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of Mary Grey's view on atonement

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## Declaration

I, Heather Festus, declare that “*Bearing ones cross: A critical analysis of Mary Grey’s view of atonement*” is my own work, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Signed .....

Date

H. Festus



## Acknowledgements

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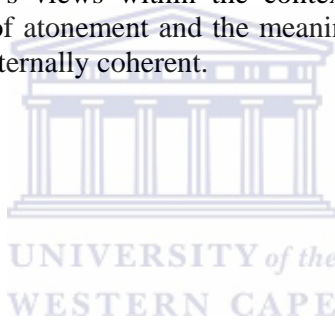
## Abstract

The aim of this research project was to seek a reinterpretation of the Christian motif of 'bearing one's cross'. This motif has been widely criticized by feminist theologians as an instrument that exacerbates the oppression of women, since it encourages self-sacrifice and in this way legitimizes abusive relationships.

The research project focuses on Mary Grey's contribution to feminist discourse on atonement as the work of Christ and, more specifically, the symbol of the cross. In general, the problem, which will be addressed in this research project, is how oppressed women should respond to the call in Christian piety "to bear one's own cross". More specifically, the research problem, which will be investigated in this project, may be formulated in the following way:

How should Mary Grey's position on a feminist reinterpretation of the doctrine of atonement and the meaning of the cross of Jesus Christ be assessed within the South African Christian context?

The study assesses Mary Grey's views within the context of her own work, a feminist reinterpretation of the doctrine of atonement and the meaning of the cross of Jesus Christ in order to establish whether it is internally coherent.



## **Keywords (areas of focus)**

Christology

Atonement

Cross

Self-sacrifice

Feminism

Patriarchy

Abuse

Suffering

Reconciliation

Restoration

Forgiveness

Sin

Justice

Interpretation



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# Chapter 1

## Bearing one's Cross: A critical analysis of Mary Grey's view on atonement

### 1.1 Introduction

The Christian motif of “bearing one's cross” has been widely criticized in feminist theology as an instrument that exacerbates the oppression of women. Women are often expected by male patriarchs to be willing to sacrifice their own interests with reference to the Christian obligation of “bearing one's own cross”.

This study will investigate a feminist reinterpretation of this motif. More specifically, it will investigate contributions in feminist theology to the doctrine of atonement – as one theme within Christian reflection on the doctrine of Christ where the meaning of Christ's cross is prominent. The study will focus on the British theologian Mary C. Grey who has made an important contribution towards a feminist Christology in her books; *Redeeming the dream, Feminism, redemption and Christian tradition* (1989) and the *Wisdom of fools* (1993). This study will entail an analysis of Mary Grey's views on the doctrine of atonement as well as a critical assessment of her work in terms of secondary literature and from within the South African context.

### 1.2 Context and relevance of the study

#### 1.2.1 The motif of bearing one's cross

The motif of “bearing one's cross” is a classic Christian theme. It is typically understood within the context of the exhortation to follow the example of Christ, or in the words the “imitation of Christ” as indicated by Thomas A' Kempis. Within the church context, this motif of “bearing one's cross” is being used to encourage women to submit, tolerate, understand and contend with abuse and victimisation. They are exhorted to forgive perpetrators of abuse as Christ forgave them.

An example, derived from within the church context is a response by a Christian woman who has been abused. When the woman was asked why she did not leave her abusive husband who had many extra-marital affairs, she replied that every time he came home he would plead for her forgiveness. As a Christian wife, she felt that she needed to forgive him. Since Christ has suffered for us, she believed she should also be willing to endure suffering in order to be like Christ. She should be willing to bear her own cross by forgiving her husband. In this way, she felt, he might see Christ in her, come to experience salvation and that at the end things might change for the better.

Since the motif of “bearing one's cross” encourages self-sacrifice, in this way it may serve to legitimize abusive relationships. It is severely criticized in secular feminist discourse, as well

as in feminist theology. As a result, many women avoid the use of the motif of “bearing one’s cross”. Nevertheless, this motif remains important in Christian piety because of its link with the redemptive work of Christ. Christian women therefore may experience some dissonance between their faith and their experiences of abuse.

The context within which this research project is situated may therefore be described as the search for an appropriate reinterpretation of the motif of “bearing one’s cross”, within feminist Christian theology in South Africa. This constitutes the wider horizon within which the research problem will be investigated in this thesis. This requires some further reflections on contemporary feminist theology and its contribution to the doctrine of atonement, as one theme within Christian reflection on the doctrine of Christ.

### **1.2.2 Feminist theology**

In Christian theology, a distinction is often made between various expressions of feminist theology, including (European and American) feminist theology, womanist theology, and theologies emerging from elsewhere in the world, including African women’s theology.

Feminist theology emerged in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the United States and Western Europe. There have been several successive waves of feminist theology, often in response to developments in wider feminist discourse. Within the first wave of feminism, women sought to express their equality to men. This responded to situations where women were legally regarded as subordinate and dependent on men. Women did not have access to the educational and employment opportunities that men had access to. Typically, women were paid less for the same work done. Household responsibilities were not shared equally between men and women. The first wave of feminism responded to such inequalities, for example by campaigning for women’s voting rights. In Western Europe and North America such response led to women’s liberation in many spheres of life. Subsequently, women were able to define themselves and their communities in new ways and with respect to areas such as employment, reproductive practices, sexual practices, family structures, and greater awareness of violence against women and children. In Christian theology, this first wave of feminist theology coincided with a prophetic critique of patriarchy in different Christian traditions and regional contexts (Green-McGreight 2000:31-32).

The second wave of feminism continued to raise women’s awareness of their struggles for civil rights and equal pay. However, questions were raised about the notion of equality since this may presume that the position which men occupy in society may be regarded as the norm which women should aspire to. This encouraged an interest in the distinctive position and experiences of women. The second wave subsequently ushered in feminist studies as a new academic discipline. In theology this stimulated an interest in the characterization of particular women in the biblical texts, in the role of women in the history of the Christian tradition, in female imagery for God, in women’s issues in Christian ministry and pastoral counseling and so forth.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion on the development of feminist theology, see the work of Russel & Clarkson (1996), also Isherwood & McEwan (1996).

The establishment of feminist studies as a discipline and of feminist theology as a contemporary theological movement soon led to recognition of different schools of feminist thought. These include liberal feminism, cultural feminism, Marxist feminism and various radical forms of feminism, including ecofeminism. A characteristic of contemporary feminist discourse is the exploration of various expressions of domination in the name of the differences of gender, race, class, language and culture. This coincides with an interest in the nature of various relationships. The focus is therefore not only on the plight of women but also on the nature of relationships, especially gendered relationships. There is a widespread emphasis on the need for relationships based on equality, justice, mutual respect and reciprocity (Clifford 2001:13-32).

The recognition of relationships of inequality also highlights important differences among women, for example, in terms of class, race and geographical context. This led, for example, to the awareness that the struggles of black women are different from those of white Euro-American women (Clifford 2001:23-25). As a result, there emerged in both feminist discourse and, subsequently, in feminist theology distinct strands of feminism, including (liberal) European and North American feminism, womanism and various contextual expressions of feminism. In Christian theology, one finds movements such as Mujerista theology, women's contributions to Latin American liberation theology, African women's theology and Minjung theology. A few further comments on these different strands of feminism and feminist theology are in order:

a) Over the last few decades, feminist theology has become well established in countries such as the United States (The work by Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Elizabeth Johnson, Catherine LaCugna, Sallie McFague, Rosemary Reuther, Mary Daly and Rebecca Chopp), Britain (Mary Grey, Elaine L. Graham, Ursula King, Grace Jantzen, Catherine Morris and Anne Primavesi.), Germany (Dorothy Sölle, Luise Schottroff, and Vuadi Vibila), and the Netherlands (Catherine Halkes) (Isherwood and McEwan 1996: 12-15).

The contributions from such feminist theologians are quite varied in terms of topics, confessional background and theological approach. One way of expressing the different approaches is in terms of continuity with the larger Christian tradition. Ann Loades (1996) argued that three such approaches may be identified. In the first "tradition-friendly" approach it is acknowledged that the Christian tradition contains patriarchal traits, but the assumption is that it is indeed possible to retrieve the positive elements in the tradition in order to rid it from such patriarchal traits. In the second approach, followed for example by Mary Daly<sup>2</sup> and Rosemary Radford Ruether, the biblical roots of Christianity, the subsequent Christian tradition and the Christian faith itself are denounced as being by and large patriarchal in orientation. Feminist theology therefore has to offer a more radical reconstruction of Christianity. The third approach places feminist theology in the context of contemporary Christian movement and takes on the responsibility as an interpreter of the tradition.

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<sup>2</sup> See especially Daly 1997, 1993.

Theologians who represent this third approach include Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Rebecca Chopp,<sup>3</sup> and Sheila Greeve Davaney (Loades 1996:400).

b) The term “womanism” in womanist theology is derived from the African-American folk term “womanish” which refers to young women who are self-asserting. The term “womanist”, was coined by Alice Walker, author of the book *The Color Purple* (1982). Walker asserted that “womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender” (1982:xii). When reading *The Color Purple*, the reader is drawn into a theological dialogue between two black American women, Celie and Shug, on how they perceive God. *The Color Purple* addresses the issue of patriarchal tradition and what the African American women’s perception is of God. Accordingly, womanist theology focuses on the struggles of African American women against the triple oppression, namely gender, race and class (Walker 1989:175-179). Some significant scholars who have contributed to the birth and development of womanist theology are Delores Williams (especially) as well as Kelly Brown Douglas, Toinette M Eugene, Jaqueline Grant and Joan Martin (Russel and Clarkson 1996:301).

c) Mujerista theology<sup>4</sup> refers to the theologies done by Hispanic or Latin women living in the United States. They were engaged, like African American women, in struggles against racism, sexism, poverty and economic exploitation. Hispanic women called themselves *cubanas*, *chicanas*, *puertorriquenas*, *hispanas*, as well as *feministas hispanas*. Feministas hispanas was constantly marginalized (Isasi-Diaz 1989: 410). Mujerista theology flows out of the experiences of Latinas and their interpretation of reality in terms of their faith. Mujerista theology thus helps Latinas to make sense of their oppressive lives, helping them to find God in the midst of their communities.

d) African women’s theology is a form of theology that concerns itself with the experiences and spirituality of African women (Oduyoye & Kanyoro 1992). This theological movement gained momentum in 1989 when “The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians” (the “Circle”) was established under the leadership of Mercy Amba Oduyoye<sup>5</sup> at a consultation in Ghana. Subsequently, various local chapters of the Circle have been established, recently also at the University of the Western Cape. The Circle promotes theological reflection amongst women from different religious traditions in Africa. It seeks to do theology by women for women on issues pertaining to women, including patriarchy in church and society, motherhood, reproductive health, economic hardships, HIV/AIDS, etc. Several publications have emerged from the circle over the last two decades.<sup>6</sup>

e) Other expressions of feminist theology that have emerged in other parts of the world will be discussed partially. Feminist theologians such as Ivone Gebara have made significant contributions to Latin American liberation theology. *Minjung* (meaning “the mass of people”)

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<sup>3</sup> See Chopp 1989, 1995.

<sup>4</sup> The first publication dealing with Mujerista Theology (then called Hispanic Women’s Theology) appeared in 1987. Mujerista Theology is born out of the hope of Latina women for liberation and liberation of their people. See the work of Isas-Diaz (1994).

<sup>5</sup> Oduyoye has often been referred to as the “mother” of African women’s theology, especially for her leadership role in the Circle. She has contributed to many edited volumes emerging from the circle.

<sup>6</sup> See Ackerman 2001, Amoah 2000, Dube 1996, Oduyoye 1997, 2001.

theology has emerged from South Korea in order to reflect on the suffering of women, especially under Japanese occupation. Korean feminist theologians call oppressed Korean women the *minjung* of *minjung*. Korean feminist theology has been created out of the historical context of physical, psychological intimidation as well as bodily violence by the hands of the oppressor. There are two categories of oppressed women in Korea. Under the first category are “*minjung* women”, namely those who are doubly oppressed as “*minjung*” and as women under poor political, economic, and social conditions. Under the second category are “women *minjung*”, those discriminated against and under the power of male domination, merely because they are women (Kyung 1990). Korean feminist theologians are finding that oppressed Korean women’s core experience is that of *han* (Hak 1982). *Han* is a sense of unresolved resentment against injustice suffered.

### **1.2.3 Feminist contributions to the doctrine of Christ**

Feminist theology has by now made important contributions to all the major sub-disciplines of Christian theology, including Biblical Studies, the history of Christianity, Systematic Theology and Practical Theology. This study will focus specifically on feminist contributions to Systematic Theology, particularly in the light of feminist Christology, with both a hermeneutics of suspicion and retrieval, in order to critically explore the significance of the person and work of Christ (see chapter 3).

## **1.3 Demarcation and statement of the research problem**

### **1.3.1 Mary Grey’s personal profile**

Mary Grey, who was born in 1941, can be seen as a member of a “bridge generation” between the founding “mothers” of European feminist theology and a younger generation. She received her doctorate in theology at Louvain in 1987, and was the successor to Catherina Halkes in the chair of Feminism and Christianity at Nijmegen from 1988 to 1993.

### **1.3.2 Mary Grey’s work on Christology**

As indicated above, Mary Grey has made important contributions within feminist theology to a reinterpretation of the work of Christ and, more specifically, to a feminist understanding of atonement and the symbol of the cross. Her most important contributions in this regard may be found in her books *Redeeming the Dream: Feminism and Redemption* (1989), *Sacred Longings* (2004), and *Prophecy and Mysticism* (1997).

### **1.3.3 A critical appraisal of Mary Grey’s work**

Mary Grey’s work has been widely acclaimed in the context of feminist theology and ecological theology. Her contribution in the area of Christology is also well appreciated. There appeared several reviews of her book *Redeeming the Dream: Feminism and Redemption. The Wisdom of Fools? Seeking Revelation Today and Sacred Longings: The Ecologist Spirit and Global Culture*.

Mary Grey is the author of several books and numerous articles and essays. Her most important books include *Feminism, Redemption, and the Christian Tradition* (London: SCM Press, 1989), *Redeeming the Dream: Feminism and Redemption* (London: SPCK, 1989), *The Wisdom of Fools? Seeking Revelation Today* (London: SPCK, 1993), *Beyond the Dark Night: A Way Forward for the Church* (London: Cassel, 1997), *Prophecy and Mysticism: The Heart of the Postmodern Church*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), *Introducing Feminist Images of God* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), *Sacred Longings: The Ecologist Spirit and Global Culture* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), and *The Unheard Scream: The Lives and Struggles of Dalit Women in India* (New Delhi: Centre for Dalit Studies, 2004).

#### **1.4 Statement of the research problem**

In this research project the focus will be on Mary Grey's contribution to feminist discourse on atonement as the work of Christ and, more specifically, the symbol of the cross. In general, the problem, which will be addressed in this research project, is how oppressed women should respond to the call in Christian piety "to bear one's own cross". More specifically, the research problem, which will be investigated in this project, may be formulated in the following way:

How should Mary Grey's position on a feminist reinterpretation of the doctrine of atonement and the meaning of the cross of Jesus Christ be assessed?

Mary Grey's position on a feminist reinterpretation of the doctrine of atonement and the meaning of the cross of Jesus Christ will be assessed by taking the following considerations into account:

- Firstly, assessing Mary Grey's views within the context of her own work, a feminist reinterpretation of the doctrine of atonement and the meaning of the cross of Jesus Christ in order to establish whether it is internally coherent.
- Secondly, assessing Mary Grey's position in terms of secondary material such as book reviews, journals, and articles, essays and thesis that give a critical analysis of her work.
- Thirdly, comparing Mary Grey's position to that of other feminist contributions to the doctrine of atonement.
- Fourthly, assessing Mary Grey's work in terms of other contemporary contributions to the doctrine of atonement, particularly with reference to the classification introduced by Gustaf Aulén (1931).
- Finally, assessing the significance of Mary Grey's views in terms of my own experience and context as a female pastor in a Pentecostal church in South Africa.

#### **1.5 Layout of the thesis**

In this thesis, a reinterpretation of how Mary Grey's doctrine of atonement has been assessed will be shown, since it is the task of the research project. Nevertheless, the following strengths and weaknesses of her views have provisionally been identified here:

- One of the strengths of Grey's position on atonement is her emphasis on "right relations", which seeks to unify men and women.

- Grey's notion of kenosis spirituality, sees suffering and self-emptying as a means to bring about redemption. "For vulnerability to be an effective empowering-to-justice, a feminist spirituality of liberation, must seek for a voluntary commitment to causes of action, which may involve suffering and death" (1989:156). Since the motive of "bearing one's cross" encourages self-sacrifice, and in this way may serve to legitimise abusive relationships, Grey's proposal of kenosis spirituality poses a challenge, as to how it can be effectively practised within the South African context.
- On the doctrine of atonement, Grey leans towards the moral influence theory. She does propose an alternative atonement theory, which will embrace both men and women. In this she explores various symbols. She replaces the symbols of Christ as redeemer with imagery drawn from female experiences. Thus one has to question whether her symbols of atonement will be helpful for women particularly within the South African context.

The argument of the thesis will be built up in the following manner:

Chapter 2: A brief survey of recent ecumenical discourse on the doctrine of atonement. Such a survey will build on the brief overview offered in section 2.3(b) above. Overviews will be drawn from the doctrine of atonement by authors such as Aulén (1931), Gunton (1989), Migliore (1991) and Brummer (2005). A detailed analysis of such discourse might be looked into. Instead, the extent at which contemporary discourse on the doctrine of atonement has been influenced by the work of Gustaf Aulén will be shown and how almost all authors see the need to respond critically to his analysis.

Chapter 3: A brief survey of feminist contributions to Christology, which will explore the divinity, incarnation and humanity, ministry, suffering, cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ will be looked into.

Chapter 4: A detailed description and critical analysis of Mary Grey's contribution to such feminist discourse on the doctrine of atonement will be considered in this thesis. Also, her view on the doctrine of atonement in the light of Aulén (1931) and discourse on kenosis theology with the aim to assess her reinterpretation of the motif of "bearing one's cross" will be investigated. This chapter will constitute the core of the thesis. Different ways in which Mary Grey's views have been assessed in secondary literature comparison of Mary Grey's views to that of feminist writers such as Mary Daly, Elizabeth Fiorenza, Rosemary Radforth Ruether, Sarah Coakley and others will be looked at in this chapter.

Chapter 5: Finally, some concluding comments on the meaning for women of the symbol of the cross of Jesus Christ and of the motif of "bearing one's cross" with specific reference to the South African context will be drawn.

## Chapter 2

### Three views of atonement: The legacy of Gustaf Aulén

#### 2.1 Introduction

Christian reflection on the work of Christ is typically captured under the rubric of atonement. In this chapter, a discussion of the influential classification of different views of atonement by Gustaf Aulén will be rendered and shown how this analysis has been taken up in several recent contributions. This discussion will provide some necessary background to the discussion in chapter 3 on feminist Christologies.

In the book *Christus Victor* (1931), Gustaf Aulén dealt with the three main types of atonement, namely the “classic” type, the “Latin” type and the “subjective” type. His own view of atonement is embodied in the phrase “*Christus Victor*” which he derives from Irenaeus. It emphasizes the victory through Christ’s resurrection over the forces of evil and of death. The Latin (or Anselmian) view asserts that humans need to make a sacrifice or payment in order to satisfy God’s justice. Such an offering was made by Jesus Christ on behalf of humanity. The Latin type thus portrays atonement in terms of a legal framework (Aulén 1931:97). Following the lead of Peter Abelard (1079-1142), the subjective or “humanist” type of atonement rejects the notion of retributive punishment.

Different models of atonement as analyzed by Gustaf Aulén have been taken up in several recent contributions. The models will be discussed under the following headings:

- (1) The “Classical” model, also known as the *Christus victor* approach;
- (2) The “Latin” model, also known as the penal substitution approach;
- (3) The “Subjective” model also known as the moral influence approach.

#### 2.2 *Christus victor*

##### **Aulén on Irenaeus’ view of the *Christus victor* approach**

Aulén uses Irenaeus (fl. c.175-c.195) as a starting point to give greater insight into the *Christus victor* view of atonement. Irenaeus’ teaching on atonement nevertheless displays characteristics of the Latin doctrine of atonement, that is, “Christ as man from man’s side, makes an acceptable offering to God” (Aulén 1931:49). Aulén considers Irenaeus to be the first patristic writer who presented a clear, comprehensive doctrine of atonement and redemption. Irenaeus’ writings are filled with the idea of atonement as he constantly reviewed the work of Christ. The incarnation plays a fundamental part in Irenaeus’ theology, as he considered the incarnation to be preparatory for the atoning work of Christ. He believed that it is God alone who is able to destroy the principalities that holds humanity in bondage.



Thus, Irenaeus placed great emphasis on the obedience of Christ throughout Christ's earthly life. He expounded on how Adam's disobedience, (which resulted in the reign of sin), was answered by Jesus' obedience which "recapitulated" and nullified Adam's disobedience. Irenaeus viewed Christ's earthly life as an act of obedience which "recapitulated"<sup>7</sup> and annulled the powers of darkness, bringing victory. Since Christ's victorious obedience can be seen in His temptation, teaching and preaching, he viewed the earthly life of Christ as a pattern of victory through every stage of His life. However, for Irenaeus, it is the death of Christ that was the final, victorious blow. Using various biblical images to describe the work of Christ, Irenaeus found the ransom image most appropriate to describe the work of Christ: Irenaeus believed that "the ransom is always regarded as paid to the powers of evil, to death or to the devil; by its means they are overcome, and their power over humanity is brought to an end. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that when this has been done, atonement has taken place" (Aulén 1931:51). As a result, the powers of darkness have been defeated and a new relationship between God and humanity is established as God redeemed humanity from the evil powers, receiving humanity to Himself; thus atonement was made possible.

When Irenaeus spoke about the "obedience" of Christ, he was not referring to Christ as being the sacrifice offered to God from humanity's side, but as the Christ who became flesh and overcame the powers of darkness. This victory could not have been achieved in any other way, only through the power of God. He emphasized that the *Christus victor* view assumes a dualistic background where the evil powers are in opposition to God's will. This conflict between God and the forces that resist, brings about enmity between God and humanity (world). The work of atonement has a "double-sidedness", where God is both the reconciler and the reconciled. Irenaeus portrays the atoning work of Christ, as a dramatic war between the powers of evil and Christ, where Christ, as *Christus victor*, gains victory over these powers. Therefore God, in Christ reconciles humanity to Himself.

### **Gustaf Aulén's position**

Aulén emphasized that there are two important points of this theory that need to be considered. Firstly, he considered this view to be a "doctrine of atonement" in the full and proper sense (Aulén 1931:20). Secondly, he noted that this atonement view has distinct characteristics that are different from the other atonement views. He regarded the *Christus victor* view to be a doctrine of atonement as it described the work of salvation. According to Aulén, the salvation is twofold, since this salvation brings reconciliation between God and humanity.

Aulén further considered the *Christus victor* view to be distinctly different in character to both the "objective" and the "subjective" views. The *Christus victor* view describes the atonement work to be the work of God from the beginning to the end (continuous divine work). Whilst,

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<sup>7</sup> Joel Green and Mark Baker in their book *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in New Testament and Contemporary Contexts* (2004:119) explain Irenaeus' "recapitulation" theory in this way: "Irenaeus, stressing the Pauline parallelism between Adam and Christ, emphasized that Adam was the originator of a disobedient race, and Christ inaugurated a new redeemed humanity". They then quote Irenaeus writing that "God recapitulated in Himself the ancient formation of people, that He might kill sin, deprive death of its power and vivify humanity".

according to the objective view, the work of atonement starts with God, Christ becomes the offering (as human) made to God on behalf of humanity (discontinuous divine work). The most marked difference between the “dramatic” type and the so-called “objective” type lies in the fact that it represents the work of atonement or reconciliation as from first to last a work of God Himself, a continuous divine work (Aulén 1931:21).

The *Christus victor* view is distinctly different to the subjective view (moral influence theory) since, according to *Christus victor*, the atonement does not only bring a change in humanity, but also in God’s attitude towards, humanity. It brings about a new relation between God and the world, changing the entire situation. It is said that this “dramatic” type stands in sharp contrast with the “subjective” type of view. It does not set forth only or chiefly a change, taking place in humanity. It describes a complete change in the situation and a change in the relation between God and the world (Aulén 1931:22).

To conclude, Aulén’s view of the *Christus victor* is that the death of Christ represented a victory over evil powers. Victory over the evil powers brings about reconciliation between God and humanity. God reconciles humanity to Himself. Aulén does not see the death of Christ as a satisfaction paid to God, neither as a moral influence on humanity.

### **Contemporary reflections on the *Christus victor* approach**

Several contemporary authors have responded to Aulén’s views on the victory achieved by Christ. In the discussion below, contributions by Colin Gunton, Daniel Migliore, Vincent Brümmer and Gregory Boyd will be mentioned.

#### **Colin Gunton**

In his book *The Actuality of Atonement: The Study of Metaphor, Rationality and the Christian Tradition* (1989), Colin Gunton examined the Christian doctrine of atonement. Drawing on various resources,<sup>8</sup> Gunton emphasised the use of metaphor as a central feature of theological language. He examined some central metaphors for atonement, drawn for example from the battlefield, the altar, and the law courts, which depict the ministry, sacrifice and victory of Jesus Christ (Gunton 1989:53-141). He also demonstrated how these metaphors can be lived in the life of the Christian community today (Gunton 1989:82). An examination of biblical material has shown that the victory is not purely a past event, or a “cosmic conflict”; it took place within human history on an ongoing basis. Therefore, the victory is seen to be continuous within the life of a Christian and the Christian community.<sup>9</sup> The second dimension, which Aulén overlooked, was that the victory is as much human as divine.

Gunton believed that Aulén’s classic theory, namely that “Christ as *Christus Victor* fights against and triumphs over the evil powers of the world” (Aulén 1931:20) has to be examined

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<sup>8</sup> Gunton emphasizes that the use of metaphor is central to rational engagement today. He draws from a number of feminist writers such as McFague (1983), Sölle (1965/1967), and Soskice (1985) in this regard.

<sup>9</sup> According to Gunton (1989:57), the view of continuous victory points to the theology of Irenaeus, whose concept of recapitulation enabled him to form a link between the way Jesus lived out the human story in a victorious way and the continuing of His victory in the life of the Church.

in the light of biblical material. He explained that recent studies have cast doubt upon the use and interpretation of the text (Col. 2:15),<sup>10</sup> used by theologians such as Aulén. The imagery is traditionally understood as being that of a Roman triumphal procession, where the “powers and authorities” are the powers of darkness. However, according to Gunton (1989:55), “it is conceivable that the “powers and authorities” are not Christ’s opponents but the host of heaven cheering him on his way.”

According to Gunton, there is little mention of victory elsewhere in the writings of Paul. He argued that within the synoptic gospels there is a rich use of language and vocabulary making reference to “struggle” (Mark 3:22-27), and the “Kingdom of God”. He argued that even though this use of language does not directly characterize the life and death of Jesus in the light of “cosmic conflict”, it is not wrong to see the synoptic gospel writers depicting a type of victory by Jesus.

Similarly, though without using military imagery, John’s gospel depicts the progress of Jesus to the cross as a movement of victorious conquest, certainly if it is right to interpret (19:30), “It is finished”, in the light of (16:30) “Be of good cheer I have overcome the world”, as a cry of triumph (Gunton 1989:56). Similarly, making reference to (Luke 13:16) where Jesus refers to the sick woman as “a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years”, Gunton explained that Jesus clearly sees the enslavement of the world by the hostile powers and that it is His calling to destroy the evil hosts.

In examining various texts (especially from the Johannine literature) and the meaning given to the narrative as a whole, Gunton believed that Aulén’s view of *Christus Victor* appears to lack two dimensions. The first dimension that is lacking is that the victory of Jesus was not only on a cosmic level, but is continuing in the life of the believing community.<sup>11</sup> Gunton believed that there is need for this to be emphasized, so that the divine conflict may be seen “as more than a myth, a “story of the gods” (Gunton 1989:57). Gunton points to the theology of Irenaeus to substantiate the notion of the divine victory being continuous within the life of the Christian community. Irenaeus, according to Gunton, draws a connection between Christ’s victory and the victorious life of a Christian. Thus the victory is as much a cosmic as it is an earthly one.

The second dimension, which Aulén appeared to overlook, according to Gunton, was that the victory of Jesus was both human and divine (Gunton 1989:57). Gunton noted that Aulén’s book has been criticized in that it placed too much emphasis on the triumphalist view of the atonement, and fails to emphasize the human and tragic view of Christ’s story. To reinforce his view of Christ’s victory being both human and divine, Gunton quoted G. B. Caird, who wrote that this Son of Man has come not simply as the representative of God’s Kingdom, but also to reassert humanity’s lordship over a demonic and rebellious creation (Caird 1956:72).

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<sup>10</sup> See Col. 2:15 “And having disarmed the powers and authorities ...” (New International Version)

<sup>11</sup> On Irenaeus’ view on recapitulation, Aulén states: “But the completeness of the recapitulation is not realized in this life: Irenaeus’ outlook is strongly eschatological, and the gift of the Spirit in this life is for him the earnest of future glory” (Aulén 1931:38).

Thus, Gunton concluded that in the light of scripture, Aulén's position on divine victory is correct in terms of it being a victory. However, what is missed within his theory is the emphasis that the victory is as much human as it is divine: "A divine victory only because it is a human one" (Gunton 1989:59). Even though the gospels do not "explicitly" show the ministry of Jesus as a victory, they do, however, see it as part of a conflict between God's authority represented by Jesus and the forces which denies this authority.

### **Daniel Migliore**

In a chapter entitled "Classical interpretations of the work of Christ" in his book *Faith Seeking Understanding* (2004), Daniel Migliore also described three theories of atonement. Migliore commented that the *Christus victor* approach helpfully emphasizes the reality of evil keeping humanity in bondage, and it clearly portrays God's victory over them. For Migliore, this theory has limitations, especially if its language of "cosmic battle" between God and the devil serves to undermine awareness of humanity to take responsibility for their sinful condition. Even though the *Christus victor* theory has limitations, Migliore affirms certain strengths of this theory, for example that God accomplished the liberation and reconciliation of the world not through coercion. He stated that: "While this theory helpfully emphasizes the reality and power of evil forces that hold humanity in bondage, and while it correctly stresses the costliness and assurance of God's victory, its limitations are readily evident" (Migliore 1991:182).

The limitation of the theory lies in the use of the language of "cosmic battle" especially if it fails to arouse human responsibility towards their sinful condition. In this sense the divine victory and conflict will be viewed as a "cosmic battle", excluding the Christian community, making them mere "spectators". Despite these limitations, Migliore saw two truths hidden within the *Christus victor* approach. Firstly, according to Migliore, God's victory over humanity was not through violent retaliation but rather through the power of His divine love: "God achieves the liberation and reconciliation of the world not by employing coercion or brute force but by the foolish wisdom of the cross" (Migliore 1991:182).

The second truth according to Migliore is that the evil forces are both "destructive" and "self-destructive". He stated that the image of God's method of salvation through "deception" has been misleading, particularly when it has been interpreted in a literal way.<sup>12</sup> Migliore stated that the images that this theory intended to convey, was that God's "foolish" way of redeeming humanity is by far more wiser and powerful than that of the evil powers.

### **Vincent Brümmer**

Vincent Brümmer in his *Atonement, Christology and the Trinity: Making Sense of Christian Doctrine* (2005) looked at the theories of atonement, particularly the patristic theories of recapitulation, ransom and sacrifice. For Brümmer, the word "atonement" means "at-one-

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<sup>12</sup> "This idea of the deception of the Devil occurs frequently, both in the East and in the West. Augustine uses the simile of a mouse trap; as the mice are enticed into the trap by the bait, so Christ is the bait by which the Devil is caught" (Aulén 1931:69).

ment”, to make two parties one, or reconciliation (2005:44). According to Brümmer, the church fathers never had an understanding of salvation as a personal reconciliation with God. Instead, salvation to them meant “divinization”. Brümmer (2005:46) here refers to Athanasius’ view on the incarnation of Christ that “He entered into humanity that we might be made divine.” Brümmer finds the patristic views on atonement regarding the divine-human relationship as manipulative, and unable to explain how we are to be reconciled to God (Brümmer 2005:50). To avoid these difficulties, the divine-human relationship could best be interpreted as an agreement of rights and obligations. He wrote that, “each partner is a personal agent who accepts certain obligations towards the other and can be held responsible for fulfilling these obligations” (Brümmer 2005:50). When this balance of rights between God and ourselves become disturbed, God rectifies this imbalance through “punishment, satisfaction or condonation” (Brümmer 2005:51). God’s justice prevents Him from condoning our sins, thus we have to make satisfaction adequate to the affront we have administered to God.

The first patristic theory, which Brümmer discussed, the “recapitulation theory” was predicated on the Platonic logic embraced by the early church fathers. According to Brümmer, Irenaeus’ theology of recapitulation means that salvation made humanity partakers of the divine nature of Christ (2 Peter 1:4). This “divinization”, is achieved by the incarnation of Christ, an act propelled by divine love. Brümmer quoted Aulén, who stated that “the incarnation has its basis in God’s love. The work of the incarnation is the work of the Divine love ... It is one Divine work, the continuity of which is not interrupted by the idea of an offering made to God from humanity’s side, from below” (Aulén 1931:62). Brümmer therefore affirmed that, in the context of Platonic logic, the early church fathers saw humanity as one entity, in which all individuals participated. The Pauline parallel drawn between Adam and Christ, is also understood within the Platonic context. Just as Adam’s (first Adam) disobedience plunged humanity as a whole into sin, Christ’s obedience (the second Adam) brought about a new redeemed humanity.

The second patristic theory, which Brümmer looked at, was the ransom theory. The church fathers’ idea of the ransom theory was that atonement was done by God and not to God. The question then arose amongst the fathers to whom the ransom was paid to if it was not to God. Brümmer says that the “obvious” answer would be Satan. According to Brümmer (2005:46), “The ransom theory, develops a speculative mythology explaining God’s victory over Satan, in which humanity was freed from Satan’s power.”

Brümmer (2005) stated that the “speculative mythology” was rejected by the early church fathers (Gregory of Nazianzus), since the notion of God paying a ransom to the Devil seemed blasphemous. Even though the ransom theory was rejected, Brümmer pointed out what he believed to be two important “intuitions”. Firstly, the ransom theory perceive sin as an “objective personalized power”, keeping humanity in bondage, and secondly, “God alone is able to save” humanity from this bondage.

Brümmer asserted that in today’s context these two “intuitions” go against the grain of the notion that the evil actions of humanity not only affects, but are also the source of evil in the

world. Also that God's saving action does require the participation of humanity. Brümmer (2005:47) quoted Sallie McFague in order to emphasize the above idea:

In an era when evil powers were understood to be palpable principalities in contest with God for control over human beings and the cosmos, the metaphor of Christ as the victorious king and lord, crushing the evil spirits and thereby freeing the world from their control, was indeed a powerful one. In our situation however, to envision evil as separate from human beings rather than as the outcome of human decisions and actions, and to see the solution to evil as totally a divine responsibility, would not be only irrelevant to our time and its needs but harmful to them, for that would run counter to one of the central insights of the new sensibility: the need for human responsibility in the nuclear age.

### **Gregory Boyd**

In a chapter in the book *The Nature of Atonement* (2006) Gregory Boyd suggested that the *Christus victor* view of Atonement needs to be looked at in the broader context of the spiritual warfare motif that runs through the scripture (2006:25). He felt that the spiritual warfare motif describes the biblical narrative of an ongoing cosmic battle between God and the forces of evil, bringing victory over the hostile powers and human agents, who threaten God's creation. Other atonement theories, according to Boyd, say very little (or nothing) about the cosmic victory and focuses mainly on humanity and sin. Boyd gives a brief overview of the Old Testament's depiction of the cosmic battle. It is seen as God waging war against hostile waters and vicious sea monsters who held the world in captivity. The ancient Israelite worldview was based on the notion that the spiritual happenings in the spiritual realm would affect events of history and nature. Therefore, poverty, injustice and natural disasters which befall humanity are considered to be the works of "rebel gods". The "mythological" imagery of hostile waters, cosmic monsters and rebel gods, stems from the ancient Near Eastern language.

For Boyd, this cosmic language adequately communicates that the earth and creation exists "in a cosmic war zone" and that ancient Israel was dependent on God's continuous battle against the hostile forces in order to preserve Israel.

Boyd is of the conviction that the consciousness of the earth being a war zone between the forces of good and evil intensified among the Jews. This consciousness intensified particularly in the two centuries leading up to the birth of Christ. It was into this context that Jesus came, having one mission and that being to destroy Satan's hold over humanity. Boyd wrote, "Everything Jesus was about was centered on vanquishing this empire taking back the world that Satan had seized and restoring its rightful viceroys (humans) to their position of guardian of the earth" (Boyd 2006:27).

The theme of Christ's victory over cosmic foes pervades the entire New Testament. According to Boyd (2006:31), Psalm 110 is the most frequently cited passage in the New Testament, and is always used in a variety of ways to express the truth that Christ is Lord because He has defeated God's enemies. For Boyd, the *Christus victor* model, in contrast to

the other two atonement models, is the only atonement model that emphasizes the cosmic significance of Christ's victory. In order to fully understand and appreciate the soteriological significance of the cross, we need to understand it in the context of the cosmic significance of Christ's victory. Due to this reason, the apostle Paul discussed the cosmic significance of Christ's work and how He defeated the hostile powers. Boyd quoted (Col.1:21-22) "And you, who (like the rebel powers) were once estranged and hostile (to God) in mind, doing evil deeds, He has now reconciled in His fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before Him" (Boyd 2006:33).

Boyd, much like Aulén, believed that the victory over evil powers brings about reconciliation between God and humanity. He stated that humanity is reconciled because the "rebel powers" have been defeated. Now, humanity can be presented "holy and blameless unto God" (Boyd 2006:33). He cited other writings of the apostle Paul, to further his argument that the *Christus victor* is the only view, which looks at the cosmic significance of Christ's work. He refers to the text in Ephesians 1-2, which emphasizes that the apostle Paul celebrates Christ's cosmic work, whereby he placed the enemies under His feet. Since the "ruler of the power of the air" has been defeated, humanity is made "alive together with Christ".

Much like Irenaeus' theology of recapitulation, Boyd also believed that the divine victory is continuous within the life of the Christian community. The Christian community's personal and social victories are joined in Christ's cosmic victory. After examining the New Testament texts, Boyd concluded that the *Christus victor* view is the only view which does justice to the centrality of the cosmic warfare motif of Christ's victory over Satan in the New Testament.

### **2.3 The Latin model (based on the notion of penal substitution)**

Centuries after Irenaeus' teaching, the belief prevailed that Christ's death delivered humanity from the "god of this world" who held them in bondage. Irenaeus taught that humanity was created by God to belong to God and the devil's right over humanity is a result of Adam's fall. The church fathers were in agreement with Irenaeus on the subject of the devil's defeat by Christ, however they differed with Irenaeus on the subject of the devil's right over humanity and the manner in which Christ deals with the devil. The church fathers questioned whether the salvation of humanity could not have taken place in manner other than that of a cosmic battle.<sup>13</sup>

#### **Anselm's Satisfaction theory**

Anselm of Canterbury, who is prominent position in the history of dogma, presents his Satisfaction theory in his book *Cur Deus Homo* (Why God Became Human). Anselm rejects the classic idea of atonement, and proposes a teaching of deliverance from the guilt of sin. He also rejects the notion of a ransom being paid to the devil, but does not develop a recapitulation model of atonement either. Instead, he taught an "objective" view of atonement, where God is the "object" of Christ's atoning work, and is reconciled to the world through the satisfaction made to His justice. Anselm states that "Sin is thus of the nature of a debt. The

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<sup>13</sup> See Aulén (1931:63-64).

sinner ought not to be forgiven unless in some way reparation can be made or “satisfaction” offered to God for the wrong which sin has done” (Anselm sa: 17)

Anselm then argues that humanity is not able to make the necessary “satisfaction”. Anselm poses the question: If humanity is to make the necessary satisfaction, where can a human be found who is free from the guilt of sin? Therefore, if humans cannot do it, then the atoning work has to be done by God Himself. According to Anselm, the only solution would therefore be if God would become human – *Cur Deus Homo*. The gravity and seriousness of sin is an aspect, which Anselm emphasizes. If sin is forgiven the seriousness of it is tolerated. Compensation or satisfaction needs to be made for sin. He believes that it was only the atoning work of God Himself who could restore the dignity of humanity as well as His own honour. Anselm and his successors treated the Latin idea of atonement as being the work of God from beginning to end. He shared the same thought with earlier representatives of the Latin doctrine that the union of the divine nature with the human nature in Christ confers on His work a greater value than it would otherwise have (Aulén 1931:103).

### **Gustaf Aulén on the notion of penal substitution**

Aulén criticized Anselm’s penal substitution on two points: Firstly, the insistence that satisfaction needs to be made by a human and that all the work of atonement is done by Christ as a human. Secondly, that Anselm’s penal substitution idea was too “legalistic”.

Aulén’s view of penal substitution is based on the notion that satisfaction needs to be made by humanity. Aulén (1931:103) quotes Anselm: “The satisfaction must be made by humans; and this is precisely what is done in Christ’s atoning work”. The atoning work of God is therefore not done by God incarnate, but by God as a human. For this reason, Aulén believes that for Anselm the incarnation of Christ and the work of Christ are not as connected together as seen in the *Christus victor* model. In the *Christus victor* approach, the death of Christ is seen as the climaxing victory of a long cosmic battle. The atoning work of God is not continuous (God reconciles the world to Himself and at the same time He too is reconciled). In contrast, Anselm discards the dualistic outlook and sees the work of atonement as no longer being the work of God, but focuses on humanity to make the necessary satisfaction to God’s judgement.

Aulén noted that the penal substitution model encapsulates a legalistic idea, a “penitential system”, where God receives payment for humanity’s fallenness. Aulén said that Anselm believes that it is God’s will that Christ makes satisfaction for God’s judgement on behalf of humanity. Aulén commented that the penal substitution view is modelled around the strict requirements of a justice system, where God is recompensed for humanity’s sin. Anselm stated that “by the reasons given above that this blessedness ought not to be given to anyone but to him whose sins are thoroughly forgiven, and that this forgiveness ought not to be granted except when the debt is paid which is due for sin, according to its exceeding greatness” (Anselm sa:111).

Aulén zones in on the strong ethical argument, which is central to Anselm’s and the Latin doctrine view. Aulén highlights the statement by Anselm with regard to the gravity of sin which says “You have not yet fully weighed the gravity of sin” (Aulén 1931:106). Aulén



questions Anselm's emphasis on sin and the need for satisfaction to be made by humanity. In Aulén's opinion, the notion of the satisfaction paid to God as making amends for humanity's sin is in fact showing that God's strong opposition to sin has become "weakened down". According to Aulén (1931:108), "If God can be represented as willing to accept a satisfaction for sin committed, it appears to follow necessarily that the dilemma of laxity or satisfaction really fails to guard the truth of God's enmity against sin. The doctrine provides for the remission of the punishment due to sin, but not for the taking away of the sin itself."

### **Contemporary views on satisfaction/penal substitution**

While penal substitution seems to be the dominant understanding of Christians today, many contemporary writers have questioned this view of the atonement. In this section Contributions from Colin Gunton, Daniel Migliore, Joel Green and Mark Baker and also Vincent Brümmer on the penal substitution view of atonement will be looked at.

#### **Colin Gunton**

Colin Gunton considers Anselm's systematic treatment of the atonement (satisfaction theory) to be the first essay that attempts to bring an intellectual understanding to the theologies of atonement that existed before him. Since Anselm's view is widely criticized, Gunton believes that every effort should be made to understand it. Compared to Aulén, Colin Gunton draws on Anselm's understanding of the atonement in terms of "satisfaction". He argues that Anselm's view is based on the medieval legal (feudal) order and that this is important to assess Anselm's apparent portrayal of God as a somewhat temperamental feudal landlord.

Being fairly critical of what existed before him, Anselm rejected these atonement views (*Christus Victor*) on the grounds that it was not rationally coherent. According to Gunton, Anselm rejected the ransom theory on two bases. Firstly it makes too literal the blood being paid as an actual price, arousing the question, to whom, was the price paid (Satan or God)? Secondly, Anselm saw the ransom theory as being too dualistic, giving Satan too much autonomous power. Since both the devil and humans are God's property and under God's power, why then should God plead for what is rightly His own creation. Anselm argues that, if the devil does inflict punishment, it is purely on God's permission that he is allowed. Therefore, in Anselm's view, the devil does not have power and should not be treated as an autonomous agent.

Influenced by the imagery taken from the legal system, the satisfaction theory is an attempt to give a more accurate picture of the atoning work of Christ. Gunton quoted Anselm in order to give clarity to his programme and thinking: "Humanity's salvation could only be affected by a work done by one who was both God and man, such as Christ did" (Anselm sa:22). Gunton commented that Anselm rightly emphasizes the humanness of Christ and that, by Christ becoming human, humanity can be saved. Gunton believes that the foundation of the satisfaction theology is not the sinfulness of humanity (that is secondary) but the primary emphasis is the goodness of God and the excellence of creation's crown. He explains that satisfaction is therefore Anselm's way of speaking of that which took place as a result of the good God being unwilling to allow His creatures to destroy themselves (Gunton 1989:91-92).

Thus, according to the satisfaction theory Anselm believes that the satisfaction<sup>14</sup> is something that Christ offers to the Father. According to Gunton (1989:92), Anselm does not consider this to be a legal transaction but unmerited grace. The death of Christ as a gift unto the Father is far too valuable; it far “outweighs” the “weightiness” of the sin of humanity. Thus, Gunton wants to make it clear that Anselm does not see the Father as a judge that seeks compensatory penalty from Christ as a man.<sup>15</sup>

Anselm takes great effort to emphasize that the obedience of Jesus as human extends to the point of Him freely giving His life to the Father. According to Gunton (1989), Anselm’s doctrine of sin, which is seen in both legal and personal terms, has been misinterpreted by His critics. They interpret Anselm’s view of sin as an offence against God’s honour. They perceive that Anselm’s God is anthropomorphical, a monarch who punishes offenders who have discredited his honour. Gunton explains that this is not what Anselm believes. Gunton argues that it is not God but creation that suffers, since God is impassable according to Anselm, He cannot be harmed neither can He be offended.<sup>16</sup> Sin does not offend God, but corrupts the order of the universe. Gunton (1989:96) wrote: “And as with sin, correlatively with salvation if sin is cosmic disorder, then salvation is the action of God as He takes responsibility for the whole context of our lives, setting us free to live in the universe He does not allow to go to ruin.”

Therefore, the meaning of satisfaction is God’s action to rectify and restore that which has been corrupted by sin. Gunton believes that there can be no restoration of humanity unless the balance of order is corrected. Gunton, retrieving from Calvin the notion of justification, stated that the demand for justice by Anselm’s God is not about the honour of the king, but the interest of the people. Therefore, according to Gunton, Anselm’s God mercifully restores humanity and the universe through restorative and distributive justice, which is to preserve the established order.

### **Daniel Migliore**

Daniel Migliore affirmed that the humanity of Christ is more emphasized in the satisfaction theory than in *Christus Victor* “cosmic conflict” theory. He noted that the severity of sin and the price paid for the redemption of sinners were expressed in a manner understood by the medieval church. According to Migliore (1991), the satisfaction theory raises two important questions. Firstly, the satisfaction theory raises juridical metaphors in a manner that makes mercy and justice appear to be in conflict. In Migliore’s words, the Anselmian theory makes the act of forgiveness something of a problem for God (Migliore 1991:184). He questions the satisfaction theory’s concept of grace. If grace is made conditional through satisfaction made to God, can conditional grace then be considered as grace?

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<sup>14</sup> Paid on behalf of humanity by Christ as God.

<sup>15</sup> God will either complete what He began, or that He made so sublime a nature, capable of so great good” (Anselm sa:119).

<sup>16</sup> “On account of God’s supremacy no one can honour or dishonour Him” (Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo*:75).

Secondly, according to Migliore, the satisfaction theory does not distinguish whether Christ was a “substitute” or a “representative” on behalf of humanity. Migliore explained that a substitution is a replacement of something, whereas “representative” belongs to the world of people and relationships. Therefore, in his view the atoning work of Christ is more faithfully understood as an act of personal representation rather than a work of mechanical substitution. Christ’s death is therefore an act of personal representation.

### **Joel Green and Mark Baker**

Joel Green and Mark Baker in their book *Recovering The Scandal of The Cross; Atonement in New Testament and Contemporary Contexts* (2000), examined the strengths and weaknesses of Anselm’s model of atonement. According to Green and Baker (2000), Anselm set out to present a logical model of the atonement theory in which he explains the necessity of the death of Jesus on the cross. In their opinion Anselm achieved what he set out to do. By using imagery taken from the feudal system of his time, and not the Bible, Anselm gives an interpretation of the cross, which could be easily understood by the people of his time. Anselm, according to Green and Baker avoided metaphors used by Paul and the author of Hebrews and based his explanation of the atonement in the culture of his day. They wrote that Anselm allowed his experience of medieval life and culture to form the framework of his atonement model (Green and Baker 2000:131). This usage of images such as “vassal” or “satisfaction”, says Green and Baker, are not foreign to Biblical language. However Anselm’s usage of these images gives the cross and atonement a meaning that is very different to that found in the Bible.

Anselm emphasized more on the debt of sin rather than the removing of sin. For Anselm, according to Green and Baker, salvation is equated with the “remission of debt”. Thus the work of Jesus on the cross saves humanity from having to do the impossible - to satisfy the honour of God. Therefore, according to Green and Baker, Anselm’s view of sin is limited. It may be rational to a certain degree, but falls short of the view of sin in biblical writings. They argued that the biblical concept of salvation focuses on reconciliation of humans with God. They stated that for Anselm, the atonement work of Christ is “to become free from indebtedness, whereas the New Testament redemption is freedom from slavery, including slavery to sin” (Green & Baker 2000:132).

Since Anselm’s model of atonement is deeply rooted in his culture and the penance system, according to Green and Baker, promotes a distorted view of God’s character. According to Anselm, God assumes the guise of a Lord or King to which the payment of satisfaction has to be made. The distorted character of God is not only likened to the image of a feudal lord, but also diminishes God’s active role in reconciling humanity to Himself.

Another contributing factor which makes Anselm’s model problematic, is his acceptance of the Greek understanding of an impassable deity. Green and Baker asserted that it is this acceptance that causes Anselm to separate Christ’s divinity from His human suffering, resulting in Anselm not placing sufficient emphasis on Jesus being a representative of God to humanity. By unquestionably basing his model of the atonement on the feudal system and

Greek philosophy, Anselm repeatedly reinforces the image of God being an angry demanding God.

According to Green and Baker (2000), Anselm's work fails to be ethically sound. Even though Anselm emphasizes Jesus' ethical behaviour as an example for Christian living, he failed to see that Jesus' life and the cross, challenged the system of the day. Green and Baker (2000:135) stated that "Based on the gospel portrait of Jesus' life, a person could offer a strong challenge to a feudal system that held certain members of society hostage to the debt obligation at the heart of relationships characterized by honour and shame ..."

In closing, Green and Baker commented that Anselm is one of the theologians who seek to grant understanding to the atonement theory by looking at it not from a biblical point of view, but rather from within a legal and social context. Anselm rooted his idea of atonement in culture, resulting in the theory having both strengths and weaknesses.

### **Vincent Brümmer**

Vincent Brümmer interpreted the satisfaction theory as a "theology of merit", on the basis that sinners have the opportunity to make satisfaction. The satisfaction required is to restore the balance of rights and duties between God and humanity. Since it is Christ who makes adequate satisfaction on behalf of humanity, restoring the imbalance between God and His creation, all credit goes to him and not humanity. Salvation still has to be earned but by Christ rather than by us. *Soli Christo Gloria!* (2005:51).

Brümmer (2005:51), stated that Anselm places much emphasis on the condition of humanity and their failure to give honour to God, which constitutes a weight, a debt, a doom upon them. According to Brümmer, the satisfaction theory in today's context appears immoral, since it asserted that the "innocent" is punished by God on behalf of those who are guilty of sin. He affirms that the only way to understand this teaching and make moral sense of it is to view it through the eyes of a feudal concept of honour where God is seen as a feudal lord whose honour has been violated because of the disobedience of humanity. Christ is therefore the only perfect human who could make the required satisfaction in order to satisfy the honour of God. For Brümmer, such feudal honour may have been well understood in the twelfth century, but it goes against modern day thinking to view Christ as a feudal lord who demands honour.

In the light of human relationships and love, Brümmer believed the theory of penal substitution will go against the understanding of modern day thinking. He said that human relationships are based on each person striving to know and serve the true interest of the other. By serving the other's interest as their own humans display a love for the other, which they have for themselves. This relationship of love is different from business relationships in which people accept certain rights and obligations from each other. The one renders a service and the other pay for it. The relationship and value is based merely on the service rendered. Brümmer considers the feudal concept of honour to be like this. God's honour needs to be satisfied. "If this is the type of relationship we have with God", says Brümmer, "then it means that we do not love God for Himself alone, but merely as provider of eternal happiness. In turn, this means that God values our service more than God values us." Therefore, according

to Brümmer, it would not matter to God whether it was humanity or Christ in their place who provided the satisfaction as long as His honour is satisfied. Also, love cannot be earned or coerced. Modern day thinking accepts a God who loves people for who they are and not for what they render unto Him. This notion goes against the teaching of penal substitution. Brümmer stated that the value of humanity is based on the love of God, and not on the service they render for Him.

According to Brümmer (2005:49), another failure of the penal substitution view was that the “divine-human relationship” is not sufficient for “divine forgiveness”. For the forgiveness of sin according to penal substitution, is seen as treating sin lightly. Similarly, as in the case of damaged human fellowship, the necessary and sufficient conditions for reconciliation with God are not punishment or satisfaction or condemnation, but repentance and forgiveness”

Concerning God’s justice, Brümmer (2005:53) considered the penal substitution as satisfying the demands of retributive justice, rather than restorative justice. He argued that since sin causes estrangement between God and humanity, retributive justice only removes the guilt of sin. It fails to restore and reconcile humanity with God. Therefore, this theory is not a theory of atonement “in the sense of at-one-ment.”

Brümmer supported Anselm’s view on the theory of satisfaction. However, according to Brümmer, this theory of penal substitution, while answering some questions, is still not adequate in that it does not explain how we are to be reconciled (“at-one-ment”) with God (Brümmer 2005:53). Brümmer concludes that an atonement theory needs to be sought in order to explain how reconciliation can take place with God from whom humanity is estranged.



### **Feminist authors on penal substitution**

The voice and theology of feminist theologians have been shaped by their experiences. Thus, womanist and feminist theologians<sup>17</sup> consider Anselm’s theory of atonement to embrace and encourage guilt, self-sacrifice and suffering. They see his view as sanctioning patriarchy and male dominance, which leads to sexual abuse (child abuse), domestic violence against women and children, and the marginalisation of other groups. In accordance, Joanne Colson Brown and Rebecca Parker in their book *For God So Loved the World?* (1989) wrote, “we do not need to be saved by Jesus’ death from original sin. We need to be liberated from the oppression of racism, classism and sexism that is patriarchy.” In this section, some views on Anselm’s satisfaction theory (Brown and Parker 1989:27) will be considered.

### **Julie M. Hopkins**

Julie Hopkins, in her book *Towards A Feminist Christology* (1994), understands penal substitution to be an atonement theory which encapsulates punishment and violence, the punishment of good in order to rectify and purify the wrong doings of humanity. She considers penal substitution to be “immoral”, and “abhorrent”, to bring about justice: “It is

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<sup>17</sup> See Mary Daly (1973), Chung Hyun Kyung (1991) and Elizabeth Moltmann-Wendel (1991).

morally abhorrent to claim that God the Father demanded the self-sacrifice of His only Son to balance the scales of justice” (Hopkins 1994:50).

She criticizes modern theologians who attempt to portray a rational understanding between God the Father and Jesus to bring about salvation, requiring Jesus’ sacrifice as necessary. Hopkins quoted Jürgen Moltmann from his book *The Crucified God* (1974): “Faith understands the historical event between the Father who forsakes, and the Son who is forsaken on the cross in eschatological terms, an event between the Father who loves and the Son who is loved in the present spirit of the love that creates life” (Moltmann 1974:246).

Hopkins’ critique of the penal substitution theory stems from a history of discrimination against women. She makes reference to Augustine’s influence on the early Latin Church which adopted his teaching on women being the transmitters of original sin through sex. It is said that women as “daughters of Eve” bear the consequences of Eve’s sin. Therefore, since Jesus died as an act to atone the sin of humanity, women are given the blame for His death. In order to satisfy for their sin, women had to either submit in obedience to their husbands and endure the pain of child bearing, or remain celibate.

Influenced by the guilt of needing to make satisfaction for their sin, Hopkins uses medieval resources in order to show the extreme measures that the medieval nuns and mystics took in order to imitate the satisfaction of Christ’s act on the cross. The imagery which accompanies penal substitution, namely that of the “father demanding obedience of the son”, holds serious consequences. Hopkins believes that within family structures where women are taught to submit to the teaching of a strict form of Christianity greatly increases the incidences of incest and abuse. Hopkins feels that this is due to the child’s confusion of religious imagery. She wrote, “For in the eyes of the child the identity of the father is confused with images of an almighty God Father demanding obedience and threatening judgement whilst Jesus becomes the role-model for her (loving?) self-sacrifice” (Hopkins 1994:52).

Much like other feminist theologians,<sup>18</sup> Hopkins believes that an atonement theology of suffering cannot be redemptive. She suggests rather that there needs to be a distinction between “descriptive” and “prescriptive” theology. She affirms that a message of the cross that leaves a suffering community comforted, inspired to live and encouraged is a redemptive one. It is descriptive theology, since suffering people will have the freedom to choose to identify with Christ on the cross in a manner that is relative to their context. If however the message blames the suffering community for the “sins that lead to the death of Christ and demand penitential self-denial, the result is not redemptive” (Hopkins 1994:54).

In conclusion, Hopkins believes that it is not possible to develop a set Christology or doctrine of atonement, since Jesus as saviour of the Christian is not “monolithic” or “uniform”. She does not offer a theological doctrine of the cross, since all Christologies are influenced by the individual’s context, and thus relative to the Christian’s understanding of truth.

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<sup>18</sup> See Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Parker (2001).

## **Sallie McFague**

In her book *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological Age* (1987), feminist theologian Sallie McFague looks at the monarchical model<sup>19</sup> of God. She examines the relevance of this model in today's context. McFague considers the monarchical model to be a dangerous model, since it creates the assumption that God and the world are far apart. She noted that: "Not only, is the world Godless, but God as king and lord is worldless ... To be sure, kings want their subjects to be loyal and their realms peaceful ... Kings do not love their subject, or realms" (McFague 1987:66). God and the world are distantly apart and all power is on God's side whether He is domineering or charitable. In this image of God, God rules by divine intervention or by controlling the will of humans. The monarchical image portrays God as the king ruling over his loyal subjects. She states that within Anselm's classic theory, this sovereign imagery is predominant. Therefore, the understanding of salvation is one of satisfaction or sacrificial death. McFague notes that Anselm's model portrays humanity as relying completely on God who became human, to die a sacrificial death and substituting His great "worth" for humanity's "worthlessness". This imagery, according to McFague, gives a sense of humanity's helplessness. Much like subjects who have gone astray, humanity is reconciled to their king by having their sins forgiven by their king.

According to McFague, the monarchical model has been influenced by images such as God the father. She states that the model of God as father may have had a positive impact if it were associated with acts of "nurture, care guidance, concern and self-sacrifice" (McFague 1987:66). Sadly, the monarchical model is dominated by acts of patriarchy, where fathers take on the role of kings, and treat their children as subordinates, demanding obedience and respect.

In conclusion, McFague commented that the uniformity of the monarchical model and its lack of concern for humanity has shortcomings. McFague (1987:64) considered Anselm's model to promote this sovereign (monarchical) imagery which demands a substitutionary act and looked for a model that would encourage inclusiveness and a non-hierarchical paradigm .

## **Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker**

In their book *Proverbs of Ashes: Violence, Redemptive Suffering and the Search for What Saves Us* (2001), Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker viewed all atonement motifs as mystifying violence and abuse.<sup>20</sup> Like other feminist writers such as Julie Hopkins, they believe that Christianity camouflages violence, creating a false hope and comfort, particularly within family structures where abuse is prevalent. Since Christian theology portrays Jesus on the cross, Brock and Parker believe that this image has encouraged the sanctioning of violence against women and children. They wrote that "if God is imagined as a

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<sup>19</sup> The monarchical model of God as King was developed systematically in Jewish thought (God as Lord and King of the universe), in medieval Christian thought (with its emphasis on divine omnipotence) and in the Reformation (especially in Calvin's insistence on God's sovereignty). In the portrayal of God's relation to the world, the dominant Western historical model has been the absolute monarch's ruling over his kingdom (1987:63)

<sup>20</sup> They are of the opinion that even non-Christians have been affected by the misinterpretation of violence within the Christian teachings.

fatherly torturer, earthly parents are also justified, perhaps even required, to teach through violence. Children are instructed to understand their submission to pain as a form of love. Behind closed doors, in our community, spouses and children are battered by abusers who justify their actions as necessary, loving discipline. "I only hit her because I love her. "I'm doing this for your own good." The child or the spouse who believes that obedience is what God wants may put up with physical or sexual abuse in an effort to be a good Christian" (Brock and Parker 2001:7).

Brock and Parker views Anselm's penal substitution theory in the light of the aspect of obedience. They argue that a theology which considers obedience to be a virtue, bind people from taking responsibility to oppose their abusive context. For Brock and Parker (2001:7), "obedience is not a virtue. It is an evasion of our responsibility. Religion must engage us in the exercise of our responsibilities, not teach us to deny the power that is ours." A theology that teaches that God punishes disobedience only leads people to be content with injustices, when in fact it would be right and just to revolt. In Brock and Parker's view, Jesus stood up against an empire who promoted oppression and exploitation. They wrote "We need a God who delights in revolutionary disobedience and spirited protest" (Brock and Parker 2001:7).

Examining the aspect of self-sacrificing love, Brock and Parker criticizes the theology of a social gospel proposed by the 19<sup>th</sup> century liberal Protestants. Rejecting the penal substitution theory and developing their own understanding of the cross, proponents of social gospel theology are of the conviction that original sin is not disobedience, but in fact selfishness. They define sin as "betrayal of the care of the bonds of care among human beings" (2001:8). Therefore, they are of the conviction that cure for the sin of selfishness, is love and care for one's neighbours and the other. They consider Jesus importance as not dying for the forgiveness of sin, but the embodiment of love for the other and the marginalized, becoming the role-model for self-sacrificial love to all Christians. However, for Brock and Parker (2001:9), "A Christian theology which presents Jesus as a model of self-sacrificing love, persuades us to believe that sexism is divinely sanctioned".

In their opinion, it fails to understand that women are culturally caring and loving often at the expense of their own wellbeing. They argue that sin may not be selfishness but in fact selflessness. To allude that Jesus is a model of self-sacrificing love will plunge women into the sin of selflessness.

Secondly, according to Brock and Parker (2001), to allude that those who crucified Jesus did what was necessary for salvation, is to say that state terrorism is the will of God and therefore a good thing: "Atonement theology takes an act of state violence and redefines it as intimate violence, a private spiritual transaction between God the Father and God the Son. Atonement theology then says this intimate violence saves life. This redefinition replaces state violence with intimate violence and makes intimate violence holy and salvific. Intimate violence ends sin" (Brock and Parker 2001:11).



## **2.4 Subjective or moral influence theory**

The continuous battle between the “subjective” and “objective” views of atonement characterized the theology of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The theology of the Enlightenment period was criticized for being “reproduced” and “shallow” and was encouraged to seek more depth. The anthropomorphic and humanistic aspects of atonement teachings were still present in theology. In this section, the moral influence theory in the light of contributions by Abelard, Aulén, and Schleiermacher will be dealt with.

### **Peter Abelard’s moral influence theory**

Peter Abelard (1079-1142) sought a more humane idea of atonement and rejected Anselm’s doctrine of penal substitution that proposed a notion of retributive punishment.

In Abelard’s view, sin was considered as “imperfection”. He considered the Latin doctrine’s view of God to fall short in terms of the biblical teachings of the life of Jesus and God the Father. It is therefore unacceptable that Christ died to make satisfaction to God. Thus the death of Jesus was interpreted as a symbol which expresses God’s willingness to reconcile with humanity. Abelard’s main challenge to Anselm was therefore the issue of God’s forgiveness towards humanity.

Even though Abelard’s idea of God’s loving forgiveness is dominant, there is an expectation on humanity’s side to seek repentance. Abelard believed that humanity “repents and amends their life and God in turn responds by rewarding humanity’s amendment with an increase of happiness. The ruling idea is essentially anthropocentric and moralistic” (Aulén 1931:151).

The satisfaction theory shows God’s demand for justice, because of the gravity of sin. The rejection of the satisfaction theory by the moral influence theory shows a weakening towards the seriousness of sin, as well as a “toning-down” of God’s opposition towards sin.

### **Gustaf Aulén on the moral influence theory**

According to Aulén, the character of the moral influence theory will be understood against the backdrop of its criticism of the Latin theory. Its criticism of the *Christus victor* theory of God needing to be reconciled, or God needing satisfaction for His honour that has been offended, goes against the grain of God’s love. Aulén affirms that the weakness of the moral influence theory is that atonement and forgiveness is no longer seen as the work of God, but rather as dependent on the “ethical effects of human lives”. He states that “His work is no longer thought of as the work of God for humanity’s salvation: He is rather the perfect Example, the Ideal Man, the Head of the Race” (Aulén 1931:163).

Concerning the aspect of sin, Aulén stated that the idea of sin has become completely weakened by the notion that it has been seen as imperfection or infirmity. This notion of sin is a general idea amongst the Enlightenment Theology and liberal Protestantism. Aulén (1931:165) wrote, “The humanistic interpretation of the process of atonement has its ground in the failure of this theology to maintain the radical hostility of God to evil, and His judgement on sin.”

Aulén commends the Enlightenment theologians for emphasizing the true humanity of Christ as historical Jesus. However, he also considers the incarnation of Christ to have lost its primary place within the moral influence theory. In this view, the interpretation of the incarnation of Christ, which portrays Christ as the “perfect example” of humanity, is “abstract” and “unreal”. Thus, salvation is, Christ bringing about the change within humans because of his influence on them: “What is primary is the change, which takes place in humanity, more or less directly through the influence of Christ” (Aulén 1939:68).

Aulén comments on the conception of God within the three views. Firstly, the concept of God within the *Christus Victor* view has a dualistic role. He is “all- ruler” and at the same time fighting the evil forces that holds humanity bondage. God plays a dominant role in the work of atonement. It is God Himself that moves towards reconciliation with humanity. Aulén noted that, “Within the Latin view, God appears slightly distant from humanity. For here, the satisfaction is paid by humanity, in the person of Christ, to God” (Aulén 1939:171).

The conception of God in the moral influence theory is characterized by divine love. According to God, no atonement is needed, as humanity who repents will be forgiven. Much emphasis is placed on humanity’s movement to God, making God even more distant from humanity.

### **Friedrich Schleiermacher**

Friedrich Schleiermacher in his book *The Christian Faith* (1928) makes a distinction between salvation and atonement. Salvation is an act of Christ in the human life which takes place as an individual’s consciousness of God grows stronger. Atonement (reconciliation), or fellowship as Schleiermacher terms it, is a state of grace which grows as the believer has a deeper consciousness of God. The original activity of the Redeemer belongs to God alone and precedes all activity of our own, as He assumes us into this fellowship of His activity and His life. The continuance of fellowship accordingly constitutes the essence of the state of grace (Schleiermacher 1928:425).

The classic view, describes salvation as atonement and atonement as salvation. The Subjective view describes atonement as preceding salvation. Schleiermacher however sees salvation as first the change within the spiritual life of humanity, and atonement as the second process within humanity. Schleiermacher sees the result of salvation as being moral upliftment within humanity and atonement as the reconciliation of humanity with their community and environment. He writes that, “The result is, not only that there arises amongst them a new corporate life, in complete contrast to the old, but also that each of them becomes in himself a new person – that is to say a, citizen” (Schleiermacher 1928:429).

Schleiermacher sees sin as imperfection. Sin becomes something which humanity seeks to overcome. It is the fellowship with Christ that causes humanity to overcome sin. All Christ’s activity stems from the being of God in Him.

## 2.5 Conclusion

The extent to which of contemporary discourse on the doctrine of atonement has been influenced by the work of Gustav Aulén and how most authors responded critically to his analysis has been briefly discussed. All authors after Aulén, recognised the need for a retrieval of the *Christus Victor* view on the work of Christ.

Concerning the penal substitution model, some authors (feminist theologians amongst others) agree with the criticism against penal substitution, seeing it as promoting domination of the marginalised. Whilst other authors such as Colin Gunton retrieves from Calvin the notion of justification that is the establishment of just rule in society. Even though most authors agree on the problems related to the moral influence theory, many contemporary authors (Scliermacher amongst others), follow this model. However, there are also many authors who see a need for an integration of all three models (McGrath, Migliore and Conradie).<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> See Alister McGrath (1998) and Ernst Conradie (2006).



## Chapter 3

### Feminist contributions to the doctrine of Christ

#### 3.1 Introduction

Feminist theology has made important contributions to all the major sub-disciplines of Christian theology, including Biblical Studies, the history of Christianity, Systematic Theology and Practical Theology. This study will focus more on feminist contributions to Systematic Theology, particularly feminist contributions to the doctrine of Christ.

Feminist contributions to Systematic Theology have not always followed the pattern of a discussion of the various topics in the field of Christian doctrine. Understandably, feminist theologians have questioned the underlying assumptions of Systematic Theology as a discipline and have therefore engaged at some length with basic methodological aspects. Nevertheless, over the last few decades feminist theologians have made a number of significant contributions to reflection on the doctrine of the trinity,<sup>22</sup> on God as Father /

Mother<sup>23</sup> and Creator, on Jesus Christ<sup>24</sup>, on the Holy Spirit<sup>25</sup>, on sin and salvation,<sup>26</sup> on the church<sup>27</sup> and the sacraments and on Christian hope.

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- 22 The classical formation of the doctrine of the trinity has been persistently critiqued by feminist theologians, who view the doctrine as being used to reinforce hierarchy. According to feminist theologians, the Father appears to be accorded superior status over the other two persons, with the Holy Spirit as being the distinct third person. By over-emphasizing the maleness of God, the notion of the trinity has aroused various responses from feminists, from simple rejection of what appears a “three-man-club” to more nuanced critique (Parsons 2002:139).
- 23 Traditional male language for God is being enriched with various feminist interpretations on gendered language for God. Some feminist theologians recognize and acknowledge the use of feminine imagery for God, while other feminist theologians believe that a female deity will affirm that women are fully in God’s image. Still, others are not convinced that a recovery of the Goddess is the solution since that would tend to focus on what is stereotypically feminine). These feminists explore other images for God, such as Mother, Father, Creator, Friend etc (Japinga 1999:69-70).
- 24 For African American women, Jesus Christ reveals God on earth. Their perspective of Christ is that Christ is their confidant and friend who understand their suffering. Jesus Christ to the African American person means life, freedom, liberty and wholeness. This definition also reflects the faith of the wider African-American community, since male and female alike suffered great oppression (Russel & Clarkson 1996:39). See also the discussion below.
- 25 “Life in the Spirit is life in Christ. The life of God is bestowed on us as love, grace and communion. The Holy Spirit helps humanity to become by grace, who God is by nature – which is boundless self-giving, free, having a love that respects and cares for God’s creation” (Fiorenza 1991:188-189). Feminist theologians have interpreted the Holy Spirit as the life-giving and sustaining breath of the body, creation, earth and every organism. Thus the Spirit is not necessarily female, even though this identification has been made (Grey 2001:83).
- 26 The Christian notion of sin has often been critiqued by feminist theologians. They have argued that sin is more than an individual’s moral acts (Japinga 1999:115). It is also the distortion of human relationships through societal structures and through ideologies such as racism, sexism, and classism. Concerning salvation, feminist theologians typically affirm that salvation affects three dimensions of a person, namely the person’s relationship with God, the other, and the individual’s sense of self (Japinga 1999:115).

Over the last few decades a number of contributions by feminist theologians on the doctrine of Christ and, more specifically, the doctrine of atonement have been published. Some feminist / womanist authors follow a hermeneutics of retrieval in that they find in the figure of Jesus a symbol for the liberation of women from oppressive and patriarchal social structures. In the work of other feminist theologians a hermeneutics of suspicion tend to dominate. They have rejected traditional (Western) modes of Christology altogether, seeing it as being “damaging to women” and finding no reason to reconstruct the exclusively male symbol of Jesus<sup>28</sup> (see Ruether 1983:136-138). Yet other feminist theologians have reinvestigated Christological themes with both a hermeneutics of suspicion and of retrieval in order to critically explore the significance of the person and work of Jesus Christ within the context of contemporary forms of domination in the name of differences of gender.

### **3.2 Jesus as liberator also of women: A hermeneutics of retrieval**

The following contributions follow a hermeneutics of retrieval. Theologians such as Kelly Douglas, Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Chung Hyun Kyung, find within the figure of Jesus symbols to liberate women from their struggles and oppressive state.

#### **Kelly Douglas**

Kelly Douglas, in her book, *The Black Christ* (1994), seeks to affirm the “black Christ”<sup>29</sup> in the lives of black women. Douglas explained that in affirming Christ’s blackness, womanist theology does not merely suggest that blackness is a facial description of Jesus, but that Christ is black for the black community in terms of his appearance, actions and his commitment to the struggles of the black community for life and wholeness. Therefore, according to Douglas, to acknowledge the blackness of Christ is to confirm black women’s unwavering commitment to their families and community (1994:107). Unlike Jaqueline Grant,<sup>30</sup> who views Christ as the one who stands against a “tri-dimensional tyranny,”<sup>31</sup> Douglas’ Christological perspective stresses the need for a multi-dimensional analysis that opposes all oppression of the black community. Thus, Christ is a sustainer, a liberator and a prophet in the face of evils such as racism, sexism, classism and heterosexism.

The emphasis on the blackness of Christ is born from within an oppressive context. Black women’s interpretation of Christ inspires them to be self-determined to survive against their struggles. It also affirms black women’s faith that God is on the side of the oppressed. The

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27 Ecclesiology receives significant attention from feminist theologians. The *ekklesia* is interpreted by feminist theologians to be a redemptive community, which speaks of equality of both male and female (Musser & Price 1992:189). For feminist theologians *ekklesia* speaks of a longing for a new future (Ford 1997:398).

28 See Mary Daly’s (1973) views on Christology.

29 Although Jesus’ ethnicity and dark-skinned complexion are certainly important aspects of Christ’s blackness, to call Christ “Black” points to more than simply ancestry or biological characteristics. Throughout religious history, the Blackness of Christ has had significant theological implications (Douglas 1994:1).

30 See Jaqueline Grant (1989).

31 A tri-dimensional tyranny encompasses race, gender and class oppression. Jesus Christ represents a three-fold significance: first Christ identifies with “Black women”, in their circumstance: secondly Christ affirms their humanity and thirdly Christ inspires active hope in the struggle for their liberation (1989:217).

blackness of Christ helps black women in their commitment to better their families and communities as they strive for wholeness.

Douglas stated that womanist theologians go beyond the aspect of the skin colour of Christ. Their approach to Christ is an affirmation of the black community's perspective of Christ. Christ is black in appearance and in solidarity with the oppressive community. The blackness of Christ allows black people to identify with Christ. Douglas explained that previous black theologians viewed Christ merely as a liberator. Yet womanist theologians see Christ as more than a liberator, sustainer or comrade of the Black community. For them, Christ is a prophet, one who is continuing the work of the prophets such as Moses and Amos. Christ is present in the black community to sustain, restore, and deliver from anything that decays the community.

According to Douglas, Christ is seen as a prophetic presence within the black community and various symbols and icons are used to give Christ a "face". This allows black people to identify and see themselves in Christ. Douglas noted that "the black Christ endeavours to lift up these persons, especially black women who are part of the black community towards wholeness. These portrayals of Christ suggest for instance that Christ can be seen in the face of each one who has helped the entire black community in their struggle to survive and become whole" (1994:108). Douglas affirmed that Christ is found amongst women and men of the black community. Black men are not excluded, since Christ is found amongst all black people.

Douglas (1994:111) highlighted a question often posed concerning a womanist understanding of Christ: "Does womanist Christology take into account the Nicene/Chalcedonian tradition?" Douglas argued that Christology seeks to define what the meaning of Jesus as Christ is, "The bearer of God's rule, the mediator of God's salvation" (1994:111). She noted that the Nicene/Chalcedonian confession sees Christ as divine and human, the incarnate God. The emphasis of the uniqueness of Christ as "divine/human" makes it impossible for ordinary Christians to be an example of Christ in the world. Christ comes above humanity, one that is worshipped and admired, but not followed or imitated.

Douglas concluded that a womanist understanding of the black Christ makes Christ accessible to the black community. Unlike the Nicene/Chalcedonian confession, a womanist understanding of the black Christ confesses the ministry of Christ on earth. According to Douglas, womanist Christology allows the ordinary Christian to be a follower and an example of Christ in their everyday life.

### **Mercy Amba Oduyoye**

Mercy Amba Oduyoye, in her book *Introducing African Women's Theology* (2001), depicts the African Christian women's context and experience which shapes the Christology that is meaningful to them. Oduyoye offers a view on Christology that would enable African women to connect with Jesus Christ. She does this by bringing together biblical hermeneutics with cultural hermeneutics in order to draw and develop a Christology that would eradicate the

injustice of a culture that suppresses women. Oduyoye's contribution challenges Western Christologies.

Oduyoye commented that "Christology" is a theological concept that is far removed from the everyday language of the African Christian woman. The name "Jesus" however, is a name they know, believe in, talk about, and closely connect to. Oduyoye explained that African women's Christology is not characterized by the incarnation of Christ, even though the incarnation is accepted with great faith. According to Oduyoye, African women's Christology is characterized by the scene of Mary and Elizabeth who shares their divinely inspired conception. African women fear being childless due to the reproach of society against childlessness. They therefore understand divine intervention in birth and conception. African women's Christology, like the story of Mary and Elizabeth,<sup>32</sup> is deeply rooted in their life experiences. Oduyoye further explained that African women compare all suffering, pain and struggle to that of birth pangs. She (2001:57) wrote: "To the African mind, however, all suffering has to be like birth pangs; it has to lead to a birth, it has to lead to a new beginning, so women create for themselves a Jesus who will mid-wife the birth of the new."

Oduyoye (2001) argues that the "Western missionary enterprise in Africa" has introduced a Christology that does not identify with the African context. The African Instituted Churches (AIC) have developed a Christology that embraces the African women's context, its fears and realities. The Christology that African women embrace, sees Christ as the "victorious Christ". For African women, says Oduyoye, Christ is the one who liberates women from their "triple burdens" of racism, poverty and marginalization. They connect with a Christ who does not place burdens upon them, but allows them to see a Christ who heals their wounds, suffers with those who suffer and liberates those who are left captive by their culture.

According to Oduyoye (2001:58), Christology to African women is about Jesus who saves. Salvation for African women means that Christ empowers women to stand up to "androcentric" culture. Christ is the one who restores and heals their dignity and self worth as well as mend their broken relationships. Storytelling is an integral part of the African women's life. It is through the living and telling of Jesus who saves that Christology is to be discerned. Christology to these women is the story that Jesus saves, and the one who proclaims the good news that set captives free. African women therefore draw strength and hope from living and retelling Jesus' story. Oduyoye affirms that there are aspects of the gospel that identify with the life and experience of the African woman – for example the story of Joseph and Mary and Joseph's respect and sensitivity for God's work through a woman. African women, identify with this story, since they understand the work of God in their lives, as they hold leadership positions within the church and society.

Oduyoye concluded that African women's Christology is birthed out of their everyday experience. For African women to connect with Christology, Jesus Christ has to be able to impact their lives holistically, and identify with their weaknesses, oppression, poverty, pain, and injustice. African women's Christology, is propelled by the announcing of the good news.

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<sup>32</sup> According to Oduyoye (2001:58), the magnificat is a cardinal hermeneutical key for African women's Christology.

## **Chung Hyun Kyung**

In her book, *Struggle to be the Sun Again: Introducing Asian Women's Theology* (1990), Chung Hyun Kyung looks at who Jesus is to Asian women. In a chapter entitled "Who is Jesus for Asian Women", Kyung (1990:53-73) looks at how Asian women used traditional Christological imagery to bring new meaning out of the old language (1990:53). Kyung also explores new Christological imagery – which Asian women refer to as a "Christological transformation".

Since many churches within Asia are still influenced by Western missionary theologies, a large majority of Asian women still use the traditional missionary titles for Jesus. Thus, according to Kyung, the Asian women's theologies may appear to be similar to Western missionary or Asian male theology. Yet, when closely examined, new meaning can be found within these traditional titles for Jesus. The most widely used image of Jesus, is that of the "suffering servant". They interpret the suffering of Jesus as creating a new humanity. For Asian women, suffering is not an end, but rather a means by which patriarchal evils can be exposed. Asian women see servanthood in a different manner. For them a suffering servant is confirmation that there is injustice. It is also a witness to God's righteousness. Therefore, the suffering servant image is a challenge to the powers, principalities and patriarchal domination in the world.

Kyung also explores emerging imagery given to Jesus, which actually portrays their self-determination and freedom. As Asian women become more self-assured, most women have continued to use and believe in the name Jesus Christ within their own culture, indigenous religions, and political movements. Kyung commented that Asian women have developed a Christological identity which shapes the Asian women's futuristic experience rather than their present oppressive experience. The following new emerging images are:

- (a) Jesus as liberator, revolutionary, and political martyr;
- (b) Jesus as mother, woman and shaman;
- (c) Jesus as worker of grain.

(a) The image of Jesus as liberator is an image that can be found within the writings of Asian, Indian, Indonesian, Korean and Filipino women. Since Asian women have suffered under colonialism and military dictatorship, their freedom, survival and reclaimed dignity is highly valued by them. Therefore, Kyung (1990:63) sees the image of Jesus as liberator is a very prominent image used by the women. After three hundred years of Spanish and American colonialism, Filipino women in particular saw their suffering, the death and resurrection of their human dignity in the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ. For them, Christ can be seen within the Filipino women who fought against an unjust system. Kyung (1990:63) wrote that Filipino women have been arrested, raped, tortured, imprisoned and displaced from their homes. Many have been killed in their struggle toward self-determination for their people.

(b) According to Kyung, Korean women compare the pain and sorrow Jesus feels for humanity to the sorrow and pain of the mothers who had lost their children in war-torn Indo-China. The weeping of Jesus for the suffering of humanity is likened to those mothers who



weep for their dead sons and daughters. In this case, Jesus is portrayed with the image of a mother. For Korean women, says Kyung, the mother image of Jesus imparts compassion, care and sensitivity as it destroys authoritarian, paternalistic paradigms. Asian women continue to identify Jesus Christ with a female figure - one who embraces and identifies with their historical context. Jesus Christ symbolises the female and the marginalised. To Asian women, Jesus is seen symbolically as the “Women Messiah” who has come to free the oppressed.”

(c) Another new female image which Kyung examines is the image of the shaman. A majority of Korean women adheres to shamanism, which is also considered to be the “big sister” to the oppressed minjing women. Korean shamanism has played a prominent role in healing, counseling, and comforting Korean women whose lives are filled with *han*.<sup>33</sup> Anger and embitterment of *han* cause Korean women to be emotionally, spiritually and physically broken. Kyung affirms that if Jesus Christ were to make sense to Korean women, then Jesus Christ needs to be a “priest of *han*”. They accept the Jesus of the synoptic gospels, who healed, exorcised, and comforted many women in his ministry. Women can identify with this, since salvation for them means healing, deliverance, and exorcism from the hold of *han*. Kyung (1990: 66) commented: “When Korean women therefore see Jesus Christ as the priest of *han*, they connect with the female image of Jesus more than the male image of Jesus. They take Jesus as a big sister, just as they take the shaman as a big sister in their community.”

Kyung argues that the female imagery of Jesus Christ allows Asian women to relate to Jesus in their everyday lives. It enables them to move away from a theology from “above”, (which perpetuates a theology of male domination), to a theology from “below”. Kyung notes that Asian women reject any hierarchical image to worship. For them, Jesus Christ emerges as the woman who works in a factory, as well as one who works in the harvest fields. Jesus Christ emerges as the woman who cares and heals others of their wounded bodies. Factory workers see Jesus in each other as they work hard, struggling for their survival. Jesus Christ does not represent one who has descended from a “glorious looking heaven”. Instead, Jesus emerges in their exploited, broken-hearted struggles.

Kyung makes reference to feminist theologians in India, who sees the female image of Jesus as one who joins women in the shedding of life-giving blood. The menstrual cycle of women is likened to the blood of Jesus that was shed in order to give life. According to Kyung (1990:71), they see the meaning of Eucharist in the menstrual cycle of women. They argue that a male priest cannot identify with the phrase “this is my body given up for you and my blood shed for you, drink it”<sup>34</sup> since they have not experienced the shedding of blood. Yet women, who experience the shedding of blood, are prohibited from participating in religious rituals, as they are considered to be unclean so that they will not “corrupt” the holy altar. For these feminist theologians, Jesus’ blood has been shed to give eternal life and menstruation is considered to be the flow of life-blood. Therefore, women’s menstruation is the holy Eucharist through which, the renewal of life becomes possible. Jesus joins women in life-giving bleeding (Kyung 1990:71).

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<sup>33</sup> Feminist Korean theologians see oppression as that of “*han*” (see Hak 1982). *Han* is a sense of unresolved resentment against injustice suffered.

<sup>34</sup> See Luke 22:19-20.

Lastly, Kyung examines the image of Jesus as “grain” for starving women, Jesus Christ emerges in the grain they eat. Without grain, starving women will die. They symbolically see Jesus as grain that makes them alive. As the grain sustains their lives, they find new meaning in the phrase, “For God so loved the world that He gave His beloved son” (Kyung 1990:73). Kyung explains that when starving women receive grain from concerned sources, it is as if God has given them Jesus Christ, the “beloved son”.

Kyung concluded that both the usage of traditional images, as well as the emergence of a new image of Jesus used by Asian women, based on their survival and liberation in the midst of their negative life experiences. It is clear, that these images pose a challenge to traditional Christology, as it does not embrace the male disclosure of Christ. For Asian women, the maleness of Christ holds limitations that need transformation so that Asian women can connect with Jesus Christ.

### **3.3 Jesus as liberator of women rejected: A hermeneutics of suspicion**

The following contribution by Mary Daly rejects traditional modes of any Christology which portrays Jesus as saviour altogether.

#### **Mary Daly**

Mary Daly rejects classical Christology and sees it as a Christian form of ideology as it affirms sexual hierarchy. In her book *Beyond God the Father* (1973), Daly criticizes the idea of a male saviour as it perpetuates the notion of male superiority. Daly cites other problems with regard to the image of the crucifixion of Jesus as Redeemer (1973:76). According to Daly, Christians are supposed to foster their identification with Jesus by living “sacrificially”. However, she observed that this poses a problem for women, since women are typically identified both with Eve and with evil. Accordingly, women cannot be regarded as “innocent” victims who sacrifice themselves in immolation for the sins of others in an attempt to follow the example of Jesus (1973:77). Thus, even where they seek to follow Christ, women are not only expected to make sacrifices; they become a scapegoat in doing so. She believes that the liberation of women will be realized when there is an acceptance of the limitations of Jesus becoming human. In this manner the idea of Jesus being the “second person of the Trinity” who took on the form of a human will become less plausible.

When confronted with the issue of women’s liberation, Daly explained that theologians, priests and ministers assert that God became “incarnate” as a male and not female. On this basis they formulate their arguments which promote male superiority and dominance. She believes that traditional Christologies are guilty of justifying male dominance since Jesus did not take the form of the “inferior” sex (women). Daly (1973:70) says “The underlying and often explicit assumption in the minds of theologians down through the centuries has been that the divinity could not have designed to “become incarnate” in the “inferior” sex, and the “fact” that “he” did not do so of course confirms male superiority.”

She is of the conviction that the “masculine symbol” of the divine “incarnation” will most likely not be overcome unless there is a paradigm shift in women. She believes that the

incarnation of Jesus in the form of the male gender will not work. The idea of the divine incarnation as a male will be replaced by the religious conviction that makes humanity aware of the “power of being” in all humans. Daly (1973:71) said: “Seeds of this awareness are already present in the traditional doctrine that all human beings are made to the image of God and in a less than adequate way in the doctrine of grace.”

Daly is not denying that there has been an incarnation event. However, she proposes that the event should be placed in the context of every historical moment, culture and people. Concerning the aspect of sin and salvation, Daly sees a male saviour as perpetuating male dominance and patriarchy. The idea of “original sin” is being exploited by patriarchal thinking to promote servitude. According to Daly, the Adam and Eve story has been seen as a hoax. In the same manner, women are beginning to perceive the incarnation as a kind of “cosmic joke”. Daly argues that a male saviour cannot save humanity from the “original sin of sexism” since the male image fails to have a fair representation of both sexual groups. Instead, it glorifies the male sexual identity.

Another problem surrounding the “Christian idolatry” of the person of Jesus is the notion of the “scapegoat syndrome” to foster their identification with Jesus as the sacrificial saviour. This sacrificial imagery of Jesus, says Daly, may evoke a sense of piety and saintliness with some Christians. However, in many circumstances it evokes feelings of intolerance, guilt and condemnation, particularly in women. Accordingly, Christianity fosters the notion of women’s roles as scapegoats. Thus, according to Daly, it is important to recognize the interconnection between the Christian qualities expected of women and Jesus in the role as scapegoat.<sup>35</sup> Qualities such as love, humility, meekness passivity are often qualities that are said to be ideally for women. These qualities also idealize Jesus. The encouragement of these qualities by the Christian community reinforces the scapegoat model on women. The irony of this is that women, being the opposite sex as Jesus, are not considered to be “good” enough to measure up to the high standards of the male saviour. Therefore, failure is inevitable. Daly notes (1973:77) that, “As the powerless victims of scapegoat psychology, women are deprived of the “credit” for sacrifice and the dignity of taking an active role.” Everyday victims offer themselves for the sins of others, as Christian theology has imagined Jesus. Women imitating the sacrificial love of Jesus are thus encouraged to willingly accept the victim’s role.

### **3.4 Jesus as liberator of both women and men: A hermeneutics of suspicion and retrieval**

#### **Rosemary Radforth Ruether**

In her book *Sexism and God-Talk* (1983) Rosemary Radforth Ruether directs her attention to the historical Jesus and seeks to give a reinterpretation of the classical views of Jesus. In her

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<sup>35</sup> “The moral aim of Christianity is to foster identification with Jesus as a model; its effect is often to inspire hatred for those who fail—because of their origins or beliefs—to display the proper reverence toward him. The Judeo-Christian imagery of the scapegoat—from the ritual of Yom Kippur to the crucifixion of Jesus as Redeemer thus fails to engender compassion and sympathy for the other” (Daly 1973:75-76).

opinion, a Christology that is identified with the maleness of the historical Jesus leads to the exclusion of women from Christian ministry as they are seen as secondary to males. Ruether looks at two different Christologies that existed alongside the dominant masculine Christologies. They are “androgynous” Christologies, which sees Christ as the representative of both male and female, and “Spirit Christologies which places the emphasis on the “split between the maleness and femaleness overcome on a spiritual plane in the redeemed humanity” (Ruether 1983:127). Ruether then hones in on feminist Christology and identifies Jesus as the Christ who liberates humanity. He is according to Ruether (1983:127-134) the liberating Word of God, manifesting the “kenosis of patriarchy”, meaning that Christ has put an end to patriarchy.

Masculine Christologies defines Christ to be the founder and cosmic ruler, who exist in a higher social stratus, since males are considered to be the fullness of humanity. Therefore, the incarnation of God could only be in the form of a male. Masculine Christology holds the notion that women represent the humble, pious, sensitive part of the Christian community who are mentally, physically and morally inferior to males. Therefore, women are unable to represent Christ, since Christ is seen as “all-ruler”, a “cosmic governor”. Masculine Christology affirms that there has to be a male representation as both Christ and priest. Ruether (1983:126) writes that the “possession of male genitalia becomes the essential prerequisite for representing Christ, who is the disclosure of the male God.”

Ruether looks at her first Christology, “androgynous Christology”, which has its roots in mystical tradition. According to Ruether, this myth encapsulates the idea that Adam had both male and female characteristics. The downfall of humanity and the ushering in of sex and sin came as a result of the female being separated from the male side of Adam. Christ is considered to be the “new androgynous Adam”, who allows humanity to rise above the male/female separation and regain spiritual wholeness. Ruether explains that the depiction of Christ reinforces the bias that male is the higher sex and that being female represents the lower side of humanity. Since femaleness is compared to the lower side of humanity, the separation of the female side of Adam is therefore seen as a rebellion of the lower against the higher side of man. In Christ the male is given attributes that are both commanding and nurturing. Yet women do not have “masculine” attributes and within the church they cannot exercise the authority of Christ through priestly or public teaching positions.

According to Ruether (1983), androgynous Christology will always reinforce an androcentric bias, whether women are seen as lower, “responsible” for sin and sex, or whether they are seen as having a higher spiritual quality. Women will never be seen as a fully human representative.

The second Christology that is different to the dominant masculine Christology, is “spirit Christology”. This movement goes beyond androgynous Christology. Spirit Christologies see the liberation of women to be the fulfilment of the prophecy of the prophet Joel, where the outpouring of the prophetic Spirit upon men and women will bring about world salvation. Ruether states that the androgynous Christologies attempts to affirm the female side of Christ. According to Ruether (1983), this notion is weak since women only represents the feminine side of a male-centred symbol. The symbol of Christ as male still promotes an androcentric

bias in terms of the redemption of humanity. However, spirit Christologies continues to disclose Christ through “spirit-possessed” male and female.

For Ruether, a starting point to the inquiry of a Christology that does not embrace the traditional masculine image of Jesus would be to re-examine the Jesus of the synoptic Gospels. According to Ruether, Jesus brings about a new prophetic vision, where he as liberator, challenges social and religious hierarchal structures, by challenging them with principles of social relationships. The picture of Christ is of one who embraces the despised groups, the prostitutes, publicans, tax collectors, Samaritans. Christ referred to the Messiah as being servant and not king, thus eradicating a paradigm of hierarchical relations. Jesus ushers in new relationships where everyone is known as brother and sister. Ruether (1983:137) affirms that theologically the maleness of Christ has no significance. Jesus’ ability to act and speak as a liberator, is not due to him being male. But as the liberating “Word of God manifesting the kenosis<sup>36</sup> of patriarchy”<sup>37</sup>. According to Ruether the synoptic gospels portray Jesus’ criticism of the religious and social structures of the day, as being compatible with the feminist criticism. The women whom Jesus encounters within the gospels - such as the widow and Samaritan woman - are not representations of the, “feminine” but rather a representation of the marginalised who could be both male and female. Ruether (1983:138) concludes that the early Christian language describes Christ as a sister of the early Christian women. She states that Christ and the liberated humanity is not just disclosed as one form, “Christ being male”, and liberated community as being female. For Ruether, the Christian community continues Christ's identity as new humanity being male and female.

### **Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza**

In her book *Jesus: Miriam’s Child, Sophia’s Prophet* (1994), Elizabeth Fiorenza develops a “Sophia Christology” in order to understand the significance of the person and work of Jesus Christ for feminist discourse and practice. In her book *In Memory of Her* (1983), Fiorenza offers a feminist reconstruction of the life of Jesus. In a chapter “The Jesus Movement of Judaism”, Fiorenza affirms that the ministry of Jesus drew a community of oneness, inclusiveness and equality.

Fiorenza focuses on traditions of divine wisdom and considers the focus to be important, since the wisdom tradition of Sophia has been completely erased from Western Christianity. The earliest Christological expression can be traced back to the traditions of the Jesus movement. According to Fiorenza, the earliest Palestinian theology understood the ministry, life and death of Jesus in terms of Jesus being the prophet of Sophia, and later as Sophia herself. Sophia’s messenger proclaimed a message of hope, peace and rest to the poor and underprivileged. Fiorenza finds this message of Sophia’s prophet to have theological significance, since it does not embrace superiority and exclusivity.

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<sup>36</sup> The term “kenosis” ultimately derives from the use of the Greek verb *kenoo* meaning “he emptied himself (Philippians 2:7)” (Polkinghorne:2001).

<sup>37</sup> Ruether’s (1983:137) idea of “kenosis of patriarch”, means that Christ has put an end to patriarchy.

Fiorenza (1994:140) quotes Luke 7:35 which states “wisdom is proven right by all her children”, and reinterprets the text as, “Sophia is justified for by all her children”. She writes that the context of this text is found where Jesus is sitting at the table with prostitutes, tax collectors, drunkards and sinners. Sophia shows compassion and concern for the well-being and freedom for the marginalized, irrespective of their social standard and ethnicity. Fiorenza gives two Christological images for Jesus. The first being Jesus as the wise teacher who through his life reflects humanity’s continuous search for a gracious God. Sophia-God’s teaching grants insight and wisdom and challenges humanity to act against religious pluralism and injustice.

The second Christological image is Jesus as Divine Sophia. Fiorenza (1994:158) notes that “the earliest Jesus traditions perceive this God of gracious goodness in a woman’s gestalt as divine Sophia wisdom”. Sophia bears the image of mother, sister, wife and teacher, who cares for the stranger and offers them comfort. Sophia holds the attributes of being “all powerful”, “all-knowing” and is a partaker in the works of God.

Concerning the cross of Christ, Fiorenza believes that the death and of execution of Jesus, should be seen as socio-political act - an act by the “imperial system”. Fiorenza (1994:106-119) affirms that a theology that is silent about the socio-political causes of Jesus’ execution and stylises him as the paradigmatic sacrificial victim continues the “kyriarchal cycle”<sup>38</sup> of violence and victimization. Fiorenza interprets the death of Jesus and John the Baptist to be much like the other prophets of Israel. Their deaths were a result of their commitment to their mission as prophets and agents of Sophia-God. The death of Jesus was a result of him being a prophet of Sophia. Jesus proclaimed the *basileia*<sup>39</sup> of Sophia-God, and suffered violence at the hands of men who seek to hinder this message. According to Fiorenza, the death of Jesus was not a sacrifice or substitution desired by God. It was as a result of violence of an imperial system, which victimised, crucified, Jews, Romans, oppressed, men and women alike.

According to Fiorenza, there are similarities between feminist liberationist and early Christian interpretation of the cross. Feminist critical analysis of the cross is birthed from their experiences of violence and oppression. Similarly, early Christian attempts to “make sense” of the execution of Jesus, starts with the dehumanisation and humiliation of Jesus as a political criminal. Both the feminist discourse and early church interpretations of the cross have their roots in the historical facts of injustice, oppression and dehumanisation of people. In terms of the resurrection, both discourses view the resurrection to be symbolic, yet real. The resurrection does not only refer to the resurrection of the soul, but a transformation of a world plagued by hunger, abuse and injustice. It does not only speak of a world in the future, but rather a present world where there is justification for all those who struggle for human dignity and freedom.

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<sup>38</sup> “A kyriarchal system serves the interests of elite men” (Fiorenza 1994:100). It is a system of victimization which severely oppressed men and women who have no social power. Women are mostly affected by such a system.

<sup>39</sup> “Basileia”, is the Greek word referring to the Roman Empire. Hence Jesus’ message about the *basileia* was both political and religious. “Basileia” conjures up the image of hope for God’s renewed and different world, a world free from suffering (1983:110-111).

For Fiorenza, Jesus and the movement gathered around him to offer a prototype for women struggling for liberation today. She states that an excavation of the wisdom tradition is not a move towards the usage of early Jewish/Christian wisdom theology, but rather provides a motivation towards a struggle against the use of a masculine language of God. Fiorenza affirms that feminist theologians should find their own images, names and symbols of Divine Sophia that will suit their context, experience, and theological struggles. In this manner the masculine language used for God and Christ, which is embraced by the Western sex/gender culture will be eradicated.

### **Rita Nakashima Brock**

Rita Nakashima Brock, in her book, *Journeys by Heart, A Christology of Erotic Power* (1988) develops a Christology which moves away from using patriarchal images of power and develops a Christology which she believes is relational and community based. For Brock, a Christology where healing and spirituality has not been contaminated by patriarchal influence is one where Jesus is not the central figure, the “heroic figure”. Healing, wholeness and spirituality, says Brock, is a result of deep intimate, interactive relationships of people in communities. Jesus becomes a partaker of this community and not the one around whom the community evolves. He is born into this community and partakes in its decisions, history and culture. Therefore, Brock refers to Christ as Christa/community.

Brock (1988:52) notes that “Christa/Community is a lived reality expressed in relational images. Hence Christa/Community is described in the images of events in which erotic power made manifest”. Brock explains that erotic power within relationships does not reside within a single individual, but flows from everyone in the community. In this sense, according to Brock, Christ does not solely bring erotic power into a community, and neither does Christ control it. Brock believes that there is a lack of understanding concerning the power of community. She believes that Jesus’ ability to show compassion, concern, care and love for others is a result of a community who had imparted to him these values. Thus, Jesus was involved in a community of mutual understanding and teaching. Brock believes that divine erotic power, frees, heals and restores through willing mutual relationships. Thus, she proposes a Christology of interconnection and active participation of all humanity for love, peace and justice.

For Brock, the Christa/Community comprises of an entire community, where Jesus is not the central figure with abstract ideals. A Christology built on a historical Jesus says Brock (1988:68) “misplaces the locus of incarnation and redemption”. According to Brock, the Gospel writers used Jesus as their own theological figure, as an icon for faith. Brock explains that his life, faith, history, and their own context were used to create imagery for their faith and hope. The Gospel writers did not see Jesus as the only revelatory and redemptive witness of God/dess. According to Brock, the revelatory and redemptive witness of God/dess is in fact the Christa community.

Brock explains that the Christa/Community has focussed on the Jesus who is the self-sacrificing, self-giving one who died to show love, “agape”. Even though His actions went against a system of greed, power and egocentricity, it does not lead to love and intimacy.

Brock (1988:70) explains that love and intimacy needs self-affirmation and self-awareness and connectedness, “erotic power and heart, are the basis of love”.

Brock concludes her argument by affirming that feminist Christology, guided by the heart, provides a gateway to understanding Christ in a manner that will not embrace patriarchy. The decentralising of the historical Jesus is necessary in order to experience complete freedom of life.

### **Sarah Coakley**

In a chapter titled “Kenosis: Theological meanings and gender connotations” from the book *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis* (Polkinghorne 2001), Sarah Coakley examines the word “kenosis” in reference to the Pauline text of (Phillipians 2:7), which reads: “he emptied himself”. Coakley is aware of feminist criticism of kenosis theology, since women can be endangered by an emphasis on “self-emptying”. Nevertheless, she appeals to Christian women to reconsider the status of kenosis as a significant spiritual goal for both men and women.

Coakley sees two possible interpretations of this text. The first interpretation focuses on the incarnation of Christ as the “emptying” of Christ, as he became human. The second interpretation that Coakley examines perceives the “emptying” as Christ humbling himself to the cross, and not in the sense of his becoming human. According to Coakley, the question still remains as to what precisely “has been “emptied” at the incarnation. Coakley notes that Christological readings of kenosis focuses largely on Christ’s divinity and incarnation. She believes that the reference to kenosis should include the two other persons of the Godhead. Coakley writes that “kenotic self-surrender is too pervasive and important a characteristic of divine love to circumscribe its significance in Christology alone” (Polkinghorne 2001:199).

According to Coakley the theological aspect of kenosis is filled with gender themes. A question that is often posed says Coakley (Polkinghorne 2001:205), is “If God is powerful enough to eradicate evil and suffering, then why does God not do so? It must be that God has placed limitations on God’s own power ...” This question and answer creates the picture that an almighty and powerful God has restrained power in order to allow humanity to exercise their freedom. According to Coakley, this picture of freedom and independence of humanity is “ deeply reminiscent of the male child repudiation of the power of the mother.” Coakley says that this picture is strongly criticized by French feminists as being gendered. They consider it to be a “male” fantasy – the desire to break away from the nurturing and caring of a mother which is the foundation of mutual human dependency and relationship.

A competing imagery which is also considered to be gendered, is that of God being maternal nurturing and supporting humanity into freedom. In the latter image, God is seen as empowering us into freedom then one gender is in play. However in the former image if God is seen as one who “must get out of the way” for the freedom of humanity then the masculine gender is at play.

Coakley looks at the critique by feminist theologians on kenotic Christology and explains that their critique of kenotic Christology is that women often fall prey to the emphasis on “self-



emptying”. In their opinion, the theme of self-emptying is not helpful and liberating since it already forms part of women’s identity. Though Coakley recognizes the above critique, she does encourage Christian women to re-look at the legitimacy of kenosis as a spiritual goal for both men and women, in that the theme of kenosis envelops the idea of respect and love for the “other”.

Coakley sees the incarnation as a “break between God and God”, so that a kenotic space could be created to include and recognize the other. Coakley added that kenosis from this perspective involves a discussion of the deep difficulties of recognizing “otherness” without swallowing the other into a preconceived category or an item of personal need (Polkinghorne 2001:209). She believes that humanity needs to be emptied of the demand for egotistical control.

To conclude, since kenosis deals with self-sacrifice, whether in God or in humans, it still has overtones of abuse and degradation which feminist theologians criticize. Sarah Coakley seeks to rescue kenosis from feminist criticism as she encourages feminist theologians not to see kenosis through the eyes of gender connotations, but to see it as a moral act to overcome humanistic power and domination.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

Pertinent questions often unveil underlying problems in Christology, for example, who Jesus is and how Jesus helps humanity. If Christ was male, then “can a male saviour save women?” (Ruether 1983:116). At the heart of the wider Christian tradition, lies a Christology, which sees Jesus Christ as a male figure, a perfect example for humanity. The work of Christ on the cross is seen as a triumphalist male hero, who gained victory over his enemies. Feminist theologians argue that as long as Jesus is seen as normatively a male person, it will always be a challenge for women to identify with Jesus as saviour. Jesus Christ as a male figure cannot symbolize salvation and freedom for women. Therefore, feminist contributions have attempted to reconstruct Christology in the light of feminist values and concerns, where Christ is represented as liberator for both males and females. In order to develop a Christology for the liberation of women, many feminist theologians see a need for a reinterpretation of the Christ figure, as well as the scriptures.

## Chapter 4

### Mary Grey's contributions to the feminist discourse on the work of Christ

#### 4.1 Introduction

Mary Grey, one of the feminist theologians, who reinvestigated Christological themes with both a hermeneutics of suspicion and of retrieval, sees Jesus Christ as the embodiment of God's relational passionate energy. In her book *Redeeming the Dream* (1989), Mary Grey views Jesus Christ as a driving power who brings forth wholeness in mutual-relationships between men and women. For Grey, Jesus Christ is the living example of mutual power in relationships.

#### 4.2 Grey's personal profile

Mary Cecilia Grey was born on 16 June 1941 at Houghton-le-Spring, Durham England. She was the eldest child of seven siblings and lived in North-East of England. Grey obtained her academic qualifications at various academic institutions. In 1959, Grey studied for her BA Honors degree in Literae Humaniores at the University of Oxford and in 1965, obtained her Masters Degree (Oxon). In 1973-4, Grey studied and achieved a Diploma in Pastoral Catechetics at the Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium. Grey continued her studies at the University of Louvain where she completed a Masters Degree (*Magna Cum Laude*) in Religious Studies as well as STB in Theology. Grey was seen as member of a "bridge generation" between the founding "mothers" of European feminist theology and a younger generation. She received her doctorate in theology at Louvain in 1987, and was the successor of Catherina Halkes in the chair of Feminism and Christianity at Nijmegen from 1988 to 1993. Grey was also a guest Lecturer at Katholieke Leergang, Tilburg, Netherlands where she lectured in courses such as: *Seeking New Models of Redemption in Feminist; Feminist Theology and Process Thought; Revelation and Experience from a Feminist Perspective of Radical Relatedness; The Dark Knowing of Morgan-le-Fay: Women, Evil and Theodicy; Women-Whom do you say that I am? Is a Feminist Christology Possible? "Till we have Faced": Feminist Theology and the Future of Europe and Towards an Ecological Theology of Church.*

She was elected president of the European Society for Women in Theological Research<sup>40</sup> from 1989-91 (Reuther 1998:198) Mary Grey has also been a lecturer in theology at St. Mary's College, Strawberry Hill, London, and a professor of Contemporary Theology at the University of Southampton. Until 2006, she was a scholar in residence at Sarum College, Salisbury, and visiting professor at Southampton University and Honorary professor at

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<sup>40</sup> The European Society for Women for Theological Research was founded in 1985 in Boldern, Switzerland. It held its inaugural conference at Magliaso in 1986 and has held all all-European gatherings of feminist theologians approximately every two years.

Lampeter University of Wales. Throughout her career, Grey has been involved in the lives of the rural women in the Dudu area of Radjistan, India<sup>41</sup> where she and her husband Dr Nicholas Grey erected the charity *Wells for India*, a water well project, which provides water for the drought stricken region. These projects have had a ripple effect, giving rise to other projects, such as tree planting, provision of spinning and sewing machines, schooling, health care, and homes for children of prostitutes.<sup>42</sup> She is also well known for her contributions to feminist theology and more specifically to the emergence of ecofeminism in Europe. She has served as editor of the journal *Theology in Green*, later renamed as *Ecotheology*.

Mary Grey is the author of several books and numerous articles and essays. Her most important books include *Feminism, Redemption, and the Christian Tradition* (London: SCM Press, 1989), *Redeeming the Dream: Feminism and Redemption* (London: SPCK, 1989), *The Wisdom of Fools. Seeking Revelation Today* (London: SPCK, 1993), *Beyond the Dark Night: A Way Forward for the Church* (London: Cassel, 1997), *Prophecy and Mysticism: The Heart of the Postmodern Church*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), *Introducing Feminist Images of God* (Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), *Sacred Longings: The Ecologist Spirit and Global Culture* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), and *The Unheard Scream: The Lives and Struggles of Dalit Women in India* (New Delhi 2004).

#### **4.3 The main features of Mary Grey's Christology**

In her book *The Wisdom of Fools* (1993), Mary Grey offers an analysis of two “myths” that contribute to human thinking today. She personifies the first as “Logos”, as that which refers to the logo-centric, profit-based, competitive ethic found in rich countries. Grey personifies the second as “Sophia” (Wisdom) where wisdom is portrayed in female or more inclusive terminology. Grey observes that this Sophia myth is submerged by the Logos myth in patriarchal societies. Grey uses this analysis to identify two basic types of Christology.

Grey's theology of redemption stems from a creation based model of “right relations”. In her book *Redeeming the Dream* (1989), Mary Grey develops a Christology, where Jesus is seen as the embodiment of “relational power”. Jesus is seen as the person rooted in God, who is both the “source” and “resource” of relational power. Grey affirms that “if God creates, heals and redeems by enabling us to claim power in relationships, a power which at the same time drives to justice, we expect to see that manifest above all in the life and ministry of Jesus” (1989:95). Grey notes that this relational energy/power is both relational and mutual in nature and practice and terms it “mutuality-in-relating”.

Relational power says Grey has been the key influence in Jesus relationship to others, as well as Jesus' self-development, being the driving force behind Jesus' passion concerning the mission to save the world. Grey states that Jesus became the human through whom the creative, relational energy of God manifests to draw the whole world. According to Grey, Jesus learnt from this relational power,<sup>43</sup> which propelled Jesus to those who were in grief and

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<sup>41</sup> See Mary Grey 2004.

<sup>42</sup> See <http://www.winaindia.com/contributors.htm>.

<sup>43</sup> “The dynamic energy of mutuality-in-relatedness” (1989:103).

pain. Grey notes that relational power can also be interpreted as “erotic power”. Erotic power is the power, which develops, builds, encourages and sustains relationships. It is the power which destroys superiority, domination and justice, and exalts unity, peace and liberty amongst all humanity. Grey states that “a passion for justice, shared and embodied, is the form God takes among us in our time” (1989:103).

Jesus as relational power is the liberating force by which God operates in and through humanity. This relational power operates within the life of humanity, in a manner in which it empowers people to do exploits by faith. Grey states that the relational power, is the love awareness and sensitivity by which Jesus was propelled to comfort those who grieved<sup>44</sup>. Grey argues that the relational power within the Gospel stories, continually challenges communities to a new dynamism of community relationships.<sup>45</sup>

Grey affirms that relational power goes beyond the development of individual relationships. It is about liberating God’s passion for justice and peace that would impact entire communities. Grey notes that Jesus sought to bring about a break through in the everyday experience of humans. So that all human passions for friendships, children, lover, parent, may be encapsulated in Jesus’ experience of passionate energy. This higher level of intensity in relationship, says Grey, brought Jesus to a new level of suffering, as this divine mutuality goes against the grain of superficial relationships. Grey affirms that “relationship power seen as passion for justice-making has to be shown as the driving force of the death and resurrection of Jesus” (1989:103). For Grey, Christ’s suffering and death is the risk taken by all people who protest against injustice. The cross signifies not God’s will but the refusal of repentance by the powers of domination.

In conclusion, Grey’s Christology views Jesus Christ to be the embodiment of God’s relational passionate energy. A driving power that brings to birth relationships, wholeness and justice termed as mutuality-in-relating. For Grey, Jesus Christ is the living example of mutual power in relationships.

#### **4.4 Mary Grey’s work on Christology and critique of the three atonement models**

Grey, like many other feminist theologians, sees the traditional atonement symbols as being damaging to women, since women are expected to follow the example of Christ as the crucified and suffering one, becoming the “Saviour” to their loved ones. In order to investigate whether the doctrine of atonement can be interwoven with the notion of “redemption as right-relation” Grey critically looks at the three models of atonement namely:

- a) The classical model
- b) Satisfaction model
- c) Subjective model

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<sup>44</sup> The story of the raising of the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:11-17) (1989:103).

<sup>45</sup> “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, so you must love one another (John 13:34)” (1989:103).

Within her examination of these models, Grey seeks to define the strengths and weaknesses of these models in order to determine whether the atonement model she is seeking to develop will effectively offer a realistic understanding of sin, grace and the reality of evil. Above all Grey desires that her atonement doctrine will be able to relate to the daily experiences of both sexes.

#### **4.4.1 The Classical Model**

##### **Grey's critique of the Classical model**

The first atonement doctrine, which Grey analyzes, is the classical model of atonement. Grey observes that the classical model of atonement is a form of “educative activity” by which Jesus teaches humanity a new way. Jesus’ teaching brings a new knowledge so that humanity may participate with Christ, as they are lead out of bondage. Grey comments that Irenaeus’ view is that the salvation work of Christ is a teaching process. She asserts that through this process, the divine image of God, which has been corrupted by the fall of humanity, can be restored to perfection as humanity is led to freedom. However, according to Grey (1989:111) the final freedom and perfection is only achieved in the next world. According to Grey, this notion undermines the move towards right-relationships and connectedness.

Grey notes that the classical model has all the motifs of atonement such as the divinization of humanity, the restoration of humanity’s fellowship with God, the forgiveness of sin and the restoration of a true life. Grey (1989:111), notes that “Using insights of Greek philosophy, atonement doctrine in this classical form means far more than moral teaching or example, but is the means of enabling a human being by *mimesis* (imitation) and *methexis* (participation) as part of the process of divinization – to attain full human becoming and participation in divine life.” For Grey, the strength of the classical model lies in the notion that salvation, creation, incarnation, redemption and divinization of humanity are unified. Lastly, another idea which Grey considers to be a strength of the classical model, is that the evil appears to be not just over individuals, but rather a social power which holds humanity in bondage.

Even though Grey acknowledges the strength of the classical model, she does however note that this model does not escape feminist critiques. Grey argues that the classical model needs to be specific with regard to its view of sin. Why, asks Grey (1989:123), is sexism not seen as a type of bondage or sin? Grey asserts that unless sexism is acknowledged as an evil, all references made of victory for women holds no strength and this model of atonement becomes ineffective in the lives of women. According to Grey’s observation, many women’s conflict situations stems from the bondage of sexism and sexist symbols society places upon them.

Another weakness of the classical model, in relation to the freedom of women, is the notion of the cosmic battle between good and evil. Grey argues that the cosmic battle and victory happens in the cosmic realm and does not adequately show how Christ’s victory becomes effective in the daily life experiences of the individual. Grey argues that this poses a psychological problem for women and promotes a sense of self-sacrifice, since women have been led to believe that salvation can only be obtained through “motherhood”, total

commitment to a religious lifestyle, and through unselfish sacrificial service for the wellbeing of others.

Grey makes the observation that Irenaeus' view of obedience over disobedience as being the way to gain victory over sin, is a dangerous concept for society. Grey argues that this view is dangerous not only for women trapped in submissive roles, but also for those in society such as soldiers, who have to be obedient to tyrannical authorities. Making reference to the Holocaust, Grey (1989:124), wrote, "I was just obeying orders" has far too frequently been accepted as excuse for collaboration with unspeakable atrocities. The very word "obedience" itself now has a passive ring – in the context of the wedding vows it has all the overtones of patriarchal bondage." Grey believes that in order to avoid the exploitation of "obedience", by those in authority, respect and mutuality of commitment should be shown to those who hold "less" positions.

Finally, Grey also comments that the classical model is rejected by many people since it emphasizes the concept of victory as being achieved through the violent death of Jesus.

#### **4.4.2 The Satisfaction Model**

##### **Grey's critique of the Satisfaction model**

The second atonement model which Grey critically analyzes, is the Latin model, based on the notion of penal substitution. Grey considers this model of atonement to be important for the development of her atonement model.

According to Grey, even though the Latin model is found to be popular in Christian worship and hymnology, it has been the atonement model which has caused great hostility amongst feminist theologians. To bring clarity to the negativity which surrounds Anselm's view, Grey (1989:113), looks at Tertullian and Cyprian<sup>46</sup> in the third century who believed that it is humanity who has to "make an offering or payment to satisfy God's justice". Grey notes that Anselm followed the thinking of Tertullian and Cyprian in terms of the notion that a "repayment" is needed in order to appease the offended "overlord".

Acknowledging the strengths of the Latin model, Grey, like Colin Gunton, affirms that the strength of Anselm's view lies in the "political" and "juridical" concept of everyday life. Grey notes that Anselm's concept of justice which shows the love of God can be overlooked if there is a concentration on the aspect of God's honour. Grey writes (1989:113), that the Western medieval Christianity developed a new realization of God's judicial function with regard to human beings- "the aspect of judgement which we have seen, was an important aspect of God's passion for justice". Grey notes that we should not see God's justice as in opposition to the rectification of a disrupted universe, but an act of mercy to restore creation to excellence. Grey observes that the classical model focuses on the restoration of a fallen humanity where the salvation would be through the divinization of humanity. The Latin

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<sup>46</sup> In Tertullian's view, the words "satisfaction" and "merit" applies to penance. Tertullian believed that satisfaction was needed to rectify humanity's fallen state. Cyprian built on Tertullian's view and observes that penance is sufficient to gain recognition from divine justice (Aulén 1931:98).

model however emphasizes the rectification of a corrupted legal order through the forgiveness of sins.

Grey summarizes Anselm's model to be a process by which humanity may obtain freedom and grace as they are inwardly forgiven. Christ is the one who appeases God's honour and in this manner, paves the way for humanity to participate in the freedom offered them. Grey states (1989:114) that "satisfaction can be seen as a moment of freedom in a much wider process of human becoming"

Grey examines the Latin model of atonement from a feminist stance in order to understand why many feminist theologians believe that this model of atonement encourages the victimization of women. Grey argues that Anselm's Latin model proposes a teaching which meets the need to lift the burden from the guilt of sin. This teaching of Anselm, according to Grey, is not liberating for women. Grey argues that women always have to bear the burden of the guilt of their families, communities, and society. Grey (1989:122) is adamant that battered and raped women often have to deal with the guilt placed upon them by society who often assumed that the abused women are in some way guilty of the crime upon them, having "deserved it" or "asked for it". Grey states further that society's acceptance of pornography, prostitution and child pornography displays the struggle which women face to liberate themselves from the guilt of "being women". Grey notes (1989:122) that "The acceptance of pornographic exploitation of women, and the flagrant organised prostitution of little girls in Thailand, the Philippines, Singapore and India manifests the contempt of society for the sexuality of women. It seems that women cannot be redeemed from the guilt of being women."

Grey argues that Anselm's symbol of Jesus as the innocent victim has intensified the danger of women who are called to identify with Christ. Grey (1989:122) writes that "an intense condensation of theological motifs is present, from a positive scriptural image representing the willing self-offering of Jesus, to the woman as innocent victim of sexual assault (the virgin martyrs), to the lamb as symbol of virginity seen as biological rather than spiritual integrity, with the connotation of the passive sexual role of woman and her victim state in society."

Grey's concluding comment of the Latin model is that she considers it to be insufficient in addressing the victimization of women. She considers the Latin model to be ineffective in addressing the socio-political problems which women often face.

#### **4.4.3 The Subjective Model**

##### **Grey's critique of the Subjective model**

Grey critically looks at the third atonement model, Peter Abelard's subjective model. The manner in which the three atonement models exhibit the same motif, says Grey, can be seen in the interpretation of Christ as perfect exemplar. Grey notes that Peter Abelard's atonement model pictures Christ as the moral example for humanity, whilst, in the classical model Christ is "part of the education process" (Grey 1989:115). Grey states that Abelard's idea of the

incarnation and atonement is that God's purpose is to draw humanity to love the Godhead. Thus, according to Grey, Abelard sees atonement as an act within the context of a loving relationship. According to Grey, Abelard rejected the notion of Christ being offered as a ransom to the devil and considers it to be "crude" and "wicked," as the blood of an "innocent victim" is required for payment.

Even though the concept of suffering is in conflict with the well being of women, Grey finds Abelard's understanding of nature suffering with Christ, profound. Grey (2004:141) states that Abelard's notion of creation being caught up in the death of Christ is found in the Gospel of Matthew and Luke, as the Gospels speaks of "the sun's light failing and darkness covering the land. Of earth quakes and tremors, as nature shared in the sorrow and death of Christ." Grey notes that Abelard sees nature's participation in the suffering with Christ as the apostle Paul's notion that the restoration of nature is part of atonement. For the "creation awaits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed" (Romans 8:19-24).

## **Conclusion**

Grey concludes her analysis of the three atonement motifs, by stating that the work of Christ on the cross should not just focus on death on the cross, but also on the value of the ministry and life of Jesus. Grey makes the point that the death of Jesus should not be interpreted as God's wrath against the guilt of humanity, but in fact sees the cross as a symbol against anything that would be a blockage to mutuality in relation.

### **4.5 Mary Grey's atonement model of right relations**

#### **4.5.1 From suffering to redemptive women**

Mary Grey makes it quite clear that her search for a new atonement model is not to interpret Christ's gender, but to interpret the cross and resurrection from a feminist understanding based on the notion of right relation.

Grey suggests that when the notion of right relation is embraced by humanity, humanity will become "co-agents" and "co-creators" of their own redemption. In order to understand the cross and the resurrection in a manner where women are not merely passive followers, Grey examines the Christian tradition for imagery of suffering and crucified women who were remembered as redemptive figures. Grey believes that these images where women are seen as redemptive figures, could be a key to re-imaging the atonement process.

Grey (1989:135) cites examples of women who, she believes, "responded to the Christ event through redemptive mutuality in a way which is both self-affirming yet self-transcending, enabled their voluntary assumption of suffering for the sake of a higher ideal". Grey's examples of women who are remembered as redemptive figures and associated with the healing work of Christ dates as far back as the first two centuries of Christianity. Martyrs of that time, whether male or female, were considered to be "other Christ". Grey gives two



examples of these early Christian martyrs. The first example being Blandina,<sup>47</sup> and the second example, a third century account of persecution and martyrdom of Perpetua<sup>48</sup> and her slave Felicitas. Other examples are accounts of medieval saints such as Clare of Assisi and Catherine of Siena<sup>49</sup> who acted against patriarchy as they defied their parents' attempts at their arranged marriages.

Grey believes that the depreciation of the Christian tradition with regard to liberating roles of women stems from the stereotypical image of a saviour and redeemer figure being male. Grey (1989:137) writes: "This is why it is vital to listen to the hidden cry, when the sculpture 'Christa'<sup>50</sup> evokes a new element, that Christ will come again, as a woman, a theme already part of Shaker belief." According to Grey, this cry displays the heart of the poor and oppressed women who consider themselves to be excluded from the healing and redemptive power of Christ as well as their church society.

Grey continues to develop her point of women as redemptive figures associated to the healing work of Jesus. The feminine image found in both the Old and New Testament which Grey explores, is that of the motherhood of God (travailing and birthing images), which can be compared to the experience of women. Grey states that two thousand years of Christianity, has been clothed with symbols of death, blood, guilt and sacrifice. Grey however seeks to introduce a symbol that would encapsulate the at-one-ment event that would inspire compassion amongst humanity.

#### **4.5.2 Re-imagining at-one-ment: To help the earth deliver**

The symbol, which Grey proposes for re-imagining at-one-ment, is the "birthing of God" symbol. Grey explains that the "birthing of God" symbol is the creative energy which brings wholeness and is continually at work in creation. Grey notes that creation needs to be liberated from its bondage of decay and redeemed. According to Grey, the birthing of God

<sup>47</sup> One such martyr was Blandina who was crucified. As she hung on the cross, those who looked at her described her as the "other Christ". As she hung on the cross, those of faith who looked at her described her as "alter Christus". They saw her in the form of their sister, the one who was crucified for them.

<sup>48</sup> The story of the martyrdom of Perpetua, the daughter of a wealthy provincial of North Africa, her eight month pregnant slave Felicitas, and seven others. Perpetua is said to have protested against the third century society of Cathaginian where she gave up her baby in order to endure prison. She also protested against her father, as she desired independence from him. According to Grey (1998:136), great emphasis is placed by the authors of the account on Perpetua's salvation, as she "reconciled herself to God without the medium of a priest and is seen to be instrumental for her own salvation" Perpetua gained her freedom as she transcended the limitations placed on female sexuality. For Grey, Perpetua's victory lies in the redemptive role she played as she suffered for her own ideals.

Felicitas prayed that her baby would be born earlier, so that she could be martyred with her companions, since the law forbade the execution of a pregnant woman. The traumatic birth due to the baby being born earlier caused much suffering, but Felicitas saw herself not suffering alone, but Christ suffering with her. Grey (1989:137), notes "Felicitas in her suffering surely actively "bearing up God in the world", ...She is seen as passing from one shedding of blood to another, from midwife to gladiator."

<sup>49</sup> Saint Clare of Assisi and Catherine of Siena defied the patriarchal roles of their parents. These women refused the arranged marriages their parents organised for them, in order to live out "God's purpose". Catherine of Siena in particular refused marriage as well as life as a "consecrated virgin" in a convent. Catherine by her own accord lived for three years in solitude at home and later at the age of twenty-one she joined a group called "Mantellate" with whom she worked amongst the poor of Siena.

<sup>50</sup> 'Christa', the sculpture of a crucified woman by Edwina Sandys – see Grey (1989:13).

symbol unites the activity of God with the activity of creation and humanity for the fundamental being of God is inter-relatedness.

Grey (1989:140) writes that “human birthing originates in the mutuality between man and woman, and itself creates new mutuality ... But it is the woman who is in travail for the new creation, co-creating with God in cosmic creativity”. This creates the image that God gives birth daily to myriads of forms of mutuality, which replaces those that have died. Grey (1989:139) asserts that “if creation is about giving birth, then so is redemption, transformation and ultimately at-one-ment.

Grey affirms that the birthing of God symbol is a symbol with which many women will be identified with. She argues that the symbol is a hidden strand within the Christian tradition, found within the Old and New Testaments. The image of God traveling for God’s children, Israel (Hosea 13:3), and the image of God as woman in labour (Isaiah 13:8), are images connected to a birthing process. Grey notes that in the synoptic gospel, (Matt. 2:18),<sup>51</sup> God is compared to a woman who is weeping for the death of her children. Grey (1989:141) interprets Rachel to be the “ancestral human mother” who weeps for the death of her children. Grey interprets Rachel’s lamenting to be turned into victory, as Rachel’s tears brings forth the “redemptive compassion” of God, as God shares in the suffering of Rachel.

Another image of motherhood connected to the birthing of God symbol and redemptive task of women, is found in the gospel of (John 16:21-22)<sup>52</sup> where the image of the motherhood of God is manifested through Jesus. Grey interprets Jesus’ “present grief” and “later rejoicing” as being in line with the theme of “birthing pains” and the joy which comes after the birth of a new creation.

In conclusion, Grey affirms that her intention is to reclaim the symbol of the “birthing of God”, since it is a link between women’s experience and redemption. Grey (1989:143), states that the birthing of God symbol proposes a notion of “creation of new forms of mutuality” through a life giving process and not through death and destruction.

#### **4.5.3 Re-Imaging at-one-ment: An alternative meaning of death**

Grey seeks to reclaim the birthing symbol from the Christian tradition in order to illuminate an alternative understanding of concepts such as conflict, death and suffering. Within the birthing symbol, lie dimensions of pain, suffering and love, experiences which brings forth joy as well as an acceptance of suffering. Grey explains that the birthing symbol has patterns of conflict which at the same time brings forth redemption.

Grey believes that the fear of death causes people to hold on to the image of Christian victory on the cross as a sense of hope and endurance. Thus, the *Christus victor* seems to be a

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<sup>51</sup> “A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more” – Matth. 2:18.

“... The Lord will create a new thing on earth- a woman will protect a man” – Jer. 31:22. Grey (1989:142) notes that the cries of Rachel bring forth victory “Male Israel becomes female Israel”.

<sup>52</sup> “A woman giving birth to a child because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. So it is with you: Now is your time to grieve, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away” – John 16:21-22.

predominant image of atonement. However, according to Grey, the birthing symbol is able to offer hope in the re-imaging of death. Grey examines the re-imaging of death in three different ways in order to show how the birthing symbol is able to bring hope.

- a) Birthing as a process of death
- b) Death as separation
- c) Death as stasis

### **Birthing as a process of death**

Grey asserts that birthing is a process whereby humans allows themselves to “let go” of the self, so that new creation can be birthed through pain and sorrow. She explains that in the birthing experience, people feel a sense of being lost and torn apart, often losing control of “centre self”. Yet, it is in this time of loneliness and darkness, which human beings meet with “God as creative centre”. Grey explains that even though this is a sense of loss, humanity is held together by a nurturing power, as there is a giving birth to new creation: new life, integrity, and a new sense of trust is birthed within humanity.

### **Death as separation: Connection through separation**

Grey continues her argument by examining the aspect of death and separation. Grey asserts that it is the separation, brought about by death which causes pain and brokenness. Yet, Grey believes that the separation of life has the ability to produce life. The separation of a loved one through death has the ability to produce a greater interdependence and connectedness amongst those who are left behind. This is evident of the death of Jesus, as the community of disciples experienced a drawing closer to each other. Jesus’ separation by death according to Grey (1989:51) was imperative for life to be born by connectedness, as “Jesus wanted to be remembered celebrating: Do this in memory of me.” Jesus’ concern is expressed for those who will be left behind, as Jesus encouraged “the daughters of Jerusalem not to weep for him, but for their children”. Grey believes that this is a different form of connectedness, which Jesus encouraged in the process of dying.

### **Death as stasis**

Grey elaborates on the idea of re-imaging death as she looks at death as stasis. Death is often seen as an event where life is cut off. There is a sense of finality, no growth, and no change. Yet, Grey interprets death to be a period of “waiting”. This may be likened to winter where through death, new growth, connection and transformation is birthed. Grey (1989:150), notes that re-imaging death is like “the working of winter, re-sourcing, re-covering roots, holding things together, awaiting the birth of a new idea, opportunity, without pre-empting its nature ...”.

#### **4.5.4 Re-imagining the life-praxis of Jesus as atonement**

Grey develops her atonement theory in a way that would bring about right relation amongst male and female. Lastly, Grey looks at the traditional symbols of atonement, where Christ is seen as *Christus victor*, prime exemplar, and exalted priest. Grey (1989:152) proposes the symbol of “the Christ of mutuality and rationality”.

Grey asserts that the danger of the notion that Christ’s victory on the cross was “once and for all” undermines and devalues present day attempts to build relationships. She notes that the notion disempowers people from claiming power in relationships. According to Grey, the relational power allows humanity to be partakers with God in a process of redemption.

Grey (1989:151) argues that the image of Jesus as prime exemplar does not allow humanity to see God’s interaction with people on a day-to-day basis. Thus this interconnectedness of God with humanity allows humanity to become co-creators and co-redeemers with God. Therefore, Grey proposes that the image of Jesus as perfect example be replaced by the “Body of God” image. The enfleshed nature of the Body of Christ, allows humanity to see how human connectedness brings God into the world. The Body of Christ is made up of miriads of mutuality in different forms (people), who experience pain, yet together can become a redeeming hope to that pain.

For the cross to be a symbol of unity which can be embraced by all humanity, Grey (1989:151) believes that the cross as a symbol needs to be redeemed from patriarchal imagery such as death, violence, conflict, and destruction: the image of Christ, the Son of God, dying, and paying the price for the sins of the world. In this manner, the cross as a symbol of atonement will become a call for all humanity to take responsibility to stand together to prevent the “crucifixion” of the marginalized.

Thus Grey (1989:151) proposes that the patriarchal symbols of the cross be replaced with symbols of “giving birth to new creation, of connection through separation, growth through stasis, integration through falling apart, healing through mutuality, compassion and solidarity”.

Grey concludes that the symbols of “the Christ of mutuality and rationality” allow people to admit their brokenness and need for healing and wholeness for themselves, as well as their wounded environment.

#### **4.6 The importance of Grey’s atonement theory for the notion of “bearing one’s cross**

##### **4.6.1 Re-Imaging atonement: “To help the earth deliver”**

In her interpretation of feminist Christology Grey stresses that Christ is the embodiment of relational power, which brings forth “right relations”. Grey sees sin as influences which corrupt and destroy connectedness and relationships amongst humanity as well as creation. In her book *The Wisdom of Fools* (1993), Grey puts forward two systems, which she personifies as two mythological characters. The first system is personified as Logos, the “man-made” system which according to Grey has been responsible for “unmaking” the world. The Logos

culture displays individualism, materialism, poverty and the pollution of the earth. The Logos culture has infiltrated all levels of society and has even dominated Christian theology, which has presented God as male, and Christ as the perfect male of all creation.

The second mythological character which Grey presents, is the Sophia character. Grey (2000:105) “*Sophia / hokmah*- wisdom whose household is governed according to the principals of right relation, of relational justice. Wisdom, who governs according to the principals of ecological wisdom, respecting the wisdom of poor people of indigenous people, whose economy respect nature’s rhythms.” Grey states, that the Sophia nature of God is right-relations which is also the nature of humanity. Sadly, the nature of humanity has been corrupted by a culture of violence, separation and destruction, to a degree that even the earth has been corrupted by it.

Grey’s notion of “to help the earth deliver”, is proposed to build a new Christian theology of redemption. Grey believes that a new Christian theology of redemption and restoration of connection with all living creatures, that which Logos has destroyed. Grey argues that women have always been involved in work of redemption on behalf of humanity in order to sustain a relationship with nature.<sup>53</sup>

In order to develop her argument further, Grey looks at process theology, which proposes a notion of inter-relatedness of God and humanity in a co-existing redemptive task to deliver the earth. Process thinking, according to Grey stems from the “process world”, where the mutuality of divine and human becomes one. Much like the creation process, process theology depicts the redemption as being a process where form is given to disrupted aspects of brokenness, and hopelessness, which threatens humanity, life and environment. Grey notes that process theology interprets redemption to be the involvement of the individual’s experience of pain and suffering (the loss of self), together with Christ’s experience of suffering. Grey (1989:35) writes “The strength of the process model is exactly this. The becoming of God and the becoming or transformation of the world are part of the same dynamism. This is because God is seen as *with* the world, not over-against the world, ‘feeling’ the world in order to offer redemptive possibilities to it.” Grey argues that in order for humanity to be reconnected to God and creation, there has to be a “losing of the self”, the self which has been mediated by capitalism, individualism and materialism. So that there can be an awakening to the connected self .

Grey (1993:77), writes that the “doctrine of “no-self” can liberate us from the rat-race of chasing our own delusions, of being propelled by our greed. The boundless-heart image can transform our individualist ego and refocus us around a larger centre”.

Grey (1993:77) uses the term “ecological self”<sup>54</sup> to describe the process of making connections. The process of making connections is a process by which humanity connects fragmented elements of their lives with the desire for wholeness/salvation. Grey (1997:19), cites the story of a Korean “comfort woman” Soo Bock, who had been tortured by Japanese

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<sup>53</sup> See 4.4.1 above - Grey’s “birthing of God” symbol.

<sup>54</sup> Grey (1993:77) writes: “the term originates within the ecology movement and within systems theory. It links the abstraction of the separate self, this false reification of the ‘I’ with the current ecological crisis.”

soldiers. Bock made a decision that she will not die at the hands of the Japanese soldiers, but live. In a process of “loss of self”, adhering to the soldiers’ demands, Bock survived their shocking treatment. Grey argues that Bock’s quest for survival meant the loss of self and in turn, found her “connected self”. Yet, through the horrors of her circumstances Bock affirmed the fullness of life.

The awakening to the connected self to the ecological self brings an awareness that humanity is part of the “main”, a larger “cosmic canopy”, where individuals become aware of their responsibility or responsiveness to the patterns of life. The ecological self, according to Grey, awakens humanity to the broken connection with God. The disconnection with creation challenges humanity to rediscover interconnectedness with the natural world. Grey believes that there has to be a theology of creation that would encourage the inter-relatedness of all creation.

Grey (1997:15) develops the notion of “epiphanies of connectedness,” moments of divine grace and revelation”. The “epiphany of connectedness”, speaks of the inter-relatedness between God and humanity in order to restore the “broken-hearted”<sup>55</sup> creation, which is caused by sin. Grey’s interpretation of sin is the corruption of connectedness, which links all life- systems. Thus the restoration of connectedness of all life-giving systems according to Grey, is redemption. Grey notes that the early church’s understanding of the death and resurrection of Jesus was that nature participated in the cross and resurrection. Therefore the early church did not celebrate the resurrection of Jesus weekly, but rather celebrated it according to nature’s patterns of “dying and rising”.

An “epiphany of connectedness” with Jesus, allows humanity to become co-creators and co-workers with Christ. Jesus’ life and ministry displayed liberation from suffering as Jesus healed the sick in their body, soul and spirit. According to Grey, the teachings of Jesus saw the suffering “body”, not only belonging to an individual, but also belonging to the “Christic body” – “body of all creation”. Grey (2004:139) writes that “Jesus points the way to seeing the Christ or the cosmic Body of Christ. Since many creatures are killed cruelly after a wretched life, thousands of species are extinct (hundreds each day). And now the earth herself is threatened, these must be a concern for the Body, the cosmic Body. What then exactly did Jesus mean when urging the community of believers to “take up your cross”? According to Grey, it means that the cross is a symbol of liberation and calls for humanity to be partakers with Christ to put an end to the degradation and suffering of creation.

Grey notes that the awakening of the ecological self will arouse a responsibility within the Christian community to sustain the environment. Grey writes (2004:133) that “For Christian theology this entails a rereading of the Bible within the context of endangered species the disappearance of the rain forest, our over-consumption of meat and loss of biodiversity in agriculture” (Grey 2004:133). The challenge to preserve the environment is placed before men and women, who make up a “body including plant and animal life, which is dependent on each other, each having a particular responsibilities towards the sustaining of this life”.

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<sup>55</sup> See Brock (1988).

Grey concludes that the key to the symbol “to help the earth deliver” lies in interconnectedness, connection and right relations between God, humanity and creation. Redeemed human consciousness through the awakening of the ecological self will also arouse an awareness to the Sophia nature of God to reunite in the redemptive task to deliver the earth.

#### **4.6.2 Re-Imaging at-one-ment: Alternative meanings of death**

Grey states that the theology of the cross and the atonement theories had conveyed messages that drew women into a conviction that self-sacrifice is righteousness. The cross as a symbol of the Christian faith has impaled women to the cross with society’s approval. Grey argues that she does not agree with the distorted imagery of the cross as being an abusive instrument for women. Neither does Grey agree with the interpretation that the cross condones child abuse.<sup>56</sup> Grey believes that there has to be a re-interpretation of the cross as a symbol of redemption in order to be redemptive for women. Grey desires to uncover a redemptive ethic of the cross and an alternative meaning for the term “self-sacrifice”. The understanding of redemption which Grey seeks to uncover should be able to speak to all humanity who are oppressed, broken and marginalized.

In order to obtain clarity as to what it is that women need to be redeemed from and what it is that women need to affirm and reclaim, Grey looks at the aspect of sin. She notes that theology sees the sin of Adam as Adam’s pride. This sin pertains to both men and women, and in order for them to be redeemed from the sin of pride there has to be a “shattering of the self”. The sin of pride comprises the self-seeking, self-asserting and self-realization of humanity which can only be removed by the “loving” sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross.

Grey believes that the sin of pride does not pertain to women, instead it is the sin of passivity that she considers to be the female “original sin”. Grey (1989:18), writes that “the important point made by the analysis of female sin as passivity is that when it is linked with the Christian ethic of self-sacrifice, of losing a self in order to find it, women are locked hopelessly into a spiral of self-giving in which no authentic self-development is possible”. Grey asserts that the redemption of the sin of passivity will not be brought about by the shattering of the self, but by self-development and affirmation. This notion goes against the grain of that women should passively bear the cross which God gives them.

#### **Redemption as self-affirmation**

Grey strongly believes that redemption from the sin of passivity for all humanity who are marginalized needs a degree of self-development. For women in particular to experience redemption as self-affirmation. Grey (1989:65-83) proposes steps towards a spiritual journey of self-affirmation and self-development: The first step being the “healing of memories”, to recover the lost self (image of death as separation). The third step is “purification” (*via purgativa*), and the third step is “the dark night of the soul” (death through stasis).

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<sup>56</sup> Grey refers here to Brown and Parker, *For God so Loved the World* (1986). Grey (1989:180) comments: “I consider this to be the lunatic fringe of feminist redemption theology”

### **Healing of memories to recover the lost self (The image of death as separation)**

The healing of memories according to Grey is a process of recollecting and reconnecting fragmented images of past experiences in order to develop the self. Grey notes that this is an important step in the spiritual journey towards redemption as self-affirmation. It is the “empowering” memories, happy memories brings forth positive emotions, says Grey, which unlocks powerful revelations of the self-bringing about knowledge and wisdom. Grey (1989:65) writes that, “For the depressed woman overwhelmed by feelings of inadequacy and non-achievement, it can be the remembering of earlier moments when she felt strong and hopeful.”

Grey continues to explain that the importance of the process of the healing of memories is that it brings about an experience of transcending the self. As empowering memories leads the person to a “deep knowledge” of themselves, there is a transcending experience of the self, the feeling of being part of a wider plain. Grey affirms that the experience of transcending the self leads to a divine experience, where God and humanity meets.

### **Purification – The *via purgativa***

Grey states that the spiritual awakening and the transcending experience of the self leads to the second step of the spiritual journey which is the *via purgativa*, the way of purification. Grey (1989:70), makes it clear that the “traditional *via purgativa* demanded a stripping away of the false notions of the self”, yet for feminists, *via purgativa* involves a painful process of retaining positive images and discarding negative images.

The *via purgativa* (purgation) process which is protective of the self-development of women, is the process of the stripping away of the images which have been placed on women by their family, and children society. To emphasis the notion of *via purgativa*, Grey reflects on the life praxis of Mahatma Gandhi (2004:174) and his quest to live a life-style of simplicity to honour all the “crucified” people of the world. Grey makes it clear that this is a life-style that calls for discipline and leads to an experience of complete freedom. According to Grey (2004:180), this freedom is the “inherent possession of human beings”. Grey asserts that freedom means the “the capacity or power to act”, which in feminist terms says Grey is linked to the notion of self and finding of the true self- “self-in-relation”.

Following the renunciation of materialism, by stripping away of the self, Grey affirms that peace, happiness and reconciled co-existence springs forth. This life-style of simplicity and austerity is contrary to a life trapped by the Logos culture of greed and materialism.

### **The Dark Night of the soul: Letting go of self**

Grey discusses the feminist ‘Dark Night’<sup>57</sup> in the light of the “letting go of self”, the stripping away of the oppressive values of society. In this experience there is a sense of abandonment and alienation.

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<sup>57</sup> Grey (1989:75) writes that, “The celebrated expression, the ‘Dark Night’ comes, of course from St John of the Cross. He describes the schooling given by God to purify and draw the human person deeper into the mystery of divine love... St John describes the purifying of the “dark side” of human desire; he shows how



Grey explains that the *via purgativa* process is a painful and conflicting process seen as the Dark Night. The Dark Night experience may take place in the area of body, soul, spirit, socially or ethically, and within this lonely experience, there is a discovery of the true self. For women, the journey is to discover the true self, not the self who is pictured as mother, wife, or sister. Yet, the term “dark night” in the everyday context of women carries negative connotations for in the “darkness” women and children are abused, raped and fall prey to violent acts. Within the church context, the “dark night” for many women may mean their inability to be ordained into the ministry. For other women, the “dark night” may mean the distorted meaning of Christian symbols and rituals that disregard the humanity of women. Yet again, according to Grey, the Dark Night means patriarchal structures that fail to protect women and children against the injustice done to them. Thus many feminists cry “take back the night” so that many women and children may be redeemed from their Dark Night experiences and walk in freedom.

Grey questions whether there is a feminist interpretation of the “dark night of the soul” experience. In order to understand the Dark Night experience so that it is not damaging to women, Grey explores the notion of kenosis<sup>58</sup> as applied to the self-emptying of God. Grey draws on Russian Orthodox theology in order to portray kenosis as a process which applies to the Triune God, where God is seen as a suffering God who shows compassion, especially to those who are despised. Grey notes that the glory and power of God is found not so much in the transcendence of God, but in the risk taken to become vulnerable to suffer like humanity.

Grey explains that the kenosis, the self-emptying of God allows those who are going through a Dark Night experience to see God actively turned towards them, stripping away the false self that has been trapped by the wrong understanding of the self. Grey affirms that the kenosis process of God as self-emptying enables those who are in their Dark Night experience to see God as the relational God of mutuality as they experience God’s love and compassion. Grey (2004:79) notes that the “kenosis of God leads divine activity into the ambiguity and tragedy of the human condition.” Grey affirms that an understanding of the kenosis of God will help those who are going through the Dark Night experience, to see the compassionate solidarity of God with them bringing hope and strength.

The Dark Night experience therefore, in the light of the kenosis of God as self-emptying, provides a space, where divinity meets humanity and bring forth a new spiritual dimension from which life will spring – a new self-affirmation will be birthed. According to Grey, within the Dark Night experience women are able to meet God. The experience provides a space for a clear spiritual dimension from which life will spring – a new self-affirmation will be birthed. Within the Dark Night experience there is a sense of falling apart, which leaves humanity feeling vulnerable. This in turn, says Grey, stirs up a sense of hunger and a greater need for God. Grey notes that this experience strips away familiar systems (logos systems), leaving humanity with a sense of loss, but at the same time quietly held by God as he creates

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it is that in the very experience of joylessness and darkness, in the withdrawal of all comfort, the actual transformation of desire takes place.”

<sup>58</sup> Kenosis refers to the process of Jesus’ self-emptying, taken from Philippians 2:5-11, where Paul writes of Christ that though being divine he humbled himself and “made himself of no reputation ..”

new life. Grey (1989:80) writes “so to claim back the night is to claim darkness as a time for growth and transformation. It is to free darkness of its overtones of evil and sin and see it as potential richness, fertility, hidden growth and contemplation, as nature broods and contemplates in winter seemingly active, yet preparing for the birthing of spring.”

Grey’s notion of re-imagining atonement as alternative meanings of death, is to see death as a process of change, transformation and new life. The notion of re-imagining atonement as alternative meanings of death gives insight into an experience where death becomes part of a gracious process. The nurturing, creative power of God becomes intertwined with a process where self-development and self-affirmation takes place.

#### **4.6.3 Re-imagining the life-praxis of Jesus as atonement: The symbol of the Christ of mutuality and relationality**

In order to understand and appreciate a new revelation of connectedness and mutuality-in-relation, it was important to review traditional Christian symbols, as well as the problem of the exclusion of women.

According to Grey, the notion of connectedness and mutuality-in-relation stems from an interactive relationship between feminist liberation and Christian feminism, with the aim to liberate women. Grey (1989:58) notes that a popular slogan which was used to promote the liberation of women on a global level was “Till all women are free, then no women are free!” According to Grey, the goal of Christian feminism has been to show that the notion of connectedness and mutuality-in-relation is not only to mend broken relationships, but also to mend renewed relations with the whole creation.

Christian feminism sees mutuality-in-relating as a breakthrough to overcome relationships based on hierarchical dominance, through re-imagining traditional Christian symbols which have encouraged the oppression of race, class and sex. In her book *Redeeming the Dream* (1989), Grey argues that redemption restores relationships and the reclaiming of power-in-relation, is a process of liberation.

#### **Relational power: A breakthrough to redemption**

Grey notes that her discussion of relational power and the symbols of “the Christ of mutuality-in-relation” is an attempt to move away from traditional atonement symbols such as *Christus victor*, Christ as high priest, or Christ as the perfect example. She proposes the symbol of “the Christ of mutuality and relationality”, which will re-image the life praxis of Jesus as atonement. Grey believes that it was the power of mutuality-in-relation (relation power), which propelled Jesus into relation building with the community of time, as well as to bring about justice. According to Grey, relational power has been the redeeming power by which God operated through Jesus and is operating through humanity today.

Re-imagining Jesus’ life-praxis as mutuality-in-relation, Grey notes that relational power is a power which empowers people in their own power, so that they in turn may develop relationships with other people. This can be seen in the Gospels as Jesus empowered the disciples to preach, heal and exorcise building relations with others. According to Grey,

another understanding of relational power is that it encapsulates a strong sense of sensitivity, awareness and affiliation to build new forms of relations. It is these aspects which drove Jesus to be with those who grieved (Luke 7:11-17).

Grey points out that relational power may also be interpreted as “erotic power” meaning the “creating, enlarging and sustaining of relationships” (John 13:34). Erotic power according to Grey is the power, which understands unity and stands against injustice, oppression and other evils, which bring about broken relations. It is the power, which transforms and empowers humanity to claim power-in-relationships. Erotic power operates in the process of restoration of right relation. According to Grey, this was exactly the mission of Jesus: to bring reconciliation between humanity, creation and the divine. Grey notes that reconciliation is a change of relationship between God and humanity, which then brings a change in humanity itself. Grey (2004:5), “I see Jesus’ great work of reconciliation not with anti-Judaistic lens, but in continuity with the mission of the Jewish prophets. This is where reconciliation and justice is interwoven. In Isaiah’s vision, when people turned to God in repentance, the desert blossomed, water flows in the wilderness, the blinded see, the lame walked (Is.35:1-10).”

In Grey’s opinion the life-praxis of Jesus is the breakthrough which sets the redemptive process in motion. Jesus was completely open and vulnerable to the passionate energy for justice and mutuality. Grey (1989:105) affirms that “it is in the reclaiming of the resources of Jesus’ life that we understand that what sacrifice really means is a total response in mutuality to justice making ...”.

### **Power of mutuality-in-relation in the Christian community**

Grey (1997) notes that relation power is actively healing, sustaining and deepening connectedness between humanity and creation in the here and now. Grey notes however that the conditions needed for the deepening of connectedness and mutuality, is based on humanity allowing themselves to become vulnerable. Grey notes that the picture of vulnerability and abandonment can be seen in the cross event. Grey (1997:35) affirms “nowhere does God appear as more vulnerable and abandoned than on the cross, yet from no other event does Christian faith derive more empowerment.”

Grey notes that the idea of being vulnerable is very paradoxical, but is important to feminist theology, since it aimed to respond to violence. Grey argues that being vulnerable is not a weakness, neither is it accepting of victimization. It is, according to Grey, a space to evoke compassion for victims of violence, so that there may be an ethic of resistance to violence. Grey writes that being vulnerable “is in no way to condone the unprotected, vulnerable, victim position of women in the face of violence, but is to resist and protest against the extent to which being invulnerable, separate from each other’s experience keeps the systems of violence in operation, and a total lack of sensitivity and compassionate empathy keeps the armament trade unchallenged” (Grey 1995:32). Grey sees vulnerability to be a catalyst for liberation of an ethic of violence, domination and control.

Grey sees vulnerability to be a catalyst for liberation of an ethic of violence, domination and control. Grey (1997:189-203) in her chapter “Who Do you Say that I Am? Images of Christ in

Feminist Liberation Theology” makes reference to “Christa”<sup>59</sup> the image of Christ as crucified women. Many abused and vulnerable women identified with paradoxical message of pain and healing, which the Christa depicts. In order to understand the relevance of the Christa image and how it relates to the image of Christ becoming vulnerable in order to refute violence abuse and oppression, Grey looks at the Christa image within its artistic, historical and theological contexts.

The examples of the image of the crucified Christ depicted by Jewish and Christian art historians, depicts Christ in a manner that women and men will be able to identify with Christ’s suffering. The manner in which the artist depicts the gender of Christ is ambiguous, so that the image will be able to speak to the needs of men as well as represent the needs of women. Grey notes that the power of the Christa/Christ image, is that it recognizes and affirms a Christian community that is suffering.

To place the Christa image in a theological context, Grey reflects on the early Christian martyrs such as Blandina, Perpetua and Felicity, to show that Christ’s identifies with women to the point of their bodily pain. This notion, according to Grey, lays the foundation of the doctrine of the “Church as the Body of Christ”. There is another theme within the image of Christa says Grey, one where Christ is depicted as the “suffering mother”. Grey recounts a story by Jewish writer, Chaim Potok of Asher Lev a young boy from a conservative Hasidic family who paints his mother crucified on a cross. The image has strong parallels with that of Christa, says Grey, as it “encapsulates the persecution of the Jews, and all the tragedy of the world”(Grey 1997b:194).

Grey affirms that the Christa image helps and empowers women in a process of resistance and healing as they find within the image of Christa, someone who identifies with their plight. Grey argues that Christa/Christ who is the embodiment of relational energy, is embodied in the community –“Christa community”. By the flow of this redemptive energy, women and men whose desire is “Christa-living, Christo-praxis”, resists injustice and oppression as they bring healing to others.

#### **4.7 A critical appraisal of Mary Grey’s work**

In this section I will engage with other authors and draw my own conclusion in affirming Grey’s contribution to feminist theology in the light of systematic theology. Mary Grey’s work has been widely acclaimed in the context of feminist theology. Her contribution to systematic theology particularly in the area of Christology has been appreciated. There are several reviews of her books: *Redeeming the Dream: Feminism and Redemption*; *The Wisdom of Fools: Seeking Revelation for Today*; *The Heart of Postmodern Church: Prophecy and Mysticism*; *Sacred Longings: The Ecological Spirit and Global Culture*.

I affirm Grey’s boldness and determination to find an atonement model, which would speak to an oppressed humanity. In her book *Redeeming the Dream: Feminism and Redemption*

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<sup>59</sup> The “Christa” image of Edwina Sandys evoked a strong emotional response amongst theologians, historians as well as abused women. The Christa image was brought to the United States by Stanford University and was displayed Stanford Memorial Chapel from October to December 1984 (Grey 1997b:194).

(1989) Grey, embarks on an exciting task to construct a new atonement model based on the belief that the whole of feminist theology is about “redemption”. In line with liberation theology Grey’s model of “right-relation” and “redemptive-mutuality” contributes to the solidarity in the struggle against the oppressed (women and men), and seeks to bring gender unity and equality. Grey’s insight into the needs of humanity causes her to see redemption as a resistance to oppression, the struggle to freedom as well as a process to restore human integrity and wholeness. For Grey redemption suggests the goal and process for reaching that desired wholeness. This human wholeness is brought about by the restoration of relationships.

In one of the reviews of Mary Grey’s book *Redeeming the Dream: Feminism and Redemption* (1989), Rosemary Ruether (1996) affirms Grey’s concentration on the female redemptive journey which brings about new and right relations between men and women, in order for them to build partnerships towards a better society and to promote unity in the church. Ruether (1998) notes that, Grey sees new relationships as a foundation not only for men and women, but also races, social groups, and nations. The call applies for the current generation “to come down from the imagined dominance over the earth and to join fellow creatures of the earth in one interconnected community of life.”

Georgina Morley in *The Grace of Being: Connectivity and Agency in John Macquarrie’s Theology* (2000) comments that Grey’s *Redeeming the Dream*, is an important contribution to feminist theology in the area of process theology. Morley notes that Grey’s intention was to uncover traditional interpretations of atonement and redemption, which has contributed to the degradation of women. Process theology holds the notion that God and the world are interdependent. Grey draws from process theology, to explore “atonement in feminist process thought”. Her notion of redemption, according to Morley is brought about by “dynamic mutuality-in-relating” between humanity, creation and God, which runs parallel with the notion of process theology. Process theology sees God and humanity and creation as interconnected.

Georgina Morley rightly commends Grey’s *Redeeming the Dream*, as an important contribution to feminist theology since the book does seek an atonement model that would encourage inter-relatedness between creation and humanity. Inter-relatedness also develops a procedure for persons to get to know each other, gaining knowledge of the other, which according to Grey is redemptive, particularly to women.

I commend Grey for raising important issues for any contemporary thinker, especially those engaged in practical theology. Hopkins found Mary Grey’s notion of “connectedness” which gives a re-interpretation of Jesus’ incarnation very helpful in her search to develop a notion of a Christology from “below”. Julie Hopkins (1995:105) reflecting on Mary Grey’s *The Wisdom Of Fools: Seeking Revelation for Today* (1993), wrote that “The work of Mary Grey in the area of Christian redemption and revelation is an excellent example of how feminist theology can reflect upon contemporary experiences and debates, adding a profound spiritual and ethical dimension to the question of Western, and particularly European identity. In opening herself to the many voices and discourses of Europe and European feminism, Grey has found the resources to develop a profoundly relational theology”

Grey's enormous task in researching the diversity of European feminist theology and also non-European discourse gave rise to her book *Introducing Feminist Images of God: Introduction in Feminism Theology* (2001). Grey's painstaking effort to write this book was to bring to center stage the non-European voice on the image of God. Acknowledging the book as an ambitious task of Grey, I have to commend Grey's motivation to show that the traditional interpretation of Jesus as hierarchical figure can be re-interpreted according to cultural diversity and religious plurality. Barbara Greene (2001) in her review on Grey's book notes that the weakness of Grey's project, is Grey's attempt to interrelate images of God found in various cultures. I wish to disagree with Greene on this, since the strength of the book is that it gives insight to those readers who need a broad, culturally diverse and religiously pluralistic introduction to feminist Christology, presenting Christ as a non-gendered redeemer, who is able to redeem the whole of humanity.

Barbara Greene (2001) in her review on Mary Grey's book *Introducing Feminist Images of God: Introductions in Feminist Theology* (2001) notes that Grey's desire in writing this book is to evoke questions pertaining to the images of God, particularly in the light of Christology. This according to Greene (2001) is evident in the title of the book. Green (2001) noted that Grey's attempt to connect the various images of Christ was quite a daunting task as Grey devoted a chapter each to images of God in Jewish feminism and Asian tradition as well as womanist Christology. Grey finally evaluates images of God found in the Roman Catholic Church.

A major component of Grey's unique perspective is her dual role as scholar and as activist. Grey with her husband, Nicolas Grey is the co-founder of a NGO called Wells for India. This organization supports women and their families in Northern India. The sharp contrast between the poorest parts of the Indian subcontinent (which Grey has traveled) and the comfort of Lampeter, (where Grey lectures) has contributed to Grey's philosophy and theology of justice that can be seen in Grey's writing. Together with Fredrick and Mary Ann Brussat (2007) and Joy Ann McDougall (2005) I commend Grey's book *Sacred Longings: The Ecological Spirit and Global Culture* (2004) and see it as an important work on globalization, particularly since it focuses on ecofeminism.

In a review of Grey's *Sacred Longings: The Ecological Spirit and Global Culture* (2004), Frederick and Mary Ann Brussat (2007) view Grey's work as "ambitious" and "powerful", as it deals with women, wilderness, water and a call for a kenotic theology, which seeks to overcome a culture of over-indulgence of consumerism. Grey's work is seen as an enlightenment to ecofeminist theology as it provides insight into a connection between cross, creation and liberation.

Joy Ann McDougall (2005) wrote the following comments on Mary Grey's book *Sacred Longings: The Ecological Spirit and Global Culture* (2004) "The most recent wave of Christian feminist proposals is best read as edifying discourse. Mary Grey's is an indication of the kind of sophisticated saving work under way in feminist theology ... As a Roman Catholic theologian, Mary Grey is less concerned with reforming a particular confessional tradition, than with addressing a broader cultural crisis – that of global capitalism ... She proposes an alternative spiritual vision, a different language of desire that would return

dignity to the least among us and a sense of shared responsibility for the collective flourishing of the earth and all of God's creatures" (McDougal 2005:20-25). McDougal notes that Grey's alternative views which goes against the grain of her ecclesiastical tradition, has allowed her to offer a fresh interpretation of the Christian faith. Grey's interpretation according to McDougal may often be "unsettling" as it challenges her Church tradition, and confronts the present with truth.

One of the "unsettling" interpretation which challenges Grey's Church tradition, is her proposal of a kenotic spirituality as a solution to global capitalism. Grey is quite aware of the sensitivity that surrounds kenotic spirituality. Feminist theologians have been wary of traditional Christian language of suffering, self-emptying and vulnerability. This spirituality can be distorted and used to encourage suffering. Grey realizes the danger concerning kenotic spirituality and argues that divine kenosis does not mean that divine power is sacrificed but rather relocated into relational love.

### **Conclusion**

I have found Grey's relational theology which is based on the notion of inter-relatedness insightful as well as beneficial, particularly in the light of the restoration of broken relationships which has occurred between gender groups, racial groups, as well class structures. Another aspect of Grey's theology I value and take with me, are Grey's thoughts on redemption. Grey sees redemption as a process whereby the freedom, restoration and integrity of an individual are restored.

Therefore based on her notion of inter-relatedness Grey seeks an interpretation of atonement, which would be relational and unite creation and redemption. Grey replaces the violent imagery of the cross with birthing symbols. Grey (1989:139-152) influenced by Indian pantheism, states that creation and redemption is about giving birth and that the "birthing symbol of God" is a symbol that unites God and humanity. These "birthing" symbols are: Re-imagining at-one-ment: to help the earth deliver, Re-imagining at-one-ment: Alternative meanings of death and Re-imagining the life-praxis of Jesus. Grey believes that "birthing" is the creation of new life through hard work and blood. She notes that nature itself was caught up in grief at the death of Christ so that nature itself was the completion of redemption.

In Grey's attempt to see whether there are other transformative possibilities, based on the image of birth, as opposed to the traditional atonement theories, Grey fails to answer the question Anselm asked "Cur Deus Homo". Why did God become human and die for the sins of the world? Why could God not use another human, or simply decree salvation to all humanity? Grey's interpretation of sin, is that sin is a disruption and a blockage of communion between humanity and God and humanity to each other. Thus according to Grey sin is overcome when the relationships between humanity are restored. My contention is that Grey's interpretation of sin does not show the severity of sin and the bondage that it has over humanity. Since Grey does not consider sin to be a condition of which humanity needs to be redeemed and forgiven, her notion of sin does not allow humanity to take responsibility for their sinful condition. Scripture is clear that all of humanity has sinned and fall short of God's standards (Romans 3:23). Since sin is an inherited part of the body (Romans 6:6), Grey's "birthing" symbol does not explain how humanity can be saved from their sinful nature.

Grey's atonement symbol for salvation is "connection through separation". "Connection through separation" is the process whereby the sinful state of humanity is dealt with through a "stripping away of the false self", which Grey calls the "doctrine of non-self". This is a purification process to rid humanity of all negative influences, which shape persons. It is an awakening to the non-self which reconciles humanity to creation as well as to God. Reconciliation, atonement and forgiveness are not seen as the work of Jesus, but rather the ethical and moral actions of the person. Grey proposes this symbol, to give an alternative meaning to Jesus' suffering and death on the cross. Therefore, according to this symbol salvation is brought about as God, humanity and creation becomes "connected" again. My contention is that it is not God's heart that needs to be changed towards humanity, but a transformation of humanity's sinful existence before God. Grey's atonement symbol for salvation, "connection through separation", fails to explain how restoration and unity takes place between a holy God and people who lack holiness.

My contention is further that the cross as atonement, violent as it is, shows that death of Jesus does bring God's holiness to expression, through dealing with human sin. God's condemnation of sin is effected through the death of Jesus - and the death of Jesus marks the end of sin and the guilt of sin (Hebrews 9:22). Jesus embodied the fullness of salvation, as He bore the sins of humanity in His body as he hung on the tree, so that humanity may live for righteousness (1Peter 2:24). Through Jesus wounds, death and resurrection a way of salvation (i.e forgiveness of sin, removal of the guilt of sin, healing, restoration and reconciliation to God.) was made accessible to all of humanity.

Why did God become human? Only Jesus, who is divine and became human (without sin 1Peter 2:22), could restore and bridge the gap between God and humanity. This does not mean that Jesus was punished to satisfy or appease God's anger towards humanity. What Grey appears to over look is the measure of God's love towards humanity. To interpret the death of Jesus as an appeasement of God's anger would undermine God's grace and righteousness.



## Chapter 5

### Bearing one's Cross: Within the South African context

#### 5.1 Introduction

The Christian motif of “bearing one’s cross” has been criticized in feminist theology as an instrument that encourages the oppression of women. The motif is typically used in the exhortation that women should follow Christ, their perfect example. Women should be imitators of Christ. The motif of “bearing one’s cross” encourages self-sacrifice, submission, tolerance and abuse. Since the motif is linked to the redemptive work of Christ, it remains central to Christian piety thus a feminist reinterpretation is needed, so that the motif may be liberating to both women and men.

#### 5.2 Significance of other feminist views on Christology and atonement

Lisa Isherwood (2002) declares that feminist theology has changed and continues to change, as its starting point of interpretation is based on the lived experience of people. Unlike the traditional theologies, feminist theology has changed according to its context, thus the face of Christ has also changed according to the context, and has embraced a multitude of experiences which calls for an interpretation of the person of Christ to be all inclusive. Feminist theology and Christology in particular, speaks to women of all nations, meeting women at the point of their need. Isherwood affirms that feminist Christology removes Christ from a hierarchical position of Christology “from above”, and is reinterpreted according to the culture of women. She notes that when African women speak of Christ, Christ is not excluded from their land or their spirituality. Isherwood (2002:13) added that when Chinese women speak of Christ “they do not have the dualistic thought of the West, since for them negative and positive are part of the same construct and cannot be divided into the neat, yet unrealistic way, that the West has employed”.

Feminist theologians in their attempt to understand the seclusion of women from church experience and practice became increasingly aware that the problem may be within Christianity itself. The maleness of Christ presents a difficulty, particularly in the traditional understanding of the incarnation of Christ. The image of a male Christ as being a saviour to women becomes increasingly difficult, if Christ has not experienced being a female. Other feminist theologians, such as Mary Daly (1993) and Rosemary Reuther (1983), see Christianity as being irredeemably patriarchal and see Christianity to be plagued with “super male” images such as that of sin and salvation.

Another difficulty which feminist theologians grapple with is the image of the cross. Though the cross and atonement are central themes within the Christian faith, they bring with them imagery of violence, suffering and pain. Isherwood (2004:25) concludes that “the image of a son sacrificed to his father” in order that good may come of it is a common theme in masculinist mythology. These stories tend to establish a bond between the father and son, who

may previously have been portrayed as rivals. In short they are stories about male bonding and fathers teaching sons invaluable lessons about the role of the hero and the glory of sacrifice. Christianity has such a story at its very heart and has spoken of it as the tale of universal salvation”.

Feminist theologians have expressed their disapproval and rejection of atonement which characterize God as a patriarchal father figure who punishes the disobedient child. Joanne Carlson Brown, Rebecca Parker, Mary Daly and Rite Nakashima Brock (1988), see the traditional theologies of the cross and atonement as encouraging patriarchal dependence, which condones a culture of child abuse, victimization and violence. The atonement model which has aroused the most severe criticism from feminist theologians, has been the penal substitution model as set out by Anselm of Canterbury in his book *Cur Deus Homo* (Why God Became Human). Feminist theologians view Anselm’s atonement model to be a portrayal of an angry male God who demands a blood sacrifice, so that his anger towards humanity may be appeased. Anselm’s theory, according to feminist theologians has posed problems for marginalized women, children and men.

### **5.3 What does it mean to “bear one’s cross”**

Mary Grey has a softer view of the notion of the cross. She leans towards Peter Aberlard’s atonement model, which interprets the death of Christ to be a loving act to save humanity. Grey in her book *“Redeeming the Dream”* (1989) developed an atonement model of “right relation”, based on Aberlard’s moral influence theory. Grey suggests that God should not be seen as the instigator of Christ’s death, but rather that Christ’s death should be interpreted as a refusal of a culmination of life-systems blocking dynamic mutuality-in-relation. Grey downplay’s the fall of humanity as she considers sin to be human-made systems which causes the fragmentation of relationships. Grey believes that humanity is not inherently sinful, but has become sinful through the corrupt human systems, thus the restoration of connectedness between all living creatures is what Grey views as redemption.

In relation to the motif of “bearing one’s cross” Grey’s atonement model, like Aberlard’s, presents various weaknesses. Aulén (1931) criticizes Aberlard’s model as being weak in the light of the atonement work of Christ and the aspect of sin. My contention is that Grey’s model poses the same weakness, particularly in the area of sin. Sin is seen as a weakness and is not directly linked to humanity. This notion takes away the seriousness of the guilt of sin of a fallen humanity. Another weakness of Grey’s atonement model is related to the notion of reconciliation. Her notion of reconciliation to God known as “epiphanies of connectedness” is brought about by a stripping away of the self, which has been shaped by negative systems such as consumerism and materialism.

The weakness of this notion of reconciliation is two fold: firstly, the notion of reconciliation is the work of humanity. The context, in which the motif is used, needs an interpretation where God is seen as the reconciler. Since Grey sees reconciliation to be the work of humanity Grey’s model fails to protect women from constant victimization. The motif is used to encourage women to seek reconciliation at all times and are exhorted to forgive and reconcile even with their perpetrators.

I examined Anselm's atonement model of "penal substitution" which encapsulates concepts that are useful to a reinterpretation of the motif of "bearing one's cross". Thus more concentration will be put on Anselm's atonement model, to establish whether it is accurate to charge Anselm's God with abusive behavior.

The basic foundation of Anselm's atonement model lies in the notion that humanity had failed to remain obedient to God's command thus breaking fellowship with God, humanity and creation. Humanity is trapped in a state of sin that affects the entire universal order. Based on Anselm's understanding of sin, the guilt of sin has to be completely removed and cannot be done by humanity alone (as Anselm suggests). My contention is that the inherent sin of humanity that exacerbates the oppression of women. The critique of Anselm's model of atonement by feminist theologians, interpret Anselm's God as wanting punishment more than showing love and mercy.

Colin Gunton (1989) argues, that Anselm sees that God's responsibility is to restore order to a system which has been corrupted by sin. God seeks to restore a relational moral order of justice established in creation. For Anselm's God justice does not mean punishment, but restoration of a broken relationship between God and humanity through Jesus as mediator. Anselm's God is not a patriarchal figure demanding the blood of those who have disobeyed God, but is a God who through "satisfaction" restores order and rectifies that which has been corrupted. Anselm's God depicts restoration in the midst of destruction. As Flora Keshgegian (2000:9) wrote in her article, *"The Scandal of the Cross: Revisiting Anselm and His Feminist Critics"*, "God's justice is a form of right relation, which maintains power and responsibility in balance and in ordered proportion...God is bound by honor to make right the relation, which involves human responsibility and empowerment."

#### **5.4 What is the message for the people on the Cape Flats with regard to "bearing one's cross"**

What does it mean to bear one's cross and does Grey's model offer an adequate interpretation of it. Grey's interpretation of the motif of "bearing one's cross" would fall in line with Grey's atonement model of "right relations"

As I have already indicated I find Grey's relational theology helpful in order to restore and make whole broken relationships. It is this view of Grey that I find particularly helpful for the people on the Cape Flats with regard to the motif of "bearing one's cross". For Grey, Christ exists in the church-community. The church which is the Body of Christ\Christian community, is the embodiment of a ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor: 5: 18) where Persons are called and live out right relationships brought about by God's power which is balanced by the responsibility of the individual towards the other. Thus the motif of "bearing one's cross" in the light of Grey's atonement model means that, as people there is a responsibility towards one another to embrace the other irrespective of race, culture or gender. In this manner the uniqueness of the individual is not lost, but enhanced by the relationship with the other. In reconciliation goes against patriarchal rules and destroys injustice. Reconciliation shows grace and respect to the spirit of the other, as people engage one another in the quest to restore life.

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