason for the divorce, the woman is accused. Women without husbands in Burundi are doomed and their children are cursed. Women are denied rights as children to inherit from their family; they are also denied education, as the culture views women and girls as sex objects rather than enablers of social development. As it highlighted in Rackley’s (2005:19) work, Burundian traditional views of women, girls and widows have contributed greatly to rape, sexual violence and prostitution, paving the way for the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Research conducted in Burundi by Le Roux (2011:7) confirms that Burundi culture does not

believe in rape: rape in Burundian tradition does not exist. Women cannot be forced into sexual intimacy: “No woman can be forced to have sex, but she may pretend she was once caught in very act” (Le Roux 2011:7). In fact, Burundi traditions take rapists as in-laws. This is the reason, in many incidents of rape, that victims beg perpetrators to take them permanently, regardless of the pain they are enduring. In many cases, men use the same strategy to get women who, under normal circumstances, they could not have as partners: they just rape them and society supports the man as long he accepts her in marriage. MSF (2009:16) reports that some sexual practices that “would be considered rape in western societies are traditionally accepted by Burundian customs and fostered by cultural myths. Some physically or mentally disabled women are raped because some men believe that this will generate wealth, for example. A traditional healer may direct a man to rape a child, telling him that doing so will solve a problem the man faces” (MSF 2009:16).

Furthermore, there are cultural traditions that contribute to rape: certain proverbs enforce unequal power between men and women, especially when it comes to sexual issues. In Burundian tradition, women and girls have no choice of sexual partner. Le Roux (2010:15) argues that proverbs like the following contribute to the rape of women and girls: “*Umukobwa ni ikirago c abashitsi*”, “A woman is a mat for guests”. There is also a practice that obliges young girls to share the room with a male guest. Other proverbs, like “*Impfizi ntiyimigwa*”, “No limit for the bull”, allow a man not only to be polygamous but also to have sex with any woman or girl he wants, at any time. In a sense, women are there to serve men’s sexual purpose, without choice and with no discussion on sexual issues. There are many more proverbs that emphasise inequality: “*Gutera intobo*” is the tradition of sex between father-in-law and daughter-in-law; “*Umugore umwe ni nyoko*”, “The unique wife is your mother”, means that only one wife is not enough; *Ntawurya irya imwe misi yose*, “No one can always eat the same meal”; and *umugabo nūwurya utwiwe nutw abandī*“, “A true man is one who eats his food and that of others” (Le Roux 2010:15). It can be argued that cultural practices that undermine women’s well-being are contributing to rape in Burundi. Le Roux (2010:25) goes further:

Women in general are seen as dependent on men, belonging to either father or husband. Her value lies in her virginity (before marriage) and her fidelity (after marriage) and her value and identity is thus to a large extent dependent on physical attributes. Such a sexual construct of the value of a woman

serves to dehumanise her. She is not a thinking, feeling, and deliberating being. She is a tool for sex (2010:25).

This would explain the Burundi traditional impact on women which denies them expression. Again, Niyonizigiye (2011:10) emphasizes how Burundi cultural traditions completely deny expression to women: “*Inkokokazi ntibika kaba ari agasema*”, “A hen does not chant: if it does, it is a disastrous sign” (Noyonizigiye 2011). Women are not allowed, to argue any case or even to speak loudly, even if it means crying for help. Screaming in the middle of the sexual act is known to be just a cry of joy and encouragement to the man. In the particular case of rape, some factors not only keep the victim silent but also make her guilty. UK Border Agency (2009:23-24) emphasizes that activists and politicians say traditional practices justify violence and discourage women from speaking out and women’s limited economic options often keep them in abusive situations. Some Burundians are agitating for changes in the law and cultural attitudes to protect women against such violence and give them the option of a better life. “Women are afraid to speak out, when it does occur, for fear of reprisals, and the culture prohibits them from expressing their views” (UK Border Agency 2009:23-24). A Kirundi proverb says: “*Urugo rutagira umugabo ntawutarukengera*”, “a home without a man is undermined by everyone”. It is true that many women and girls fall victim to rape and sexual abuse in Burundi during war and even in times of peace, however, single women and widows are the most vulnerable to rape in Burundi.

2.4 Political factors as second wound contribute to rape, leading to HIV infection

Women and young girls in Burundi are not that different from other women in traditional patriarchal societies. In times of war, women and girls are raped, killed and subjected to humiliating social subordination by men. But even when war is absent, women and young girls are still subject to subordination. MacKinnon (2006:180) argues that in patriarchal societies, “when no war has been declared, and life goes on in a state of everyday hostilities, women are beaten and raped by men to whom they are close” (MacKinnon, 2006:180). Burundi has been known for its social unrest and wars for the past two decades. Women and young girls have been direct victims and casualties of the war (Landesman 2002:27). While rape and sexual violence is a pressing issue in Burundi, government is not doing anything to address the matter: some of its officials were found to be perpetrators of rape. Fiacat (2008:3) asserts that in Burundi “authorities are not making the necessary efforts to prevent these rapes or to

conduct investigations leading to prosecutions. Therefore, those responsible for these crimes usually escape punishment. Discouraged by the futility of initiating judicial proceedings and fearing reprisals and social stigma, the victims are even reluctant to report that they have been raped” (Fiacat 2008: 3). Regardless of the peace agreements that marked the end of the war in Burundi in 2005, sexual violence and rape continue. Cohen (2009:6) believes that the return of refugees and the displaced, the presence of high numbers of demobilised soldiers, the lack of economic opportunity, the degradation of social norms and the predominance of female-headed households all contribute to the high levels of sexual violence and rape (Cohen 2009:6; Amnesty International 2007:10). Large numbers of demobilized soldiers, *imbonerakure*, supported by government, are known to be involved in many cases of rape. They demand sex from any girl or woman, especially widows. They want a reward for their hard work and they claim to be their source of security and protection. As will be explained below, it is a military tradition that beautiful women are handed over to brave soldiers for sex as a reward. Not only are victims afraid to report any member of that government privileged group, but police and the judiciary body have no power over them.

In addition, Arieff (2010:10-12) emphasizes that rape has always been used as a “weapon of war, to weaken and humiliate enemies by violating their women, and to terrorize and destabilize civilian communities in war zones” (Arieff 2010:10-12). Raping that occurs during war in Burundi increases women’s and girls’ vulnerability and men’s access to them. Amnesty International report (2004:15) states that the raping of women and girls in the course of armed conflict:

reflects a universal understanding of women as male property or commodity, and sexual access to women (including by force) as male entitlement. Rooted in inherently-patriarchal militaries that foster masculine aggression, with raping and looting as normative rewards for victorious soldiering, and legitimated by patriarchal civilian structures that oppress and de-value women, the omnipresence of war-related violence against women seems intransigent (2004:15).

Although war rape is now nominated in international law as both a crime against humanity and a war crime, it occurs regularly and with impunity in the Burundian conflict. Farry (2010:103) believes that:

violence in today's wars in African and other countries surrounds women and girls, who are both targeted victims and caught in the cross-fire. The overwhelming majority are civilians, and when fighting intensifies, they are attacked in their homes and villages, and eventually in flight. As refugees or internally displaced persons, their risk of victimization is also high; that is, there really is no escape. War rape may be justified by perpetrators as an act against an enemy (that is, an enemy's women), or as part of the spoils of war (2010:103).

In Burundi women and young girls are sexually attacked and there is no one to protect them. As the above testimony indicates, members of the multiple combatant groups, armed with guns and other weapons, rape women and young girls with impunity. Alison (2007:30) argues that sexual violence is the most frequent human rights violation during wars:

Unlike indiscriminate rape during peacetime, wartime rape is often targeted. It serves as a weapon directed at enemy women. Also, wartime sexual violence is often done in groups to promote bonding, social cohesion and loyalty. Consequently, targeted rape in conflict zones can lead to increases of prevalence rates in certain groups compared to others. A series of indirect and direct channels between AIDS and conflict are commonly cited (2007:30).

Human Rights Watch (1996:32) argues that "rape - like murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, imprisonment, torture, persecution on political, racial and religious grounds and other inhumane acts - is a crime against humanity" (Human Rights Watch 1996: 32). This is exactly what is happening in Burundi.

Mukamana says "that rape, like military violence, is a crime in perpetuity against survivors, their families, and communities who endure the repercussions indefinitely" (2004:12). In this regard, one can argue that any crime, gender-based or not, as the case might be, requires the power of the law. As has been specified above, rape in war has nothing to do with satisfaction of sexual desire, but is a weapon to punish and humiliate opponents. The genocide of Tutsi in Burundi in 1993 and in Rwanda 1994 was mass murder and mass sexual abuse, where a number of young girls and women were raped by a multitude of men, combatants and non-combatants. Rieger asserts that in Burundi "war is accompanied by sexual abuse and rape is known to be systematically used as a psychological weapon. Women may be forced into "survival sex" in return for staying alive or receiving food" (Rieger 2011:6). It is imperative to note that rape and sexual abuse and gender-based violence in Burundi, as well as to the rest of the Great Lakes Region, increased during war as a result of the absence of law

enforcement. War took away the power of local authorities, when local administrators had no say against the man who held a gun in his hands. Though this might be beyond the focus of my research, guns and violence have suppressed the power and authority of justice. High levels of violence, intensive attacks and intimidation of civilians drive elections and determine the political movement winner. It is obvious, therefore, that the government turns a blind eye to the rape of women and young girls committed by their soldiers and officers, despite the fact that this may lead to HIV infection.

2.5 HIV and AIDS as a third wound for rape survivors

Although HIV/AIDS remains a reality even in the absence of rape and war in this epoch, Burundi represents a case of great concern. Emphasizing the issue of health, with a specific focus on the link between HIV infection and rape in Burundi, Amnesty International Report (2004:1) indicates:

an alarming increase in the number of cases of rape of women in the context of Burundi's armed conflict. It describes, among other things, how a concomitant increase in HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases has affected victims of such violations; how, due to the stigma and fear attached to reporting rape, lack of access to medical care and the lack of systematic recording of cases, many cases go unreported (2004:1).

The issue of HIV and AIDS, as well as other sexually transmitted diseases, cannot be ignored in any study of rape and sexual violence, as they are intimately linked. Jennings and McLean assert that:

Where there is sexual assault or where women have to trade sex for money, food or safe passage, they are particularly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS infection. The genocide in Rwanda continues to take lives slowly and painfully ten years later; the results of a survey carried out by the Rwandan Association for Genocide Widows indicated that 67% of women who survived rape had HIV (2005:20-21).

In addition, Jennings and McLean indicate that “in the minds of those responsible for the genocide, HIV/AIDS was a three-pronged weapon: a woman who was raped and infected with the virus became a potential source of transmission for any future sexual partner; her subsequent children would almost certainly die; and the chances of the same woman surviving were slim” (2005:21). High rates of HIV/AIDS infection are also evident among women who have been raped in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Hentz, in her

study in the DRC that focused “on physical torture, psychological torture, and sexual violence committed during the war (including individual and gang rape, forced incest, removal of genital organs, introduction of harmful objects into the vagina, and HIV infection following rape with one or more infected persons)”, indicates that “80.9% of women had symptoms of trauma; 67% of survivors are considered HIV positive” (2005:2). Norbert (2005:16) also points out that just in the southern province of South Kivu (DRC) alone, “it is estimated that forty women are raped each day. Of these women, 13% are under the age of fourteen, 3% die as a result of the sexual violence, and nearly 12% are subsequently infected with HIV” (2005:16).

Furthermore, a study done by *Medecin Sans Frontieres* in Burundi demonstrates that the rape of women and girls increases HIV infection. MSF assert that:

A woman is more likely to contract HIV/AIDS from rape than during regular sexual relations, as tearing and cuts in the vagina, often caused by forced sex, facilitate the entry of the virus into the mucosa. The risk is even higher amongst adolescent girls, as their reproductive tract is not yet fully developed, making it more susceptible to tearing (2009:12).

The International Association of Women Judges (IAWJ) indicates that the rape of women can be the cause of HIV infection: “It denies women the ability to make decisions about their sexual and reproductive lives, to decide when and with whom to have sex and to negotiate condom use” (2005:7). Fear of violence “prevents women from accessing HIV/AIDS information, being tested, disclosing their HIV status, accessing services for the prevention of HIV transmission to infants, and receiving treatment and counselling, even when they know that they have been infected” (IAWJ 2005:7). Onyejekwe believes that also in South Africa, “rape survivors often face a myriad of emotional, physical, legal, and medical issues, resulting in significant repercussions. For example, the aftermath of rape, be it marital or otherwise, is compounded by the risk of HIV transmission” (2005:34). From the above, one can argue that those living with HIV/AIDS as a legacy of rape in Burundi see their lives shattered. Apart from the inhumanity of these acts against them, many rape survivors are affected by HIV infection. Rape by an infected man directly exposes women and young girls to HIV infection. Hentz (2005:6) argues that the “abrasions or tearing of vaginal tissues” which may result increase the risk of infection dramatically (Hentz 2005:6).

Le Roux (2012: 6) emphasizes that the rape of young girls (under 12) is also common, sometimes in “the mistaken belief that it will provide protection from, or constitute a cure for, HIV/AIDS” (2012:6). The rape of women and young girls should be treated as a serious crime because it affects women health. However, Burundian society does not see it as a crime.

2.6 National legal protection against rape

In time of peace as in time of war, women and young girls remain at the centre stage of male domination. But there is a lack of documentation and analysis of this domination in Burundi. Writing on war and gender, Goldstein says “that oftentimes basic questions about when and where collective rape occurred and what factors contributed to the crime remain unanswered” (2003:38). Similarly, Green observes that rape has garnered considerable worldwide attention in recent years but that systematic documentation and empirical research are still lacking (2006:28). In a patriarchal society like Burundi, women do not have adequate economic resources to survive. Their subordination to men is a by-product of their economic deficiency and the fact that men own all economic opportunities (including their women as property). This subordination of women finds its expression in the fact that some women victims choose not to come forward and report their suffering. For traditional women, Narayan asserts, it is not possible to report a crime committed by men against woman. It is believed that choosing silence is an “embodiment of cultural and traditional values of being a good wife and mother” (Narayan 1997:6). Arieff observes that many women were unwilling to report rape for cultural motives, fear of reprisals, and unavailability of medical care (2010:20). According to Amnesty International’s report (2007:25), in Burundi only 10 to 15% of reported rape survivors initiated legal proceedings. The report indicates that:

Some police and magistrates reportedly ridiculed and humiliated women who said they were raped and required that victims provide food for and pay the costs of incarceration of those they accused of rape. Many of those who sought judicial redress faced the weaknesses of the judicial system, including judges who did not regard rape as a serious crime and a lack of medical facilities to gather medical evidence (2007:25).

Furthermore, Amnesty International’s report indicates that “sometimes victims were forced to withdraw their complaints and enter into negotiated settlements with the perpetrator or his family outside of the formal judicial system. There were cases where the victims were forced by their families and local arbiters to marry their attackers. In the limited number of cases

that were investigated, successful prosecutions of rapists were rare” (2007:30). Also MSF asserts that rape survivors are not able to access health facilities due to the stigma and impunity: “Despite increased attention to the problem, many women did not have access to appropriate health care in the immediate aftermath of a rape due to lack of adequate resources. The continuing stigma attached to the victims of sexual violence and fear of coming forward prevented many victims from accessing these limited services” (2009:14). Women and young girls who try to report rape may face punishment. In addition, Arieff states that in Burundi a rape survivor can face “reprisals from law enforcement or military forces; a woman who has been sexually assaulted can be prosecuted for adultery. In addition, societal upheaval and impunity for perpetrators may reinforce norms in which rape and other forms of sexual abuse are tolerated” (2009:12). Amnesty International asserts that “the impunity which the security forces have enjoyed for rape and other human rights violations, and the lack of accountability of armed political groups, has been a key factor in allowing rape and other forms of sexual violence to reach the current alarming proportions” (2004:10). From the above statement, one can agree that the impunity of the security forces and the patriarchal mind-set are sources of the rape of women and young girls in Burundi.

Niyongabo asserts that:

The judicial system is largely indifferent to sexual violence. Courts often refuse to hear rape cases without a witness, which forces most victims to give up on pressing charges. Sometimes, medical-legal certificates, which can be used as evidence in court, are rejected unless they are signed by a government doctor. To obtain a signature, a victim must pay up to 15,000 francs (15 USD), which is unaffordable for many Burundians. The justice system is very difficult. It takes too long. It may be two or three years, if you are lucky, before the aggressor is brought to court. And it doesn't repair the damage that rape has caused. Many victims simply choose not to seek justice (2012:16).

As a result, rape in Burundi often remains secret, untreated and unpunished. And rape survivors are humiliated and rejected by the community and the judicial system of the law. The Burundian government is not fully committed to condemning rape. Supporting this statement, Kgosano says: “South Africa and the USA have locked horns at the United Nations over a General Assembly resolution that seeks to condemn rape. The US is accusing South Africa of opposing a resolution condemning rapes committed by military and governments for political purposes” (2007:17). In addition, Kgosano writes: “(we) think there

is a real difference between governments that fail to prevent rape, and governments that promote it” (2007:17). The Burundian government and society are promoting rape rather than condemning it: rape survivors are forced to die in silence because no one protects them.

2.7 The silence of rape victims

The silence of the rape survivor in Burundian society is caused by many factors. As I have already mentioned, it is taboo to talk about rape or sexual issues in Burundian tradition and silence often overcomes the rape survivor. Rape brings shame and humiliation to the whole family and their attempts to redress it are unlikely to bring relief to the victim. As a consequence, few women seek medical care after a rape and even fewer press charges against their perpetrators. MSF asserts that “it is very difficult for women to reveal they have been raped. Society often does not recognise the victim as a victim. Victims are accused more often than the perpetrators” (2009:7). Adegbola believes that taboos prevent the breaking of certain customs and when someone breaks such a custom that person can face bad luck, rejection or even death (cited in Kanyoro and Njoroge 1996:163). Amnesty International asserts that rape is not regarded as a crime by Burundian society and the sexuality of women is not on the agenda of discussion because it is against the culture. The culture is that women are there to satisfy men sexually (2004:23). Because of the subordinate position of women in Burundian society and the patriarchal system, they are always voiceless and men speak for them. All these issues contribute to the silence of women concerning rape in Burundian society. MSF indicates that in Burundi many women do not even know that they can speak out against rape (2009:17). Pierce-Baker suggests that “women need a space in which they can learn to speak and to trust one another in a sharing recovery of inner memory of sanity” (1998: 18). It has become clear that survivors of rape in Burundi have accepted rape as a part of their culture. Many women and young girls have been raped many times but there is no one to share their stories. All of them have carried this burden of rape in their hearts and minds. Nobody will even listen to their stories of rape. Le Roux (2010:11) says that women and young girls do not find it easy to talk about rape. They feel uncomfortable. They fear that the rapists might come back and rape or even kill them. “Most of the time the society believes that the rape survivor is not totally innocent, that she has asked for it” (Le Roux 2010:11). These kinds of attitudes make it extremely difficult for rape survivors to speak out against rape. Many women and young girls keep secret the fact that they were raped because of a future husband. Bride price is very important in Burundian tradition, therefore, every woman is supposed to be a virgin before marriage. Oduyoye (1997:81) defines *Lobola or* bride price

as a certain amount of money or goods that is given to the father of the bride before marriage and is only paid for a woman who is a virgin (Oduyoye 1997:81). The failure to fulfil the demands of the family and society might bring shame to the entire family. In the Burundi tradition, when a young girl loses her virginity before marriage, she has a significant burden of guilt to bear for the rest of her life because she is accused of having asked to be raped. These attitudes push women and young girls to not seek justice for rape.

2.8 What are the effects of rape on women and young girls?

Amnesty International states that many rape survivors in Burundi are physically and emotionally damaged. Rape destroys the survivor's self-determination and damages her dignity as a person. Some rape survivors develop nightmares that someone wants to rape them. These kinds of nightmares make them afraid to sleep (Amnesty International 2007:20). Some women told Amnesty International that they are HIV positive because their rapists had this disease (2007: 13). It is a painful situation for women and young girls who become infected by the virus through rape, because women are more susceptible to contracting HIV infection. Many women and young girls are jobless and they cannot follow a healthy routine or cannot afford the medical costs. These issues affect their lives and they carry their anxiety forever after being raped. One rape survivor told Amnesty International that her husband divorced her after she had been raped. He blamed her for the rape and did not want to stay with her any longer. Her husband was the only breadwinner in the house and now she struggles financially (Amnesty International 2004:11; MSF 2009:5; Amnesty International 2007:26). She has lost her interest in life and has tried to commit suicide. One of the rape survivors told Amnesty International that she totally lost her capability to be intimate because of the rape that she experienced. She cannot make love as she used to before the rape and her partner blames her if she cannot please him during sexual intercourse (2007:16). Vogelmann notes that "all women, whether raped or not, fear rape and take precautionary measures which limit their freedom" (cited in Buckenham 1999:28). Rape affects all women, irrespective of race, colour and age, or whether they themselves have been raped. Women and young girls are now aware of the fact that they are vulnerable to rape. That limits their lives: not to go to some places at night alone, or to do their daily work and so on. Wamue and Getui (1996:53) believe that "the threat of rape curtails for women liberties that men enjoy freely" (1996: 53). According to their testimony above, women and young girls in Burundian society generally live under the threat of rape. The incidence of rape also restricts their access to various activities, and changes their way of dressing because of their fear of rape. The incidence of

rape among Burundian women and girls is a kind of terrorism that limits their freedom and makes them dependent on men for protection. Farr reports that for rape survivors, rape always carries with it the threat of death, because most of the women have been threatened with a knife or a gun (Farr 2009:2; Amnesty International 2004:7). Wamue and Getui assert that rape also exposes women and young girls to “pregnancy, physical illness and sexually transmitted diseases like HIV/AIDS, Gonorrhoea and Syphilis” (1996:53). In addition, Wamue and Getui go further by saying that the biggest feelings experienced by rape survivors are those of powerlessness in the face of the threat of death, vulnerability, devaluation and fear of loss of ability to control the events in their lives (1996:56). Rape leaves emotional, physical and psychological scars in the hearts of Burundian women and young girls. De Bruyn (2005:7) emphasizes that indirect effects are also “insidious. Rape often has lasting psychosocial consequences, including depression, stigma and discrimination, which can lead women into further cycles of exploitation and also contribute to other high risk activities such as drug use or prostitution”(De Bruyn 2005:7).

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter began with a brief discussion of the statistics of rape and the incidence of rape in Burundi. It showed how the Burundian worldview places much emphasis on the well-being of men; therefore, women and young girls have no honour in their communities and they are vulnerable to rape. First, the chapter discussed how socio-cultural, economic and socio-political factors compound the vulnerability of women and young girls to rape and HIV infection. The practice of levirate marriages and traditional proverbs that encourage men to sleep with women any time they want were identified as some of the cultural drivers exposing women and young girls to rape. In addition, Burundian women and young girls face sociological, economic and political problems that contribute to the rape crisis in that society. Because of these problems, men find various reasons for raping women and young girls. Furthermore, the chapter pointed out myths surrounding rape that are created either by men or the community. It was argued that people in Burundi do not see rape as a crime. Secondly, this chapter showed how wars, which take away law enforcement, allow soldiers and civilians to rape women and young girls. It was discussed that rape occurred in Burundi as a way to reward brave warriors, as it has been in tradition, and sex was a weapon to weaken and intimidate opponents. Thirdly, the chapter highlighted that the concept of patriarchy and the mind-set prevalent in communities within Burundi further compounds the vulnerability of women and young girls to rape and HIV infection. Lastly, the chapter discussed the link

between rape and HIV infection. Here, it was argued that the vulnerability of women and young girls to rape has further exacerbated the rate of HIV infection in Burundi.

The next chapter discusses how the challenge of the vulnerability of women and young girls to rape is further compounded by the adoption of traditional Christian anthropologies that assign an inferior status to women. It explores theological traditions that compound the vulnerability of Burundian women to increasing levels of rape and HIV infection.

CHAPTER THREE

Women as human beings: patriarchal interpretations

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter reflected on the rape of women and young girls in the context of HIV infection in Burundi and identified some of the socio-cultural and political factors that contribute to their vulnerability. The discussion indicated that culture and the years of civil war multiply the vulnerability of women and young girls to rape. The focus of this chapter is to reveal views of women's anthropology within the early Christian tradition and to disclose the androcentric interpretation of the doctrine of *imago Dei* that considers women as inferior to men. This process highlights the ways in which this androcentric interpretation denies women their full humanity leading to their marginalization.

3.2 Views of women in the early Christian tradition

In the early Christian tradition women were greatly undermined. For instance, scholars such as Rakoczy (2004:28) argue that “throughout all Christian history, men have decided that women are less human than they are, sometimes almost a different species. Women are lower in dignity, needing men to complete them” (Rakoczy 2004:28). She adds that women have regularly been viewed as “dangerous seducers of men” and they have been seen as “a mistake in God's creative plan” (Rakoczy 2004:28). Kean points out that “during the early Christian centuries, Church Fathers described women as the cause of sin” (quoted in Rakoczy 2004:31). Tertullian wrote:

You are the Devil's gateway. You are the unsaler of the forbidden tree. You are the first deserter of the divine Law. You are she who persuaded him who the Devil was not valiant enough to attack. You destroyed so easily God's image, man. On account of your desert, that is death, even the Son of God had to die (Ruether cited in Rakoczy 2004:30-31).

John Chrysostom (349-407) described women as “savage beasts” and “most harmful” while John Damascene (646-750) described women as “a sick she-ass...a hideous tapeworm...the advance post of hell” (quoted in Rakoczy 2004:31). Ruether contends that the teachings of Monatism, Marcionism and Valentinianism held the seeds of emancipation for women, but that the church fathers that shaped the church soon quelled these ideas. The Church Fathers relegated women to subordination, subjected to the authority of husband and church, “while their sexual and reproductive roles were linked to sin and death” (cited in Isherwood

2000:37). “It was Augustine who epitomized a general feeling among the church fathers that the act of intercourse was fundamentally disgusting. Arnobius called it filthy and degrading, Methodius unseemly, Jerome unclean, Tertullian shameful, Ambrose defilement” (McClintock 2001:42). Jerome (345-419/420), who is praised in Christian history for his translations of the scriptures, divided women into three groups: “strumpet (prostitute), wife and virgin. Virginity is highest. Marriage is inherently polluting and childbearing disgusting. Children are only good as candidates for virginity” (Rackozy 2004:31).

Rackozy (2004:31) has pointed to Greco-Roman and Jewish culture as the driving force behind these negative views of women. Roman law defined women as male property, giving ownership to the male and placing women under the control of men (Rackozy 2004:31). A virgin daughter was seen as an economic asset to a father (Rackozy 2004:31). The father as head of the “*familias*” had complete power over his family and was responsible for arranging marriages and appointing guardians for the family members (Rackozy 2004:31). The *pater familias* held the “power of life and death over the family” (Rackozy 2004:31). Furthermore, under Roman law, women were “forbidden from undertaking business transactions and women, as daughters, were not assigned individual names. They were identified through the feminine form of their fathers’ names and, in many cases, women were regarded as the ‘legal property’ of their fathers and thereafter of their husbands” (Rackozy 2004:32). Women were “objects of the law, not its creators. In these male-defined laws, men and their perspectives on reality are at the centre, women and their perspectives are on the margins” (Clifford 2001: 73). This is reiterated by Lerner who asserts that patriarchy is the “manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general” (1986:239). Salzman and Lawler (2008:34) assert that in ancient cultures “menstruation was seen as giving women power and this power was believed to be evil and destructive ultimately. Among people who believed that the whole cosmos could be upset if nature intruded into human culture, women were viewed as a source of foul contamination” (Salzman and Lawler 2008: 34). Furthermore, they point out that women were “often isolated from the community each month and rigid controls were placed on them” (Salzman and Lawler 2008: 34). These attitudes were carried over into the Christian tradition. Salzman and Lawler (2008: 34) assert that, as in Roman and Jewish culture, women were discriminated against by the church because of biological factors which rendered them “unclean”. It was believed that “women shall not in the time of impurity enter into a Church, or communicate” (Salzman and Lawler

2008:34). Salzman and Lawler (2008:34) add that men feared that “menstruating women would somehow pollute the worship services and sacraments of the church” (Salzman and Lawler 2008:34). Based on these above attitudes towards women, it is clear that they were discriminated against and robbed of their dignity in society and the church.

Likewise, Okure argues that in Jewish society “a woman had no legal status, except insofar as she was an object of marriage and divorce” (1988:50). For instance, a woman was not allowed to “testify in court or inherit property; nor was she expected to keep all the 615 precepts of the Torah. Her sole reason [for living] was the husband; she was his home, and her duty was to secure his happiness and serve him in the meaner and more menial aspects of life” (Okure 1988:50). Similarly to Roman law, Okure explains that women in Jewish society were their husband’s property and a man “could acquire her like a slave by money or sexual intercourse and divorce her if she caused the slightest ‘impediment’ to the marriage, like spoiling his food or growing old. The wife was also held responsible for the husband’s piety or wickedness” (1988:58). Furthermore, “women in general were believed to be gluttonous, eavesdroppers, lazy and jealous, devoid of intellectual capacity, and living only for self-ornamentation” (Okure 1988:58). Okure emphasizes that one can understand the attitude towards women in Jewish society, as “the Sirach regards the birth of a daughter as ‘a loss’ (Sir. 22:3), and why the Jewish male counted it a daily blessing that God did not make him a woman” (1988:50). As Roman culture regarded menstruating women as unclean, similarly “Jewish tradition demands that the husband and wife should sleep in separate rooms during the menstruating period. The unclean period involves the actual menstruating dates and seven days thereafter” (Reisenberger 2003:176). Based on this perspective, a couple is traditionally and religiously denied the right to have sexual relations.

Early Christian theology was also strongly influenced by Greek philosophy which was dualistic. Amour asserts that a dominant dualistic anthropological worldview “operates as a rigid either/or dialectic that polarizes certain values and attitudes in reified stereotypes” (1991:162 - 163). In addition, Hessel and Ruether (2000:98) assert that this dualistic anthropological worldview began with the Greek philosopher Plato’s premise that mind was divided from matter (2000:98). For Plato “sex is grounded in his mind-body dualism. The soul or mind is not necessarily reflected in and is distinct from the body. Therefore, with regard to their soul, men and women have similar natures; with regard to their bodies, one finds a hierarchy of being” (Gonzalez 2007:19). Allen (1997:63) echoes this as he asserts that when Plato views “women as inferior in their embodied, he is accepting a cosmic view of sex

polarity in the inferior incarnation of women, while also suggesting a theory of sex unity for actual lives of women and men in the world” (Allen 1997:63). Allen went further by saying that Plato believed that “female identity is grounded in the soul, not the body but when it comes to embodied existence, women are clearly inferior” (1997:63). Plato also argued against women in leadership. He claimed that “there is no pursuit of the administration of the state that belongs to a woman because she is a woman or a man because he is a man. But the natural capacities are distributed alike among both creatures, and women naturally share in all pursuits and a man in all- yet for all women is weaker than the man” (cited in Gonzalez 2007:20). Plato believed that “women and the men, then, have the same nature in respect to the guardianship of the state, save in so far as the one is weaker, the other stronger (cited in Gonzalez 2007:20). In other words, Plato believed that the innate inferiority of women did not allow women to be in leadership positions.

As discussed above, this dualistic understanding influenced the early Christian tradition. Sexual issues were associated with sin, evil and death. “The dualism of the physical and spiritual also came into play here. Men, as representatives of the spiritual, had to subdue and dominate women, the physical. With every act of intercourse the physical entrapped the spiritual” (Isherwood and Stuart 1998: 18). Aristotle believes that “women’s seed does not contribute to reproduction. A woman is a passive receptacle. Man contributes the energy of creation; woman contributes the material stuff of creation. The semen enters the uterus and mixes with the female secretion” (cited in Gonzalez 2007:22). Aristotle argues that “the female is as it were a deformed male, and the menstrual discharge is semen though in an impure condition” (cited in Gonzalez 2007:22). Clearly, Aristotle saw women’s only role as that of reproduction. Within Burundian culture, children belong to men and not to women and a boy child is preferable to a girl child, as they are seen to continue the family lineage as I discussed in Chapter Two.

Furthermore, the influence of Aristotle’s dualistic thought reached into the political and social realm. He argues that “the man rules over the woman, the male is by nature superior, and the female inferior, one rules and the other is ruled. This principle of necessity extends to all mankind” (cited in Gonzalez 2007:23). His hierarchical understanding of society is grounded in his view that women are deficient. This also includes children and slaves, who, like women, are to be ruled by men:

The freeman rules over the slave after another manner from that in which the male rules over the female, or the man over the child: although the parts of the soul are present in all of them, they are present in different degrees. For the slave has no deliberate faculty at all, the woman has, but it is without authority, and the child has, but it is immature (Aristotle cited in Gonzalez 2007:23).

He believes that a woman, much like a child, “is to be ruled by man and to accept his ultimate authority” (cited in Gonzalez 2007:23). Allen comments on Aristotle’s philosophy that “women have inferior reasoning capabilities; they are, therefore, considered capable only of true opinion and not of knowledge, properly speaking” (2000: 103). Men, therefore, represent “higher” intellect while women are on an inferior level. This understanding that women are inferior intellectually influences the way they are viewed in Burundian society, as highlighted in Chapter Two.

Christianity continued the idea that the relation of the soul to the body is like the male controlling the wayward female and her passions. Male attributes were seen as normative and, therefore, the female was subsumed under the male (Hessel and Ruether 2000:98). Ruether argues that it is this androcentrism that distorts all dialectical relationships, such as good/evil, nature/grace and body/soul by modelling them on the polarisation of male and female (cited in Isherwood and McEwan 1996:42). In fact, Ruether (1996:42) concludes that dualism sees reality in pairs of opposites, where ultimate value is assigned to the first of each pair. It also promotes separateness (Ruether cited in Isherwood and McEwan 1996:42). Clifford proposes that such hierarchical dualisms must be challenged because they result in opposing relationships and oppressive behaviour (2002:19). Dietrich points out that patriarchy encourages dualistic relationships that touch all aspects of life, including access to property, education, other basic amenities, the division of labour and the use of violence to control women’s labour, sexuality and fertility (2001:17). One can argue that the dualistic vision plays a key role in devaluing women’s humanity. It contributes significantly to the subordination of women in all aspects of life. The predominant negative attitude towards women from Greek philosophers and the early Church Fathers means that women cannot expect to reflect the *imago Dei* in the same manner as their male counterparts. This dualistic understanding also shaped how women’s *imago Dei* was understood within the early church.

3.3. Understanding of *imago Dei* in early Christian tradition

Gonzalez maintains that throughout “Christian tradition men have overwhelmingly been viewed as reflecting God’s image, while women have been judged to reflect the *imago Dei*

deficiently” (2007:125). Similarly, Rakoczy (2004:34) asserts that Christian tradition’s interpretation of women as not quite in the image of God has been a source of oppression and discrimination against women. Church Fathers assert that only the male was created in the image of God and a woman was the image of God only when she was joined to her husband:

the woman with her husband is the image of God in such a way that the whole of the substance is one image, but when she is assigned her function of being an assistant, which is her concern alone, she is not the image of God; whereas in what concerns the man alone he is the image of God as fully and completely as when the woman is joined to him in one whole (De Trinitate cited in Rakoczy 2004:34).

Augustine’s understanding of the *imago Dei* arises out of his argument that Adam was created first and Eve was created from his side. He contends that “to this end, when He created the woman who was to be joined to the man He decided not to create her in the same way as He created man himself. Instead He made her out of the man, so that the whole human race should spread out from the original man” (cited in Schott 2011:29). This suggests that Augustine understood women as created secondary to men based on the creation account. Schott suggests that in order to “establish equality and bring women into the full image of God, Augustine affirms women’s role as helpmate to men. As a helpmate women are fully *imago Dei*, because they are now associated with the higher, rational function of the mind, and not just the lower, emotional function of the mind” (2011:29). In other words, for women to reflect God’s image, women need to be associated with men. Women, therefore, are less human than men. It also suggests that women are just the material property of men because women are not fully *imago Dei* unless they are joined with men in marriage. Gonzalez goes further by saying that Augustine claims that “the image of God is found in the masculine dimension of the soul. Women are to be oriented towards the earthly realm and receive guidance from men” (2007:41). Borreson echoes Gonzalez by pointing out that “as regards the *homo interior*, woman possesses the quality of the image of God through her soul, which is identical with that of a man, for souls have no sex. But as regards the *homo exterior*, women is distinguished from man, formed as she was in second place *conformatio*, and taken from the side of man” (1995:26). Given the above negative articulations by Augustine on how women are created in God’s image, one can argue that women are not seen as equal to men, and that their reflection of *imago Dei* is deficient.

Aquinas echoes Augustine’s theology in that the *imago Dei* is located in the “rational capabilities of humanity” and this excludes women (Gonzalez 2007:42). For Aquinas, when

the human mind turns towards God, it is the locus of God's image (Gonzalez 2007:42). In the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas maintains that *imago Dei* occurs in humankind in a threefold manner based on our knowledge of God:

First, inasmuch as man [sic] possesses a natural aptitude for understanding and loving God and this image consists in the very nature of the mind, which is common to all men [sic]. Secondly, inasmuch as man [sic] actually or habitually knows and loves God, though imperfectly and this image consists in the conformity of grace. Thirdly, inasmuch as man [sic] knows God actually and loves Him perfectly and this image consists in the likeness of glory (1945:890).

Aquinas argues that women are intellectually inferior to men. This threefold understanding of humanity as *imago Dei*, is based on intellectual knowledge of God. Aquinas's anthropology is that compared to men women are lower intellectually. His understanding of *imago Dei* is based on intellectual knowledge of God; since women are seen to be emotional, it creates a subordination position for women. In addition, commenting on Aquinas's notion of *imago Dei*, Gonzalez writes: "Women are not able to achieve and reflect the image of God in such an elevated manner as men. Aquinas argues that "multi-tiered understanding of the image allows him to articulate an ambiguous theology in which women reflect the image on some levels but not on others" (2007:44). Furthermore, for Aquinas, man reflects the image of God perfectly because he was directly created by God but "woman is inferior; yet on the level of procreation she plays a necessary and complementary role to the function of man" (cited in Gonzalez 2007:46). Aquinas's anthropology upholds men instead of mutuality and equality. Women need men to fully complete their humanity. Aquinas believes that women reflect the image of God, but in a less perfect way than men. Women's task in this world is to be a "submissive receptacle to the male seed" and participate in the process of procreation (Gonzalez 2007:47). The theological anthropologic voices of early church leaders continue to shape our thoughts and this, in turn, impacts negatively on women.

These views of women were reiterated during the Reformation. Martin Luther agrees with the early fathers of the church when it comes to his understanding of women's *imago Dei*. Luther asserts that "for man [sic] was created in the image of God, in the image of righteousness, of course, of divine holiness and truth, but in such a way that he could lose it, as he did lose it, moreover, in paradise and has now recovered it through Christ" (cited in Gonzalez 2007:54). Furthermore, while "both men and women were created equally; however, since this was lost in the Fall, ultimately women in Luther's theology are

condemned to a life of subordination” (Gonzalez 2007:54). For Luther, women are not only held responsible for “the Fall” of humankind, “they are not considered truly equal to men in creation or societal roles for they are weaker and, thus, inferior” (Schott 2011:31).

Draper (1991:47) points out that women are seen to be made in the image of the church and men or husbands are made in the image of Christ. He maintains that “this gives a theological base to the assumption of the inferiority of the female and the subversive intention becomes the legitimisation of the oppression of women in the church” (Draper 1991: 47). In light of the above statements, one can argue that the misinterpretation of *imago Dei* has resulted in women’s being seen as totally dependent on men in their relationship with God.

Furthermore, “traditional Christian readings have emphasized a hierarchical depiction of the creation accounts, highlighting the second at the expense of the first. This interpretation most often depicts woman’s subordination as part of the order of Creation” (Gonzalez 2007:10). These interpretations of Genesis 2-3 have been harmful to the lives and sexuality of women for centuries. In patriarchal society “Eve represents sin, seduction, and the secondary nature of woman” (Meyers, Craven and Kraemer 2000: 79). According to Pagels, the story of Creation has come to be “a primary means for revealing and defending basic attitudes and values” (1989: xix). Many negative beliefs about and attitudes towards women’s humanity, still prevalent today, were formed by traditional Christianity. The story of Eve set the stage for the hatred of sexuality that coloured the misinterpretations of *imago Dei*. Draper (1991:49) argues that the Graeco-Roman and the Jewish patriarchal societies view women as “fickle temptresses and deceivers, who cannot be trusted with leadership in church or society. The ‘punishment’ for their sin in the Garden of Eden, namely childbirth, will continue to be the means of their ‘salvation’ in addition to faith. They must be kept rigorously in subordination to men for their own good and the good of society” (Draper 1991:49).

Groothuis (1997:127) asserts that past Christian theology sees Eve as the embodiment of all that is female, while Adam embodies all that is both male and human (Groothuis 1997:127). In his work he concludes that man is a human being while woman is a sexual being. When a woman is removed from her association with a man through marriage, she is deficient (Groothuis 1997:127). In addition, Skredsvig (2000:98) maintains that the traditional interpretation of the Creation story “has been used to justify the male embodiment of God. Because Eve gave the fruit of the tree to Adam, she is viewed as the one who caused the downfall of humanity, and he as the one who merely ‘went along’ out of his affection for her”

(Skredsvig 2000:98). Christian tradition has presented and given women (descendants of Eve) the status of the 'weaker sex,' and labelled them as 'easily deceived' (Skredsvig 2000:98). The inferiority of women in traditional and popular belief is linked to the figure of Eve, "who embodies everything which is problematic and negative" (Skredsvig 2000:98). Woman (descendant of Eve) is morally, physically and intellectually inferior to men (descendant of Adam). She emphasizes that "Eve is canonized as the very spirit of disobedience and credited with no less than the fall from grace of all humanity. Because she succumbed to temptation and, worse yet, persuaded Adam to follow her terrible example, all humans are punished with lives of hardship" (Skredsvig 2000:98). The fall of Eve has been historically linked to all the evils and calamities that take place in this world. Based on the story of the fall of Eve, Okure emphasizes that women were often considered as "the cause of the sinful nature of men" and accused of men's faults and limitations (1989:49).

Similarly, looking at the case of rape in the Burundian context, as we have seen in Chapter Two, Amnesty International's report indicates that women and young girls are blamed for seducing men. It is, therefore, generally believed that men have no choice but to rape the women who tempt him (2007:2). This implies that women and young girls are blamed for men's rape and they will keep quiet because their voices will never be heard, since they are descendants of Eve. The dualistic anthropology of the Church Fathers "associated women with everything that is lesser - most often the body, sensuality, and emotion. Men, in contrast, are associated with rationality and spirituality" (Gonzalez 2007:86). The dualistic understanding of anthropology leads women to a subordination position.

3.4 Implications for theological anthropology

The consequences of dualistic understanding for women are severe. Ruether argues that "assimilation of male-female dualism into soul-body dualism, conditions basically the definition of women, both in terms of subordination to the male in order of nature and her carnality in disorder of sin" (cited in Rakoczy 2004: 33). As has already been discussed, the dualism understanding leads to a hierarchical construction of gender complementarity, where women are devalued (Gonzalez 2007:111). Rakoczy points out that traditionally for the Church Fathers, men and women are "different but equal". Their understanding stresses the complementarity of the sexes, seeing sex role duality as part of the created order, "the divine plan", in short, a biological determinism (2004:48). The implication of dualistic understanding "is that men are nearly complete by themselves and only need the addition of

women's helpfulness and patience, while women are understood to have qualities which are not as important or useful in the world and the church as are the characteristics and gifts of men" (Rakoczy 2004:48). Dualistic understanding "undercuts the theological understanding that humanity is one and was redeemed as one race" (Rakoczy 2004:49). One of the Church Fathers, Gregory of Nazianzus, cited in Rakoczy (2004:49), argues that "for what was not assumed was not cured. But whatever has been united to God is saved". Rakoczy (2004:49) rejects this statement by saying that it is inappropriate. She argues that "Christ did not redeem, save, and liberate men in one way and women in another, because they are so different. He gives the fullness of new life to humanity, women and men" (Rakoczy 2004:49). Furthermore, the dualism model emphasises biological and spiritual motherhood. Hilkert (1995:199) asserts that, although "women's bodily experience and female sexuality provide appropriate images and metaphors for the divine, the way that woman was created in God's image or the destiny and vocation of women [was] extrapolated solely from biology" (Hilkert 1995:199). Gonzalez (2007:112) insists that women were reduced to "their biological roles as mothers". She adds that, for some women, their entire identity is reduced to motherhood (Gonzalez 2007:112). Similarly, Rakoczy (2004:49) argues that a dualistic understanding of "women's role as biological and spiritual motherhood reduces women to one role in society". She believes that motherhood is a sacred gift from God and, thus, to be celebrated but to insist that women fulfil their entire destiny through this experience is inadequate (Rakoczy 2004:49). Women's child-bearing ability should be taken as an additional capacity for women and, instead, justify their strength rather than their limitation. As I will discuss in the next chapter, with equal opportunities women have the aptitude to perform all duties, including those defined as exclusively male callings in Burundi, like construction, the army or police force etc.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter reflected on patriarchal interpretations of women's humanity. It argued that women's humanity has been undermined throughout the history of Christianity. It discussed, also, how women have been considered as less-human, from the explanation of the functionality of mind-body dualism, to the fall of Eve as first woman and how this was used as evidence to substantiate the arguments of the early church. The Church Fathers allocated and distorted the image of God for women, resulting in their continuous subordination and leading to the marginalization of women in all spheres of life. Women were regarded as not only inferior to men but also as needing men to be completely human, making women just

the material and property of men. In addition, the concept of *Imago Dei* was intensively misused by Church Fathers and philosophy to prove how women carry just part of God's image, not its fullness, like men. The negative attitude towards and misinterpretation of *imago Dei* with regard to women influenced our theological anthropology. This misconception resulted in the exploitation and oppression of women by men. This is prevalent in Burundi as women are subjected to rape and other sexual violence, leading to an increase in HIV infection. As discussed in the previous chapter, and given this theological tradition, women's vulnerability is great and women need their rights and dignity to be fully restored. The next chapter will discuss feminist interpretations of women's humanity. It is very important to understand how theological discourse can be liberating for women.

CHAPTER FOUR

Women as human beings: feminist interpretations

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the historical anthropological interpretation of women in church tradition. This interpretation has had a negative impact on women because church tradition does not fully affirm women's human dignity. Unfortunately, this negative interpretation leads to the justification of the marginalization of women in society and in the church. The patriarchal lens of Christianity distorts the theological notion of the *imago Dei*, and diminishes the dignity of women as made in the image and likeness of God. Feminist theological anthropology explores the ways that this aberration of the *imago Dei* negatively impacts on women. Feminist theologians stress the importance of understanding how theological discourse can be liberating for women. They, therefore, attempt to reconstruct a positive and affirming anthropological viewpoint which affirms women's dignity through a reinterpretation of the *imago Dei*. This is the subject of this chapter.

4.2 Feminist critique of the early Christian tradition

The invisibility of women within religious tradition and institutions motivated feminist theologians to ask themselves what it means to be human. The voice of women within religious institutions is "at work today in helping women to affirm and live their full human dignity" (Rakoczy 2004:56). Gonzalez (2007:86) argues that the invisibility of women in our religious sector and society is based on a sexist understanding of what it means to be human, "grounded in an androcentric world view that values men over women, and results in the institutional devaluation of women" (Gonzalez 2007:86). Exploring further the theological arena in the 1960s, Gonzalez (2007:86) believes that women's experiences within theology have been suppressed. In order to critique Christian tradition, "a central source and often norm in feminist theology is women's experience" (Gonzalez 2007:86). She argues that "what has been deemed human experience in Christian theology is actually male experience", and that "in order to have a true vision of the human, women's experience must be included" (2007:86).

In addition, Gonzalez (2007:xiii) believes that liberation theologies around the 1960s "emphasize a preferential option for the marginalized, a rewriting of Christian history, and theology from the underside. They propose alternative Christian visions grounded in both

traditionally marginalized sources and rereading of voices ‘canonized’ within the theological tradition” (Gonzalez 2007:xiii). As discussed in Chapter Three, the marginalisation of women within the early church gave birth to feminist critique. Gonzalez (2007: xix) asserts that “the 1968 publication of Mary Daly’s *Church and the Second Sex* marks the birth of this movement in the United States. Many consider Elisabeth Schussler-Fiorenza, along with Daly and Rosemary Radford Ruether, the foremothers of feminist theology” (Gonzalez 2007: xix). Gonzalez asserts that the work of the above feminist theologians “finds a hesitancy to give Christian traditions, scripture, and theology any sort of normative status due to their androcentric foundation” (2007: xix). Their theological critiques are based on “recovering women’s intellectual histories and the implications of this task. Through privileging gender as a primary analytic category, feminist theologians seek to highlight the ideologies operating in historical and current understandings of Christian tradition” (Gonzalez 2007: xix). Gonzalez (2007: xx) believes that women’s “association with bodies, is often interpreted within the Christian tradition as reflecting the image of God in a flawed or lesser manner” (Gonzalez 2007: xx).

Furthermore, Rakoczy (2004:38) argues that the “first woman in contemporary theology to critique the received theologies of women’s natural inferiority was Valerie Saiving” (Rakoczy 2004:38). According to Saiving (cited in Rakoczy 2004:38):

The gender of the theologian played a significant role in the work of theology. Focusing on the post-Renaissance era in the west, she described it as a ‘hyper-masculine culture’ which placed the highest value on external achievement, on the creation of structures of matter and meaning, on self-differentiation and the separation of man from nature...it was a masculine era, too, in the degree to which it devalued the functions of women and children and the whole reproductive process (2004:38).

As discussed in the previous chapter, Rakoczy asserts that American feminist theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether, trained in Classics and Patristic writings, used this training “to critique the misogynist teachings of the Fathers of the Church. She located their anti-women views in the appropriation of Platonic dualism which has had very negative effects in both the theology of the person and body to this day” (2004:38). Hierarchical dualism is seen as the fundamental flaw in traditional Christian anthropology (Hinsdale cited in Rakoczy 2004:38). Feminist theologians reject the dualistic model as inadequate. It “is the assumption that the male is the better, stronger, more gifted one in the pair and that a woman needs a man to be complete” (Rakoczy 2004:48). In other words, women are in this world for the purpose of

completing men, but are not fully human beings. In addition, Hampson (1996:192) argues that “feminist women are adamant in rejecting the concept of a complementarity between the male and the female”. She contends that “a good way then of marking the male concept of complement is to note that the female is always to complement the male and never vice versa” (Hampson 1996:192). The dualistic model is “naïve about the impact of culture and social factors that influence how a society views women and men. This has been seen all down the ages, from denial of women’s ability to learn and thus to teach, to the refusal to admit women into professions such as law and medicine because they are too emotional” (Rakoczy 2004:49). According to Rakoczy (2004:38), Mary Daly “outlined the Christian tradition’s negative interpretation of women as stemming from classic Greco-Roman thought and Judaism. She also located the fault line in Christian anthropology in its adoption of Greek dualism, which then made women the second and the lesser sex” (Rakoczy 2004:38). Keightley, in reacting to “the many threads of the Christian tradition’s negative interpretation of women”, asserts that women are described as “physically weak” (cited in Rakoczy 2004:39). Keightley argues against this view by analysing the strengths of women through childbearing and life expectancy (cited in Rakoczy 2004:39). Keightley emphasises that the church has presumed that human nature is unchangeable. “But science recognises that the capacity for change is built into persons and influenced by social and cultural factors. Thus biology is not destiny” (cited in Rakoczy 2004:39). The traditional male and female label cannot be justified simply by biological differences. From my experience of family members, Burundian women work hard physically as they respond to family demands. In Burundian culture women are assumed to be incapable of carrying out professional work as they are only seen to be capable of child-bearing and other activities related to the household. They are forbidden access to education and prevented from getting jobs that require physical strength, such as the army and police force. Removing such restrictions will enable women to develop, as is the case with their male counterparts.

4. 3 Women as created in the full image of God

Throughout Christian history the belief that humanity reflects God in some manner has been a focal point of theological anthropology. Gonzalez (2007:124) argues that the doctrine of “the *imago Dei* is at the heart of Christian understandings of the human and reveals something about humanity as created and about our Creator” (Gonzalez 2007:124).

Referring to equality between men and women created in the image of God, Gruden suggests that “to be in the image of God is an incredible privilege. It means to be like God and to represent God. No other creatures in all of creation, not even the powerful angels, are said to be in the image of God. It is a privilege given only to us as men and women” (2002:19). She adds that men and women share equal status and “we should treat men and women with equal dignity, and we should think of men and women as having equal value. We are both in the image of God, and we have been so since the very first day that God created us” (Gruden 2002:20). In addition, Gruden maintains that:

nowhere does the Bible say that men are more in God’s image than women. Men and women share equally in the tremendous privilege of being in the image of God. The Bible, thus, almost immediately corrects the errors of male dominance and male superiority that have come as a result of sin and that have been seen in nearly all cultures in the history of the world (2002:20).

Gruden claims that “wherever husbands act as selfish dictators, wherever wives are forbidden to have their own jobs outside the home or to vote or to own property or to be educated, wherever women are treated as inferior ... the biblical truth of equality in the image of God is being denied” (2002:20).

Furthermore, it is also significant to note that the negative theological anthropology that led to the historical subordination of women has been based on the Genesis creation accounts. These creation accounts have been misinterpreted to sustain patriarchy, as has been discussed in the previous chapter. Gonzalez (2007:125) argues that Christian tradition has neglected Genesis 1 and focused on the Genesis 2 and 3 account of creation, which is then used to blame women for the corruption of *imago Dei*. The creation story has been a bleeding ground for women’s subordination and discrimination. African feminist scholar Teresia Okure (1988:49) believes that looking at “the prevailing negative assessment of women is a far cry from the status accorded them in Genesis 1:26-27. All the ills of humanity, including the sinfulness of the man himself, are thus to be blamed on women” (1988:49). She maintains that the “first creation account (Gen. 1:26-2:4b;5:1-2) makes the theological statement that the human species is composed of male and female, that it is a unity in nature and a diversity in sex, and that as an entity it was created in the image and likeness of God” (Okure 1988:49).

Okure comments on the story of Eve:

We discovered that certain elements in the Biblical accounts have been either misinterpreted over the centuries or simply ignored. For the Bible is a patriarchal book not only because it was written by men (and for the most part for men), but because over the centuries it has been interpreted almost exclusively by men. Yet the human race is composed of male and female, each with its own distinctive way of perceiving reality...belief in the innate inferiority of the woman and in her exclusive instrumentality for sin and death is based on a misreading of the Genesis account of Creation and the Fall (Gen. 1:26-2:4a; 2:4b-4:2; 5:1-2) and on failure to discern the distinctive purpose of each of these narratives (1988:56).

Okure points out that “visual imagery of the creation of the woman from the man’s rib vividly illustrates both their identity in nature and their destined union as husband and wife in one flesh” (1988:56). Okure believes that “the belief in the innate inferiority of the woman and in her exclusive instrumentality for sin and death is based on the misreading of the Genesis accounts of Creation and the Fall and on the failure to discern the distinctive purpose of each of these narratives” (1989:49). The misinterpretation of the Creation story has impacted negatively on women’s life and allocated a low position to women’s lives (Okure 1989:49). One can argue that this misinterpretation of the Creation account and the doctrine of *imago Dei* not only place women in a subordinate position, but also influence negatively women’s anthropology. This understanding, she argues, helps to identify the relationship between husband and wife within the institution of marriage as one of equality, as they were both equally created in the image of God.

Mercy Oduyoye further adds that the doctrine of *imago Dei* asserts that “women and men are of equal value before God, both created in the image of one God, or else we declare Genesis 1:26 a lie” (2001:181). She argues that in the stories of Creation we discover concepts such as “the wholeness, unity, relatedness and inter-relatedness of all that exists” (Oduyoye 2001:40). For Oduyoye, “all life is to be held as sacred and, therefore, worthy of respect. The worship of the maker reflects on what has been made, and nothing is to be deemed trivial and unworthy of existence and, therefore, to be excluded from the enjoyment of fullness of life” (2001:40). She asserts that “God that created males, created females, gave both the same spirit, and called both human. What is central to our humanity, therefore, is that both female and male are akin to God, having received the same divine spirit. Gender does not define our worthiness, since it is not present in God” (Oduyoye 2001:42).

This theological understanding creates and gives emphasis “to the dignity, equality, and mutuality of both women and men” (Abbey 2001:143). Thus, for feminist theologians, “creation in the image of God is reclaimed and transformed into creating a rallying call for women’s equality” (Gonzalez 2007:125). Womanist theologian Delores Williams understands “creation in the image of God as a manner of denouncing sin against the body, in particular, black women’s bodies” (cited in Gonzalez 2007:126). For Williams, “womanhood and humanity are synonymous and in the image of God”; women’s sexual being is also in the image of God; therefore, to devalue the womanhood and sexuality of Black women is sin” (cited in Gonzalez 2007:126). In this regard, one can argue that it is important to be familiar with early Christian writers in order to understand their patriarchal bias and overcome their misinterpretation of *imago Dei* in women. This means that the interpretation of scripture demands that “sustained efforts be made to discern between the divine and human elements in it” (Okure 1983:56). It is also important to understand how the equality of women as made in the image of God is seen in the ministry of Jesus, “where the Holy spirit is given in new fullness to both men and women, where both men and women are baptized into membership in the body of Christ, and where both men and women receive spiritual gifts for use in the life of the church” (Gruden 2002:22). Rakoczy (2004:31) echoes Gruden in emphasizing that Jesus was friendly to women as an ostracized group in society. She argues that Jesus Christ broke the social and cultural taboos of his time that marginalized women and always sought to emancipate and liberate women through his teachings (Rakoczy 2004:31).

Other scholars have argued similarly. Schott (2011:7) argues that being *imago Dei* calls humankind to take responsibility for the “dignity of human life for women” (Schott 2011:7). Hilkert affirms this, saying that “to say that human beings are created in the image of God is to say something about the dignity and goodness of all aspects of the human person” (1995:95). Neill (1993:141) argues that the mistreatment of women, or the rest of creation, is a violation of the goodness of God’s creation. To maintain the goodness of creation, women and men must understand the role of humanity in the created world and appreciate our creation as a gift, freely given by God (Neill 1993:141).

So it can be argued that, even though the doctrine of *imago Dei* has “been interpreted historically to oppress women, it is also a symbol that is used to fuel justice, human rights, and social transformation” (Hilkert1995: 194). She further reminds us that “official statements of all Christians churches today unconditionally affirm that women and men are

created equally in the image of God and are to be accorded equal human dignity” (Hilkert 1995: 196). Gonzalez claims that wherever church practice is to the contrary, “we must use the official teaching of creation in the image of God as equally shared by all humanity to empower social justice movements” (Gonzalez 2007:128). Similarly, McClintock argues that “creation in the image of God is the foundation for humanity’s relationship with God” (2007:129). She maintains that *imago Dei* indicates the attributes of the human being that make it capable of relationship to God. More importantly, it conveys a theologically appropriate affirmation of the goodness of the finitude of creatures” (cited in Gonzalez 2007:129). In summary, men and women are created equal and women’s sexuality is also understood as being part of the image of God and, therefore, should be enjoyed rather than abused. However, in order to ensure that women also enjoy the fullness of life, the distorted *imago Dei* which led to their subjugation must be reinterpreted through the practice of a relational anthropology.

4.4 Relational Anthropology

A relational anthropology begins with the acknowledgement that women are fully human and “does justice to the dignity of woman as person” (Rakoczy 2004:52). It is a concept that acknowledges that women are really human and they are “meshed in a web of relationships from birth” (Rakoczy 2004:52). Relational anthropology, thus, abolishes hierarchical relationships that have denied an equality of relations between men and women. Rakoczy points out that the practice where men identify themselves as superior and recognize God in themselves, needs to be positively changed to consider women as equal beings: women must be regarded as subjects in their own right (2004:54). She argues that sexism gives a distorted view of women’s identity; sexism distorts the dignity of women. Exercising a relational anthropology breaks down the sexism that is prevalent in the church and society (Rakoczy 2004:54). She asserts that this holistic anthropology is concerned with our relationships with God, with one another, with ourselves and with all of creation. Its emphasis on “right relationships provide the foundation for liberation praxis in every dimension of life” (Rakoczy 2004:54). Relational anthropology stresses the understanding that the image of God is not only confined by the Godhead but is a part of who we are as persons created in the divine image (Bongmba 2007:46). Sachs (1991:16) affirms this by saying that “as humanity shares in God’s likeness, both men and women are in a relationship with God and are defined by this relationship” (Sachs 1991:16). In addition, Ackermann (1991:103) believes that “rationality must demand a change in societal structures, away from male-dominated

hierarchies and divisions. Its vision is truly egalitarian as befitting the reign of God” (Ackermann 1991:103). She goes on to emphasize that the vision of relational anthropology is found in action, which is liberation. The aim and the motivation “for liberating acts is found in the values of the reign of God, values like justice, love, freedom, equality, wholeness and shalom. The life and actions of Jesus are our model” (Ackermann 1991:103). As she is writing from a woman’s perspective, she highlights the great necessity for “liberating actions in which women are the subjects. Our relationship to God is intrinsically shaped by our relationship to each other and that the power-in-relation is God” (Ackermann 1991:103). For Ackermann, relationality is at the heart of all theological reflection.

Furthermore, LaCugna, writing on the Trinitarian notion of the *imago Dei*, reminds us that “it is par excellence a theology of relationship: God to us, us to God, us to each other. The doctrine of Trinity affirms that the essence of God is relation, other-ward, that God exists as diverse persons united in communion of freedom, love, and knowledge” (1993:243). Gonzalez (2007:159) echoes LaCugna by saying that “our *imago Dei* is our ability to be relational. Through our relationship with God, our fellow human beings, and the rest of creation, we reflect the image of God within us. The human being is not self-contained but rather is constituted by relationship” (Gonzalez 2007:159). Fernandez (2004:187) claims that it is through our relationships that we most concretely reflect God’s image. “This Trinitarian notion of the image of God also gives us a theological grounding for relational anthropology” (Fernandez 2004:187). Relational anthropology is fundamental to feminist theological anthropologies.

Referring to Trinitarian theological anthropology, Gunton argues that “we are persons only as we exist in relation to the Triune God, but particularly through the Son and the Spirit, the right and left hands of God. As the ‘archetypal bearer of the image, it is through the Son and by the agency of the Spirit that we are made in the image of God in the first instance” (cited in Stephenson 2005:7). Gunton further argues that it is important that we see:

“horizontal” relations taking their distinctive shape as the outgrowth of the ontologically prior relationship with Christ through the work of the Spirit. The first of these horizontal relationships has to do with what we might call *social* relationality. The social element teaches us that we reflect the *imago Dei* in that humans are ontologically established in community with other persons (cited in Stephenson 2005:7).

In addition, Gunton argues that “the first and privileged relationship belongs to the ‘vertical’ human-God relationship. This form of relationality is prior to all other forms of relationality as it is through relationship with the triune God that our relational and distinctively human personhood is revealed” (cited in Stephenson 2005:8). Secondly, the “horizontal” human-human relationship (the social), is similarly ontologically prior to the human-nonhuman relationship. In sum, we primarily are constituted through our relationship to God, and then to a lesser degree through our inter-human relations, and last of all through our relations with the nonhuman realm” (Gunton cited in Stephenson 2005:8). Based on the above statement, one can argue that all humanity shares in God’s likeness, which in turn puts us in relationship with one another, both men and women, and our humanity is, thus, defined by this mutual and equal relationship.

Gonzalez (2009:119) claims that relational anthropology is based on a model that focuses on the “self-in-relation” to others. It is a model that stresses “mutuality and empathy and strives to honour the diversity and function of power within social relationships” (Gonzalez 2007:119). For Graaf, this is linked to the Trinitarian notion of the *imago Dei*:

As the Trinity is the event of the distinct persons who are God in full, continuous relation with one another - God as selves-in-relation - so we human beings are creating ourselves continually out of our ongoing relations, each of us structuring those relations uniquely to be our own dynamic process of constant creation. This process mirrors the relational nature of God as Trinity and invites us into the *imago Dei*. (cited in Gonzalez 2007:119).

So it can be argued that the relational vision of humanity “is most clearly reflected in communities characterized by equality, respect for difference and uniqueness, and mutual love” (Hilkert cited in Gonzalez 2007:120). So, a feminist anthropology promotes the dignity of women. This promotion of the dignity of women also promotes dignity for all humankind in rejecting dualistic and unequal relationships.

Oduyoye (2001:46) calls African women theologians to name God as both inclusive of female and male, and above gender and sexuality (Oduyoye 2001:46). Relational anthropology for women is about a society that promotes life-giving and life-sustaining relationships for women and men. This relational anthropology is about equal opportunity for women and men in societal and domestic roles, as well as the capability to move beyond gender stereotypes.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter outlined and challenged various models of anthropology which regard women's humanity as less than that of men. Feminist theology establishes a positive anthropology for women that denies androcentric notions of women's subordination and their domination by men. Within feminist anthropology, there are positive theological principles that demonstrate the dignity and worth of women. The chapter articulates an understanding of the *imago Dei* that is inclusive and affirming of the humanity of women. From a feminist perspective, this principle, established in creation and demonstrated through the actions of Jesus, maintains and upholds women in their rightful status as human beings. The following chapter will present how the church should respond to rape in the context of HIV infection in Burundi based on the implications of a relational anthropology and the reconstruction of teachings on sexuality.

CHAPTER FIVE

Responding to rape in the context of HIV infection in Burundi

5.1 Introduction

In Chapter Two of this study, we saw that rape is closely linked to the HIV and AIDS epidemic and is fuelled by various social factors. It was pointed out that rape in the context of HIV infection is sustained by unjust socio-economic, political, cultural and theological traditions. These unjust structures prevent women from taking responsibility for their sexual behaviour because of their subordinate status which exposes them to rape and HIV infection. Furthermore, it was argued in Chapter Three that early Christian tradition saw women as second class citizens and inferior to men and these theological traditions have not been transformed in the present church context. The continual rape of women and young girls in Burundi is proof of the failure of the church to adequately promote just relationships in our political, economic, social cultural and religious affairs. Burundian churches cannot persist in holding onto their traditional theology that effectively ignores the real causes behind the increase in the rape of women and their vulnerability to HIV infection.

The current situation forces the Burundian church to rethink its way of understanding women. This chapter examines some of the values and principles that should be promoted by the church, including some practical implications of a feminist understanding of relational anthropology.

5.2 Implications of relational anthropology for the church

In order to restore dignity and fullness of life for those women who are exposed to rape and ultimately to HIV infection, there is a need in the church to take seriously the implications of a relational anthropology. Women need to emerge as full human beings, liberated from all forces of patriarchy that have kept them in slavery for the past years. Haddad suggests that:

attitudinal and behavioural patterns of men in church communities have to change, and the onus is largely on the primarily male leadership to effect this change. Of course, change begins with themselves and, all too often, church leadership themselves are engaged in sexual violence against women and children. Calling the church to accountability for its actions requires courage on the part of its membership and leadership to stand on the side of gender justice (2003: 160).

Given the above perception of women, Ramodibe points out that “the power of women should change the society and the economic structures that have been exploitative. Women cannot build the church with men, however, until men have been liberated to accept women” (1989:18). Ramodibe maintains that “men and women need to cooperate on the basis of mutuality. God’s plans of differentiation of God’s creatures was not meant to be a disadvantage to others, but was meant to enrich one another. Mutuality does not recognize paternalism” (1989:19). In addition, Ramodibe argues that once “women are seriously acknowledged as partners, as the body of Christ, we can build a new church” because “the church as we have it today is a creation of male persons” (1989:19). Women “have been given concessions and permissions like children. We have always had to ask permission and be apologetic” (Ramodibe 1989:19). It is important to build a new church which “should be non-discriminatory... a church where all human beings are regarded as equals” (Ramodibe 1989:19).

Furthermore, in order for the church to reconstruct women’s image in the likeness of God, “church membership needs to be re-educated in order to undo the problematic education received from traditional male leadership and its teachings” (Masenya 2003:125). Masenya believes that “education should be geared towards women’s empowerment and could entail the following aspects: the redefinition and transformation of the African culture in a way that will be life-giving to all members, both women and men” (2003:125). In addition, as part of the education process, “educators should expose patriarchy both in the African culture and in the Christian church for what it is: an evil system which has been used and continues to be used by the church to perpetuate inequalities between people who have been created in the image of God” (Masenya 2003:125).

Masenya further points out that “the church should also critically revisit androcentric interpretations of the Bible since these interpretations have contributed to the perpetuation of the view that the female is inferior, and that the latter is God-ordained” (2003:123). Such understandings or interpretations have allowed “dangerous cultural sayings, reinforced by apparently similar sayings from the Bible, to be applied indiscriminately to powerless girl children and women. These women-unfriendly Bible interpretations should be substituted with empowering life-giving ones that will show that women and men have a role to play in God’s divine plan for the world” (Masenya 2003:123). Women, as well as men, are moral agents and are called to the co-creation of persons and of community. Women’s submissiveness as acclaimed by early church tradition has been used to justify patriarchy but

this does not promote equality between men and women in a society ruined by rape and HIV prevalence. The church must promote equality in term of sexuality, such that sex should be a source of mutual pleasure and bonding between men and women rather than only a duty and a condition for procreation. Men and women should have equal capacity to negotiate sex as partners. The church in their pastoral counselling must emphasize equal relationships between men and women. In an attempt to redefine womanhood in Africa, the church should reconstruct the culture that dehumanises women and young girls. Masenya suggests that in the process of educating African culture, they must define women in the following way:

the ideal African Christian woman is a female African person, who though conscious of the corporeal mentality of Africans and respecting it, can stand on her own and affirm her full humanity as one created in God's image. As an independent person, she may choose marriage, a choice, which does not make her lose her full humanness and independence to her partner. She may also opt for celibacy, an option that in no way tampers with her full humanness (2003:126).

Similarly, Jin (1989:107) points out that there is need “for creating a new form and pattern of relationship between man and woman: husband and wife must be approached on a more personal level. It may be seen as unimportant, but in order to be fully integrated into the new, the old models and patterns of relationship must also go” (Jin 1989:107). In addition, Jin believes that in Africa “women together with men will have to break through traditions and cultural practices that keep them in their respective gender roles. This involves a long and painful process. Women will have to help themselves, first of all, to break out of the roles defined for them, the image and the position that restricts them from creativity and freedom” (1989:107). Men and women need to acknowledge and act upon their inter-relatedness. It means creating a relationship of mutual equality between men and women through our actions and relationships with one another. Mutual relationships in the church and in families mean that the difficult question of sexuality needs to be discussed, particularly in the context of rape and HIV prevalence.

5.3 Reconstruction of the teaching of the church on sexuality

As discussed in Chapter Two, speaking openly about sexual issues is taboo within the church and society in Burundi. Because of this attitude towards sexual issues as taboo, the church does not distinguish between adultery and rape (Le Roux 2010:34). It was discussed that the church does not present its teaching with openness nor does it even make its position clear about the rape of women and young girls. The church cannot respond to rape and HIV infection in Burundi “without addressing the realities of human sexuality and sex [that] are

intrinsically linked” (Pillay 2009:102). The church needs to reconstruct its teaching on sexuality by recognizing that it is a basic dimension in “our personhood and a way of being called to communication and communion” (Pillay 2009:102). It means that sexuality includes sex and “the church is also very much a human community composed of sexual human beings” (Pillay 2009:102). Haspel states that “sexuality is very intimate. It is very serious. It always has been and it definitely is in the time of HIV infection and [rape]. Sexuality has much to do with who we are or at least who we think we are” (2004:48). In addition, Maluleke emphasizes that sexuality is lovely: it is one of God’s greatest gifts to human beings and, thus, it should be celebrated (2004:134). The church cannot deny the reality that human beings are also sexual beings. It is, therefore, important for the church to rethink its stance on sexuality in order to respond positively to the HIV epidemic and rape. Sex and sexuality in the church have been “privatized and perverted into obscenity” (Maluleke 2004:134). As discussed in previous sections of this study, “the church has had a phobia for talking about sexuality... for too long the church has shied away from speaking about sexuality” (Maluleke 2004:134). The church and society have considered human sexuality as evil, especially women’s sexuality, as discussed in Chapter Three. Haspel argues that “sexuality has much to do with who we are or at least who we think we are” (2004:48). This shows that sexuality is an integral part of human identity and, therefore, the church cannot ignore teachings on the goodness of sexuality (WCC 1997:30).

Sexuality should be handled with respect and should be used to enrich life and strengthen the relationships among couples. The church should portray sexuality in a way that makes people responsible for their sexual behaviour. Indeed, for the church in Burundi to respond appropriately to the rape and HIV epidemics there is a need to start promoting sexuality in a more helpful way as a gift from God. Njoroje says: “our bodies are a gift from our creator ... Human sexuality is a creative, pleasant and precious gift that we are meant to enjoy, if appropriately offered and received; but it is also a very delicate gift and if wrongly used, can result in very unpleasant experiences that leave lasting wounds” (2008:182). Men and women are sexually equal and must together agree on sexual acts, without any coercion. Garland says that “in the church’s witness to the world regarding the HIV epidemic [and rape], we must make it clear that God calls us to celebrate sex as God’s gift. Christians should not be against sex, only its misuse” (2003:246). Bongmba affirms the statement above by arguing that “humans are sexual beings and sexuality cannot be removed from any configuration of the human ... sexuality is a part of who we are in God’s image” (2007:50). God sees human

sexuality between a man and a woman as a good part of creation. Church and society have destroyed views of sex as a sacred gift from God and misused it by raping women and young girls in Burundi. In reconstructing the teaching on sexuality, the church needs to know that sexuality is an “aspect of identity, relationship, pleasure and creativity” (Haspel 2004:489). Rape and sexual violence need to be challenged and removed from society. Positive teachings by the church on sexual issues will help to do this. Therefore, the church needs to inform its members how to deal with sexual violence and how this violence leads to HIV infection.

Haddad argues that “the traditions of the church have notoriously seen sexuality as dangerous, thus rendering it a taboo subject confined to the secret and dark corners of our lives. This silence becomes even more deafening given the lack of analysis of patriarchy and gender injustice within the church and society” (2008:89). Given the dualistic hierarchical theological understandings of anthropology discussed in the previous chapters of this study, it is possible that men misunderstand the teachings of the church with regard to sexuality and misuse the good gift from God. This could be the reason sexual violence is increasing among Christians and society is paving the way to HIV infection. Therefore, it is very important that the church breaks the silence around sexual violence against women.

5.4 Breaking the church’s silence on links between rape and HIV infection

The low status assigned to women by men in Burundi, as discussed in Chapter Two, leads to rape against women and has a direct relationship to the growth of the HIV epidemic amongst women and young girls. It was also pointed out that girl-child rape is used as prevention or cure for HIV infection. In breaking the silence, the church needs to encourage the rape survivor to visit a doctor or to go to a health clinic after she has been raped. The rape survivor might have injuries, such as bruises or cuts, that need medical attention as soon as possible, and she can receive anti-retroviral treatment as well, as a precautionary measure. In breaking the silence, the need to educate or encourage rape survivors to seek “post-exposure prophylaxis” (PEP) is very important because it helps to reduce the risk of being infected with HIV after rape (MacKinnon 2002:18). The rape survivor can start taking the PEP pills within 72 hours of the rape. There is a possibility that the survivor can become pregnant and to prevent pregnancy she can take a pill immediately after the rape (Odendaal and Hubbard 2000: 1-9).

The vulnerability of women and young girls to rape leading to HIV infection affirms that men have failed to honour women as sexual beings and to honour life. Rape survivors are often

forced into marriage with the rapist, which is common in Burundi and in many African countries, as discussed earlier. It is one of the actions that subjects women to HIV infection and there is a deadly silence about this within the church and society. In breaking the silence, it is very important for the church to empower women in order for them to have control over their bodies. This notion is strongly emphasized by various scholars. Chitando argues that:

women need to be empowered to protect themselves. They are made in God's image. They should not surrender their lives in order to be deemed good wives...Marriage needs to be re-conceptualized as partnership (2003:188).

Similarly, Nicolson asserts that:

Churches need to locate sex within a relationship of love, not legalism. Because it is important in AIDS ministry that women be empowered to have some control within relationships, we need to move our people away from a mentality that sees sex as a man's right and a woman's duty, something which men have a right to demand of women (1996:21).

The above arguments indicate that the church needs to empower women to protect themselves against rape and from HIV infection. As pointed out in Chapter Four, women like men are created in the image of God so they have the right to live by rejecting any action or behaviour that threatens their lives. Furthermore, the church cannot remain silent about the rape of women and young girls. Czerny (2005:38) emphasizes that women and young girls are vulnerable to rape and HIV infection. The myths and cultural beliefs that promote rape "should be condemned from the pulpit" (Czerny 2005:38). The church has a special responsibility to help recover the sense of sexual wholeness. Theological understanding of human sexuality as a gift from God can enable people to attain a fuller humanity in relationship with one another. In fact, the church is supposed to actively work on the restoration of the image of God in humanity. The work of Ruether (1995:19), as discussed in the previous chapter, indicates that the hierarchy of gender takes place where the image of God is distorted. By making women less human, the image of God is already distorted. Moreover, taking away pleasure and harmonious agreement in sexual practice denies the presence of God in that union which is supposed to be divine and a symbol of true love. The church, therefore, has a major responsibility to restore divine sexuality which reflects love, gentleness and understanding of God.

In addition, Chauke (2003:141) argues that "if the church is to be a true messenger of God it should be prepared to stand by those who are oppressed, regardless of who the oppressor may

be. The Christian church should exist to liberate the oppressed” (Chauke 2003:141). Rape survivors are mostly stigmatised and discriminated against in our society. They need someone who will listen to and believe their stories. Some survivors might see the church as the last place that could solve their problems. Therefore, to encourage survivors, the church should start to preach in sermons about the destructiveness of rape. Rakoczy (2000:42) states: "Women are in the highest number in the church, yet they rarely hear about issues that are a dominant reality in their lives, such as domestic violence and rape" (2000:42). This is so because the preachers in our churches are ignorant about rape and sexual issues. In breaking the silence on women's rape, Rakoczy argues that it would be very helpful for a rape survivor to hear pastors preach and speak in public rallies about rape: "Name the sin of rape, speak, preach, pray about it" (2000:42). Similarly, Haddad (2003:162) states that "the churches need to begin to address issues of human sexuality and relationships of power in sermons and workshops" (Haddad 2003:162). The church needs to organize workshops, conferences and training programmes to inform the survivors of rape and our society about rape. It is difficult for the church to turn a blind eye to the issue of rape because women who are being raped are members of the church and society. Therefore, the church needs to condemn rape, as well as violence committed against women in any kind of form. As discussed in previous chapters, most churches are male dominated in leadership and it is, therefore, difficult for the issue of rape to be addressed, as Haddad points out:

Some of these men practise abuse in their own homes. Therefore, it is easy for men to ignore women's abuse in their churches. If the church wants to be a church for the people, the church needs to clean up all the injustice in it, such as all harmful cultural practices, and systems, such as polygamy, which oppress women, and needs to create an environment where rape survivors feel safe and comfortable (2003:160).

The church, thus, needs to be a place where women feel free to worship and practise their faith in God. To inform and educate church members, West argues for reading the Bible text of Samuel 13: 1-22. It is a relevant text for many women, and it tells the stories of both the rape survivor and the rapist. The text is about Tamar, the daughter of King David, who has been raped by her brother. She tries to "persuade him that rape is wrong and reminds him of his faith and the traditions of their culture, but she is raped because he is stronger than she" (West 2000:37). In addition, West maintains that the same thing happens with many rape survivors who try to plead with their rapist, but become victims because they are vulnerable and are silent because of their culture. The story of Tamar can help women to talk about rape openly and also to educate men concerning rape and the fact that it is against God's values.

The fact that this text is read on a Sunday will show men that the church is against the crime of rape (West 2000:37). As West states: "the story of Tamar provides a line of connection between the lived faith of women today who have been abused and their tradition" (2000:38). Preaching this text in Sunday services will help women to understand that they are not alone in their suffering as rape survivors but that the church and God are with them. This will take the church a step further to prevent rape or any kind of violence against women and among its congregants and society. To find ways of prevention, the church should open up discussions about rape between women and men. The church should allow women to be part of leadership and to hold decision-making positions in the church. This would empower women to speak for their rights and have equal status in the church. The church could be fully involved by beginning organizations of women which "work for an end to violence against women and raise funds to support them" (Rakoczy 2000:44). It is the responsibility of the church to speak out against any oppression and give pastoral care where it is needed.

5.5 Pastoral care and counselling of rape survivors

As it discussed in Chapter Two, the government and the church are silent on issues of rape and, therefore, there is little pastoral care being done with rape survivors to bring about healing. In order to deal with healing, the pastoral counsellor should encourage and assist the rape survivor to forgive herself and her rapist. Buckenham and Dlamini argue that "although forgiveness is a key component to letting go of the past, it happens in its own time. Forgiveness does not mean allowing things to go on as before, but depends on accountability of the offender and justice. There should be evidence of repentance on the part of the person who has injured the woman" (2000:34). Marie Fortune describes what, for the survivor, the act of forgiveness finally means: "I will no longer allow this experience to dominate my life. I will not let it continue to make me feel bad about myself, I will not let it limit my ability to love and trust others in my life. I will not let my memory of the experience continue to victimise and control me" (1983: 2009). Forgiveness is not an easy task, because of the anger, pain, powerlessness and misery that the rape survivor has experienced. It can be very difficult for the rape survivor to forgive her rapist. The rape survivor needs to take her time and not be forced to forgive the rapist. Buckenham states that "forgiveness is a matter of the victim's (survivor's) being able to say that she will no longer allow the experience to dominate her life and will let go of it and move on" (1999: 100). To forgive means that the survivor gets out of that trauma because it is not easy to live with that memory. It takes time. It is difficult for the survivor to forget everything and to go back to normal life. The incident might still be fresh

in her mind, so the healing could take a long time. Mary Fortune claims that the act of forgiveness helps the survivor to move forward and get past her pain in order to make a new beginning. Clinebell states: "the overarching goal of all pastoral care and counselling is to liberate, empower, and nurture wholeness centred in spirit" (1984:26). Through pastoral care and counselling the rape survivor can liberate herself from all fears, anger and frustration that dominate her mind. She needs to be empowered to stand strongly against traditional sex role stereotypes. Empowering women will help them to stop violence committed against them and to seek justice.

5.6 Report to the police

Many women in Burundi find it very difficult to report their rape cases to the police. The country does not even have data collection for rape. Those who find the courage to report their cases face stigma and sometimes their families reject them or ask their rapist to take them in marriage. Those who try to report their cases face male police who do not take them seriously. They are asked insensitive questions such as "did you enjoy it or not?" and are blamed for the rape by questions such as "what were you wearing?" (Buckenham 1999:29). The problem is that most women do not report rape cases because of the poor police treatment which they receive. Vogelmann states: "the legal system needs to be changed so that rape survivors do not feel victimized during the court case and the process of reporting sexual abuse is no longer as traumatic" (cited in Lewis 1994: 104). This can help women by reducing their fear and they may report rape cases to the police more often and easily. It is very important for the rape survivor to report her rape to the police, even if the survivor experiences humiliation. If successfully handled by the police, the man who raped her should be caught and put in jail. Dealing with the police is not so easy because police almost always are men and they have a certain image about rape. It is always better to report the rape case to the police as soon as possible. Lewis states: "It is best to report the rape within 72 hours, as this is the period in which forensic evidence, such as blood or semen, can still be collected"(Lewis 1994:55). By reporting to the police the crime of rape, the rapist is held accountable and faces the consequences of his actions. This may help rapists fear raping women because they could be punished. The church has a strong role to play in offering support to rape survivors and providing emotional support at the critical time when they report the rape to the police.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter presented responses to rape in the context of HIV infection and discussed the implications of relational anthropology for the church in this context. The reconstruction of church teaching on sexuality was discussed and it was argued that the church should reconstruct its teaching on sexuality in order to speak about sexuality as gift from God rather than as evil. The chapter discussed that the church needs to break the silence about sexuality and issues of sexual violence. This reconstruction of the teaching of the church on sexuality will assist in moving women from oppression towards fullness of life.

CHAPTER SIX

Concluding the study

6.1 Summary of the study

Chapter One introduced the study by providing a general overview. It examined the background of the study. It pointed out that patriarchal structures makes women and young girls more vulnerable to rape and ultimately to HIV infection. I argue that the church as a patriarchal institution has been very slow to responding to rape in the context of HIV infection. The church has a taciturn approach towards the link between rape and HIV infection. The research question was formulated and objectives of the study were formed. The theoretical framework and research methodology of the study were also defined. The chapter concluded by giving an outline of the whole study.

Chapter Two sketched rape in the context of HIV infection in Burundi, giving relevant statistics on rape in Burundi. The rape of women and young girls was explored in the socio-economic, political and cultural context. The chapter also demonstrated how rape is closely linked to patriarchal structures and explored relevant literature to illustrate how patriarchy prevents women from making decisions that concern their health, sex, reproduction, and other behaviour and that this exposes them to HIV infection. It was evident that women and young girls are severely affected by rape and ultimately HIV infection due to their inferior position in society and in the church which is reinforced by political, social, cultural, economic and religious factors.

Chapter Three explored how theological traditions have contributed to the vulnerability of women and young girls to rape. It highlighted how the view of women in the early Christian tradition was that they were bad news. It explored the fact that women in Roman and Jewish culture were considered men's property. This low identity assigned to women by the Church Fathers put them in a subordinate position in the church and society. The chapter also indicated that the fall of Eve became the basis for the dehumanisation of women and for blaming them for bringing sin into the world. The chapter demonstrated how *imago Dei* in the early Christian tradition viewed men as reflecting God's image, while women were judged to reflect the *imago Dei* deficiently. The chapter indicated that early leaders of the church misinterpreted the image of God with regard to women and this misinterpretation of *imago Dei* has been a source of oppression and discrimination against women. It was,

therefore, evidenced throughout this chapter that the distortion of the *imago Dei* in women gave rise to their subordination, a trend that has continued in the current period. This situation sadly exposes women and young girls to the vulnerability of rape, as they are religiously and culturally denied the right to make decisions about their own well-being.

Chapter Four presented feminist interpretations of women's humanity. The chapter presented the feminist critique of misinterpretation of women's anthropology. It presented, also, theological anthropologies from the Creation account that affirm that women are created in the image of God. The chapter demonstrated that *imago Dei* is a theological concept that promotes male and female as equally human and rejects any deviation from patriarchal and androcentric anthropologies that work to put women in a subordinate position. Relational anthropology was presented as an anthropological model concept emanating from *imago Dei* that affirms women and men as equal creatures. However, for the purpose of this chapter, the primary focus was on women. Relational anthropology upholds the mutuality and equality of both genders and abolishes sexism. The chapter highlighted the work of feminist theologians and critiqued negative interpretations of theologies of church tradition that deny women as being made fully in *imago Dei*. It argued that feminist theologians reconstruct a positive and affirming anthropological notion for women's dignity in the church and society.

Chapter Five argued that the church and society would never succeed in fighting rape in the context of HIV infection, if they did not put an end to women's oppression in the church. The chapter presented the role of relational anthropology in order to promote women's dignity in Burundi. The chapter also argued that for the Burundian churches to be relevant, they needed to reconstruct their theological teaching on sexuality in order to restore women's dignity in the face of the challenge of rape and HIV infection. The implication for Burundian churches is that they need to advocate social justice by being on the side of women in challenging oppressive political and socio-economic ideologies, as well as cultural traditions and religious beliefs that do not promote right relationships between men and women. The chapter also outlined practical steps that the church and society in Burundi can take in responding to rape in the context of HIV infection.

6.2 Recommendations for further research

In Chapter Two of this study, it was argued that women have been and continue to be treated unequally to men, both culturally and theologically, by patriarchal structures. Women are treated as second-class human beings and suffer many injustices in the name of religion and

culture in Burundi. The researcher, therefore, contends that the inclusion of empirical research would have added much value to the study. As published material is limited, further studies on this subject need to include qualitative field research in order to determine how the survivors of rape respond to this issue that affects their lives. In this way, their voices can be heard.

This study has shown that the church displays an oppressive theology which needs to be reconstructed in order to be a theology of social transformation, which would effectively not only restore women to their place in society but also tackle social injustice based on gender discrimination. As discussed in Chapter Two, sexual issues are taboo within the church and society. Given the silence surrounding rape and HIV infection, retribution theology finds its way into the practice of the church through stigma and discrimination, where rape survivors are considered more as perpetrator than as victim. Rape survivors are excluded from church work and are rejected by husbands or family on suspicion that they are HIV positive. The study, therefore, recommends further research on a theology of the body and sexuality in order to respond to the current Burundian context where there is increasing rape, sexual violence and HIV incidence.

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