

**GOD'S IMAGE OR MAN'S GLORY?: A KENYAN
POSTCOLONIAL FEMINIST READING OF 1
CORINTHIANS 11:1-16**

By

Lydia Muthoni Mwaniki

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Supervisors

Professor Jonathan Draper and Doctor Sarojini Nadar

DECLARATION

I, Lydia Muthoni Mwaniki, PhD candidate, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Faculty of Humanities, Religion and Social sciences, School of Religion and Theology, hereby declare that unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, this thesis is my own original work and shall only be submitted for the purposes of the above mentioned degree.

Lydia Muthoni Mwaniki

10th January 2011
Date

As the supervisor, I hereby approve this thesis for submission

Professor Jonathan Draper

Date

As the co-supervisor, I hereby approve this thesis for submission

Doctor Sarojini Nadar

Date

University of Kwazulu-Natal

2011

DEDICATION

In loving memory of my beloved husband, the late Rev. Daniel Stakos Mwaniki, who encouraged and motivated me to pursue a PhD course but died suddenly two months before I began the programme. My dear husband, I have fought the good fight, I have won the race. Glory to God! May your soul rest in eternal peace until we meet again. Amen.

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ABSTRACT

This study uses a postcolonial feminist analysis to show how a biblical text (1 Cor 11:1-16), because of its patriarchal and imperial background, excludes women from the image of God. It demonstrates how this text has been taken up, developed and appropriated to support the subordination of women throughout the Christian tradition from the Church Fathers to the reformers and right up to the present day postcolonial Kenyan Church context. While this text has been used for a long time to oppress women, this study argues that a critical reading of the text from a postcolonial feminist perspective shows that gender disparity exists in this and in other gender-biased Pauline and post-Pauline texts because they were based on the existing patriarchal and imperial structures, which subordinated women to men. Further the study demonstrates that the texts have continued to subordinate women to men throughout the history of Christian tradition. Most churches, such as the Anglican Church, express belief in the Scriptures. Yet such churches like the Anglican Church of Kenya, which seemingly supports gender equality through its gender inclusive article in its *Constitution*, does not offer guidance about how such texts are to be read and appropriated by Christians. The study offers a method to fill this gap. It is hoped that the academy and the church will avail themselves of this method in their reading practices of the Bible. It takes into account the history of gender and imperial biases in the construction of texts such as 1 Cor 11:1-16 that exclude women from the image of God.

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ACRONYMS

ACC-Anglican Consultative Council

ACK-Anglican Church of Kenya

AIDS-Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

AIM-African Inland Mission

CBS-Contextual Bible Study

CMS-Church Missionary Society

CNC-Chief Native Commissioner

CPK-Church of the Province of Kenya

DC-District Commissioner

FGM-Female Genital Mutilation

FPE-Free Primary Education

GEMA-Gikuyu, Embu, Meru Association

GER-Gross Enrolment Rate

HIV-Human Immunodeficiency Virus

IBEA-Imperial British East African Company

KAMA-Kenya Anglican Men's Association

KCSE-Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education

KKSA-Kikuyu Karing'a Independent Schools Association

KISA-Kikuyu Independent Schools Association

KNA-Kenya National Archives

MP-Member of Parliament

MU-Mothers' Union

NIV-New International Version

NPCs-Neo-Pentecostal Churches

NRSV-New Revised International Version

NT-New Testament

ODM-Orange Democratic Movement

OT-Old Testament

PCS-Post Cultural Studies

PNU-Party of National Unity

SCM-Church of Scotland Mission

UN-United Nations

YKA-Young Kikuyu Association

GLOSSARY

Androcentrism

Androcentrism means ‘male-centeredness’. It is the belief that men’s experience and thought are normative for human beings i.e. men’s experiences, viewpoints, and ideas represent all of human experience.

Colonialism

Colonialism is a political manifestation of imperialism, which includes geographical control. According to Segovia (2005:66), it is “the implantation of settlements in distant territories by the dominating centre.” One of the differences between colonialism and imperialism therefore is that the former includes the physical presence of the centre in distant territories (for a detailed comparison of both see Segovia 2005:66-68).

Decolonization and **Depatriarchalization**-I will use these terms as used by Dube (1996:122-123). They mean to counter or recognize and expose the imperial and patriarchal elements in the text rather than bracketing them.

Glory

In the Old Testament, glory was used in a secular sense for ‘honour’ or for such things as material wealth that gave importance to man. In relation to God, it implies that which makes God impressive to man or the force of God’s manifestation. In Rabbinic Judaism, the term denotes divine and human honour. Rabbinic Judaism recognizes that the first created being had a part in God’s glory or radiance. This view is echoed by Fee in his attempt to define ‘glory’ in Paul’s argument that man is the ‘image and glory of God’ (1 Cor 11:7). Fee (1987:516) states that “being in God’s image, man is somehow a reflection of God himself.” In the New Testament, glory has a sense of repute, honour and radiance (Kittel 1964:237). The term ‘glory’ is significant in this study since it is the subject of investigation, and captured in the title. While Paul in 1 Cor 11:7 limits the glory of God to man and presents the woman only as the glory of man, this study argues that a woman’s glory is not derivative but rather, being in God’s glory, woman is a reflection of, and brings honour to God, as man does.

Hybridity

Hybridity is the condition that results from intercultural exchange, in which one culture is not swallowed by another but both intermix to create something new. Sugirtharajah (2001:249) describes it as “a space where one is equally committed to and disturbed by the colonized and the colonizing cultures.” He further regards it as a “two way process in which both parties are interactive so that something new is created” (2002:191). In simpler terms, he defines it as “a process where different cultures interact to create new transcultural forms” (2006b:67). In Bhabha’s view, it is “a doubling, dissembling image of being in at least two places at once” (Punt 2003:59-81), or “the ‘Third Space’ which emerges from an analytical scrutiny of diverse cultures rather than from integrating them” (quoted from Sugirtharajah 2001:249). In my understanding, hybridity results from the colonizer’s call to imitation of his superior culture. Since the colonized cannot imitate fully, an in-between space is left which creates hybridity that manifests itself in ambivalence where as Sugirtharajah (2001:249) puts it “one is equally committed to and disturbed by the colonized and the colonizing cultures.”

Image of God (*Imago Dei*)

The Latin for ‘image of God’ is ‘*Imago Dei*.’ In Greek *eikōn* (image) in the strict sense is an ‘artistic representation’, e.g. a statue or impress on a coin as in Matt 22:20 (Kleinknecht 1964:388). *Imago Dei* is “a visible manifestation or contingent picture which reflects the otherwise inaccessible but intelligible mind of God” (Thiselton 2000:834). The LXX retains the notion of a visible model. In the epistle to the Hebrews, Christ is portrayed as the perfect manifestation of God. In Jewish, Christian and Muslim theologies, the term *Imago Dei* signifies human relationship to God on the one hand, and to the living creatures on the other. By virtue of being created in the image of God, human beings possess qualities that distinguish them from other creatures. They radiate or manifest the presence and love of God. For this reason they are, according to Moltmann, prohibited from constructing images of God (cited in Thiselton 2000:834).

According to the Encyclopedia of Science and Religion (<<http://www.enotes.com/science-religion-encyclopedia/imago-dei>> p.1, accessed: 23.10.2009), the original Hebrew meaning of the term as it first occurs in Gen 1:26-27, 5:1-3, 9:1-7 has long been debated in the Christian theological tradition. In the ancient and medieval theologies, the image of God is identified with

the human ability to reason. During the Reformation period, Luther (1483-1546) interpreted the image in terms of human relationality with God. In the Enlightenment period, the image of God was seen in the human capacity for self-consciousness and current scholarship attaches the meaning to human acts of stewardship or representation of God's sovereignty.

While the interpretation of the image of God continues in its various dynamisms, my argument is that both male and female equally share in all implications of being created "in the image of God," "male and female..." (Gen 1:27). This for me includes the ability of both male and female to image God in their moral, spiritual, and intellectual nature. They image God in their ability to actualize qualities that God has bestowed on them. This study regards a denial of the possession of gifts in women, whether these are gifts of leadership or otherwise, as a distorted perception of the image of God, not only in a woman but also in a man, and consequently affecting the image of God itself which comprises both male and female. Part of what it means to be created in the image of God, my study implies, is also an atmosphere where both men and women live in dignity. Any situation that denies human dignity on basis of gender, race, class, tribe, nationality etc., is deemed as distorting the perception of *Imago Dei* in male and female.

Imperialism

I shall use Edward Said's definition as cited in Dube (1997:15) and Segovia (2005:66-67) of imperialism. Said uses the term to refer to the practice, theory and attitudes of a dominating centre or metropolitan over distant territory. These tendencies include the imposition of the centre's images, ideas, religions, economic structures and political control in foreign lands. Imperialism is therefore an ideology of expansion that does not necessarily include geographical possession. It adopts diverse forms and methods at different times (Dube 1998:297). When Paul was writing, Corinth, formerly a Greek city, had been under Roman imperial power since Caesar re-founded it in 44 BCE, as we shall see in the next chapter.

Imperial texts

Dube (1997:16) defines imperial or colonial texts as texts that are designed to take possession of the minds and lands of those who are different (the colonized) (Dube 1997:16).

Masculinities

Whitehead and Barrett (2001:15-16) define ‘masculinities’ as “those behaviors, languages and practices, existing in specific cultural and organizational locations, which are commonly associated with males and thus culturally defined as not feminine.” Positively, they accord identity to the male gender but, negatively, they ‘other’ the female gender. This research investigates how masculinities have been constructed in the ancient Near East by Greek philosophers, dictating gender relationships in the Jewish, Greek, and Roman world and consequently shaping the view of unequal gender power relations in literary and legal sources, including the biblical writers.

Mimicry

According to Moore (2005:88), mimicry is the posture ‘in which the colonized heeds the colonizer’s peremptory injunction to imitation, but in a manner that constantly threatens to teeter over into mockery’ (2005:88). On another level, it can be seen as the selective use of the master’s tools by the subaltern (e.g. the Bible) as a way of enhancing the subaltern’s identity or evolving a hybrid identity. In this study, I am using *mimicry* as a postcolonial term *in a particular way*, not to examine the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized but to illuminate ways in which Paul, who is a subject of the empire, *imitates* the empire in his effort to form an alternative community of believers. Chapter four for instance examines such acts of imitation with regard to Paul’s construction of gender power relations in the text of 1 Cor 11:1-16. The term mimicry further illuminates the behaviour of Paul’s subjects i.e. the Corinthian Christians especially women towards Paul. It will be evident that they do not always imitate him but sometimes resist his call to imitation just as the colonized in modern times sometimes resisted the colonizer’s call to imitation.

Patriarchy

Mary Daly defines patriarchy as ‘father-rule’ in which some powerful males exercise power over some other males, and most women and children (see Loades 1998:81). For Ruether (1983) patriarchy means “not only the subordination of females to males, but the whole structure of Father-ruled society: aristocracy over serfs, masters over slaves, king over subjects, racial overlords over colonized people.” Following these definitions, in this study, patriarchy will refer

to a rule that validates male sovereignty. It is a rule by men, in which men hold positions of power in all-important institutions in the family, social, political, religious and economic realms of society whereas women are kept from holding these positions. It will also refer to a system in which some powerful men and women exercise power over other men, women and children in dehumanizing ways. In addition, patriarchy is an ideology and a cultural system, which draws both men and women to its service.

Sex and Gender

Sex is biologically determined. It has to do with biological differences between men and women. Gender, on the other hand, is culturally constructed. It refers to ways in which a particular society constructs or makes the differences between men and women. I will use the term ‘gender’ to refer to the social construction of the categories of men and women, masculinities and femininities. Sometimes biology is used to justify socially constructed gender roles, which subordinate women, especially the notion that women are “naturally” more nurturing.

Sexism

Sexism is the belief that a person is superior or inferior to another person on the basis of his/her sex. In this study, it will refer to unequal treatment of either women or men on this basis.

Subaltern

“Subaltern” refers to the non-elite, rural section of Indian society, ranging from destitutes to the upper ranks of the peasants (Sugirtharajah 2002:22). In this thesis, I will use the term ‘subaltern’ to refer to marginalized and oppressed people who mainly include the colonized and women.

Traditional

This term will refer to beliefs and practices that are not foreign to ethnic groups in Kenya but that have their roots in pre-colonial Kenyan societies. Some continue to be practiced in these communities by the present generation.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This church proclaims that all human beings are made in the image of God and are therefore, of equal value and dignity in the sight of God, and, while careful to provide for the special needs of different people committed to its charge, allows no discrimination in the membership and government of the Church based on grounds of racial, tribal or gender difference (The Anglican Church of Kenya Constitution 2002:6, Article IV).

1.0 Background and research question

The gender-inclusive article IV in the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK) Constitution (2002:6) seems to suggest that the church supports gender equality. However, while a commendable effort is being made to empower women through engaging them in leadership positions and the church has even gone as far as ordaining them, my experience as an ordained woman in this church has shown that women are still marginalized in various areas of the life of church and society. For example, the participation of the ordained women clergy in top leadership positions in the church is still significantly minimal. Furthermore, despite the equality proclaimed in the constitution, the church has not developed policies with regard to cultural prejudices that confine women to their ‘traditional place’. My earlier study (Mwaniki 2000:76) revealed that ordination or holding a leadership position in the public arena for a woman does not automatically translate into liberation from her traditional status in the home, for she is always a home maker. Women continue to practice their traditional gender roles even in the church.¹

One of the main reasons why the church has not been able to act on its constitutional commitment to gender equality, I would argue, is because of some biblical texts in particular Pauline texts like 1 Cor 11:1-16, 14:34-35 (and other post-Pauline texts traditionally attributed to

¹ Nadar (2003:213) makes a similar observation in her remark that “...although many women work outside the home in professional jobs, their roles within the church and the home are still confined to the domestic arena.”

Paul e.g. 1 Tim 2:11-12, Eph 5: 22-24). The Bible remains authoritative in the ACK, as it does in many church communities. The text has reinforced the already existing gender-biased patriarchal attitudes in various cultural contexts where the gospel has been preached. It consequently affects the relationship between men and women in the church, at home and also in society at large, whereby the perception of the image of God in a woman is distorted. As Ackermann (2004:31) argues, “We know, (however), that the Bible, as the source book of our faith, is a powerful means for defining women’s place in society and that it has been invoked to justify women’s subordination to men.” Therefore, these texts do not only legitimize the subordination of women at the level of the text but have also been appropriated in the Christian tradition as divine sanctions for the subordinate status of a woman. Schussler-Fiorenza (2003:203) raises a similar point in her observation that preachers and theologians have used Pauline passages over the centuries to silence women’s demands for equality, arguing that “the submission of women and their subordinate role in family, society and church was ordained and revealed through Paul and that woman was created after man (and) she is not the image of God.”

The continued use of Pauline texts to justify theological and cultural beliefs and practices which relegate a woman to a subservient status is reflected in my own experiences of subordination as an African Christian woman and also the subordination of women that I have witnessed during my pastoral ministry as a priest. Paul’s writings were for instance used to deny me and my women colleagues ordination to priesthood for some years, even after undergoing three years of ordination training together with men. The men were immediately ordained after completing the course while the women were commissioned to serve in the lay ministry. Sometimes we were assigned to serve under our male classmates as their juniors. There was also a big discrepancy with regard to our remuneration.

Given that biblical texts such as Pauline texts have been appropriated and applied in oppressive ways, subordinating women even to this day, in this study I want to examine how such Pauline texts can be read in ways that are not oppressive to women. One such text that has been used to subordinate women is 1 Cor 11:1-16. This is a pivotal text that deals with the heart of the matter, namely with the question whether women are fully human, and whether they are fully created in the image of God.

The struggle to recognize that women are made ‘fully’ in the ‘image of God’ has been a major concern of feminist theologians (see for example Gonzalez 2007, Rakoczy 2004:28-57, Ruether 1983, 1993, Ackerman 1991). While the Genesis text (1:27) describes God as creating *ha-adam* in the ‘image of God’ (“male and female he created them”), Paul in 1 Cor 11:7 argues for man’s exclusive God-likeness.² This text, which excludes women from the image of the divine, has been interpreted and appropriated in the history of the Christian tradition in ways that are oppressive to women.

The Early Church Fathers for instance used the Bible selectively, especially 1 Cor 11:1-16 among other biblical texts, to justify subordination of women in the church and to show that women are evil and do not bear the image of God (see Tavard 1973:113, Clark 1983, Rakoczy 2004:30-32). In so doing they excluded women from ordination to priesthood and consequently from the top decision-making positions in the church hierarchy. Following the theology of the Church Fathers, and Pauline passages which subordinate women to men, Western missionaries treated African women as inferior to men. In Kenya for instance, in the colonial era, Christian women were kept from church leadership positions (Mwaniki 2000: 51-53). It is clear therefore, that a reading of this text is important if we are to fulfil the vision and mission of the church *Constitution* on gender equality. Hence, in this study, I will read 1 Cor 11:1-16, using theories of postcolonial biblical criticism and postcolonial feminist hermeneutics to decolonize and to depatriarchalize³ this particular text with a view to scrutinizing in how far such a reading can contribute toward the vision of gender equality in the ACK and in society. My research question therefore is: *To what extent can a postcolonial feminist reading of 1 Cor 11:1-16 re-image the distorted perception of Imago Dei in a woman?* Further questions which I will attempt to answer are:

² In 1 Cor 11:7 Paul states; “A man...is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man” (NIV).

³ I will use these terms as used by Dube (1996:122-123). They mean to counter or recognize and expose the imperial and patriarchal elements in the text rather than bracketing them.

- To what extent did Paul's imperial identity shape his gendered view that "a man ...is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man?" (NIV).
- How do Paul's gender views, as expressed in the text, maintain and subvert unequal gender power relations in the church?
- What difference can a postcolonial reading make to the meaning and appropriation of this text?

1.1 Reading the text through postcolonial feminist lenses

1.1.1 Postcolonial biblical hermeneutics

Postcolonial biblical criticism is a new approach to biblical interpretation. It is derived from postcolonial theory, which seeks emancipation from all forms of colonial and imperial entanglement. (This will be expanded on in chapter two). A postcolonial biblical criticism optic is helpful for my study in four ways. Firstly, a postcolonial biblical optic investigates and analyzes the impact of imperialism on the production, interpretation and the interpreters of canonical texts (Segovia 2005:24, Sugirtharajah 2002:25). I am interested in examining what such an analysis would make of my text of focus, in view of the fact that Paul was writing in the imperial context of the Roman Empire. Furthermore, the text has continued to be interpreted and appropriated within various imperial and colonial contexts.

The second feature of postcolonial biblical criticism is the acknowledgement of the intricate relationship between colonialism/imperialism and patriarchy whereby the analysis of one without the other is deemed incomplete by postcolonial feminist theologians (Kwok 2005:80-81, Dube 2000:73). Both Kwok (2005:80-81) and Dube (2000:73)⁴ agree that colonialism involves the contest of male power in which "patriarchal ideology is constantly *reshaped* and *reformulated* on the colonial process" (emphasis mine) (Kwok 2005:81). This process subjects a woman to

⁴ Dube (2000:73) for instance notes that "because of patriarchy, imperialism is to a large degree a male game". Edet and Ekeya (1998) show further how these systems reinforced each other to bring about double subordination of women in Kenya and Nigeria in the colonial era.

double subordination by colonialism and patriarchy. Thus, my study investigates how these systems have served each other at the level of the text, its interpretation and appropriation.

A third element of postcolonial criticism which makes it attractive for my study is that the undefined broad parameters of postcolonialism allow for the use of a variety of different hermeneutical methodologies. According to Sugirtharajah (1998:15), postcolonialism “is not a homogeneous project but a hermeneutical salmagundi, consisting of extremely varied methods, materials, historical entanglements, geographical locations, political affiliations, cultural identities and economic predicaments.” I regard this as a strength because it enables me to specify my own agenda in my own context within this broad framework.

Finally, postcolonial theory allows the reader to play an active role in interpretation. As Punt (2003:73) points out, in postcolonial biblical criticism, meaning in a text is constructed in the text-reader interaction. Postcolonial scholars read texts with a view to decolonizing them in order to liberate the oppressed (Punt 2003:73, Dube 1997). This approach therefore allows me to read 1 Cor 11: 1-16 using theories of postcolonial biblical hermeneutics.

While much scholarly attention has been paid to the Hellenistic and Jewish patriarchal contexts which Paul found himself in, little attention has been given to the role that the Roman family and society played in informing his worldviews.⁵ This study seeks to fill this gap, but without at all

⁵ Some scholars have however acknowledged the political or imperial context of biblical texts (e.g. Dube 1998; 2001; Nadar 2001; 2003; and Nzimande 2007) but do not specifically deal with Pauline writings. There are some postcolonial feminist scholars who have generally interrogated Paul’s anti-imperial stance by adding the gender dimension to his texts but in the main without examining how the Roman family structure influenced the way in which Paul wrote 1 Cor 11:1-16, which my study seeks to do. These scholars include Kittredge (2000), D’Angelo (2003), Briggs (2000) and Kwok (2005). They all doubt Horsley’s stance that Paul is anti imperial (Horsley 1998b) on the basis of his subordination of women. Kittredge for instance argues that Paul is fundamentally shaped by the patronage system. Wire (1990), using New Criticism (which emphasizes the text) to read Paul’s rhetoric in 1 Cor usefully unearths the role of women prophets as key to the formation of early Christian communities. She however does not problematize Paul’s use of the hierarchy of subordination and his exclusion of women from the image of God, which my postcolonial feminist approach seeks to examine. Fiorenza (2003) in her analysis of 1 Cor 11: 2-16; 14: 33-36 shows Paul as a liberator of women by arguing that women were allowed to prophesy and to pray in his churches provided that “they should not deny in their behavior the creational differences (Gen 2) and hierarchical relationships” (Fiorenza 2003:219). She, like Wire, fails to problematize these creational differences and the hierarchy of subordination. Furthermore, she does not locate the text in its imperial context, which this research

bracketing the Jewish and Hellenistic socio-cultural contexts. It argues that *a satisfactory scrutiny of Paul's construction of gender identity and hierarchy has to take into account not only his Jewish/Hellenistic cultural context but also the Roman imperial ideology of gender power relations that informed his worldviews*. It also argues that the denial of the ability of a woman to image God is a distortion of the perception of the divine image itself.

1.1.2 Postcolonial feminist hermeneutics

Given that my hypothesis is that Paul's gendered worldview was informed by his imperial background, it is important to engage theories in my study that combine both postcolonial and feminist theories.

Postcolonial biblical criticism and postcolonial feminist hermeneutics are not opposed to each other. Both are engaged in a struggle against all forms of oppression including patriarchy and colonialism. Both are also committed to the interrogation of colonial texts and exposure of the subjugation of both male and female in these texts and further problematize the use of gender in the colonial discourse and social reality.

Why then the need for postcolonial feminist biblical hermeneutics theories rather than simply use postcolonial biblical criticism theories to read my text? This choice has been necessitated by three reasons. Firstly, one of the points of departure between post colonial biblical criticism and postcolonial feminist hermeneutics is that male postcolonial critics overlook and downplay gender differences, women's concerns and their contribution to the liberation process,⁶ and hence the need for a postcolonial feminist approach to read this text, a text which necessitates

labors to do. My study is therefore unique. Its originality lies particularly in its use of a postcolonial feminist perspective to interrogate and read 1 Cor 11:1-16, and to appropriate it to the Anglican Church of Kenya.

⁶ The other differences between the two as recorded by Sugirtharajah (2002:26) are that the Third World postcolonial feminists in particular unearth and investigate the role of women in the struggle for freedom, their involvement in social roles, motherhood and economic development. Second, Third World feminists recognize that women of the First World participated in colonizing men and women of the Third World and are also beneficiaries of the aftermath of colonialism. Third, postcolonial feminist scholars of the Third World, critique First World biblical scholars for bracketing the colonial context of the imperializing texts so that their exegetical conclusions fail to problematize the colonial agenda that has shaped the biblical narrative.

liberation of women. Secondly, in this study, I argue that Paul was not writing only as a male Jew but also as a product of Roman imperialism with its patriarchal influences. It is therefore productive to use postcolonial feminist hermeneutics to inquire how his understanding of women was informed by the Roman imperial view of the same, and especially by the way in which the Roman law constructed a woman. Thirdly, a postcolonial feminist interpretation will expose that the theology of the early Church Fathers who excluded women from the image of God, has continued to influence the present as an authorizing past, through (to use Kwok's words) a "repetitious citation and continuous interpretation using the same framework" (Kwok 2005:146). My theory therefore contests this authorizing past.

Postcolonial feminist theories have therefore been used in this study, not only because they include all the concerns of postcolonial biblical criticism, but also because they go further to include the gender dimension, which is the main concern of my research. This approach has well defined theories of reading for decolonization and depatriachalization, which I have used to read 1 Cor 11:1-16 in chapter four (see Dube 1997, 1998, 2000).

In addition, my study is also informed by African women's theologies which address the specific situation of experiences of women in Africa. Some of the issues which African women's theologies addresses, and which are also of significance to my study are, women's struggles with patriarchal culture, their participation in colonialism, missionary Christianity and its aftermath. Because of these struggles, African feminist cultural hermeneutics has been developed as a theory (Oduyoye 2001; Kanyoro 2002). This theory has been used as a tool to analyze culture and the Bible as these operate in the lives of women in the African context. The theory is used to expose and critique those aspects of African and biblical cultures, which are life-denying for women and to reclaim aspects which are life-giving. It is the former concern of this theory, namely the exposing and critiquing of the life-denying aspects of 1 Cor 11:1-16 that I am more interested in.

1.2 Research methods and methodology

The study is purely a philosophical and theoretical undertaking. It is non-empirical in that it does not involve the use of any primary data such as survey, interviews, experiment etc to support any major theory. In response to the research question therefore, I have relied heavily on analysis of secondary data obtained from library research in books, periodicals, theses, relevant publications, national and church archival materials and internet research.

In my approach to the text of 1 Cor 11:1-16, I use two hermeneutical methods, namely historical criticism and literary criticism. Historical criticism seeks to retrieve meaning by reading behind the text i.e. by looking into the 'world of the author' (his/her socio-historical context). While the context of the author is important to my study, the question of authorship of the text is not. Notwithstanding some scholars like Horsley (1998a), who argue that on the basis of the flow of the argument, the passage is an interpolation, I proceed with the argument that, as a result of the damage which this text continues to exert on the identity of a woman due to Paul's authority that has been traditionally attached to it, it would be unthinkable to explain it away as an interpolation. I therefore maintain the traditional view of Pauline authorship in order to analyze his thought through a postcolonial optic. Given my objective in terms of finding a more liberating view of this passage for my church in Kenya, the question of authorship becomes a minor one, because it is not an issue for my community of faith to which it does not matter who authored the text. Feminist scholars like Nadar (2003:4) make a similar observation about the authority of the Bible among faith communities when she indicates that "in many contemporary churches, the Bible is considered foundational literature, upon which the church (and hence those who belong to it) bases many of its practices." I therefore consider the arguments of the authorship of the text as secondary to the primary task of reading the text in liberating ways for women since the text stands as oppressive regardless of who wrote it.

The second hermeneutical method employed in this study is literary criticism. According to Dube (1997:15-16), a literary postcolonial reading involves an analysis of the literary constructions of the text and how they function to justify subordination of women on the basis of imperialism and culture. This is how I will use literary criticism in this study. It will particularly

help me to examine how Paul constructs gender power relations and his use of rhetoric in the text. It will also enable me to determine the literary unit of my text of focus.

1.3 Logic of the study.

*How shall I use my theoretical frameworks and my methods to appropriate meaning in the text?
What logic will be used?*

I use Draper's 'tri-polar model' of contextual exegesis⁷ as my logic to interpret the text (2001, 2002 cf. West 2007a). Draper argues that the interpretive process takes into account three poles namely: *distantiation* (othering the text or allowing it to speak for itself through a process of exegesis of the text in its context); *contextualization* (analyzing the context of the reader/ hearer and relating it to the communication offered by the text) and *appropriation* (bringing the context of the text and the context of the reader/ hearer into dialogue or conversation with the text and then the putting into action of this meaning by the reader/ hearer and the community).

This model has been favoured in this study because my study is contextual and I recognize (as Draper 2001 rightly argues) that the Bible was not written to my faith community. It can only be appropriated into the context of this community through Draper's and other models. However, while in this process Draper employs a hermeneutics of trust (Draper 2002:15), my study begins from a hermeneutics of suspicion due to the sexist nature of my text. Following Draper, I will apply the tri-polar model as follows:

Distantiation-I will distance myself from the text (1 Cor 11:1-16) by locating Corinth within the Roman Empire, locating 1 Cor within Roman Corinth, and locating (Corinthian) women in the Roman Empire (chapter 3). I will also distance myself by doing an 'exegesis' of the text in order

⁷ The term 'tri-polar' was first used by Cristina Grenholm and Daniel Patte who in their analysis of 'Scripture Criticism' argued that scripture reading is an interpretive process that interrelates three poles, namely; a scripture text, the believer's life and the believer's religious perception of life (Grenholm and Patte 2000: 14). This view was then modified by Draper (2001, 2002). In an effort to conceptualize the pole of appropriation, West (2007a) takes the tri-polar model further and attempts to show how it operates in biblical hermeneutics in Africa.

to locate it in this socio-historical and in the Roman imperial context (chapter four). In my distantiation, I will use the historical critical method.

Contextualization-I shall bring postcolonial feminist hermeneutics into conversation with the text in its context, in order to scrutinize it for non-liberating imperial and cultural ideologies as well as for aspects of colonial mimicry, hybridity, ambivalence, resistance and to unearth the submerged voices of women in the text. In so doing I will use *a literary reading of the text* to analyze the construction of the hierarchy of subordination in the text, gender construction, and Paul's construction of the image of God in relation to male and female in the text, in chapter four.

Appropriation-I will bring the insights drawn from the above reading to bear on the lineage of the appropriation of the text in the history of the Christian tradition, culminating in my church context (ACK), which is also shaped by the African culture and the ecclesio-theological missionary residue. In this conversation, I will scrutinize the non-liberating elements in the way the text has been previously appropriated and impacted on gender power relations in the church and in the community (chapter five, six, and seven), and finally propose the course for action in chapter eight. My use of the tri-polar model is therefore linked to the structure of the study, which I describe below.

1.4 A summary of the structure of the study

The study is divided into eight chapters all which focus on the aim of the study, namely to read 1 Cor 11:1-16 in a way that re-images the distorted perception of *Imago Dei* in the text and in subsequent contexts in the history of the Christian tradition, with special reference to ACK.

Chapter one gives the overall structure by defining the research question, explaining the theories and methods that are used in answering the research question and describing why the study is important.

Chapter two introduces and highlights the concerns of postcolonial feminist hermeneutics as my main theoretical framework, locating it within the wider contexts of, (a) postcolonial studies, (b)

biblical criticism, (c) feminist biblical studies, and (d) African and liberation biblical hermeneutics. The chapter further demonstrates that this theoretical framework has been favoured as a result of the inadequacies of previous approaches to biblical interpretation.

Chapter three situates 1 Cor in its Roman imperial/ social context. It locates Corinth within the Roman Empire and establishes that the Roman imperial/socio-cultural context and the Corinthian worldview form the basis on which 1 Cor was written. The chapter also locates the Corinthian woman within the Roman Empire, mainly within the Roman family structure and Roman law. It establishes that the status and role of women in the church in Corinth, and in Christianity in general in the first century C.E., cannot be properly conceived outside the Roman Empire.

Chapter four employs a postcolonial feminist hermeneutical framework to read 1 Cor 11:1-16. The text is investigated within its socio-historical context and literary context in the light of the findings of chapter three. The goal of the interpretive process is however not merely exegetical-critical but significantly hermeneutical. In other words, the chapter does not just seek to retrieve the intention of the author in the text through the examination of the way in which he constructs gender, but also to use the postcolonial feminist theories to identify and expose the imperial and patriarchal aspects in the text. It is a reading of the text.

Chapter five sketches how Paul's perception of *Imago Dei*, in which he excludes women from the image of the divine, and his notion of male headship and female subjection were taken up, developed and appropriated in the history of the Christian tradition with special focus on the Church Fathers up to the Victorian construction of gender in the Church of England in the 18th century. The Fathers' views have been traced, not only to Paul but also further to the construction of masculinity in the ancient world from which they draw heavily for their construction of unequal gender power relations and for their perceptions of *Imago Dei* in gender. The chapter therefore argues that gender construction has to be historicized. It demonstrates how the tradition about the subordinate status of women has been constructed, sometimes through distortion. The chapter also offers a feminist critique on the construction of women in the history of the Christian tradition.

Owing to the fact that the appropriation and application of the text in previous contexts had made it almost “natural” to consider women as not bearing the image of God, chapter six examines what impact this distorted tradition of gender relationships had on the interaction between the worldviews of British missionaries (Church Missionary Society-CMS) and pre-colonial Kenyan communities, mainly the Kikuyu pre-colonial community.

Chapter seven examines the perception of the image of God in gender construction in the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK). It shows that although the church has made commendable efforts to liberate women, in some ways it has also continued in the long tradition of gender bias from pre-colonial times to the missionary period, and to the contemporary post-missionary period.

Chapter eight forms the conclusion of the study. It shows that Kenyan women have not been passive recipients of colonial and patriarchal domination. It shows various ways in which Kenyan women respond by way of mimicry, resistance and survival. The chapter further charts what work remains to be done.

In conclusion, this study proposes a postcolonial feminist approach to read 1 Cor 11:1-16. This approach offers tools for decolonization and depatriarchalization of gender-biased biblical texts, with a view to creating mutual gender power relationships. In this way, the distorted perception of *Imago Dei* in male and female in the text can be re-imaged.

CHAPTER 2

POSTCOLONIAL FEMINIST HERMENEUTICS

2.0 Introduction

In the last three decades Two-Thirds World biblical scholars⁸ have pioneered biblical interpretations that take full cognizance of the importance of not only the social location of the author but more importantly the influence that the social location of the interpreter exerts on his or her search for meaning in the Bible (Okure 1995:54). West (2007:10) is therefore accurate in his contention that “African biblical interpretation is overt about the context from which and for which the biblical text is interpreted.” African biblical interpretation takes seriously the fact that “all readings of the Bible are contextual” (West 2006:131). African biblical interpreters approach the Bible with their concerns and questions, which constitute their ideo-theological orientations (or generally the theoretical hermeneutical frameworks) through which they appropriate the text to their own context, and hence their reading of biblical texts is subjective. Ukpong makes this point clearer by his observation that African biblical interpreters (and other Two-Thirds World scholars in general) have therefore taken a divergent view from the modernist biblical scholars who failed to acknowledge the contextual dimension of the reader by holding that scholarly interpretation of the Bible can be objective and hence neutral. In short, as Ukpong (2001:11) rightly observes, the main focus of interpretation in the African context “is on the communities that receive the text rather than on those that produced it or on the text itself, as is the case with the Western methods.” This focus on the context of the reader has led to a proliferation of hermeneutical methods within biblical scholarship. In this chapter I want to focus on one of these methods namely, postcolonial feminist hermeneutics.

⁸ These include Latin American liberation theologians, black theologians of South Africa and North America, African and Asian theologians.

2.1 Locating postcolonial feminist hermeneutics

In this chapter, I introduce and highlight the concerns of postcolonial feminist hermeneutics as my main theoretical framework, locating it within the wider contexts of, (a) postcolonial studies, (b) biblical criticism, (c) feminist biblical studies, and (d) African and liberation biblical hermeneutics. Given that postcolonial feminist hermeneutics is a combination of both postcolonial and feminist theories, it will be helpful to examine each of these in turn. Postcolonial biblical criticism is an intersectional theory that straddles both secular postcolonial theories as well as mainstream biblical hermeneutical theories.

2.1.1 Postcolonial studies

Postcolonial biblical criticism like feminist hermeneutics has its roots not in biblical studies but in a secular discipline, namely postcolonial studies and feminist theories. It will be helpful therefore to locate postcolonial feminist hermeneutics within its two homes, namely postcolonial studies and thereafter feminist hermeneutics. Firstly we shall turn our attention to postcolonial studies and then establish its link with feminist hermeneutics and other liberation discourses. This will hopefully lead to a possible, or a working definition of the term ‘postcolonialism’ as it relates to my study.

In brief, the rise of postcolonial theories emanates from the rise of the Western empires and their scramble to divide the world among themselves, using strategies of colonization from the eighteenth through to the twentieth century. Their imperial ideologies shaped the cultural, economic, political, religious and even the emotional lives of the colonized from a Eurocentric worldview, which was deemed superior, while the worldview of the colonized was regarded as inferior and even demonic. Imperial ideologies were also used to sanction acts of domination of foreign nations. Edward Said (1988:7) is very clear on this European domination of other peoples (which he refers to as “an undeterred, and unrelenting Eurocentrism”) in his statement that:

All of the subjugated peoples had it in common that they were considered to be naturally subservient to a superior, advanced, developed and morally mature Europe, whose role in

the non-European world was to rule, instruct, legislate, develop, and at the proper times, to discipline, war against and occasionally exterminate non-Europeans.

The colonized began to develop forms of resistance in a chain of reactions including “a massive political, economic and military resistance that was itself carried forward and informed by an actively provocative and challenging culture of resistance” (Said 1988:8, cf. Dube 2002:100). Western imperialism therefore forms the frame of reference for the term postcolonial.

Postcolonial theory has no fixed starting date (Sugirtharajah 2002:2, 2006:64). It embraces two historical periods namely the period of colonialism and its aftermath, which is the current period of neo-colonialism. Segovia (2005) is helpful in tracing the chronological development of postcolonial theory and even mapping postcolonial biblical studies.

From Segovia’s survey⁹ (2005:25-39), and from the works of other writers such as Sugirtharajah, (2002, 2006; Kwok 2005) we get a general idea that the term post-colonial began to be adopted in the literary field from around the late 1970s although postcolonial studies came to proliferation only in the early 1990s. The term was applied to a body of Commonwealth literature, written during and after colonialism by authors from the former colonies of the British Empire in Asia and Africa, who were products of Western scholarship. They were addressing the complex relations of domination and subordination between the colonizers and the colonized peoples by first analyzing how the colonizers constructed the images of the colonized in this literature and, secondly, by studying how the colonized in return deconstructed these images in their endeavour to articulate their identity, self-worth, and empowerment (Sugirtharajah 2002:11). The literature was also a critique of the structures, which sustained Western

⁹ Segovia brings to our attention that postcolonial discourse evolves from Post Cultural Studies (PCS). According to Gugelberger (cited in Segovia 2005:30), PCS arose in the 1960s in the academy as a variant study within the revisionist project and even emerged as the umbrella counter discourse embracing the concerns of the other variant studies such as Cultural Studies, Women’s Studies, Gender Studies, African- American Studies etc. It engaged in ‘colonialist’ and ‘post-colonial’ studies. Postcolonial studies became increasingly popular in the 1970s, with the study of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) as a central text. The 1980s saw the establishment of the centrality of ‘colonialist’ debate, which focused both on the impact of imperialism on the colonies and the reaction of the colonized by way of corrective writing. Thus, from Gugelberger’s work, we gather that PCS constitute a literary project of “non-European origin, oppositional in kind, dialogical and corrective in mode” (quoted in Segovia 2005:30). Its literature included the texts produced in the process of colonization both by the colonizer and the colonized. This literature was studied and analyzed from the perspective of the colonized.

hegemony.¹⁰ Some of it was ‘reading back’¹¹ to the colonizer the colonial texts which had been used to legitimize colonialism. This involved questioning or challenging these colonial discourses and creating new forms of representation. Postcolonial studies were given impetus by the literary works of postcolonial critics like Edward Said’s *Orientalism*¹² (1978), Spivak’s *Can the Subaltern Speak?* and Homi Bhabha’s *The Location of Culture* (1994) (see Moore 2006; Sugirtharajah 2002:21-25).

The scope of the term ‘postcolonial’ has been a matter of development. The term was first used in 1959 by a British newspaper, the *Daily Telegraph* to refer to India, which gained its independence in 1947 (Sugirtharajah 2002:2). Sugirtharajah observes that since then the term has been used to refer to the formerly colonized countries, which have already gained independence. From Segovia’s survey, we gather that ideas on the scope of the postcolonial period have been widened from a restriction to the historical dimension of Western colonization to a broader vision. Sugirtharajah (2002:2) raises a similar observation when he says that, recently, there has been a development and shift, whereby the meaning of the term has moved from it being understood as a linear chronological sequence to a much more universal and diverse sense. It is in this sense that I use the term ‘postcolonial’ in my study. In other words I do not make a claim that the era of the biblical context in which Paul wrote 1 Cor was a postcolonial era, but I use postcolonial theory as a tool of analysis of how the imperial context influenced Paul’s gendered worldviews.

From a chronological point of view as stated by Segovia (2005:42), the development of the scope of postcolonialism has been as follows, although it must be noted that the term postcolonial is

¹⁰ Sugitharajah (2002:21-25) states that what postcolonial studies introduced in the field of literary criticism was power and politics which exposed how some literature, art and drama sustained the European colonizers.

¹¹ ‘Writing back’ or ‘reading back’ is a form of reaction to the colonial texts by the colonized. It involves writing texts of resistance in order to assert their self-worth (see examples from Sugirtharajah 2001:74-108).

¹² Citing McLeod, Sugirtharajah indicates that a literary analysis of Said’s work manifests itself in three ways: rereading of Western canonical texts to detect conscious or dormant colonial elements in them, a search in other documents to see how the colonized were constructed and in return how they resisted or embraced the colonizer (e.g. the work of Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak and historians who engaged in the subaltern studies). Finally there was an analysis of the literature that emerged from the colonized as a way of ‘writing back’ to the centre (e.g. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1989).

not marked by any chronology as such,¹³ but refers to “a critical idea”, with *post* indicating “the intention to go *beyond* the colonial in all its forms” (Keller, Nausner and Rivera 2004:7).

From 1940s to 1970s, the term is understood in chronological terms. It is used as such by historians to refer to the post-independence period after the Second World War. From the late 1970s, a cultural understanding of the term develops among literary critics such as Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhaba. These writings analyzed in different ways, how the power of representation in colonial discourse impacted on both the metropolis and colonies alike. This focus acquired the name of postcolonial discourse.

Critics from the English commonwealth countries employed the rubric in a hyphenated form ‘post-colonialism’, to refer to cultural interactions in literary circles of colonial societies. These scholars did so to politicize the commonwealth literature and new literatures in English, produced since the 1960s. In other words, some critics have used the hyphenated form to refer to the historical period or the aftermath of colonialism. More recently, the term has been used without the hyphen (‘postcolonialism’) to refer to the political, linguistic, cultural, economic, and even the psychological experiences of the former colonies of Europe, i.e. a reactive resistance discourse of the colonized in which they not only seek to recover the past from Western slander and misinformation, but also to interrogate the continuing forms of neo-colonialism (Sugirtharajah 2002:13). Currently, the term is generally used without the hyphen to refer to the whole field, including the textual practices, psychological conditions, and historical processes, and hence the meaning is dependent on the user (Sugirtharajah 2002:3). It is also currently located in various other fields, varying from medieval studies, to music and sociology, to sports. All these disciplines continue to uncover the impact of colonialism and the continuing forms of neo-colonialism in the form of globalization (Sugirtharajah 2006b:64).

Scholars have not come to a consensus about the definition of the term postcolonialism, owing to its complex composition, and its interdisciplinary nature. Sugirtharajah himself regards the term ‘postcolonial’ as highly diverse and hence difficult to define since it covers “a multitude of intellectual and textual practices” (2006b:65). As implied by its historical background and the

¹³ According to Sugirtharajah (2006:65), “postcolonial is not about chronological markers of ‘periods’, ‘eras’, or ‘aeons’. It is about a series of anti-colonial resistances undertaken in order to instill a new sense of national pride and purpose, both before and after the formal end of territorial colonialism.”

scope above, postcolonialism is *a discourse of resistance* to all forms of imperial domination. However, each scholar defines it in the way he/she wants to use it. Sugirtharajah (2002) and Dube (1997) in their usage of the term define it in terms of its historical setting, usage and the classification of texts.¹⁴ Kwok adds the human element. She states that the colonized are also referred to as postcolonial and proposes that even the colonizer should be postcolonial because he/she requires decolonization of the mind. Keller, Nausner and Rivera (2004:8), following Sugirtharajah, regard it as “an active interrogation of the hegemonic systems of thought, textual codes, and symbolic practices which the West constructed in its domination of colonial subjects.”

Following Keller, Nausner and Rivera, in my study I also use the term postcolonial as “an active interrogation of the hegemonic systems of thought, textual codes, and symbolic practices” within the text of 1 Cor 11:1-16. As such, my simple working definition will take into account views of such scholars as Sugirtharajah, Dube and Kwok with regard to the setting, use and classification of the term postcolonialism. I regard ‘Postcolonialism’ as a literary technical term that inquires into the complex relationships of domination and subordination, dependence and independence, resistance and collusion as these occur within biblical and contemporary postcolonial contexts, such as Kenya. I will therefore use postcolonial biblical criticism, as a critical anti-colonial/imperial hermeneutical approach, which employs both a hermeneutics of suspicion and a hermeneutics of retrieval or restoration. This will contribute towards exposing and challenging the oppressive colonial and imperial ideologies in the continued use of biblical texts to construct gender power relations in the church, in the history of the Christian tradition.

Having located postcolonial biblical criticism within the context of secular postcolonial studies I now turn my attention to postcolonial hermeneutics within the broader context of biblical criticism.

¹⁴ In its historical usage, it refers to the aftermath of colonialism, in its setting, it refers to the reactive resistance of the colonized in their effort to recover their past from the Western slander (Sugirtharajah 2002:13) as they struggle to decolonize and liberate themselves. In its classification, it refers to a complex collection of texts that are brought, born and used in imperial setting to legitimate, resist, or collaborate with imperialism (Dube 1997:14).

2.1.2 Postcolonial hermeneutics within biblical criticism

Postcolonial hermeneutics has emerged to serve a new historical context, namely the postcolonial context especially in the Two-Thirds World countries. Like feminist hermeneutics, it is an offshoot of postmodernism. As an interdisciplinary approach, it draws to some extent on modern and postmodern theories (and others), but also diverges from these.

Modernist hermeneutical modes for instance interpret the Bible “objectively” to serve the Enlightenment period, and in particular, the age of the colonization of the non-European world.¹⁵ Ironically, it is in this period that the Bible was used more as a tool of oppression than a tool of liberation, because it was used as a colonial text to sanction the European venture (see Dube 1997).¹⁶ Indeed, for this reason a major task of postcolonial biblical criticism, as Kwok (2005:79) indicates, is to unveil ways in which modern readings of the texts colluded with colonial interests in the West. Historical criticism¹⁷ failed to identify with the experiences of the colonized in order to liberate them and therefore fails to offer adequate tools, contributing toward more life-affirming interpretations for women in a postcolonial context. At its best however, as West (2006:132-133) observes, modern historical scholarship through historical criticism has succeeded in demonstrating that the Bible is a product of political, economic, cultural and religious contexts of the Ancient Near East. This methodology is therefore important, because it will enable me to situate my text in these original contexts, but on the whole modern hermeneutics do not take the context of the reader into account, which postcolonial biblical criticism seeks to do.

¹⁵ According to Kwok (2005:6, cf. also Said 1988:7), European expansion was very rapid in the modern era. In 1815, Western powers held approximately 35 percent of the earth’s surface, by 1914 Europe was in control of about 85 percent of the earth in the form of colonies, protectorates, dependencies and commonwealths and today the United States has emerged as the world’s sole super power “with president George W. Bush invoking unabashedly biblical images and Christian rhetoric to justify his global ‘war against terrorism’”.

¹⁶ Postcolonial writers strongly point out that, during modern imperialism, the Bible alongside other texts served as a classical text to legitimize imperialism (see Horsley 1998b, Sugirtharajah 2002:1). According to Boehmer (in Dube 1998:300), the use of a textual strategy enabled the colonial agents to cope and colonize strange geographical places.

¹⁷ Historical criticism is a scientific model of interpretation of biblical texts that was constructed by biblical scholars in the Enlightenment period, in order to parallel the way in which scientists were interpreting the world (see West 1991:24).

On the other hand, postmodern hermeneutics is also inadequate for the purpose of my study. Although postmodernism is “an anti-hegemonic reaction to or repudiation of the world- annexing impulses of European modernity” (Moore 2005:80), it does not address the West’s continued domination of the ‘other’, which is the main engagement of postcolonialism, and which my faith community is currently experiencing. Furthermore, its dissolution of subjectivity and agency at a crucial time, when women and other oppressed categories are just beginning to fight for their emancipation, makes it blind to their experiences. Schussler-Fiorenza therefore expresses that a postmodern reading of texts undermines the political implications of feminist readings (cited in Kwok 2003:76). Hence, both modern and postmodern hermeneutics stand in need of postcolonial biblical and postcolonial feminist critique.

In the following section, I will therefore attempt to define and map postcolonial biblical criticism, and postcolonial feminist hermeneutics, showing why they have been preferred as fitting theories for a reading of 1 Cor 11:1-16. The rest of the chapter will mainly locate postcolonial biblical criticism and postcolonial feminist hermeneutics within the wider context of biblical interpretation in theologies of liberation in the Two-Thirds World.

Postcolonial biblical criticism is a new approach to the Bible, of which the parameters have not even yet been clearly defined (Sugirtharajah 2001:245). Scholars have not been keen to define its purpose and instead have chosen to exercise their freedom in dealing with it. It is slightly more than a decade ago that postcolonial biblical criticism was conjoined with postcolonial studies.

Writing in 1997, Gerald West (West 1997:322) predicted that post-colonial concerns were “on the way to becoming another ‘criticism’ within Biblical studies...” Indeed, his prediction was soon to be realized because it was during the same Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature (1997) in which West was speaking, that Fernando Segovia and Stephen Moore discussed the possibilities of bringing into fusion Biblical Studies and the already existing Cultural Studies in order to develop a ‘cultural biblical criticism’ (Moore and Segovia 2005:1). However, in order to distinguish their name and perspective from the already existing project named ‘The Bible and Cultural Studies’,¹⁸ they decided to examine the intersection of Biblical

¹⁸ This was initially a three year consultation on Gender and Cultural Criticism (1993-1995), which in 1996 was renamed The Bible and Cultural Studies.

Studies and Postcolonial Studies of which the latter was already growing into a broad field that had its roots in cultural studies. Their thought coincided with developments in biblical criticism: some biblical scholars had already begun to bring a postcolonial approach into biblical scholarship (see Moore and Segovia 2005:2-3). They decided to name their project and consultation ‘New Testament Studies and Postcolonial Studies’ in which they aimed to bring postcolonial concerns to bear on biblical studies.¹⁹ So what is the implication of bringing postcolonialism to bear on biblical studies? This is what I address below as postcolonial biblical criticism.

It has not been an easy task for biblical scholars to draw correlations between the two disciplines, especially because it is not long since the two were conjoined. In fact, for Moore, a proponent of postcolonial biblical criticism, the task “is a formidably complex one that has scarcely begun” (2006:11). Sugirtharajah (2002:25-26, 2006b:67) however, makes the remarkable point that “the greatest single aim of postcolonial biblical criticism is to situate colonialism at the centre of the Bible and biblical interpretation.” He rightly notes that, for over four hundred years, biblical scholars have been overt about showing the impact of Reformation, Counter-Reformation and Enlightenment in defining and shaping biblical scholarship but have been unwilling to disclose the impact of imperialism on the discipline. Thus, a postcolonial approach to biblical studies concerns itself with issues of expansion, domination and imperialism as key factors in defining both the biblical narratives and biblical interpretation.

The second area in which postcolonial biblical criticism interrelates with postcolonial criticism as cited by Sugirtharajah, is where it has been able to collaborate with postcolonialism in its battle for emancipation and in its continued attempt to demolish imperial institutions and other dominating structures. This is due to postcolonial biblical criticism’s ability to accommodate insights from other disciplines.

¹⁹ Moore and Segovia however do not claim that this exercise marked the beginning of postcolonial biblical criticism because its notion was already in existence. They point out that it was a challenge to map the field of postcolonial biblical criticism because it was difficult to identify where it precisely “begins or ends.” They indicate that it may have emerged from liberation hermeneutics, extra-biblical Postcolonial Studies, or even historical biblical criticism, or from all of them at once (Moore and Segovia 2005:5-6).

The other area in which biblical studies can benefit from postcolonial studies is in the “place and function of criticism in the contemporary world” (Sugirtharajah 2002:26). Like literary studies, which have been detached from peoples’ life experiences as indicated by Said,²⁰ biblical interpretation in modern times, with its emphasis on reason as the determinant of the meaning of the text, has ignored the role that intuition, sentiment and emotions play in perceiving meaning in the text. The danger of this approach is that the meaning of text has been made objective rather than subjective, i.e. the context of the reader has not been taken into account. Postcolonial biblical criticism has learnt from postcolonial criticism to take the context and the concerns of the subaltern seriously and hence has taken a subjective approach in biblical hermeneutics.

The points of contact between postcolonial biblical criticism and postcolonial criticism are also well stated by Moore (2006:9-10). He observes that, just as postcolonial criticism concerns itself with issues of colonialism in the empires of modern Europe, colonialism was also a reality in the ancient Near East and Mediterranean empires from which the Bible draws its context: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. In that case postcolonial biblical criticism, like postcolonial criticism, addresses similar features and concepts like imperialism, hybridity, colonial mimicry, subalterns, decolonization etc., which are realities in the Bible. Some biblical texts, due to their imperial context, address imperial concerns. Postcolonial biblical criticism scrutinizes these texts for their “colonial assumptions, imperial impulses, power relations, hegemonic intentions, the treatment of subalterns, stigmatization of women and the marginalized, land appropriation, and the violation of minority cultures” (Sugirtharajah 2006b: 67). It also reclaims the submerged or the silenced voices and sidelined issues.

Secondly, for Moore, just like the imperial texts which postcolonial criticism addresses, the Bible was also used to sanction colonization of Africa, America, parts of Asia and Europe, and hence postcolonial studies impel postcolonial biblical criticism to “resituate biblical texts in relation to their ancient imperial contexts” (Moore 2006:10). In other words, a postcolonial approach to biblical studies calls for interrogation of the Bible to reveal its oppressive colonial and imperial connotations.

²⁰ With regard to the American literary scene, Said has this to say; “As it is practiced in the American academy today, literary theory has for the most part isolated textuality from the circumstances, the events, the physical senses, that made it possible and render it intelligible as the result of human work” (cited in Sugirtharajah 2002: 26).

The difference between the two, and which is crucial for my study as well, is that postcolonial studies do not interrogate the imperial context of the Bible, which is a main concern of postcolonial biblical criticism. Postcolonial biblical criticism analyzes how the imperial-colonial phenomenon impacted on the whole process of the production of the texts,²¹ their interpretation and the interpreters (see Segovia 2005:24, Sugirtharajah 2001:251, 2002:25) and how this process, including the formation of the canon (Kwok 2005:78-79), bears on the construction of the 'other'. It also exposes the ideological content hidden behind the text's apparent claim of neutrality (Sugirtharajah 2006b:67). This scrutiny, as Sugirtharajah (2001:251) indicates, requires that the Bible be viewed not as a divinely inspired document, but as emanating from colonial contacts. This process therefore deconstructs colonial ideology, stigmatization, and unearths the voices that were submerged or distorted in the canonized texts. Postcolonial biblical criticism also reads biblical texts with the concerns of postcolonialism in mind. These include liberation struggles from colonialism and neo-colonialism, concern relating to the 'other' or the subaltern, and the feminine elements embedded in the texts.

Besides the use of the Bible as an imperial text, Christianity was also used for imperial purposes. Liberation theologians have critiqued ways in which the church absorbed, justified and even benefitted from the imperial structures (Keller, Nausner and Rivera 2004:8). Postcolonial biblical criticism therefore analyzes "the troubling ways that Christianity, born as a movement of a colonized people, could also come to mimic the empire" (Keller, Nausner and Rivera 2004:8). For my study, this observation is particularly significant when analysing the extent to which the Anglican Church of Kenya continues to mimic the ways and beliefs of the missionaries and the British in terms of the treatment of women. Postcolonial biblical criticism also offers a theological dimension which is lacking in postcolonial studies. My research is based on this theological dimension in that it addresses God's image in humanity, which is a profoundly theological and anthropological concern.

²¹Owing to the fact that, as stated above, the Bible contains documents which were born from colonial contexts, including Egyptian, Persian, Assyrian, Hellenistic and Roman contexts.

The application of postcolonial theories to biblical studies therefore concentrates on the study of the Bible.²² In a nutshell, postcolonial biblical criticism brings about two perspectives of biblical hermeneutics. Firstly, it uses a hermeneutics of suspicion in the interpretation of biblical texts that were used to sanction imperialism. Secondly, it pays particular attention to the voices of the colonized and the marginalized in the biblical texts. Postcolonial feminist hermeneutics combines the above interests of postcolonial theories with the interests of feminist hermeneutics.

2.1.3 Within feminist hermeneutics

Postcolonial feminist hermeneutics involves bringing or incorporating the gender dimension into postcolonial biblical criticism. Postcolonial feminists work within biblical studies and also within the wider circles of postcolonial theory. Both feminism and postcolonial theory which operated separately until fairly recently when they came together, had a common concern for the defence of the marginalized 'other' by the existing structures of domination. According to Gandhi (1998:83), they both began by making attempts to dismantle the prevailing hierarchies of gender/culture/race and have both embraced the poststructuralist move "to refuse the binary oppositions upon which patriarchal/colonial authority constructs itself." However, despite the common concerns, feminists have observed that gender issues remain marginal to male postcolonial theorists (see Kwok 2005:80-81), and hence the need for postcolonial feminist theory to address gender issues within postcolonial biblical criticism.

As a method of inquiry, feminist criticism precedes postcolonial biblical criticism since even Women's Studies and Gender Studies were part of Postcolonial Cultural Studies, which arose as a variant study in the academy in the West in the 1960s, long before the conjunction of biblical studies to postcolonial studies. Postcolonial feminists are still trying to define the parameters of the field. In sum, as indicated in chapter one, postcolonial feminist theories will be used in this

²² Kwok (2003:80) identifies three ways in which the Bible is studied postcolonially. First is the 'Saidian exhortation' which seeks to peruse the text for gaps, absence and eclipse, the silences and the closures, recovery of history or narratives that have been distorted. Others compare the Bible with imperializing texts. Secondly, there is the way of Sugirtharajah, who, following Said, challenges orientalist interpretation and Eurocentrism in Biblical studies. Third, scholars from minority communities in the United States, like Segovia, have applied postcolonial theories to challenge the hegemonic interpretation of the Bible.

study, not only because they include all the concerns of postcolonial biblical criticism, but also because they go further to include the gender dimension, which is the main concern of my study.

Like postcolonial biblical criticism, postcolonial feminist hermeneutics is situated within the wider context of biblical interpretation in theologies of liberation, in particular feminist criticism, which falls under 'feminism', a movement that concerns itself with the full humanity of women. At this juncture therefore, I need to consider 'feminism' and 'feminist criticism' before I locate postcolonial feminist hermeneutics within feminist criticism.

The term 'feminism' is diverse in its scope. According to Loades (1998), there is not a single meaning that can be attached to the term 'feminism' any more than there is one thing meant by 'Christian' or 'theology' or even 'interpretation'. The most basic definition of the term has been given by Gross (in Donaldson and Kwok 2002:24). Gross defines feminism as "the conviction that women really do inhabit the human realm and are not 'other', not a separate species...(it) is the radical proposition that women are human beings." Due to its efforts to restore both men and women to full humanity, Okure (1995:59) rightly regards feminism as "a human revolution that surpasses all other major revolutions in history, such as the industrial and the scientific revolutions."

As a critical discipline, feminism has its origins in the secular movement of women in the 1960's, which was a political movement. According to Dube (2002:103), this movement constituted/ constitutes of both men and women. It "seeks to understand the construction of women as secondary citizens in their societies and to implement change that will re-inscribe them as whole beings with full rights in their given contexts." After its inception, Christian women began to reflect on issues raised in this movement from a faith perspective. Feminist theology is for instance traced to this movement. It originates from the work of middle-class White American and European women (see Clifford 2005). Feminist theology has assumed many forms and names in different parts of the world as women continue to localize their experiences of oppression by race, class, colonialism, culture, gender, etc.²³ In Africa for instance, African women's theologies (whose hermeneutical approach will be discussed under

²³ White feminists have been sharply opposed for presuming to speak for womanist/African American, 'mujerista'/Hispanic and Far East Asian women theologians.

African liberation hermeneutics below) reflect on the faith and experiences of African women (see Phiri 2004:16).

Feminism has become a worldwide movement, manifested in diverse forms that seek change for the better in terms of justice for women and hence pays particular attention to women's perspectives. It singles out patriarchy as the root cause of oppression against women in all spheres of life (Ruether 1983). Feminism therefore seeks to liberate women from all forms of sexism. It, for instance, seeks to demystify the androcentric view that maleness is the normal or neutral standard by which human beings, both male and female, are defined. Feminists highlight that even those male texts which are often presumed to be neutral, present a hierarchy of domination in which the woman's inferior status is regarded as natural rather than as a cultural construct. Feminists therefore call for inclusiveness, especially in human power sharing.

Feminist criticism firstly generally concentrates on the political, social and economic rights of women. It has been born out of dissatisfaction with other methods of inquiry. Some of its concerns are that it is critical to the Western scholarly tradition, which has been, until recently male-oriented. Like other ideological criticisms, e.g. Marxist or African-American criticisms with their influences of postmodernism, it critiques claims to objectivity and challenges the notion of universals or absolute truths. It, for instance, rejects the definitions that males have put forth for women. Second, feminist criticism seeks to recover and to reclaim the lost voices of women and women's experiences.

Third, feminist critics encourage women to produce new texts. In the case of the Bible, which to a great extent was not written by women and neither with women in mind, women are encouraged to engage in feminist hermeneutics i.e. "a reading of the Bible from women's perspective" (Okure 1995:58) or simply women's readings of the Bible, mainly because feminist interpretation recognizes that the Bible legitimizes patriarchy. Feminist criticism therefore applies a hermeneutics of suspicion to the Bible with the knowledge that "the biblical text itself is ideologically biased against women" and that "the Bible is a major source and legitimator of women's oppression in family, society, and church" (Schneiders 1999:181).

Feminist hermeneutics therefore, I would say, puts gender at the centre of biblical interpretation. In so doing, it recognizes, as Loades (1998:82) observes, that "pre-occupation with gender (in

biblical interpretation) lies not simply in how human beings relate to one another, but with how such relationship affects their relationship to God, and how God may be mediated to them.” It takes into account, for instance, that the language and symbolism used for God is androcentric and this in turn dictates the inferior place accorded to a woman in relation to man, and also the roles that women play in the service of the ‘male’ God. Androcentrism also prescribes women’s gender and dictates their sexuality. Women’s readings of the Bible therefore take cognizance of the equal rights and dignity of both men and women, which they perceive to be intended by God in creation and redemption. In their readings of the Bible, they also highlight the patriarchal elements of the Bible culture, that either bracket or downplay the important contributions of women in the biblical stories (Okure 1995:58-59).

As a result, women have developed mixed reactions towards the Bible. Some have wondered why women should read the Bible at all. Mary Daly, for instance, regards the Bible as ‘irredeemably patriarchal’ and has walked out of the church. Others however see in the Bible elements of subordination of women as well as liberating traditions and uphold these liberating elements. Feminist hermeneutics has developed as a discipline within the field of biblical studies and a variety of methods are extant within this discipline.²⁴

Feminist hermeneutics generally takes into account the complexities of race, class, economic status, culture, colonialism, impact of gender, etc., in the interpretation of the text. It is, however, noteworthy that since the introduction of gender as a category critical to the study of religion, the feminist study of religion in the United States which is done mostly by Euro-American women has mainly been pre-occupied with the relationship between cultural-religious traditions and the sex/gender system (Donaldson 2002:2). This is a clear indication that they have bracketed the issues of the impact of colonialism and religion in gender construction and violence, for which they receive critique from postcolonial feminist scholars of the Two-Thirds World. In addition, the latter rightly observe that the First World biblical scholars, including women, bracket the colonial context of the imperializing texts so that their exegetical conclusions fail to problematize the colonial agenda that has shaped the biblical narrative. Schussler-Fiorenza

²⁴ For women’s reading of the Bible, see for example Nadar (2001, 2003, 2006); Dube (1996, 2004b); Masenya (2001); Tribble (1990:23-29); Lacocque (1990); Wire (1990); Thistlethwaite (1995); Fiorenza 2003, Dijkhuizen (2008); Tamez (1990) just to mention a few.

(2007) has responded to this critique as a First World biblical scholar, by developing an emancipatory theory to decolonize kyriarchal power.²⁵

Postcolonial feminist hermeneutics of the Two-Thirds World is hence born out of the inadequacy of such prevailing modes of inquiry to take the intersection between colonialism, gender and religion seriously, as we shall see below.

Postcolonial feminist hermeneutics is a fairly new approach to the Bible. It is a focus on feminism(s) within the framework of postcoloniality or rather a focus on the concerns and strategies of the Two-Thirds World feminists within postcolonialism. It takes into account most of what feminism and feminist hermeneutics stand for. It, however, has its main focus on the interactions among colonialism/imperialism, gender and Christianity. It engages in a critical perspective all that which incorporates the threads of colonialism, gender and Christianity in one intricate web, an aspect that previous feminist hermeneutics has not seriously tackled. Donaldson and Kwok (2002:2) note that even feminist scholars who are interested in postcolonial studies are likely to address issues of race, gender and sexuality in the context of colonialism and ignore the critical importance of religion to these dimensions (cf. Kwok 2005:7). Postcolonial feminist hermeneutics seeks to fill this gap without which “feminist scholarship in religion has the danger of replicating the colonial gaze in the name of serving a feminist agenda” (Kwok 2005:3). In the following section, I will introduce postcolonial feminist hermeneutics and its concerns.

Postcolonial feminist hermeneutics is just one of many possible approaches that empower biblical scholars to engage in hermeneutics of liberation. It is perhaps one of the newest ways of reading biblical texts in liberating ways for women and taking the imperial element into consideration.

²⁵ In her recent book, *The Power of the Word: Scripture and Rhetoric of the Empire* (Fiorenza 2007), following feminist postcolonial theorists among others, Schussler-Fiorenza has developed an emancipatory theory which she calls “a critical feminist interpretation for liberation.” She uses this theory to decolonize the kyriarchal power (i.e. rule of the emperor, lord, slave master, father, husband, both at the level of the production of the texts and at the level of their appropriation in contemporary contexts. She critiques the Two-Thirds World postcolonial theorists for creating ‘identity politics’ or “dichotomy of the West and the rest, the colonizer/colonized” (Fiorenza 2007:129).

So, what are the concerns of postcolonial feminists? What strategies do the Two-Thirds World postcolonial feminists use for decolonization and depatriarchalization? How do they read the Bible in a way that re-images the perception of the image of God in woman, that has been distorted by colonialism/ imperialism and patriarchy? This section seeks to respond to these questions.

Postcolonial feminist hermeneutics strives to disengage itself completely from colonial practice. Postcolonial feminists therefore do not only seek to analyze colonial discourse or to deconstruct Western dominant regimes of knowledge (Kwok 2005:3) but also to examine the intricate relationship between colonialism, gender and religion. They, for instance, highlight the role of religion, and in particular Christianity, in justifying and disseminating imperialist ideologies. This engagement by postcolonial feminists is undertaken with a view to decolonizing the ideologies that still continue to undergird the entire postcolonial enterprise (Donaldson and Kwok 2002: 6).

Postcolonial feminists have also been able to identify the intersection between colonialism, gender and Christianity as a key factor, underlying the mapping and naming of explored lands. Donaldson (in Donaldson and Kwok 2002:6-8) cites examples of how explored lands like Europe, Asia and America were given feminine names. This process of exploration and naming does not serve to popularize women, but uses them as a symbol of the colonized (see Dube 1998:301).²⁶

Postcolonial feminists highlight that Western Christianity robbed women of their significant traditional religious roles. In Africa for instance, although African cultures suppressed women in several ways, women's divinely endowed religious roles were traditionally recognized and acknowledged. In pre-colonial Kenya for example, women participated in worship as spiritual leaders, healers, diviners, mediums, herbalists, prophetesses and medicine persons (Mwaura 1996:253-269). Such women were esteemed because of their possession of supernatural powers. According to Mwaura (2005b:420), they even owned deities, cults and shrines in West Africa

²⁶ Dube (1998:301) drives this point home by her observation that the female gender is used to describe the colonized and "serves the agendas of constructing hierarchical geographical spaces, races, and cultures." This gender construction also serves to legitimize the oppression of women in the societies where these narratives are used.

(Mbiti 1989:68, cf. James 1996:69). Western missionaries however condemned African ways of worship and sacrifice as “a denial of the efficacy of the ‘Great Sacrifice’” (Strayer 1978:82). Among other factors, this condemnation robbed women of their divinely endowed traditional roles.

Postcolonial feminist critics in the Two-Thirds World highlight the triple oppression of their women during colonialism by their own patriarchal structures, the patriarchal structures of the colonizers, and the imperial structures of Western men and women as well as the roles played by First World women. Race and class characterized the relationship between Western and native women (see Kwok 2002:66-67). The interactions between Western women and Kenyan women will be cited in chapter six, but we shall find that some Western women suffered frustration from their own Western men in their efforts to emancipate Kenyan women.

Postcolonial feminist critics in the Two-Thirds World oppose some Western feminists for assuming a self-proclaimed role of advocacy for the Two-Thirds World women in naming and challenging patriarchal atrocities committed against them.²⁷ This attitude as Kwok (2002:73) observes portrays inequality of power between Two-Thirds World women and Western women “both in terms of socio-political status and knowledge production.” It also fails to acknowledge postcolonial rewritings of the Two-Thirds World women. Two-Thirds World postcolonial feminists do not however regard all men and all Western women as enemies but rather acknowledge that some men and some women have more power than others (Kwok 2002:78). Thus, in chapter six, as indicated above, we will observe that some missionaries and Western women made conscious and sacrificial efforts to liberate women from not only repressive African cultural structures, but also from the male dominance of the missionary church structures.

In sum, I would say that all the concerns of postcolonial feminist scholars mentioned above inform postcolonial feminist hermeneutics. In other words, the concerns of postcolonial feminist critics shape their ideo-theological orientations, which influence their interpretation of biblical texts. Like postcolonial biblical criticism, postcolonial feminist hermeneutics has two main tasks.

²⁷ See for example Kwok’s critique of Daly’s self-proclaimed role of representing the Indian, Chinese and African women in challenging the patriarchal oppression of *sati*, footbinding and genital mutilation. Daly is critiqued for her failure to acknowledge the efforts of the colonized women to name their own oppression.

The first task is to scrutinize the Bible for imperial elements, and the second one is to read it for decolonization and depatriarchalization. This double engagement is exemplified in their readings of biblical texts (e.g. Dube 2000:121-124, Nzimande 2007).

2.1.4 Within liberation discourses and African feminist hermeneutics

Postcolonial biblical criticism is located within the wider context of biblical interpretation in theologies of liberation in the Two-Thirds World. Keller, Nausner and Rivera (2004: 5) rightly observe that it is liberation theology that has drawn to the attention of Two-Thirds World theologians the political nature of the church, that whether by default or on purpose, the church is political.

Liberation theology began in a number of places across the world in the 1960s. The notion of liberation theology developed into divergent forms as more aspects of oppression continued to be identified in various countries, thus creating new Asian and African Christian theologies, feminist theologies and Black theology. All these as Berryman (1987:162) rightly observes, “represent reactions against a European and North American theological establishment that unconsciously assumed that its theology was simply ‘Christian’ theology.” They are critical of the ways, used by Western scholarship to define Christian symbols.

In North America liberation theology was rooted especially in the civil rights and black power movement²⁸ as a critique of economic structures that created poverty and widened the gap between rich and poor. It had a “preferential option for the poor” as its starting point (Escobar (2005:454). In Latin America, a key feature in liberation theologies was their proposal of a “new way” of reading Scripture from the perspective of the poor i.e. all those experiencing political, social, economic or cultural oppression. This hermeneutical process was started by Gustavo Gutierrez, a Peruvian theologian. Liberation theologians are therefore committed to change situations of oppression. A major inspiration to liberation theologies has been the Exodus motif with its focus on freedom for the oppressed and suffering slaves. Liberation hermeneutics in

²⁸ The civil rights movement of the 1950s and early 1960s sought to liberate African Americans from racial oppression in the context of a white racist society. Therefore, their emphasis was on liberation from racial discrimination.

Africa has a variety of methods aimed, for example, at inculturation (Ukpong 1995), at socio-political aspects (Mosala 1989), and at reconstruction (Mugambi 1995), but most significant for my study is African feminist hermeneutics which I examine below.

2.2 African feminist hermeneutics

African feminist hermeneutics is not at all unproblematic due to its varying designations. Some prefer to borrow the African-American term ‘womanist’ (Nadar 2003), some like Masenya (2001) use the African indigenous term *bosadi*, while still others like Haddad (2000a) prefer to use the general term ‘African women’s hermeneutics.’

African feminist hermeneutics is formed from African women’s theologies, which belong to the wider family of feminist theology, a form of liberation theology (see Phiri 2004). It also emerges within African inculturation and African liberation hermeneutics, and hence shares features with both (West 2007:5). It focuses on gender and mainly on the oppression of women by patriarchy, an aspect that is normally overlooked by male liberationists. Like other forms of liberation hermeneutics above, it uses the Bible as a resource for the struggle against the subordination of women in contemporary society but unlike inculturation hermeneutics, it is suspicious of both biblical texts and African culture, which, due to the influence of patriarchy, subordinates women to men.

African women’s readings of the Bible have taken various approaches.²⁹ The most astute example of African women’s hermeneutics can be found in the book *Other Ways of Reading* (Dube 2001). This book profiles a number of African women biblical scholars who read the biblical text from a variety of perspectives. For example Nadar (2001), using womanist theories, applies a literary approach to read the character of Ruth contextually, showing how her character can provide a positive example for South African women. Masenya (2001), basing herself on an African woman’s liberation perspective on the Bible, calls her hermeneutics *bosadi* (womanhood). Using this approach, she reads Proverbs 31 to show what ideal womanhood

²⁹ Ukpong (2000:21-22) has usefully identified five other approaches to African feminist hermeneutics, all different to the ones mentioned in this section.

should be for an African South-African reader. Dube (2001), using theories of postcolonial feminist hermeneutics, applies a divination approach to diagnose the health of international relationships, namely between Moab and Judah, represented by the two women Ruth and Naomi. Through the divining powers, she comes to the conclusion that international relationships were not healthy since Ruth was exploited by Naomi in a slave-master relationship.

African women's hermeneutics is however not without critics. Maluleke (2001) for example, critiques Nadar and Masenya for failure to problematize the patriarchal nature of their texts of focus. He further critiques Dube for her failure to critique divination, a deep-rooted cultural practice in many parts of Africa, through which women are often blamed for poor relationships in the community (see Maluleke 2001:247).

A key factor in African feminist hermeneutics is also the role that African culture plays in the process of women's reading and interpretation of a text, owing to the fact that "the culture of the reader in Africa has more influence on the way the Bible is understood and used in communities than the historical facts about the text" (Kanyoro 2002:10). Kanyoro (2002) therefore coins a framework for analyzing culture, which she refers to as 'Feminist Cultural Hermeneutics'.³⁰ Feminist Cultural Hermeneutics enables women to view the Bible through African eyes and through using skills of critical examination in order to extract from the Bible that which is liberating.

However, a major challenge of African feminists in cultural hermeneutics is that women are the custodians of culture and as such apply, even oppressive, cultural practices to other women (Kanyoro 2002:15). African women are not always in solidarity as to which aspects of culture are to be discarded. For instance, while some view female circumcision as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), others embrace it as a useful rite of passage and as a result African feminists are handicapped in their efforts to abolish FGM.

³⁰ Cultural hermeneutics as Kanyoro defines it is "the analysis and interpretation of how culture conditions people's understanding of reality at a particular time and location" (Kanyoro 2002:9). It is submitting culture to scrutiny in order to test its liberative potential for people at different times in history.

In sum, African feminist hermeneutics focuses on African women's experiences with religion, culture and the Bible. As such, it shares elements with inculturation hermeneutics, but its point of departure is different in that African feminist hermeneutics problematizes the treatment of women by these cultural institutions. On the other hand, due to its suspicion of the Bible and its strong stance on the liberation of woman from all that dehumanizes her, African feminist hermeneutics shares elements with liberation hermeneutics.

On the whole, African women's biblical hermeneutics employs more indigenous forms of interpretation, as opposed to Western women who employ classical forms and, as such, the latter do not take African women's hermeneutics seriously. The skills of African women's hermeneutics will equip me to analyze women's experiences in the Roman, Jewish and Kenyan cultural contexts. Their approach however can benefit from postcolonial feminist tools which expose how women are subjected to double oppression by culture and colonialism, not only at the level of the appropriation of these texts but also at the level of their production.

2.3 Conclusion: The significance of postcolonial feminist hermeneutics for this study

In this chapter I have described the theory of postcolonial feminist hermeneutics, and located it within four broad areas of academic inquiry. These were postcolonial studies; biblical criticism; feminist hermeneutics and African feminist and other liberation hermeneutics. To conclude, I will establish the significance of postcolonial feminist hermeneutics as a theoretical framework for my study.

Postcolonial feminist hermeneutics is significant for my study because I see colonialism and imperialism as heavily implicated and inevitably playing a key role in my text of focus (1 Cor 11:1-16). Postcolonial feminist hermeneutics concerns itself with knowing how imperialism impacted the production of canonical texts, their interpretation and their interpreters. This theory will enable me to scrutinize and analyze how the Roman imperial context informed Paul as he wrote, and how the imperially and patriarchally coded text which created unequal gender power relations was enforced in the history of the Christian tradition through a *lineage* of interpretations

leading up to my church (the Anglican Church of Kenya) in the colonial era and after. This theory has for example made visible, in chapter five, six and seven, ways in which modern reading of this and similar texts colluded with Victorian interests of domesticity of womanhood, resulting in subordination of women, not only in the church but also in society. This British imperial construction of woman was transported to the Kenyan church and society through colonialism and missionary Christianity and reinforced the Kenyan patriarchal system in which a woman was already a subordinate.

In this case, a postcolonial optic *will reveal how a text that was born in the church to serve the interests of the Roman Empire* (i.e. to maintain Roman imperial family structures), has been appropriated by the church (Church of England), to serve the interests of the British Empire. *In other words, 1 Cor 11:1-16 is imperialistic both at the level of its production and at the level of its appropriation.* Postcolonial feminist hermeneutics will therefore help to reveal the collusion between the church and the empire in the subordination of women in the history of the Christian tradition. In my study, I will confine the scope to the period of modern European imperialism and its aftermath, but I will use postcolonial theories *to illuminate* the Roman historical period, as Kwok (2005:79) would propose.³¹

I argue that, since most of the New Testament was written during the Roman imperial period and responds to the concerns of that period, either by way of resistance or collaboration, Christianity, whether early, modern or postcolonial Christianity (which is a direct product of European colonialism), needs a postcolonial approach to scrutinize it for imperial and colonial ideologies. It is evident that the imperially coded biblical texts continue to influence the lives of Christians, right from the time of their writing to date. As such, it is my contention that Christianity continues to promote, sustain and transmit gender-biased imperially coded ideologies from one generation to another.

To conclude the discussions in this chapter, we have found that the proliferation of the new modes of interpreting the Bible has been forcefully brought about by the current political and

³¹ Kwok (2005:79) argues that, just as modern theories have been implored to illuminate ancient societies, so can postcolonial criticism be used to illuminate ancient texts. In other words, we can use postcolonial imagination to shed light to the imperial world of biblical texts, without necessarily regarding the “imperial/colonial experiences (as) similar across time and culture, though there may be resemblances.”

cultural shifts which have created new experiences, necessitating new ways of reading the Bible since the old ones no longer work. As far as my study is concerned, I have shown that, although I will draw on most established methods and theories, such as historical and literary criticism, liberation theology, and African feminist hermeneutics, none of them is better suited than postcolonial feminist hermeneutics.³² My thesis addresses a context in which woman has been relegated to a subservient status, not only by the interpretation of a biblical text (1 Cor 11:1-16), but *by the text itself*, in its patriarchal and imperial context. Such a text calls for postcolonial feminist hermeneutical theories to interrogate its context and to appropriate it to my postcolonial Kenyan church context in a way that offers tools which can liberate women.

³² However, one point where I depart from postcolonial theory is that, while the postcolonial reading practice reconsiders the biblical narratives “not as a series of divinely guided incidents or reports about divine-human encounters, but as emanating from colonial contacts” (Sugirtharajah 2001:251), in my application of the postcolonial theory to the Bible, I will not treat the Bible as any other colonial text. Rather, I will regard it as a sacred text that contains the inspired Word of God, intended to liberate human beings from all forms of oppression (Lk 4:18-19) and to enable them to have life in all its fullness (Jn 10:10). Anything else short of liberation and life-affirmation in the Bible, whether in the process of its production, canonization, interpretation and appropriation, can only be attributed, not to God but to human beings in their fallen nature through whom the inspired message was/is mediated. As such, the Bible warrants a critical reading without depriving it of any aspects of its sacredness.

CHAPTER 3

THE INFLUENCE OF GENDER CONSTRUCTION IN ROMAN IMPERIAL SOCIETY ON 1 CORINTHIANS

3.0 Introduction

In chapter one, I have argued that many studies which have been done around Pauline texts which are oppressive to women, trace his beliefs to his Hellenistic, Jewish-patriarchal socio-cultural background and overlook to a large extent the role that Roman imperial society played in informing Paul's gendered worldviews. For example, Winter (2003:3) observes that "much of the discussion on women and the Pauline communities has neglected critical evidence from Roman law." In chapter two I have introduced postcolonial feminist hermeneutics as the most fitting theory to enable me to scrutinize the imperial context of 1 Cor 11:1-16 and to read the text in liberating ways.

This chapter seeks to situate 1 Cor in its Roman imperial/social context. This is done with the understanding that Paul's ideo-theological orientations were informed by his Roman imperial context as well as other religious and social factors, and hence his message is imperialistic as much as it is cultural.

The chapter also examines the place of women in Corinth. However, since this cannot be done in isolation from the experiences of women in Roman imperial society, I will examine the position of women, in particular in the Roman family structure and in Roman law during the first century when Paul was writing his first letter to the Corinthians.

It is worthwhile mentioning at the outset, that there is no clear distinction between Roman law and society. There was a strong connection between Roman law and social and economic life in the Roman Empire, as has been observed by some scholars. Crook (cited in Winter 2003:2-3) for instance, presents Roman law as a reflection of social and economic life in antiquity. Winter (2003:2) also asserts that "the essential aspects of Roman society were consciously built on Roman law..." Seen in this way then, Roman legal statutes concerning women cannot be

divorced from the social perception of women in the Roman Empire and it is quite an impossible task trying to even separate the two in this chapter.

In this case, therefore, since most of what the law said about women was that which was socially acceptable, and what was socially acceptable for women was that which men defined as honourable for a 'good' woman, it is not difficult to see how the law acted as a reinforcement of these social perceptions about women. Thus, though allowing women some freedom, the legal aspect made it more difficult to effect women's emancipation in areas in which they were already oppressed by Roman culture, in particular the legal justification of male superiority over female. This hierarchy of subordination was further bolstered by the belief that it was ordained by the gods and hence was beyond human challenge.

The chapter further investigates ways in which the role and status of a woman in the Roman family and Roman law influenced the role and status of a woman in Pauline congregations. The chapter deals with these issues in order to set the context for later chapters, wherein I provide a detailed exegesis of my text of focus i.e. 1 Cor 11:1-16 (chapter four) and where I will explore the implications of Paul's gender hierarchy in the text on gender power relations in the lineage of the appropriation of the text in the history of the Christian tradition (chapters five, six and seven).

I will use a postcolonial feminist lens in order to examine: 1) Roman family structure as a model of the social stratification of the Roman Empire; 2) The status of a woman in the family, in public and in Roman Law; and 3) The influence of the Roman family 'values' of patronage and hierarchy on the place and role of a woman in 1 Cor. Before I do that, it is important to locate Corinth in its Roman imperial setting.

3.1 Corinth in its Roman imperial setting

Corinth was a great commercial centre of the Eastern Mediterranean world. It was originally a Greek city, situated on a narrow neck of land in Greece between Attica and the Peloponnese. The city was named after Corinthus, a son of the god Zeus. Corinth was burnt down by the Roman general Lucius Mummius because of its rebellion against Rome in 146 B.C.E. (Horrell and Adams 2004:3). Corinth was then re-founded as a Roman colony by Julius Caesar in 44 B.C.E. The re-founding of the city meant that Corinth became a Roman colony (Winter 2003:32).

Roman administration was established there and it also became a settlement place for colonists from Rome who comprised freed persons, urban plebeians and perhaps also army veterans (O'Connor 1983:1). Other categories of people who soon occupied the city were traders and business entrepreneurs from various parts of Rome (Thiselton 2006b:6). In addition to Romans, the population of the city consisted of Greeks, Jews and other peoples. In the first century C.E., its social and administrative structures were well in place under the wider socio-economic and political systems of the Roman Empire. Corinth had also become a centre of Roman culture. The penetration of Roman culture in Corinth meant that Corinth was not culturally isolated but had embraced Roman culture in all its aspects (Winter 2003:32-33). Latin was the official language although Greek was also used.

In Paul's day, Corinth was a wealthy modern city, a centre for trade, facilitated by its strategic location on the narrow Isthmus over which the goods, brought by sea, were transported. The presence of the Isthmian games (established in 582 B.C.E. and second in fame only to the Olympic Games) which took place every two years, attracted many visitors/tourists from all over the central and eastern Mediterranean world to the city. Trade was also facilitated by the presence of two harbours, one on each side of the Isthmus, Lenchaeum to the West for the trade to Italy, and Cenchreae on the East side for trade connections with Asia (see Thiselton 2006b:1). The re-founding of the city had reopened its opportunities for business and trade to an extent that, by the first century C.E., Corinth had grown from a simple colony to a prominent city (Horrell 1996:65) which, in 29 B.C.E., became the capital city of the Roman Province of Achaia. By the second century C.E. it was the largest city in Greece (Thiselton 2000:2). It would therefore be an accurate assumption that businesspersons whom Paul mentions in 1 Cor, such as Chloe, Priscilla and Aquila, may have found the location of Corinth very convenient for their trade.

The city was characterized by various religious cults which would have been regarded by Jews like Paul as idol worship. There was the temple of the goddess Aphrodite, which was so rich that it owned more than one thousand temple slaves, as well as prostitutes, both male and female (O'Connor 1983:55). The city had a reputation for sexual license and 1 Aristophanes (c. 450-385 B.C) coined the verb 'Korinthiazesthai': 'to act like a Corinthian', meaning to practice fornication (O'Connor 1983:56). There was also the cult of the goddess Isis who is said to have

given women the same power as men. Other gods who were worshipped were Dionysus, Poseidon, Apollo, Zeus and Hermes, among others.

This brief information about Corinth in its early days is important for our understanding of the epistle to the Corinthians. First, it shows that the city community and city culture of Corinth were patterned after a Roman, and not a Greek, model, even if the city itself was cosmopolitan with immigrants from Achaea, Macedonia, and the East. Thus, the church that Paul founded in Corinth would have been Roman in character (although Greek culture and language remained popular), and hence some Roman features are evident in 1 Cor as well as in other Pauline letters.

3.2 The Roman Empire as a mirror of Roman family structure

Roman family structure represented the structure in terms of which also the Roman government and society were ordered. In other words, the basic organization of the Roman world was derived from that of the family. The interrelation between the family and the state structure may be traced as far back as to the days of Plato and Aristotle. Carolyn Osiek (1992:82) has usefully indicated, that it is Plato who articulated the concept of the household as a microcosm of the state, or rather the state as a macrocosm of the household, and that state harmony is therefore dependent on family harmony.³³ The Roman family was highly structured and hierarchical. This hierarchical structure is reflected in the basic relationships of husband and wife, parents and children, and masters and slaves. Within the family hierarchy, the father (*paterfamilias*) was at the top and had dominion (*patria potestas*) over all those below him. Second below him was his wife, followed by the children, and below them came slaves and other attendants (Horrell 1996:68).

The hierarchy in the Roman Empire was well fixed and modelled after this family hierarchy with the emperor at the top of the hierarchy as the great *paterfamilias*. The empire was therefore

³³ It is however worth noting that although some of the Roman social values were borrowed from the Greeks, Romans had significantly different values which, according to Bruce Winter (Winter 2003:32-34), were promoted by “highly sophisticated forms of propaganda.” These values were embraced, even in non-Roman centres in the East, as part of the first century modernity, hence constraining Greek values. Values of Roman women, both traditional and ‘new’ were very different from those of Greek women. This chapter focuses more on the Roman family values.

understood as “a great *familia* in which the emperor functions as a *paterfamilias*” (D’Angelo in Kwok 2005:88). In this way the position of the *paterfamilias* was legally reinforced.

Further still, there were highly placed family metaphors which privileged the father and which were also applied to the emperor such as ‘*pater*’ and ‘*Pater Patriae*.’ The term *pater* was affiliated with gods such as Mars, Jupiter, Saturn and Neptune. The *pater* metaphors played an important role not only at the family level but also in the aristocratic Republic and, later on, imperial Rome. The most important family metaphor, used at the beginning of the Christian era, was “Father of the Fatherland” (*Pater Patriae*). The public father figure was connected with the idea of rescue in time of war. Caesar used the father metaphor for himself and the title *Pater Patriae* was conferred on him officially around 45 or 44 B.C.E. Augustus, in his reign, also made extensive use of the image of *Pater Patriae*, which was conferred on him in 2 B.C.E. Most of his successors also used the metaphor (Lassen 1997:112-113).

It is therefore not difficult to see why the family and the social structure, where the father was highly privileged as head, could not be challenged. The affiliation of the father with the gods served to deify the male figure. Furthermore, the use of *Pater Patriae* by the emperors served to popularize the term in such a way that it became internalized and naturalized as the norm by which the family and the entire society should be defined.

In sum, the Roman social structure was patterned after the patriarchal family structure. The family structure was therefore beyond challenge. Any challenge to the family hierarchy was tantamount to a challenge of the powers that be. The fact that women were regarded as not possessing qualities that mirror the gods, and also that female metaphors were “significantly less prominent... than male metaphors” (Lassen 1997:111), was enough justification for their inferior position.

3.3 The role and status of a Roman woman in the family, in public and in Roman law

The Roman *familia* was composed of all those who were legally under the power of the patriarchal male head, the *paterfamilias*. The Roman wife was highly privileged as the manager of the affairs of the household among other privileges (Osiek and Macdonald 2006:152). Legally, she was entitled to property ownership, even within marriage (Grubbs 2002:18, 101).

According to historical evidence as cited by Winter (2003:4-5), there was the appearance of the ‘new’ Roman woman, or a new breed of wives, who emerged in certain circles in Rome at around 44 B.C.E. This ‘new’ Roman woman lived a more independent life than the traditional woman. She was more involved in public life, even at the expense of her household chores. These women, for instance, operated personal businesses, initiated legal action and defence in court, while others assumed public roles as patronesses³⁴ and they were found reclining at dinner with their husbands. Some women were politically influential and were the power behind their husbands’ success in the political arena. As such, the roles that women played in the first century church, cannot be conceived of while ignoring the ‘new’ Roman woman. Winter (2003:6-7) therefore usefully warns that the common assumption, that women in the first century were confined to the domestic domain, is “one unexplored assumption in New Testament scholarship.” Nevertheless, public participation for women privileged only the wealthy, hence creating a class distinction between upper and lower class women,³⁵ a binary opposition which a feminist optic critiques.

With regard to women in Roman law,³⁶ in ancient Rome, all free Roman women were under one of the following three types of legal authority:

³⁴ Some of the elite and wealthy women could be honoured by being appointed as patronesses of towns, trade associations, synagogues and other types of private associations. Some could be asked to become founders or patrons of men’s clubs, which entailed providing a meeting venue in their homes or a donation for the expenses of the club, which may include banquets, sacrifices, and funeral expenses for members (See Meeks 1983:24).

³⁵ It should be noted that Roman women were not equal. They were classified according to the social stratification of Mediterranean societies. In reality, even the degree of freedom a woman enjoyed depended largely on her wealth and social status.

³⁶ For this section see among others, Alföldy (1985:5); Lassen (1997:105); Witherington (1988:17); Fantham et al (1994:227); Dixon (1988); Wordelman (1998); Grubbs (2002:20); Osiek and Macdonald (2006).

patria potestas (“paternal power”). This referred to the all-inclusive legal authority of the *paterfamilias*, the male head of the family who possessed unlimited powers over his wife, children, and their property and slaves. He had the right to decide over life or death where it concerned his children and controlled their marriages and property.

*Manus*³⁷(marital subordination of the woman to her husband). By the time of Augustus, “*manus*-marriage” had mostly disappeared, but legally Roman women entered a form of marriage in which the wife remained under her father’s *potestas* (Treggiari 1991, Grubbs 2002).

Tutela mulierum (the guardianship of women). A woman, whose *paterfamilias* was dead and who had not entered *manus*-marriage, was required to have a male guardian on account of the weakness of the female sex³⁸ and legal inadequacy (Grubbs 2002:47). This guardianship of women goes back to ancient Greek cities and was many centuries old. This is clear from Cicero in his famous description of Roman women which reads as follows:

Our ancestors, in their wisdom, considered that all women, because of their innate weakness, should be under the control of guardians (“Roman Society.” <
<http://www.roman-empire.net/society/soc-house.html>>. Accessed 28/06/2010).

The popular ideas on the weakness of women are reflected in non-legal and literary sources, and had made their way into Roman law (Grubbs 2002: 48). The purpose of *tutela mulierum* was that the guardian should give consent and validate certain legal and financial activities. Augustus revised this law and allowed freedom from *tutela* to women who had borne three children (in the case of freeborn women), and four (for freedwomen). It was rather an imperial incentive for women to give birth and so benefit the state, than that it was meant to liberate them from male control. Emperor Claudius abolished *tutela* for freeborn women, but not for freedwomen. *Patria potestas* existed into the late antiquity.

³⁷ For more details about marriage by *manus*, see Treggiari (1991:16-36).

³⁸ Western men, including the Early Church Fathers constructed women as highly sexual. They regarded women’s sexual appetites and capacity for pleasure as “frightening and dangerous” (Dixon 2001:37), and hence the need for male control.

Citizen women were privileged in that they enjoyed economic security. Apart from getting a dowry, women could legally own property within marriage, which they acquired through widowhood, inheritance and even through business deals. A woman who was no longer under paternal power would bring into marriage property of her own, which she may have inherited from her father (Grubbs 2002:101). A Roman woman also had a legal right to divorce her husband.

In sum, although a woman was privileged in the Roman family and also in some ways in Roman law, she was not equal to her husband to whom she was subordinated through the hierarchical family structure. Both socially and legally, the woman was regarded as inferior to the man, because she had always to be under the control of a man. This traditional hierarchical structure of the Roman family was legally reinforced by Augustus' family laws of 18/17 B.C.E.³⁹ and further strengthened by the use of family metaphors. Finally, the fact that women were excluded from voting and holding public office, either as senators or as local magistrates, even in the age of the empire (Grubbs 2002:9), is a clear indication that, unlike men, women had no official role in public life. Therefore, the Roman family is based on unequal gender power relations and as such does not offer a gender egalitarian societal model.

Having established that the Roman family structure was not egalitarian because it maintained gender disparity, does Paul deviate from this Roman family structure or does he employ it uncritically in his gender definitions? In response to this question, I will use a postcolonial feminist optic in order to examine the influence of the role and status of the Roman woman on the role and status of women in Pauline congregations with special focus on 1 Cor. I limit myself to the influence of Roman family values through: a) patronage and b) hierarchy.

³⁹ Emperor Augustus enacted a marriage legislation 18/17 BCE, which some scholars with whom I concur, rightly argue was geared toward curtailing the freedom of the 'new' Roman woman. He perceived their social freedom to be a threat to the hierarchical structures of society. Augustus, for instance, enacted a dress code, which distinguished a modest wife from an adulteress or a prostitute. The law also enforced marriage and childbearing, which affected women and girls more negatively than men. Through this law, the state increasingly controlled the family's private and public life (see Carter 1982:142; Fantham et al 1994:303, 306; Winter 2003:57; Witherington 1998:20).

3.4 The influence of Roman family ‘values’ of patronage and family hierarchy on the place and role of women in 1 Cor

A thorough scrutiny of Paul’s writings in so far as they relate to gender relationships, reveals a conflict within himself between embracing and not embracing the prevailing structures. This struggle may be best understood through the postcolonial features of mimicry, resistance, hybridity, and ambivalence to the existing Roman legal and kinship structures as portrayed in various passages. These features will be defined and examined in detail in the exegetical analysis of 1 Cor 11:1-16 in the next chapter. We shall for instance identify that Paul largely mimics/imitates the Roman family structure in his construction of the gender hierarchy in the chapter, but he also shows aspects of resistance and hybridity to the prevailing structures.

3.4.1 Roman patronage

The Roman Empire was held together by a patronage system that functioned under hierarchical relationships at different levels in society. The emperor was seen as the patron of the entire empire. Patronage also functioned at the level of households where the head of the household served as the patron (Chow 1992:30-36, 41, 68).

The Roman value of patronage may be one of the contexts in which to understand the life of the early Christians. Some scholars, like Horsley, however, present Paul as constructing his community as egalitarian, in opposition to the Roman patronage system. Horsley is right in the sense that Christianity was unique in several ways and so believers, for instance, did not regard their religious family (perceived by Paul as a ‘body’) as being governed by networks of the patronage system “with heavy reliance on *images* that embodied the imperial ‘presence’ in public space and private awareness” (Horsley 1988b:71). Wire’s argument about the Corinthian women prophets’ understanding of baptism is also anti-imperial. They regarded Christ as their connection to God through baptism rather than through human intermediaries in a patronage system (Wire 1990:38,187,167-169).

Nevertheless, it would be unrealistic to assume that the patronage system had no influence on the life of Paul and of new believers, given that patronage was one of the ways in which the Corinthian community was organized. In 1 Cor 11:1-16, Paul, for instance, seems to be

influenced by the language of the Roman patronage system and uses it to reinforce the (gendered) hierarchical relationships of domination (1 Cor 11:3). Furthermore, Paul himself plays the role of patron to his communities (see Kittredge 2000,⁴⁰ Castelli 1991:89-117, Marchal 2008:59-90). Paul therefore, as patron, maintains asymmetrical relationships with his clients, namely his faith communities.

However, with regard to the role and status of women in the church, the patronage system had a positive effect. As indicated above, one of the roles of the 'new' Roman woman was patronage. This significant role underlies the role of women as patronesses of house churches in Paul's letters.⁴¹ Osiek and Macdonald (2006) for instance, argue that the named women patrons in Pauline letters were probably continuing the leadership roles, which they had fulfilled as pagan and Jewish women in other groups and associations. Chow (1992:101) also regards Paul's use of '*prostasis*' with reference to Phoebe (Rom 16:1-2) as an equivalent of patroness.

If this is the case, then the church mimicked the empire with regard to women's roles of patronage. The Early Church may therefore not be credited with being the first to accord public roles to women, for this already was done in Roman society. The church facilitated such roles by allowing women to serve as hosts of household churches. From the role of patronage, we can also deduce that there was class distinction among women in the church, just as in the society. Women's patronage in Roman homes and society can therefore be regarded as a positive influence for the Christian women because it created opportunities for them to be active participants in the spread of Christianity through house churches but, on the other hand, it negatively reinforced class hierarchies in the church.

⁴⁰ Kittredge criticizes Elliott's and Horsley's view that Paul was organizing the church as an alternative society to the Roman patronage system. She rightly argues that Paul was actually shaped by the patronage view as becomes apparent in the ways he used the language of subordination of the Son to the Father in 1Cor 15, used also to subordinate women prophets (1Cor. 11: 1-16).

⁴¹ Several passages in the New Testament and especially in Acts and Pauline letters, reveal that women participated in the Christian community as patronesses of home churches. Some of these were Mary, the mother of John Mark (Acts 12:12-27), Lydia (Acts 16:14-15, 40), Nympha (Col 4:15), Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:2-3, 1 Cor 16:19, Rom 16:3-5).

3.4.2 Family hierarchy

This section examines the influence of the Roman family hierarchy on the role and status of women in Pauline congregations in general. Several passages give evidence of the active participation of women in Pauline churches. Apart from their role in patronage cited above, which indicates that these women managed house churches, women are also portrayed as serving the church in other ways. Phoebe (Rom 16:1-2) for example, was *diakonos* (servant) and perhaps the principal leader of the assembly at Cenchreae, Euodia and Syntyche were perhaps leaders of the church in Philippi and probably also hosted a house church (Phil 4:2-3) and in Rom 16:7, Paul refers to Junia(s) (a woman) as an apostle, probably used here in a broader sense and not to designate one of the Twelve. The mention of these women by name is significant because it serves as evidence of gender inclusiveness in the leadership of Pauline congregations. Paul also portrays women as praying and prophesying in the Church in Corinth (1 Cor 11:1-16).

However, did women participate in Pauline congregations as equal partners with men, or was there a gendered hierarchy like the Roman family hierarchy in their participation?

The question as to whether or not women participated in Paul's churches on equal terms with men, is made more difficult to answer by the contradictory (ambivalent) statements of Paul himself (which will be examined further in the next chapter). As far as the role of women in patronage is concerned, both women and men may have equally provided meeting venues for worship in their homes. We however have no idea whether the hostess/host also played a leadership role in the house church, worshipping in her/his home.

With regard to other public roles of speech, there is a difference between men and women. Women were for instance expected to pray and prophesy, but in a subordinate status under a gendered hierarchy (1 Cor 11:1-16), or they were silenced altogether (1 Cor 14:34-35⁴²).

⁴² Although some scholars like Conzelman (1975:246) among others regard this passage as an interpolation, I maintain the traditional view of Pauline authorship because the passage is not inconsistent with Paul's ambivalence in his positioning of women. Paul silences the woman here and directs her to be taught by her husband at home, following the Greco-Roman cultural practice where, according to Hemelrijk, a wife was the student of her husband (Hemelrijk in Dijkhuizen 2008:71).

Horbury, Davis and Sturdy (1999:399) also argue that even the role of women deacons like Phoebe was restricted to dealing with women. In his book, *Women Deacons in the Early Church*, Wijngaards (2002) makes a similar conclusion, namely that the main task of women deacons was pastoral care among women and also to prepare them for baptism. If women's ministry was only confined to serving other women rather than the entire church, then the church maintained the gendered hierarchy of the Roman family structure.

However, the role of women deacons in Pauline churches requires further evaluation. Paul's commendation of Phoebe (Rom 16:1-2) reveals that her role as a servant *is of equal importance* to him (Paul) as the role of his fellow male servants. It is for instance noteworthy that Paul gives to Phoebe a similar commendation as to Timothy and Epaphroditus in Phil 2:19-30. The fact that Paul indicates that Phoebe has been of help to many and also to him, may imply that her ministry was not confined to women but in some ways touched the lives of men as well. Phoebe therefore measures up to the qualifications of Paul's fellow male servants and hence Paul himself does not perceive her ministry as inferior to that of his fellow male servants. However, the use of the term 'deacon' in Rom 16:1 may be only a generic designation which denotes 'servant' or 'assistant' (Fitzmyer 2005:867), and Paul may have used it in the same way for both Timothy and Epaphroditus (cf. also 1 Thess. 3:2; 2 Cor 3:6; 11:23).

Other scholars indicate that Rom 16:1 refers to a 'church office' (see Wild 2005:897). We have actually no way of knowing with certainty what Paul is referring to here. If women in Pauline churches were excluded from the special 'order' of ministers (which is first mentioned in Phil 1:1 and expounded in the post-Pauline text in 1 Tim. 3:8, 12 where women are not mentioned as either bishops or deacons), then we may argue that even if women like Phoebe qualified, the emerging 'church order' was a male preserve. 'Woman deacon' did not connote a meaning, similar to that of 'male deacon.' In this case, the role of a woman deacon was inferior to that of a male deacon.

In sum, although Paul values women in the Christian congregations as co-workers, benefactors and leaders in the church, his view about their roles is quite inconsistent. To a great extent, he limits women in their public roles. It is, for instance, quite puzzling that Paul does not mention any woman in his list of witnesses of the resurrection in 1 Cor 15:5-8, where he indicates that Jesus appeared to over five hundred brothers some of whom he mentions by name, including

himself as the last witness. He therefore differs from the gospels which present Mary Magdalene and a few other women, not only as the first eye witnesses of the resurrection but also as the first post-resurrection witnesses to the Twelve apostles (Mk 16; Matt 28:1-10; Lk 24:1-12; Jn 20:1-18). Some scholars explain this variance by arguing that Paul was using a different traditional account of resurrection appearances (see Crocker 2004:155-156), while others argue that it cannot be proven that Paul knew and rejected the gospel accounts (Wire 1990:162). However, in my view, given Paul's hybridity and ambivalence on the public roles of women, it is plausible that, with regard to such a significant event as the resurrection, he once again opted to silence women. He may have been influenced by the dominant unfounded Jewish cultural view that a woman is unreliable as a witness (see arguments in Wire 1990:162-163).

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has located Corinth within the Roman Empire in order to show that Paul wrote 1 Cor within the Roman imperial context, which informed his views on gender. I have also located women within the Roman imperial context, scrutinizing their role and status in the Roman family structure, in public life and also in Roman law, in order to establish how this context not only influenced the roles that women played in Pauline churches, but also how this context shaped Paul's gender construction or the gender power relations in his letters. I have argued that 1 Cor as well as the roles of women in Pauline congregations cannot be properly conceived outside Roman legal and socio-cultural structures.

I have also examined Paul's gendered worldviews in relation to the Roman imperial context of the patronage system and the hierarchical family structure. I have identified that, although Paul allows women to play active roles in his churches and sometimes addresses them in equal terms as his male co-workers (Rom 16:1-2 cf. Phil 2:19-30), he is ambivalent in that he sometimes only allows them to do so in a subordinate status (1 Cor 11:1-16), or at times silences them altogether (1 Cor 14:34-35).

This imperially and socially constructed perception of gender power relations which privileges the male, continues to influence the subordinate status of woman in the lineage of the appropriation of these texts in the history of the Christian tradition. Hence, it is crucial for me to

accord a more in-depth analysis to 1 Cor 11:1-16 among other Pauline gendered texts. This analysis must be informed by the knowledge that “Paul’s teachings on women and his vision of the relationships between male and female must not be interpreted through the sex-gender system alone, but have to be seen from the multiple lenses of gender, culture, class, ethnicity and empire” Kwok (2003b:277). This is the analysis which I shall undertake in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

A POSTCOLONIAL FEMINIST READING OF 1 CORINTHIANS 11:1-16

4.0 Introduction

1 Corinthians 11:1-16

1 Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. ² I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions just as I handed them on to you. ³ But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the husband is the head of his wife, and God is the head of Christ. ⁴ Any man who prays or prophesies with something on his head disgraces his head, ⁵ but any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled disgraces her head-- it is one and the same thing as having her head shaved. ⁶ For if a woman will not veil herself, then she should cut off her hair; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or to be shaved, she should wear a veil. ⁷ For a man ought not to have his head veiled, since he is the image and reflection of God; but woman is the reflection of man. ⁸ Indeed, man was not made from woman, but woman from man. ⁹ Neither was man created for the sake of woman, but woman for the sake of man. ¹⁰ For this reason a woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. ¹¹ Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man or man independent of woman. ¹² For just as woman came from man, so man comes through woman; but all things come from God. ¹³ Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head unveiled? ¹⁴ Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair, it is degrading to him, ¹⁵ but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her for a covering. ¹⁶ But if anyone is disposed to be contentious-- we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God (NRSV). ⁴³

In chapter three, I have located Corinth within the socio-historical context of the Roman Empire. I have also examined the role and status of a woman in the Roman Empire and its influence on the role and status of a woman in Pauline congregations in general, as well as, with particular reference to 1 Cor. The current chapter confines itself to the text of focus, namely 1 Cor 11:1-16. The aim of the chapter is to use a postcolonial feminist lens to, firstly, explore the extent to which Paul's construction of gender hierarchy for the Corinthian church was patterned after the hierarchy of the Roman imperial family, secondly to investigate ways in which the status of a woman in the Roman imperial family influenced the status of a woman in the Corinthian Church

⁴³ Unless otherwise stated, all Biblical quotations will be from the NRSV.

in 1 Cor 11:1-16 and thirdly to demonstrate how the text of 1 Cor 11:1-16, can be read for decolonizing and depatriarchalizing purposes.

While gender theory has often focused on the role and identity of women, in my analysis I will also examine the ways in which masculinities⁴⁴ are constructed in the text. My argument is that *this text is socially constructed* in that the gender power relations in 1 Cor 11:1-16 cannot be properly understood without taking into account the gender power relations in the Roman family in the first century, already discussed in the previous chapter.

The text will be investigated within its socio-historical and literary contexts.⁴⁵ The goal of the interpretive process *is however not merely exegetical-critical but significantly hermeneutical*. It is a *reading* of the text. In other words I do not just seek to retrieve the meaning of the author in the text through the examination of the way he constructs gender, but also to use postcolonial feminist theories to identify and expose the imperial and patriarchal aspects in the text with the aim of gender transformation. Put simply, a postcolonial feminist approach has two main functions (among others) which will work for me in the process of analyzing the text. This is, firstly, to scrutinize the text for its subordinating elements and, secondly, to read it for decolonization and depatriarchalization. This means to counter or recognize and expose the imperial and patriarchal elements in the text rather than bracketing them (Dube 1996:122-123).

In applying this theory to scrutinize the text, I will be guided by some of the questions which postcolonial feminist hermeneutics employs to interrogate imperializing texts or texts that are used to justify domination of the 'Other' as outlined by Dube (2000:57). However, while Dube's concern is to establish the construction of the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized through texts at the geopolitical level, my concern is to examine how my biblical text constructs gender power relations in the church. I have chosen three questions from Dube's list to which I will respond in the conclusion. These are: 1) *Does this text have a clear stance against*

⁴⁴A study of masculinities seeks to combat the patriarchal ideology of male superiority and female inferiority. Masculinities will be discussed further in the next chapter.

⁴⁵ The socio-historical reading will entail retrieving meaning by reading behind the text, i.e. by looking into the 'world of the author'. A literary postcolonial reading involves an analysis of the literary constructions of the text (Dube 1997:15-16) and how they function to justify subordination of women on the basis of imperialism and culture. A literary reading will therefore enable me to identify and examine Paul's gender constructions in the text through his rhetoric, and to determine the literary unit of the text.

imperialism of its time? 2) How does this text construct difference: is there dialogue and liberating interdependence or condemnation of all that is foreign? and 3) Does this text employ gender and divine representations to construct relationships of subordination and domination?

These questions will enable me to investigate the literary-rhetorical devices that Paul used in the text to either subordinate or liberate women. Through a postcolonial approach, I will also be able to identify some postcolonial features such as mimicry, resistance, hybridity and ambivalence in the production of the text.

The structure of the chapter will be as follows: I will first give some background information on the letter of 1 Cor as a whole, citing some of the Corinthian cultural ethos that permeated the church and which prompted Paul to write the letter. The background is not only informative for our understanding of the entire Corinthian correspondence, but also an understanding of how the text of 1 Cor 11:1-16 fits within the context of the letter. Secondly, given that the letter (1 Cor) was *not a sacred text* but a *conversation* between Paul and the Corinthians at the point when it was written, but has continued to define gender power relations as *a sacred text* in the history of the Christian tradition, I will give a brief overview of the function of this letter to the Corinthian community, assessing what authority it carried and when it became sacred text. I will finally do an exegesis of 1 Cor 11:1-16 using a postcolonial feminist hermeneutic.

4.1 Background information to 1 Corinthians

4.1.1 Authorship

Pauline authorship of 1 Cor is undisputed, though certain passages like 1 Cor 11:1-16, have been argued to be an interpolation. These arguments regarding the presence of possible significant interpolations concern especially passages where women are subordinated to men e.g. 1 Cor 11:2-16 and 14:34-35. Some scholars have for instance argued for a case of interpolation in 1 Cor 11:1-16 on the basis of the flow of argument. As I have argued in chapter 1, I do not wish to enter into the debate about interpolation, but rather seek to adopt the traditional view of Paul as author, because I am interested not so much in the redaction of the text, but in the production and appropriation of it. In its appropriation in faith communities the author is presumed to be Paul. In

this case I regard the debates about its authorship as secondary to the primary purpose of reading it, since the text stands as gender-biased regardless of who wrote it. I therefore maintain the traditional view of Pauline authorship in order to be able to examine his thought through a postcolonial optic and to read the passage in liberating ways for women. Given that I am presuming Pauline authorship, Paul's background becomes important to this study.

Paul was born in Tarsus which, according to Marrow (1986:8), was designated the capital city of the Roman province of Cilicia in 67 B.C.E. It was located at the foot of the Taurus Mountains on the road passing from Asia Minor to Syria. During Paul's time, Tarsus was a Hellenistic city as well as an important trading, commercial and Greek cultural centre (Bornkamm 1995:3, Roetzel 1997:11-16). Paul was therefore born in the Diaspora (Jews living outside Jerusalem). There are however debates about where Paul was brought up. While some scholars, such as Bornkamm (1971:3) following Acts 22:3, cf. 23:34, argue that his parents may have moved to Jerusalem in his youth where Paul received his education, others dispute this Lucan view and have preference for Tarsus as the place of Paul's upbringing and education, undergoing Hellenistic influence, and where his missionary view was shaped, rather than Jerusalem (see debates in Roetzel 1997:11-16). He had two names, a Hebrew one (Saul) and a Greek one (Paul). Some scholars, like Lüdemann (2002:134), however indicate that 'Paul' was a Roman name. It was a custom for Jews living in Diaspora to have two names, a Hebrew one, and a Greek or Roman one.

Paul was a Jew by birth (Rom 11: 1; 2 Cor 11:22; Phil 3:5) from the tribe of Benjamin (Rom 11: 1; Phil 3:5). He referred to himself as a Hebrew of Hebrews, thus associating himself with the Jews of the motherland since this term referred to Jews of the motherland who spoke Hebrew or Aramaic (Acts 6:1). Paul could therefore speak Hebrew (cf. Acts 21:40, 22:2), although Greek may have been his first language as he was a Diaspora Jew. He was also a Pharisee born of the Pharisees (Acts 23:6), indicating that he was a member of one of the main Jewish sects in Jerusalem.

From the Lucan account (Acts 22:25-27), Paul was a Roman citizen. This view is however sharply disputed. Scholars who support Paul's Roman citizenship argue that Paul may have acquired it through his parents who had obtained citizenship (see for example Ferguson 2003:63). Lüdemann (2002:134-135) also argues for Paul's Roman citizenship and gives several

points to support his view as follows. Firstly, he argues that on the basis of his Roman name (Paul), he must have been a Roman citizen since a Roman citizen had a right to bear a Roman name. Secondly, he asserts that Paul's appeal to be tried in Rome (Acts 25:10-11) is evidence of his citizenship. Thirdly, he states that Paul's freedom to write to Philemon from prison can be explained by his citizenship because as a citizen, he was not kept under harsh confinement but in a liberal detention. Fourthly, that Paul's wide-ranging missionary journeys were only possible, because his citizenship served both as his passport and his shield.

Views against Paul's Roman citizenship, which far outweigh the Lucan view and Lüdemann's argument, are based on various arguments. Roetzel (1997:19-22) mentions some of them. Firstly, Jews from Eastern Provinces were not given Roman citizenship, unless they were rich and influential. Secondly, citizenship demanded participation in the civic cult. This would be at odds with Paul's religious zeal in Judaism (cf. Phil 3:6). This argument may however be countered by the fact that, since the reign of Julius Caesar, Jews were given the right to govern themselves by their laws, to practice their ancestral religion, and autonomy to create their own administrative and judicial organization (Roetzel 1997:21). Thirdly, Paul's endurance of oppression (cf. 2 Cor 1:8, 9f), when an appeal on the basis of his Roman citizenship would have offered a ready escape, puts his Roman citizenship in question. Fourthly, Paul himself does not give any evidence of his Roman citizenship in his letters. Finally, Luke's theological interest would have been served by Paul's Roman citizenship in that Luke would be able to show that the movement in which Paul was involved was not a subversive one.

We may never be able to establish Paul's citizenship with certainty. By extension, this also implies that Paul's social status cannot be established with certainty, because only Roman citizens could occupy the higher stratum.

Some scholars like Mary Smallwood (cited in Roetzel 1997:22) argue, that to be a citizen did not necessarily imply that one was indeed a Roman citizen. It could also imply that one was a member of a *politeuma*⁴⁶. I therefore concur with Roetzel (1997:22) that Paul may have been a member of a Diaspora Jewish *politeuma* or association in Tarsus.

⁴⁶ A *politeuma* referred to a self-governing group within a Roman city who were given specific rights. Alexandrian Jews for instance formed a *politeuma*, meaning that they were allowed to live in their own laws i.e. they were not

Paul was an educated man. It is however doubtful whether he was taught by Gamaliel (a famous pharisaic teacher of the Torah in Acts 5:34) if Paul was indeed reared in Tarsus, as argued above. However his education equipped him with the knowledge of the Septuagint and also with skills of interpretation, as evidenced by the way he often cited Jewish Scriptures and applied Jewish thought patterns to clarify his point, though giving them a new meaning in Christian thought (see Achtemeier, Green and Thompson 2001:296-297). Through his education, he was immersed into the tradition of Israel and the Pharisaic understanding. Education also exposed him to Greek philosophy, which provided a framework for thinking in the Greco-Roman world. Although he may not have had intensive training in Greek culture, he learnt a lot about it through his preaching and also through the theology of the Diaspora synagogue. This is exemplified in his writings, which draw concepts and ideas from the philosophy of the Stoics (e.g. his use of terms like freedom, reason, nature, conscience, sobriety, virtue and duty). His use of the contrast between flesh and spirit in Rom. 8:9-13, reflects Platonic thinking, encouraged by Stoic philosophers (cf. also 1 Cor 7:29-31, 2 Cor 6:10).

This brief background shows that Paul was a highly hybridized man. He was a man of three worlds: a Jew, perhaps a 'Roman' citizen (even if only through his membership of a *politeuma*), and he was also familiar with Greek language and culture, having been born and brought up in the Diaspora, a strongly Hellenized environment. All these worlds shaped his thought and worldview, as reflected in his writings and especially his view of woman, as we shall continue to establish.

During Paul's life before conversion, he was a persecutor of Christians. He put much pressure on them and applied torture, forcing them to blaspheme or curse Christ in Jerusalem (Acts 26:11, 1 Cor 12:3). He then planned to extend the persecution to the centres of the Jewish Diaspora where the Christians had fled in order to escape the persecution in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1, 11:19). Our knowledge of Paul as persecutor of Christians is however limited and Luke's account, which some scholars regard as biased, differs from that of Paul (1 Cor 15:9) (see arguments in Roetzel 1997:38-43).

granted citizenship but "they were given the right to create their own administrative and judicial organization which was called a *politeuma*" (Roetzel 1997:21).

Paul's conversion took place on the road to Damascus. After the conversion, he may have joined the Jesus' movement in this Hellenistic city on the border of Roman political influence (Haacker 2003:24), where he stayed for three years (Galatians 1:17-18). When he went back to Jerusalem, he stayed for two weeks with Peter. According to Acts 9:26-30, the disciples at Jerusalem did not readily welcome him because they doubted the sincerity of his conversion. Later, he had trouble with Hellenistic Jews who plotted to kill him. The church in Jerusalem escorted him to Caesarea with a ticket for Tarsus (Acts 9:30). It is not clear for how long Paul stayed in Tarsus before Barnabas invited him to join in the ministry in Antioch.

Paul's background and influences that shaped his life are pertinent to the understanding of 1 Cor and will greatly inform and shape my reading of chapter 11:1-16. This is the case, particularly because his argument in this text seems to be highly informed by his background.

4.1.2 Occasion and purpose

Paul may have been prompted to write 1 Cor by the information he received from at least three main sources. These sources are the oral report about the dissensions in the church brought by Chloe's people, the letter of inquiry that the Christians in Corinth had written to Paul, and further details of the report from Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus (16:10-11).

Paul wrote 1 Cor in order to address circumstances or issues, that arose within the period of two years after he had left Corinth. The main issue that threatened the church, was the influence of 'secular' culture, including the peer groups, and the local value systems mentioned in 1 Cor 1:26-31. It is also clear from 3:1-3, that moral practices that originated from the cultural patterns in the wider Corinthian society, had infiltrated the church. Paul identified jealousy and quarrelling as key factors that fuelled division in the church and hence accused the Corinthians for being worldly. They were seeking status, were competitive, boastful, used the church as a means of self-promotion, marginalized, neglected and even humiliated those without status as in 11:17-34 etc. Thiselton (2006b:9-18) cites some of the social, political and economic cultural ethos of Corinth, which are evidenced in the behaviour of the Corinthian Christians and Paul's response to them in 1 Cor.

4.1.3 Readers

On his arrival in Corinth, Paul gathered a congregation which included Jews (cf. Acts 16:21, 18:2, 8, 17; 1 Cor 1:1, 14; 16:19), but the majority may have consisted of Gentiles (cf. 1 Cor 12:2; 8:7). The readers were therefore both Jews and Gentiles, though it is difficult to establish either the size of the Jewish community or the membership of the entire congregation. The congregation may have grown numerically by the time when Paul wrote.

4.1.4 Integrity and the unifying theme of the letter

Scholars have propounded three main views of the integrity of 1 Cor. Some see patches in the letter that may be stitched together from three separate letters that Paul wrote e.g. 6:12-20; 10:1-23 (see Johnson 2004:25-26). On the same note, others have identified a literary issue concerning the Corinthian correspondence as a whole. They argue that Paul wrote four letters to the Corinthians and not only the two that appear in his New Testament corpus. Scholars for instance identify an evidence of an earlier letter before 1 Cor in 1 Cor 5:9, in which Paul advised the Corinthians about wrongful association with sexually immoral people. According to Achtemeier, Green and Thompson (2001:332), some fragments of this earliest letter are found in 2 Cor 6:14-7:1. In this case 1 Cor is the second letter that Paul wrote to the Corinthians. In addition, there is a third letter to which Paul refers as the 'letter of tears' in 2 Cor 2:4 and 7:8. This letter does not seem to be 1 Cor, but a different letter. The fourth letter is the current 2 Cor excluding 6:14-7:1.

The second view is that Paul wrote the letter (1 Cor) in two different sittings: first, after hearing the report from Chloe's people (1-4) and second, after receiving the letter from the Corinthians and the further report from Stephanas (5-16). Both of these views are arrived at after a careful scrutiny of the content and style differences in the material and hence need to be taken seriously, but Johnson (2004:26) is right in his observation that the scholars of agreement on the separate letters weakens their claim and that such theories are not necessary when it comes to the exegesis of the texts.

However, some current scholars, Thiselton (2000) among others, have argued for the unity of the entire letter. Thiselton (2000, 20006b) identifies the main problem with the Corinthian congregation as secularization, as mentioned above. He therefore regards Paul's emphasis on grace, the cross, and the resurrection, as the most fitting, unifying themes for such a corrupted

congregation, arguing that “glorying in the lord and receiving status derived from identification with the crucified Christ (1: 30-31) lead to a new value system demonstrable in a wide array of life issues” (2000:40).

I argue with Thiselton, that the letter is a unity considering the concrete situation in Corinth. The situation in Corinth, or the context of the letter, allows for tension within Paul’s argument which sometimes seems to create some inconsistency in the letter (e.g. chapter 8 and 10:23-11:1) or which even functions like an excursus or like an interpolation (e.g. chapter 9 where Paul deals with his role as an apostle). The content of the letter, which is characterized by the above unifying themes, testifies to the unity of the letter.

4.1.5 Summary of the structure and basic theological thought

In chapters 1:10-4: 21, Paul is addressing the divisions in the church. After Paul left Corinth, the church broke into rival groups which threatened the unity of the body of Christ. Some claimed to belong to Cephas, some to Paul, others to Apollos and still others to Christ, and hence they lost the vision of Christ as the foundation of their faith. The cause of the divisions is not clear but Baur (2004:56-57) may be right in his observation that the question of Paul’s apostolic authority was the main cause, because Paul’s opponents did not recognize his apostleship on the ground of Paul not having been in connection with Jesus in his earthly ministry in the same sense as Peter and the other apostles of Christ. Paul is critical of the parties with which the Corinthians identify themselves.

Chapter 4 delineates the demonstration of the Pauline apostolate as an example of the Christian life in general. In chapters 5-6, Paul addresses issues of sexual immorality (*porneia*), drawn from the Corinthians’ worldview which found their way into the church. There was a group of fanatics who claimed to be filled with the Holy Spirit and to possess knowledge derived from revelation. They held that they had reached the state of perfection. They also justified their sinful acts of licentiousness by claiming that ‘all things are lawful’ (1 Cor 6:12, 10:23). Paul allowed freedom only where it was compatible with the law.

In chapters 7-10, Paul responds to questions from the Corinthians about a number of practical issues. Chapter 7 deals with marital problems. Chapters 8-10, deal with the issue of meat, sacrificed to idols. Paul argues that idols are non-existent from a Christian point of view. However, for the sake of the weak Christian, Christians are to forfeit their liberty to eat meat, that is sacrificed to idols. In chapters 11-14, Paul corrects behaviour with regard to the community's life together, particularly in relation to worship. In 11:1-16, Paul admonishes the Corinthian women prophets about the veil, which they must put on when praying, and prophesying. In 11:17-34, he addresses the issue of the misuse of the Lord's Supper, which had lost meaning as a communal meal among the Corinthian Christians. Chapters 12-14, take up the theme of the Holy Spirit. Paul argues, that it must be revealed very clearly who is revered in the ecstasy, whether Christ or the individual Christian. Ecstasy must also edify the church and not just the individual who speaks in tongues. The gift of love is elevated far beyond the gift of speaking in tongues (13:13).

Chapter 15 addresses the theme of resurrection. Paul is correcting the wrong perceptions about the resurrection of the dead whereby some Christians deny resurrection, while others argue that resurrection had already happened, and that they were living in the resurrection age. Paul clarified that the resurrection of the body is a reality, but it was still a future event. Chapter 16 is the concluding chapter, which contains correspondences (personal notes) and greetings.

4.1.6 Paul and rhetoric in Corinthian correspondences

Paul rejected the sophistic rhetoric of his day, the practitioners of which sought to win the admiration of their listeners and approval for themselves (1 Cor 2:1-5 cf. 2 Cor 4:5). He however draws from classical rhetoric that sought to clarify argument and articulate truth in a persuasive manner. Paul uses rhetoric in 1 Cor 15, especially verses 12-19, where he expresses the consequences of rejecting resurrection. Thiselton (2006b:18) identifies the genre of rhetoric used here as 'deliberative rhetoric'. This genre "outlines the advantages or disadvantages of accepting certain beliefs or of practicing certain conduct." This also seems to be the genre he uses in 1 Cor 11:3-16, where he is persuading Corinthian women to veil their heads as will be identified in this chapter. The other genre of rhetoric that Paul uses is parody and self-parody. Thiselton (2006b:19) defines self-parody as "'fun-making' that makes delicate and subtle alterations to

what would otherwise be a solemn self-defence.” It contains sarcasm and irony (cf. 1 Cor 4:1-21, 9:1-23, 11:22-33; Phil 3:7-11).

4.1.7 Archaeological evidence of the Roman character of Corinth

Thiselton (2006b:19-21) identifies three examples which give evidence that Corinth was patterned after a Roman, rather than a Greek model. This archaeological evidence sheds more light on our understanding of 1 Cor and in particular chapter 11:1-16.

First, the Roman background sheds light on 1 Cor 6:1-8. In this text, Paul is charging the believers not to take their fellow believers to secular law courts, but instead to set judges among themselves to handle disputes. Evidence from the Roman background shows that the civil law was corrupt. The rich or influential patrons could offer incentives to judges, so that they might judge cases in their favour. In this case, as Thiselton observes, Paul was condemning a situation where a wealthy Christian could use his/her position to exploit another believer.

The second example comes from 11:17-34 where Paul is rebuking the Corinthians for divisions during the Lord’s Supper. Archaeological evidence shows, that Roman-dining customs influenced the way Christians celebrated the Lord’s Supper. They were designed in a way that the ‘first class’ favoured guests reclined on couches in the *triclinium* with excess good quality food and wine while the ‘others’ stood in the hallway (*atrium*) where they fed on low quality food or even went home hungry. The Corinthian Christians may have taken the Lord’s Supper as if it were such a banquet. In this case it obviously created divisions among believers and embarrassment to the poor ones, instead of bringing the desired unity.

The third example comes from my text of focus, 1 Cor 11:1-16, where Paul reprimands women to be veiled when they are praying or prophesying. Citing Aline, Rousselle and Dale Martin, Thiselton (2006b:20) indicates, that in the Roman society, a respectable married woman was required to put on a head covering or a hood in public, without which she would be sending signals of being ‘available’ “for friendship or more” (Thiselton 2006b:21 cf. verses 4-6 further below.). Thiselton therefore argues that Paul was concerned about “respect and respectability” in public worship. Paul’s demand for the veil will be discussed further in the chapter.

In sum, the above evidence reveals, that Paul was prompted to write the letter by practices which had permeated the church from Corinthian society, and which he felt were not compatible with the community of believers that he was trying to constitute. As such, the foregoing description of Roman Corinth's socio-cultural context is crucial for my analysis of the text which will follow later.

4.2 The function of Paul's letters

From the above description of issues in the Corinthian church, how Paul came to know about these issues and how he addressed them in his letter, we are bound to ask ourselves what significance a letter had in the world of Paul. Given that the letter to Corinthians (and other Pauline letters) *was not a sacred text* at this point, but a *local communication or a conversation* between Paul and the Corinthians, what authority did it carry, and when did it finally become a sacred text? These questions are crucial for me, especially because in the following chapters, we shall see how Paul's conversation with the Corinthians in 1 Cor 11:1-16 became a divine sanction of the subordinate status of woman in the history of the Christian tradition where the text functioned (and still functions) as a sacred text.

In antiquity, letters served an important purpose.⁴⁷ They substituted presence for absence, hence bridging the gulf between the sender and the recipients (cf. Roetzel 1998:51). Paul is very clear that his letter to the Corinthians for instance substituted his physical presence and carried a lot of authority: "For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present I have already pronounced judgment" (1 Cor 5:3). In most cases, when he wrote, he also indicated that he would visit the congregation soon, perhaps to find out if his instructions had been followed. This intensified the importance of his letters. Wall (2004:30) puts it more sharply, stating that "the letter represents the 'spirit' of the prophetic Paul, which communicates the word of the Lord in his personal absence."

⁴⁷ According to Dormeyer (2004:61-64), there were different types of letters in antiquity. Dormeyer (2004:63) classifies the New Testament letters in the *tupos* (type) called 'cultivated friendship letter' which was considered "the epitome of epistolography" (e.g. 1 Thess 1:2-3:10; 1 Cor 1:10-4:21; 2 Cor 1:12-3:3; Gal 1:6-11, 3:1-5).

Paul's letters were conversational. They allowed for dialogue as evidenced above by the fact that the Corinthians could write to him on the issues affecting their church, and he could write back. Thus, both Paul and the community were interested in maintaining their relationship through conversation. I therefore argue with Ehrensperger (2007:56) that "the founding of a community was the result of a corporate activity (and so) it should not come as a surprise that the communication process at a distance via letters was maintained by a group rather than Paul alone" (cf. Crocker 2004:113-114). Important for my argument in my study as a whole and also as I examine 1 Cor 11:1-16 in the current chapter, is that *the text is socially constructed* and *it is socially constructed in conversation*, i.e. it is co-construction whereby Paul talks to the community and the community talks back. In so doing, the identity of the community continues to be constructed.

Given the conversational aspect of Pauline letters, which were responding to specific issues in a specific time in history, (at that time these letters were not a sacred text), what was their authority? When and why did they become a sacred text?

The significance of Paul's letters is expressed by the pseudonymous author of 2 Peter who refers to them as 'Scriptures' (2 Peter 3:16), in which case, according to Wall (2004:30), "the Pauline collection serves the church as a Christian appendix to the Jewish Scriptures." The importance of Pauline letters is also attested by the fact that they were in circulation, long before the collection of the New Testament in the fourth century. According to evidence given by Tertullian, Marcion (c. 85-160 C.E.) who is the first well known collector of Paul's letters, included ten Pauline letters among others in his canon⁴⁸ (excluding the Pastoral Epistles). The Chester Beatty Papyrus (P⁴⁶) from the end of the second century also included ten letters of Paul. The Muratorian Canon, which perhaps dates around the second century C.E., contains a list of thirteen letters, attributed to Paul. By the fourth century, all canonical lists knew a Pauline canon of at least thirteen letters (or fourteen including Hebrews), though sometimes in a different sequence. The above evidence shows that Paul's letters circulated as authorized letters beyond their original destination even before the formal literary collection (Wall 2004:30; Porter 2004:98-99; Brown 2005:1044-1045).

⁴⁸Marcion was using Paul's letters in his canon for the formation of a Christianity, regarded by the church in Rome and the later Christian tradition as heretical or non-catholic.

The question however remains why Paul's letters prompted such a wide circulation, given that Paul's apostleship was contested and his letters were not general, but specifically addressed to particular churches to deal with real life issues.⁴⁹

Scholars have come up with different theories (see Gamble 1985:36-41, Porter 2004:98-121, Brown 2005:1046-1046) but none of them is satisfactory about the origins of the Pauline letter collection. Schenke's view about the involvement of a 'Pauline school'⁵⁰ in the collection of the letters is quite appealing (see Gamble 1985:39). This is because, as Gamble (1985:39) rightly observes, Paul's letters must have been preserved because of the fact that they were persistently taught in church, as opposed to Goodspeed's theory that Paul's letters were obscure and only gained importance after 90 C.E with the writing of Acts. Against the view that Paul's letters were not always valued and carefully treasured (because some were even lost e.g. 1 Cor 5:9; 2 Cor 2:4, while others were only preserved in fragments e.g. 2 Cor), Gamble (1939:40) convincingly argues that although some of Paul's letters were lost, others were valued and circulated at a very early stage. He identifies Romans and 1 Corinthians as two key letters, whose "original specific addresses were generalized early on, a change that must have been calculated to suggest their broader relevance and their broader use."

In sum, I find some of the arguments of the traditional theory that Gamble (1985:36) refers to as the "snow ball theory" quite appealing though it has been criticized. In particular, I concur with the theory that Paul was an authoritative figure to the congregations he founded. In fact, some of his writings are characterized by the rhetoric of obedience and submission as we shall see in verse 1 below. Furthermore his claim to apostolic authority,⁵¹ (though contested by some in his

⁴⁹Catholicity was one of the criterions considered for canonization of Scriptures. Letters that were intended by the author for localized use were of questionable value. Although Paul's letters were unquestionably apostolic, they still fell short of the criterion of catholicity and this raised difficulties as regards their canonization, even at the end of the second century. (For more details about the criteria of canonicity, see Gamble 1985:62-72).

⁵⁰These may have been a group of people who knew Paul well and valued his teachings. They developed his teachings after his death.

⁵¹ Apostles were those whom Jesus had called and sent to preach i.e. to bear witness to his victory over death. An apostle was one who had been with Jesus throughout his earthly ministry and had witnessed his resurrection. Paul however regards the term as wider than the Twelve (1 Cor 15:5-7). He includes himself in the list of apostleship on basis of the fact that he saw Jesus (1 Cor 9:1; 15:7-9) near Damascus (Gal 1:17), and secondly because he was commissioned by Jesus to preach. The importance of the apostles in the church is evident in texts such as 1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:1, where they are given the first rank. They were regarded as the authoritative interpreters of the Jesus-

community), and his self-proclaimed status as father figure to his congregations as the founder (1 Cor 4:15-16), accorded value to his letters which led to a wider circulation and finally to their canonization. As Brown (2005:1045) rightly argues, “Paul spoke as an apostle with an apocalyptic, eschatological thrust.”

4.3 A postcolonial feminist reading of 1 Corinthians 11:1-16

Gender identity was one of the important factors that Paul considered in his effort to define the boundary of his new Christian community, which he deemed as alternative and in opposition to the Roman imperial order as indicated above, and as Elliott (1994) and Horsley (1998b) argue. Nevertheless, he was constructing his perception of gender within the larger context of the social norms of Jewish and Hellenistic, culture as well as the Roman imperial context. Despite his efforts to organize an alternative society, Paul’s view of gender relationships is however not monolithic. His writings rather reveal ambiguities and complexities in his view of the position of woman, which constantly create problems as the reader tries to attach an anti-imperial or a liberating meaning for women to these texts. Kwok (2006:54) makes a similar observation in her effort to establish Paul’s political stance. One such ambiguous passage is 1 Cor 11:1-16.

A thorough scrutiny of Paul’s view of gender relationships and especially the position of a woman in the hierarchy in this passage, which is characterized by deliberative rhetoric, reveals a conflict within himself between embracing and not embracing the prevailing hierarchical structures. This struggle may be best understood through the postcolonial features of *mimicry*, *resistance*, *hybridity* and *ambivalence* to the existing Roman legal and kinship structures. Perhaps examination of these features may be one of the best ways to understand, how the Roman imperial context informed Paul’s gender construction in this text. I will therefore divide the text into three main parts namely: 1) *Paul’s mimicry* (verses 1-10); 2) *Paul’s resistance* (verses 11-12); and 3) *Paul’s hybridity and ambivalence* (verses 13-15).

tradition. Their importance outlived their earthly life and continues to influence the life and teaching of the church, which still regards itself as apostolic i.e. patterned after the teaching of the apostles.

Verse 16 is Paul's conclusion and seal to his argument. However, before I examine these features it is important to place the passage in context by examining the preceding passages and those that follow the text of 1 Cor 11:1-16.

4.3.1 Placing 1 Corinthians 11:1-16 between the preceding and the following passages: The theme of 'order'

Some scholars have regarded 1 Cor 11:2-16 as an isolated text on the basis of the flow of the argument. Horsley (1998a:152), for instance, identifies a smooth flow from 8:1-11:2 on to 11:17-34 in which the discussion of food, offered to idols, comes to its peak "in the mutually exclusive opposition between banqueting in pagan temples and sharing in the Lord's Supper." Part of the difficulty in placing 1 Cor 11:1-16 is also about how the issues that Paul addresses here came to his attention. Are they a response to their letter? From 7:1-10:33, Paul replies to questions from the Corinthians about a series of practical issues (see Thiselton 2000:99-163, cf. also Fee 1987:357-362⁵²) Paul picks up the issues, raised by the Corinthians, only later in 11:17⁵³ and hence 1 Cor 11:1-16 breaks this flow. Some scholars have therefore regarded the passage as an interpolation (see arguments in Horsley 1998a:152-153), because it does not link naturally to either the preceding or to the following passage.⁵⁴

However, 1 Cor 11:1-16 is not an isolated text, but relates to the preceding passage (8-10) and the passage after it (11:17-14:40) by the themes of self-discipline, restraint, and respect for those who are weak in conscience (cf. Thiselton 2000:803, 2006:170). For Paul, nothing should distract worshippers from God. These themes suggest order. Paul was concerned about maintaining order in his congregations. This is evident, especially in 1 Cor 11:1-14:40, where order is to be maintained in worship and especially in the use of the spiritual gifts. Order was

⁵² Fee brings out four points that the Corinthians may have raised in their letter and how Paul responds to them in 8:-10:33 (Fee 1987:357-362).

⁵³ Cf. 11:18 "...I hear that there are divisions among you; and to some extent I believe it." This is a response to what Paul had actually heard about the Corinthians and 12:1 where he address the spiritual gifts as an issue raised by the Corinthians to him.

⁵⁴ I have maintained the traditional view that the passage was written by Paul (see my argument on authorship above).

crucial for the running of the Roman Empire, as reflected by the order in the family structure in which the household served as a microcosm of the state, as we saw in chapter three (cf. Osiek 1992:82). It may therefore be argued that Paul, in his construction of gender hierarchy, followed the same concept that the family is the microcosm of the church or the church is the macrocosm of the family. For him, the family hierarchy was crucial for order in his churches, which he organized as a family.

4.3.2 Paul's mimicry (chapter 11 verses 1-10)

According to Moore (2005:88), mimicry is the posture 'in which the colonized heeds the colonizer's peremptory injunction to imitation, but in a manner that constantly threatens to teeter over into mockery' (2005:88). On another level, it can be seen as the selective use of the master's tools by the subaltern (e.g. the Bible) as a way of enhancing the subaltern's identity or evolving a hybrid identity. In this chapter, I am using *mimicry* as a postcolonial term in a particular way, not to examine the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized but to illuminate ways in which Paul who is a subject of the empire *imitates* the empire in his effort to form an alternative community of believers. This chapter examines such acts of imitation with regard to Paul's construction of gender power relations in the text of 1 Cor 11:1-16. The term mimicry further illuminates the behaviour of Paul's subjects i.e. the Corinthian Christians, especially women towards Paul. It will be evident that they do not always imitate him, but sometimes resist his call to imitation, just as the colonized in modern times resisted the colonizer.

11:1 Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

Many scholars regard this verse as a conclusion to the preceding passage 10:23-33, on the basis of its language and argument (see Fee 1987:490, Thiselton 2006:166 among others). However, as much as the verse fits well as a conclusion, it can also fit well as an opening remark to capture the minds of the Corinthians in preparation for the following argument (11:2-16). I therefore regard verse 1 as an opening remark of the passage, because it draws my attention as a postcolonial feminist interpreter by asserting apostolic authority to the argument that follows. Paul calls the Corinthians to be imitators of him even as he is of Christ. The theme of imitation is

a common one in Paul's letters (cf. Phil 3:14-17, 4:8-9 etc). Paul sets himself as a model, patterned after Christ, which his communities might imitate by thinking the same things as he does. Many scholars have argued that Paul's exemplariness consists in humility, self-denial, self-giving, and self-sacrifice, for the sake of Christ and for salvation of others. They therefore *do not attach a power claim* to his rhetoric of imitation, because Paul considers himself to be *nothing* on the basis of his calling (see arguments in Thiselton 2000:795-797).

Some postcolonial feminist scholars as well as scholars in masculinities, however attach a power claim to Paul's rhetoric (Castelli 1991:86-87, 89-117; Marchal 2008:47; cf. 59-90, Conway 2008:7, 9; Fiorenza 2007:5). They, for instance, argue that Paul's metaphor of imitation resonates with colonizing practice of mimicry, whereby the colonizer calls the colonized to mimic his culture, and hence places Paul in a position of authority over his congregations. Dube (2000:117) also warns postcolonial readers to be suspicious of the ideological motives behind divine claims in texts.

It is significant to note that Paul is writing in the context of the empire. Although he may be a subject in his position in the empire, he places himself in the position of authority in the Corinthian church, not only as its founder but also because of his claim of apostleship (1:1) (though resisted by some Corinthians who identify other models to imitate e.g. in 1 Cor 1:12). The fact that some Corinthians approach him for guidance on a series of practical problems, to which he replies, is evidence of his position as a spiritual leader. Furthermore his claim to be the only father that the Corinthians have (1 Cor 4:15,⁵⁵) places him in a position of authority like a patron so that he can, for instance demand obedience and discipline from those who do not obey (cf. 1 Cor 4:21; 2 Cor 10:6; 13:2). Paul's call to imitation therefore needs to be interpreted in a context of power relations. Paul mimics the imperial binary opposition based on status by claiming supreme authority as a model. He mimics the authority of the *paterfamilias* in his position as a father of his family (the church), and in so doing promotes the patriarchal/imperial structures of the Roman family in the church.

⁵⁵ 1 Cor 4:15-16; ¹⁵ "For though you might have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers. Indeed, in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. ¹⁶ I appeal to you, then, be imitators of me."

Following Dube's caution on divine claims, I therefore regard verse 1 as a literary–rhetorical device, in the form of a divine claim, used to take control of the mind of the reader. Paul uses the metaphor of imitation in order to present his gender constructions in the following verses as divinely justifiable. The metaphor therefore serves as a method of domination, employed by the apostle with regard to his followers.

Verse 2-3a Preparation for another tradition

After the rhetorical statement in verse 1, Paul opens verse 2 by commending the Corinthians for observing the previous traditions and then, in verse 3a, continues with “But I want you to understand...” This is a way of preparing them to receive yet another tradition in the subsequent verses.

Verse 3 The hierarchy⁵⁶

Paul's use of the term ‘head’ (*kephalē*) here to express relationships between man/Christ, woman/man, Christ/God, has long been debated. Some scholars hold the traditional view, which translates *kephalē* to mean authority. Fitzmyer (1989:510) for instance shows a wide range of passages where the term refers to chief, leader or leadership and concludes that “a Hellenistic Jewish writer such as Paul of Tarsus could well have intended that (*kephalē*) in 1 Cor 11:3 be understood as ‘head’ in the sense of authority or supremacy over someone else.” Following the traditional view, Alford (1958:652) translates *kephalē* as “head *next above*” and argues that Paul is confining the woman back to her proper traditional status of subjection.

Many current scholars, however, translate *kephalē* as *source*. Some like Murphy-O'Connor argue that *kephalē* can only mean ‘source’ here. It “never connotes authority or superiority” in ancient Greek (O'Connor 1990:808 cf. Fee 1987:503). Scholars who interpret *kephalē* to mean source, argue against any claim of hierarchy in this text (see for example Fee 1987:503-505, 512, Keener 1992:32-36, Horsley 1998b:153, Thiselton 2006:171).

⁵⁶ By ‘hierarchy’ here, I do not mean an established or an institutionalized church order, but a gendered hierarchy that Paul constructs in 1 Cor 11: 1-16 to govern gender relationships in the church. It is significant to mention that, when Paul is writing to the Corinthians, the Corinthian church is a charismatic community that worshipped together as ‘the body of Christ’ in which believers were bestowed with various spiritual gifts, which they freely used in the church. A gradual replacement of the dynamic charisma of the apostolic (i.e. Paul's) leadership by an institutionalized church (male) leadership is a later development, which this study does not seek to trace.

According to Schlier (1965:675), in the LXX, “an element of what is superior or determinative is expressed... (*kephalē*) is used for the head or ruler of a society.” Using Deut 28 to illustrate this point, Schlier (1965:679) observes that, “v. 13⁵⁷ in comparison with v. 43 f,⁵⁸ shows the headship over someone is at issue.” He also notes that *kephalē* “is used for ‘head,’ ‘ruler,’ of others or of a society at Ju. 10:18”⁵⁹ With regard to 1 Cor 11:3, Schlier (1965:679) argues that Paul is using the term *kephalē* “as it is familiar to him, and in respect of one element at least its root is in the LXX. (*Kephalē*) implies one who stands over another in the sense of being the ground of his being.”

Following Schlier's argument, we can identify that the term *kephalē* connotes authority and superiority when used in the LXX in the sense of a ruler, as he illustrates in Deut 28:14, 43f. I also see a similar connotation of superiority and hierarchy, even when the LXX uses the term to imply “one who stands over another in the sense of being.” For instance, why would ‘source of being’ be associated with *kephalē*, i.e. with the top part of the body, and not with any other part, if it were not for the pre-eminence that is attached to the head over the other parts of the body? The supremacy of the literal head is well underlined in Deut 28:14, 43f, where the head is contrasted to the tail in the same way as ‘top’ is contrasted to ‘bottom.’ Obedience to the Lord’s commandments would result in the Israelite’s supremacy not in their subordination, while disobedience would lead to the opposite.

In sum, there is no significant difference between the traditional interpretation of *kephalē* as authority and the current translation as ‘source’, since the term itself carries an ideology of supremacy. I maintain that *kephalē* in 1 Cor 11:3 means ‘supreme authority.’ It is however noteworthy that in this hierarchy, woman is not said to be *kephalē* of anyone, despite Paul’s

⁵⁷“The LORD will make you the head, and not the tail; you shall be only at the top, and not at the bottom-- if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God...” (Deut 28:13).

⁵⁸“Aliens residing among you shall ascend above you higher and higher, while you shall descend lower and lower. ⁴⁴ They shall lend to you but you shall not lend to them; they shall be the head and you shall be the tail” (Deut 28:43-44).

⁵⁹“The commanders of the people of Gilead said to one another, ‘Who will begin the fight against the Ammonites? He shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead’” (Judges 10:18).

mention in verse 12 that “man comes from woman,” hence reflecting the legal condition of the Roman woman who had no power (*potestas*) over anyone other than herself. Consequently, the same meaning of superior authority is not attached to her, either in the metaphorical sense or in the literal sense (when Paul uses *kephalē* to refer to the woman’s head i.e. part of her body) because according to Paul, her head is not to be made visible, but instead to be covered. The veil gives pre-eminence to the husband since, among other things, it is a symbol of his headship over her, as we shall see later in the chapter.

Paul’s hierarchy in verse 3 is not without a model behind it. As indicated above, Paul’s concern is to ensure the proper order of relationships in his congregations (cf. Kittredge (2000:106). His use of *kephalē* may therefore be best understood within the order of the structure of the Roman family, whose order was maintained by a strict hierarchy⁶⁰ of subordination with the *paterfamilias* as the head (see chapter three). Paul applies this order in the church by establishing a hierarchy from God, Christ, male, female (11:3). He reinforces the hierarchy by subjecting Christ to God. It is however significant to note, that Paul elsewhere subjects Christ to God (1 Cor 3:28; 15:28). Perhaps Paul has in mind Christ in his human nature where, as a Son, he is subordinate to the Father. Nevertheless, by subjecting Christ to God in verse 3, Paul is portraying Christ as a model for submission, in order to characterize the female’s proper relationship to the male. In terms of the construction of masculinity and femininity in the Greco-Roman world, Paul makes Jesus *unmanly*. Jesus is feminine in his complete submission to God (Moore in Conway 2008:11). Rieger (2007:36-37) rightly argues that, “the subordination of Christ under God should be as troublesome to Trinitarian theologians as the idea of the subordination of women under men is for progressive Christians.”⁶¹ In other words, the relationship of mutual interdependence

⁶⁰A similar hierarchy existed both in the Greek and Jewish social system where the woman was relegated to a subservient status (see Rakoczy 2004:31).

⁶¹Many contemporary conservative evangelicals argue that the Son is eternally subordinated to the Father in role or function, but equal in being. They argue that the subordination of the Son to the Father is a model for permanent women’s subordination in role to men but equal in being, which is mandated by the Trinity. For them, “the Trinity reflects the God-given ideal for male-female relationships” (Giles 2005:334). They cite 1 Cor 11:3; Jn 14:28 among others as the Scriptural bases for their argument. However, while virtually all Christians are in agreement that in the incarnation the Son subordinated himself to the Father, most Christians do not believe that this subordination defines the Father-Son relationship in the eternal or immanent Trinity but rather affirm the equality of the Father and the Son (see arguments in Giles 2005:334-352). I concur with Giles following the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, that there is no hierarchy in the Trinity and will address it further in the following chapter.

that exists in the Trinity should characterize the male-female relationship where none should be subjected to the other.

In sum, verse 3 no doubt establishes a hierarchy. I concur with Draper (1991:43)⁶² and Dunn (1998:588), that Paul's argument is indebted to the social realities. Sampley (2003:9) shares a similar observation that "nowhere does Paul try to deny or even modify the hierarchical burden of the patriarchal language."

From a postcolonial feminist examination, this verse fits in Dube's category of imperializing texts, or texts that are used to justify domination of the 'Other' in that the verse does not have a clear stance against the structures of imperialism of its time, and the verse also employs gender and divine representations to construct relationships of subordination and domination.

Verses 4-6 The veil in public worship

There are arguments among scholars about whether Paul means the veil or hairstyle. It is worth noting that Paul does not use either the term 'veil' or 'hair-style' explicitly. Verse 4 is actually *an asyndeton* (no joining participle or conjunction) and hence literally reads "Every man praying or prophesying, having down over head shames his head." Nevertheless, I concur with Fee (1987:506), that the verse (and indeed the entire text) is set in the context of worship and that the asyndeton connects the verse with verse 3, hence the head that is shamed by the man is his metaphorical head (Christ). The difficulty with the verse however is what "having down over head" means, or rather as Fee (1987:506) asks, "having *what* down the head"? Some scholars argue that it refers to having long hair (Horsley 1998a 153-154). O'Connor (1990:809) argues that the reference is to long hair "which male homosexuals grew in order that it might be dressed elaborately," and hence the contempt for long hair on men. Other scholars like Byrne (1988:39) argue that the idea of the 'veil' is present in Paul's language, because the Greek expression *katakalyptesthai/akatakalyptesthai*, when used in reference to the head, implies the sense of being covered or uncovered by wearing a cap or veil.

⁶²Draper (1991:43) argues that in 1 Cor 11:3, Paul uses "a culturally determined language of 'headship' to create a hierarchy: God-Christ-man-woman."

I argue that any of the interpretations (either hair-style or veil) can apply without changing Paul's meaning, because whatever it was, Paul expected that the Corinthians would understand, depending on what was considered to be modest or immodest dressing of either the male's or the female's head in Christian public worship. I however maintain that Paul is referring to the veil because firstly, it was the customary wear for women, both in the Roman Empire as well as in the Jewish world as we shall see below in verse 5. Secondly, Kenyan women (who are the subject of investigation in my thesis) would identify more with the veil, rather than with bound hair, not only because the British missionaries interpreted the verse to mean 'veil' to which they introduced Kenyan women, but also because many Kenyan women's hair is naturally too short to be bound.

Nevertheless, Paul's reference to the man dishonouring his head by praying with his head covered in verse 4, is more problematic to trace. Did Paul trace it to the Jewish or to the Roman prayer practices? According to the *Standard Jewish Encyclopaedia* (Roth 1959:1784), male adults donned a *tallit* (prayer shawl) "during the morning (and additional) prayers...and on the Day of Atonement..." Some scholars like Oster (cited in Thiselton 2000:803) however argue that this Jewish practice is later than Paul. On the other hand, according to archaeological evidence, from Rome, men covered their heads when they prayed and prophesied. Oster states:

(T)he practice of men covering their heads in the context of prayer and prophesy was a common pattern of Roman piety and widespread during the late Republic and early Empire. Since Corinth was a Roman colony, there should be little doubt that this aspect of Roman religious practice deserves greater attention by commentators than it has received (quoted in Thiselton 2000:823).

The practice of men, veiling in worship, both in the Jewish and in the Roman world, therefore contradicts Paul's argument here, if he is referring to actual veiling for men. Some scholars like Horsley (1998a:154), as indicated above, conclude that the reference is "to long hair" which was associated with homosexuals rather than to the veil. We may not know with certainty what Paul meant, but there is no doubt it made sense to the Corinthians. I argue with Byrne (1988:39), that, "the whole idea for men is hypothetical and only put in as a negative contrast to the situation of the woman."

Verse 5-6 Women and the veil in public

I have argued above, that Paul was prompted to write the letter by practices which had permeated the church from the Corinthian society and which he felt were not compatible with the community of believers that he was trying to constitute. I have also argued that 1 Cor 11:1-16 is full of ambiguities and contradictions, especially with regard to the position of women, where to a great extent Paul is imperial or rather mimics the empire as we have found in verse 3. Verses 4-6 reveal this mimicry, which translates into contradiction because Paul uses the ‘secular’ dress code to design women’s dressing in his new movement. Verses 4-6 are therefore to be understood within the common mode of dress in Paul’s social/imperial context and especially for women in worship.

In classical antiquity there was a strong belief that ‘you were what you wore’ (Winter 2003: 4-5). The veil was a significant part of dress. According to Keener (1992:22-23), the practice of covering of the head by women can be traced to the old Greek tradition. According to Winter (2003:78), in the Roman tradition “the veil was the most symbolic feature of the bride’s dress.” However, though veiled, Roman women were less secluded than Greek women, but still a married Roman woman “was expected to wear (a veil) *in public*” (Thiselton 2006:172).

What then was the significance of the veil? What did its removal symbolize? Why does its removal cause Paul concern? What does the veil symbolize about the role and status of Corinthian women prophets?

According to Bruce Winter, recent scholarship by historians has shed light on the understanding of the veil in 1 Cor 11:1-16. Through use of this new material, Winter has usefully given detailed information about the veil and its implication for the Corinthian woman (Winter 2003:77-96). I will briefly use some of this information to address the above mentioned concerns of this section.

If the veil was symbolic for a bride (Winter 2003:78), then one of the significances, attached to it, was that a woman was married. It was also a mark of modesty/honour for Roman women (Thiselton 2006:172), as well as for Greek and Jewish women. Some scholars, e.g. Martin (1995), connect the head/hair with female genitals whereby the covering of a woman’s head

functions to cover her sexuality i.e. to guard her honour.⁶³ The veil was also a mark of man's authority over his wife. John Chrysostom (349-407), a Church Father, clearly declares that it is a mark of woman's "subjection," "it induces the woman to be humble and preserve her virtue, for the virtue and honour of the governed is to dwell in obedience" (NPNF 112:153, quoted in Bray 1999:109).

The removal of the veil signalled the opposite of the above. It symbolized withdrawal from marriage (Winter 2003:81), or rather resistance to the husband's authority. Some women were divorced on account of going out unveiled. In the context of public worship, Thiselton (2006:173) explains that an unveiled woman was "inviting men to 'seize her up' as a woman who *might* be willing to be propositioned and 'available.'" In 1 Cor 11:5, Paul explains further the significance of its removal: "it is one and the same thing as having her head shaved." According to the law, a woman who was caught in adultery was shamed by having her hair shaved (Winter 2003:82-83). Martin (1995:243) gives a more explicit explanation that "the removal of their hair symbolizes the shameful uncovering of their genitals." In this case, Martin attaches a similar meaning for unveiling (adultery) as Paul. Paul however does not accuse the women prophets of adultery but uses deliberative rhetoric in verse 6, to indicate that, if it is a shame for a woman to have her hair shaved, then the only option was to have it veiled.

The veil characterized the dressing of women who worshipped in cults.⁶⁴ There are statutes that reveal the role of some of these women as priestesses with their heads veiled⁶⁵ e.g. Livia, the wife of Augustus (see Winter 2003:89-90).

As opposed to this traditional woman, 'the new Roman woman', mentioned in chapter three, lived a more independent life, contrary to the traditionally accepted norms of marriage, fidelity, and chastity and embraced new norms, hence showing little regard for the veil. Consequently,

⁶³ Cf. a similar significance was attached to a long dress that covered the body. It was a sign of "denying sexuality and of showing acceptance of social structures" (Moxnes 1997:33).

⁶⁴ In the time of Paul, the cult of Demeter with which women were connected operated in Roman Corinth.

⁶⁵ Keener (1992:25) however cites evidence of unveiled pagan prophetesses and unveiled women in Greek religious activities but also argues that these were more secluded and also that it is not likely that Paul had them in mind.

Emperor Augustus who was a staunch traditionalist enacted the marriage legislation of 18/17 B.C.E., which among other things legalized the traditional norms of women's modesty as indicated in the previous chapter. The dress code, for instance, distinguished between a modest wife, an adulteress, and a prostitute. From a postcolonial feminist optic, we can therefore identify a distinction among women, based on class, and morality, depending on what they wore. The dress code further reinforced the culture of honour and shame.

Paul allowed women to perform the public roles of praying and prophesying, thus defying the Mediterranean definition of female space as domestic. These roles for women were not unique to Christianity because women were active participants in cults. Paul also demanded that women who prayed and prophesied be veiled, just like the priestesses in the cult. It may therefore be observed that women who undertook religious functions had to have their heads veiled, which was a Roman legal requirement for married women outside their homes. As such, it can be argued that both in the cult and in Pauline congregations, women performed their religious function *in an inferior status*; first in accordance with their subordinate status in the gendered hierarchy in the church, and second because of the veil which subjected woman to the authority of her husband as her head. Given this explanation, Paul's use of 'head' can be best interpreted as '*authority*'. Thus, Paul links authority (honour) to the man and subjection (shame) to the woman.

What does Paul's prescription for women to wear a veil imply about the behaviour of Corinthian women prophets? Had they abandoned the veil?

One of the functions of the postcolonial optic is to unearth submerged voices. The fact that Paul is very particular about the veil may indicate that some women were appearing to be 'contentious' (cf. verse 16). This may have caused Paul offense, given that the veil symbolized respectable women. Some scholars have argued, that unveiling would distract worshippers and bring shame to the woman due to lack of self-respect, respect for her husband as her head, and also to the church (see Thiselton 2006:172-173, Keener 1992:36-37).

Nevertheless, given that the veil was also a mark of subjection of a woman to her husband (an aspect which many exegetes have bracketed), from a postcolonial optic, we can identify the *submerged voices* of Corinthian women which are *eloquent in their behaviour*. The Corinthian

woman prophet *mimics* the ‘new’ Roman woman with her liberating lifestyle. She is *resisting* the veil and all its implications. Winter 2003:77 similarly argues, that “...wives praying and prophesying with their heads uncovered in the Christian gathering were replicating the attitude and actions of ‘new’ wives.” Wire (1990:118) also observes, that the unveiled Corinthian woman is an advocate for justice. Other scholars have traced the Corinthian women’s practice of unveiling to the Christian freedom, preached by Paul, and which they had misunderstood. Thiselton (2006:173) for instance indicates that “some Corinthian Christian women... wanted to break free from more conventional roles or constraints on the basis of gospel ‘freedom’ and gender equality...”⁶⁶ Alford (1958:564) had made a similar comment about women’s reaction to Christian freedom: “It appears, that the Christian women at Corinth claimed for their sex equality with the other, taking occasion by the doctrine of Christian freedom...” Whether women’s unveiling was a response to their (mis)understanding of Christian freedom or a mimicry of the new Roman woman, the fact is that they identified an aspect of subjection in the veil and decided to take an active role on their own liberation by unveiling.

In postcolonial terms, unveiling therefore becomes a form of the subordinate’s (woman) resistance to the patriarchal and imperial methods and strategies of domination, in order to win her freedom, both in the church and in society. By not veiling, the Corinthian women prophets are not only resisting domination by the family and society patriarchal and imperial structures, but it is also an indication that these women are *not imitating* Paul in the way he would like. Instead, they are resisting him despite his display of a divinely endorsed authority. In Bhaba’s view, the inability to achieve sameness with a model, is the sign of the model/colonizer’s lack of control over the copy or the colonized (see Marchal 2008:72). Paul’s call to imitation in verse 1 is therefore challenged by the imitator. In their resistance, the women are also constructing their own identity of freed women.

⁶⁶Thiselton (2006:173) therefore argues that “Paul was unhappy about any assumption that gender equality means gender sameness or gender interchangeability,” meaning that these women had misunderstood the nature of Christian freedom. But I do not see any evidence in the text that women were claiming ‘gender sameness’ or ‘gender interchangeability’ through unveiling other than gender equality itself.

By making it an obligation that women who pray and prophesy be veiled, Paul mimics Augustus who subordinates women by legalizing the veil. Paul therefore re-enforces the imperial law of veiling in the church by making it a divine sanction. In mimicking Augustus, he therefore also promotes the Roman culture of honour and shame, as well as class distinction based on morality among Christian women.

Verses 7-9 Image of God versus glory of man

After his prescription of the veil for women, Paul uses the creation stories (Gen 1-2) to justify, why a man ought not to cover his head and why the veil has to be confined to the woman. He argues: “A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man” (RSV).

Paul alludes to Gen 1:27 where creation of humankind in the ‘image of God,’ male and female, is first mentioned, but reads it, through Gen 2, in such a way that he confines the image of God to the man and so he gets the basis on which he argues that “woman is the glory of man.” I will therefore first examine the perception of the image of God in male and female in the two creation accounts, before I consider how Paul used the two concepts, ‘image of God’ and ‘glory’, in relation to gender in 1 Cor 11:7-9. It is worthwhile mentioning here, that the title of my thesis is drawn from 1 Cor 11:7-9, which I regard as the core of the whole text. Hence the need to give these verses more attention here.

a) Perception of the image of God in male and female in the two creation accounts (Gen 1-2)

In the opening two chapters of Genesis, we are presented with two creation accounts (Gen 1:1-2:4a, 2:4b-25). Contemporary scholars have identified that the first creation account is from a later date than the second. The first originates from the Priestly source (P), dating probably to the fifth century B.C.E., after the exile but it contains ancient materials. The second account originates from the Yahwist tradition (J). It originates in Judea under David and Solomon, hence dating back to the ninth century (see Ceresko 2001:60, Tavard 1973:4, 9).

In the pre-scientific exegesis, these accounts were regarded as part of a collection that the Jewish Rabbis later considered to be inspired. It is uncertain, what the narratives meant in the minds of

their authors (or transmitters, or redactors). According to Tavad (1973:3), these accounts are not original in an absolute sense, because they “express contradictory, or at least divergent, attitudes which themselves testify to a long period of reflection on the male-female relationship as it was experienced in the near East (including ...the Fertile Crescent and Egypt...)” However, there may be no conflict between the two creation narratives. They may be explanations of the same reality, but from different perspectives. Some scholars, like Kessler (2004:40), even doubt whether there is really a first and second creation account. Kessler sees both accounts as having been introduced by Israel’s writers, who were quite accustomed to putting two related accounts side by side. This view is also held by Richard Clifford (Clifford 2005:8-12), who regards Gen 1-11 as a single story with Gen 1:1-2:3 as an introduction to Gen 2:4b-11:26 and a preface to the entire Pentateuch.

In the first account God created humankind, male and female in God’s image; “So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Gen 1:27). The Hebrew term used for the created being is *ha-adam* meaning ‘humanity’.⁶⁷ According to this account, God creates an undifferentiated creature, which constitutes God’s image and likeness in being male and female. Important for us to note here is that, like in the second creation account (see below), there is only one origin of humankind. Humanity is originally an undifferentiated creature. It “is a unity in nature and diversity in sex” (Okure 1990:49) or as Hess (2005:94) puts it, “unity in personhood and diversity in their gender.” As male and female therefore, they are of equal dignity in God’s presence, by virtue of their creation in God’s image and likeness.

The second creation story presents the woman as being created second, and from the man’s own self. In view of the above argument, I concur with Tavad that there are no two creations but only one, that of Adam (the undifferentiated creature). The second account portrays the process, in which the differentiation of Adam was done by Yahweh through a surgery to form *Ish* and *Isha*,

⁶⁷ The word *adam* was used as a generic term for humanity in the West Semitic lexicon before its use in Gen 1-3 in the form in which it occurs. In Genesis 1-3, the term has two different uses; it refers to ‘humanity’ (Gen 1) and to ‘the man’ in the Garden of Eden (Gen 2-3). Hess (2005:80) notes that this development was not unique to the term *adam* but a common phenomenon of evolution of words shared in many languages. Since the OT has no common term for ‘humanity’, other than *adam*, and that in Hebrew there is no neuter, then as (Hess 2005:80-81) rightly argues, “it is somewhat inaccurate to suggest that there was a conscious divine decision to use a masculine term to describe the human race.”

male and female (Tavard 1973:6-7). Tribble (1978:80) makes a similar observation in her argument, that there is no sexual definition of the human being in the beginning of the account: “Instead, the earth creature here is precisely and only the human being, so far sexually undifferentiated.” She further argues: “After God operates on this earth creature, to produce a companion, its identity becomes sexual” (Tribble 1978:98). Following Tribble, Gonzalez (2007:11) also argues:

Gender differentiation does not occur until the creation of the female. In other words, male and female come to exist at the same moment. Prior to the creation of the female, the human being did not have a distinctive sexuality.

The two creation accounts were put together, one after the other, during the compilation of the Pentateuch in the postexilic period under the guiding hand of the P tradition and perhaps a redactor (R)⁶⁸ around 400 B.C.E.

Did these stories therefore come from within an egalitarian community? What may have prompted their invention? As Tavard (1973:12-26) has convincingly argued, it is probable that the writers of the two creation accounts lived at the beginning of the monarchy, after the Israelites had already passed from their nomadic way of life and began to adopt a more settled agricultural life. This contributed to the development of strong cultural traditions. Israel was trying to establish her identity as worshippers of Yahweh, as opposed to their neighbours who worshipped idol gods. The poet tried to explain, that the current order of things had not always been the same. In the two creation stories, the author presents an order in paradise, which he contrasts with the present order of struggles, which are seen as a consequence of the fall.⁶⁹ A woman is presented as the crown of creation in chapter 2, but in chapter 3 the poet seeks to explain why the woman is inferior to the man in the current order of society. It is due to the curse that was pronounced on her by Yahweh, because of her participation in the fall. Israel is

⁶⁸ For more information about the formation of the Pentateuch, see Murphy and Carm (2005:3-7); Clifford R. (2005:9).

⁶⁹ In Genesis 3 comes the story of the fall. This story like the second creation account, falls in the Yahwist tradition. Exegetes argue, that the story relates to pagan myths in several minor ways. It is a myth that takes place in paradise with the woman as the key actor (Tavard 1973:12-26).

therefore made to realize that the present order of the universe has not always existed. Instead, there is a paradise order to which they always longed to return in the messianic age.

Tavard (1973:18) observes that, whatever the origin of this story, it came to be identified with the religious view of primitive times to such an extent, that it also appeared primitive and real in religious circles. Feminist scholars have also traced the theory of objectifying female sexuality as evil to this period of the establishment of the monarchy, as we shall discuss further in the next chapter (see Setel 1985).

However, although these biblical texts may be mythical (Rogerson 2004:54), and may have been invented by their authors for their own reasons, they still have significant lessons today in our effort to reconstruct gender identity in the current order of things in the following ways: firstly, by identifying Gen 3:16 *as a social construction* of gender relations in the Ancient Near East, they deconstruct the common view of the Church Fathers and other Christian and Jewish writers, that the verse serves as a divine sanction of the subordinate status of a woman.

Secondly, these accounts, as feminist scholars like Tribble and Reisenberger have argued, may provide a liberating model for both men and women, by presenting them as equal on the basis of creation in the image of God. This point will be discussed further in the feminists' critique of the Fathers, who subjected woman to man as a result of their selected and limited reading of the creation accounts, in the next chapter.

Having examined the perception of *Imago Dei* in male and female in the creation accounts and having shown through some feminist scholars work on the texts, that both male and female are created in the image of God, I will now show how Paul uses them in 1 Cor 11:7-9.

b) Paul's use of 'image' and 'glory' in relation to gender in 1 Cor 11:7-9

As already stated, while the Genesis text (1:27) describes God as creating *ha-adam* in the 'image of God' "male and female he created them," Paul in 1 Cor 11:7 argues for man's exclusive God-likeness. He also applies the 'glory' of God exclusively to man but not to woman, whom he argues, is the glory of man. It is surprising that many scholars have not problematized Paul's argument here, but instead have argued that Paul was showing gender differentiation as willed by God in the order of creation. O'Connor (2005:809) for instance, argues that, although Paul was

aware that both male and female are created in the image of God, he could not say it here, because his intention was to “find a formula that underlined the differences between sexes, and the idea that woman gave glory to man” (cf. also Thiselton 2000:834-837, Fee 1987:517-518). While these scholars are right in their argument that the creation accounts show gender differentiation, I argue that Paul has used this gender differentiation in the accounts to create gender disparity in a way in which these accounts do not. As argued above, gender differentiation in the creation accounts create gender companionship. So, where might Paul have drawn his argument about man’s exclusive God-likeness from?

According to Johnson (2004:195), Paul’s interpretation “follows known Jewish Rabbinic exegesis, which disallowed the divine image to Eve.” Similarly, O’Connor (2005:809) gives evidence from Josephus of such Jewish use of the second creation account to show that woman was inferior to man (but argues that Paul in verses 11-12 is nullifying this tradition).

The construction of the male gender as the image or representation of the divine may however be traced beyond the above traditions to the construction of masculinity and femininity in the ancient Mediterranean world. In that world, the woman was by definition inferior and an incomplete or deformed version of the male (see Vorster 2008:117-123). This gender disparity was influenced by the thoughts of early philosophers and scientists. In his science, Aristotle, for example, associated male with reason and female with the senses. The logic here is that reason must rule over passion. He also argued, that females should be looked upon “as being as it were a deformity...” (1V, vi, 775a, LCL, quoted in Wegner 1991:51, cf. Gonzalez 2007:21-25). Aristotle further spoke of males as “more divine” or ‘godlike’ as a result of their active role in creation (cited in Conway 2008:2). Philo developed Aristotle’s view further by using Greek philosophical models to interpret Jewish scriptures. In his reading of the creation stories in Genesis, he identified the mind (*nous*) or intellect (the rational part of the soul) with the male, and sense (*aesthesis* i.e. the irrational part of the soul) with the female. He argued that the *nous* is patterned after God (i.e. male is the image of God) but the woman, who has no part in the *nous*, is not fashioned in the image of God (see Wegner 1991:45). Consequently, Philo associated the fall with the irrationality of the female soul, which the serpent was able to deceive. As a result of influence by these philosophical thoughts, the Greeks, and the Romans after them who did not reason on the basis of Genesis, regarded the woman as a potential source of danger and subjected

her to a *tutela* (guardian), on account of her *light-mindedness* which is easily deceived (see previous chapter).

Like Philo, Paul's reading of the creation accounts in 1 Cor 11:7-9 is indebted to these Greek philosophical ideas, revealed in his argument regarding man's exclusive God's likeness. Paul therefore applies the notion of 'the image of God' (Gen 1:27) in a gender-biased way, contrary to the text. He further cites the second creation account, where Adam was created first, and the woman was created from his 'rib' as a 'helper' (Gen 2:18-23), to justify the female's inferior status in the order of creation. This is what Gonzalez (2007:25) refers to as "an interpretation of Genesis 1 that is tainted by a misinterpretation of the Genesis 2-3 account."⁷⁰ For Paul, by virtue of being created directly by God, Adam is the sole representation of God on earth. Man being the glory of God in the Old Testament usage means, he is the 'force of God's self-manifestation' (Kittel 1964:237).

Consequently, for Paul, since a woman comes from man, she is not the glory of God in a direct sense, but rather she has *derivative* glory from man. She is man's glory in that she was created for man (verse 9) and hence expected to bring honour to him. Unveiling for a woman is a challenge to man's honour (position of headship), because in the Roman world, the purpose of modest dressing of women was to exalt men, be it their fathers, husbands or brothers. Woman being the glory of man therefore, reflects the Roman culture of honour and shame.⁷¹ It was expected, that wives uphold the honour (glory) of their husbands by avoiding behaviour that would result in shame. A man acquired honour, or lost it, through a woman (see Camp 1991:2-39,⁷² Witherington 1995:54). The veil thus symbolizes the authority of the husband and the subjection of his wife to this authority.

Nevertheless, Paul is contradictory in that according to him, man, being God's glory, needs no covering while woman, being man's glory, needs covering. This contradiction points to the

⁷⁰ Gonzalez (2007:25) is referring to the influence of platonic and Aristotelian perceptions of gender on the construction of male and female in the earliest Christian writings.

⁷¹ Honour and shame were closely linked to power and authority. Witherington (1995:154) observes, that, "honour was primarily a male matter" while "shame was primarily a female matter."

⁷² Camp (1991) examines the bases for honour and shame in Ben Sira, as they relate to gender and to the socio-economic realm.

significance of the veil as a mark of subjection of woman to man in society since, after all, the creation accounts themselves do not present a veiled Eve.

It is significant to note, that the privileged position of Adam in verse 8 occurs elsewhere in Rom 5:14, and has had serious implications for the identity of woman. Adam is for Paul a *tupos* or a ‘type’ (originally ‘stamp’)⁷³ of Christ. Paul therefore shares Philo’s idea, who, through the influence of Plato, regards Adam in both creation stories “as an allegory of the ideal man” (Reisenberger 1993: 450). The New-Adam-New-Eve typology is therefore developed from these thoughts. The argument behind this typology is that “God-like Adam prefigures Christ who as the new Adam and divine Redeemer is incarnated in perfect manhood.” On the other hand, “Non-God-like Eve prefigures the church/Mary, who as new Eve represents dependent and gynaecomorphic humanity” (Borresen 1995:248). This Christian anthropological gender model continues to exclude women from ordination to priesthood in some churches, as we shall see in the next chapter.

In sum, Paul reads the creation accounts selectively, in order to re-enforce the culture of honour and shame by privileging the male. A feminist critique of this limited reading of the creation accounts will be given in the next chapter. We shall see that some feminists have argued, that based on the correct translation of this creation account, a woman’s creation is not derivative and secondary, since a relationship of subordination is not implied in the Hebrew text (see for example Gonzalez 2007:11).

Verse 10 “...a woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.”

This phrase is obscure and I do not consider it as a main argument in the text. The phrase “a woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head” of course begs the question, “whose authority?” Following the above argument about a woman being the glory of man in verses 7-9, the phrase most probably refers to man as the ‘symbol of authority’ over the woman’s literal head.

The reference to the angels has been long debated. Some scholars, like Wire (1994:179), associate the ‘angels’ with the ‘sons of men’ mentioned in Gen 6:1-6, Enoch 1-20, who leave

73 The language of ‘stamp’ is imperial. It is a language of authority in coins, which have the stamp of the emperor.

heaven to mate with daughters of men. According to Keener (1992:40), in early Jewish and Christian texts there were traditions about fallen angels having intercourse with human women. Other scholars, like Augustine and Aquinas, identify angels “with holy angels who as hosts of heaven participate in the worship of the church” (cited in Thiselton 2000:840). According to Augustine, these holy angels would be pleased with the purity of women. Thiselton (2000:841) still mentions another argument that refers to the Jewish traditions of angels as “guardians of order” and participants in the church’s praise to God.” These traditions found their way into the New Testament. Any of these interpretations may offer a possible application to verse 10. The veil (as a symbol of a husband’s authority) would protect women from the gaze of these angels, whatever their intention or role among human beings might be. The verse serves to further intensify the question why a woman should wear a veil.

4.3.3 Paul’s resistance? (verses 11-12)

In the previous verses, we have seen ways in which Paul’s construction of gender identity through the hierarchy, veiling for women and his perception of *Imago Dei*, mimicked gender power relations in the Roman family structure and other existing Jewish and Greek constructions of gender identity. In verses 11-12, Paul seems to show *resistance* to the existing structures by indicating: “Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man or man independent of woman.¹² For just as woman came from man, so man comes through woman; but all things come from God.” As opposed to the rigid hierarchy that he has constructed in 1 Cor 11:3, these verses seem to advocate for relationships of mutual interdependence. Any attempt to advocate for erasure of gender distinction was regarded as dangerous and seditious (see Punt 2009:10-11). Such a relationship was not possible in the Roman Empire, because it would challenge the authority of the *paterfamilias* and consequently become a direct challenge to the emperor.

Several scholars have identified an aspect of mutuality between man and woman in these verses which either corrects or qualifies the previous argument. O’Connor (2005:809) argues, that the fact that woman is source of man, contrasts with verse 3b. For Fee (1987:522-524), Paul’s use of *plēn* (nevertheless) serves to qualify his preceding argument: “In fact, the sequence ‘woman/man’ makes almost impossible the view that v. 10 has to do with the man’s having

authority over the woman” (Fee 1987:522). Fee identifies further qualifiers through the perfect double chiasm,⁷⁴ that corresponds with the thrust of verses 8-9 (see Fee 1987:523). He then concludes: “To read the text as though it said the opposite of what vv. 10-12 seem clearly to say is to do Paul an injustice...” (Fee 1987:524). Thiselton (2000:842-843) also identifies mutuality between man and woman in these verses. For Byrne (1988:47-48), Paul in verses 11-12 goes beyond interdependence to equality of man and woman ‘in the Lord’ that echoes Gal 3:28, “an equality which the preceding argument could well have seemed to threaten.”

However, if 1 Cor 11:11 is examined in the context of the definition of ‘sexuality’ (to use a modern term) in the ancient world, the verse raises serious concerns about the nature of gender equality and consequently serves to maintain the hierarchy. In the ancient world, biological determinants counted little in the definition of sexual categories. Instead, the cosmos was perceived to be structured on a vertical continuum. The perfect male occupied the top while other less perfect versions of male identity were placed at various lower points of the axis (see Conway 2003:474). If Paul proposes gender equity only ‘in the lord’, i.e. *union into one male*, is he therefore proposing *masculinization* of the female gender into the perfect male, and hence loss of female identity? Punt (2009:6) raises a similar concern with regard to Gal 3:28: “Would Gal 3:28 therefore have meant that women in their mystical union with Christ became empowered as males, growing toward the male end of the spectrum?” Some scholars, like Punt, therefore do not attach an egalitarian meaning either to Gal 3:28 and by extension to 1 Cor 11:1-2 (cf. Dunn 1998:588, 593, Vorster’s and Martin’s argument on androgyny⁷⁵).

Furthermore, even if Paul is proposing mutual relationships between man and woman, based on the idea of Adam being the source of Eve and Eve bringing forth man through procreation,

⁷⁴ According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*, chiasmus is “a technique, used in writing or in speeches, in which words, ideas, etc. are repeated in reverse order” (Wehmeier 2006:244).

⁷⁵ Martin (1995:230-232) observes that modern scholars argue for androgyny in these verses, assuming that androgyny implied equality between sexes. However, recent studies, informed by feminist critics, demonstrate that “androgyny does not imply equality.” They observe that androgyny is defined in male terms, for instance where “women must become male in order to be saved, but nowhere is it claimed that men must become female.” (Martin 1995:231). Vorster (2008:129) also argues that androgyny “was a product of a masculinist signifying system and functioned as such to negatively valorize women...” As such, androgyny does not erase hierarchy, and not least in these biblical texts.

mutuality is immediately countered by verse 8⁷⁶ where Paul privileges the man as the head of a woman, by virtue of being her source. Furthermore, if Paul is proposing mutuality through woman *as the source of man*, this mutuality should be seen throughout his argument. In verse 3 for instance, where he argues that “the husband is the head of his wife,” he would also have reciprocated by saying that “*the wife is the head of her husband*” (since “man comes through woman”). In verse 7, where he argues that “woman is the glory of man,” he would also have said that “*man is the glory of woman.*”

These verses remain hierarchical, even if a complementary meaning is attached.⁷⁷ I therefore concur with Dunn (1998:588) that 1 Cor 11:11-12 does not erase the hierarchical relation in the entire passage.

4.3.4 Paul’s hybridity and ambivalence (verses 13-15)

Hybridity is the condition that results from intercultural exchange, in which one culture is not swallowed by another but both intermix to create something new. Sugirtharajah (2001:249 cf. 2002:191) describes it as “a space where one is equally committed to and disturbed by the colonized and the colonizing cultures.” Paul’s background in the previous chapter revealed that he was a highly hybridized man as a product of three worlds, the Jewish, the Roman imperial and the Greek world. Besides, he was a man and also a follower of Jesus. All these worldviews shaped his construction of gender identity in his churches. Paul’s hybridity is seen in the conflict between his past life in the Roman/Jewish hierarchical structural society and his new life in Christ, who offers liberating insights through the gospel (notwithstanding that the Jesus too is part of first century Palestine). Meeks (1983), I think, captures the dilemma of Paul in quite a convincing manner. Following Victor Turner, Meeks (1983:9) observes that the early church was in a liminal state (transitional stage), whereby, as a marginal group which distinguished itself from society, it continued for some time to “exhibit features of *communitas*.” They could not

⁷⁶ “Indeed, man was not made from woman, but woman from man.”

⁷⁷ If Paul is suggesting a complementary relationship between man and woman, complementarity does not abolish the hierarchy. Rather, as Rieger (2007:28-29) observes, it ‘naturalizes’ difference by hiding power differentials while the hierarchy exposes them. Each person then appears to fulfill an important role as part of the larger whole so that even the most subservient roles of women are justified.

evade the existing structures in their endeavour to create their own. As such, there was tension between “structure and anti-structure,”⁷⁸ as evidenced by Pauline letters.

The ambivalence of the transitional manifests itself in the contradictions especially in our text, among others. While, in verses 11-12, Paul seemingly advocates relationships of mutual interdependence between men and women in the Lord (though debatable as discussed above), in verses 13-14 he *contradicts* himself and shows *ambivalence* by reverting to his earlier argument about the veil and the culture of honour and shame. He does this by appealing to the Corinthians’ judgment and sense of propriety in the form of two rhetorical questions.⁷⁹ His first question in verse 13b points back to verse 5. It is based on propriety and does not expect an answer: “Is it proper for a woman...?” His second question in verse 14-15 appeals to nature and expects a positive answer: “¹⁴ Does not nature itself teach you...” As Fee (1987:525) rightly observes, this question serves “to reinforce or to clinch the first one.” He further suggests, that the points that Paul is making by appealing to nature are that: nature, has: “distinguished between sexes,” and that “a woman’s long hair should teach them the propriety of being ‘covered’ when they pray” (Fee 1987:525). In my view, “the very nature of things” (verse 14) refers to the social construction of propriety in male and female which has been objectified as nature.

Paul’s hybridity that results in conflict, ambivalence, and contradictions, is even clearer when we compare 1 Cor 11:1-16 (where he allows women to pray and prophesy but in a subordinate status) and the stringent suppression of public roles for women in 1 Cor 14:34-35 (see chapter 3). A further feature of hybridity is seen in the way in which Paul sometimes speaks about some women as his colleagues, on equal terms with his male colleagues, e.g. in the case of Phoebe in Rom 16:1-2 who is introduced in equal terms with Timothy and Epaphroditus in Phil 2:19-30 (see chapter 3). In 1 Cor 7:1-7, Paul also advocates for mutual sexual relationships between the husband and the wife, as opposed to the traditional and legal view, where a man could force

⁷⁸ Meeks (1983:88-89) is using Victor Turner’s view of *liminality* (the antistructural quality of the initiatory phase between separation and reintegration i.e. a temporary or a transitional stage between two modes of integration into a society that is structured by roles and statuses). In Meek’s words, Turner uses *communitas* to refer to “the close, undifferentiated mode of social relationship that initiates experience with one another.”

⁷⁹ According to Fee (1987:526), “A rhetorical question by definition has its answer implied in the question itself.”

himself on his wife, even if she was unwilling, without breaking the law.⁸⁰ These texts reveal Paul's hybridity, but they also have *liberating potential* for women if taken up because they point to mutual gender relationships.

In sum, although Paul's views with regard to women stems from his hybridized position and although he privileges women in many ways, he does not seek to transform the social systems of his day. This is further evidenced by his concluding ruling in *verse 16*, where he asserts his authority as a seal of his argument. Henceforth, the church is to be governed by this hierarchical structure. Paul, in 1 Cor 11-16, therefore presents what, according to Dunn (1998:588), "appears to be an unbending statement of male hierarchy." In this case, from a postcolonial feminist point of view, it can be argued that the liberating gospel message of Christ, which Paul is promoting in his alternative society, to a large extent remains *submerged* and *subordinated* to the cultural/imperial dominating voices with regard to the construction of gender power relations.

4.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, I will use the three questions outlined in the introduction which are used by postcolonial feminist hermeneutics to interrogate imperializing texts or texts that are used to justify domination of the 'other' (Dube 2000:57; cf. Marchal 2008:45-54), in the light of my findings in the chapter.

"Does this text have a clear stance against imperialism of its time?"

My analysis has shown that the text does not have a clear stance against imperialism of its time because it mimics the empire. It reinforces the imperial and traditional social order by making it into a divine sanction.

"How does this text construct difference: is there dialogue and liberating interdependence or condemnation of all that is foreign?"

This text creates difference. One of the ways in which Paul creates difference in the text is by presenting anti-models. In verse 1, Paul sets himself as a model to be mimicked or imitated by

⁸⁰ Lord Hale in the eighteenth century B.C.E pronounced: "By their mutual matrimonial consent and contract the wife hath given up herself in this kind unto her husband, which she cannot retract" (quoted in Dixon 2001: 49).

the Corinthians. Anyone, who deviates from this model, is seen to be different and hence anti-model. This includes the unveiled Corinthian women prophets and the veiled men in the church, whom Paul is persuading to return to his model. Secondly, Paul creates difference by showing gender differentiation in the creation order, which he uses as a divine sanction for the subordinate status of women in a way in which the Genesis text does not. While gender differentiation in the creation accounts leads to equal relationships of mutual gender interdependence, Paul uses this gender differentiation to create gender hierarchy.

On the question of dialogue, I have argued that this text is a conversation between Paul and the Corinthians. Nevertheless, Paul's strong voice and language that are dominant in the text, show that he is actually far from dialogue. His final ruling in verse 16 that "if anyone is disposed to be contentious-- we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God," is clear evidence, that Paul has silenced all other voices and is not prepared for any dialogue and interdependence.

The response to the last part of the above question is also negative. There is no condemnation of all that is foreign. This is interesting because, in the beginning of the chapter, we found that Paul was prompted to write 1 Cor by the 'secular' or 'foreign' practices, which had permeated the church and which he felt were incompatible with the alternative community that he was creating. However, in this chapter, surprisingly, he has totally embraced what is 'foreign' and non-liberating for women from the Roman family structure to construct a hierarchy of unequal gender power relationships in his church.

"Does this text employ gender and divine representations to construct relationships of subordination and domination?"

Paul employs gender and divine representation to construct relationships of subordination and domination in the text in the following ways: firstly, by placing himself as a mediator between the divine (God and Christ) and the community through his call for imitation as he imitates Christ (verse 1), secondly, in his hierarchy, he uses the relationship between God and Christ to sanction unequal gender power relationships between male and female (verse 3), and finally, Paul uses the authority of sacred texts, i.e. the creation accounts in Genesis, to construct gender differentiation.

1 Cor 11:1-16 therefore fits Dube's definition of imperializing texts, or texts that justify subordination of 'other' by claiming divine authority.

In a nutshell, the chapter has revealed how patriarchy, imperialism, gender, and religion have served each other mainly in the Roman Empire, but also in the Greek and Jewish world, and in Christianity, to construct unequal gender power relations at the level of the production of 1 Cor 11:1-16. I therefore concur with Schneiders (1999:182) that:

One cannot assume...in reading the biblical text that it gives us an accurate picture of women in the community of salvation (since Jesus won universal salvation). We get the picture of women that men created, which corresponds to the male understanding of women and their place in society at the time of the writing of these documents.

Having established that the gender power relations constructed in the text, *is not a God-given condition* of male/female identity and relationships, but a patriarchal construction through the existing social, imperial and legal structures, how was this text taken up by the future church? We must bear in mind that the future church did not regard this text as a social and imperial construction but as a *sacred text* which was authoritative in their lives. In the following chapter, I will examine how Paul's perception of *Imago Dei*, which he confines to the male gender, was taken up, developed and appropriated in the history of the Christian tradition. However, since Paul constructed his theology of gender upon an existing distorted tradition about gender identity, and since the Church Father who took his theology further also shared the gendered views of philosophers like Aristotle and Philo, the chapter will first briefly historicize gender power relations by tracing it beyond Paul to the ancient world.

CHAPTER 5

RECEPTION AND APPROPRIATION OF *IMAGO DEI* IN THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION

5.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I used a postcolonial feminist hermeneutic to analyze 1 Cor 11:1-16 against my findings in chapter three. My critical and extensive reading of the chapter has confirmed, that the text is a social construction through a conversation between Paul and the Corinthians. In a nutshell, Paul constructs his theology of gender on the basis of *an existing imperial and cultural tradition about gender identity*, a fact that the church tradition has been sometimes reluctant or totally unwilling to admit.

The main argument in this chapter is that the perception of the image of God in a woman, that has been handed down in the history of Christianity, is *a distorted one*. The Christian tradition, deeply rooted in an androcentric framework as demonstrated by the views of the Church Fathers, has perceived women as lacking in the image of God, and hence their subordinate status has been legitimated by their lack of full human nature or God-like capability. I argue, as I have argued in chapter four, that this is not a woman's God-given status but a social construction.

This chapter is however *only a sketch* of the examination of the perceptions of *Imago Dei* in male and female in the history of the Christian tradition. It seeks to give an overview of how Paul's imperially and patriarchally coded perception of *Imago Dei* in a woman was taken up and appropriated in the history of the Christian tradition. I will pay special attention to the writings of the Early Church Fathers in their exegesis of their own selected⁸¹ texts from Paul, which they

⁸¹ The Fathers read the Bible selectively, in order to subordinate woman. They only use Paul's texts which collaborate with the hierarchical system, but not those that resist it. They also use the second creation story to subject woman to man and are not emphatic of the first creation account, where both male and female are created in the image of God. Even where they argue that male and female bear the image of God, they limit it to the spiritual level and argue that, at the physical level, the female is inferior (cf. Augustine).

relate to creation stories and the fall (Gen 1-3).⁸² This will hopefully reveal how their exegesis of these texts which in most cases suppressed a woman *even more than the texts did*, continued to shape the theology of the church, as well as the church's tradition with regard to women in subsequent centuries. I will, for instance, briefly highlight the influence of this theology on the perception of woman in the medieval period, and among the protestant reformers, through to the twentieth century in the Church of England. In the Church of England, the Genesis and Pauline texts meet the British Empire, where they reinforce the Victorian constructions of gender. In this chapter, I will show that the Fathers, who are using biblical texts to construct their insights regarding women, share similar perceptions to the 'secular' Greek and Roman perceptions of women that were described in chapter three. This connection will be explored at the outset, by tracing these views to the construction of masculinity in the ancient world. The chapter will show that the Fathers, like Paul, were functions of the ancient world, its culture, and the Roman Empire. Consequently, the chapter argues that gender construction has to be *historicized*. It will show that the perception of a woman in relation to a man and also to God, has journeyed and been modified from one author to another and continues in that vein, even today. The chapter will therefore demonstrate, how *tradition is constructed* and passed on from one generation to another, sometimes through distortion. In this case, unfortunately, the tradition about the perception of *Imago Dei* in woman has circulated as the 'Word of God' in the history of the church, through repetitious citations and interpretations from generation to generation.

The distorted perception has been safely preserved through Jewish and Christian literary and legal systems, including Church Councils and Constitutions which have been handed down in the form of Church Canons, Laws and Traditions from one generation to another. In this case, as Oduyoye (1986:130) expresses, "(t)here is no doubt that the image we have of ourselves as Christian women and men and of our community and the language we use in speaking of ourselves have been shaped by these thinkers."

⁸² See e.g. Cloke (1995:25-56) who, in her discussion of the Fathers' view of womanhood, argues that the patristic attitudes about women take their root in the writings of "the Apostle Paul; for them the first and greatest Christian writer" (Cloke 1995:25). She rightly indicates, that Paul in 1 Cor 11:3 was expounding Gen 1:26, 2:7, 2:21 on the subject of the image of God in relation to man and woman.

While the Church Fathers and the early traditions invoked these texts to subordinate women, in recent times Christian feminist theologians have invoked anthropology to deconstruct the distorted traditional perceptions of *Imago Dei* in woman in the writings of the Fathers and to re-affirm God's image as present in both sexes. In this chapter therefore, I will use their writings to critique the Fathers' distorted perception of *Imago Dei* in a woman. Although their critiques have offered us much by way of re-affirming God's image in both sexes, I will argue that the critique of feminist theologians can be strengthened by a study of masculinity, since feminist critique is focused on how woman is constructed, rather than on the social construction of man. A study of masculinity would bring a balanced focus about taking account of not only the construction of woman but also that of man which after all has largely shaped the gendered perception of the image of God in the writings of Paul and the Church Fathers. Only such a balanced focus can lead to a fuller picture of the image of God, in both woman and man.

The constraints of space and time do not allow for any detailed and comprehensive discussion of over two thousand years of gender construction in the church. However, I will sketch, as fully as I can, the way in which this text has been taken up and appropriated throughout the Christian age. My findings are grounded in the works of a few scholars, such as Elizabeth Clark (1983); Michelle Gonzalez (2007); and Seal Gill (1994), among others. Each of these scholars has comprehensively examined gender relations in her particular period of focus.

This chapter is significant for the entire thesis because it links the preceding chapters with the following ones in two ways. Firstly, it historicizes gender construction beyond Paul and the Roman Empire by tracing it to the ancient world. Thus, the chapter gives further illumination to chapter three and four that Paul constructs his theology of gender and consequently his perception of *Imago Dei* upon an existing distorted tradition about gender identity. Secondly, tracing the gendered understanding of *Imago Dei*, derived in 1 Cor 11:1-16, in the history of the Christian tradition (in the Church Fathers, the Protestant Reformers, and in the eighteenth to twentieth centuries), naturally leads to an investigation and evaluation of the ways in which this theology influenced the perceptions of *Imago Dei* in its interaction with my pre-colonial Kenyan context, western missionary Christianity, and the ACK, in chapters six and seven. Chapter five therefore shows how the distorted tradition of gender identity has journeyed from one author to another even today, creating a distorted perception of *Imago Dei* in relation to gender.

5.1 Construction of masculinities in the ancient world

In my exegesis of 1 Cor 11:7-9 in chapter four, I have briefly alluded to the construction of masculinity and femininity in the ancient world, as informative to Paul's perception of *Imago Dei* in relation to male and female, and generally to the construction of gender identity in the Greek, Jewish and Roman world. It is therefore necessary to explore the construction of masculinity and femininity in the ancient world in detail for a better understanding of the Fathers' arguments concerning the image of God, which were strongly influenced by the understanding of gender in the ancient world. Understanding of the construction of masculinity and femininity is crucial, not only for this chapter but also for the following chapters, where the perception of *Imago Dei* in woman is discussed as reflected in gender construction in various contexts. In this section I will investigate how sex and gender were viewed in the ancient Mediterranean world and, in particular, how masculinity was defined in relation to femininity.

5.1.1 A brief definition of masculinities

Whitehead and Barrett (2001:15-16) define 'masculinities' as "those behaviours, languages and practices, existing in specific cultural and organizational locations, which are commonly associated with males and thus culturally defined as not feminine." Masculinities are therefore socially and culturally constructed, rather than biologically determined. These behaviours have a positive dimension in that they give identity to the male gender, but, negatively, they 'other' the female gender (Barrett 2001:16). As such, I consider the understanding of the construction of masculinity, or how men were formed in the ancient world, as crucial to the understanding of the construction of femininity not only in that world and in that period, but also in subsequent centuries. This is because, as Whitehead and Barrett (2001:23) express, "no matter how definitions of masculinity change, they are always in contrast to some definition of femininity and always elevated over this." Therefore, whatever masculinity features will be highlighted in this section, will always be considered relational to femininity, in a superior versus inferior manner.

The sociology of masculinities concerns itself with "the critical study of men, their behaviours, practices, values and perspectives." It "seeks to highlight the ways in which men's powers come to be differentiated, naturalized and embedded across all cultures, political borders and organizational networks," with a view to "change and challenge such power differentials, and,

one hopes, change men” (Whitehead and Barrett 2001:14-15). The sociology of masculinity is highly inspired by feminist theories and hence fights the same cause for gender justice.

Masculinity studies are not to be confused with *masculinism*. Nadar (2009:2) makes a clear distinction between the two. She defines masculinism as “the antithesis to feminism. It is an ideological system which not only believes in, but actively promotes male power.” Masculinism therefore naturalizes the superior position of males over females, while masculinity studies serve to deconstruct this ideology in order to combat patriarchy and to redefine masculine identity.

5.1.2 Conceptions of masculinities (sex and gender) in the ancient world

Evidence from major writers in antiquity, stretching over five centuries (who include Xenophon, 428-354 B.C.E.; Aristotle, 384-322 B.C.E.; Philo, 15 B.C.E.-50 C.E.; and Hierocles 117-138 C.E.) has revealed, that in the ancient world, the cosmos was perceived as gender-divided, with certain roles, tasks, and objects appropriately assigned to each gender. The roles that were seen as appropriate for men were the ‘outdoor’ or ‘public’ roles, which included agriculture and civic affairs. Women, on the other hand, were associated with the ‘private sphere’ or ‘indoor’ activities. These included child rearing, preparation of meals and production of clothing (Neyrey 2003: 44, 49-51). Human sexual organs were used to illustrate these spheres.⁸³

In the ancient world as Conway observes, biological determinants counted little in the definitions of sex and gender.⁸⁴ The female sex was not defined as the opposite of the biological male sex but, instead, was regarded “as an imperfect, incomplete version of man” (Conway 2003:474). Man was believed to be naturally hotter than woman was, and this ‘natural’ bodily heat accounted for his superior position. This view is evident in literary works in early centuries. Aristotle for instance wrote:

⁸³ Since male genitals are located outside the body, men were associated with the outside ‘public’ sphere, while women were associated with the ‘private’ ‘inside’ sphere, as dictated by the location of their genitals (see Neyrey 2003:51-54).

⁸⁴ The equation of a person’s sex with biological anatomy and gender with social construction is a later development which only came in the twenty-first century with contemporary scholarship.

In human beings, the male is much hotter in nature than the female... It is due to this...that the perfecting of the female embryos is inferior to that of male ones, (since their uterus is inferior in condition) (quoted in Conway (2003:474 cf. Vorster 2008:117-123).

Galen, a second century physician, posed a similar view when he wrote:

Now just as mankind (sic) is the most perfect of all animals, so within mankind (sic) the man is more perfect than the woman, and the reason for his perfection is his excess of heat, for heat is Nature's primary instrument (quoted in Conway 2003:474).

This belief is echoed by Philo of Alexandria who stated: "It is said by naturalists that the female is nothing else than an imperfect male" (quoted in Conway 2003:475). In the Greco-Roman world, the act of penetration by the penis was a mark of manhood. The body that was penetrated specifically by a penis, was therefore the inferior one. Masculinity was associated with the Roman sexual protocol, which defined men as "*impenetrable penetrator*" (see Walter 1997) Women were regarded as 'passive' sexual partners.⁸⁵ A male, who was penetrated by another male in a sexual act, was said to have been passive as well. Therefore, not all males were *men*. Male slaves for instance fell in the category of the passive, because they were at the disposal of their masters to penetrate them.

The other male characteristic in the Mediterranean world was mastery of others and/or oneself (Moore and Anderson 1998:250). This trait is common in Greek and Latin literary and philosophical texts. Thus, it was man's right to dominate others, who included his wife, children, slaves etc (see similar view about the authority of *paterfamilias* in the Roman Empire, in chapter three).

In the Greek world, gender was also constructed through a dualistic view of reality. The Greeks had a dualistic view of mind-body. They held, that in a human being there is both spirit and matter. Spirit is good, higher and better, while, on the other hand, matter is evil, dangerous and lower than the spirit. The male is identified with the spirit, while the female is identified with

⁸⁵ Feminist scholars such as Donaldson and Kwok (2002: 6-8, Dube 1998) therefore rightly critique feminization of the explored (penetrated) lands and the use of female gender as the symbol of the colonized, because this feminization serves a similar purpose, namely to subject woman and the colonized into a passive and inferior status.

matter, and hence male is superior to female (Rakoczy 2004:33). This Greek dualistic view exerted some influence on the construction of woman among the early Christian writers.

In the Jewish world, the rabbinic construction of masculinity⁸⁶ was not unique to the Jews, but rather “it only slightly reconfigures elements found in both Jewish-Hellenistic writings and in the literature of the non-Jewish elite, especially moralists and philosophers,” and also from the pre-rabbinic Jewish wisdom tradition (Satlow 1996:20-21). The rabbis drew at least two themes from this literature. First, self-mastery which was a condition for a life of the mind and which was “gendered as characteristically male”⁸⁷ (Satlow 1996:21). For them, this uniquely male trait had to be used in the pursuit of the divine through the study of the Torah. His second theme was the pursuit of the life of the mind. Manliness was associated with reason, while femininity was associated with passion (see e.g. 4 Macc 15:29-16:4, and also the gender-biased writings of Ben Sira⁸⁸ in Sir. 9, 19, 25, 36,42). For the Rabbis manhood was a state to be achieved and therefore maintained through constant proof that one is a man.

The above analysis of gender construction in the ancient world and in the Jewish world reveals a clear link between the two, namely that Hebrew and Jewish perceptions were not unique but owed a lot to the construction of masculinity in the ancient world generally. I therefore concur with Satlow (1996:20-21) above, and also with Maher (2006). According to Maher (2006:63):

The scholars who formulated the classical texts of Rabbinic Judaism were part of a world that was decidedly patriarchal, a world in which women lived very much in the shadow of their husbands. Furthermore, these classical texts are the product of a literate male elite, who fully accepted the values of the man’s world in which they lived.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ For full details of the rabbinic construction of masculinity, see Satlow (1996:19-40). He presents the views that were written and compiled over the course of five centuries (first to sixth century C.E.) in rabbinic literature.

⁸⁷ The *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* portrays women as “constitutionally unable to restrain themselves” (see T. Reub. 5:1-7; T. Judah 13; T. Joseph 6:7, 10:2-3; Ep. Arist. 250, cited in Satlow 1996:22).

⁸⁸ Ben Sira held that women are inherently evil and ought not to be empowered (Sir. 9:1-9, 42: 12). His literature was originally written in Hebrew.

⁸⁹ This is not to deny the dignity and honour, which the rabbinic literature (cf. Job 5:24) and the Talmud accorded to a woman. Both heed husbands to honour their wives, due to the sensitivity of the latter. Rabbinic literature also approves the image of an ideal woman in Prov 31:10-13. However, if the husband is to honour his wife on account

I therefore conclude this section by arguing that the patriarchal culture and structures *pre-date* the literary and the legal sources, that have governed gender relations throughout the centuries. In other words, the views about the superiority of man and the inferiority of woman, that found their way into the literary and legal sources and systems of the Greeks, Romans, Jews and Christians, were based on already existing sexist views on gender from the ancient world.

It is in this case evident, that Paul was operating within the existing patriarchal structures of the Ancient Near East whose view of gender had already found its way into the legal and imperial systems of the Greek and the Roman Empires. In the following section, I will show how the Church Fathers, who were operating within similar structures as Paul, developed Paul's perception of the image of God in relation to gender even further, by their exegesis of Paul's texts, the accounts of the creation and the story of the fall in Genesis.

5.2 Construction of the perception of *Imago Dei* in a woman in the writings of the Church Fathers⁹⁰

The Church Fathers used the Bible selectively, to justify subordination of women and to show that women do not bear the image of God. Below, I will examine the ways in which they do this.

5.2.1 The Fathers' construction of the perception of *Imago Dei* through creation stories and 1 Cor 11:1-16

The Fathers used the second creation story in Gen 2 as a divine sanction of the subordinate status of woman on the basis that Eve was created second and from Adam's rib, and they overlooked the first creation story in Gen 1:27, in which both man and woman are created at the same time

of her sensitivity, because "her tears are frequent (hence) she is quickly hurt" (Talmud in Maher 2006:64), then he is not truly honouring her, because he associates the woman with emotions as opposed to reason, which is associated with man. Jewish literature subordinated women in various other ways. Women were, for instance, mentioned together with the slaves in Mishnah and in the Talmud, hence setting them on the same footing. Women, slaves, and minors, were for example mentioned together in the exemption from the recital of the *Shema* and the *Tefillin* (see Maher 2006:64).

⁹⁰ In this section, I do not intend to cover the views of all the early Church Fathers since the field is wide. Instead I will select just a few Fathers, those whom I consider to be quite influential like Tertullian, Chrysostom and Augustine, among others.

in the image of God. The Church Fathers also, basing their argument on 1 Cor 11:7 where Paul excludes women from the image of God, saw women as lacking in some vital qualities that men shared with the Godhead. Augustine's and Severian's views of *Imago Dei* illustrate these points.

Augustine⁹¹ (354-430 C.E.) was the most important of the Western Fathers of the Church. He is looked upon both by the Catholics and Protestants "as the font of orthodoxy" (Ruether 1983:95). In his view of the image of God, he stressed the equality of man and woman on a spiritual level i.e. in respect of their rational intelligence because both are in the image of God. At the same time however, he maintained the physical subordination of woman, insisting that, what the woman is as a rational spirit, must be distinguished from what she symbolizes in her bodily difference from man. This is clear from his exegesis of 1 Cor 11:7-10, where, like Paul, he subordinates woman to man and also excludes her from the image of God. Augustine argues that 'image' in this text refers to authority rather than to essence:

Man is called the 'image of God' because God has stamped him in this way..." The 'image' has rather to do with authority, and this only the man has; the woman has it no longer. For he is subjected to no one, while she is subjected to him... (Gen 3:16). Therefore the man is in the 'image of God' since he had no one above him, just as God has no superior but rules over everything. The woman however, is 'the glory of man,' since she is subjected to him (quoted in Clark 1983:35-36).

In his attempt to understand the Trinity, Augustine argues, that the family (father, son and mother) does not provide a fitting analogy, by which to explain the Trinity. This is mainly, because he has a problem with the woman being taken as representing the Holy Spirit, because if one accepts this, one would accept that woman is equal to man, which she is not:

(If even one human person out of three can be called the image of God, as each person in the exalted Trinity itself is also God, why is not the woman also the image of God? For this is also the reason why she is commanded to cover her head, which he is forbidden to

⁹¹ For a deeper account of Augustine's teenage life, secular career, his conversion, theological contribution to the church and a taste of his confessions, see Litfin (2007:213- 237); González (1984:207-216).

do because he is the image of God (Augustine Book 12 Chap 5, in McKenna 1963:352-352).

He consequently argues, that the sense in which Paul is to be understood when he indicates that man is the image of God and consequently forbidden to cover his head, is that the woman together with her husband is the image of God.

The woman together with the man is the image of God, so that the whole substance is one image. But when she is assigned as a helpmate, which pertains to her alone, she is not the image of God; however, what pertains to man alone, he is the image of God just as fully and completely as he is joined with the woman into one (quoted in Matter 1999:888 cf. Augustine Book 12 Chap 5, 7 in McKenna 1963:346-353)

Augustine therefore argues that a woman only bears the image of God in association with her husband, and hence only married women bear the image of God. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch seems to have been influenced by Augustine in his reading of Gen 1:27, where he argued that “only the two sexes together form the complete (human) conception.” “Woman must join in man’s efforts for her direction and sphere in life...Man chooses his own profession; the woman receives it in joining her husband” (quoted in Reisenberger 1993:450). In other words, a woman owes her entire life to a man (cf. Paul’s suggestion in 1 Cor 11: 7 that a woman’s glory is derivative).

Like Augustine, Severian of Gabala associated the image of God with man’s superior authority, “For just as God has nobody over him in all creation, so man has no one over him in the natural world. But a woman does, she has man over her” (NTA 15:261 quoted in Bray 1999:107). He therefore argued that the woman is not the image of God.

5.2.2 The Fathers on the fall of humankind (Gen 3)

The Fathers held that Eve was the originator of sin, because she was the one deceived by the serpent. Her sin resulted in her subordination to man as a punishment that is spelt out in Gen

3:16.⁹² Consequently, all women are subordinated to men because of Eve's participation in the fall. The following Fathers are among those who exemplify this view.

5.2.2.1 Ambrose and Augustine on Eve's responsibility for Sin

As we shall see below, not only did the Church Fathers take up Paul's argument in 1 Cor 11, against the presence of the image of God in woman, but they also *developed* it further by adding new reasons, why a woman could not image God. Augustine, for instance, attributes Paul's exclusion of woman as bearer of the 'image of God' to Eve's sin, caused by her "small intelligence" which succumbed to deception, and through which woman "perhaps still lives more in accordance with the promptings of the inferior flesh than by the superior reason" (quoted in Clark 1983:40). He therefore holds that Eve, and not Adam, was the one led astray.

Ambrose⁹³ too held that responsibility for sin lies with Eve, not Adam:

Scripture records which sex it was that first was liable to sin...The woman, therefore, is the originator of the man's wrongdoing, not the man of the woman's. Hence Paul also says, 'Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and committed sin' (1 Tim 2:14) (quoted in Clark 1983:42).

The sentence of Eve for her sin, according to Ambrose, was made milder because she confessed her sin. She was henceforth to devote herself to her husband. Ambrose portrays this servitude as a gift and even a blessing because it compares to subjection of the church to Christ.

⁹² "To the woman he said, 'I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you'" (Gen 3:16).

⁹³ Ambrose had a strong Christian background. In his position as Bishop of Milan, he greatly inspired Augustine, who was then pursuing his career in the city, through his rhetorical preaching coupled with allegorical exegesis (see González 1984:189-193).

5.2.2.2 John Chrysostom on women's subordinate status because of Eve's sin

John Chrysostom (349-407) was Bishop of Constantinople, the Eastern capital of the Roman Empire.⁹⁴ Chrysostom held that the woman was subjected to an inferior state as a result of her role in the first sin and not before. She proved her inadequacy to rule when she sinned and hence she was given over to be ruled by the man, and thus, it was a fair subjection. He indicates that the inferior status is not burdensome for a woman, if she takes it positively (see Clark 1983:42).

He interprets Gen 3:16 in his Discourse 4 as follows:

God said in effect to Eve, 'I made you equal in honour. You did not use your authority well, so consign yourself to a state of subordination. You have not borne your liberty, so accept servitude. Since you do not know how to rule –as you showed in your experiment with the business of life- henceforth be among the governed and acknowledge your husband as lord'"(quoted in Clark 1983:43).

Clearly Chrysostom is not just interpreting what Paul says, but also claims to speak on behalf of God! In addition, he argues that both the Old and the New Testament are in agreement, that the servitude of a woman is not burdensome. He says that God made it lighter, because Eve confessed her sin and hence was given over to her husband to serve as her refuge. He goes further to, paternalistically, declare:

Note God's kindness here. For least when she heard the words 'he will rule over you, she might imagine them to mean a burdensome tyranny, God puts the words of caring first. He did this by saying, 'Your inclination shall be for your husband', that is, He is your refuge, your haven, and your security...You see how sin introduced woman's subjection, but how God, so ingenious and wise, used the results of sin for your benefit (quoted in Clark 1983:43).

Chrysostom finds similar words of servitude, mixed with mercy, in Paul's teaching as well:

⁹⁴ For details of Chrysostom's life history, see Liftin (2007), González (1984:194-200).

I want to teach you how Paul...mixes the authority with affection. How does he manage to do it? He says in the Epistle to the Corinthians, 'Men, love your wives' (Col 3:19; Eph 5:25)...Paul then says, 'Wives, respect your husbands' (Col 3:18; Eph 5:22)...You see how the tyranny is not burdensome when the master is the frenzied lover of the woman who serves, when fear is tempered with love? Thus, the burdensome quality is removed from servitude (quoted in Clark 1983:44).

Chrysostom therefore presents the woman's servitude as the most 'natural' way of responding to man's 'generosity' towards her. In so doing, he makes the woman feel indebted and as though she really deserves the subordinate status as the only way of showing her gratitude. However, the cost of servitude, that the woman offers in return, is much greater and bitterer than the 'love' she receives from man.

5.2.3 *Imago Dei* through women's modesty

The Fathers regarded head covering as "a visible proof of feminine modesty" (Cloke 1995:31). They held, that covering distinguished a Christian woman from other women. In their view, modest dressing for women entailed covering of the head and every part of the body as Augustine recommends to women monks, below. One of the strictest Fathers on dressing was Tertullian.

The Church Fathers on veiling and modest dress

Tertullian, a Church Father in the second century (170-215) was an important Christian apologist from the city of Carthage in North Africa. He was very protective of the scriptures against the heretics of his day, such as Marcion.⁹⁵ He also played a vital role in the process of canonization of scriptures.

Tertullian was very passionate in his views about the dressing of women, as revealed in his treatise *On the Dress of Women*. He advocated that a woman need not wear charming dresses,

⁹⁵ Marcion rejected the God of the Jews and argued that Christianity had no connection with the salvation history of Israel. In the New Testament, he only accepted the gospel of Luke and the Pauline letters.

but cheap ones, because each woman is an Eve: “Do you not know that you are (each) an Eve?” (Tertullian in Roberts and Donaldson 1956:14). For him, therefore, a woman should rather be dressed in mourning to expiate the sin of Eve, who “crushed the image of God, the man Adam”:

She would carry herself around like Eve, mourning and penitent, that she might more fully expiate by each garment of penitence that which she acquired from Eve...God’s judgment on this sex lives on in our age; the guilt necessarily lives on as well. You are the Devil’s gate-way; you are the unsealer of that tree; you are the first forsakers of the divine law; you are the one who persuaded him whom the Devil was not brave enough to approach; you so lightly crushed the image of God, the man Adam; because of your punishment, that is, death, even the Son of God had to die. And you think to adorn yourselves beyond your ‘tunics of skin’⁹⁶ (Tertullian in Clark 1983:39, cf. translation by Roberts and Donaldson 1956:14).

From this statement, we can gather that Tertullian, like many Fathers, subjected woman to the sin and guilt of Eve. He regards her as the source of sin, and hence, as the cause of the death of Christ. It also reveals that Tertullian believed that it is the man, Adam, who bears the image of God and not Eve.

Tertullian was also sharply opposed to women’s adornment of their hair and upheld the view of veiling. He argued that women who adorn their hair would not meet Christ in the air on the day of the Lord:

In vain do you call in the aid of all the most skilful manufacturers of false hair. God bids you ‘be veiled.’⁹⁷ Some should be seen! And oh that in ‘that day’ of Christian exultation, I, most miserable (as I am), may elevate my head, even though below (the level of) your heels! I shall (then) see whether you will rise with (your) ceruse and rouge and saffron, and in all that parade of head-gear: whether it will be women thus tricked out whom the angels carry up to meet Christ in the air!⁹⁸ (quoted in Clark 1983).

⁹⁶ He was referring to Gen 3:21.

⁹⁷ “See 1 Cor. xi. 2-16.”

⁹⁸ “See 1 Thess. iv. 13-17.”

It is evident in this statement that Tertullian is referring to the views of Peter and the writer of 1 Timothy that women should not adorn their hair (1 Pet 3:3⁹⁹, 1 Tim 2:9¹⁰⁰) and to Paul's view that women should be veiled (1 Cor 11:2-16).

Like Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria despised women's adornment of their hair. He argued:

It is unholy and deceptive for a woman to wear a wig. If the man is the head of the woman, is it not impious for her to deceive him with all that extra hair and at the same time offend the lord by dressing like a harlot, when her own natural hair is so beautiful? (FC 23:248 quoted in Bray 1999:109).

Chrysostom declared that a woman ought to wear a veil because it is a mark of her *subjection*. "Being covered is a mark of subjection and authority. It induces the woman to be humble and preserve her virtue, for the virtue and honour of the governed is to dwell in obedience" (NPNF 112:153 quoted in Bray 1999:109).

Augustine, who built a monastery for women in North Africa after he had come from Italy, also had strict rules for women's dress in the monastery. The monastery was run by his sister, and among other rules he made for the 400 women who stayed there, he gave prescriptions for how they must dress when they went out and he particularly insisted on proper covering of the head:

You should not let your clothing be conspicuous, nor should you strive to please by your clothes but your behaviour. Do not have such delicate headcoverings that your hairnets show underneath. Do not let any part of your hair remain uncovered nor should you be outside with hair either carelessly strewn or painstakingly arranged (quoted in Clark 1983:139). (He also added)... Even the washing of the body and the use of baths should not be habitual, but allowed at the customary interval of time, that is, once a month (quoted in Clark 1983:140).

⁹⁹ "Do not adorn yourselves outwardly by braiding your hair, and by wearing gold ornaments or fine clothing" (1Pet 3:3).

¹⁰⁰ "also that the women should dress themselves modestly and decently in suitable clothing, not with their hair braided, or with gold, pearls, or expensive clothes" (1Tim 2:9).

Perhaps Augustine felt that an excessive desire of physical cleanness could lead a woman to compromise her inner purity. Nevertheless, would it be that his problem with unruly hair has something to do with African hair? An African woman's hair is naturally short and perhaps for Augustine it requires a net covering since in itself it neither reflects a woman's glory, nor does it serve for a covering. According to 1 Cor 11:15,¹⁰¹ Paul indicates, that it is long hair that reflects a woman's glory and serves for a covering. From the perspective of an African feminist postcolonial scholar, Augustine's instruction on head-covering, and Paul's view of long hair serving as a head-covering in 1 Cor 11:15, is an interconnectedness of gender and racial oppression of the African Christian woman.

On the same issue of women's modesty, Ambrose wrote: "Modesty everywhere accompanies the virgins' unique virtues: without it virginity cannot exist; it must be the inseparable companion of virginity" (quoted in Cloke 1995:30). Jerome had this to say: "Let your dress be neither too neat nor too slovenly; in neither let it be so remarkable as to draw the attention of passersby."

Some women took modesty so seriously, that they chose to bear the pain of injured bodies, rather than risking to expose their bodies to physicians. Women such as Macerina and Gorgonia were praised as having set good examples to Christian women in this respect (Cloke 1995:31).

5.2.7 The Fathers on the role of the woman in church

Ordination to priesthood and administration of sacraments

Chrysostom brings out the views of the Fathers on women's ordination to priesthood and administration of sacraments. He had his reservations on both. He argued against ordination of women to priesthood, by invoking the divine law that shuts women out from the ministerial office, but states that women use force to access such functions. They have invested themselves with such power that "...we see realization of the proverb, 'The ruled lead the rulers.'...The blessed Paul did not assent to have them speak in church (1 Cor. 14:34)" (Clark 1983:174).

¹⁰¹ "Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair, it is degrading to him,¹⁵ but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her for a covering."

For his view on women's administration of baptism, he referred to the Acts of Paul and Thecla. The *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, dated in the late second century C.E., indicated that Thecla¹⁰² performed a self-baptism in a pool in a stadium, where she had been thrown to the wild animals by Roman authorities for confessing Christ, in order that she might die as a martyr. She prevailed however.¹⁰³ Chrysostom argued, that the example of Thecla should not be used to legitimate the act of baptism by women, since Paul did not allow women to teach or to baptize but commanded them to be silent (1 Cor 14:34-35).

It is worth mentioning, that the exclusion of women from the public roles of preaching and teaching in the church, as well as from ordination to priesthood,¹⁰⁴ was sanctioned by *The Council of Nicaea* (325 C.E.), *The Council of Chalcedon* (451 C.E) and the *Apostolic Constitution* of the fourth century C.E. (see Clark 1983:196; Massey 2002:83; MacHaffie 1992:18-19). The Council of Chalcedon for instance stated:

Thus, we do not permit women to teach in the Church, but only pray and listen to those who teach. Indeed, even our Teacher himself, the Lord Jesus Christ, who sent us the twelve to teach the people and the nations, nowhere did he send out women for preaching..." (quoted in Clark 1983:179).

Thus, the distorted perception of *Imago Dei* in woman, based on the theology and ideology of male headship and female subjection, was preserved as law.

5.2.8 Evaluation of the Church Fathers on *Imago Dei*

From the foregoing analysis of the Church Fathers and their conceptualisations of *Imago Dei*, it is clear that they believed women were excluded from the *Imago Dei*. I have shown that, not

¹⁰² Thecla is credited with teaching, preaching and baptizing. Until recently, her works were said to have been fabricated. However, currently, an increasing amount of scholarship has identified her as one of the many women, whose active role in the church was submerged in the process of canonization of scriptures (see Massey 2002:79)

¹⁰³ See a full account of Thecla in Clark 1983:78-88.

¹⁰⁴ There is evidence of women deaconesses from the fourth century C.E. but they were to be counted among the laity.

only do they draw on 1 Cor 11 to make their arguments against women being in the divine image, but they go further to the Genesis accounts and to other chapters of Corinthians to argue for women's subordinate status in every aspect of her life, from the religious (the non-ordination of women) to the family (the requirement for women to be subject to their husbands).

5.3 *Imago Dei* in the medieval period

One of the most significant persons in the Middle Ages, and one who exerted much influence on the perception of the image of God in that period, was Thomas Aquinas. I will consider his views in this section.

*Thomas Aquinas*¹⁰⁵ (1225/1227- 1274)

Aquinas lived a monastic and celibate life. In his 'theology of the feminine', Aquinas accentuated and refined many of Augustine's remarks about women, but also intensified the contempt for women in the medieval period (see Küng 2001:39, Rakoczy 2004:34-35). On the positive side, unlike Augustine, he for instance argued that woman was created by God not only for procreation, but also for a shared life. However, with reference to the biblical account of creation, he did not only concur with Augustine that "God's image is found in man in a way in which it is not found in woman," but he also added: "for man is the beginning and end of woman, just as God is the beginning and end of all creation" (*Summa Theologiæ* 1964:61). In addition he said, that there is something deficient and unsuccessful about a woman, a woman is a defective man. Aquinas's views on woman were, like the views of his contemporaries, based on interpretations of some gender-biased biblical texts and of the prevailing Aristotelian philosophical views which he studied at the University (see Küng 2001:40, 67, Ruether 1983:96, Gonzalez 2007:46).

On the issue of sacraments, Aquinas denied women a natural capacity of priesthood i.e. on the basis of her natural inferiority. He argued that "superiority cannot be indicated by the female sex since woman is in a state of subjection. Therefore, she cannot receive the sacrament of orders" (Tavard 1973:213).

¹⁰⁵ For more information about his life, see González (1984:215-219), his view of the image of God, see Gonzalez (2007:41-47).

Although Aquinas may be credited for making marriage indissoluble by being accorded the status of one of the seven sacraments, a move that built self-confidence in women in the twelfth century C.E., he did not reform the traditional perception of the inferior status of a woman, but even made it worse by making it a natural (biological) condition, meaning that it was not just a consequence of the fall. On the whole, although Aquinas followed Augustine's line of thought, he added some views that were more patriarchal than Augustine's thought. In this way, the traditional view of woman continued to evolve through *distortion*.

5.4 Protestant reformers and *Imago Dei*

Did the reformers construct woman as inferior to man, or did they reform the Fathers' views by re-imagining the distorted perception of *Imago Dei* in women in liberating ways? In this section, I will embark on the views of protestant reformers concerning woman, limiting myself to Martin Luther and John Calvin. Owing to the fact that Luther and Calvin among other reformers led the Protestant Reformation, it can be stated almost certainly that the influence of their theology on gender, alongside other areas to the future Protestant Church, was immediate and enormous. It is for instance notable that both Luther and Calvin shared Aristotle's and Paul's view about the natural inferiority of woman to man (Luther in Pelikan 1958:202-203 cf. Ruether 1983:79; Calvin in Tavard 1993:176). This theology was embraced by the Church of England, which regarded the subordinate status of woman as natural (Gill 1994:77), a view that was pertinent to the exclusion of women from ordination to priesthood in that church, as will be evident further below.

5.4.1 Martin Luther (1483-1546)

Luther on women and Imago Dei

Luther held a completely different view of *Imago Dei* from previous theologians. For him, both male and female were created in the image of God. He however maintained, that the image of God, in both male and female, was completely destroyed by the fall, but only appears through doing the will of God. The image of God consists in the ability to have perfect knowledge of

God, which both Adam and Eve had to the same degree, but which they lost after the fall, with only a remnant of it remaining. As such, in the order of redemption, both are equally called to justification and to life with Christ. The image will be fully restored in the afterlife, but it begins to be restored in this life through God's grace. In this respect therefore, Luther, as opposed to thinkers *Imago Dei* discussed earlier in this study, does not interpret the image of God as exclusively male but rather argues that both male and female reflect the image of God in an equal manner (Gonzalez 2007:52-53).

Luther, however, subordinated woman to man on account of the fall. He held that woman would have been equal to man, had it not been for sin, but she has lost this equality through the fall. For Luther, woman bears more severe consequences of the curse than man. The man's share of the curse is reduced to the burdens of leadership: "The female sex has been greatly humbled and afflicted and it bears a far severer and harsher punishment than the men" (Luther in Pelikan 1958:200). The fall places Eve under her husband's power and authority. The rule remains with the husband, and the wife is compelled to obey him by God's command. Luther confined a woman to the home (see Luther in Pelikan 1958:202-203). For Luther therefore, the subjugation of a woman is not to be regarded as a sin against her, but as a divinely ordained punishment for sin (see Ruether 1983:79).

Luther on female preaching, based on Gen 3:16 and on Paul's writings

In the first section of his *Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, Luther discusses the priestly office as one of preaching. His view of 1 Cor 14:34, where Paul forbids women from speaking in church, is, that Paul was acting according to the law as recorded in Gen 3:16, "which says that women are to be subject" (Luther in MacHaffie 1992:75). Women are not to preach, since they are not as competent as men are: "...it is much more fitting and proper for a man to speak, a man is also more skilled at it" (Luther in MacHaffie 1992:75). For the sake of "proper respect, discipline, and order," women are to keep silent while men speak, unless "if no man were to preach, then it would be necessary for the women to preach" (Luther in MacHaffie 1992:76). Luther, like the Fathers before him, therefore silenced women in church. Women continued to be excluded from all important church offices, but could only be accorded the positions of catechist and church servant.

Although Luther may be credited for transforming the contemporary view of marriage, hence contradicting the view that virginity for women was the only way to avert the sin of Eve, and also for making the role of child care (which was traditionally confined to women) into a responsibility, shared with their husbands, he did not reform the patriarchal mindset about the woman. On the whole, Luther, like the Fathers, regards subordination of woman to man as a natural condition and as God's will, resulting from her natural role in procreation. He therefore shares Aristotle's view of the natural inferiority of woman, despite the fact that women, including his wife Katie Von Bora Luther, were great defenders of his, as well as of Calvin's reformation endeavours (see Tucker 2004:32-33). Such an ideology of male headship reflects Paul's positioning of man as the head of woman in 1 Cor 11:1-16. Although Luther portrays both male and female as reflecting the image of God, subordinating a woman to a man in itself implies that woman is less human as compared to man, and hence that she does not image God on equal terms with man. Luther, thus, does not actually deviate from Paul's notion of man as the image of God and woman as the glory of man (1 Cor 11:7-9).

5.4.2 John Calvin (1509-1564)

Calvin on the creation of woman

In his interpretation of the term helper, that is applied to Eve, Calvin upholds the position that woman is created in the image of God, just like man. However, as a helper, she is in a state of subjection. The purpose for which she is created, is to "help him live more comfortably", and "to be willingly subject to her husband" (Calvin in Tavard 1973:176). He regards the obligations of both sexes as 'mutual' in that, while the woman serves as the man's helper, it is on the other hand his obligation "to fill the place of her head and leader" (Calvin in MacHaffie 1992:74). The woman however, according to Calvin, "is cast into servitude" in Gen 3:16, for "having trespassed over her limits" into which she is put back "more narrowly" (Calvin in Tavard 1973:176). Her subjection in Gen 2:18 turns to slavery with the fall. In this respect, Calvin shares the views of Luther, the Fathers, and also Paul, regarding the subordinate status of woman, not

only as a consequence of the fall, but also by virtue of being created from man in Gen 2:21.¹⁰⁶
(cf. 1 Cor 11:8-9)¹⁰⁷

In sum, I concur with Rakoczy (2004) that the Reformers did not affect the lives of women in any significant way:

Neither Luther nor Calvin nor any of the other reformers called for the ordination of women. They accepted the status quo of women's exclusion from ordination from the diaconate (and, by extension, from priesthood), which had been in effect for nearly a thousand years (Rakoczy 2004:234).

Therefore, although both Luther and Calvin held that both man and woman are created in the image of God, I would argue that subjecting a woman to a man's authority and excluding her from leadership positions by implication, excludes her from the image of God as well. My study argues, that both male and female bear all what it means to be created in the image of God. This includes the ability of both male and female to actualize qualities that God has bestowed on them, such as leadership qualities. A denial of the possession of these qualities by woman is a distortion of the perception of the image of God, not only as regards woman, but also in relation to man and, consequently, to the image of God himself. In this sense, reformers, like the Church Fathers and Paul before them, excluded women from the image of God. Did reformation in the Church of England make a difference to the prevailing perception of *Imago Dei* in gender? It is to this that I shall now turn.

¹⁰⁶ "And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man." (Gen 2:21).

^{107,8} Indeed, man was not made from woman, but woman from man. ⁹ Neither was man created for the sake of woman, but woman for the sake of man" (1 Cor 11:8-9).

5.5 *Imago Dei* and the Church of England from the eighteenth¹⁰⁸ to the twentieth century

According to Gill (1994:6), the fact that the Christian church played “a large part in creating and sustaining patriarchal modes of thought and practice...cannot be ignored in studying the history of the Church of England in the last three hundred years...” In the following section, I will consider the role of patriarchy in the construction of the perceptions of *Imago Dei* in a woman in the Church of England from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. In which ways did the theology of the Church Fathers and Paul pertaining to woman continue to shape notions of gender power relations in the Church of England?

What is interesting about the construction of gender in the Church of England is that *the birth of the church is a gender construction in itself*, because it was born out of King Henry’s yearning for a male heir, as we shall see below. The other interesting factor is the interplay between patriarchy and British imperialism, which cannot be divorced in the state church. Consequently, the already patriarchally and imperially coded Pauline theology of gender (which I have been investigating) is subjected to, reinforced, and also reinforces a new patriarchal and imperial context. This reinforcement operates to the detriment of woman. It is puzzling, how the two systems could reinforce each other to the detriment of the female gender in the Church of England, and yet accept a woman as the Supreme Governor, of both the church and the state.

Gender construction in the Church of England requires of my attention, because it forms the immediate background to the perceptions of gender among the British missionaries in my Kenyan Church context, from the nineteenth century onward. This aspect will be explored in chapter six and seven. I will begin this section by providing a brief historical background of the beginnings of the Church of England and its relationship to the empire, and then move on to the

¹⁰⁸ I have chosen to trace the construction of gender in the church of England from the eighteenth century not only because it is in this century where significant changes in English society and theology that shaped later history of women were seen (Gill 1994:3-4), but also because it is this century that greatly shaped the theology of gender which consequently informed gender construction in the Anglican Church of Kenya through the British missionaries in the nineteenth century to the present. I have also extended my review to the twentieth century in order to trace the genesis of the ordination debate for women in the Church of England, which culminated in that century.

various ways in which the image of God was constructed in relation to gender in the Church of England.

When King Henry VIII died on 28th January 1547, he left a church that was in transition. It had already broken away from the Church of Rome and the authority of the Pope.¹⁰⁹ The role that had been assumed by the pope as the head of the church was now being played by the King in England who forcefully intertwined politics and religion by claiming for himself the authority over the church, in order to seek protection from criticism by the church.

The break from Rome however left the church in England without a clear identity. Henry himself remained orthodox and was reluctant to enter into an alliance with the Protestant states in Germany. However, although he did not leave behind a Protestant church at the time of his death, there was a strong move towards Protestantism. The church had also undergone some reforms but was not fully reformed into a Protestant Church.

The Church in England became a fully reformed church, only after the restoration of the monarchy in 1660. *The Act of Monarchy* bound the church to recognize “the monarch as Supreme Governor of the Church in England.” On the other hand, the parliamentary *Act of Uniformity* of 1662 bound the church to a Prayer Book (see Benn 1984:66). Other marks of Reformation in the Church in England included subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, which appeared in their final form in 1571. This was required of every clergy person.

¹⁰⁹The pope was officially recognized as the head of the Church in England by the Synod of Whitby in 664 C.E. Church and state sustained each other by a complicated system of mutual allegiance and support. The Crown submitted to the Pope in matters of faith and depended on the church for financial and administrative support while, on the other hand, the Pope depended on the King for protection against heresy, schism, apostasy etc (see Benn 1984:63-74). It is beyond the scope of this section to enter into the historical process or the conflict, that led to the break of the Church in England with Rome. It may however be stated briefly, that the break was initiated by King Henry the VIII because of his marital affairs which were politicized. The Pope could not consent to Henry’s wish to divorce Catherine of Aragon, who had failed to give birth to a male heir, and marry Anne Boleyn. King Henry made every effort politically to gain England’s autonomy from Rome. Statutes were devised which could free Henry from the Pope’s jurisdiction. In April 1533, the Act in Restraint of Appeals became law. This act defined the relationship between the King and the Church in England. It, for instance, claimed that all legal issues, whether ecclesiastical or secular, would henceforth be settled in England and would derive their authority only from the King, not the Pope (Newcombe 1995:49). In May 1533, Cranmer, who in 1532 had been placed in the position of Archbishop by King Henry, annulled Henry’s first marriage and regularized the second marriage with Anne. Consequently, in July 1533, the Pope excommunicated King Henry. At last the divorce issue was settled and the most significant ties with the Pope were broken.

The articles sanctioned the main doctrinal emphases of Reformation. The articles “also maintained that the Nicene, Athanasian, and Apostles’ creeds, long accepted by the Church in the West as authoritative, ‘ought thoroughly to be received and believed’” (Article VIII quoted in Jay 1877:182). In addition, the articles asserted *the importance of Scriptures* as the criteria in doctrine and forms of worship in the Anglican worship (Article XX). These articles are used in the *Constitution* of the Anglican Church of Kenya and have had an impact on construction of gender in the ACK context, as will be mentioned in chapter seven.

In sum, the breach between the Church in England and the Pope was political, not theological. It created a nationalized church that had to conform to the state. Important for my study therefore is that *gender construction, or the perception of Imago Dei in a woman, in the Church of England is not only a biblical and patriarchal issue but also an imperial one.*

Anglican theologies of gender were claimed by the Victorian church to be *natural* and *God given*. On the contrary, however, they were shaped by, and also contributed to, the changing and contested views of gender construction in contemporary society. The notorious ideology of woman as the source of evil (developed by the Fathers) gave way to the ideology of ideal womanhood. Christian ideas of appropriate femininity claimed that “women were endowed with particular moral and spiritual qualities that qualified them to be the educators of the young and the creators and sustainers of Christian family values” (Gill 1994:4). Paid work for middle-class women in the eighteenth century was therefore perceived as incompatible with gentility and also with Victorian values of middle-class women. Victorian exhortations from the pulpit urged women to find fulfilment in their duties as wives and mothers at home. However, ironically, women’s virtues that were confined to the home were claimed to be of use in Victorian public campaigns, where women acted as social activists. They also performed various voluntary and charitable activities in the church. Thus, there was a contrast between the Anglican teaching about the place of a woman in the society and the actual lives that church women led. Religion therefore played an ambiguous and contradictory role in the life of a Victorian woman. In sum, as Gill (1994:4) observes, “fewer women were in reality either able, or unwilling” to be confined to the home.

In this section, I will pay attention to some of the ways in which gender power relations were constructed in the Church of England, and particularly how Scripture was used to inform the theologies of gender in the imperial church.

The most significant text in the seventeenth century that used Scripture to promote patriarchy, mimicking the Roman imperial ideas as well as the theology of the Church Fathers on the subordinate status of woman, was *Patriarcha*. *Patriarcha* was published in 1680 by Sir Robert Filmer.¹¹⁰ In this text, Filmer used Scripture to argue for *patriarchalism*¹¹¹ as a model for absolute monarchy. He argued that society had originated in one man, Adam, and, consequently, governmental authority would be derived from the supreme fatherly power of Adam and his successors (see Gill 1994:11). This theology of *patriarchalism* continued to influence Anglican theology in the eighteenth century.¹¹² Archbishop Lincoln of Canterbury for instance supported this theology by invoking the fifth commandment (which he coloured with Paul's theology) to argue, that subjects must obey those in government and likewise wives must obey their husbands. Clergy also quoted 1 Pet 2 and 3 to reinforce the binary relationships between masters and subjects, husbands and wives. Class divisions were regarded as divinely ordained throughout the century. Henry Venn shared similar views in his *The Complete Duty of Man*, published in 1763 (cited in Gill 1994:14).

Like Paul and the Fathers before him, this use of Scripture privileges Adam, and consequently the male, as the head/ruler and subordinates Eve/woman as having been created as a secondary human being.

The Fathers' and the reformers' ideology of the division between the public and private spheres (see Augustine in Clark 1983:37; Luther in Pelikan 1958:202-203; Calvin in Tavard 1973:176-

¹¹⁰ John Knox, a great reformer of Scotland in the sixteenth century had written his *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women: 1558*, earlier, which was extremely misogynist.

¹¹¹The claim that kingly rule is comparable with the rule of fathers over their families (see *paterfamilias* in chapter three).

¹¹² Proponents of patriarchalism were not without a problem with a female supreme governor of both the church and the state during the reign of Queen Anne. At her coronation in 1702, John Sharp, the Archbishop of Wales preached from Isa 49:23 ("Kings shall be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers.") as a justification for female rule, though reluctantly, because he saw the latter as a subordinate to princely power.

177),¹¹³ which was drawn from the ancient world, continued to influence the theologians of the eighteenth century in the Church of England. This was clear, especially in the area of Christian marriage, where a woman was subjected to the home. In 1712, for instance, Steel wrote: “The utmost of a Woman’s Character is contained in domestick (sic) Life...” (quoted in Gill 1994:15). Rev. Bennett shared similar views: “If men are expected to distinguish themselves by science, valour, eloquence or the art, a woman’s greatest praise consists in the order and good government of her family” (Gill 1994:15). The church expected women to exercise their Christian vocation in marriage and hence quoted relevant biblical texts to instruct the wife about her duties in relation to her husband. Like the Church Fathers, some of the eighteenth century theologians subjected a woman to a subordinated status because of the creation of Eve as second human being as well as her participation in the fall. In 1705 for example, Bishop Fleetwood published *The Relative Duties of Parents and Children, Husbands and Wives, Masters and Servants* in which he claimed that “both the laws of God and Man have subjected the Wife to the Husband...” The reasons why the authority in the home lay with the man, and not the woman, were:

From whence it appears, that he makes the Creation or Formation of Eve after Adam to be one Reason for her subjection...and therefore St. Paul urges the Subjection of all Women to their Husbands’ upon that account...But the second reason...is fetch’d from Eve’s being first in the Transgression...she must therefore rule no more (quoted in Gill 1994:15).

¹¹³ Augustine for instance held that the distinction between the private and the public sphere has been designed by God in order to maintain peace and decency between men and women. The private sphere is designed for a woman. It is “less important” and involves “inferior matters” such as duties of managing the house including managing finances, cooking, weaving etc. (quoted in Clark 1983:37). In this sphere, the woman is “assigned the presidency.” “She cannot express her opinion in a legislative assembly, but she can express it at home” (Clark 1983:36). On the other hand, the public sphere is assigned to man. It has “the more necessary and beneficial aspects” (Clark 1983:37). It involves “all the business of the state, the marketplace, the administration of justice, government, the military, and all other such enterprise...” (Clark 1983:37). For Luther, by divine command, man bears the burden of leadership while the woman is subjected to patriarchal marriage as God’s punishment on account of the fall (see Luther in Pelikan 1958:202-203). Calvin also confines a woman to the home, basing his argument on his commentary on the rape of Jacob’s daughter, Dinah. He claims that Dinah was raped, because she left her father’s house (Calvin in Tavard 1973:176-177).

These theologians regarded the subordinate status of women and gender roles as divinely ordained,¹¹⁴ as dictated by nature and common sense. Gill (1994:15-26) cites not only men, but also women who promoted this kind of theology. The Church of England however exhorted the husbands “to love and care for their wives as St Paul urged,” and also that “chastity was a Christian ideal for both sexes” (Gill 1994:17, 25). Nevertheless, the central position of a woman at home was not compromised even in the nineteenth century. In 1895 for example, Mary Sumner, the founder of Mothers’ Union,¹¹⁵ underlined the centrality of the family in the Christian vision of society and the important role of the woman in it.

Therefore, a trajectory of the perceptions of woman as a subordinate and as more inclined to emotions than to reason,¹¹⁶ is evident from the ancient world through Paul and the Fathers, through to the thoughts of the Church of England theologians. Furthermore, this notion of the nature of Christian womanhood continued to influence hermeneutical thought in the nineteenth century, despite the introduction of biblical critical methods in the second half of the century.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Cf. the leading evangelical journal of the eighteenth century called *The Christian Observer*. It stated: “One fact we hold to be indisputable, that our wise Creator purposed man and woman to hold different positions in the universe wherein he placed them...” (Quoted in Gill 1994:77). Evangelical theologians quoted the creation accounts and Paul’s letters i.e. 1 Cor 11 and 1 Tim 2, to justify their arguments about the subordinate status of a woman (Gill 1994:77).

¹¹⁵The role of the Mothers’ Union in instilling the central place of woman in the home in the Kenyan Church context will be discussed in chapter seven.

¹¹⁶ See for instance the views of Bishop Ken of Bath and Wells in his sermon in 1682 that “Women are made of a tempter...are more endangered by snares and temptations, less able to control their passions...than men” (quoted in Gill 1994:26).

¹¹⁷ The Rev. E. Lyttleton a liberal theologian for instance, who, through use of critical methods, argued that Paul’s teaching about women “was not only tinged but saturated with Jewish ideas” and hence “his precepts on the relation of the sexes are not necessarily authoritative for us to-day,” simultaneously supported Paul in his argument in 1 Cor 11, that only the man bears the image of God (see Gill 1994:83).

5.5.1 The church and ordination of women to priesthood

Ordination debates in the early twentieth century

In the early twentieth century, the issues of democratization, Women's Suffrage,¹¹⁸ and the advancement of professionalization for women's work began to impact on the lives of women in the church. In 1913, Ursula Roberts, the wife of the Rev W.C. Roberts and a member of the Church League for Women's Suffrage, wrote to 150, people seeking their views on women's ordination and also on the possibility of holding a conference on the same subject. The news caught the attention of the Church Times, which responded on July 24th 1914 in a very negative way:

The monstrous regiment of women in politics would be bad enough but the monstrous regiment of priestesses would be a thousandfold worse...we regard it (the conference) as a piece with that epidemic of hysteria which has manifested itself in the violence of feminine militants. It will pass with time (quoted in Gill 1994:234-235).

The same issue was raised in a different forum in the church in 1916, when the possibility of allowing women to preach and serve in church councils was raised. These proposals were received with resentment. Riley, an Anglo-Catholic layman, for instance gave a strong argument that allowing women to speak in church "contradicts both Scripture¹¹⁹ and 'the common order of the Catholic Church'"¹²⁰ (Gill 1994:235). Some clergy threatened to abandon the mission of the

¹¹⁸ The first wave of feminism (1848-1920) which focused on women's suffrage in Europe and America fought for gender equality in the political arena where women campaigned to be allowed to vote equally with men. It also impacted on the church by challenging the selective reading of the Bible to justify subordination of women (Clifford 2005: 29; Rakoczy 2004:12; Seat 2004:248-249). There was also the Women's Suffrage movement which called for "greater equality and opportunities for women in the society" (Gill 1994:234). This movement found support both from the clergy and the lay in the church in early twentieth century. These movements and others accelerated ordination debates.

¹¹⁹ The Church of England and in general the Anglican Church claims to derive its authority from Scripture (the records of both the OT the NT), Tradition (what the church has done in the past historically is used to guide decisions of the current church) and Reason (the appropriation of Scripture and Tradition to every-day living in the light of God's continuing presence) (see Dowell and Williams 1994:10).

¹²⁰ Referring to 'tradition'.

church if women were allowed to speak there. The bishops also drew back.¹²¹ When women were finally allowed to preach and pray in a consecrated building in 1922, they were only given the right to preach to other women and children.

Arguments that Jesus' disciples were males and that Jesus' institution of the Lord's Supper took place in the presence of only men also acted as barriers against ordination of women to priesthood. Voices of dissenters, like Dr Matthews who saw *no theological objection to women's ordination*, fell on deaf ears in the Anglo-Catholic Church Union which responded by objecting to women preaching, leading services, baptizing or administering the chalice (see Gill 1994: 238-240). The Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple, speaking in 1943, regarded the question of ordination of women as a live issue that would continue "for a considerable..." (quoted in Gill 1994:241).

As indicated above, by the end of the nineteenth century and in the early twentieth century, women were increasingly seeking employment, sometimes out of necessity and sometimes due to the wish for independence. Women were pushed more urgently to work for pay by the First World War, which left six million young men dead so that some villages were left with only old males.

Factors that accelerated ordination debates and finally led to the ordination of women to priesthood included the impact of the second wave of feminism, which called for greater political and social equality.¹²² Following this resurging feminism, the Victorian ideology of domesticity and compulsory motherhood was challenged through campaigns for women's economic independence from men. The wave also began to influence church institutions where women "called for the right for their vocations to ordained ministry to be discerned and tested" (Rakoczy 2004:13 cf. Seat 2004:249-250). In the 1960's the wave of feminism, along with pressure from other secular groups and individuals, led to a growing acceptance in western cultures of the need

¹²¹ The Bishop of London for instance revoked the permission he had granted earlier on.

¹²² The second wave of feminism in North America and Europe was initiated by Euro-American women in 1960s. It fought for political and social equality of African-American women. This served as a catalyst for women in America and Europe to call for liberation from all that bound them. They, for instance, called for 'equal pay for equal work', end of class divisions, argued for women's reproductive rights, and recognition in law of women's human dignity, liberation from all forms of patriarchy and also sought to end the economic dependence of women upon men (for more details, read Clifford 2005:21-25, Rakoczy 2004:12-13, Seat 2004:249-250).

to give women equal opportunities,¹²³ especially in education, and employment as a moral imperative. Employment of women countered the dominant view, that a home-based ministry for women was best, and served as a catalyst in ordination debates (see Dowell and Williams 1994:42-43).

The first bishop to come out strongly in support of women in the priesthood and who ordained the first woman was Dr. Hall, Bishop of Hong Kong and South China. He ordained the first woman priest, Li Tim Oi, in 1944.¹²⁴ In his sermon, in London in 1945, he said:

There is no question that Li Tim Oi has the gift of priesthood. The only thing that remains is, is it going to be possible to ordain women with these obvious gifts and calling to the ministry? I am convinced myself that it is right (quoted in Gill 1994:242).

Ordination of Li Tim Oi was, however, met with serious opposition, especially from two archbishops and bishops from China who called on her to resign. The pressure was unbearable for Li Tim Oi and finally she withdrew from serving as a priest.

After many years of serious debates on the issue of ordination of women, the Lambeth Conference of 1968 passed a resolution that there were no conclusive theological objections to the ordination of women. Every national or regional church or province was asked to study the question and then report its findings to the newly formed Anglican Consultative Council. It also encouraged the churches within the Anglican Communion “to make canonical provision for duly authorized women ‘to share in the conduct of liturgical worship, to preach, to baptize, to read the epistle and gospel at the Holy Communion, and to help in the distribution of elements,’” but first to seek the advice of ACC before any move to ordain women (Gill 1994:250). In 1973, the ACC

¹²³ The first wave of feminism which started in 1848 in Europe and America and lasted for 72 years had called for equal “rights to vote and own property in one’s own name” (Rakoczy 2004: 12, Seat 2004:248-249). In England, women of over 30 years of age were given the vote in 1918 and in 1928 all women were given the right to vote. This political equality served as an incentive for women to call for equal opportunities to serve in the Church of England as priests.

¹²⁴ “A Multitude of Sins?: Constitutional Standard for Legal Resolution.” <<http://www.episcopalchurch.org/41685-3276-ENG-HTML.htm>>. Accessed: 6/8/2009.

passed a resolution that a decision by any bishop who would be acting with the approval of his province to ordain women, would be acceptable by the Council.

Following this resolution, the Bishop of Hong Kong ordained two women to the priesthood in 1971. Other bishops followed suit. In 1974, three American bishops ordained eleven women. In 1975 and 1976, the Churches in Canada and New Zealand accepted the principle of women's ordination to priesthood, but a hot debate continued around the issue. The final legal requirement for the ordination of women to priesthood was completed in February 1994 and the first thirty-two women priests were ordained in Bristol Cathedral by Bishop Rogerson on the twelfth of March 1994.

The current, and heated, debate about women concerns the question, whether women should be allowed to become bishops. The Church of England agreed to "press ahead with the introduction of women bishops" in July 2008, after a six hour debate, despite threats by over 1,300 clergy that they would quit the church.¹²⁵ In December 2008, the church published draft legislation that could allow the ordination of women bishops, amid serious threats of splits. The legislation would go for debate by the church's General Synod governing body in February 2009. On 11th February 2009, this General Synod, despite considerable opposition, voted to begin the long process of introducing legislation to allow women bishops.¹²⁶ The legislation is expected to get final approval, sometime after 2010. This approval will however depend on whether the legislation obtains two-thirds majorities from bishops, clergy, and laity. So far, the Anglican churches that have women bishops, include the USA, Canada, and New Zealand. The main argument against appointing women bishops is that the order of bishops is a male preserve, because Jesus and his disciples were male.

These strong reactions against ordination of women to priesthood and their consecration to the office of bishop are evidence, that the Church of England did not, and generally does not, consider women as sufficiently human to hold top positions in the church hierarchy. The

¹²⁵ See details in *Telegraph* 2008. <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/majornews/2264484/Church-of-England-set-to-split-over>>. Accessed: 6/11/2009.

¹²⁶ *National Catholic Reporter*, Feb. 17, 2009. <<http://ncronline.org/news/women/church-enland-inches-toward-women-bishops>>. Accessed: 6/11/2009. There were 281 proposers, 114 opposers and 11 abstentions.

influence of Paul's argument about male headship and his exclusion of women from the image of the divine are evident in these debates.

In sum, patriarchy and imperialism reinforced and reshaped each other, subordinating women in the Church of England. The arguments of opponents of women's ordination had much in common with the views of the Church Fathers and Paul. The theology of the Church Fathers regarding the subordinate status of woman, resulting from her secondary status in creation, her status as a helpmeet, the maleness of Jesus and his disciples and the interpretation of Pauline notions of headship, continue to distort the perception of *Imago Dei* in woman in the Church of England.¹²⁷

Nevertheless, the move to ordain women is very remarkable. It is a witness to the effort of the Church of England to rise above the dominating structures of both church and society, in order to accord women their full humanity. The influence of the Victorian theology of gender and the ordination debates in the Church of England to the ACK will be discussed in chapter six and seven.

Since this chapter traces the perceptions of *Imago Dei* in relation to gender in the history of the Christian tradition, it is important that we also listen to the voices of women on this issue. How have feminists responded to the handed down distorted perception of *Imago Dei* in gender? This question is important at this point because so far, in the current and previous chapters, gender construction and constructions of the perceptions of *Imago Dei*, have been done by men. Have women accepted these definitions uncritically? In the following section, I will therefore bring out contemporary views of Christian feminist theologians with regard to the theological and anthropological issue of *Imago Dei* in relation to gender. These views will be in form of a Christian feminist critique to the oppressive views of the Fathers and the Christian tradition.

¹²⁷ It is quite a surprise that in this supposedly equal culture, women still continue to be regarded as less important, not only in the church but also in society. According to Threlfall-Holmes (2009), women in English culture continue "to be paid less than men for the same work, and to suffer pregnancy-related discrimination in employment. Women are disproportionately under-represented in government and on the boards of large corporations. Women's sport is generally less well funded and less popular than men's, whilst women's contribution to art and literature has a tendency to be marginalized-as 'chick lit,' for example" (M. Threlfall-Holmes, "Persistently over History God is seen as Male," 2009. <<http://blogs.reuters.com/great-debate-uk/tag/women-and-the-church/>>. Accessed: 29/7/2009.

5.6 Critique of the Christian tradition by feminist scholars

The critique of Christian tradition by feminist theologians is based on the above beliefs and practices, that have been derogatory to the perception of *Imago Dei* in woman throughout Christian history. The Christian tradition has perceived women as lacking in the image of God in four main areas, which Loades (1990:5) summarizes as follows: The failure to find femininity in God, the insistence that woman is derivative from, and hence secondary to, man, the assumption that woman is characterized by passivity and, finally, the tendency to identify woman with body-ness as opposed to a transcendent mind. Feminists have identified that these views are deeply rooted in sexism and androcentrism. They have consequently offered a critique of these distorted views and affirmed the full humanity of woman. In this section, I will give a feminist critique of some of the main issues of concern that have distorted the perception of the image of God in a woman.

One of the main criticisms, brought against the Christian tradition by feminist scholars, is androcentrism. Androcentrism is the belief that men's experience and thought is normative for human beings. Androcentrism has developed in various doctrinal stages with regard to the concept of human God-likeness in the history of the Christian tradition. Some of these concepts have served as an authorizing past, which continues to dictate the treatment of women in church up to today. Borresen (1995) has summarized these stages, which also serve as her critique, as indicated below.

5.6.1 Borresen's critique of inculturated concepts of human God-Likeness

Using a social anthropological model,¹²⁸ Borresen (1995) traces the androcentric view of God-likeness to some themes in the patristic and medieval anthropology. These themes are inculturated concepts of God-likeness, drawn from Christian gender models. Some of these doctrines are:

¹²⁸ This model explores the socio-cultural foundations of God-language and religious symbolism.

Androcentric monism- This view images God as male and God's female images are downplayed. It holds that the exemplary human being is male, since Adam is created in God's image (Gen 1:26-27a; 2:7). Therefore "only men are considered to be creationally God-like, whereas women can achieve salvational Christ-likeness by 'becoming male' (1 Cor 11:7; Eph 4:13)" (Borresen 1995:247).¹²⁹ The argument behind this model, as indicated in chapter four, is that "God-like Adam prefigures Christ who as the new Adam and divine Redeemer is incarnated in perfect manhood" (Borresen 1995:248). On the other hand, "Non-God-like Eve prefigures the church/Mary, who as new Eve represents dependent and gynaecomorphic humanity (Rom 5:14,¹³⁰ Eph 5:32¹³¹)." These gender models were elaborated by Justin and Irenaeus in the second century C.E. and continued into the fourth century. Borresen, however, observes that the new-Adam–new-Eve typology is still fundamental in both Catholic and Orthodox Christology, ecclesiology and Mariology. It affirms women's cultic incapability and, consequently, excludes women from ordination to priesthood. This view therefore assumes, that women can only become fully human and capable of undertaking religious functions, by 'becoming male' in Christ.¹³² The idea of female transformation into perfect maleness continued to influence the view about holy women in Christian and patristic writings, and also in female writings in late Antiquity.

Besides androcentric monism, the other doctrinal stage is *androcentric dualism* which was initiated in the third century by Clement of Alexandria and developed by Augustine. It became normative in the middle ages. It holds that *Imago Dei* comprises of the sexless rational soul with

¹²⁹cf. also in late antiquity, women actualized salvational equality with God-like men through asceticism by assuming virginity and widowhood.

¹³⁰“Yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who is a type of the one who was to come” (Rom 5:14).

¹³¹ “This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church” (Eph 5:32).

¹³² Following this androcentric view therefore, as I argued in chapter four, it is difficult to attach an egalitarian meaning to Paul's baptismal formula in Gal 3:28, which unites both male and female into one male. The irony of it is that this *defeminization* for women does not erase the ideology of male headship and female subordination both in the social and religious spheres.

human maleness exemplifying it (Gen 1:27b¹³³ attached to 1:26-27a¹³⁴ by means of Gal 3:28¹³⁵) (Borresen 1995:248).

The third doctrinal stage is the concept of *holistic monism*. This concept uses both male and female metaphors to describe God, “where women and men are defined as God-like *qua* female or male human beings” (Borresen 1995:248). It was anticipated by medieval women mystics through the identification of their femaleness with a kenotic Christ. However, female God-likeness became explicit only in the nineteenth century when feminist exegetes expounded post-androcentric views of God-likeness, dismissing the traditional concepts of male or sexless *Imago Dei*.

This concept of *holistic God-likeness* has become normative in the twentieth century among feminist scholars, being pioneered by Western theologians. They argue that God bears female images as well as male, and that both women and men are created in the image of God. In favour of this doctrine, Borresen concludes that “only when verbalized in terms of both women’s and men’s gendered experience does theology become a fully human God-language” (Borresen 1995:253).

In the following section, the arguments of Christian feminist scholars that are based on holistic God-likeness, will be used to critique the androcentric view of God.

5.6.2 Feminists’ critique of *Imago Dei* as male

Feminist scholars have identified that the view of *Imago Dei* as male is not divinely ordained, but a social construction. They have deconstructed the idea of a male God by, first of all, tracing the origin of this social construction and by identifying female images of the divine. Female

¹³³ “...in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Gen 1:27b).

¹³⁴ “Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.’²⁷ So God created humankind in his image...” Gen 1:26-27a).

¹³⁵ “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28).

images of God are also socially constructed since, from a Post-Modern point of view, all images and attributes of God are social constructions. However, continued denial or suppression of the feminine images of God at the expense of the male images, has created a distorted perception of the image of God itself.

5.6.2.1 The origins of the idea of a male God

Through archaeological evidence, Ruether (1983:53) has usefully established that the social origin of *male monotheism* lies in nomadic herding societies. In the religions that existed before patriarchal monotheism, a Goddess was the dominant image of the divine or she was paired with the male image in such a way that they both, as equals, represented the divine. However, nomadic herding societies tended to image God as the Sky-Father. The religious system of the male monotheistic religions maintained a social hierarchy of patriarchal rule in which:

God is modelled after the patriarchal ruling class and is seen as addressing this class of males directly, adopting them as his ‘sons’ and making them his representatives. Wives, along with children and servants, represent those ruled over and owned by the patriarchal class. They relate to man as he relates to God. A symbolic hierarchy is set up: God- male-female...Women...are connected to God secondarily, through the male (Ruether 1983:53).

Man is also depicted as the image of God while woman is excluded from the image of the divine.¹³⁶

5.6.2.2 Appropriation of female images of God

According to Okure (1988:52), “a denial of the woman’s ability to image God means a denial of God’s own feminine attributes, hence a distortion of the divine image itself.” Feminist scholars reject the view that only a man bears the image of God. They argue that God appropriates female images and also that, in some traditions, the Holy Spirit too has been characterized as female

¹³⁶ Plaskow (1990:125), a Jewish feminist scholar, has also identified that the male God-language was not always natural in Israel but has a gradual history with the rise and consolidation of patriarchal and religious institutions, where women began to be marginalized in both institutions.

(Ruether 1983:56, cf. Tribble 1990; Plaskow 1990:123-128; Okure 1988:52). These scholars note that Yahweh is, for instance, described as a mother, or like a woman who is in labour, indicating that God has maternal qualities.¹³⁷ Sophia (Wisdom) is also feminine. It is used to express the person of the immanent God, i.e. Jesus Christ and his work in creation, revelation and redemption. Paul presents the crucified Christ as “the Wisdom of God” (1 Cor 1:23-24). However, while Sophia plays a similar role as logos and has even been used in Christological hymns in place of logos, Ruether (1983:58) notes that, when the word logos is identified with the maleness of the historical Jesus, it “obscures the actual fluidity of the gender symbolism” because it refers to Jesus Christ as the ‘Son of God’ who is the ‘image of the Father,’ thus creating the notion of the male as the exclusive image of God.

In some early Christian writings, the feminine aspects of God have been identified with the Holy Spirit (e.g. the Gospel of Hebrews, the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Philip etc) (see Ruether 1983:59).

Perhaps Augustine, under the influence of Greco-Roman Christianity, had the imagery of the Holy Spirit as feminine in mind when he argued, that the analogy of the mother is not fitting to describe the person of the Holy Spirit (see Augustine above). This analogy is also rejected by some feminists, like Ruether, who rightly argue that feminization of the Holy Spirit would lead to subordination of the female person of God who plays a mediatory role in relation to the dominant image of male divine sovereignty¹³⁸ (see Ruether 1983:61).

5.6.2.3 Feminist critique of the use of androcentric language for God

One of the main factors that led some feminists to reject Christianity and Judaism, is the Christian symbolism of a Father-God. They react against imaging God as ‘male’, for example addressing God as ‘Father’. They argue that male symbolisms of God lead to male domination in society. As such, they argue for a female god, i.e. a Goddess (see Clifford 2005:93). Following Ruether, Clifford (2005:95) rejects the view of post-Christian feminists, that Goddess-dominated

¹³⁷ This is also a social construct.

¹³⁸ This serves as a critique of some Christian feminists who argue that the female aspect of the Trinity resolves the problem of the exclusively male image of God.

religions were egalitarian, arguing that in reality they were not. This post-Christian feminist view only serves as a reversal of a *masculinized* God into a feminized God (cf. Tewelde 2009:7).

Ruether stresses that God-language must never be used literally, because human beings can never define God. As Tewelde (2009:7) observes, “God is beyond human form.” In support of Ruether’s argument, Clifford (2001:95) states:

God-language is intrinsically related to the world and to human experience that is ‘worldly’, that is profoundly affected by our historical and social context. Put simply, God-language is more about relationship than definition. Because God-language is not literal, the language one uses in reference to God can never be equated with who or what God is.

Ackermann (1991:98) however, makes an interesting, cautioning remark here, that “Even if the maleness of God is not taken literally maleness as power over, as special, as more truly representative, is communicated by patriarchal images and symbols.” In other words, when God is imaged as male, the image of a patriarchal male figure for God is not erased, even if we may know for sure that the maleness of God is not to be taken literally.

In contrast to post-Christian Goddess feminists, Christian feminist theologians argue for an inclusion of female images for God, without at all rejecting male images for God, because the male images are equally important for the way in which people have related and will continue to relate to God. Christian feminists however argue that “an exclusive emphasis on speaking of God as Father can also contribute to a limited understanding of God, an understanding that has the potentiality for idolatry” (Clifford 2001:96). This exclusive emphasis on God as Father has created a hierarchy that privileges male and distances female from God. They recommend an inclusive language, where God is also addressed as mother. Some argue for gender-neutral names for God, but these would not accord women full humanity (see Clifford 2001:98). Plaskow (1990:129) advocates structural changes in patriarchal society as the only way of dislodging male idols.

Given the above understanding by Christian feminists, that our language and image of God can never define who God is, and that the way human beings image God is a meaningful resource for helping them to relate to God, I argue for the teaching of the same to Christians so that they may

have a transformed mind about God's gender, realising that God is neither male nor female¹³⁹ and that, hence, as Cochrane (1991:25) expresses: "To address God as father has no theological significance, (but rather)...expresses a cultural and linguistic limitation." Through such awareness, Christians will learn that one gender is not entitled above the other to represent God. This consciousness will allow for use of inclusive language for God, which will enable each gender to relate to God not as "other" but "like me."¹⁴⁰ Conscientization will therefore be a step towards the structural change of patriarchal structures that Plaskow calls for.

5.6.3 Feminists on *Imago Dei* through creation stories and the story of the fall

Christian tradition has relegated a woman to a subservient status on the basis of the second creation story in which woman was created as a helper for man (Gen 2:18). Some feminist scholars have, however, affirmed equality of man and woman in the second creation account, based on their translation of the Hebrew words used. They argue that the Hebrew *tsela* has been translated wrongly as 'rib' instead of 'side' (literally: side of a person).¹⁴¹ Eve was therefore taken from the whole side of Adam, not just from a small 'rib.' Secondly, the term *ezer kenegdo* has been translated as 'helpmate', rather than 'compatible partner.'¹⁴² The term in Hebrew does not denote an inferior being, but rather "connotes superiority (Ps 121:2; 124:8; Exo 18:4; Deut. 33:7, 26, 29)" (Trible 1990:126). The term also connotes equality (see Reisenberger 1993:449 cf. Trible 1990:126; Gonzalez 2007:11).

¹³⁹ Clifford (2005:95) rightly notes that from Christianity's point of view, "God is a mystery surpassing human understanding...None of the individual names, images, symbols, or concepts for God in Christian God-talk can ever capture who or what God is." In this case, to promote an image of God, based on a particular gender is, as Ruether (1983) argues, idolatry because, "the metaphor is no longer simply a way of pointing to God but is identified with God..." (Plaskow 1990:128).

¹⁴⁰ Goddess theology argues that when God is imaged as male, women tend to relate to him as "the other" but not "like me" (see Clifford 2005:95) and hence advocate for female images of God. I argue for an inclusive language which does not "other" God from any gender.

¹⁴¹ See Simpson ("Adam's Rib," 2010.<<http://www.jasher.com/Adamsrib.htm>> .Accessed: 21/06/2010).

¹⁴² Cf. also Clifford's, R (2005:13) argument that, "Traditional Eng 'help-mate' is a corruption of the archaic 'helpmeet' = 'meet or fitting helper.'"

With regard to the view of the Church Fathers that a woman is the source of sin, feminists have tried to trace the origin of the theory of objectifying female sexuality as evil. Setel (1985) traces this objectification to male priesthood in the prophetic writings during the establishment of monarchy in Israel. Before the prophetic writings, female sexuality was “viewed primarily as the power to give birth.” Male priesthood then sought to control the status of motherhood by subjecting it to the system of ritual purity.¹⁴³ Furthermore, female sexual activity was objectified as a property valuation to be transferred from her father to her husband. Sexual activity for women outside this paternity system was labelled as prostitution or harlotry. Such is the use of female sexual imagery in the book of Hosea (8th century B.C.E). Gomer is the imagery of objectified female sexuality, representing the harlotry of Israel (female sexuality is objectified as evil). On the other hand, Hosea (male) represents the Holy God of Israel. Female sexual imagery therefore is a manifestation of a patriarchal perspective.

Concerning Eve’s intellectual inferiority, feminists argue that she was theologically intelligent, as evidenced by her discussion with the serpent (Trible 1990:27-28, cf. Sharple in Gill 1994:92). Ruether (1983:114) also rightly argues that both sexes have a capacity for psychic wholeness. Reason therefore ought not to be “a tool of competitive relations with others. Recovering our full psychic potential beyond gender stereotypes thus opens up an ongoing vision of transformed, redeemed, or converted persons and society....”

With regard to Eve’s contribution in the fall, some of the Fathers recommended asceticism and virginity as the only options for a woman to avert her sin. Such a theology is wanting because it proposes a personal effort to avert one’s sin. Christian feminists argue, that the story of the fall needs to be read in the light of Christ’s redemption through the cross that lifted the curse from Eve (see Cochrane 1991:25).

¹⁴³Since in Israel the power of life and death belonged to God, the priests may have recognized women’s participation in divine power in their process of life-bearing and hence rendered it a *taboo*. The emphasis on ritual purity serves “to diminish-or-even to negate-the power of female human beings in the life process” (Setel 1985:89).

5.6.4 Feminist critique of the Christian tradition through affirmation of liberating biblical texts

The Fathers as well as the later opponents of women's ordination to priesthood read the Bible selectively as though its view of the female gender were homogeneous. Christian feminist theologians affirm that, although the Bible has messages that confine women to a subservient status, there are other biblical texts that affirm the full humanity of womanhood and her equality with men, e.g. Gen 1:27 and Jesus' egalitarian treatment of women and men in the Gospels (cf. Seat 2004:251-254, Ruether 1983:23). They therefore argue that "the life and message of Jesus provide the basic criteria by which ...the Bible (and the entire Christian tradition) can be evaluated" (Seat 2004:251). They give *only one* option for the interpretation of Scripture, i.e. to interpret it "with a primary commitment to social justice," or not to interpret it at all (Seat 2004:251).

5.6.5 Feminist critique of the Fathers' view of women's dress

In her critique of Tertullian's view of women's modesty, Oduyoye (1986:131) recognizes that Tertullian tells women to dress modestly in order not to be stumbling blocks to men. She observes that it is a well-known tradition in the West as well as in other religions and cultures that society's morality depends on the 'purity' of women. As such, in the biblical tradition: "Women's sexuality is deemed to be a necessary evil." She critiques this view by asking some questions:

In what does being made in the 'image and likeness of God' consist? If sexuality is a necessary evil, why should it curtail the involvement of the woman with what is sacred and not curtail the man's involvement? Can we continue to affirm Genesis 1:26 and then carry on as if the image of God meant nothing when applied to the woman?

In other words, Oduyoye is critiquing the Fathers' view and the views of the other traditions, that women are sexually immoral and that they are tempters of men. Such a derogative perception of woman's sexuality, demanding her modesty for the sake of not tempting men, ironically dehumanizes men by painting them as sexually weak and lacking in self-control. As such, can

men, on the basis of their sexuality, really claim moral superiority and the image of God, and exclude women, pronouncing their female sexuality weak?

5.6.6 Feminist critique of the Christian tradition, distinguishing sex and gender

Feminists have used the distinction between sex and gender to critique the Christian tradition. Women's studies pursued from a social science perspective have distinguished sex from gender. Sex is biologically determined. It has to do with biological differences between men and women. On the other hand, gender is culturally constructed. It refers to ways in which a particular society constructs or makes the differences between men and women (see Borresen 1995:246, Loades 1990:5-6).

This distinction has served as a useful tool to critique the Christian tradition, which has always used a sexist language in which they construct men as:

Active, independent, intelligent, brave, strong, good and, needless to say, godlike. God in turn is male-like...Males are *always* more godlike than females could ever be, even when they try to approximate male...their religiously sanctioned gender construction has been that they are passive, dependent, bodily, emotional, weak, peculiarly responsible for evil and sin...and childlike (Loades 1990:6).

It is therefore heartening for feminists and for the purposes of this study to know that the perception of the image of God in a woman in the Christian tradition, (including Paul's view in 1 Cor 11:7) is not natural (i.e. it is not biologically determined) but cultural, and hence can be deconstructed and reconstructed in liberating ways for both women and men.

5.6.7 Feminist critique of the Fathers through distinguishing patriarchalism from patriarchy

The feminist movement distinguished 'patriarchy' as a modern usage from earlier political theories of patriarchalism, which continued to influence Anglican theological thought in the

eighteenth century. According to theories of patriarchalism, as comes out clearly in chapter three, the authority of the *paterfamilias* (rule of the father) over his family legitimated the hierarchical structures of the Roman Empire, with the emperor as the great *paterfamilias*. Feminist theologians and historians have given a broader definition ‘of the rule of the father’ through use of the term ‘patriarchy’.¹⁴⁴ They define patriarchy as “any form of social organization in which men are predominant to the detriment of women.” Feminists have identified the Christian Church as one of such institutions that have created and sustained patriarchal ideology and practices (see Gill 1994:6).

5.6.9 Feminist critique of the Christian tradition through the Trinitarian model

While Christian feminist theologians uphold the Trinity as a model of relationships among human beings, they are critical about the lack of emphasis on the relational or communal aspect of God as the Trinity. They observe that Christian tradition, especially in the West, has a tendency “to focus on God as if God were strictly a single person” (Clifford 2001:115). This has contributed to God being imaged as ‘male, patriarchal and domineering,’ an aspect that is apparent in the creeds, which appear in purely androcentric terms. God is, for instance, imaged as father. According to Ackermann (1991:97), “when the image of God mirrors the patriarchal concept of the head of the family, it becomes an exercise of power by ruling class males over all others. Such images can be the cause of ethical problems in the construction of relationships...” Clifford (2001:115) also expresses that: “Such a monotheism...neglects important ways in which belief in the Trinity can have practical relevance for our lives.” She correctly argues that the Trinity is symbolic of the fact that “to be a person (whether divine or human) is to be in relationship to others, to support and nurture life in community” (Clifford 2001:115). Oduyoye (1986:141) is also emphatic on this point and adds that the Trinity reminds us “of the need for properly adjusted relationships in our human families, institutions, and nations.” Furthermore,

¹⁴⁴In my view therefore, feminists use patriarchy as an umbrella term with the political theory of patriarchalism as an example of it. Feminists are divided on the origins of patriarchy. While Marxist feminists trace gender inequality to capitalism, psychoanalytical theorists trace it to the unconscious during gender formation in early childhood. On the other hand, postmodernists and poststructuralists trace patriarchy to the role of language and discourse which, as understood from Michael Foucault’s perspective, “is a set of institutionally based social practices in opposition to others” (Gill 1994:6). These theories draw attention to the use of language to create gender differences whereby oppositions and hierarchies that value one term above the other are generated (e.g. male/female, spirit/matter, intellect/emotion etc).

“our baptism into the name of the Trinity means that we should stand not for monarchies and hierarchies but rather for participation” (Oduyoye 1986:143).¹⁴⁵

Seen in this way then, embracing faith in the triune God, means living in unity and harmony with each other and hence being opposed to aspects that threaten this unity, including patriarchy that subordinates the female gender to the male gender. Belief in the Trinity is the recognition of the presence of the triune God in every human being. Feminism therefore draws the image of perfect harmony from the Trinity and hence calls for “equality, interrelatedness, and mutuality as the basis of the world as it ought to be” (Clifford 2001:116).

5.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, my argument in this chapter is that the perception of *Imago Dei* in a woman in the history of Christianity is *a social construction of a tradition through distortion occurring in a historical process rather than through a divine ruling*. The chapter has revealed that the image of woman in the Christian tradition has been socially constructed by theologians who, like Paul before them, were operating within the realms of their society, hence the need to *historicize* gender construction. These theologians constructed a woman through the exegesis of their own selected biblical texts that are imperially and patriarchally coded. They particularly used creation accounts, the fall (Gen 1-3), and Pauline writings. Consequently, the woman has been regarded as less human than the man, or as a ‘deformed male’ (Aristotle). In the Christian thought, she cannot represent the image of God because God has been imaged as male. Only the man can.

These oppressive and distorted thoughts have, in the form of church tradition, continued to shape Christian thought, to privilege the male over the female, and also to dictate the roles that a woman ought to play in the service of the ‘male’ God.

¹⁴⁵ The arguments of feminist theologians about co-existence among the persons of the Trinity is in line with the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity who argue that the divine Persons of the Trinity “coexist in perfect harmony, working together as one” (Giles 2005:352, cf. orthodox arguments against the contemporary evangelical view of hierarchy in Trinity in Giles 2005:334-352).

In a nutshell, the chapter has revealed how Paul's view of gender was built on a biased tradition of gender power relations, rather than on divine inspiration (see exegesis of 1 Cor 11:1-16 in chapter four) how this view has circulated as Scripture, i.e. 'the Word of God', through canonization and, consequently, how this Scripture has been used to build church tradition and theology. The result is that, since the tradition that built the Scripture was gender-biased, the Scripture and both the theology and the tradition that are built on it are equally gender-biased.

It is quite in order, that the Anglican Church derives its authority from Scripture, Tradition and Reason (see Dowell and Williams 1994:10). It is however worrying, that the authority of the Scripture and Tradition that has governed the theology of gender is not liberating for women. As such, I think reason needs to play a prominent role in putting things right in this respect. The role of reason ought to involve a critical reading of Scripture in liberating ways, deconstructing the distorted tradition, and then reconstructing it on the basis of liberating Scripture. As such, I have proposed a postcolonial feminist reading of Paul's Scripture with a view to decolonizing and depatriarchalizing it, in order to re-image the distorted perception of the image of God in a woman. In the following chapters, I will discuss the perceptions of *Imago Dei* in woman within my own, contemporary faith community.

CHAPTER 6

THE CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER IN PRE-COLONIAL KENYA AND THE MISSIONARY CHURCH

6.0 Introduction

In the previous chapters I looked at the impact of Roman imperial society on Paul's gendered worldview, particularly on ways in which this imperial society influenced Paul's views on women and their place and role in church. Thereafter, I sketched how Christian tradition over 2000 years has taken up Paul's gendered worldview of the image of God, and even gone beyond it in their appropriation and application. This appropriation and application took on a life outside of the text, where it became almost "natural" to consider women as not bearing the image of God. In this chapter I seek to answer the following question: What impact did this distorted tradition of gender relationships have on the interaction between the worldviews of British missionaries (The Church Missionary Society-CMS) and worldviews, as expressed in pre-colonial Kenya? This question is significant, because in Kenya, like elsewhere, missionaries did not operate in a vacuum but within Kenyan cultures, where gender identities had been clearly defined within the socio-economic and political structures already in place (see Kenyatta 1938).

Since it is almost impossible to discuss all the forty-two ethnic groups in their pre-colonial Kenyan contexts, in this chapter I will limit myself to the Kikuyu pre-colonial community of Central Kenya, and only draw examples from other communities where need arises. The Kikuyu have been singled out because of four main reasons. 1) This ethnic group was most effected by colonialism with White settlers, in the nineteenth century, occupying the Kenya-highlands where the Kikuyu community was/is concentrated, 2) It is in Central Kenya where CMS work was mainly concentrated from 1900 to the 1930s, given that the area had been demarcated as the CMS sphere of influence,¹⁴⁶ and hence there was much interaction between the CMS and the Kikuyu community, 3) The Kikuyu represents the largest ethnic group in Kenya (Mwaniki 2000:14), and finally I will be building on my previous study (Mwaniki 2000) in which, through

¹⁴⁶ See "the scramble for Kikuyuland" in Strayer (1978: 41-46).

empirical research, I examined the impact of the Anglican Church in Kirinyaga (Central Kenya) on the development of the identity of a Kikuyu woman from the missionary era (1910 to 1999).

Before I examine the interaction between the pre-colonial Kikuyu and CMS worldviews on *Imago Dei* in male and female, it will be helpful to reiterate that my understanding of '*Imago Dei*' in this thesis, is that both male and female equally share all it implies to be created "in the image of God," "male and female..." (Gen 1:27). This for me includes the ability of both male and female to image God in their moral, spiritual, and intellectual nature. They image God in their ability to actualize qualities and gifts, that God has bestowed on them. As this chapter will show, a denial of the possession of gifts by women, whether these are gifts of leadership or otherwise, is a distortion of the perception of the image of God, not only in relation to woman but also to man and, consequently, to the image of God itself which comprises both male and female. In what follows, I will show how Kenyan Christians responded to pre-colonial as well to missionary Christianity's perceptions of the image of God, through the use of the postcolonial theoretical concepts of resistance, mimicry¹⁴⁷, collaboration, survival, hybridity¹⁴⁸ and ambivalence.

¹⁴⁷ According to Moore (2005:88), mimicry is the posture 'in which the colonized heeds the colonizer's preemptory injunction to imitation, but in a manner that constantly threatens to teeter over into mockery' (2005:88). On another level, it can be seen as the selective use of the master's tools by the subaltern (e.g. the Bible) as a way of enhancing the subaltern's identity or evolving a hybrid identity. In this sense, it is a form of resistance. In this chapter, depending on the context, I will use the term to mean either an act of imitation or 'use of the masters' tool to turn against him.'

¹⁴⁸ In Bhabha's view, hybridity is "a doubling, dissembling image of being in at least two places at once" (Punt 2003: 59-81), or "the 'Third Space' which emerges from an analytical scrutiny of diverse cultures rather than from integrating them" (quoted in Sugirtharajah 2001:249). In this chapter, in simple terms, I regard hybridity as a combination of an outsider's worldview with the indigenous worldview. When I use the term 'hybridity' for the colonized Kenyans, I am referring to them as having been shaped by various worldviews-precolonial, colonial, missionary Christianity and Kenyan Christianity. These worldviews sometimes create ambivalence in their practices where they are torn between being fully Africans and fully Christians especially in their construction of gender identities.

6.1 The construction of gender through education and rituals in the missionary period

The Church of England, Corinth and Kenya share something in common. They were all operating within political imperial/colonial structures and, simultaneously, within existing cultures. I would argue that Paul's struggle to position a woman within the structures of his day is also the struggle of the Church of England and the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK). Since both feminism and postcolonial theory reject "the binary oppositions upon which patriarchal/colonial authority constructs itself," (Gandhi 1998:82-83), this chapter will identify and address two areas in which gender was constructed in the missionary period in Kenya. The first is through the education system and the second is through established gendered rituals or rites of passage.

6.1.1 Encounter between the CMS and the Kikuyu through missionary education

Education was the major tool for evangelizing to the 'heathens'. It is mainly from the process of education that we can clearly deduce the strategies and ideologies of domination applied by the colonizer and the missionaries, and, on the other hand, the strategies adopted by the colonized in response. In this interaction, we are also able to identify ways in which gender was constructed.

6.1.1.1 Missionary (formal) education system

The education system was set up by the colonial government in Kenya in 1926, but the Ministry of Education was not established until 1952. There was a racial bias in enrolment in both primary and secondary schools, whereby Africans ranged the lowest, followed by the Arabs, Asians, and top on the list were the Europeans (Barngetuny 1999:13).¹⁴⁹ The curriculum provided was not geared towards liberation of Africans, but was aimed to advance literacy and to "(foster) colonial politics and economic interests"¹⁵⁰ (Ngumi 1998:92).

¹⁴⁹ A survey of school enrolment of 1962 shows that African children in primary schools constituted 4.7 percent, Arabs 36.9, Asians 77.5, and Europeans 84.6. In secondary education, Africans constituted 1.3 percent, Arabs 9.4, Asians 80.9 and Europeans 98.9.

¹⁵⁰ Ngumi (1998:92-94) gives a more detailed account of how education of Africans was politicized, right from the beginning, and a conclusion drawn that the nature of education provided would prepare Africans to serve European interests rather than their own. The first boy's school in Kenya, Alliance Boy's high School was for instance established in 1926 "with the sole aim of creating a new class of African elites who would work mainly in the

Kenya's primary education was started off by missionaries in Kenya as a means of spreading Christianity but of course also to promote European interests, since the school was "engaged in a process of political and religious indoctrination similar to what was going on in the church" (Ngumi 1998:93). The missionaries set up mission schools, particularly in the central and Western parts of Kenya and ignored most regions, especially the pastoral tribes since such areas were not suited for peaceful penetration and also because these areas "were not of major interest to the colonial economy"¹⁵¹(Ngumi 1998:91).

Africans reacted strongly against this biased curriculum, which led to the first confrontation¹⁵² between the proponents of the school, and those who were opposed to the policy. Although in 1928 the issue of female circumcision led to a sharp confrontation between the missionaries¹⁵³ and African communities, especially the Kikuyu in the central province and the Kalenjin in the Rift Valley, the underlying issue was not female circumcision but the quality of education that was given to Africans, and also the colonial intervention in the traditional methods of political socialization. Consequently, Africans introduced their own schools and churches.

The missionaries however improved the curriculum of the first boys' high school, Alliance Boys' (see Smith 1973:28-29). Some of the boys who left Alliance had opportunities to continue with higher education¹⁵⁴and some later became leaders of independent Kenya.

colonial administration" (Barngetuny 1999:4 cf. Smith 1973:xvii). The curriculum in primary schools only equipped Africans for agricultural and industrial activities. Many of them served as clerks and farm overseers in the colonial period (Kanogo 1987:78-79).

¹⁵¹ It is to be noted here as Ngumi (1998: 91) observes, that since the missions were to embark on the colonial agenda of development through the transformation of the Africans, they had to concentrate their mission only on the areas that were suitable for European settlement, while they avoided the other areas. The avoided areas lagged behind in modern development and also in their social status. They were relegated to the margins of social transformation and categorized as non-*asomi* (non-civilized), while the others were categorized as *asomi* (civilized). Society was therefore divided along the lines that separated areas, occupied by Europeans, from zones they avoided.

¹⁵² Read more about this historic confrontation which led to Africanization of schools and churches in Ngumi (1998:108-110, Mwaniki 2000:55-57).

¹⁵³ Missionaries were sharply opposed to the cultural practice of female circumcision as we shall see below.

¹⁵⁴ One for instance went to A. H. S. for Hampton College in the U.S.A., another went to Makerere, and another to South Africa.

6.1.1.2 Gender-biased curriculum in primary schools

Apart from the racial bias in the curriculum, the curriculum was also *gender* biased. Before independence in Kenya, in 1963, women's formal education was regarded as unimportant, both by many parents and by some missionaries. Kenyan communities generally believed, that women would eventually get married. This is well attested to by the Luo proverb that: "*Wuoyi siro, nyako to ogwang*" meaning: "A son is a pole, but a girl is a wildcat"¹⁵⁵ (Ayanga 1996:16). Education was not considered important for a woman in marriage. Consequently, "a girl's father believed he was educating a wife for another man (which) he saw as a loss" (Aseka, Oral interviews, quoted in Kanogo 2005:209, cf. Shisanya 1996:61). Indeed, the move to educate girls in the beginning was not divorced from the desire for marriage: sometimes girls were admitted to mission schools at the request of men who were ex-pupils of such schools and who wished to marry mission-prepared girls (Holding in Kanogo 2005:211). Similarly, Strayer (1978:80-81) observes that education opportunities for girls were necessitated by "the general lack of suitable Christian wives for converted young men." Thus, girls enrolled at an older age than boys.

According to Kanogo (1993:180), up to the early 1950s, the missionaries were not keen to impart academic skills to women. Instead, they aimed at inculcating "ideals relating to cleanliness, proper housekeeping and general aptitude in housecraft..." (Kanogo 1993:180-181). A CMS mission conference held in 1942 on 'women's and girl's work' for instance recommended that:

Education should have as its goal the training of girls themselves for home-making... girls teachers are best employed in teaching in the kindergarten and in teaching girls' subjects throughout the rest of the school (KNA Mss/61/567 "Women and Girls' Education 1943").

This missionary attitude towards women's education reflected the situation in Victorian England in nineteenth century Britain, where conservative educationists, whose roots were in the eighteenth century, argued that it was inappropriate for women to receive equal education with

¹⁵⁵ This proverb emphasizes the permanence of the boy in the home and his value as the pole of the home. The girl is not of as much value because she is temporary. Like a wildcat, she will wander in search of a husband. Such beliefs impacted negatively on the education of girls, since the community believed that her education would not benefit her parents as much as that of the boy. The Kikuyu has a similar attitude that a girl is only temporary in her father's house.

men because of their intellectual inability and their different social duties. In Kenya, there was also the widespread fear both, in the church and in society, that education would threaten women's sense of domestic duty. This was an influence of the Victorian ideals of female domesticity as well (see Gill 1994:40, 41).

According to the weekly timetable for Kabete Girls' Boarding Primary School in 1942, the subjects taught included needlework, housewifery, cooking, laundry, housecraft, baby welfare and First Aid (KNA Mss/61/348 "Kabete Girl's School" 1941-1943, cf. similar curriculum at Alliance Girls and other girls' schools in Kanogo 1993:181, Barg'etuny 1999:4-5). These subjects were taught by women teachers because, according to E.N. Brown, women "were better able to tackle (them) than men teachers"¹⁵⁶ (KNA Mss/61/348 "Kabete Girl's School" 1941-1943).

On the other hand, the boy's curriculum was formal and covered reading in Kikuyu and Kiswahili language, arithmetic, nature study, geography, colloquial English reading, history, grammar and agriculture or manual training (Presley 1992:100-101, KNA Mss/61/341 'CMS' 1939-1940).

A minority of the missionaries however had a keen interest in an academic education for girls. In Central Province, a CMS stronghold for example, the following comment was made in 1935:

Though for some time to come most of our girls in CMS will leave school to be married, there are already a few, and these are increasing, who want an outlet in nursing and teaching for two to three years between school and marriage" (KNA CMS 1/382, quoted in Kanogo 1993:181).

Janisch, the superintendent of female education in 1943, was optimistic that the relatively early of marriage for African girls would decrease with higher education for girls¹⁵⁷ (KNA Mss/61/567). Janisch's vision for girls could only be achieved by a gradual process, as we may judge from obstacles to women's education, as presented more than twenty years later in a

¹⁵⁶ This was the view of E.N. Brown in his report on the "Elementary Teacher Training for Girls" in Kabete in 1942.

¹⁵⁷ Janisch also noted in her report that "it had taken one hundred years for the first African woman student to start her medical training on an equal footing with students of all races in the Witwatersrand University in South Africa," (KNA Mss/61/567).

women's seminar, in 1966. It was noted, that some of the obstacles in women's education, were: early marriages of girls; girls dropping out of schools as a result of unplanned pregnancies; suspicion among parents that the formal schools did not instil discipline and, hence, some communities, like the Maasai, opted to continue their traditional education of girls; parental preference for sons' education over that of daughters (girls would be married off anyway but boys would provide security for their aging parents);¹⁵⁸ division of gender roles, especially in rural areas where girls spent time after school, helping their mothers with household chores¹⁵⁹ which was (is) by custom not required of boys and girls as a result performed often more poorly than boys because they were too tired to concentrate on homework; fear that higher education for girls made girls rebellious and therefore minimized their chances of getting married.

Gender bias in textbooks

Apart from the gender-biased curriculum, gender inequality in education was reflected in the teaching materials used, which also reinforced traditional gender roles.¹⁶⁰ The United Nations (2001:75) highlighted this gender bias in its statement that: "...Science curricula in particular are gender-biased. Science textbooks do not relate to women's and girls' daily experiences and fail to give recognition to women scientists."

¹⁵⁸ The fact that parents had the most immediate effect on the education of their daughters is well expressed by Keran Akoto, who recalled in oral interviews how much she had wanted to further her education. Her parents however interfered, because they were interested in her marrying so as to acquire dowry. After her marriage in 1947, her husband also forbade her from pursuing training in nursing in order to stay "around the home" (quoted in Kanogo 2005:230).

¹⁵⁹ Oral interviews from Nyona and Ayuku, reveal how they, as school going girls, were overwhelmed by household chores and *shamba* (garden) work including ploughing, which they had to accomplish both before going to school in the morning and after coming back from school (Kanogo 2005: 227-229). Similarly, Sicily Muriithi gives a personal experience of her primary school days in her rural area. She was required to help her mother with household chores, including fetching water, firewood and cooking after school, while her brother "was allowed to concentrate on his table" since "the education of a boy child was valued more highly than that of a girl child" (Muriithi 2008:16).

¹⁶⁰ Ngumi (1998:249) for instance observes, that "in *Safari English Course* (Book 1: for pupils standard 5: (pp. 8-9; 14-15), an exercise, titled '*What are they doing*', shows females sweeping the floor, working in the fields, sewing, cooking and ironing, while males are in school, eating, resting, reading, playing a game and running. Another exercise in the same book, entitled '*What do they do every day*', portrays similar stereotypes, adding that women go shopping and men go to work as tailors, barbers and shopkeepers.

Such a gender-biased learning environment discouraged women from aspiring to study marketable subjects which would enable them to become public figures outside the home, including engagement in national politics (Njoroge 2000:83-84). The feminization of education therefore led to feminization of jobs, where women “only occupied the lower levels of the job hierarchy” (Kanogo 1993:182).

Missionary education had a double effect on women’s identity. It both empowered and disempowered them. In areas of empowerment, firstly, education empowered women to be instruments of transformation in the fields of agriculture, health and education; secondly, the working away from home accorded girls some independence from the control of parents and other social constraints, a freedom that uneducated girls did not enjoy; and thirdly, as Kanogo (1993:185) observes, missionary education opened leadership opportunities for women, particularly in the church as leaders of women’s organizations such as Mothers’ Union and women’s guild

On the other hand, the training disempowered women in many ways. Firstly, accepting Christianity and missionary education was a form of colonial domination, that led to ‘social death’ of women and girls who accepted Christianity since they had to detach themselves completely from their traditional way of life.¹⁶¹ Secondly, Christian girls and women lived hybridized lives between their traditional world, where they were now regarded as social misfits (Kanogo 1993:169-170), and the missionary (European) world where they were accepted on the basis of their acceptance of Christianity but at the same time subordinated to white men and women on the basis of their race, gender and their status as the colonized. Some even worked as servants under white mistresses (Bowie 1993:13). Thirdly, the missionary curriculum was a mimicry of the traditional society curriculum in that both prepared women only for informal power and influence, as opposed to men who held formal authority.

¹⁶¹ According to Kanogo (1993:169-179) they underwent a process of ‘cleansing’ by abandoning all forms of traditional decorations including jewellery. Those who had their ears pierced had to have them sewn-up. Ear piercing among the Kikuyu, Embu, Meru and Kirinyaga was a rite of passage of a girl from childhood to pubescence but not to adulthood. While some missionaries considered this act as “a willful damage to the body, which is the temple of the Holy Ghost” (quoted in Kanogo 2005:119), Lambert, a colonial administrator had a varied opinion. He wondered why the “fashionable ladies of London (had) not been excommunicated for having their ears pierced for earrings” (Kanogo 2005:119).

The patriarchally gender divided spaces which the missionaries reinforced through education have a long history from the ancient world, where there is a clear divide between the public and private sphere, to the Roman and Jewish world, through the history of Christian tradition as we have seen in previous chapters.¹⁶²

However, with the introduction of equal curriculum for both boys and girls after Kenya's independence in 1963 and the introduction of Free Primary Education in Kenya in 2003 (FPE) by the Government of Kenya, gender parity is being realized in some Kenyan provinces with the rate of enrolment in and completion of schools by girls showing an upward trend, as evidenced by a report from Human Resources Department (OSHD) (2007:22).¹⁶³ Nevertheless, the report also shows that the gender gap widens in tertiary education:

Enrolment in public universities is characterized by wide gender disparities in favour of males¹⁶⁴...Further, female enrolment in technical and science degree courses is very low. For example, at the University of Nairobi, for the academic years 2002/2003 to 2004/2005, females constituted only 16.1% of those enrolled in the Bachelor of Architecture and Bachelor of Computer Science degree programmes respectively” (Human Resource Department 2007:24 cf. Ndambuki in Karanja 2003:4, Mwaura 1998:31).

The report also notes that girls face bigger problems than boys in the secondary school education process which include “the high cost of education (girls will be withdrawn first when finances do not suffice), patriarchal values, school girl pregnancies and resulting dropouts, early marriages and HIV/AIDS” (Human Resource Department 2007: vi). Other problems include FGM and

¹⁶² Augustine, who shared the views of the ancient world about the division of the public and private for instance assigned the man the public sphere and the woman the private arguing: “In this sphere, the woman is “assigned the presidency.” “She cannot express her opinion in a legislative assembly, but she can express it at home...” (Augustine in Clark 1983:36-37). Following this tradition, Luther shared similar views (see Luther in Pelikan 1958:202-203).

¹⁶³ This report shows that the national Gross Enrolment rate (GER) ratio by sex in primary education “increased overall from 82.1% in 2004 to 83.2% in 2005, with the NER of boys rising from 82.2% to 83.8% in the same period while that of girls increased from 81.1 to 83.2%...while in Western Province the NER of girls was higher than that of boys (83.1% girls and 78.2% boys). The NER is higher for girls in all provinces except North Eastern (where the net enrolment rate in 2005/6 was 57.6 boys against 40.3% girls).”

¹⁶⁴ In 2003/2004, women constituted only 35.1% in public universities enrolment while in 2004/2005 academic year the number dropped by 1% to 34.1%.

sexual violence suffered by girls in schools. The boy-child has not been spared either. According to 2008 KCSE (Kenya Certificate of Secondary education) results, the number of girls was higher (51%) than that of boys (49%) in the Central Province as a result of some factors, affecting the boy-child (Wachira and Mwangi 2010:1).¹⁶⁵

From the above description, it is clear that patriarchal factors, that hindered women's education and their participation in non-traditional subjects in the missionary era, continue to affect women's education in Kenya even today. The gender bias in the science curriculum, I would argue, is a form of gender stereotyping which associates science with masculinity and as a male preserve. In this aspect, the missionaries mimicked the Aristotelian science that associated manliness with reason, while femininity was associated with passion and weakness. Kanogo (1993:182) is therefore accurate in her observation that "it could be claimed that missionaries were instrumental in slowing down the pace at which women entered professional occupations."

In addition to gender disparity in missionary education, according to Strayer (1978:81, 82), improvement of women's status was hindered by "the male dominance of the missionary structure" and also "by the priority assigned to 'men's work in a context of scarce resources.'" This is evidenced in the education sector where Mrs Hooper's (she was a wife of a missionary priest) efforts to improve women's education and participation in church councils was met by strong opposition from *the male dominant leadership* that, Mrs Hooper *realized, matched the male dominance of African society*. She expressed that "her goal was 'nothing less than abolition of sex disqualifications'" (quoted in Strayer 1978: 81).

Mrs Hooper represents a situation where a white woman struggled as much as she could to challenge the patriarchal structures of sexism, in order to liberate the African woman from subordination by colonialism, Christianity, and patriarchy. She advocated women's education and participation of women in church councils. Thus, not all white women subordinated black

¹⁶⁵ Wachira and Mwangi (2010:1) warn that "Kenyans should be very careful before they celebrate" gender parity in education, because there is emerging evidence of boys' under-achievement in education in Nairobi, Central and parts of Eastern Province." One of the reasons for this under-achievement of boys is their recruitment into the Mungiki sect, an outlawed politico-religious group in Kenya. This sect rejects all forms of Westernization in favour of indigenous African traditions and practices e.g. FGM and male circumcision. It is the largest criminal organization in Kenya.

women. This is in line with the acknowledgement of Two-Thirds postcolonial feminists, as indicated in chapter two, that not all men and all Western women are enemies, but rather some men and some women have more power than others (Kwok 2002:78).

Both Kenyan men and women portrayed aspects of colonial mimicry, when they seized the master's tool of education and made serious efforts to dismantle colonialism by organizing associations, geared towards Kenya's political freedom. This mimicry reflects Horsley's observation of the irony in mission schools whereby "the very missionary schools which taught the Bible...produced many an anti-colonial agitator" (Horsley 1998b:152). Colonial mimicry was also seen, when educated boys later replaced colonial masters by becoming political leaders in independent Kenya. The first president of Kenya, Mr Kenyatta, was a product of missionary education.

6.1.2 Gender construction through rites of passage in the missionary period

A second way in which gender was constructed in the missionary period, was through the rituals and the rites of passage systems which already existed in pre-colonial Kenya. The aim of the missionaries and colonialists, as we have seen so far, was to 'civilize' Africans. One of the ways in which the missionaries thought they were "civilising" Africans, was to get rid of gendered rites of passage which oppressed women. This objective of the missionaries was more often met with resistance by the Kikuyu even where the missionaries felt they were genuinely re-imaging the distorted perception of the image of God in a woman by African culture. We shall examine the interaction between the missionaries and the locals on various issues, relating to gendered rites of passage, below.

6.1.2.1 Circumcision

The making of a man and woman among the Kikuyu was done in the process of circumcision (for boys) and clitoridectomy (for girls). It was a rite of passage from childhood to adulthood. This transition may be best understood in an anthropological sense where according to Podles (1999:46):

Initiation entails a sharp break, and has a threefold structure: a departure from a previous way of life, a 'liminal' period in which the one being initiated is suspended between two worlds, and the entry into a new way of life.

It was regarded as religious because it was "an act of communion with the ancestral god (*morungu*), whose protection is invoked to guide and protect the initiates through the *irua* (circumcision) ceremony" (Kenyatta 1938:136-137). It was therefore marked by a big religious ceremony (see Kenyatta 1938:135-147).

Circumcision for boys

Circumcision for boys involved removal of the foreskin of the penis. It was a test of their masculinity and manhood which had to be achieved through physical pain amid determination, fierceness and self-control, in preparation for gender roles associated with manhood, particularly being a warrior (protector of the society) (Mwaniki 2000:26). During a seclusion period, construction of masculinity involved a strict teaching to denounce any feminine traits, e.g. cowardice and crying. They were also taught Kikuyu tradition, religion, folklore, mode of behaviour, taboos and sex. One of the ways in which the circumcised boy would be detached from femininity was by living in a separate hut. He was no longer allowed to sleep in his mother's house or to visit the kitchen. Food had to be brought to him in his hut and he was henceforth attached to men. (This did not happen to the girl after clitoridectomy, since she continued to live in her mother's house and use the kitchen until she was married). The boy was then incorporated into a new age-set. All the boys who were circumcised together became members of the same age-set, and lived closer like blood brothers.

The CMS resisted the ceremonies and the teachings that accompanied circumcision of boys but tolerated the act of operation of the boys itself. They therefore took the initiative to Christianize the initiation rite by overseeing the operation themselves from 1909. Boys who were under Christian instruction would be circumcised in the hospital, either by the doctor/hospital-assistant or by the traditional circumciser. The CMS ruled that all male children of Christian parentage be circumcised as infants. However, the locals met this missionary initiative with resistance. According to Strayer (1978:84), the operation "in no way satisfied initiation requirements of the Embu." This is, because the hospital operation was not done in a ceremonial manner as in the

traditional way and the crucial gender teachings, that accompanied it, were lost. Instead, circumcised boys were left under instruction by their peers.

The current ACK, especially in the Diocese of Nairobi, has begun to take the initiative to organize a Christian ceremony for circumcision of boys at the diocesan level. The first organized diocesan initiation ceremony took place in the Diocese of Nairobi in December 2008.¹⁶⁶ During the ceremony, boys from various parishes in the diocese were brought together in one place for seclusion. They underwent some counselling sessions in order to prepare them psychologically, after which medical doctors did the operation. During the seclusion period that took seven days, they were joined by girls of the same age (about 12-14 years) but girls did not undergo female circumcision. They were taught together varieties of topics, geared towards moulding them into responsible manhood and womanhood in a Christian setting and also introducing them to Kikuyu social reality, since circumcision facilitates the social construction of Kikuyu social reality, especially through the teaching of gender roles (see also Githiga 1996:83-86).

In one of their teaching manuals, entitled “Family Problems, Marital Conflicts and Ineffective Parenting” (Timber 2005), there is a topic on “Man as the Family Leader.” One of the subheadings that is of interest for my study, because it serves to construct gender is “Differences in man and woman.” Some of the differences between men and women that are stipulated are:

- A woman has “power to influence...” while a man has “power of authority...”
- A woman “supports and encourages with her strengths and abilities the vision expressed” while a man “casts vision and creativity to lead in decision making”
- A woman “has more language capacity and capacity to access more words” while a man “is equipped with leadership qualities, able to judge and decide...(has a ‘specialized’ brain...that makes him focused...)

The same manual reflects on the relationship between man and woman in both creation stories in Genesis. It emphasizes that “the woman, like the man, was created, ‘in the image of God’, (Gen

¹⁶⁶ The ceremony was pioneered by one of the parishes in Nairobi Diocese known as ACK St. Peter’s Church Kahawa Sukari, a few years before the bishop of Nairobi, the RT. Rev. Peter Njoka, pronounced it a diocesan ceremony in 2008, whereby all the other parishes that had similar plans were directed to do so jointly with St. Peter’s parish.

1:27).” In the second creation story, the manual emphasizes that “a woman was created and brought to man as a helper and companion (Gen 2:18, 20-23), not as a possession or property.” For the sake of order in the family, the man is “the head of the home (1Cor 11:3) and the wife being submissive to him (Eph 5:22-24), Col 3:18, 1Pet 3:1-6)...Thus, harmony in the family prevails when such order is maintained” (Timber 2005- unpagged).

The teachings of these articles promote gender disparity in the following ways. The first article reflects the “scientific” findings of Aristotle in chapter five, where the woman is depicted as being controlled by emotions rather than reason and, hence, is weak in decision-making. Consequently, she is incapable of holding positions of administration and decision-making. Secondly, although the manual upholds the creation of male and female in the image of God, at the same time it privileges male headship. In this way, although Christianization of the rites of passage is to be celebrated, in that it equips the youth to cope with the numerous challenges of the new millennium and moulds them into mature and responsible Christian men and women, fulfilling the aims of the traditional initiation rite, it simultaneously creates gender disparity by its teaching on male headship and female subordination. It is clear from the ideas expressed in the manual that men are leaders and women are supporters, that men therefore are indeed the image of God, while women only bear the glory of man. It is therefore evident that in the twenty-first century, the new generation of Christians is still taught to privilege the male over the female, and relevant biblical texts are still being cited to sanction gender relationships of domination and subordination, rather than relationships of equality and partnership between men and women, husbands and wives.

The churches’ initiative to go back to tradition is an appreciation and acknowledgement of some of the important traditional values that can be accommodated in African Christianity, and it is a positive response to colonialism which sought to deny African people their identity. However, if we apply an African feminist cultural hermeneutic to the process which the church has begun, it is clear that the teachings relating to gender roles are not transformed when they are Christianised. They are simply a continuation of cultural roles which were oppressive to women and which were reinforced by the missionaries. An African feminist cultural hermeneutic requires, that we name those aspects of culture which are oppressive and that we reclaim those aspects which are liberating (Kanyoro 2002). In this respect, reclaiming the practice of

circumcision in order to initiate boys, is a positive step, but reclaiming it with all its cultural gendered baggage in an uncritical manner is unhelpful. As such, the teachings confine boys to leadership roles while, in effect, confining girls to their subordinate roles.

Female circumcision

Clitoridectomy involved trimming of the girl's clitoris. Like the boy who was expected to show courage during circumcision, the girl was also expected to show courage and readiness to face womanhood. Besides preventing her from sexual enjoyment, the rite was meant to prepare the girl to withstand her forthcoming role of procreation. Practical and theoretical education was imparted during the seclusion period both before and after the rite, in which girls were socialized to take up private responsibilities in the home (Mwaniki 2000:26-27).

A closer evaluation as to whether the rite of initiation had similar implications for both boys and girls reveals, that the rite empowered men and disempowered women by making them subordinates to men in various ways. Firstly, initiation for boys did not have the same meaning as initiation for girls. While boys demonstrated their strength and wisdom to deal with public and political affairs, the latter were prepared solely for marriage and procreation, where they would be fully controlled by their husbands. This rite of passage was therefore gender-biased. Secondly, clitoridectomy disempowered a woman sexually through the excision of the clitoris, since the clitoris is the source of female sexual arousal. It was cut intentionally, in order to remove excessive female desire that would lead women to hold male genitals during coitus. It was considered a taboo, especially among the Kikuyu for a woman to hold a man's genital, which, according to Wamue (1996:172), would lead to divorce of the woman or her excommunication from the society. Clitoridectomy therefore reduced a woman to a sex object during coitus. According to Nyambura Njoroge (Njoroge 2000:23), the purpose of clitoridectomy was also to preserve the virginity of a girl through decreased sexual passion. On the contrary, virginity was not strictly required for boys, as for girls in marriage. Thirdly, in the cultures that practice it, clitoridectomy constructs women negatively as sexually immoral and tempters of men, and hence their sexual desire has to be kept in check. Sanderson is said to have rightly remarked that:

In male dominated societies, there exists a widely held notion of the strong irresistible force of female sexuality. This notion may be held by both men and women. It suggests

that a woman left alone without external coercion to guard her ‘honour’ will act impulsively for immediate gratification...this view may present a constant and worrying threat to which genital mutilation may be one of the many repressive responses (quoted in Okemwa 1993:53).

On the whole, the rite of initiation was derogative to women.

The missionaries too, condemned this practice. One of the acute conflicts, resulting from the missionary attempts to eradicate African cultural practices and religion, was the female circumcision controversy.¹⁶⁷ In the late 1920s, the missionaries, led by Church of Scotland Mission (CSM)¹⁶⁸ and African Inland Mission (AIM), reacted strongly against female circumcision. They argued that the surgery was unfitting for women because, medically, it was drastic and created large scars, which affected childbirth and exposed the lives of expectant mothers and the foetus to risk. Furthermore, they argued that the rite was incompatible with Christianity. While the missionaries’ efforts to eradicate this practice is commendable, it can be noted that their opposition was couched only in terms of women’s reproductive rights and not their rights to a fulfilling sexual life which FGM denied them.

In support of the missionary view of clitoridectomy, African feminists have condemned it as “Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) (cf. Okemwa 1996, Dolphyne 1991, Daily Nation, March 8, 2000:25).¹⁶⁹ However, the *resistance* to missionary teaching and the *ambivalence* that still persists among some Christians with regard to this rite is outstanding. While many Christians in the central province have broken away from this tradition because of the strong church teaching against it, recent news reports allege that “female circumcision (has) risen sharply in Central Kenya. The figure (is) a startling 23 per cent” (Saturday Nation 30/5/2009). According to Esther Murugi, the Gender Minister, the figure is even higher in the Central Province where it stands at

¹⁶⁷ For a full account of the origin and character of female circumcision as well as the causes and consequences of the female circumcision controversy, see the memorandum on female circumcision prepared by The Kikuyu Mission Council in 1931 (KNA DC/FH/3/2).

¹⁶⁸ Systematic teaching against the practice was started by the CSM through Dr. Arthur who was in control of Kikuyu hospital in 1906 (KNA DC/FH/3/2 pg 8).

¹⁶⁹ In this Kenyan News Paper, FGM was described as “not only physically damaging but also a violation of human rights” during the international women’s day in Kenya.

30 per cent (Daily Nation 31/8/2009:8). After her recent research among Christian women of Meru South District in Kenya, Muriithi (2008:62-65) reported that FGM is still rampant even among Christian families. In cases where Christians still perform the rite, it is done in hiding because it is condemned by the church.

6.1.2.2 Marriage

There are various issues which relate to marriage like dowry, polygamy, and divorce among others. These issues create gender disparities in ways that are derogatory to women. The missionaries arrived at similar conclusions in their view of marriage. Some colonial administrators, like the Chief Native Commissioner (CNC) John Ainsworth, characterized the ‘uncivilized’ Native Law and Custom¹⁷⁰ as oppressive to women and under which a woman “never comes of age and although she is transferred from the custody of her father or guardian to some other man on payment of the so-called marriage price she still remains a chattel, so long as she remains in the Reserve under tribal conditions...” (quoted in Kanogo 2005:20-21). This section will examine the interaction between the missionaries and the Kenyan communities over some of these marital issues, that brought conflict between the Native Law and Custom and the colonial/missionary rule that aimed at “civilizing” Africans.

Ruracio (brideprice)

Payment of *ruracio*¹⁷¹ was of paramount importance among the Kikuyu. What the payment of brideprice entailed, is well captured by Kanogo (2005:105-106, cf. Mwaniki and Muraguri 2006:4-5). Kanogo rightly indicates that payment of dowry involved “the delivery of livestock by a suitor to the father of his prospective bride, in exchange for the woman’s reproductive and productive labour. The payment of bridewealth established an alliance between two families or

¹⁷⁰ It is worth noting that the use of state ordinances for marriage and divorce as opposed to native African law had been made compulsory in the “Conference of Missionary Societies in Great Britain and Ireland in 1943 (KNA Mss/61/55 Marriage Ordinance 1939-1945).

¹⁷¹ In anthropological terms, ‘dowry’ refers to the property that a woman brings into marriage while ‘bridewealth’ or brideprice refers to goods and services that a bridegroom transferred to the family of the bride (see Mwaniki and Muraguri 2006:2 cf. Kanogo 2005:105). In this study, I will use the three terms interchangeably to refer to the money or property that the bridegroom or his kinsmen pays to his wife’s family both before and after marriage.

clans, compensated the bride's family for loss of labour, and assured them of the bridegroom's family's goodwill towards the bride." It was also a clear message that "the wife belongs to the family lineage and clan of her husband" (Mwaniki and Muraguri 2006:5). The children to be born also belonged to this lineage.

Dowry, which is still a continuing practice, has serious negative consequences for the identity of husband and wife. Firstly, it is through dowry that the wife becomes the 'property' of the husband and is treated as such. The language used in Kikuyu for marrying a woman is *kugura mundu muka*, meaning to 'buy' a woman. Such a language and practice dehumanizes the wife by turning her into property and privileges the husband as her owner. Secondly, dowry creates a hierarchical relationship between husband and wife, rather than a relationship of partnership. It reinforces the patriarchal idea of male headship in the home. Thirdly, dowry can lead to forced marriages where the daughter is forced by her parents to marry, not out of love and commitment, but because of the wealth of the man.¹⁷² Fourthly, payment of dowry cripples newly married couples financially. In my previous study (Mwaniki 2000:29), some informants indicated that they had to incur huge loans, to offset dowry as well as wedding expenses.

While the Kikuyu claimed that, without *ruracio*, marriage was no more than concubinage, the missionaries regarded dowry as tantamount to the selling of a girl. The issue of dowry was too complex for the missionaries who handled it in different ways. Since mission girls were encouraged to marry Christian boys, some missionaries blessed these marriages without the consent of the parents. Others opted for the monetarization¹⁷³ of dowry, while still others, like the CMS, tried to discourage it.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² Although Kikuyu women were free to choose their husbands as Kenyatta (1938:165) indicates, this was not always the case in practice as evidenced by women who joined the missions because they were fleeing such arranged marriages (see Strayer 1978:3).

¹⁷³ Monetarization of dowry, made it extremely difficult for young men to accumulate enough money to pay for the required number of livestock. It was rejected by some colonial administrators like the local Native Council (LNC) of Meru (see Kanogo 2005).

¹⁷⁴ In 1907, the CMS missionaries tried to discourage the practice since they believed that dowry "made of marriage a mere mercantile transaction" and that "women in African societies were regarded as mere chattels, the worth of so many goats and cows" (Strayer 1978: 79, 80). However, their effort was received with resistance whereby "Christians continued to give and receive bridewealth."

In a conference of Bishops of East and Central Africa held in Nairobi in June 1945, the missionary bishops discussed the issue of dowry at length. They felt, it posed a challenge to the church and other bodies “to contribute to the general improvement of the status of African womanhood” (KNA Mss/61/55 Marriage Ordinance 1939-1945). During the conference, the bishops strongly expressed that “the solution of the problem of ‘bride-price’ can be found only by African Christians themselves.” The immediate problem that the Bishops wanted to arrest, was “the deplorable upward trend in the amount of the ‘bride-price’” (KNA Mss/61/55 Marriage Ordinance 1939-1945).

Although the Kenyan Anglican church has, almost successfully, condemned some of the traditional practices, that dehumanize woman, including female circumcision, levirate and polygamous marriages, it has not yet tackled the issue of dowry in a meaningful way, since the recommendation of the Bishops in the 1945 conference to the African church leaders to offer a solution to the issue. The churches’ silence on this crucial issue implies its affirmation, that a wife is her husband’s possession and still a source of income to her family through dowry. In fact this strong stance of the church on the importance of the dowry came out clearly during the Clergy and Spouses Seminar, held in the ACK Nairobi Diocese on 23rd September 2006. During this seminar, my male colleague priest and I had been asked to present a joint paper, entitled “Receiving and Paying Dowry Violates Christian Principles” (Mwaniki and Muraguri 2006). Despite showing that the payment of dowry entrenched hierarchy and ownership, and that this was against the Christian principles of mutuality, partnership and love, the motion favouring the practice of dowry was passed.

It is clear therefore, that we understood Christian principles differently from the way in which the majority of the clergy understood these principles. For them, Christian principles of gender relations are essentially the principles, outlined by Paul in 1 Cor 11, which declares that a woman does not fully bear the image of God, but only the glory of man. Dowry re-enforces this derivative value of women. Hence, it is clear how the biblical text maintains and promotes cultural values, which assert women’s subordination through practices such as dowry.

6.1.2.3 Widowhood

The final rite of passage among the Kikuyu was death. Since I am interested in the construction of gender power relations and especially how the death of a husband affected the human identity of a widow, I will not discuss death as a rite of passage but will discuss widowhood instead.

Among the Kikuyu, care was taken to ensure that a widow had enough resources to feed herself and the children. Arrangements were made for the widow to be inherited, either by the brother of her husband or by a close relative. How then was gender power relation constructed through the death of a spouse?

The gender element in an occurrence of death is evident in that a widower is not treated in the same way as a widow. A widower for instance has the freedom to continue with owning his property and he can remarry a woman of his choice. On the other hand, a widow was deprived of freedom to remarry a man of her choice. This important decision was made for her through the arrangements whereby she was to be inherited. Strict measures were put in place to ensure that she did not remarry outside these arrangements, in which case the dowry had to be returned in full, a condition that was very difficult to meet (Wamue 1996b:41-42). Secondly, the widow was deprived economically. Under the socio-economic rules, after the death of a man, property ownership e.g. ownership of land, was passed on to the male children and not to the mother. Thus, *sexual status counted more than age status* in matters of land and property inheritance.

Economic disempowerment of widows and levirate marriages are experienced in diverse ways in traditional Kenyan communities. According to Shisanya (1996:63), among the Abaluhya of Kenya for example, women are exposed to “immense economic violence by their brothers-in-law.” The demand of the community’s funeral rites is, that “the deceased’s property be distributed to close relatives with a view to keeping the deceased’s spirit amongst them.” Abaluhya women, according to Shisanya’s research, (1996:63) “lose all their property after the demise of their spouses. This property ranges from assets such as cars to household goods.” Furthermore, a widow is not set free to re-marry but “brothers-in-law scramble to inherit (her).” The decision to be inherited is made for the widow, as clearly expressed by the Luo proverb: “*Dhako chogo morudore gik libamba jok modong’to gweno,*” literally meaning that “A woman is the middle bone that the clan chews after her husband’s death” (Ayanga 1996:15). According to Ayanga’s explanation of the proverb, a widow, as the property of the clan, has no choice in

being inherited or remarried within the clan, just as a bone has no say in its being chewed. By extension, “any member of the clan has the right to a sexual relationship with the widow” (Ayanga 1996:16).

While the missionaries condemned levirate marriage union and exhorted a widow to remain celibate or to remarry (Njoroge 2000: 85), the traditional practices hold that the wife and her offspring are the property of the family and the clan of the deceased husband, as a result of the dowry paid for her. The church’s silence on the issue of dowry therefore does not only subordinate the wife to her husband, but also the widow to his clan and family. As a result, the Christian widow lives in a state of profound dilemma, with little freedom to live a life of her choice.

Unfortunately the church, which relies on Scripture for direction in these matters, cannot help a widow either, because texts like 1 Cor 11:1-16 simply affirm the view that a woman is nothing without a man – she herself cannot bear the image of God. She can only be the glory of man. Her power is derivative. It is this same ideology, that drives widowhood practices in Kenya, which is why widows are not allowed to inherit property nor to exercise freedom of sexuality, because she can never be fully autonomous. She is always an addendum to the man.

6.2 Women in the CMS

A CMS Conference, held in September 1942, stated the following on the agenda of “Women in the Work of the African Church”:

It is hoped that African women will be encouraged to take their full share in the life and work of the Church, particularly by serving on the African Church Councils, by assisting in pre-baptism classes, by helping girls in village life, by assisting in the examination of girls and women for baptism, and by generally undertaking the responsibility for the investigation of cases of discipline involving women and girls (KNA Mss/61/567).

According to this statement, it is evident that the missionaries desired women to be actively involved in the affairs of the church. However, such a desire could only become fulfilled with an initiative by the missionaries themselves to empower women. There were at least three major

barriers to women's full participation in the church. Firstly, the male dominated church hierarchy matched African hierarchy of leadership.¹⁷⁵ Secondly, the gender-biased curriculum did not prepare women for major responsibilities in the church, but prepared them rather to be homemakers.¹⁷⁶ Thirdly, women could not be ordained to priesthood. This meant that women could only perform as laity in the structure of the church.

Furthermore, apart from recommending that women serve in the church councils, the conference confined women's ministry to the service of other women and girls. It did not even propose that women could either lead services or preach in the church. This was a mimicry of not only the roles that women played in the Church of England in the eighteenth century, but also in the history of the Christian tradition and the biblical texts as a whole. According to Mwaura (2005b:410) however, in the missionary era women were deeply involved in evangelistic work and opened various outstations, but unfortunately this effort has been ignored in the records where more attention has been given to the role that men played in the growth of the church.

In sum, most of the contributions of women to the advancement of the missionary church were not highlighted as much as the role that men played in church growth. Furthermore, the failure to ordain women was a major handicap to their full participation in the church. All in all, the missionaries subordinated women, in that they established hierarchical structures and male domination in the church, whereby women were not accorded equal status with men. In accordance to Scripture, such as 1 Cor 11, women were not allowed to hold positions that would allow them to lead men or to speak in church.

As indicated in chapter five, this silencing of women in the church in the history of the Christian tradition goes back a very long time to Paul's 1 Cor 11:34, 35 where women are silenced in the church, and also 1 Cor 11:1-16 where male headship is sanctioned. The Church Fathers and the Christian tradition in subsequent centuries used these Scripture texts as a divine sanction of the silencing of women in church and to confine the leadership of the church to male headship. This

¹⁷⁵ See above where in 1916 Mrs Hooper's campaign for women to be represented in church councils met with strong opposition from the male dominant leadership in the church hierarchy.

¹⁷⁶ The same conference for instance recommended that, in addition to the Bible Study and Prayer Meetings courses that were being offered to women, other subjects such as "hygiene, child-welfare, agriculture, and other general matters which must find their place in the new Christian home" should be taught (KNA Mss/61/567).

notion of male headship subordinated female missionaries to male missionaries, so that the former had difficulties in their efforts to liberate African women (see Bowie 1993:8-9).¹⁷⁷

6.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, as with Paul, one cannot use a generalized and monolithic description of either pre-colonial Kenya or the CMS. Rather, both, like Paul, have played an ambivalent role in regard to the role and status of women. On the one hand, for instance, CMS has served as an agent of women's liberation, but on the other it has been a catalyst of their subordination, especially through the male dominated leadership of the missionary church and its colonial tendencies. Although the missionaries, for instance, made an effort to liberate women from some of the dehumanizing aspects of African culture, such as female circumcision, dowry, levirate marriages and wife inheritance among others, the church did not and has not done much to abolish gender disparity. This is particularly so, because Africans received the gospel as a divine sanction where Paul's texts in particular were used to bolster subordination of women in the already existing pre-colonial Kenyan patriarchal structures.¹⁷⁸ I therefore concur with Oduyoye (1995:183) that:

In my opinion, it is still debatable whether or not the influence of Christianity has been beneficial to the socio-cultural transformation of Africa- and I am most concerned with

¹⁷⁷ During the 1888 London Missionary Conference, J.N. Murdock argued for the authority of male missionaries over female missionaries when he stated: "Women's work in the foreign field must be careful to recognize the headship of man in ordering the affairs of the kingdom of God (Johnston in Bowie 1993:8). Earlier on, Bishop Allan Beecher of Bloemfontein had expressed a similar opinion in 1883 with regard to the sisterhood he had founded in southern Africa, when he said: "All Sisterhood work, to be perfect, ought ...to be carried on with the real central power vested in the Bishop..." (Swaisland in Bowie 1993:8). Women missionaries were therefore frustrated by lack of independence. This subordination of women within the missionary community itself brought an obvious contradiction, as the women missionaries tried to raise the standards of the native women. This is clear from Miss Gollock's statement of 1912 that: "It seems only good that the natives should see the Christian women missionaries not segregated, not treated as if they must by reason of sex be kept out of authority and responsibility, always subordinate, even the wisest and ablest, to the most callow and tactless young man; but treated by fellow missionaries as honoured and trusted fellow-workers..." (Bowie 1993:9).

¹⁷⁸ According to Mwaura (2005:412) for instance "the missions whether Catholic or Protestant originating in the nineteenth century, were largely expressions of a patriarchal society and these attitudes seemed to fit with an African society in its patriarchal and matriarchal form."

its effects on women. It seems that sexist elements of Western culture have simply fuelled the cultural sexism of traditional African society...

The missionary theology of gender was also representative of the theological perceptions of gender in the Church of England, characterized by the Victorian ideology of womanhood as indicated in chapter five. It was observed in this chapter, that this missionary/Victorian theology was in many ways similar to the pre-colonial theology of gender in Kenya and hence both theologies reinforced each other, while being propped up by biblical texts such as 1 Cor 11:1-16 to support the subordination of women.

The question which remains is, has the Anglican Church that was born out of the missionary church re-imagined this distorted perception of *Imago Dei* in a woman? How has the ACK interacted with both the pre-colonial and the missionary forms of gender construction? In the following chapter, I will address these questions.

CHAPTER 7

PERCEPTIONS OF *IMAGO DEI* IN MALE AND FEMALE IN THE ACK

7.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter I highlighted how the interaction between missionary Christian gender values and pre-colonial Kenyan constructions of gender served to resist but also to re-enforce each other. This was further bolstered by the biblical text, to which increasing value became attached through the translation of the Bible into local languages. In this chapter I will show how the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK) has continued in this tradition of gender bias, from pre-colonial times to the missionary era, and to the contemporary post-missionary period.

As mentioned in chapter one, the *Constitution* of ACK is clear on the church's stance on the dignity of humanity. According to article IV in *The Anglican Church of Kenya Constitution* (2002:6), the ACK view "on the value and dignity of man (sic)" is that:

This church proclaims that all human beings are made in the image of God and are therefore, of equal value and dignity in the sight of God, and, while careful to provide for the special needs of different people committed to its charge, allows no discrimination in the membership and government of the Church based on grounds of racial, tribal or gender difference.

While the church affirms its commitment to the *Constitution*, it at the same time affirms a commitment to the Scriptures. The ACK acknowledges the Scriptures as the rule and standard of the faith of the church. According to the *Anglican Church of Kenya Constitution* (2002:4):

This Province, being in full communion with the Anglican Churches throughout the World, receives all the Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, given by inspiration of God, as containing all things necessary for salvation and being the ultimate rule and standard of the faith and life of the Church.

This constitutional view of Scriptures is mandated by the Thirty Nine Articles of religion and later by “The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral,” 1886/1888, in which the acknowledgement of “The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as the revealed Word of God” was one of the items regarded “as essential to the restoration of unity among the divided branches of Christendom” (The Windsor Report 2004:73). The Christians in the ACK as well as other Christians in Kenya revere the Bible as a sacred text and as the norm of their Christian life. In the rest of this chapter I will show how an uncritical reliance on Scripture, especially those texts which do not value the full humanity of women, has contributed to glaring gender disparities within the ACK.

I will present my case of the gender disparities through an examination of the role and status of women in ACK, with special reference to ordination of women, and women in the Mothers’ Union. I will also investigate the status of women in the organizational structure of ACK. Although I intend to focus on the ACK as a body that is governed by the Provincial Synod under the Archbishop, I recognize that each diocese is governed by the Diocesan Synod under the Diocesan Bishop, and hence each diocese exercises some autonomy in its spiritual and administrative affairs. For my examination of the status of women in ACK, I will use ACK Nairobi Diocese, where I am currently serving as an ordained priest, as my special focus, in particular where specific data is required.

7.1 A brief history of ACK

The Anglican Church in East Africa was founded originally as the Diocese of Eastern Equatorial Africa, comprising present day Kenya, Uganda and central Tanzania, in 1884, with James Hannington as its first bishop. This diocese was split into two, giving way to the dioceses of Mombasa and Uganda, in 1899. Mission work in Kenya, which had begun in 1844 in Mombasa, continued to grow under white missionaries, particularly with their settlement in the Kenya highlands in the beginning of the eighteenth century. In 1955, bishops Obadiah Kariuki and Festo Olang’ were consecrated as the first Kenyan bishops. With the new African leadership of the church, the numerical growth of the church increased which led to the splitting of more dioceses. In 1961 for instance, the diocese of Mombasa was split into three dioceses; Maseno,

Nakuru and Mt. Kenya.¹⁷⁹ Currently, there are thirty-one dioceses. The church counts at least 1,500,000 Anglicans, covering a geographical area of 580,400 Sq KM (The Anglican Communion Official Website, <<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/tour/province.cfm?ID=KI>>. Accessed: 29/7/2009.)

7.2 The role and status of women in ACK

7.2.1 Developments in the ordination of women to priesthood in the ACK

Discussions about ordination of women to priesthood began taking place in the House of Bishops in ACK in 1980, following the recommendation of Lambeth Conference of 1978 that the member churches could consider ordaining them (Lambeth Conference 1978:44-45 resolution No. 20). Although in 1980 the province agreed in principle that women could be ordained, each diocese was to be autonomous in taking up the issue.

One of the leading dioceses that took up the issue was the then Diocese of Mt. Kenya East, under the bishopric of the RT. Rev. Dr David M. Gitari who later became the archbishop of ACK.¹⁸⁰ He was very enthusiastic about women's ordination to priesthood and made a remarkable impact in the whole Province. His enthusiasm was however not shared by many, as we can see from the debates on ordination in his diocese. Bishop Gitari raised the issue of women's ordination to priesthood in four consecutive Diocesan Synods; 1979, 1981, 1983 and 1986. The motion that was brought, lost in the first three synods because the majority of the members, who were

¹⁷⁹ For comprehensive details about the subdivision of the Anglican dioceses in Kenya, see Church of the Province of Kenya (1994:129).

¹⁸⁰ Since 1979, women in the Diocese of Mt. Kenya East had been offered equal training with men under the initiative of bishop David Gitari. Women however remained lay in the order of deaconesses on the basis of their sex, while their male colleagues were ordained to priesthood and hence entered the Holy Orders. Some vicars treated deaconesses as their subordinates despite the equal training. It was not unusual for the vicar to ask the deaconess to cook for a on-going parish council meeting, hence denying her the right to attend the meeting. Worse still, there was a big discrepancy in salary and allowances between a priest and a deaconess in the same parish. The salary scale was based on ordination rather than on the level of education (Mwaniki 2000:63). Unlike in the History of the Christian tradition, where deaconesses were only allowed to minister to other women and children, a deaconess in the ACK could perform all the duties of a priest apart from sacraments (baptism and Holy Communion- although she could help with the Chalice during Holy Communion) and marriage. I served in the capacity of deaconess for eleven years before my ordination to priesthood.

predominantly male, opposed it (The Diocese of Mt Kenya East Marches On: Fifth Ordinary Session of the Synod, Resolution 51/83).¹⁸¹ The motion was finally passed in 1986 (Resolution 56/86 cited in Mwaniki 2000:63). The first three women were ordained in the new diocese of Kirinyaga in 1992, after the split of the diocese of Mt Kenya East in 1990. By 2000, the diocese of Kirinyaga was leading with twenty-nine ordained women, followed by the diocese of Embu with ten ordained women. Other dioceses followed gradually but the pace was/is slow in some dioceses, as we shall see below.

7.2.2 Debates on women's ordination

It has been difficult to trace debates on women's ordination from the Minutes of the Provincial Synods, because the discussions and arguments that took place, were not captured in the Minutes. What was recorded, were the resolutions that were made (see e.g. Provincial Synod 1982 Min. 23/82 Ordination of Women). This makes it very difficult to trace arguments that were levelled against women's ordination as well as reasons why the motion finally won at the Provincial level. However, in my previous study, (Mwaniki 2000:64-65), I was able to gather some of the factors in favour of and against women's ordination using both oral and written sources from the ACK diocese of Kirinyaga.¹⁸² I found that the arguments against were mainly historical, biblical and cultural.

Historically, some Christians argued that the CMS only trained and ordained men but not women. Such an argument was based on ignorance of the fact that the CMS was an emissary of a gender-biased Church of England's tradition as indicated in chapters five and six.

The biblical and theological arguments were built on church tradition, namely; that women were not part of the Levitical Priesthood in the Old Testament, that Jesus chose only male disciples and that Pauline theology does not allow women to speak in church. Bishop Gitari rose against

¹⁸¹ The motion lost by 71 votes against 69 votes in favour. It was supported by 50 people in the House of laity against 31 and 18 people in the House of clergy against 40 clergy who opposed it.

¹⁸² Due to the absence of ordination debates at the Provincial level, I will use the debates in ACK Kirinyaga Diocese as representative of some of the factors that withheld women from being ordained in the entire ACK and how these were finally overcome.

such views and argued that “the Bible should be taken in its social-cultural context through proper biblical hermeneutics” (Gitari, oral interviews quoted in Mwaniki 2000:64).

Cultural arguments were based on the fact, that women were never leaders in traditional society and that the only women who participated in religious affairs were of past child-bearing age. Some synod members were therefore of the opinion, that deaconesses should be ordained to diaconate ten years after completing their ordination training. Others recommended that only married women should be ordained, while still others claimed that ordained women should remain unmarried (The Diocese of Mt Kenya East Marches On: Fifth Ordinary Session of the Synod, 1983:38).

Other cultural factors raised against, were that ordination of women would empower women to lead men, which is against (Kikuyu) culture. It was interesting that the proposers of such conservative arguments had no problem with women leaders in other fields. The synod rejected these arguments as mere prejudices, born from patriarchy. Others also argued that, if ordained, women would cease to be traditional wives and mothers (see Mwaniki 2000:65).

A further concern was the issue of menstruation and childbirth which, biblically and culturally, renders a woman unclean. Some opponents of ordination therefore declared that, if ordained, women would defile the church. Bishop Gitari argued, that this is a biological condition for which women ought not to be stigmatized. After all, “both men and women come from the same blood” (Gitari, oral interviews quoted in Mwaniki 2000:65).

The 1986 diocesan synod, where the motion to ordain women was finally carried with a majority of 131 votes against 78, observed that the reasons against were more cultural than theological in nature. The synod therefore argued that “... the time of preserving some of our discriminative aspects of our culture is now gone in our churches” (Min. 18/86 18.3 quoted in Mwaniki 2000:65).

A closer look at the ordination debates in the ACK reveals a trajectory of similar arguments against full participation of women in the church, in the history of Christian tradition right from Paul, the church Fathers, the reformers, the Church of England and the Western missionaries. Like the ordination debates in the Church of England, discussed in chapter five, the debates in the ACK were patriarchally, theologically and imperially driven. The influence of the Victorian

theology of gender, through the missionaries, is evident in the debates, alongside Pauline theology of male headship, as well as African cultural prejudices. Thus, like in chapter three and four, where I observed that imperialism, patriarchy, gender and religion had colluded to the detriment of woman, both in the Roman Empire and in Christianity, so have these institutions served each other in the ordination debates in the ACK in efforts to keep women from ordination. The ACK may however be strongly commended for its courageous move to ordain women, because in doing so it resists the prescribed role and place of a woman in CMS missionary congregations as well as in pre-colonial Kenyan cultures where women were not placed in positions of decision-making where they could lead men.

Although the ACK has finally succeeded in ordaining women to priesthood, because of strong proponents of women's ordination like Archbishop David Gitari among others, and although the ministry of ordained women is highly appreciated (see Mwaniki 2000:71-74), the church has not succeeded in eradicating the cultural, imperial, biblical and theological factors that keep women in a subservient status. This is revealed by the slow pace of ordination of women in ACK dioceses and also by the status of ordained women in the ACK.¹⁸³ In order to illustrate this point, I will refer to the ACK Diocese of Nairobi, an urban diocese that is expected to be more liberal and critical of cultural and other forms of bias, than rural dioceses. The table below assesses the number of women who have been ordained to priesthood in relation to men, since the creation of the diocese in 2002.

¹⁸³ It was evident from my research, that even in Kirinyaga diocese which was leading the ordination of women in ACK, there was still gender discrepancy in ordination training. Within a period of five years from 1995-1999, women constituted only 1/3 of men in ordination training (Mwaniki 2000:69-71). Consequently, fewer women than men were ordained each year. Furthermore, the research revealed that although all the ordained women held positions where they were involved in decision-making as heads of parishes and departments, they were not part of the senior clergy and hence were not involved in the higher decision-making positions in the church hierarchy (Mwaniki 2000:66-68).

Table 1 *Number of men and women, ordained to priesthood¹⁸⁴ since the creation of the Diocese of Nairobi in 2002*

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Total
Men	3	4	3	5	5	5	2	27
Women	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	3

Source: Clergy Ordained From the Creation of the New Nairobi Diocese Document August 2009

The table shows that only three women (10%) out of a total of thirty clergy, have been ordained by the new diocese of Nairobi. This gender disparity suggests that the new diocese has not encouraged women to join the ordained ministry. Although currently there are no debates on women's ordination since the motion was already passed, it may be argued that some of the factors that stopped women from being ordained continue to influence the board that determines who qualifies for ordination.¹⁸⁵ In total, the diocese of Nairobi has eighty-four (84) active clergy.¹⁸⁶ Out of these, only twelve (12) are women¹⁸⁷ (see the Anglican Church of Kenya-Diocese of Nairobi Clergy Mobile Numbers 2009).

The role and status of ordained women is even more pathetic in some other dioceses. In Mombasa diocese for example, where the first women's ordination only took place in 2001, Gathogo (2009) notes, that only 1 (one) woman has ever been appointed to the level of a rural

¹⁸⁴ This table excludes the two men made deacons in August 2009, awaiting ordination to priesthood, and also the two male students in theological colleges at the time when the research was conducted. There was then no female student under ordination training.

¹⁸⁵ In my earlier study, I observed that underrepresentation of women in this approving body also hinders women from joining ordination training and consequently from ordination (Mwaniki 2000:70). This gender disparity is still evident at the provincial level where presently the Board of Education and Training has only three (3) women among twenty (20) men.

¹⁸⁶ This number excludes the nine retired clergy who are all men.

¹⁸⁷ Some of these women clergy have joined the diocese from other Anglican Dioceses in Kenya. Out of the twelve, some serve as vicars (priests in-charge of parishes), others are curates (they serve directly under the vicar), attached clergy (attached to parishes but serving on a voluntary basis without pay), chaplains, and others are currently on study leave.

dean¹⁸⁸ (in 2004), but she went back to her original diocese after the death of her husband in 2005. Another woman priest who had been promoted from being an assistant priest to the position of vicar of Miritini parish in 2004, was demoted to pastoral assistant upon the death of her husband in 2008 (Gathogo 2009:3). Currently, there is only one female who holds the position of vicar, a position that she acquired in 2007 after she graduated with a Doctoral degree in Old Testament. Gathogo (2009:2) further observes, that ordained women in Mombasa “can best serve in the cosmopolitan areas of the Diocese as the rural parts of the diocese do not fully appreciate women’s ordination” (Gathogo 2009:2). Cultural barriers to women’s emancipation are therefore still very prominent in Mombasa among other dioceses.

It is by the rite of ordination, that an individual is given authority to administer sacraments, conduct church weddings and perform other pastoral and administrative duties. Some of the dioceses are to be commended for their efforts to rise against cultural and other barriers. The Diocese of Nairobi for instance has appointed five women vicars. Among them are archdeacons of which one is a Canon. Nevertheless, the slow pace at which the diocese is ordaining women, indicates that only a few ordained women can be involved in high decision-making positions in the church. Priesthood and church leadership in general continue to be male dominated. Ironically, this gender distribution of ordination is not representative of the genders in the diocese of Nairobi, where according to Diocesan Statistics of 2008 the number of female worshipers is higher (15,433) than that of men (12,171).

The current debate with regard to women in the Anglican Communion concerns itself with the ordination of women to episcopate (see chapter five). This matter has not yet been debated at Provincial Synod level in the ACK. In fact, it does not require any debate, if the ACK *Constitution* is to be followed faithfully. The *Constitution* “proclaims that all human beings are made in the image of God and... therefore...allows no discrimination in the membership and government of the Church based on grounds of racial, tribal or gender difference (*The Anglican Church of Kenya Constitution 2002:6, Article IV*).

¹⁸⁸ A rural dean is the position, immediately senior to that of the vicar (parish priest) in the church hierarchy. He/she is in charge of a deanery which is usually made up of a few parishes.

7.2.3 Women in the Mothers' Union (MU)¹⁸⁹

The MU is an organization of the Anglican Church, which originated in England and spread in Africa through the process of colonization. According to Gill (1994:103), it was “one of the most significant institutional embodiments of conservative Christian constructions of womanhood,” “the epitome of Victorian ideals of female domesticity” (Gill 1994:126). It was founded by Mary Sumner in England in 1876. She began gathering women together with the sole purpose of teaching them “the spiritual value of wifehood and motherhood, the great responsibility of parents for their children and the power and example of prayer” (MU London n.d:2). The movement spread far and wide to churches in England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland. Its headquarters was established in London and is called Mary Sumner House.

In Kenya, the organization was founded by the wives of missionaries in 1918. The first African women were admitted into the MU in 1956 under the leadership of Mrs Beecher. MU leadership remained in the hands of the missionaries until 1970, when African women took over. It is currently the only official women's organization in the ACK. Its aim is “advancement of the Christian religion in the sphere of marriage and family life” (*The Mothers' Union of the Anglican Church of Kenya Constitution* 2006:6). Its aim and objectives have traditionally defined the categories of women who are eligible for MU, and those who are not. Since upholding the sanctity of marriage is a crucial aim of MU, it follows that women who are eligible, are only those whose marriages have been solemnized in the church and who are “in good standing” with the church (see MU London n.d:4). However, in March 2006 the MU organization in the ACK revised its constitution and allowed unwed mothers, widows and the first wives in polygamous marriages to join the movement, but only as associate members¹⁹⁰ and under certain conditions (see *The Mothers' Union of the Anglican Church of Kenya Constitution* 2006:7, 21).

¹⁸⁹ For more details about women in the MU see *The Mothers' Union of the Anglican Church of Kenya Constitution*, Mwaniki 2000:78-81; Haddad 2000a; Mombo 1998.

¹⁹⁰ Associate members of the MU are those women who are not eligible for full membership but who have fulfilled certain conditions according to the constitution. Constitutionally, they are “fully accepted into fellowship with full members but they cannot stand for or hold any office in the Mothers (sic) Union” (*The Mothers' Union of the Anglican Church of Kenya Constitution* 2006:7).

My previous study (Mwaniki 2000:78-81) brings out the role of the MU in the church quite clearly. I observed, that the MU participates very actively in the church's economic and social development at congregational level, parish level and even diocesan level, where they run income generating projects, including church halls, dispensaries, kindergartens, children's homes, etc. MU members are also active in church services where they use their talents in singing, leading worship and preaching among others. They are also expected to do pastoral visitation among the socially and economically disadvantaged people (see Provincial MU Talent Week Program August 2009). MU may therefore be categorized as one of the most active and efficient departments in the life of the entire ACK.

The other major role is cleaning and decorating the church, at least in rural areas where no caretaker is employed. It is also their duty to ensure that guests are fed. In this case, traditional domestic roles of a woman at home have found their way into the church, where women are expected to be totally self-giving as care takers, while men are paid for similar services.¹⁹¹

The MU serves as a major source of information on gender construction in the church through their aim and objectives. It is based on some biblical texts which appear in their service book, such as Prov 31:10-31 (the virtuous wife), inspiring stories of exemplary biblical women, Eph 5:22-23 (submission of the wife to her husband), among others (see *Mothers' Union* 2004:35). These texts are read uncritically in their enrolment services, other MU services and meetings, in order to reinforce the subordinate role and status of a woman in the home.

Furthermore, the motto of the MU is "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Phil 4:13). The members of the MU apply this passage to themselves with regard to their numerous socially constructed gender roles and hence use this text as their basis of strength,

¹⁹¹ In my previous study, I observed that women voluntarily cooked, cleaned and decorated the church in some rural congregations because, according to one respondent, "it is their main duty at home and they are good at it..." (Mwaniki 2000:79). However, ironically, in some of the congregations, where a care-taker had been employed to do these services, it was a man. It was then difficult to come to terms with the view that cooking, cleaning and decorating the church is a feminine job.

helping them to perform their roles in a submissive manner and without complaints. However, even a cursory look at Phil 4:13 shows, that the text has nothing to do with roles and responsibilities, whether in the church or elsewhere. Rather, Paul was expressing his contentment, both in lack and in abundance.

In sum, from a postcolonial feminist perspective, the theology of MU is to a large extent a mimicry (imitation) of the Victorian ideology and theology of womanhood, perpetuated by the missionaries,¹⁹² and it is also a mimicry of biblical texts which promote male headship and submission from women.

However, the contribution of the MU to the development of women's lives cannot be overlooked. The MU has significantly improved the lives of women socially, religiously and economically, not only within the church but also by reaching out to socially and economically challenged women outside the church. Through MU, women in the church become exposed to seminars about health, legal rights, business, marital relationship, and parenting, among others. It also serves as a safe space for women to share their experiences.

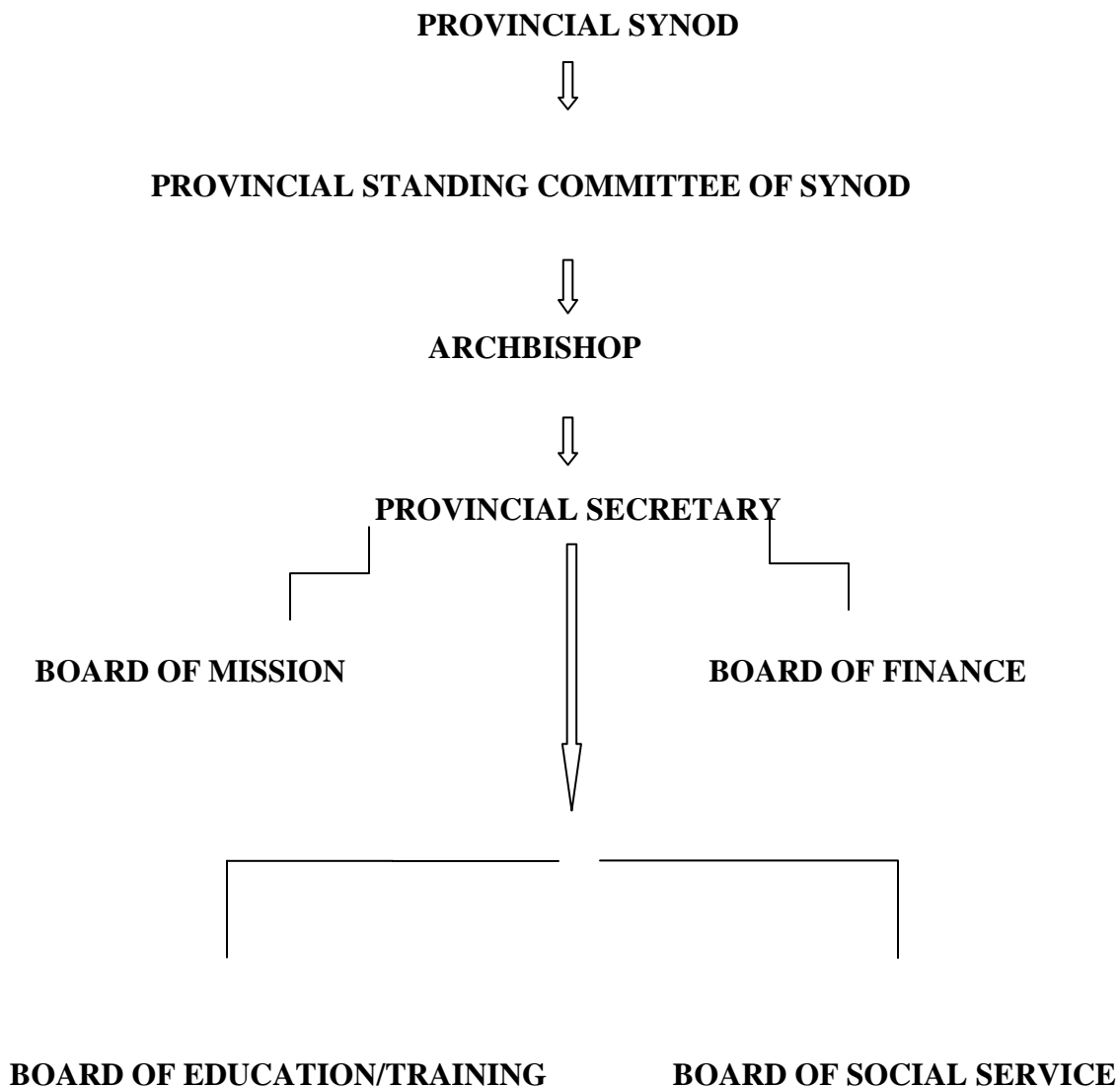
7.3 Gender representation in the organizational structure of ACK

In this study, I have proposed a biblical postcolonial model to resist cultural and imperial structures that continue to subordinate women in the church. This is in view of the understanding that, as I argued elsewhere (Mwaniki 2010:37-50), Paul's gender construction in 1 Cor 11:1-16 reflects the highly hierarchical structure of the Roman Empire. As we have observed in the previous chapters, this text and Paul's construction of gender power relations in general, have continued to influence gender relationships, the roles that women play in church and also the place of woman in the church hierarchy, in the history of Christian tradition. In this section, I will examine the organizational structure of the ACK, both at the Provincial level and at the diocesan level, using ACK Nairobi diocese as an example. I will examine the extent to which the church structure offers either a mimicry of, or a resistance to the Roman (family) imperial

¹⁹² See missionary education and the role of women in the CMS in chapter six.

structure through 1 Cor 11:1-16 and I will also investigate gender representation in the church hierarchy. The chart below shows the organizational structure of ACK.

7.3.1 Chart 1 The ACK organizational structure



Source: “The Anglican Church of Kenya-Our Organizational Structure,” <http://www.ackkenya.org/structure.htm>. Accessed: 29/7/2009.

7.3.1.1 Provincial Synod

The Provincial Synod is the governing council of the ACK. Its governing committee is made up of three houses namely, the House of Bishops, the House of the Clergy and the House of the Laity.¹⁹³ The committee consists of members from all dioceses, of which each sends five representatives. They deliberate on matters pertaining to the church in accordance with the constitution. The Provincial Synod has the final authority in matters that concern the discipline of the entire ACK (*The Anglican Church of Kenya Constitution 2002:23*, The Anglican Church of Kenya- <<http://www.ackkenya.org/structure.htm>>. Accessed: 29/7/2009). The table below shows the number of attendants and the gender representation in the three houses during the last three consecutive Provincial Synods, as recorded in the minutes of 2003, 2005 and 2007 ordinary sessions of the Provincial Synod during the term of Archbishop Benjamin Nzimbi who retired in June 2009.

¹⁹³ Thanks to Prof. Phiri for pointing out that this order of houses in the Anglican Church mimics the British order of government

Table 2 *Gender representation in the Provincial Synods of 2003, 2005 and 2007.*¹⁹⁴

Attendants	2003 (Total)	Male	Female	2005 (Total)	Male	Female	2007 (Total)	Male	Female
Number of Officers	7	7	0	7	6	1	7	6	1
House of Bishops	27	27	0	27	27	0	28	28	0
House of Clergy	57	56	1	47	46	1	24	24	0
House of Laity	57	44	13	51	42	9	27	23	4

Source: Anglican Church of Kenya Provincial Synod Minutes Book IV 16th- 18th Session 2003-2007.

According to this table, women are highly under-represented in all the three houses and also at the level of officers. Of course, there are no women representatives in the House of Bishops, because there are no women bishops in the ACK. In the House of Clergy, only 1 (one) woman attended the Provincial Synod in both 2003 and 2005 and none in 2007. Women are also under-represented in the House of the Laity whereas there are more women than men at grassroots level in the parishes. The glaring gender disparity at the Provincial Synod is a reflection of gender disparities at the top-most decision-making forums in every diocese from where the synod members are drawn. It is also an indication, that the ACK has not successfully overcome the ideology of male headship among its members.

¹⁹⁴ Besides the list of attendants shown here, there are other delegates who attend the Provincial Synod in the categories of observers and staff in attendance. I have not considered these categories in my list because they are not elected members of the Synod.

7.3.1.2 Provincial Standing Committee of Synod

This is a sub-committee appointed by the Provincial Synod. It handles urgent matters that do not necessarily require the attention of the Provincial Synod. This committee deliberates on matters of the boards of mission, finance, education/training and sciences, before these receive the final approval of the provincial Synod. During the eighteenth ordinary session of the Provincial Synod held in June 2007, among the 91 members who were appointed into this committee, only 6 were women (see Minutes of the Eighteenth Ordinary Session of the Provincial Synod Min 13/PS/6/2007:8-9).

Below the provincial standing committee of the provincial synod is the archbishop who is the chairperson of both the provincial synod and the provincial standing committee of synod. Besides this position, he is also the head of the entire ACK. Below him is the provincial secretary who is appointed by the archbishop. Currently, the position is being held by a woman clergy, the Rev Canon Rosemary Mbogo.

Below the provincial secretary are four Boards whose current gender representation is as follows (see Minutes of the Eighteenth Ordinary Session of the Provincial Synod Min. 15/PS/6/2007:15-19):

- *Board of Mission*-is the evangelistic arm of the ACK through its various departments. Of its twenty-five (25) members, twenty (20) are men and five (5) are women.
- *Board of Education and Training*-fights ignorance in the church by bringing together Theological Education, Provincial Colleges Council, Education and Liturgical Council. Among the twenty-three (23) listed members, twenty (20) are men and only three (3) are women.
- *Board of Social Services*-addresses major areas of societal concern including Development, Communication, Justice, Peace and Reconciliation. Among the forty- one (41) listed members, thirty-four (34) are men and seven (7) are women.
- *Board of Finance*-is the financial arm of the church. The committees that work under this board include: the budget Committee, Provincial Institutions and Investments, Terms of Service and appointment and stewardship Committee (Anglican Church of Kenya-

<<http://www.ackeny.org/structure.htm>>. Accessed:29/07/2009). It is composed of all the bishops, all diocesan treasurers or accountants, provincial accountant, provincial treasurer and company secretary. Although the names of the members are not listed, it is not difficult to ascertain that the committee is male dominated particularly because its membership consists of all the bishops, the provincial accountant, provincial treasurer, the current Board chairman and secretary, who are all men.

7.3.2 Organizational structure of the ACK Diocese of Nairobi

The diocese of Nairobi is one of the dioceses within the ACK. It was created from the former diocese of Nairobi in September 2002. Like all other Anglican dioceses, it is part of a worldwide communion of Anglican churches. These Anglican churches originated from the Church of England and, hence, share a similar organizational structure with the Church of England.¹⁹⁵ The table below shows gender distribution in the organizational structure of ACK diocese of Nairobi.

Table 3 *Gender distribution in the organizational structure of ACK diocese of Nairobi*

Position	Men	Women
Diocesan Synod ¹⁹⁶	142	46
Bishop ¹⁹⁷	1	0
Archdeacons ¹⁹⁸	6	2

¹⁹⁵For the organizational structure of the Church of England, see “The Church in Britain,”

<<http://www.britannia.com/church/ch12.html>>. Accessed: 31/7/2009.

¹⁹⁶ *Diocesan Synod*-Governing council of the diocese. It deliberates on matters pertaining to the church, in accordance with the constitution and has the final authority in matters that concern the discipline of the entire ACK.

¹⁹⁷ *Diocesan Bishop*-Presides over the administrative area of the diocese and has exclusive jurisdiction within it. The *Anglican Church of Kenya Constitution* (2002:7-8) offers detailed information about ‘the office and work of a bishop.’

¹⁹⁸ *Archdeacon*-Bishop’s appointee who heads an archdeaconry that is composed of several parishes.

Vicars ¹⁹⁹	47	5
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Source: ACK Diocese of Nairobi Staff Establishment August 2009

The above organizational structure shows that women clergy constitute only about 5% of the total number of vicars in ACK Diocese of Nairobi.

In sum, it is evident from the above chart and tables that the organization of the ACK is highly structured and hierarchical. The hierarchy is male dominated with men holding the highest positions in the hierarchy. It mimics the position of men as the heads of the church in the history of the Christian tradition, right from the hierarchy put in place by Paul in 1 Cor 11:3. Paul's hierarchy reflected the authority of the *paterfamilias* in the Roman home and empire. Paul used this hierarchy to privilege male headship, both at the family and the church level.²⁰⁰ In fact, the structure of the ACK mimics the language of the Roman Empire with regard to the role of the bishop, who is described as “the head of the family” (the church).²⁰¹ In the Roman Empire, the family structure, with the father (*paterfamilias*) as the head, provided a model after which the empire was patterned with the emperor as the great *paterfamilias* (see chapter three). Consequently, the woman continues to be subordinated by these imperial structures just like a woman in the Roman Empire. My argument finds support from Tavard (1973:202) who rightly states that:

Insofar as the organizational structure of the Church was patterned on that of Roman society (and its pattern was consciously adopted for diocesan organization), woman was deprived of her legitimate Christian freedom... Has not the time come for the Church to

¹⁹⁹ Vicar-Head of the parish. The parish is the smallest administrative unit in the ACK.

²⁰⁰ A careful investigation of the trajectory of the church structures, right from the early church, and how the social stratification of the Roman Empire may have influenced their formation, is an area of study which is beyond the scope of my current study. In this study, I am interested in examining how 1 Cor 11: 1-16 is informed by the Roman imperial ideology of gender relationship, and how this text has continued to influence the perceptions of the image of God in male and female as reflected in gender constructions in the history of the Christian tradition up to the current ACK, assessing gender construction in the ACK hierarchy as only one of these areas.

²⁰¹ See the role of the bishop number ‘j’ in “The Secretary General of the Anglican Consultative Council” 1988 :61. Indeed even *The Anglican Church of Kenya Constitution* (2002:7-8) supposes that the bishop is male because the language, used to describe his duties is entirely masculine. He is, for instance, described as ‘father’ and ‘brother’ and the pronouns used for him are masculine (see *The Anglican Church of Kenya Constitution* 2002:9-10).

reverse its compromise with the society of the Roman Empire... Why prolong now an ambiguity that resulted in the first place from a necessary compromise with the society of the Roman Empire?

The consequences of under-representation of women in the church hierarchy are obvious. The views of the few women representatives are likely to be overshadowed, judgments made in meetings are not gender balanced and, generally, the views of women who constitute the majority of the church's population are underrepresented. Furthermore, this under-representation serves as evidence of distortion of the perception of *Imago Dei* in a woman by limiting her full potential to serve God.

One of the areas in which under-representation of women in the church hierarchy has been felt strongly in the recent past, was lack of women's voices in the then on-going debates about the Proposed Draft Kenyan Constitution. On 29th April 2010, the ACK House of Bishops formally declared its opposition to the Draft Constitution, calling for amendments of two contentious issues²⁰² (A. Kagiri 2010:1). This was despite the effort of the Draft to create gender parity in many of its sections if the Constitution became law. One of the areas in which the Draft created gender parity was that of land. The bill guaranteed equal access to land and the security of land rights through "elimination of gender discrimination in law, customs and practices related to land and property in land"²⁰³ (see *The Proposed Constitution of Kenya*, 6th May, 2010). According to the draft, matrimonial rights of women, both during and after marriage, were also to be protected. This would enable women to own matrimonial property, which was under ownership of their husbands in the then *Constitution* (see "Proposed Constitution: What Women Stand to

²⁰² The church was calling for amendment on the issue of abortion on which it argued that the Draft Constitution did not protect the life of the unborn despite the statement in the Draft that "abortion is not permitted." The second contentious issue was the inclusion of Khadhi (Muslim) courts in the Draft Constitutions, which the church interpreted as a favour to one religion (see A. Kagiri, "Kenya Anglicans reject Draft Constitution," 2010. <<http://www.capitalfm.co.ke/news/Kenyanews/Kenyan-Anglicans-reject-draft-Constitu...>>. Accessed 03/06/2010).

²⁰³ This is an improvement on the long existing *Constitution* in which women's ownership of property has been governed by statutory law, customary laws, and religious law so that most women have access/possession of land but do not legally own it (see Kameri-Mbote, "Women, Land Rights and the Environment: The Kenyan Experience," 2006. <<http://www.palgrave-journals.com/development/journal/v49/n3/full/1100274a.html>>. Accessed: 16/7/2009, pp. 1-8.

Gain,”2010.<http://www.gendergovernancekenya.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1234>. Accessed 03/06/2010). The absence of women’s voices in the House of Bishops was/is regrettable when such and other major decisions which affect the lives of Kenyan women, both born and unborn are made. Fortunately, this Proposed Constitution won at the August 2010 referendum. It is hoped that with the new Kenyan law, the long history of women’s suffering under patriarchal domination will not be prolonged further.

The ACK is however to be commended for its move to offer women levels of training, equal to those of men,²⁰⁴ opportunities for further studies, and, above all, to ordain them and to place a few of them in the church hierarchy. A few of the ordained women are holding top decision-making positions in the church hierarchy, such as Provincial Secretary, archdeacons, provosts (in-charge of cathedrals), while some have been honoured as Canons. In these ways, ACK shows *resistance* to its predecessors in the history of the Christian tradition with regard to the status of women in the church. Nevertheless, ACK leadership needs to draw up a firm policy to ensure eradication of gender disparity in synod meetings, at the diocesan level as well as the provincial level. Perhaps such a policy would help deconstruct the patriarchal ideology of male headship. Without such deconstruction women will continue to be subordinated by the structures of church and society. It is one of the most crucial tools in the necessary re-imagining of the distorted perception of *imago-Dei*, in these structures.

In the final and concluding chapter which follows, I will examine ways in which women in some parts of Kenya are already deconstructing and responding to some of these oppressive structures. I will also chart what work remains to be done.

²⁰⁴ Every ordained clergy, whether male or female, in the Diocese of Nairobi for instance, holds at least a diploma in theology. The current bishop, the RT Rev. Peter Njoka encourages both men and women clergy to advance their theological education and gives opportunities to those who seek it, regardless of gender.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

This study has responded to the research question as stipulated in chapter one: *To what extent can a postcolonial feminist reading of 1 Cor 11:1-16 re-image the distorted perception of Imago Dei in a woman?* Through a postcolonial feminist analysis, I have shown how a text (1 Cor 11:1-16), because of its patriarchal and imperial background, excludes women from the image of God. I then demonstrated how this text has been taken up, developed and appropriated, to support the subordination of women throughout the Christian tradition from the Church Fathers to the reformers and right to my present day postcolonial Kenyan Church context. While this text has been used for a long time to oppress women, I have argued in this study, a critical reading of the text from a postcolonial feminist perspective proves that gender disparity exists in this, and other such, Pauline and post-Pauline texts, because they were based on existing patriarchal and imperial structures, which subordinated women to men (chapter four). The text has continued to maintain the subordination of women to men, throughout the history of Christian tradition (chapter five). In my Anglican Church, while the faithful express belief in the Scriptures, the Church Constitution does not offer guidance about how such texts are to be read and appropriated by Christians. My study has offered a method, which I hope that the church will take up in its reading practices of the Bible. It is a method, which takes into account the history of gender and imperial biases in the construction of texts such as 1 Cor 11:1-16 that exclude women from the image of God.

While this text has been taken up, developed and appropriated, against women, it must be said that women have not responded passively to this treatment. For example in certain parts of Kenya women are developing methods and strategies to fight against their oppression.

“When women take over the trousers and the stick too”²⁰⁵

The methods and ideologies of domination that the British colonizers used in their contact with Kenyans, were met with strategies, developed by Kenyans to win back their freedom. These strategies included the Mau Mau rebellion in which women were equally involved with men (see Mwaura 2000:83; Presley 1992:136-150; Mwaniki 2000:42-46). Women also composed songs of protest called *muthirigu*,²⁰⁶ which served as powerful weapons of political expression and mobilization. I will briefly examine women’s responses to patriarchy, which, like colonialism, is an area of contest for power and struggle for justice. *What strategies have women employed to resist, survive or fight back*, in order to liberate themselves from patriarchy, or at least even to cope with it at home and in church?

A Kenyan newspaper article, headed “when women take over the trousers and the stick too” (*Daily Nation* Saturday 30th May 2009), reveals that women have not been passive recipients of patriarchal methods and ideologies of domination. The article claims that research, that was conducted recently, showed that over 1.5 million Kenyan men who had been interviewed, are facing domestic as well as other forms of violence “by their girlfriends, mistresses, and wives.” According to the article, women’s violence against men is being experienced in several parts of the country, with Central Kenya leading “with 72 per cent of the ones interviewed saying they were victims of domestic violence, followed by Nairobi, Nyanza, Rift Valley and North Eastern Province.” Some of the areas in which men claimed to be abused, included “being forced to perform domestic chores traditionally reserved for women, being beaten up and...being locked out. But the most prevalent case is denial of conjugal rights” (Channy 2009:1). Although this information requires more investigation in terms of verifying the number of abused men, which seems to be exaggerated, and although a parallel research needs to be done concerning the number of women who are victims of violence and abuse by men, generally speaking,

²⁰⁵ The headline of a *Daily Nation* news paper, Saturday 30th May 2009, used to express the current claim about women’s violence against their male partners in Kenya.

²⁰⁶ *Muthirigu* were songs of protest against the oppressors, including colonialists, settlers, missionaries and government appointed chiefs. They were sung by shaking and patting the buttocks as a traditional way of cursing the oppressor. They date from the late 1920s (Sandgren 1976:245-246).

postcolonial features may be identified in the experiences of Kenyan women with patriarchy through this article.

On a different occasion, on 29th April 2009, a coalition of women's advocacy groups, -the G10 caucus, called on all Kenyan women to boycott sex relations for a week in order to compel Kenyan leaders especially the president and the Prime Minister to settle their disputes which were detrimental to Kenyans including women ("A Nairobian's Perspective!: G10-Kenyan Women Caucus calls for 1 Week Sex Boycott," 2009. <<http://www.siku-moja.blogspot.com/2009/04/g10-kenyan-women-caucus-calls-for-1.html>>. Accessed: 21/9/2009). Although I regard this mass sex boycott as violence against men (most of whom are not involved in the political saga) and as an extreme way of expressing a political opinion which may create more problems for women than solutions, it shows some of the extreme strategies that women can use to respond to dominating male power. From these two episodes, it seems that sex boycott is the strongest strategy of resistance and fighting back, that Kenyan wives have used against their husbands.

As indicated in chapter six, the colonial/patriarchal structures equipped women with education, although with a gender-biased curriculum. Women have portrayed aspects of mimicry in forms of resistance, by using the colonial/patriarchal tool of education against these structures. With Kenyan independence, and the introduction of Free Primary Education by the Kenyan Government in 2003, women have accessed education equal to that of men, including equal access to information technology. Through education, women have become equal competitors with men in the job-market. Some women are therefore employed in posts, holding high levels of decision-making in society where, contrary to pre-colonial Kenyan cultures, they lead men. Several have employment that brings in a good income, while others run successful businesses. As a result, some women have become rich, have acquired property, and are driving expensive cars with or without financial assistance from their husbands. Education has therefore resulted in women's economic empowerment which consequently leads to self-sufficiency and economic independence from men. This economic empowerment of women poses a challenge to patriarchy, as evidenced in chapter three. In chapter three, we observed that the economic empowerment of Roman women resulted in the creation of the 'new', Roman woman who compromised her traditional gender roles and status, and lived a more liberated life. There is no

doubt that a new breed of Kenyan women (or rather the ‘new’ Kenyan woman) has been generated by education, exposure to modern technology, and by social and economic empowerment.

Women in Kenya are therefore increasingly assuming the role of headship in their families, with some earning more income than their husbands. In this way then women have “*taken over the trousers.*” This reversal of gender roles becomes a challenge to hegemonic masculinities. The husband may interpret the new scenario as violence, committed against him because of the way he has been socialized. This is in line with Chitando and Chirongoma’s (2008:61) argument that:

Men who grow up believing themselves to be ‘little gods to be worshipped’ often find it difficult to engage with women who may challenge their perspective on particular issues.

Women as heads of the family “*take the stick too,*” as is revealed in the newspaper article quoted above. This happens because patriarchy has often confused (male) headship with dominant authority and violence. When women take over as heads they may apply the same measures of violence to their husbands, or to their juniors in their working environment. From a postcolonial optic, this mimicry serves as an aspect of *resistance* and a *fighting back* against male domination. Consequently, patriarchal forms of socialization, which traditionally favour men, turn against them and begin to oppress them. Since not many husbands can cope with female headship/dominance of the home, a husband may opt to befriend an economically challenged mistress who will recognize his position as the head.

Secondly, not all women in Kenya are economically empowered or have had access to education. Some women, especially in the rural areas are overburdened with the triple role of reproduction, production²⁰⁷ and management of the family, because some of them are widows and single mothers while others have absentee husbands and fathers.²⁰⁸ Women have therefore sought

²⁰⁷ According to Human Resource Department (2007:vi), women in Kenya contribute up to 80% of all labour in food production.

²⁰⁸ Clergy families are not exempted here, because some clergymen live alone in the vicarage within the parish while their wives continue to head the family in the rural home.

means of economic survival through formation of *merry go-rounds*.²⁰⁹ The church through MU has encouraged women to form such socio-economic groups (see Mwaniki 2000:84-86). *Merry go-rounds* are increasingly becoming interdenominational as well as non-denominational where religious affiliation is not necessarily an issue. They are also multipurpose in that, besides the economic empowerment of individual members, some groups make organized visits to each of their parents in turns and give them financial and other material support. This I would argue, may be a form of *resistance* to patriarchy, which privileges the male child as the hope of the parents. Some of these groups have also engaged in dowry payment for single mothers.²¹⁰ The woman's payment of her own dowry can also be a form of *resistance* to marriage and consequently to the control of a husband. Majority of Kenyan women of all social and economic status are members of at least one of these socio-economic welfare groups. Through these groups, women have become increasingly self-reliant.

In sum, through formal education, education on emancipation of the girl-child, campaigns aimed at eradicating violence against women, women's socio-economic welfare groups, the media, seminars and conferences on women's welfare organized by the church and other forums, women and girl-children in Kenya today are more sensitized about women's rights, violence against women, including rape and wife-beating, and how to deal with these. There are also legal forums in Kenya and women's advocacy bodies, all geared towards fighting for women's rights.²¹¹ All these are forms of *resistance* against patriarchal violence experienced by women.

As a result of all these opportunities, created with the aim of emancipating women, the woman and girl-child in Kenya are ahead of some men and of the boy-child in terms of education, self-motivation and actualization, self-development, self-awareness, and awareness of their rights

²⁰⁹ These are socio-economic welfare groups where women contribute into a kitty regularly (usually monthly). This money enables them to start income generating projects or is loaned to members to boost their economic standards. They then repay the loan with some interest, which further boosts the kitty.

²¹⁰ It is an expectation especially among the Kikuyu that the mother's dowry has to be paid first before the parent(s) can receive their daughter's dowry. This expectation prompts some single mothers to pay dowry, which their husbands would have paid had they been married.

²¹¹ A list of women's organizations in Kenya records 43 organizations aimed at bolstering a woman in various ways e.g. education, health, economic empowerment, advocacy, gender equality, fighting violence against women, among others (Women's Organizations: Kenya. <<http://www.distel.ca/womlist/countires/kenya.html>>, accessed: 21/9/2009.

among other things. The boy-child who has traditionally been content with (an unjustified) sense of importance as head and heir, and who, hence, sometimes sees no reason why he should work hard to improve his status, is currently *an endangered species* in Kenya. A case at hand is the report of the Nation News Paper article (Saturday 30th May 2009). According to this article, “school enrolment and completion for boys has fallen off so sharply in Central Kenya, that in most districts, you now have more girls than boys in school.” Education Minister Hon Sam Ongeru expressed similar views when releasing the 2008 KCSE (see chapter six).²¹² Together with cultural factors which lead to under-achievement of the boy-child in education, the patriarchal *Mungiki*²¹³ factor is mentioned in chapter six into which boys are being recruited at a very early age. If this information is anything to go by, then *patriarchy has worked to the detriment of the boy-child* and is irrelevant for socio-economic development of current and future generations in Kenya.

The present reality therefore makes Paul’s hierarchy of subordination in 1 Cor 11:3 a *contradictory and inappropriate model for a definition of gender relationships in the transforming Kenyan family and society*. This is why a postcolonial feminist reading of the biblical text, such as the one I have proposed in this study, is so crucial and significant. It is hoped that this will be taken up by the church, so that women can be recognized as fully human, made in the image of God, and therefore capable of leadership and responsibility in the church and within society.

²¹²Ongeru indicated that in the Central Province the ratio of girls to boys was 51% and 49% compared to 54% for boys and 46% for girls nationally (Wachira and Mwangi 2010:1).

²¹³ A socio-political criminal organization in Kenya.

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DECLARATION

I, Lydia Muthoni Mwaniki, PhD candidate, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Faculty of Humanities, Religion and Social sciences, School of Religion and Theology, hereby declare that unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, this thesis is my own original work and shall only be submitted for the purposes of the above mentioned degree.


Lydia Muthoni Mwaniki

10th January 2011
Date

As the supervisor, I hereby approve this thesis for submission


Professor Jonathan Draper

28 February 2011
Date

As the co-supervisor, I hereby approve this thesis for submission


Doctor Sarojini Nadar

28 February 2011
Date

University of KwaZulu-Natal

2011