

THE "SILENCE" OF THE CHURCH IN SOUTH AFRICA ON RAPE



BY

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I

I declare "The "Silence" of the Church in South Africa on rape" is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

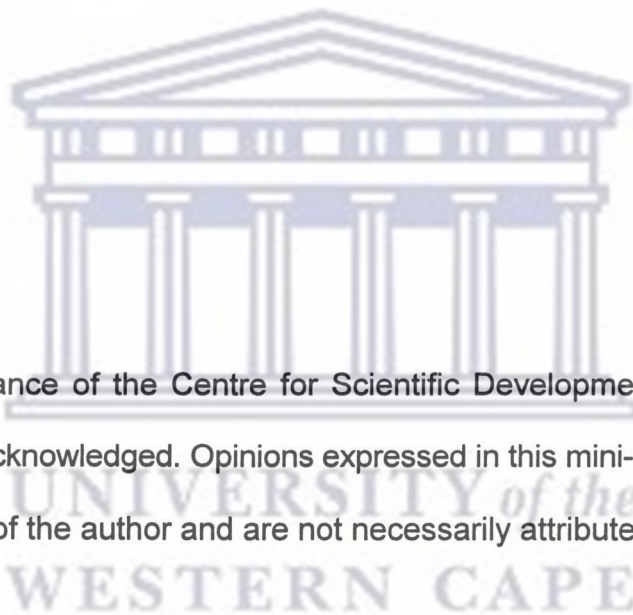


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DEDICATION

Dedicated to Anna Benting who taught me to live in fullness.



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INTRODUCTION

The context of the study

My interest in the subject of rape stems mainly from three sources. First of all, I was the hospital chaplain of the Congregational Church at both Groote Schuur and Tygerberg Hospitals, where I had the opportunity to counsel rape survivors in 1991 and 1992. Secondly, rape is quite frequent in my community. I have witnessed personally four rapes, three of them gang related. Thirdly, research on rape indicates that South Africa has the highest rape statistics in the world.

South Africa's rape statistics show that reported cases are more than twice that of any other country and the rate is still rising (Rape Crisis 1994). Of all the rapes, 18,90% occur in the Witwatersrand, 17,48% in the Western Cape, 14,54% in Natal, 10,72% in the Eastern Cape and 8,30% in Soweto (Annual Report of the Commissioner of the South African Police 1992:61). Rape statistics from 1991-1995 indicate that rape is constantly on the increase.

- In 1991, 22 761 rapes were reported to the South African police (Annual Report of the Commissioner of the South African Police 1992:52).

- In 1992, 24 360 cases were reported to the police. That is an increase of approximately 7,03% (Annual Report of the Commissioner of the South African Police 1992:52).

- In 1993, 27 056 cases were reported to the police with an increase of 11,07% (Annual Report of the Commissioner of the South African Police 1993:96).
- In 1994, 32 107 cases were reported to the police (Rape Crisis Statistics 1994). In the Western Cape a total of 5 524 cases were reported and 37,47% were solved (Reported crimes: Selected categories Western Cape Region 1994).
- From 1987 to 1992, the frequency of rape increased by 34,25% (Annual Report of the Commissioner of the South African Police 1992:61).
- In 1995, 34 783 cases were reported to the police nationally. In the Western Cape reported rape cases were 5 465. The reported rape cases for 1996 is not available yet (Rape Crisis 1997).

Rape statistics only reflect reported cases. A large number of cases are never reported. It is estimated that only one in thirty five rapes are reported to the South African police. An average of approximately 3 335 South African women per day can expect to be raped (Rape Crisis 1997).

The frequency and horror of rape is in no way unique to the South African context. Rape is a worldwide phenomena, affecting every woman. Statistics collected by the New York based International Women's Tribune Centre (Gnanadason 1993:2-3) state the following:

- One out of every two women can be the victim of violence at some

point in her life in Costa Rica;

- In Jamaica, 1088 cases of rape and carnal abuse were reported in 1989;
- In Canada, one in four women can be assaulted, half of them before the age of seventeen;
- The United Nations (UN) reports that India leads in custodial rape (Rape committed by men in positions of power such as police officers, prison authorities, etc);
- Every 15 seconds a woman is beaten in the United States, every six minutes rape occurs, and every day four women's lives are ended by their batterers;
- 95% of women in Mexico are victims of sexual harassment within their workplace;
- Before the age of sixteen one out of every four girls in Peru will be the victim of sexual abuse. A third of all adult women reported that they have had sex against their will;
- In Uganda eleven women were raped by soldiers in April 1991, when they went for identity checks and questioning.

No woman anywhere in the world is exempt from the fear of being raped. Though it happens for different historical, social, political and economic reasons (Brownmiller 1975; Vogelman 1990a & b; Fiorenza & Copeland 1994), virtually all victims are female.

Statement of the problem

Whilst South Africa has the highest rape statistics in the world it is also a religious, largely Christian country. More than 70% of the South African populace claims adherence to the Christian religion (Oosthuizen et al 1985:20). Women are most often in the majority in these churches. To use only one example, in the United Congregational Church of South Africa (UCCSA), at least 60-65% of people in the church are women (Brienen 1994:2). Taking the high rape statistics into account and the percentage of women in the Church, rape certainly affects every woman and the Church as a whole.

To my knowledge the issue of rape as violence has not been fully addressed in official documents of churches in South Africa. The only exception is the Roman Catholic Church. The Theological Advisory Commission of the Catholic Bishop's Conference in South Africa is preparing a document on sexual violence (Ackermann 1993:95). This document is not available yet according to the Cape Town Diocese. The Church in South Africa may in this respect, be accused of being "silent" on rape in its official documentation.

Members of churches as well as certain ministers have always been involved in combating sexual violence. In Johannesburg various churches joined a campaign, organized by People Opposing Women's Abuse (POWA) and some non-

governmental organizations, against rape and violence against women (Oliphant 1995:24). Violence against women has also been on the agenda of the World Council of Churches (WCC). In 1994 the Central Committee of the WCC met in Johannesburg and made several recommendations to member churches in South Africa (Decade Link 1994:3-4). However, in its official capacity the Church in South Africa has never addressed the issue of rape.

This emphasis on the Church in its official capacity calls for some clarification. Various manifestations of the church can be distinguished. Smit (1996:120-121) with reference to Hansson & Hansson (1987), identifies at least six manifestations of the church, namely,

- i) the Church as worshipping community;
- ii) the Church as local community;
- iii) the Church as denomination;
- iv) the Church as ecumenical body;
- v) the Church as believers involved in voluntary organizations, movements or groups and,
- vi) the Church as individual believers.

In this thesis, I will primarily use the manifestation of the church as denomination, understood as the different mainline churches in South Africa, and more specifically their official documentation.

In the light of the above observations, two important questions can be asked.

Firstly: Why has the Church in its official documentation remained "silent" on rape as violence?

Secondly: How can the Church break this "silence" on rape as violence?

This mini-thesis will primarily focus on the causes of "silence" on rape in the official documentation of the Church, before seeking ways and means to break this "silence" on rape.

An analysis of feminist literature on the position of women in the Christian tradition and Church, leads me to identify at least three interrelated factors, which explains the Church's "silence" on rape in its official documentation (Ackermann, Draper, & Mashinini (eds) 1991; Carlson Brown & Bohn (eds) 1990; Daly 1968; Ramodibe 1989; Trible 1984):

1). There is a certain theological tradition present in the Christian religion which sanctions violence against women. In general, violence against women has patriarchy at its foundation. It is the natural symptom of patriarchal social constructs that defines the relationship between men and women whether in biology, politics, the economy, society or religion as one of domination and subordination. It is supported by a myriad of ideologies and structures that nurtures male control over females. Central in patriarchy are moral systems of power and control not only over gendered relationships, but throughout the social and natural order. It is this control inherent in

patriarchy that attracts violence against women (Bloomquist 1990:62). This ideology of patriarchy often dominates in the theology of the Church.

2). The lack of representation of women in the official structures of the Church discourages women's participation and the issues facing them such as rape.

3). The "suffering Christ theology" present in the Church encourages endurance of suffering and leads to women's silence on rape and all other forms of abuse (Carlson Brown & Parker 1990:1-28).

This study, by example of five case studies, will show how these three factors reinforce one another and sanction violence against women. An analysis of androcentric tendencies in the Christian tradition and Church is beyond the scope of this study. The five case studies record instances where rape explicitly occurred to women in the Christian tradition and Church.

There are a myriad of situations in the Bible and the Christian tradition, most of the times unrecorded, where rape or other forms of violence against women occurred. In the Old Testament the stories of the rape of Tamar and Dinah, give us an indication how the rape law functioned in that society. It did not protect the victimized women, but rather the men who were their relatives (Trible 1984; Brownmiller 1975; Pressler 1994).

In the New Testament there is no explicit mention of women who have been raped. The women who were caught in adultery and almost stoned in John 7:53-8:11 shows how religious law and custom sanctioned violence against women (Thistlethwaite 1985:101). Violence against women in the Early Church and Middle Ages were undergirded by a theology and tradition which stipulated that they were an inferior species under the discipline of their men, fathers or brothers. The story of creation with Adam as the firstborn and Eve as inferior and sinful, set the pattern for all human relations. Because of Adam all males had to be in control of all layers of society. The theories of women's inferiority were formulated in the theology of Thomas Aquinas. He held the view that a woman is defective by nature, a "misbegotten male", her subjugation existed before sin, and it belongs to the order of nature as created by God. In 400 E. C a decree of the Council of Toledo announced that if a wife transgresses a husband's command, he may, "beat the wife, keep her in the house, and force her to fast, but not unto death". In the twelfth century there was a law which allowed husbands to strike their wives in anger, but not subject her to stripes under the whip like a slave. In medieval times and Renaissance periods most customary and town laws gave men the right to beat their wives, but only moderately. The reformers of the sixteenth century like Martin Luther argued that women's inferior position was caused by Eve and that they therefore need to be subjugated to the male as a punishment for sin. Calvin said that women's inferiority was according to the hierarchy of creation and labelled any woman who deviated from this norm as sinful, a disrupter of the natural order of creation and a witch. Through actions, such

as witch-hunting, women were punished, especially those who lived by themselves, who were free and outspoken and who did not preside under male authority. These women were likely to be called town witches (Ruether 1990:32-36). In the Middle Ages women were used as scapegoats, blamed for and punished not only for the sins of others, but for tensions and conflicts of all kinds (Girard 1987:74).

Patriarchy and the violence it causes against women, is in no way confined to the times of the Early Church and Middle Ages. Patriarchy continues to influence the Church in South Africa in a different way. The third and fourth case studies of Connie Mofekeng and Shahieda Issel, detained in 1970 and 1985 are stories of attempted rape (Mofekeng 1989:52; Issell 1989:74-75) in apartheid South Africa. Through the signing of the Kairos Document: Challenge to the Church (Institute of Contextual Theology 1986) and other confessional documents such as the Belhar Confession (Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk 1988), the Rustenberg Declaration (Louw & Chikane 1991), The Road to Damascus: Kairos and conversion (Institute of Contextual Theology 1989), the prophetic Church denounced structural violence, which caused the detention of these two women, as evil. In most cases structural violence included the rape and abuse of women (Mohamed 1989:37-38). In these documents, as in many others there was no specific focus or theological analysis on the plight and abuse of these women and many others, unknown and unheard. These two case studies show how the influence of the patriarchal theological tradition, also exemplified in the structures of the Church, subjugate women and

continue to play a role in the present "silence" of the Church in South Africa on rape in their official documents.

A fifth case study of Mary Jones gives an indication how the image of the suffering Christ, played a role in her own as well as other women's acceptance and silence on rape and eventually the Church's silence on rape.

Thus the problem which I would like to investigate through these five case studies and in this mini-thesis, is how patriarchy has influenced and shaped in various ways a theological tradition which still contributes to the "silence" on rape in the official documentation of the Church in South Africa.

Methodology

In the social science and legal fields much research has been done on rape (Hoffmann & Mckendrick 1990; Stanton 1993; Mayne 1989; Stanton & Lochrenberg 1994; Human Rights Watch/Africa 1995; Ross 1992). Chapter One serves as a background to Chapters Two and Three. Its objective is to create an understanding of how patriarchy is present and functions in certain psychological theories, socialization, sexuality and the broader social, economic and political contexts. Patriarchy positions women as having less power than men. This unequal distribution of power not only leads to women's vulnerability to being raped (Vogelman 1990a:23), but also to their silence and society's silence on rape (Vogelman

1990b:96). To speak out on rape is to claim power and to challenge the "natural" patriarchal social order.

A key figure on research in South Africa on the subject of violence against women is Lloyd Vogelman, a social scientist. He is the Director of the Project for the Study of Violence in the Psychology Department at the University of the Witwatersrand (Cape Times 28/4/1991). The research of Lloyd Vogelman is published in The sexual face of violence: Rapists on rape (1990a). My research relies extensively on the work of Vogelman for the reason that he explains male aggressive behaviour, as part of a wider social, economic and political South African context where violence has become an accepted mechanism to deal with conflict. Although Vogelman (1990a:3) does his research from the perspective of the rapist, I will evaluate his research against my own historical, social, economic and political context and my particular experience in counselling rape survivors. In critiquing Vogelman I will also use the reviews of Levett (1992) and Sterling (1990) and other primary sources from Rape Crisis (1994; 1997). I obtained permission from Rape Crisis to use their statistics and material.

Although Vogelman (1990a:17) mentions that most of the rapists belong to Christian denominations, he is unable to point out what contribution the Church as a social force and institution makes to sustain the power imbalance between men and women both in Church and society. Thus, Chapter Two, which is the main focus of my study

investigates through the case studies of Tamar, Dinah, Connie Mofekeng, Shahieda Issel and Mary Jones how patriarchy through the religious law, tradition, structures and theology still contribute to the Church's "silence" on rape in its official documents. In the case study of Mary Jones (not her real name), I make use of primary material gained in counselling her and other patients in 1991 and 1992, organizing workshops on rape and other forms of violence against women and discussions with fifteen women in 1997 who were either raped or survived attempted rape. The story of Mary is an excerpt from a counselling session which I had with her. I allow her to tell her own story in her own words. By allowing her to speak she herself breaks the silence around her abuse. To explain in more detail how Mary and other survivors deal with their experience of rape or attempted rape on a religious level, I make use of the work of Joanne Carlson Brown and Rebecca Parker (1990:1-30). They are critical of how the suffering Christ image conditions abused women to accept the violence committed against them. Other critical discussions on the atonement theories are to be found in Migliori (1991), Hopkins (1995) and Barry (1968).

Patriarchy and its violence needs to be challenged. Rape is breaking women's bodies, their spirits, their integrity, dignity and pride. It is breaking their humanity. Rape spoils the image of God in which women are also made. Right around the world churches have responded to violence against women, either through setting up task forces, producing educational material and organizing regular seminars on violence against women (Gnanadason 1993:42-47). In South Africa there are many social

actions and campaigns against violence against women that the Church can support. Such actions however take place outside the church, leaving the patriarchal tradition of the church intact. The Church in its official capacity needs to challenge its own patriarchy and its own "silence" on rape and violence against women. One of the most important ways to break the "silence" on rape is to produce a document on rape and other forms of violence against women. Chapter Three gives some guidelines to the structure of such a document. Such a document should be the product of both clergy and lay people, young and old, a high representation of rape survivors, women as well as men and people of the social sciences all participating and contributing towards alleviating rape. In the construction of a document on rape and violence against women it is important that rape survivors and lay people articulate what they would like the Church to do to combat violence against women. Therefore, Chapter Three mainly consists of primary information gained through counselling, attending and preparing workshops on the issue of rape as well as comments on preaching on the subject of rape. Other primary sources include the empirical research of Sharon Stanton in Greater Cape Town from 1989-1991. The research of Sharon Stanton (1993:15-23) helps one to understand the situation of rape survivors as she gives the demographics of rape survivors, their circumstances, the nature of their assault, the consequences of rape and the agencies available to whom rape survivors can report or confide in. I also interviewed Jeanette Deenik-Moolhuizen in 1995 in the Netherlands on their organization's role in educating the church on rape and other

forms of violence against women.



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CHAPTER ONE

RAPE IN ITS SOCIAL CONTEXT: THE CONTRIBUTION OF LLOYD VOGELMAN (1990a)

1.1 Introduction

Rape is a complex issue with many faces. Different researchers from the field of psychology to sociology have attempted to understand rape. In some psychological studies, rape is considered as a psychological disorder. Psychologists like Krafft-Ebing, a researcher on sexual disorders, in his research "Psychopathia Sexualis," categorized rapists as "degenerate, imbecile men" (Brownmiller 1975:1). Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis (1856-1939) (Meyer et al 1989:39), did not deal with the subject of rape specifically. Freud viewed the sexuality of men, which was sometimes marked by aggression and a strong tendency to subdue women, as biological. It is necessary for men to overcome the resistance of the sexual object (women) by actions other than mere courting (Geis 1977:18-19). According to Freud, this aggression is a natural characteristic of being male. Thus, in rape there is no abuse or violence, no offence, no victims and no offenders (Fortune 1983:114-115). This view that aggression was natural to being male made rape, which is an act of aggression, a natural act. Women had no need to complain, speak up, or lay a charge against their offenders in rape. They need to be silent. Rape was most of the times considered as natural and acceptable in both Church and society.

In the late 1950's and early sixties, feminists began to dominate research on rape. Research on rape not only shifted from psychology, where rape was often regarded as natural to being male (Geis 1977:18-19), to sociology, but took the blame of rape away from women, and placed it firmly as an act for which rapists should be held responsible.

In this chapter I will briefly give a survey on the views of some leading researchers who employ a feminist analysis of rape. Amongst them are Susan Griffin, Susan Brownmiller and the South African, Lloyd Vogelman.

1.2 Feminist research on rape

In 1971 Susan Griffin wrote an article, Rape: The All-American crime, in which she dismissed the notions of psychoanalysis and described rape as an act of aggression, an act of violence which is not different from any other, for instance beating, murder or killing. It is the terrorism of male supremacy against women, who are often blamed for being unchaste and being in the wrong place at the wrong time. To end rape, says Griffin, the nature of male behaviour should change (Griffin 1977:66). Susan Brownmiller, in her book Against our will: Men, women and rape, makes a watershed statement on the issue of rape. Putting rape in its historical context, as a crime which has been present since the beginning of time, she holds that history needs to be analysed to understand the current situation of rape,

Man's discovery that his genitalia could serve as a weapon to generate fear must be ranked as one of the most important discoveries of prehistoric times, along with the use of fire and the first crude stone axe. From prehistoric times to the present, I believe rape has played a critical function. It is nothing more or less than a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear (1975:2-3).

There were certain criticisms levied against Brownmiller's research on rape. Brownmiller makes herself guilty of racial discrimination and the old myth of the black rapist (Davis 1982:178). Susan Griffin commented that Brownmiller somehow plays down the connection between rape and imperialism in Vietnam. Brownmiller's analysis of rape also has its own contradictions. Although she argues that rape is socially produced, she also holds that a change in society and culture would not necessitate a change in male attitudes (Eisenstein 1984:31-38). However, her study is important, for along with other feminist works, such as Diana Russell who wrote The politics of rape: The victims perspective (1975), they name rape a social problem which needs social analysis. Rape for them is not an isolated act. It happens within a broader social milieu and should be understood in that way. Rape is an act of violence, a symptom of unequal power relations between men and women in the economic, social and political spheres. Men who rape women need to take accountability for this act. The work of feminists such as Brownmiller and Griffin created grounds for later works on rape in society. One such study in South Africa is the work of Lloyd Vogelman, The sexual face of violence (1990a).

Vogelman's study, the first of its kind in South Africa, was significant and timely as it adopts a feminist approach on male violence (Levett 1992:247).

Vogelman's research (1990a:1-2) was prompted by the high incidence of rape in South Africa. Rape forms part of what Vogelmann defines as a "war culture," where violence is an acceptable mechanism to resolve conflict. Rape, though, is different from other forms of violence, for it is commonly committed by men against women. Adapting the analysis of socialist feminists, Vogelmann (1990a:7-8) believes that rape is a reflection of how the economic, political, social, cultural, interpersonal relations, domestic life and sexuality are all integrated.

Vogelman (1990a:12-13) interviewed twenty-seven coloured men from similar socio-political circumstances and geographical areas. In Riverlea where the participants reside, overcrowding, unemployment, a high incidence of violence, teenage pregnancies, alcohol and drug abuse are prevalent. Vogelmann's sample included three groups. There is what he calls a "rape group," (those who committed a violent act whereby a woman was coerced into having sex with them); a "physically violent group," (those who committed a physically violent act against a woman, excluding a sexual act); and a "non-violent group," (men who have never committed violence whether sexually or physical). There were altogether nine rapists. Five had been convicted of rape and four admitted to rape in the course of the interviews (Vogelman 1990a:12-17). What follows is a summary of Vogelmann's most important arguments.

1.2.1 Rape and the social control of women

For Vogelman it is imperative that rape and the rapist be analysed within a context of patriarchy and the social control of women. Patriarchy's oppressive structures and social relations put women in a position of powerlessness, which in effect contribute to their vulnerability to being raped. Any one rape has social and psychological consequences for all women (Vogelman 1990a:23). It limits women's freedom, actions and attitudes. For example, women will not venture out alone at night, will always move in a group, and will confine themselves to acceptable gender role behaviour, especially in the company of men. Acceptable gender behaviour defines women as passive, weak, dependent, irrational whilst men are aggressive, rational and independent (Vogelman 1990a:28).

The rape law in South Africa often protects the rights of the perpetrators to the detriment of the rights of the survivors (Hansson 1991:191). The prosecution of a rapist sometimes depends on the social, marital and sexual status of the woman who was being raped. Women of high social status and rank such as virgins, faithful wives or women living under the protection of their fathers sometimes get a more sympathetic treatment from the courts, than women who are sexually promiscuous, women who are prostitutes and regarded as the property of all men, and lesbians (Vogelman 1990a:24). Rape as a social control mechanism is further strengthened

by the silence which surrounds it. Only one in thirty five rapes gets reported to the police (Rape Crisis 1997).

1.2.2 Psychological theories of sex differences and rape

Psychological theories of sex differences contribute to the perpetuation of gender stereotypes and rape myths such as, "Men need to be aggressive especially in the sphere of sexual relations," (Vogelman 1990a:37). For example, psychobiological theorists argue that the values attached to masculinity and femininity are based on instinct and biology, not on learning. An example of such a theory, is the animal behaviour theory. Researchers such as Rohrbaugh in Women: Psychology's puzzle (1981), use their investigation of the sex differences in animal behaviour to understand the sex differences between human beings. Since the sex differences in animals are biological without the influence of social variables, this explanation is regarded as valid for explaining the sex differences between human beings. Thus, when animal behaviour is sexually aggressive, the same can be expected in the sexual behaviour of human beings. In animals it is usually the male that plays the aggressor role and the female the nurturant and passive role (Vogelman 1990a: 38-39). There is some critique against this theory. Animals are not unsocialized, their socialization is rather acted out in a different way. By using the animal behaviour theory to explain human behaviour, this theory at least accepts sexual aggression and rape. It is also uncommon in certain animals that the male always plays the

aggressive role and the female the nurturant role. It is known that male baboons care for the young when their mates die. Coercion and rape are also rare in the animal world. Monkeys cannot mate until there is an invitation from the female monkey to cooperate (Vogelman 1990a:40). For Vogelman (1990a:51-53) biological theories cannot fully explain sex differences in human attitudes and behaviour. However these theories should not be rejected but critically analysed. For Vogelman, rape in South Africa can be explained through factors such as socialization, a process whereby people adopt attitudes and ways of behaviour which enable them to participate in society. The socialization process is a more apt explanation for violent male behaviour. It is often in the family, at school and in peer groups where people re-enact the models available to them. Research on cross-cultural sex differences in socialization done by Barry, Bacon and Child (1957) shows that socialization patterns can pressurize girls into being nurturant and submissive, whilst it encourage boys to be more independent and achievement-orientated. The emphasis on nurturance as a "natural" feminine quality prepares girls for the child caring roles, whilst the emphasis on men being independent and active prepares boys for hunting. Socialization patterns which encourage sexist ideas and behaviour contribute to rape and the social control of women.

Using the socialization process, the family is the child's first and important institution in shaping beliefs, values and attitudes. The child adopts the attitudes and roles of its parents. The child also learns to accept authority and hierarchy. In the home the

father has more power than the mother and the child less than both parents. Many of the rapists in Vogelmann's research come from homes where physical violence is an everyday occurrence. In the family these men were taught that it is appropriate for fathers to assault mothers. Violence is a legitimate means of resolving conflict. These lessons children take with them into their school lives and adulthood. At school, boys and girls continue to interact and behave in a way that they have been taught by their families. In most cases they will use the same methods for problem solving as laid down by their respective families – physical violence and aggression. Besides the home, the community is also a cradle of violence. In Riverlea, for a man to live up to his status as part of the dominant sex, he needs to show aggression, increase his physical strength and show more assertiveness (Vogelmann 1990a:53-57).

1.2.3 Rape-promoting factors: Sexuality and rape

For Vogelmann (1990a:61-68), rape exists because there are ideologies and institutions which not only dehumanise women, but are essential constructions of masculinity. Views on women's sexuality play a pivotal role in society's acceptance of rape. Rape myths such as, "Men rape for sexual gratification," "Women enjoy sado-masochistic sex," and "Men cannot control their sexual drives," give men tacit permission to rape women and to evade responsibility for their behaviour. Rape myths give a false account of what rape is. They do not explain the reasons for rape.

Rape myths have strong links with sexist ideologies, institutions and behaviours. Sexist ideologies and institutions such as pornography and prostitution strengthen the perception that women are inferior to men, they are objects who need to be degraded and abused.

In prostitution as well as in rape the male exerts power over the female. In prostitution men and women have power. Men have power to buy women for a few hours, to follow their orders (Vogelman 1990a:79-80). Women have power for they can choose with whom to have sex. Although in prostitution and in rape the male exerts power over the female, of the men in the study most prefer raping than having sex with a prostitute for the following reasons. In rape aggression and coercion are always present. The rape survivor has no control over sexual interaction, where the prostitute agrees to take part in the act. Power is a very strong motive in rape for it entails, unlike prostitution, the complete control of a woman, without her consent (Vogelman 1990a:83).

Prostitution confirms the idea that it is the man's right to have access to the female's body, and that sex is a female service. The fact that there are more female prostitutes than male prostitutes reinforces the impression that men have a stronger sexual drive than women. In prostitution as in pornography women are portrayed as docile objects of sexual desire, and men are portrayed as sex-hungry, and

domineering subjects. In this context prostitution, just as rape, promotes the idea that the male needs to have power over the female body (Vogelman 1990a:84).

In pornography the message is absolutely clear that women's bodies are available to be used by men. As an expression of male power, pornography whether soft or explicit, depicts women through intimidation, violence and humiliation as possessions of men. By promoting female submission and male dominance, pornography, like rape, depicts such sexual behaviour as natural and desirable. Pornography can have a powerful impact on adolescent boys and adult men. It depicts male domination and rape as sexually desirable (Vogelman 1990a:87).

1.2.4 Rape-promoting factors in the economic, social and political spheres

Some factors in the economic, social and political spheres are closely linked to masculinity and sexuality. Since rape is about a man's need to gain power, it is essential to focus on social factors which contribute to powerlessness and demasculinisation. An example is the working situation in the country. Employment provides some psychological benefits. It should satisfy needs for stimulation and a sense of belonging; it structures a person's time and provides social relations with others. Definitions of work are inextricably linked to definitions of masculinity (and femininity). People achieve personal worth from their jobs.

For men to gain power they need to have social status. In South Africa this is not always possible, for men living in oppressed communities such as Riverlea. A person's social status and success is closely linked to their type of employment performed. A successful job makes a successful man. Many men in Riverlea, including the sample, are unemployed or have a low paying job. Unemployment for most men in Riverlea is perceived as a personal failing, rather than a fault of the economic system. This feeling contradicts male feelings of pride, success and strength (Vogelman 1990a:109-110). Catherine Campbell (1992:619), in her research on family and violence in Natal, speaks about a "crisis in masculinity." Men and fathers who cannot live up to the masculine status as the supporters of the family are looked down on, not only by the communities in which they live, but also by their spouses, their families, brothers and sisters.

In situations where workers suffer less favourable working conditions, lower wages, poor safety measures and exploitation from their employers, dissatisfaction with work is likely to be present. In blue collar production labour is usually broken down in repetitive and simple actions. Often the work becomes monotonous and the worker bored and they fail to identify with the end product. A man who expects his work to make him feel masculine and in control, and who finds that it doesn't, is most likely to experience heightened frustration. In rape, the rapist is relieved from frustrations. Rape in a sense immediately alters the rapist's low self-concept and can be justified by social norms (Vogelman 1990a:111-112).

Vogelman (1990a:112-114) points out that this does not mean that all working class men are rapists, there are working class men who do not rape. However work dissatisfaction, unemployment and the socio-economic crisis in South Africa contribute to the way men behave in Riverlea. Violence against women in some oppressed communities becomes a symbol of strength and power to gain dignity, esteem and respect to compensate for "lost" masculinity. Gang fights, assaults and rape are quite acceptable male behaviour in Riverlea. It is regarded as a powerful means to restore power and masculinity (Vogelman 1990a:128-132).

The way men behave in Riverlea and in South Africa is for Vogelmann (1990a:118-128) the symptom of a culture of violence. Violence is so much part of life in South Africa that it is difficult to imagine a South Africa without violence. It has featured in white colonial settlement and has remained indispensable in settling disputes in politics, the family, the school, the community and peer groups.

Vogelman (1990a:198) concludes that South Africa needs to change its social patterns, social relations, structures and ideologies. Racism, classism and sexism need to be substituted with egalitarian relationships. In a society free from sexism rape would be limited.

1.3 An evaluation of Lloyd Vogelman's research

Vogelman's study is significant in analysing the different layers of violence in South Africa. This is a study of oppressed communities committing acts of violence against themselves. As rape is connected to social, economic and political factors in the country the study remains remarkable, for it highlights the immense burden of women living in such communities. Some critical comments may, however, be expressed against Vogelman's research.

(i) Being a white male researcher Vogelman has some kind of "privilege" over any female researcher especially those living in similar conditions like Riverlea. He does not live with the fear of being raped and is to a certain degree exempted from the "demasculine" factors in the social, economic and political sphere. Vogelman is inevitably doing his research from a position of male power. As this book sketches rape from the perspective of the rapist, it at times tends to be a subtle celebration of male dominance and violence. For example, at times Vogelman conformed to the language being used to degrade, objectify and diminish the human rights of women (Levett 1992:249). He used language such as "chick," "fuck" and "cherrie" (Vogelman 1990a:19). As this was done to get the participants to trust him and share their stories, some kind of education should have been done afterwards to show how the language being used reflect their sexism and female degradation (Sterling 1990:30). If a woman did the research and if the accounts of the rape survivor's were available

and compared to the men's accounts the research would have been not only more comprehensive, but much more complex (Levett 1992:249).

(ii) Vogelmann (1990a:1) starts his first chapter with the fact that every woman is a potential rape victim. This is true, but some women are more vulnerable to rape than others. Rape is also a crime of opportunity. Women who are poor and have limited access to social power are more vulnerable to violence, than women who have more power in relation to male power. It means that black women are more vulnerable to rape than most white woman (Rape Crisis 1994:2).

(iii) Vogelmann's (1990a:79-90) views on prostitution and pornography are valid but he needs to consider the issue of choice in prostitution and pornography. In prostitution and pornography women make a choice to participate in such activities, in fact they are paid to take part. In the light of increasing rape statistics, prostitutes at least can choose whom to have sex with. The fact that they choose such a dangerous job, where they are vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse and exploitation, may even be regarded as a victory for women who are often portrayed as victims of society, who do not have the ability to make a choice. Prostitutes make a conscious choice to participate in paid sex, no matter how dangerous. If pornography and prostitution is all about women's submission, then it should be valued for making public the position of women in society.

(iv) In a very subtle way Vogelmann may be accused of blaming women for rape. By using the socialization process to explain the violence of these participants, he argues that because these men see their fathers assaulting their mothers, the child,

most likely, as the observer becomes the batterer and the rapist. Because their mothers accepted abuse these participants expect other women to accept abuse from them (Vogelman 1990a:120). It is assumed that if the mother resisted violence, she would somehow prevent the child from becoming violent towards women. This is somehow implying that women are to blame for their own abuse. There are men who have violent fathers, but made the choice not to be violent. There are also mothers who resist violence, and yet their children become batterers and rapists.

(v) To reduce rape in the community, Vogelmann (1990a:53) suggests that social institutions such as schools, the family and society need to change their sexist ideas and behaviours which encourage rape. How then should we explain the increased rape statistics in the light of so many positive changes in favour of women in South Africa. The argument also does not explain why rape is still committed in countries where political, social and economic systems are more democratic and just (Cape Times 28/04/1991). Rapists themselves need to change, they need to take responsibility for their own acts. Just as there is support for rape survivors, there should also be some kind of rehabilitation for rapists. The Kwazulu Natal's Childline Family Centre, has a rehabilitation programme for children and adolescents who have committed sexual offenses (Weekend Argus 1/2/11/1997).

(vi) Besides pointing out the social, economic and political factors contributing to rape, rape also has an historical context. The history of the country is also a history of slavery. There is clear evidence that slaves were abused (Shell 1989:21). In slavery there is an unequal power relation. Those who have the most power because

of economic, political, social and sexual standing have the ability to abuse that power. Violence is the extreme form of the abuse of power. For men in slavery this may have implied a beating, but for women it often implied a beating as well as a payment with her body. In other slave societies such as that of the African-American situation, women were raped by white colonists to manifest that black women are inferior and need to be humiliated. White men, by virtue of their economic position, had access to black women's bodies,

At the crux of the ideology that black women were an inferior species was the belief that black women, unlike white women, craved sex inordinately. The rape of the black women by white men or the use of their bodies for pleasure could be rationalized as the natural craving of the black women for sex, rather than the licentiousness of the white men. The mixed blood of thousands of African people's descent is incontrovertible proof of sexual contact between white slave masters and black slave women (Cannon 1985:32).

Rape in times of slavery is an unresearched area in South African history. Brownmiller (1975:165-166) records that rape in slavery is an institutional crime, part and parcel of white men's subjugation of a people for economic and psychological gain. The women's body belonged to the white master. She could not refuse such sexual advances. If she did not comply there was always the gun, the knife and the whip to make her subdue.

(vii) Vogelmann (1990a:60) defines rape as sexual violence. This definition indicates that rape is neither an act of violence, nor of sexual passion, but a crime of sexual violence. Despite the way in which he grounds his research in the socio-political

context of racial oppression, unemployment, male dominance and sexism in society, Vogelmann's own definition of rape as "sexual violence" does not adequately recognize the social, political and economic factors contributing to male aggression. He explains rape in sexual terms. There is a danger in this definition, for how does sex and violence hang together? Is rape sex or is it violence, or is it both? To use the term "sexual violence" or "sexual intercourse" (Ross 1992:8-10) when describing rape, there is a potential to confuse it with sexual activity. Other definitions of rape describe it as violence, not sex. Just because the male is using his sexual organ, does not make the act a sexual act (Fortune 1983:15-17). Sometimes males do not use their genital organs but use objects such as a knife, a stick or bottle to penetrate women. Clinical studies reveal that rape is serving non-sexual needs. Rape is more undergirded by retaliatory and compensatory motives than by sexual ones. Rape is labelled as a pseudosexual act, which addresses issues of hostility and power. Rape Crisis in South Africa defines rape as assault against someone that uses sexual behaviour as a weapon of domination. Rape would include the following:

- women who are sexually exploited by a date or someone they have a relationship with;
- women hijacked and raped by groups of men;
- women attacked by men they do not know;
- women threatened by "I will get you; I know where you live";
- women in situations where men in authority use their official power to harass them; and

- women whose family members want to disempower them.

This means that there are different types of rape in society. To name each type of abuse of women as rape brings into focus the coherence of different types of abuse (Rape Crisis 1994:2). When we define rape, or any other violence against women, it is important to ask what are the perspectives of those directly involved, or those living in communities where rape has become part of the community's make-up. After rape, women suffer from other psychological symptoms such as emotional numbness, depression, anger, a loss of self respect and disruption of their relations with their husbands, friends and family (Stanton 1993:20; Hansson 1992). Rape is thus violence against the whole being of a person. As one rape survivor says,

Rape is not an isolated incident which you put behind you and pick up where you left off. It will always be there to affect your job, your studies, and your relationships – everything that is you (Kotze 1994:80).

Besides the legal definition of rape (Ross 1992) and the recommendations to change the law (Hansson 1991:180-192), rape should also be viewed as political violence expressed sexually for basically two interrelated reasons. Firstly, in rape the brokenness of the whole community is displayed. Rape is part of a broader political context of slavery, forced removals (Bickford-Smith 1989:47-54; Pinnock 1985:29), unemployment (Todes, Watson & Wilkinson 1989:209; Wilson & Ramphele 1989:54-57; Pinnock 1985:22), overcrowdedness and gangsterism (Wilson & Ramphele 1989:153; Pinnock 1985:21, 33; Threat analysis: Gangsterism and crime tendency

in the Western Cape 1995:1-20, Mayne 1989:232). Forced sex is a sign of social decay and social disintegration (Keefe 1993:82). Secondly I want to embrace the feminist slogan of the "personal as political and ontological". Whatever happens to women, it informs their entire way of being and relating to God (Zikmund 1985:28). Although rape is a personal bodily act, it is also a political statement of the relationships between men and women. Domination by men in the sexual act is part of the social control of women. This control, brought about by biological, psychological, legal, social and economic means is executed on a private and intimate level (Eisenstein 1984:12).

1.4 Conclusion NB

When we understand rape as a symptom of unequal relations between men and women in the economic, social and political spheres, we also need to identify the agencies which keep these unequal relations alive. Lloyd Vogelman (1990a:51-57;109-139) has identified these agencies such as the home, the school, work and the community as cultivators of inequality between men and women and thus violence against women. Once these agencies have been identified it becomes easier to work against violence against women.

Vogelman is silent on an analysis of the Church as a possible contributing social agent in cementing an unequal relation between men and women and thus contributing to violence against women. To name and identify the Church and its

tradition as an agency of inequality and violence against women, will be to break the silence that says it is not an agency.



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CHAPTER TWO

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION

2.1 Introduction: The role of patriarchy

Violence against women is all pervasive. It happens to women of all classes, races, ages, cultures and religion whether in the workplace, in the domestic sphere, in relationships or in the church.

Violence against women has patriarchy at its roots. Patriarchy in its simplest definition, is a system of graded subjugation, where there exists unequal power relations between men and women in the economic, political, social and cultural spheres (Gnanadason 1993:4). There are different variations of patriarchy. Patriarchy according to Adrienne Rich (1976:40) implies, the power of the fathers: a familial-social, ideological, political system in which men -by force, direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law, and language, customs, etiquette, education, and division of labour, determine what part women shall or shall not play, and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male. Acknowledging that feminist discourses tend to understand patriarchy as the rule of the fathers, Fiorenza in her introduction Violence against women (Fiorenza & Copeland 1994), regards patriarchy as also kyriarchal, meaning the ruling power in the hands of elite propertied educated freeborn men. For Delores Williams (1986:47-48) there is a limitation as far as black

women are concerned on the definition of patriarchy as understood by Rich (1976:40). Patriarchy, for her should also include the power of a certain group of females (white) to oppress other groups of females (black). This chapter will work with the definition of patriarchy as formulated by Adrienne Rich (1976:40).

The power imbalance brought about by patriarchy also manifest itself and influences the Church and is most of the time legitimized by theology. In the introduction of Violence against women (Fiorenza & Copeland 1994), Fiorenza identifies four key traditional theological discourses that stand in the way of abused women and children to change their violent circumstances.

1). The Western socio-cultural politics of subjugation originating from Greek philosophy and Roman law is transparent in the major three religions of Judaism, Islam and Christian scriptures. One example is the household code texts in the Christian scriptures which demands subordination, submission and obedience from freeborn women, wives, children, servants and slaves (1 Peter 2:13-25). These texts provide a framework not only about people's relation to one another, but also God's relation to the world. The image of the Almighty Father God, who is the great patriarch of the universe, legitimates religious misogyny, racism, status inferiority, homophobia and xenophobia. These patri-kyriarchal scriptural readings, together with theological teachings on headship maintain patriarchal family relations and Church structures.

ii). Paul's second letter to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 11:2-3) compares marriage between Christ and the Church with the deception of Eve. The pseudo-Pauline pastoral epistles explicitly link women's submission with their sinfulness. The silence of women and their lack of authority over men is due to the claim that the woman was the deceiver and transgressor (2 Tim 2:11-15). The implication sometimes, for sexually abused women, is that they should feel guilty and to be blamed for their own victimization, for sin came into the world through a woman, Eve. To compensate for that sin, women need to bear children, be faithful, loving and holy. The victim and not the victimized should be held responsible for violence against women.

iii). Certain scriptural texts puts a great emphasis on suffering and victimization. One example is the epistle of Hebrew which asks of Christians to resist sin until the point of shedding their blood. It alludes to the example of Jesus who endured suffering on the cross. Therefore the followers of Christ need to expect suffering which is God's way of disciplining them. Just as the earthly father punishes so does God, who disciplines (Hebrews 12:1-12). The first epistle of Peter asks of slaves to practice submissiveness in the same way as Christ did. Servants need to be subordinate themselves even to unjust and overbearing masters. The unjust suffering of Jesus is an example worth following (1 Peter 2:18-23).

iv). Sermons on love and forgiveness can help to sustain relations of domination and help subordinated men and women to accept violence against them. Often such sermons exclude resistance to violence. Scriptural texts such as "blessed are the

peacemakers and those who suffer for righteousness sake" can persuade victims of violence to accept suffering without resistance (Matthew 5:1-10).

The intention of these four theological discourses might not have been to subjugate women and children, but they can be used to sustain and reproduce submissive behaviour. In history, whether in the Bible or Middle Ages, patriarchy has been present in allowing violence against women.

With the help of five case studies in this chapter, I will investigate how this patriarchal theological tradition influenced the different Christian religious communities and allowed violence against women. In the case studies of Tamar and Dinah the politics of subjugation, encapsulated in the rape law, allowed David and Jacob the patriarchs and protectors of their respective society's to regard the violence against their daughters, as insignificant and not worthy of any prosecution. This patriarchal theological tradition in the Biblical roots of Christianity influences, and still presents itself, in Christian communities today. This is, for example, evident in the case studies of Connie Mofekeng and Shahieda Issel. In these case studies, I will indicate why the Church was "silent" in their official documents on rape, which was part of political violence. In the fifth case study of Mary Jones, I attempt to show how a theological tradition which puts an emphasis on suffering and victimization leads to Mary's acceptance and silence of her rape and, inevitably the Church's "silence" on rape in their official documents.

2.2 The rape of Tamar and Dinah

2.2.1 The rape of Tamar in 2 Samuel 13:1-33

In the fourth chapter of the Bible after the glorious, astounding creation story where everyone lived in peace and harmony, we are shocked by the murder of Abel by Cain. Central in the act are issues of sacrifice, inequality between the youngest and the oldest, discrimination, rejection and acceptance. Cain, failing to win God's favour, feels unaccepted and left out by the God of creation. A patriarchal and hierarchical religion which subjugates and oppresses people creates grounds for conflict and violence between people. Between two men it could lead to murder as in the case of Cain and Abel, but between a man and a woman it could result in rape. Instead of killing one could rape.

The rape of Tamar and Dinah are two examples, of how a patriarchal society responded to the rape of women. In both cases the actions of David and Jacob are to preserve their male authority and tradition. These two women are mere subjects in their society. In 2 Samuel 13 we read the story of a beautiful woman, Tamar who is raped by her own brother Amnon. This story is infiltrated by patriarchy, male supremacy and female subjugation. Amnon assisted by Jonadab, rapes Tamar. David who is the father protects Amnon against Tamar and Absalom eventually takes revenge on behalf of his sister. This story is not about rape in the field or outside the gates of the city. It happened in the family, the most intimate and fundamental of all

social units. It did not happen in just any family, but it happened in the royal family of King David (Keefe 1993:87).

Amnon is in love with Tamar, his sister. Governed by the laws of his people, such a relationship would be impossible. Together with Jonadab, son of Shimeah, his nephew, they work out a scheme to fulfil Amnon's need. Amnon should pretend that he is ill and should request his father that Tamar should come and prepare food for him. As Amnon is neither sick nor hungry, this request sets the scene for violence against Tamar. Amnon chooses the bedroom, a place of love, sharing and affection, to execute his plan of force, love, hatred, coercion and violence. Tamar a mere subject in her society, appeals to the laws of the country, to stop Amnon's evil plan.

In verse 12 she says:

Don't my brother! Don't force me. Such a thing should not be done in Israel! Don't do this wicked thing.

The guardian of the law is Tamar's father David, "Please speak to the King: he will not keep me from being married to you" (v13), she protests. The law and King David stand between Amnon and his lust. His lust is stronger than the laws of the country and he disregards the law.

After the rape of Tamar there is hatred in the heart of Amnon, he cannot stand the sight of Tamar and orders her to get out. Tamar pleads in verse 16:

"No!" she said to him. "Sending me away would be a greater wrong than what you have already done to me."

Amnon disobeys her plea and sends her out (Graetz 1993:309). Tamar is violated and lives a desolate life. Absalom her brother plans revenge on Amnon for violating his sister. According Van Dijk-Hemmes (1989:143), the cry of Tamar in verse 19, "Tamar put ashes on her head and tore the ornamented robe she was wearing. She put her hand on her head and went away, weeping aloud as she went," is a cry for justice. Absalom rebukes his sister to be silent when she wails after being raped (Van Dijk-Hemmes 1993:23). Violence continues as Absalom takes revenge on Amnon for violating his sister. This is the justice that Tamar gets, she needs to be silent about her rape, whilst Absalom kills Amnon. Despite her screams Tamar is not heard from again in the Bible (Graetz 1993:309).

Tamar is again victimized by their father David when he does not act according to the law. In David's time the law was made by men and protected them. The definition of rape did not rest on the women's consent or on her understanding of her right to bodily integrity. It was a crime against the male estate (Brownmiller 1975:8-9). In Hebrew society, a women's sexuality first belonged to her father in the case of a virgin, or to her husband if she was married. Violation of the women's sexuality was an offence against the father or the husband (Pressler 1994:103). By not defending his male estate, David is not only protecting Amnon, his son, he is also protecting

himself. How could Amnon, son of David, the King and protector of the law, violate the laws of the country? The house of David would be shattered. Silence should be kept by David. It is the law of David and Amnon against Tamar.

According to the Old Testament laws in Deuteronomy 22:22-30, the locus of the rape and the status of the woman influenced the reactions of men. When a betrothed virgin is raped in the city, both she and the man will be stoned to death. The woman will be stoned because she did not scream and the man because he had trespassed on the rights of the husband. If a man finds a betrothed woman in the field and force her to have sex with him, only the man shall die. The man will die because he violated the rights of the husband, but the woman is set free from the death penalty, for even if she cried or screamed there was no one to hear her and help her. If an unbetrothed virgin such as Tamar is being raped the man that raped her needs to pay fifty shekels of silver to the father. The woman is to be made his wife and he shall never divorce her. This process provided security for the woman who lost her virginity and possible marriage. The woman's father is also protected for he is exempted from providing for an unmarriageable daughter (Pressler 1993:41).

2.2.2 The rape of Dinah in Genesis 34:1-31

When rape happened outside the tribe or the city, evident in the case study of Dinah, war could erupt. Dinah, a Hebrew woman was raped by Schechem, a Hivite from a Canaanite city. After raping Dinah, Schechem son of Hamor, fell in love with her and wanted to marry her. According to tradition he could agree to marry her and he might never divorce her (Pressler 1994:104). Dinah's father and brothers controlled her sexuality. In rape their rights are violated (Pressler 1994:111). Dinah's brothers were outraged by this act but agreed to the marriage. The condition for the marriage was that all the Hivite men should be circumcised. The Hebrew men, Simeon and Levi, attacked the Hivites, whilst they were recovering from this sensitive operation, killed all the men, captured the children, and wives and all the contents of their houses (Thistlethwaite 1993:69). Again Jacob, the father is quiet about Dinah's rape (Graetz 1993:308).

When rape happened within a particular social order, a payment of money to the father of the house was appropriate to acquire a wife. The fifty shekels to be paid to the father was called "the bridewealth of virgins." Rape ended in a business transaction. It decreased the father's daughter's price on the market and he had to be compensated (Brownmiller 1975:8-9). According to the law in the Hebrew society, a married woman could not be raped. When a married woman claimed that she was raped, it was considered as adultery and she was stoned to death alongside her

attacker at the gates of the city (Brownmiller 1975:10). This meant that many married women, who were in fact raped, remained silent about the incident. If they broke the silence death could result.

In these two case studies of Tamar and Dinah their status as being subordinate to men make the crimes committed against them insignificant. This theological legitimization of patriarchy, prevalent in the two case studies continued throughout the Middle Ages (Ruether 1990:31-41; Girard 1987:74), modern period (Gage 1985:217-294) and has also a lasting influence in South Africa. The case studies of Shahieda Issel and Connie Mofekeng show how patriarchy in a different way played a role in the Church's "silence" on rape in their official documents.

2.3 Attempted rape of Connie Mofekeng and Shahieda Issel

Connie Mofekeng was eighteen years old and lived in Soweto in 1976. She was a member of the Soweto Student Representative Council and later a member of the Soweto Student Organization. She took part in the riots of June 16 and was detained. After three months she was released. She was again detained in 1976. Living in Sebokeng in 1984, she took part in the formation of the Vaal Organization of Women and became its secretary. On the 18th of October she was again arrested and taken

to the John Vorster Square police station in Johannesburg where she was brutally abused. They kicked her in face, induced electrical shocks, she was beaten with a baton, thrown against the walls and received no food for at least six days. Here she describes her attempted rape:

I always knew that if I had a chance to escape, I'd do it. One day the watch policeman wanted to sleep with me. I fought with him, and fortunately he didn't manage to overpower me. I pulled his hair, and he fell down. The door was open so I left my cell. I wanted to run away, but I realized that if they caught me, he'd say I was fighting with him to escape. Then the case against me would be very serious. So I stayed in my cell where police found me after they came running in thinking that I had escaped. So the watch policeman's story that I tried to escape wasn't very convincing. But when I told them what had happened, their reaction was to assault me. Two weeks later, a prison inspector asked me and the other prisoners if we were having problems. I made a statement to him about what had happened on that day in my cell, but the only thing they did as a result of my report was to transfer me to another prison.

This wasn't the first time something like that happened. They would usually try to sleep with me when they came to look into my cell in the evenings. When I heard the door opening, especially in the evenings, I had to be ready for anything. I often couldn't sleep because I felt so unsafe. But they never succeeded because I used to fight them (Mofekeng 1989:47-52).

Shahieda Issel a divorced woman with three children lives in Mitchell's Plain. She participated in the work of the Black Women's Federation. Due to her political activity she was detained in 1985 for a month and was released for about two weeks and then detained again for another three months. During her first detention, her sexual harassment was mostly psychological. Police men would ask her personal questions about her love life. Then they swore at her and called her a dirty person, a slut and said that her children would become sluts too. During the state of emergency in 1985 she was again detained. Here she records her attempted rape:

I had a curly perm at that point, and this guy in the lift said to me, "Oh, you've got nice curls," and started playing with my hair, then gave it a

pull. "This is just the beginning," I thought. "The rest is coming. I'm not going to get upset about it". In the foyer of the Caledon Square police station, I saw the most hated man in the security police, Colonel Mostert. He asked me, "What have you got on?" I said, "I've got a dress on." He said, "I want to know what you have on underneath." I replied, "I've got underwear on." Then he wanted to know the colour of my underwear. I said, "I've got black panties on." Then he said, "That is not all I want to know. I want to know what is inside your panties." I thought, "This man is totally crazy." I said, "Look, this is my personal affair. It has got nothing to do with you." Then he walked over to me, pulled at my dress, and started unbuttoning it while he said, "Well if you won't tell me, I'll find out for myself." I was very intimidated, but I said, "I am menstruating. I've got a tampon in." I was completely devastated. I didn't know what to do, and I prayed to God to help me. I was afraid that he would rape me. I thought, "Oh my God, is this what is going to happen?" I've always heard people speaking about it but I had never been subjected to it myself. But I couldn't even scream. I stood there saying nothing. By the time he had unbuttoned my dress, another guy walked in, but Colonel Mostert wasn't even embarrassed. He said, "I am Frans Mostert. That is normally how I introduce myself," and he shook my hand (Issel 1989:66-75).

These are cases of attempted rape. There are other stories of actual rape.

In Phola Park a squatter camp, women suffered rape by soldiers of the South African Defence Force (SADF) battalion. Those raped included pregnant and wounded women (Lewis 1994:12). Several Namibian women were raped by South African security forces (TEP Update 1989:7). Just as the silent war against the women of Bosnia is not much spoken about (Equality now- The women's action network on mass rape and murder in Bosnia-Herzegovina 1993), so has rape as a political and war weapon in South Africa not been fully addressed in any of the official documents of the Church in South Africa. Mass rape is frequently used as political and military

strategy either to punish or intimidate those warring factions. The logic behind such action is, in order to teach the men a lesson, the women need to be hurt. After rape women are usually killed (Gnanadason 1993:15-16). Apart from the war in which everyone in such circumstances is engaged in, women still need to fight a sexual war which in most cases they loose (Fiorenza & Copeland 1994:47).

In any social system where oppression is being institutionalized such as in the case of South Africa, those who benefit from such oppression will maintain power by various oppressive and ideological means. In the apartheid era it did not only mean that the government had to increase military power to secure law and order, it also meant the rape and abuse of women (Jordaan 1991:124). Jacklyn Cock, writing from a social-scientific perspective, equates rape in South Africa with war. In the preface to The sexual face of violence (Vogelman 1990a), she writes:

If terrorism means acts of violence that impact on power relations in society by spreading fear and intimidation, then rape is clearly a terrorist weapon. If war is defined by the scale and intensity of political violence, then perhaps there is a hidden war being waged against women in society.

Who will break the “silence” on rape as part of political violence? The Kairos Document: Challenge to the Church (1986) formulated at the height of political violence, when many women were raped and sexually harassed by policemen, did not address this kind of violence against women. The road to Damascus: Kairos and

conversion (1989) signed by various women does not express the feeling of women who were jailed, forcibly removed, detained and raped.

In the apartheid era there were abundant theological works (Ackermann 1987:255-270; Blom 1989:180-190; Nicol 1989:216-226; Mayhew 1989:53-88; Villa-Vicencio 1990; Deist 1983), and official documents on violence and the role of the Church (Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk 1988; Institute of Contextual Theology 1986; Louw & Chikane 1991; Institute of Contextual Theology 1989). Rape, as part of political violence, has not been dealt with adequately in any theological work or official document. The following reasons could serve as an explanation why the Church did not address the issue of rape in their official documents. To search for reasons why the Church is "silent" in its official documents on rape, I will look at:

- i) who produces theological works or documents,
- ii) who are most affected by rape,
- iii) the structures of the church and who dominate it,
- iv) the nature of the structures of the church,
- v) women's organizations and their function in the church,
- vi) women and their sexuality in the church,
- vii) women and their self-image
- viii) women's organizations and their identity
- ix) the difference between black women and white women
- x) feminist theology and the Church

- i) Most theological works or documents are being produced by male, white and black, middle-class educated theologians. There has never been an in depth socio-political theological analysis of rape in South Africa. The only theological works which I could locate on rape in South Africa were articles by De Jongh van Arkel (1985:55-65) and Ackermann (1993:89-99). One could then deduct that theologians have no or little interest in issues that affect women such as rape. Also, in most cases, rape is considered as a women's problem which needs to be dealt with by feminists.
- ii) Rape happens in all communities, but in the black communities it is definitely more difficult to conceal. Black men are easier to arrest and convict because of their lack of power in the community (Vogelman 1990a:118). Aggravated by social, economic and political problems, a popular notion is that rape is an "oppressed problem" that needs to be solved by the violent oppressed communities themselves. Black women living in these communities have power, but not an adequate consciousness to challenge structures, including Church structures, to work against violence against women.
- (iii) In most communities the Church is the most important grassroots structure. The Church's structures however, are dominated by males. Women who are present on these structures most often blindly serve the Church and its structures against their own needs and expectations. The Church, in its discussions, in its decision-making, at regional, diocesan, episcopal and synodical levels are more controlled by male representatives

than female representatives. Because there are more male representatives on all levels of the Church, the issues which affect males will probably dominate any agenda, to the detriment of female issues (Govinden 1994:289).

- (iv) The structures of most denominations are very hierarchical. Churches are ranked in terms of status and position. The minister who is usually male is the head of the congregation and has more authority than parishioners. This hierarchical structures of the Church most often exemplifies parishioners relationship to God. God is on high, for God is holy and they are low because they are human and sinful. The minister becomes a mediator, between God and humans. Whatever the minister speaks, they believe God has instructed it, and therefore they listen. They do not question authority unnecessarily. The majority of males in the Church have positions of power and privilege and influence women, men and children. In an empirical inquiry conducted by Ackermann (1993:94), she questioned 86 people on rape and only one person had actually heard a sermon on rape. Ministers do influence people and have a role in making people aware of social issues which are affecting them. If the ministers and therefore the Church leadership are silent on rape it is to be expected that the Church and the wider community will be silent on rape too.
- (v) Women's organizations are the largest in the Church and in the wider South Africa. Women, including Church women, played a major role in political activism. In the 1920's women were involved in the development of trade unions, and in the 1950's they were at the forefront of the movement against

carrying passes (Bam 1986:42). Women's social and political activism and organization have little influence in the Church. The silence of women on rape in their different organizations tells of their subservient status in the Christian religion. Women in South Africa have never adequately found and named their religious power to organize and transform their position of oppression in the Church. Women most often perform their duties in the Church in a very submissive way. Women in the church are most of the time wanted as workers, cleaners, bakers and fund raisers (Ramodibe 1989:17).

- (vi) Women too need to take the responsibility for the Church's "silence" on rape in their official documents. Women themselves see matters of sexual orientation, which is usually associated with being women, as taboo to the life of the Church. Because of the "sexual" connotations attached to rape some women believe that they should not speak about rape in the Church.
- (vii) Some women often have a low self image and doubt their feelings unnecessarily. Many women are not able to speak about their experiences. Their accounts of suffering and abuse, are frequently perceived as incredible and unbelievable even to themselves (Young-Eisendrath & Wehr 1990:119).
- (viii) The women's movements are the backbone of many churches. The problem, however, is that they prefer to organize and act separately from the whole Church, guarding their identity as a women's movement. One will

sometimes hear stories of abuse in the women's organization, but they will deal with it as a woman's issue separate from the whole life of the Church.

ix) Rape affects all women, but some women are more vulnerable to rape than others. As rape is also a crime of opportunity, women who are poor and have limited access to social power are more vulnerable to violence, than women who have more power in relation to male power. Thus, most black women are more vulnerable to rape than most white women (Rape Crisis 1994:2). Feminism in the church and society, is dominated by white middle-class feminists who often live a life different from most black working-class women. This essentially means that the issues which affect white middle-class women will mostly dominate in feminist publications. I also agree with Walker (1990:2) that most white women are both oppressed as women, and oppressor belonging to the white race. Thus, their commitment to work with black women (as women), for example against violence against women which is a social and political problem (created through inequality between people including racism), will be divided.

(x) Churches, through ecumenical organizations such as the South African Council of Churches (Bam 1992: 35-36) and the Institute for Contextual Theology (1984) have produced multiple feminist theological publications. Feminist theological publications in South Africa have to a great extent neglected to connect social, economic and political issues with the study of theology. It needs to be admitted that feminist theology in South

African is in its embryonic stage. Most articles published concentrate on issues such as feminist hermeneutics (Wittenberg 1991:3-21), theological foundations towards a feminist theology (Kretzschmar 1991:106-122), women and the Church (Donaldson 1991:207-220; Bennett 1986:169-174; Mosala 1986:129-135) and women and ministry (Jacobsen 1991:241-254). These articles only attempt to create an understanding of what feminist theology is.

The abovementioned reasons may therefore explain why the Church is "silent" on rape in its official documents. The churches in South Africa which were on the forefront of the establishment of a just and democratic order remain "silent" on rape in their official documents. Can the words of Cullinan (1987:48), that we are silent because we participate in this evil be true? The next case study of Mary Jones is an indication of how through the influence of a "suffering Christ theology," women can accept, be silent and therefore participate in their own suffering and cover up evil.

2.4. The rape of Mary Jones

Violence against women implies suffering. Most of the time raped women accept their suffering. Behind the acceptance of this kind of suffering, often lies a theological tradition that encourages endurance of suffering and thus violence against women. There are various types of suffering, for example, suffering as a result of one's own irresponsibility (e.g smoking and developing lung cancer); suffering imposed on one

because of the sins of others (e.g violence against women); suffering as a result of natural disasters (e.g earthquakes) and suffering willingly taken upon oneself for a particular cause (e.g Martin Luther King, Jnr. who suffered to bring social transformation for blacks). People undergoing these different types of suffering, will search for something that will help them to understand their suffering. When Christians suffer, they usually attempt to understand their suffering through relating it to the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. The story of Mary Jones, rendered below, shows how she compares her suffering with the suffering of Christ. She believes that she should accept her suffering in the same way as Christ accepted his suffering.

My name is Mary. I am twenty five years old. I was hospitalised last week, because I have these terrible headaches and I vomit all the time. It is probably because of the rape. I live in a squatter camp near Bellville. On my way to a friend, a man suddenly appeared from behind me, wrestled with me, dragged me into the bushes and raped me. I am strong and fought back, I even tried to alarm the neighbours by screaming, but to no avail. Nobody lifted a finger to release me from the rapist.

I know the rapist, and fear that he will return to harm me. He can kill or rape me again, to prevent me from reporting the case to the police. I have no other home or relatives with whom I can live, and am obliged to return to the squatter camp after hospitalization. I wish I had a home where I can live without the fear of being raped or killed.

Sometimes I wonder why I was raped. All the suffering is driving me crazy, sometimes I wish I was dead. Why do you think we suffer so much and yet God is someone who loves us? I guess Christ also suffered much and he did not complain. Maybe that is what I need to do: be silent about my suffering and accept it.

Mary, is certainly not the only one who use the image of the suffering Christ to understand her own suffering. Many survivors feelings in response to their rape and suffering, can be summarized by the following:

- "I need to make sense out of my suffering. It may bring my children, my family, my brothers and sisters nearer to one another."

- "If God loves me so much, why do I suffer."

- "Suffering is punishment from God. I have done something wrong."

- "Suffering is part of life. Christ suffered and I should accept my suffering. I will be a stronger person after my suffering."

- "God does not understand rape and the suffering it causes. I cannot talk to God about rape."

- "Rape is an everyday occurrence. I need to accept it when it happens to me. Everybody gets raped."

- "God does not love me. That is why rape happened to me."

These are typical responses of rape survivors to their suffering. The Church somehow offers some answers to the questions or responses of rape survivors. The dominant image surfacing in the understanding of rape survivors suffering is the image of, "Christ that suffered and helps us to endure our own suffering." There is in essence nothing wrong with such a theological analysis. Christ did indeed endure suffering and "died for our sake" according to the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed

(World Council of Churches 1991:54-60). There are however different interpretations with different emphases on the theological significance of the suffering Christ. A brief description of the different theories of the suffering Christ, will illuminate that there is indeed a difference between Christ's suffering and Mary's suffering. Mary's uncritical identification with Christ's suffering actually leads her to accept her suffering when she should have questioned her suffering and the difference between rape and the crucifixion.

The discussion of the significance of Christ's suffering on the cross can best be grouped around four central controlling themes or images. These themes or images are not mutually exclusive and here and there approaches do overlap (McGrath 1994:341-342).

i) The cosmic or the 'Christus Victor' theory. This theory concentrates on the military metaphors present in some New Testament passages, such as in Colossians 2:15. This view describes atonement in terms of God's fierce struggle against the forces of evil in the world. Through Jesus the Incarnate Lord, God battles with the demons, the devil and all powers that keep human beings in bondage. Through the cross and resurrection Christ overcomes these powers and sets people free (Migliori 1991:152).

ii) The satisfaction theory finds its roots in the medieval theologian, Anselm of Canterbury (Hopkins 1995:49). This theory explain vicarious suffering as necessary

for the redemption of humanity. Anselm is influenced by the medieval thought world and its understandings of law, offence, reparations and social obligations. Expressed in Cur Deus Homo? (Why did God become human), Anselm understands God's relationship to human beings as the same as feudal relationships to their serfs. When disobedient serfs dishonour their Lord, an act of satisfaction needs to remedy the relationship. In the same way human beings sin against God and satisfaction needs to be given for this offence (Migliori 1991:152). Human beings need to provide the necessary satisfaction but lack the resources to provide for the necessary satisfaction. Therefore God had to become human. A God-man would possess the ability as a God, and the obligation as a human being to pay for required satisfaction (McGrath 1994:350).

iii) A third theory to understand the significance of the suffering Christ, is often called the liberal or moral influence theory. It is also referred to as the subjective theory of the atonement, in contrast to the objective emphasis of the cosmic conflict and satisfaction theories (Migliori 1991:153). The moral theory as developed by Abelard (1079-1142), states that sin evolved out of being disobedient to God's will. This disobedience separates humanity from God, rather than offences committed for which satisfaction should be offered. Therefore there was no need for Christ to die and pay satisfaction. The purpose of the incarnation was to carve out a new way of existing and to move humanity to repent and seek forgiveness. Through the death of Jesus Christ, humanity is won back to God's will (Barry 1968:144).

iv) The fourth theory, explains Christ's death upon the cross as a sacrifice. Drawing on the New Testament letter to the Hebrews, Christ's sacrificial offering was an effective and perfect sacrifice, something which the Old Testament sacrifices could not achieve. According to Augustine in City of God, Christ was the true sacrifice which was designed to unite humans with God in a holy fellowship (McGrath 1994:342).

All four of these theories emphasize that the suffering of Christ was wanted or demanded by God and that suffering brings redemption. Each of the theories has its own context in which it was developed. When these theories or fragments of these theories are applied uncritically, without due analysis of the context in which it was developed, for example to understand a rape survivor's suffering, it could lead to the legitimization of suffering and unnecessary abuse. Carlson Brown & Parker (1990:1-28) together with other feminists indicate how these theories can be used to encourage women to be silent on rape and other forms of abuse:-

i) Christianity's emphasis on Jesus as a model, has led to the idealization of certain qualities, especially for women, such as sacrificial love, passive acceptance of suffering, humility and meekness. Through imitating these qualities, women who are the most victimized in society, are plunged more deeply into victimization (Daly 1985:77).

ii) The believer who is influenced by the 'Christus Victor' theory may interpret her suffering as acceptable, for redemption will inevitably follow. Before new life is

experienced, suffering must be present. God is effectively working through suffering, pain and death in order to bring new life and hope. Suffering is a gift bestowed by God upon the believer to lead the believer to ever greater triumphs in life. If such a theology leads a person to believe that victimization and suffering lead to triumphs, suffering and pain will be unnecessarily prolonged (Carlson Brown & Parker 1990:4-7).

iii) A criticism against the satisfaction theory is that it presents God as a sadist, for God punishes through pain, despair and unnecessary death (Hopkins 1994:56). Another criticism is that love, suffering and freedom are intertwined attributes. Suffering becomes an experience that will redeem others. The woman who believes that she will redeem others will find herself choosing to endure suffering because through her suffering and pain others will be set free. The glorification of suffering encourages women who are being abused to be more concerned about their victimizers than about themselves. The image of God demanding the suffering and death of Jesus Christ, as satisfaction to heal the relationship between God and humans may in this way sustain a culture of abuse and may encourage unconcern for the victims of abuse and oppression (Carlson Brown & Parker 1990:7-9).

iv) The moral influence theory states that an innocent, suffering Jesus, for whose suffering we are responsible (he died for our sins), has the power to confront us with our guilt and move us to new commitments. Jesus' suffering should move us to become more righteous, just, loving and kind. One criticism of this theory is that women may believe that their victimization is necessary, for in due time, the

perpetrator might repent and become more righteous and responsible. In this theory, redemption cannot be fulfilled in intimate affectionate relationships, only in seductive violence. The rape survivor may protect the rapist by believing that the rapist did not mean it that way, that he was drunk, angry and had lost his mind (Carlson Brown & Parker 1990:11-13).

v) Life cannot be lived without suffering. This does not mean that all suffering is necessary and not all suffering leads to an experience of new life. Jesus' death should not be seen as a symbol of new life to be given. Acceptance of suffering does not give life, it is the commitment to life that gives life. If people believe that acceptance of suffering will bring new life, they will not confront perpetrators of violence and abuse (Carlson Brown & Parker 1990:18).

vi) Jesus ministry confronted suffering. His ministry embraced life and he laboured to eradicate pain, social distress and preached Good news to the oppressed, the poor and the heavy-hearted. The message that he proclaimed could not avoid suffering. It was in direct confrontation with Roman political and Jewish sacerdotal power. We may never know or fully understand his motives which lead to his violent death. His death however, exposed those who cling to absolute power (Hopkins 1995:56-62).

The suffering Christ theories, although open to misinterpretation, are very important to the theology of the Church. Twentieth century theologians such as Moltmann (1974), Bonhoeffer (1966), Ferm (1986), Barth (Brown 1967; Bromiley 1986), Oscar

Romero (Sobrino 1982; McAfee Brown 1990), Tilhagale (1986), Bonino (1985), Roberts (1974), Cone (1969), Nolan (1977), and feminists such as Wilson-Kastner (1983), Ruether (1983) and Daly (1985), have each expanded, elaborated, criticized and amended the suffering Christ theories. In most cases their explications have showed the differences and similarities between our suffering and Christ's suffering, and the meaning of Christ's suffering for us.

If Christianity dares to speak on rape and other forms of violence it would bring years and years of abuse to the surface which was allowed by theological perspectives on suffering (Wood & Mchugh 1994:186). To break the cycle of abuse, the following observations might help to understand the significance of Jesus' suffering and the implications for women who suffer as a result of rape:

(i) Jesus' world was a violent world, and so is our world. The socio-political context of the Palestinians during the New Testament period, was marked by corruption, violence, robbery, brutality, extortion and executions. The world of Jesus and his fellow comrades was enmeshed with religio-political unrest, violent rebellion and repressions (Mosothoane 1987:111).

(ii) The cross is not a sign that Jesus wants us all to suffer as much as possible. In his death, Jesus also exposed the idolatrous conception of God and its alliance with a dehumanizing order of life. God in Jesus became uncomfortable with the political and social arrangement of life which destroyed the poor (Migliori 1991:157). He suffered not only "for us" and in "our place" but also "with us."

(iii) There is a difference between suffering imposed on others and suffering willingly assumed for the sake of assisting others to gain release from bondage (Migliori 1991:157). Jesus invited suffering against himself by his message and the life he lived. His crucifixion in Jerusalem was not an act of evil destiny, but Jesus himself set out for Jerusalem and actively took the suffering upon himself (Moltmann 1974:51). Rape is suffering imposed by others and should be resisted.

(iv) Through Christ, God shows that God can suffer, bleed and cry. God has all these human attributes. God is in solidarity with humanity. God is revealed as having love, someone who gives hope and a future through suffering in history (Sobrino 1978:224-225).

(v) In the Resurrection, God shows that death and suffering do not have the last say in life. We can survive suffering and we can live after suffering.

In the story of Mary Jones, it is evident that the suffering Christ or atonement theories, with its emphasis on the necessity of suffering, passive suffering, the glorification of suffering, sacrificial love, together with patriarchy that subjugates women and their feelings (suffering), may lead women to maintain silence on violence committed against them. Mary's lack of differentiation between her suffering and Christ's suffering, led to her acceptance of suffering. The acceptance of suffering due to rape is part of hundreds and thousands of women in every corner of the world. Sometimes women would hold on to this unnecessary suffering, as healing and

freedom might mean that they need to find new ways of relating to God. This is a most painful process.

2.5 Conclusion

These five case studies show that behind the "silence" of the Church on rape in their official documents, lies a patriarchal theological tradition that subjugates women and their feelings; church structures which discourages women's participation and the featuring of issues affecting them and a theology that idealizes certain Christlike qualities for women such as sacrificial love, passive suffering and acceptance of suffering. To break the cycle of abuse allowed by this patriarchal theological tradition the Church needs to break the "silence" on rape. To break this "silence" it is necessary to spell out a different theological vision in an official publication of the church. This theological vision should celebrate women's lives as a gift from God. Rape takes away this gift from God. Therefore rape should be resisted. The next chapter gives some guidelines, to the contents of an official document on rape and violence against women.

CHAPTER THREE

BREAKING THE “SILENCE” ON RAPE: GUIDELINES FOR AN OFFICIAL DOCUMENT ON RAPE AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

3.1 Introduction

The Church is “silent” on violence against women. Church statements and official documents condemning violence against women are still few. In most cases such statements are incorporated in other statements so that women's specific experience of abuse do not receive the attention that it deserves (Gnanadason 1993:40; Theological Commission of the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa). The Church in South Africa has never released an official document which theologically analyses the roots of violence against women. Official documents are “silent” on violence against women. Chapter Two indicated that violence against women is nourished by patriarchy, the rule of men over women in all facets of society. Theology is also influenced by patriarchy. This patriarchal theological tradition has legitimized violence against women throughout history. The Church is an institution which celebrates life. Rape destroys the lives of many people. To be faithful to its life-giving ministry, the Church needs to break its own “silence” on violence against women.

Local social organizations such as Rape Crisis, and the Wynberg sexual offence court have managed to challenge patriarchy and break the silence on rape and other forms of abuse against women. Rape Crisis offers counselling services to survivors of rape and educates the public on violence against women (Mayne 1989:231). The Wynberg sexual offence court in Cape Town, is a structure which endeavours to help survivors of violence gain trust in the legal structures of the country, and encourages survivors of violence to report rape cases and threats from rapists (Stanton & Lochrenberg 1994; Human Rights Watch/Africa 1995:120-121). As part of the process of healing and reconciliation in the country, United Nations observer, Angela Masithela, has requested that the National Peace Accord and the Goldstone Commission should investigate violence against women as critical to peace and reconciliation in the country (Ackermann 1993:93).

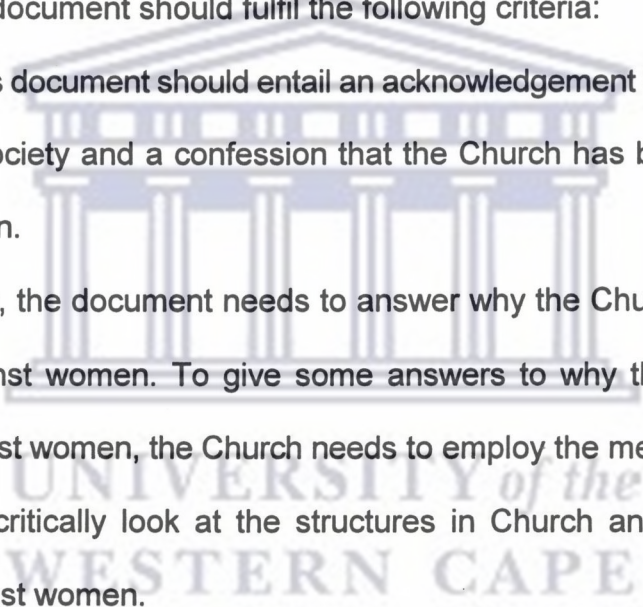
Ecumenical structures such as the World Council of Churches (WCC) has started to break the silence on violence against women, through various publications and consultations. Through the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women (1988-1998), an initiative of the WCC, women in various parts of the world came together to name the various forms of violence they experience and struggle with, in order to find ways to deal with such violence. The WCC has responded to these voices and attempts are being made to challenge the churches to find ways in which they can act against violence against women. In 1994 the WCC held consultations on violence against women in Bali, Indonesia, San Jose and Costa

Rica. The aim of these consultations were to bring together women engaged in dealing with survivors of violence, to help them form a network in each region and to develop strategies for joint action (Decade Link 1994:24). In the same year the Central Committee of the WCC met in Johannesburg. Focusing on women and violence under racism, they made the following recommendations:

- that there be a commitment to look at basic theological formulations that have legitimized violence against women;
- that churches will commit themselves to set up resources to support women in their efforts to build a just and violence-free world;
- that churches will use their moral and spiritual resources to help men to deal with male sexuality and male violence;
- that churches will look at their structures and institutions which have remained silent when there have been expressions of violence against women within the life of the churches and outside (Decade Link 1994:3-4).

Many churches around the world have responded to the recommendations of the WCC. Churches in America such as the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Anglican Church of Canada have issued documents, set up taskforces, and adopted policies and procedures to deal with violence against women (Gnanadason 1993:42-43).

The Church in South Africa has never committed itself adequately to implement the four recommendations of the WCC. Basically the WCC is asking the Church in South Africa to challenge its own patriarchy and its “silence” on violence against women. Since there is no official document on violence against women in South Africa, a possible first step to break the “silence” on rape is to compile an official document on rape and violence against women. Such a document would be a witness that the churches are united and committed in breaking their “silence” on violence against women. This document should fulfil the following criteria:

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- (i) Firstly, this document should entail an acknowledgement by the Church that rape happens in society and a confession that the Church has been silent on violence against women.
 - (ii) Secondly, the document needs to answer why the Church has been silent on violence against women. To give some answers to why the Church is silent on violence against women, the Church needs to employ the method of social analysis which would critically look at the structures in Church and society that support violence against women.
 - (iii) Thirdly, this document needs to give churches some suggestions to act against violence against women.

In addition to these requirements, this document should be the product of extensive discussions on all levels of the Church, regional and national, and open to para-church organizations and individuals for study and amendments. In content the

document should be accessible through its language to lay and ordinary people of the Church especially survivors of violence. The document should empower people to speak out on and act against violence against women. What follows is some guidelines to the content of such a document.

3.2 Guidelines for an official document on rape and violence against women

3.2.1 An acknowledgement that rape happens and a confession that the Church has been silent on rape

The Church cannot perpetuate the unnecessary suffering of its most vulnerable members. Stories such as, "Women tell of horror with four men" (Weekend Argus 3/3/1990), "The cruellest rape of all" (Botha 1993:51-54), and "Satanists found guilty of raping three women" (Argus 14/6/1995), are true stories and they happen to people who are part of the Church. Through being "silent" on rape in its official documents the Church has aggravated violence against women. As part of the confession of the Church that it has been "silent" on rape, it also needs to acknowledge that the lives and struggles of women such as Hagar, Dinah and Tamar, the unnamed concubine in Judges 11:29-40 and the daughter of Jephthah in Judges 11:29-40 are part of the history of the Church (Gnanadason 1993:49).

After this confession and recognition that rape happens in society and in the history and tradition of the Church, there needs to be a commitment that dares to ask "Why is this happening to women" and "Who is responsible for violence against women." A social analysis on violence against women needs to be done.

3.2.2 A social analysis on violence against women

The word social analysis refers to an attempt to find out how society is structured and in this case, what allows violence to happen to women. Social analysis is a tool most commonly used in the social sciences. It strives to analyse, interpret and understand the way the world in which we live, operates. To analyse a specific context is to identify all the variables existing in it, to establish how it works to see why and what makes people behave the way they do. Any society consists of structures and relationships. To do a social analysis is to try and find out the different elements in the structure, what are their relation to one another and how it determines and influence human behaviour. Social analysis critically seeks for causes and root causes.

Important in social analysis is the discovery that society is in a constant state of flux. It produces structures of its own and people and individuals are incorporated and form part of these structures. People, individuals and groups do not stand apart from structures, but they are part of and function within these social structures. Social

analysis attempts to reveal the most fundamental structures, the divisions it creates in society, how structures dominate and oppress, who are the oppressors and oppressed, the class divisions, who are rich and who are poor, male and female, who are on top of the structure and who are at the bottom, who benefits from structures and who gets disadvantaged by structures. A social analysis in theology will help to discover what is happening in the world and what are the causes of that which is happening around us (Nolan 1987:55-56)

To do a social analysis on rape and the causes of rape, the following suggested questions can be asked and answers need to be searched for.

- Why is rape prevalent in South Africa and all over the world?
- Who gets raped and who not?
- What are the structures in South Africa that contribute to rape and violence against women?
- Are these structures also present in the Church?
- How does rape affects the witness of the Church?
- What is the church doing about rape?
- Why should the Church concentrate on rape?
- Why is the Church in its official documents "silent" on rape?
- What does the Church as a social organization contribute through its own structures and theology to rape and violence against women.
- What theologies contribute to women's silence and the Church's silence on rape?

When the Church has analysed how it plays a role in contributing to violence against women through its structures and particular theology, the Church needs to repent for its contribution and “silence” on violence against women. The Church needs to act against violence against women. It is the action of the Church which would make visible the repentance for its contribution towards violence against women. This action of the Church can for example entail continuous education on rape to the Church community, and an exposure of healing rituals and songs to the Church communities. These healing rituals and songs can be used on special occasions such as on National Women's day when churches have programmes focusing on women or the day of prayer for women, usually held on the first Thursday or Friday in March every year.

3.2.3 Suggested action against violence against women

1) Ongoing education on rape

The Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk has several programmes to help society deal with violence against women. Organizations such as the Foundation for Pastoral Care for Women, the Centrum voor Educatie van de Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk and the Department of Women and Church educate men and women on violence against women. Publications such as Struikelen over bijbelteksten (Van Cuilenberg & Deenik-Moolhuizen 1993), Spel zonder grenzen: jongens en mannen aangesproken op de

grenzen van macht en seksualiteit (Van der Deijl 1992), Christianity and incest (Imbens & Jonker 1992) address issues such as men and sexuality, the reasons for violence against women, religion and violence against women, scripture and interpretation, how women listen to the scriptures, etc. These organizations also plan workshops for their ministers, prepare papers for synods, give education to prisoners, youth and children on violence against women. Many churches in South Africa do not offer such basic education to people. Churches lack special centres who specifically research, counsel and offer workshops on violence against women. An awareness of rape through an official document should be followed up by other material on sexuality, domestic violence, power and abuse, patriarchy and abuse, theology and silence on rape etc. The Church could even translate some of the Dutch documents on violence against women.

ii) Liturgical action for healing of rape survivors

Rape can also be dealt with in our liturgy and songs. The following healing rite and song encourages women not to endure suffering, but to break the silence and become whole again.

Rituals are signs and actions which are easy to understand and refer to another deeper sense, which words cannot express (Decade Link 1988:93). An example

would be where women assemble in a circle, with the woman who has been raped inside the circle and the others facing her. Someone would then say:

We are here because our sister has been violated. Her body, her feelings, and her spirit have been gravely injured. We are here to mourn with her and also to cry out in anger with her. We are outraged – outraged at the hostility to women and the distortion of sexuality into violence that are all around us in the patriarchal society, taking the most extreme form of rape. We are filled with grief because we don't know when the violence will end and how we can repair the damage that has been done. But we refuse to give up. We will not be defeated. We will not be intimidated and turned into fearful people unable to claim our freedom to go where we please and do what we wish.

A second person says:

We love and affirm our sister who has been hurt. Although she has been injured, she is not destroyed. Although she has been demeaned, yet she has not lost her integrity. Although she has been subjected to ugliness, yet she is beautiful. Although evil has gripped her, yet she is still good. Although lies seem to impugn her, yet she is still truthful. We affirm her wholeness, her goodness, her truthfulness, her integrity, her beauty. We dispel the forces of destruction, of ugliness, of violence and of lies, which seek to make her their victim.

The woman can then say something about her experience or she can choose to remain silent, or express herself in non-verbal ways. The group then leads the woman to a ritual bath. The bath can be filled with herbs and sweet smelling flower petals. Her body is immersed and massaged. After that she is dried and anointed

with fragrant oils and clothed in a dress with a crown of leaves and a bouquet of flowers and herbs. Again in the circle one woman facing her says:

- (With hands on abdomen) From violence to your body, be healed.
(others repeat) Be healed.
- (With hands on breast) From violence to your feelings, be healed.
(others repeat) Be healed.
- (With hands on forehead) From violence to your mind and spirit, be healed.
(others repeat) Be healed.

(All together) The Mother Spirit of Original Blessing surrounds you, upholds you on all sides, flows round about you, caresses you, loves you, and wills you to be whole. Be whole sister, be whole.

If the rape has taken place in the home the house should be purified and rededicated, also where the rape took place and where the rapist entered (Decade Link 1988:95).

Rituals can create a strong group bond and can help build community. A place where people can share deep feelings, scream, cry, play or keep silent (Starhawk 1989:326).

Images and symbols in worship are most of the time expressed in patriarchal language which rules out women's experience. Such images and words influence our thinking about God, the way we pray and worship. Such male language, taken from the Bible, distort women's experience in worship. Reference to women and their experience are rare in prayer books and hymn books (Robins 1986:159-160). Music

and song can also make the church aware of violence against women. An example of such songs are, "We shall go out with hope of resurrection" which was written for a day on feminist theology in London 1990.

1. We shall go out with hope of resurrection.
We shall go out from strength to strength go on.
We shall go out and tell our stories boldly,
Tales of a love that will not let us go.
We'll sing our songs of wrongs that can be righted.
We'll dream our dreams of hurts that can be healed.
We'll weave a cloth of all the world united
Within the vision of a Christ who sets us free.
2. We'll give a voice to those who have not spoken.
We'll find a word for those whose lips are sealed.
We'll make the tunes for those who sing no longer,
Vibrating love alive in every heart.
We'll share our joy with those who still are weeping.
Chant hymns of strength for hearts that break in grief.
We'll leap and dance the Resurrection story
Including all within the circles of our love.

Worship is an expression of how the believer feels. Therefore women's feelings or experience need to be reflected in worship. Feminist songs of empowerment, solidarity, resistance to violence and breaking the silence on violence against women need to become part of the church's liturgy.

3.3 Conclusion

When the Church in South Africa does not speak up, nor acts against rape, it is playing into the hands of evil, darkness and unnecessary suffering. In the gospel of John there is constant emphasis on the life and light which Christ brought. John 3:16 records that Christ came so that those who believe in him might not perish, but have eternal life. Again in John 8:12 "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in the darkness, but will have the light of life".

When the church is silent on rape, it does not witness to the light and life which Jesus spoke of. Instead of being a liberative force in society speaking against violence against women, the Church aggravates women's oppression by keeping silent. We keep them in the house of bondage, suffering and darkness. The truth is that women and the Church can help to break the silence on rape, by addressing it. "The truth," in the words of John the Evangelist, "will set us free". Elie Wiesel, who suffered under Nazi rule uttered these powerful words. He said:

Let us remember that what hurts the victim most is not the cruelty of the oppressor, but the silence of the bystander. (Fortune 1993:287)

The Church which is the haven of so many suffering and raped women cannot be "silent". To be "silent", is to miss this kairos (Institute for Contextual Theology 1986:1).

Epilogue

Rape affects every South African community. In the disciplines of psychology, sociology, anthropology and women's studies much research has been done to understand the phenomena of rape. Besides the Church in South Africa being "silent" on rape in its official documents, the study of theology has to a great extent neglected to do extensive research on rape.

With this research, which is in no way comprehensive, I hope to stimulate or encourage further theological research on rape. More research needs to be done on the Christian religion and violence against women, to construct a more comprehensive picture. Theological research on rape and other forms of abuse in South Africa could cover aspects such as: theology and the abuse of power, rape and the Christian religion in slavery times in South Africa, and abused women and their image of God.

It is my dream that theological research on rape, together with churches and social organizations will break the "silence" on rape and violence against women throughout South Africa.

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SUMMARY

South Africa has the highest rape statistics in the world (Rape Crisis 1994). South Africa is also a predominantly religious Christian country. Women are most often in the majority in the Church. Taken the high percentage of women in the church and the rate of rape in South Africa, then rape certainly affects every woman in the church.

In the fields of psychology, sociology and criminology extensive research has been done on rape as a social phenomena. Rape receives little attention in theological documents. The Church is "silent" on rape in its official documents. My research attempts to answer "Why the Church has been "silent" on rape in its official documents?" After the reasons for the Church's "silence" on rape in its official documents are sought, I make some suggestions what the Church can do to break the "silence" on rape.

There are three interrelated reasons why the Church is "silent" on rape in its official documents:

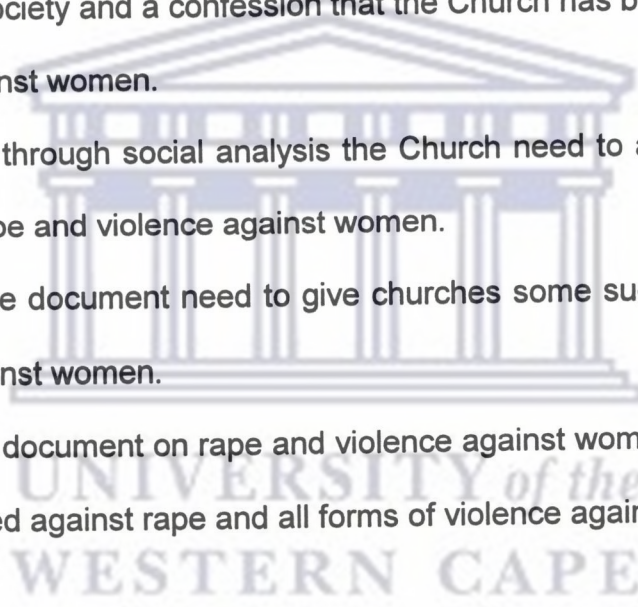
- 1) There is a certain patriarchal theological tradition present in the Christian tradition that sanctions violence against women. Violence against women has patriarchy at its foundation.
- 2) The hierarchical structures of the Church discourage women's participation and the addressing of issues facing them such as rape.

3) The "suffering Christ theology" present in the Church, with its emphasis on endurance of suffering, leads to women's acceptance of suffering and rape.

The Church needs to break the "silence" on rape and violence against women. One of the ways to break the "silence" on rape is to produce an official document on rape and violence against women. The document need to fulfil the following criteria:

- 1) Firstly, the document should entail an acknowledgement by the Church that rape happens in society and a confession that the Church has been "silent" on rape and violence against women.
- 2) Secondly, through social analysis the Church need to answer why it has been "silent" on rape and violence against women.
- 3) Thirdly, the document need to give churches some suggestions to act against violence against women.

To publish a document on rape and violence against women the Church will show that it is united against rape and all forms of violence against women.



OPSOMMING

Suid Afrika het die hoogste verkragtingsyfers in die wêreld (Rape Crisis 1994). Suid Afrika is ook 'n grotendeels Christelike godsdienstige land. Vroue is in die meeste gevalle in die meerderheid in die Kerk. Met die persentasie van vroue in die Kerk, en die hoë verkragtingsyfers in die land, kan die afleiding gemaak word dat verkragting elke vrou in die kerk affekteer.

In sielkunde, sosiologie en kriminologie is daar reeds baie navorsing gedoen rondom verkragting. Verkragting ontvang egter relatief min aandag in teologiese dokumente. Die kerk handhaaf ook 'n sekere "stilte" oor verkragting in haar amptelike dokumente. My navorsing probeer die vraag beantwoord, hoekom die kerk "stil" is rondom verkragting in haar amptelike dokumente. Nadat redes verkry is vir die Kerk se "stilte" rondom verkragting in haar amptelike dokumente, word 'n paar voorstelle aan die hand gedoen om die "stilte" rondom verkragting te verbreek.

Veral drie redes word geïdentifiseer waarom die kerk "stil" is rondom verkragting in haar amptelike dokumente:

- 1) Die patriargale teologiese tradisie in die Christelike tradisie dra by tot geweld teenoor vroue. Geweld teen vroue het patriargie as basis.
- 2) Die hiërargiese strukture in die Kerk ontmoedig die deelname van vroue en aandag aan probleme soos geweld teenoor vroue.

3) Die “lyding van Christus teologie” wat in die kerk funksioneer, dra by tot vroue se aanvaarding van lyding en dus verkragting.

Die Kerk moet die “stilte” rondom verkragting en geweld teen vroue verbreek. Een van die maniere om die stilte rondom verkragting te verbreek, is om ‘n amptelike dokument rondom verkragting en geweld teen vroue op te stel. Die dokument kan die volgende bevat:

- 1) Eerstens moet die dokument ‘n erkenning deur die kerk insluit dat verkragting gebeur en ‘n belydenis dat die Kerk in die meeste gevalle “stil” is rondom verkragting.
- 2) Tweedens, moet die kerk met behulp van ‘n sosiale analise probeer beantwoord waarom daar ‘n bepaalde “stilte” rondom verkragting en geweld teenoor vroue gehandhaaf word.
- 3) Derdens, moet die dokument aan kerke riglyne bied hoe om pastoraal te reageer ten opsigte van geweld teen vroue.

As die kerk binne ‘n ekumeniese konteks n amptelike dokument oor verkragting en geweld teen vroue publiseer sou publiseer, sal dit ‘n teken wees dat kerke inderdaad saamstaan teen verkragting en geweld teen vroue.

KEY WORDS

church documents

South Africa

rape

silence

patriarchy

Vogelman

women and violence

suffering

theories of atonement

liturgy



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