A GENDER-CRITICAL APPROACH TO THE PAULINE MATERIAL AND THE ZIMBABWEAN CONTEXT WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO THE POSITION AND ROLE OF WOMEN IN SELECTED DENOMINATIONS.

by

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submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of

MASTER OF THEOLOGY

in the subject

NEW TESTAMENT

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

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FEBRUARY 2008

Student number: 3279-118-6

I declare that "A Gender-Critical Approach to the Pauline Material and the Zimbabwean Context with Specific Reference to the Position and Role of Women in Selected Denominations" 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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SUMMARY

In this work I have used Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* as a springboard to examine the Pauline tradition in the light of Zimbabwe-African, cultural, legal and social attitudes to women. I have highlighted the conflict between the practices defined by Zimbabwean Constitutional law regarding the status of women and what is the actual situation on the ground, also considering the role of the church in confronting or conforming to the cultural norms. I have likewise highlighted the conflict in the Pauline tradition where one hand women are given more active roles in the church than could be expected according to the customs of the time, but on the other hand are still bound by an oppressive tradition. I have concluded by suggesting how the church can act in order to break free of this oppressive tradition and bring about change in the *habitus* of the society.

KEY WORDS

Law and women in Zimbabwe; women and empowerment in Africa; patriarchy and Paul; Women and Paul; customary law in Zimbabwe; *habitus*; culture and religion in Zimbabwe; women of the first century Mediterranean world; Paul and patriarchy; power and sex in the Bible; androgyne

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the following people for their help.

Mrs Rachel Ncube, now deceased, who gave me invaluable insights into the culture of a traditional Ndebele.

Mrs Gloria Chinamatera, Director of the Legal Projects Centre, Bulawayo, who gave me insight into legal aspects of this work, especially as regards women.

Mrs S. T. Cotton, Projects Director for Youth For Christ, Bulawayo, who told me about the work Youth for Christ is doing in this region.

Mrs Chipo Sitshebo, President of the Mothers' Union of Matabeleland, Bulawayo, who spoke to me about the work of the Mothers' Union.

My husband, Mr D. G. Townshend, who provided records of synods of the Diocese of Matableleland.

The Bishop of Matabeleland, the Rt Rev Wilson Sitshebo, for his advice on doctrinal matters and for his encouragement in general.

The pupils of the Dominican Convent High School, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe who were always ready to share their opinions with me.

My supervisor, Professor J. N. Vorster who oversaw the work.

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CHAPTER 1
METHODOLOGY

1. Introduction

The aim of this dissertation is to examine the Pauline tradition in the context of African, in particular Zimbabwean, cultural, legal and social attitudes to women and in the light of Pierre Bourdieu's concept of the *habitus*. It would appear that the Pauline tradition, because it is in itself patriarchal and firmly embedded in a patriarchal tradition, has been eminently suited to reinforce any patriarchal values already existing in a society. Zimbabwean society is traditionally patriarchal, its strategies of power placing men firmly in control. This society, it will be argued, is governed by its constitutional law, the written legal code, which, while it is not all that makes up a context, is part of the normative discourse of that context. Constitutional law is generally considered to reflect the values and ideals towards which a society aims. But in the Zimbabwean context it will be seen that this is complicated by the parallel values of cultural law which often reflect very different ideals and which frequently may be in conflict with the ideals of constitutional law. Cultural law is traditional, oral law which runs parallel to constitutional, or general law and in many cases permeates society more deeply as its values arise from ingrained cultural tradition, what Bourdieu calls *habitus*.

Then there is the part the church has played in the formation and maintenance of these attitudes. Though the church, like the Constitution, claims to uphold equality of rights and would regard itself as an advocate of the marginalised, it will be shown that, in fact, it is frequently silent in the face of inequality. Its traditional teachings as perceived in the Bible are patriarchal in character and so can be used to continue inequality in gender and the marginalisation of women. The Pauline tradition, as I will show, carries the authority of the founder of early Christian communities and these writings are therefore open to be used as a means of perpetuating patriarchy in the church and in society. This is similar to the conflict that can often be seen in the Pauline tradition where, on one hand, women are given more active roles in the church than could be expected according to the customs of the time, but on the other hand are still bound by an oppressive tradition. It will be seen, too, that, even in taking on these roles, women are being permitted to do so only if they take on symbolically male characteristics.

When examining the Pauline tradition and the background in which it was written, it will be seen that there are many cultural similarities between that tradition and the Zimbabwean tradition with

the attitudes that it maintains. The Pauline tradition, to some extent, will be interpreted as challenging these attitudes, but in many more respects it will be demonstrated that it can fuel those attitudes that subjugate women and keep them in subjection.

2. Pierre Bourdieu and the *habitus*

In order to understand the powerful mechanics which create and maintain tradition, I have used Pierre Bourdieu's notion of the *habitus* as my point of departure. It seems to me that Bourdieu offers an excellent explanation of how practices and principles in a society arise and are maintained. It also explains why superficial reforms, without changing the governing principles and practices of a society, do not have any long term effects.

2.1. *Habitus*

Bourdieu defines *habitus* as

> systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organise practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them.[1]

What Bourdieu is saying is that *habitus* is a generating principle in that it "produces those regular improvisations that can also be called 'social practice'."[2] In a society, certain practices become prevalent, though after a period of time we perhaps lose track of why these have happened in the first place. These practices arise from the *habitus* and in turn nourish the *habitus*. The *habitus* is not a static system because it generates and is generated by practices continually. Bourdieu writes:

> The *habitus,* a product of history, produces individual and collective practices – more history – in accordance with the schemes generated by history. It ensures the active presence of past experiences, which, deposited in each organism in the form of schemes of perception, thought and action, tend to guarantee the 'correctness' of practices and their constancy over time, more reliably than all formal rules and explicit norms.[3]

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[1]Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (trans. R. Nice; Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 53.

[2]Beate Krais, "The Gender Relationship in Bourdieu's Sociology," (trans. J. M. William), *SubStance* 29, no. 3 (2000): 56.

[3]Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 54.

The constant repetition of these practices gives them in the end a certain power of their own; they become "embedded"[4] and internalised. Once this has happened they become regarded as the "natural" way of life and are no longer questioned. Richard Jenkins explains: "The dispositions of the *habitus*, internalized implicitly and inculcated explicitly during socialization, but always subtly and less-than-knowingly at work below the surface level of appearances, make men and women do what they do."[5]

The systems of the *habitus* thus form an "attitude" and as such generate practices which in turn reinforce the *habitus*. Thus the *habitus* maintains itself by not allowing questioning. This is particularly seen in the concepts of discourse and discursive practices.

2.2. **Discourse and discursive practice**

According to Foucault, there are certain unwritten rules and structures in a society which everyone knows and obeys and these rules and structures in turn produce statements of belief and action. These statements constitute discourse, what Sarah Mills refers to as "regulated practices that account for a number of statements."[6] These statements and practices combine with other statements and practices in ways that can be predicted[7] and are regulated by the unwritten rules in a society and also form the way we perceive reality.[8] So people perceive reality and interpret it through these discursive structures and act without being aware of the influence of those structures.[9] For instance, biblical discourse has been a major influence on the way people think, and action by people over generations has been based on the beliefs arising from this discourse. No one questions this as it is regarded as "normal" activity. People who attempt to think outside these structures are considered insane or reactionary and pressure is brought to bear on them to change their thinking or behaviour. Practices and institutions in turn define what is true and what is untrue in terms of the discourse and exclude whatever is considered "false" whilst circulating and propagating what is considered "true". In this way the institutions authorise the discourse that fits in with what they regard as the proper way to think or behave.[10] Mills comments that "truth is constructed and kept in place through a wide

[4]Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 54.

[5]Richard Jenkins, review of Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice. Man: New Series*, 28 no. 3 (1993): 617.

[6]Sarah Mills, *Michel Foucault* (London: Routledge, 2003), 53.

[7]Mills, *Michel Foucault*, 54.

[8]Mills, *Michel Foucault*, 55.

[9]Mills, *Michel Foucault*, 56.

[10]Mills, *Michel Foucault*, 58.

range of strategies which support and affirm it and which exclude and counter alternative versions of events."[11]

This discourse therefore finds its expression in "discursive practices" which Foucault defines as human activity "embodied in technical processes, in institutions, in patterns for general behaviour, in forms for transmission and diffusion, and in pedagogical forms which, at once, impose and maintain them."[12]

An example of discursive practice can be seen in Zimbabwean society. Since pre-independence days, when there were international sanctions against the country, people had to resort to smuggling goods into the country in order to survive. They then became used to the idea of sourcing goods in whatever illegal ways they could and after independence this became a flourishing business as people crossed into Botswana or South Africa and brought back goods for resale here, sometimes bringing them in legally, but more often smuggling them in. Over time, this became known as "informal cross border trading" and the people concerned were known as "informal traders." (So language itself gave authenticity to the practice.) Stalls were set up by the various City Councils for the traders to sell their produce and they were officially licensed to do this. It became an established practice to shop at these stalls. Despite "Operation Murambatsvina," a brutal campaign in which the police and army destroyed these stalls and declared them illegal, the practice continued and the stalls sprang up again, often temporary in structure so that the owners could hide when the police arrived. The practice has become so accepted that people do not question it. The process is rapidly coming to be regarded as the "natural" way to go about business. Part of this process can be seen in the fact that the constant repetition of this practice has caused it to become institutionalised and accepted so that people no longer question it or how it arose. Rituals have arisen around the process of buying and selling, power relations have sprung up in that the "practice" of informal trading is in a relationship with the law, so there is a relationship of power. The police wield the power to close down the traders but, in normal circumstances, veil that power because they, too, need what the traders are offering.

The law, as I will consider it in this study, is an element of judiciary practice. Judiciary practice consists of institutions, such as the courts, law schools, jails etc., and those who maintain the practice, such as judges, lawyers, etc. It is governed by the limits set in the Constitution and it is upheld by people fulfilling their roles and playing their part in the structure. It is maintained by rituals such as the movement patterns in court and the legal formulation of language. The law is

[11]Mills, *Michel Foucault*, 76.

[12]Michel Foucault, "History of Systems of Thought," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice* (ed. D. F. Bouchard; Oxford: Blackwell, 1977), 208, quoted in Nick J. Fox, "Foucault, Foucauldians and Sociology," *The British Journal of Sociology* 49 no. 3 (1998): 418.

therefore infused with hierarchical power, maintained by its structures which are themselves hierarchical. A vital element of this practice in terms of this study is customary law which is not written law but is maintained by oral tradition and ritual.

Similarly, the Church can be seen as a discursive practice. It is bound by its canon of the Bible, and upheld by a patriarchal hierarchy fulfilling roles which maintain the patterns of power. Rituals play their part in upholding these patterns. For instance, in the Anglican church when the bishop processes out of the church people are expected to genuflect, or at least bow, to receive a blessing. This ritual reinforces the status of the bishop as top of the hierarchical tree. Equally language rituals, such as calling clergy "Father," emphasise the clergy's superior relationship to the ordinary laity.

These discursive practices do not exist in isolation but are constantly in relationship with each other. For instance, constitutional law is in relationship with customary law in that each yields power to the other in order to function. Constitutional law allows itself to be limited by customary law in certain situations, but so does customary law recognise that it is not applicable in other situations. Equally, the practice of the Church is in relationship to both laws as it reinforces its own patriarchal structures by offering biblical teaching to underscore the requirements of the law.

2.3. **Structures**

Repetition of practice leads to structures which in turn become "structuring structures."[13] These are structures which become generative principles. They in turn come to be seen as "normal," as part of a reality that is unquestioned and which then brings about the construction of further structures. It is precisely the process of repetition which infuses these structures with power as they become regarded as "natural" and unquestionable. An example of this lies in the power exerted by the practice of *lobola*. This is a structure that has become a principle in Zimbabwean marriage and by constant repetition has given power to the family of the bride - a power which cannot be questioned if the marriage is to go ahead. Once these structures have become regarded as normal, they achieve a fixity, a stability that cannot be challenged. They hold a power to regulate society and laws may be passed to protect them and so infuse them with even more power. In Zimbabwe, regulations were passed which "legalise" the selling of goods on the "informal market" so that the whole process has become institutionalised and accepted as such. It may seem that in the normal course of events this practice has not been going on for long enough for it to be accepted without argument, but in fact no one questions it and there was a great sense of national injustice when the government tried to stop

[13]Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 53

the practice. In the church, till recently, it has been seen as "normal" that men are ordained to ministry while women serve behind the scenes. When a person challenges these power structures, acts outside the pattern of accepted discourse, he or she is perceived as a threat to the *habitus* and is rejected in one way or another.

An important concept of Bourdieu's is that of "symbolic power." Symbolic power, he maintains, resides in those who have "symbolic capital."[14] This symbolic capital is power that is given to those people who have enough recognition in society to be able to demand that their power is accepted. In this way institutions such as the judiciary and the police force gain symbolic power because they are recognised as implicitly having this power. In many cases, men wield this symbolic power because tradition has granted them symbolic capital and ritual strengthens it.

2.4. **Ritual**

In a country, for example, whose tradition has been such as to oppress women (and to trace back the beginnings of the formation of the *habitus* by which this tradition arose may often be well nigh impossible), traditions have arisen which rely on the assumption that it is "normal" that women are considered weaker than men and must submit. This assumption is reinforced in various ways.

Rituals, for instance, are enacted and these lend power to the *habitus*. Rituals play an important role in this way for it is through ritual that culture is expressed and also constructed and renewed.[15] Practices are repeated over and over until they achieve a power of their own, a power to create and to change culture, authority etc.[16] The fact that they are accepted as a "norm" means that they become an integral and unquestioned part of how society acts.

These rituals could take the form of pre-marriage rituals such as *lobola* or bride price and dowry customs. They could be rituals in the form of games taught to girls as they grow up. These games may emphasise their domestic roles, such as encouraging them to nurture dolls, to sew, to learn to cook, whilst boys are encouraged to play war games, games of power and strength. There is, for example, a ritual game Shona children play from about the ages of twelve to fourteen, whereby the girls and boys pretend to be mothers and fathers and the younger children pretend to be their children. It takes place at the end of the harvest period and lasts about a month. The girls are paired

[14]Pierre Bourdieu, "Social Space and Symbolic Power," (trans. L. J. D. Wacquant), *Sociological Theory* 7 no. 1 (1989): 23.

[15]Catherine Bell, "Performance," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies* (ed. M. C. Taylor; Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998): 208.

[16]Bell, "Performance," 208.

off with the boys and perform housewifely tasks, cooking for their "husbands." The intention is to train them for marriage.[17]

Boys, meanwhile, are trained to hunt and herd and are encouraged to box and fight and to avoid "womanish" behaviour.[18] It then becomes regarded as "natural" that women should have their lives circumscribed by the home, whilst men go out into the world. So "public" and "private" areas become the domain of men and women respectively. The repetition of the practice gives it power and this power dictates what is natural.

In fact, it becomes regarded as so "natural" that it becomes almost impossible to question it, never mind change it. Sarah Mills shows how Michel Foucault describes the solidity of these practices. She writes: "In the process of thinking about the world, we categorise and interpret experience and events according to the structures available to us and in the process of interpreting, we lend these structures a solidity and a normality which it is often difficult to question."[19]

Foucault, as Mills shows, describes how resistant the *habitus* is to change. Even in the case of a revolution, the actual revolution may change the way the society is run, but the practices of that society are likely to be maintained rather than be erased.[20] In the case of Zimbabwe, for example, the oppression of the colonisers has simply been replaced with oppression by the formerly oppressed. The structures, practices and rituals of the colonialist society have been maintained, even rituals such as the opening of parliament and, in a more sinister way, the re-enactment of laws preventing freedom of speech and freedom of association.

In Judaism circumcision was a ritual enacted on male babies. Whatever the origin of this ritual was - and it may have been a health precaution - it rapidly achieved a power to define who belonged to the society and who did not. It achieved the power to allow admittance and to exclude those who were "outside," for instance non-Jews and women.

2.5. **Embodied history**

As Bourdieu[21] suggests, the *habitus* is a product of history which produces individual and collective practices which in turn make more history. Jenkins sums it up when he writes: "The *habitus* appears

[17]Michael Gelfand, *Growing Up in Shona Society* (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1979; repr., Gweru: Mambo Press, 1992), 23.

[18]Gelfand, Growing Up in Shona Society, 17.

[19]Mills, *Michel Foucault*, 56.

[20]Mills, *Michel Foucault*, 37.

[21]Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 54

to be both individual and collective. It is the embodiment of shared history. It is also literally embodied."[22]

Repetition makes these practices feel correct and normal. As our subconscious is made up of the imprint of the past, we often do not realise that these influences are there, especially those which began to form further back in time. It is easier to perceive more recent influences as they are not yet assimilated into the collective subconscious. So it is that taboos and prejudices may exist in a society and though no one may know how they arose in the first place they are passed down and inherited and become part of the accepted culture.

So *habitus* is this "embodied history"[23] which has become second nature and therefore has been largely forgotten as a formative influence and is now accepted without criticism. It then perpetuates and reinforces itself in tangible structures. Laws are passed to perpetuate the *habitus*. These may be in the form of a written legal code (such as a country's constitution) or may be an oral transmission of laws (such as customary law). It may also be a body of writings which through repetitive use have achieved the power to regulate and control, such as the biblical canon. One may imagine, for instance, that the avoidance of pork in the Middle East may have begun as a health safeguard as pork goes bad quickly in a hot climate, but constant repetition gave this taboo a power of its own. It entered the oral traditions and finally became inscribed in the legal codes of Judaism and Islam. The origins may have been forgotten, but the tradition has achieved a very real, though often symbolic, power.

As Bourdieu[24] also points out, the *habitus* defends itself from change by rejecting anything that challenges it. He also comments:

> [S]ocial space is so constructed that agents who occupy similar or neighbouring positions are placed in similar conditions and subjected to similar conditionings, and therefore have every chance of having similar dispositions and interests, and thus of producing practices that are themselves similar.[25]

In this way people tend to mix with other people who hold the same opinions and reject those who are different. This reinforces and strengthens the *habitus*. Bourdieu continues: "[T]he dispositions of agents, their *habitus*, that is the mental structures through which they apprehend the social world, are essentially the product of the internalization of the structures of that world."[26]

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[22]Jenkins, review of Pierre Bourdieu, 618.

[23]Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 56

[24]Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 60.

[25]Bourdieu, "Social Space," 14.

[26]Bourdieu, "Social Space," 18.

People form concepts of "inside" and "outside"; those who conform to the *habitus* and those who do not conform to it. Society becomes exclusive and creates further structures to guarantee this exclusiveness.

3. The relevance of Bourdieu to gender studies

In his article "On Male Domination," Bourdieu opens by saying: "Male domination is so rooted in our collective unconscious that we no longer even see it."[27] He maintains that a gendered view of the world is deeply embedded in the *habitus.* Beate Krais writes: "[T]he *habitus* is profoundly and inescapably shaped by a pattern of classification that constructs male and female as polar opposites. At the same time, the *habitus* shapes our action through constant use of that classification."[28]

This classification not only creates dichotomies but is also hierarchical and is reinforced by what Bourdieu calls "symbolic violence": "a violence that is hardly noticed, almost invisible for the victims on whom it is perpetrated."[29] It is a legitimate violence in the sense that it is accepted by the society and is therefore not recognised as violence.[30] It is all the stronger because of this and in fact even those who are dominated are not aware of it and participate in it as willing victims.[31] Krais comments:

> An essential element of symbolic violence thus lies in the fact that the oppressed – in this case women – must identify themselves as inferior by incorporating the prevailing order. Domination also means that the dominated adopt the "prevailing opinion," the world-view developed by the dominant, and along with it a self-image shaped by the dominant. Men's view of women – their positioning of the male as universal and of the female as particular, as deviant – and the dichotomies and classifications that have developed from this vision – also determine women's thinking and perception.[32]

It will be seen in this study that women have for so long been regarded as subordinate to men that until recently they have accepted the situation as normal and have not questioned it. In Zimbabwean culture many women still accept their inferior status as normal and often it is these women themselves who resist change.

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[27]Pierre Bourdieu, "On Male Domination,*"* (trans. E. Emery)*, Le Monde Diplomatique* (October 1998) n.p. [cited 31 August 2007.] Online: http://mondediplo.com.1998/10/10bourdieu

[28]Krais, "Gender Relationship," 58.

[29]Bourdieu, "On Male Domination," n.p.

[30]Toril Moi, "Appropriating Bourdieu: Feminist Theory and Pierre Bourdieu's Sociology of Culture," *New Literary History* 22 no. 4 (1991): 1023.

[31]Krais, "Gender Relationship," 58.

[32]Krais, "Gender Relationship," 59.

This symbolic violence affects all relations in the society. Those with recognised authority become spokesmen for the *habitus* and anyone who disagrees with them is regarded as being without authority. This is also linked with Bourdieu's concept of *doxa*, a concept "which represents a tacit, fundamental agreement on the stakes of struggle between those advocating heterodoxy and those holding to orthodoxy."[33] *Doxa* is the order which is regarded as normal or natural and anything that challenges the established order is heterodoxy. The subordination of women in Zimbabwean culture (and indeed Graeco-Roman culture) is part of the *doxa* and anyone challenging that is subject to criticism and sometimes violence.

4. **A definition and explanation of the term culture**

At this stage it would be useful to explain the term "culture" as it is closely linked with the idea of *habitus*. *Habitus* is a way of thinking that comes about because of cultural practices and in turn the *habitus* influences the cultural practices. Tzvetan Todorov defines culture as "commonly held representations, ones shared by at least two human beings (but usually by a much higher number)."[34] In sharing their image of the world, a group of human beings is accepting a common interpretation of that world, an interpretation that they have achieved through a shared history and by a rule of communal living.[35] But whilst a group may share a culture, the members of the group are also each members of multiple cultures. For example, a schoolgirl at an urban school in Zimbabwe will share the cultural *habitus* of her home community, but she will also be part of the culture of her school, accepting its values and ethos. But even within that school culture, there are other cultures. Common interest groups form amongst the pupils and sometimes the ideals of that sub-culture may be in conflict with those of the larger school group. In addition, when these girls go to the rural areas to visit their families, they are expected to adopt the cultural *habitus* of that tradition even if it is in conflict with what they experience at home. This experience of multiple cultures inevitably leads to a gradual change in cultural values. This change is an inevitable aspect of culture.

Furthermore, culture is essentially a social attribute and does not belong to the legal sphere. It is dictated by the *habitus*, which is socially determined, and legal rules cannot change it.[36] This is why the general law of Zimbabwe has little effect on the customary law, which reflects the cultural

[33]David Swartz, "Bridging the Study of Culture and Religion: Pierre Bourdieu's Political Economy of Symbolic Power," *Sociology of Religion* 57 no. 1 (1996): 80.

[34]Tzvetan Todorov, "The Co-Existence of Cultures," (trans. J. Borossa), *The Oxford Literary Review* 19 (1997): 3.

[35]Todorov, "The Co-Existence of Cultures," 3.

[36]Todorov, "The Co-Existence of Cultures," 12.

habitus of centuries. Whilst the *habitus* is very strong, it is in fact able to change. It is precisely because of this, for instance, that racial attitudes, often held for centuries, can be transformed. The process is slow, but it is possible to effect change.

5. **Method of approach**

My starting point in this study has perhaps been a deviation from the norm as I have begun by examining the Zimbabwean context, namely its constitutional and customary laws and the Church's role in this context. I have only then gone on to the Graeco-Roman world and the Pauline tradition. As Masenya has pointed out, there are usually three ways of interpreting the biblical text. It can be interpreted experientially, presuppositions arising from our own contexts can be brought to bear and the meaning of the text can be re-shaped by our interpretation.[37] Schüssler-Fiorenza has argued that "feminist biblical interpretation must place at the centre of its attention every woman's struggles to transform patriarchal structures, both in biblical times and in our own, rather than focusing only on the androcentric biblical text and its authority."[38]

She has emphasised that the biblical texts have arisen within the context of a community and, equally, biblical interpretation and application have also arisen from the context of that community.[39] In this study I have firstly examined the context of the community and then turned to biblical criticism to attempt to throw a light on the context of Zimbabwean society. I have focused on the concept of *habitus*, to explain how biblical discourse is used to enforce the *habitus,* generally confirming it though, in some cases, it can be used to challenge it.

5.1. **The Zimbabwean context**

Zimbabwean culture has over time developed certain areas of *habitus* but, with colonization, a Western *habitus,* with its own discourses and practices, was imported and in some areas this challenged Zimbabwean attitudes, whilst in others it confirmed them. However, because years of repetition have strengthened the power of the Zimbabwean *habitus*, Western culture, not having that power, remains superficial and has little effect except in those areas where it conforms to the prevailing culture.

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[37]Madipoane Masenya, *How Worthy is the Woman of Worth?* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 28.

[38]Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 8.

[39]Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (London: SCM Press, 1983), xv.

I shall commence my actual study by examining the legal situation of women in Zimbabwe. I use as my starting point the Constitution of Zimbabwe. A constitution is a written, codified legalisation of the structures of a society. It enables the society to reinforce and regulate behaviour so that it conforms to the expectations which are reflected in the legal code. In this way it regulates the discourse. The expectations of the prevailing *habitus* of tradition, the unwritten rules and structures, may, however, be very different. An interesting aspect of the Constitution of Zimbabwe is that in some ways it contradicts the *habitus* of Zimbabwean culture in that it attempts to remove sexual discrimination. At the same time, however, it also encourages this discrimination by adding clauses that reinforce the customary law which assumes that discrimination against women is in the natural order of things. In fact, these clauses have the effect of totally nullifying the laws against gender discrimination.

The various laws passed in favour of women's liberation appear to counteract the *habitus* which rules that women are inferior to men and should occupy a position of subordination. It will be seen, however, that the parallel system of law, the customary law, is recognised as perfectly legal in certain situations and completely negates the general law in these areas. It is evidence of the fact that *habitus* dictates that, whatever may happen on the surface in terms of general law, underneath it is a very strong influence which cannot be denied and is very difficult to change. Vorster states that a ritualised performance "can only be regarded and recognised as appropriate to a situation if it has been generated from the *habitus* of the community."[40] This can be translated to the area of the Constitution of Zimbabwe in this case where the provisions regarding discrimination have not been generated from the *habitus* of the community but devised according to "Western" *habitus* - an ideology which is often foreign to the *habitus* of customary law.

I have had to rely to a large extent on personal interviews with women because it is very difficult to find written sources of women's opinions as their views have been largely discounted and unrecorded and often they will only make them known on a one-to-one basis. Frequently the voices I have heard have been those of teenage girls whom I have taught in the classroom as they have felt free in the environment of the school to express opinions which perhaps they would be reluctant to express in a broader context where men may be present to hear them.

In my third chapter I will consider the role of the church in Zimbabwe in the lives of women and its own attitudes to women. I have used as my focus the Anglican church in the Diocese of Matabeleland as I am an Anglican in this diocese and can therefore have more of an "insider's" view. In addition Anglicanism is the second largest denomination in Zimbabwe and is a founding

[40]Johannes N. Vorster, *Constructions of the Body and Sexuality in Early Christianity,* Department of Old Testament and of New Testament Tutorial letter 501/3/2002 BBS308-S, (Pretoria: University of South Africa 2001): 99.

church of this country, having been part of the establishment since the inception of colonialism. It has therefore had a profound influence on traditions and attitudes since 1890 and has had a formative influence on countless generations of young people educated in its many mission schools.

There are, however, several problems as there is practically no documentary evidence for procedures in the Anglican church, especially in the Diocese of Matabeleland. In addition, any voices heard have been those of men as it is men who are prominent in the decision-making areas of the church. The church itself is seen to be patriarchal and hierarchical in its basic structures with the bishop at the top of the ladder and the clergy (all male) in a special relationship to him. The positions of power in the church, as will be seen, are all in the hands of men who are the ones to dictate policy and write the official documents. This enables them to stay in control and prevent their positions being challenged. The Mothers' Union is often seen as a women's group with great power, but this power lies in relations between its members and it has no role at all in determining church policy.

I have also considered the teachings of the Roman Catholic church where necessary because it, too, is a founding church of the country and has had a similar formative influence over generations of people. It is also the largest denomination in the country and still has many schools which educate their pupils in the Roman Catholic ethos. As its teachings are well documented in Papal encyclicals and in its Catechism, documentary evidence is more readily accessed though, again, the problem exists that only men's voices are heard.

In the church as a whole, the influence of the *habitus* is profound for the church has been unable to counteract the strength of the *habitus* that contributes to the subjugation of women and, in fact, it has largely adopted this stance itself. The Bible has often been used to reinforce customary laws which discriminate against women. Though my focus has been on the Zimbabwean context, I have also considered the status of women in other African countries in that there often seems to be a similarity of *habitus* running throughout the African continent in this respect. What is particularly apparent is that whatever may appear on the surface, especially in the area of marriage, underlying attitudes have not changed. In the case of polygamy,[41] for instance, this was practised in the traditional African context for so long that it has become part of the underlying *habitus* and is subconsciously regarded as the "natural" state for men, while women are expected to submit and be relegated to the home. The church has, on the surface, protested against polygamy, but has been unable to change these basic attitudes and though polygamy is officially discouraged it is nevertheless still practised. Under general law men may not marry more than one wife but under

[41]After much reflection I have opted to use the word "polygamy" to indicate "polygyny" as this is its more usual usage and in documents such as the Roman Catholic catechism this is the word that is used. To avoid confusion, I have maintained this usage.

customary law it is perfectly acceptable, so even those married under general law regard it as "natural" to have mistresses.

Zimbabwean society is hierarchal and patriarchal and there are certain dichotomies which strengthen this system. There is a tendency for the *habitus* to strengthen itself, justifying itself to some extent, by causing the mind to form dichotomies such as "man/woman," "good/bad," strength/ weakness" and to invest these dichotomies with value. One becomes infused with a more positive value than the other and so hierarchies form. There is, for instance, the dichotomy of strength and weakness whereby men are considered "the strong" in that they are breadwinners, decision-makers, owners and invulnerable, contrasted with women whose function it is to serve, to abide by the decisions of their "owner/protectors" (fathers or husbands) and who are vulnerable to shame. This helps to maintain the *status quo* and prevents women - even when they are apparently fulfilling a "male" function in terms of work or prestige - being effective in transforming society.

An example of this is in the Zimbabwean women's movement, Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA). This movement is active in highlighting social injustice and oppression and the members are regularly imprisoned when they stage peaceful protests. It is one of the few visible protest movements in a country where any voices which oppose the government are brutally silenced, and the women in it deserve much admiration and international recognition for their courage and conviction. Yet until recently they received little international news coverage although the situation is now changing. The leader of the movement, Jennifer Williams, was nominated for the Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders in 2006, the only woman to be nominated, and in March 2007 she was awarded the International Women of Courage Award.

Another dichotomy which upholds patriarchal hierarchy is one of honour and shame, for men always run the risk of being shamed by their wives or daughters who pose a continual threat to their esteem. Women are protected and treated with suspicion. If they are assaulted or raped, it is considered their fault - they must have placed themselves in a situation in which they were "asking for it." In traditional African homes the girls may not have boyfriends nor even have too much contact with men in case they bring shame to their fathers. The task of the man is to protect his honour by protecting or castigating the female members of his household.

A third principle which enhances the prevailing *habitus* is that of visibility/invisibility. Schüssler-Fiorenza has spoken of the centuries of "silencing" of women,[42] a process whereby, over history, women's voices have been silenced by being ignored, ridiculed or prohibited from being heard. In biblical discourse, men's voices are discussed, studied and highlighted, whereas women's voices are

[42]Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic: The Politics of Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 2.

lost. In Zimbabwe-African tradition, too, women are not heard. In former times they were confined to the sphere of the home and were expected to maintain silence, to accept the judgements of their menfolk. Even in modern times, women's views are often ridiculed or counted as of less worth than those of men.

As will be seen, men are highly visible in the public world and in the church whereas women are expected to be the "invisible" supports. It is because of this invisibility of women that I have had to make use of interviews with women and not only use official documents which are for the most part produced by men. I have tried to speak to a cross-section of women. At times I have spoken to women in positions of influence, women who could be expected to voice opinions which oppose the prevailing *habitus* but frequently do not do so. I have also spoken to less Westernised women to get an idea of traditional views and often to teenage girls who are in the process of forming ideas or having them formed by the *habitus*. It is interesting to note that although in many respects these girls have adopted Western ideology and practices, the underlying *habitus* still remains and they cannot escape it. For instance, they fully accept the institution of *lobola* and find ways round the conflict of ideologies by interpreting it as a "thanks offering" rather than acknowledging that there may be inherent implications of women being bought and sold as "assets."

Institutions, another offshoot of the *habitus* which give power to the structures surrounding it, also support the *status quo*. The Mothers' Union of the Anglican church, like the various women's organisations in the Roman Catholic church, fulfils the role of the traditional women's clubs which encourage women to be home-makers and to serve. These dichotomies will be seen to have an echo in the Pauline tradition and are often strengthened in the church in Zimbabwe by the understanding of biblical teaching which supports patriarchy.

5.2. **The biblical texts and the Graeco-Roman context**

The Bible itself is a source of power within the church and a means by which the *habitus* is strengthened. As has already been mentioned, the Bible is a powerful discourse in the lives of many people and regulates how they live and how they think. The constant repetition of teaching in texts which advocate a subordinate status for women has resulted in structures which are considered normal, such as male clergy in the church itself, which in turn leads people to think that men have a special relationship with God. This builds up patriarchal power in the church and serves to keep women in a subordinate position. In some respects the Bible is regarded as a more powerful document than the Constitution (especially at a time in the country's history when the government

itself frequently disregards the Constitution) because the teaching on women which is emphasised in the Bible is seen to conform to the prevailing *habitus* whereas that in the Constitution does not.

Having looked at the African context I will turn to the Pauline tradition, firstly considering the status of women in the first century Mediterranean world. It is very difficult to generalise about this as Roman and Hebrew culture, for instance, differed as did Roman and Greek. Women of the various classes held differing status. In addition the tradition that was transmitted is that passed down by men, so it is difficult, if not impossible, to come to conclusions as to the views and opinions of women. If women did dare to speak out, their words were generally not preserved, as has been pointed out by Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza although she was saying this more generally, in terms of women through the centuries.[43] But certain dichotomies again exist and I have chosen to consider some that are also reflected in Zimbabwean society today. Graeco-Roman civilization was generally speaking patriarchal and hierarchal and again the principles which helped form the practices of the *habitus* were ones such as strength vs weakness, ownership vs possession, honour vs shame and visibility vs invisibility.

After seeing how the *habitus* controlled the lives of men and women in the first century I shall consider the writings of the Pauline tradition. Paul himself was governed by the *habitus* of his community and it will be seen that there sometimes appears to be a conflict in his writings between his traditional values and those suggested by the new ideology. In this tradition, men are shown as strong, invulnerable and, in accordance with the *habitus* of the first century Mediterranean, as being considered to be manifestations of the ideal, of what would be considered the "normal." Women, therefore, not being like men physically or mentally, are deviations from the norm. Women are largely invisible in the Pauline tradition even though they occupied positions of leadership in the church. This new-found status of leadership for women can be seen as a deviation from the *habitus* which dictated that women should be invisible and remain in the home. The tradition was so powerful, however, that Paul was never able to overcome it entirely and in the later writings of the tradition we see the *habitus* reasserting itself, with women being urged to be silent and to take on roles of service rather than leadership.

It will be seen how the phenomenon of coming to see practices as "natural" and "normal" also pertained in the formation of the Pauline tradition and the development of the church. Though the early church may have had women in positions of leadership, the *habitus* of the contemporary society exerted its power that declared that women were subordinate to men and so the church did not really change but began to conform and to accept only men in leadership positions. As the practice of ordaining only men to the priesthood became widespread, male clergy became part of

[43]Schüssler-Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic,* 2.

the structure of the church. When the Church Fathers came to translate the scriptures and interpret them, it never occurred to them that women may have been apostles, so often female roles were seen in terms of "service" rather than ministry. The *habitus* in this way gave power to patriarchal practices which in turn reinforced that same *habitus*.

There is a technical problem, too, in analysing Paul as research has shown that not all the letters previously considered to have been written by Paul were in fact written by him. Ephesians, Colossians, and 2 Thessalonians are considered Deuteropauline; 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus are considered to be of an even later authorship. In terms of this study I have included all these books in the term "the Pauline tradition" as, until recently, they were all deemed to be Pauline and carried the authority of Paul. The attitudes and injunctions held in these letters often appear to contradict those of the unquestioned Pauline letters, but are still used by the church to claim Paul's authority to subjugate women. They have become an integral part of the *habitus* of the church and in this area, too, education is needed for the ordinary person to be able to analyse critically the contradictions in them. I have not referred to other New Testament texts, such as the gospels or the non-Pauline letters but have limited my scope to the Pauline material alone.

5.3. **"Difference"**

It is unavoidable that to some extent I shall be comparing the Zimbabwean and the Graeco-Roman contexts. It is important to consider whether in fact it is possible to compare contexts that are not only geographically but also temporally poles apart. It is a question of essentialism and difference. Musa Dube has defined essentialism as "a position that makes universal claims for its description of an entity."[44] This is indeed a danger when considering a comparison of attitudes to women in two diverse contexts. Elizabeth Castelli criticises Rodney Stark for using broad terms like "Christianity," "the Graeco-Roman world," "paganism," and "Judaism" without considering the differences within these terms, differences of time, place, ethics, etc.[45] She says: "The point is that generalisations can often give way to the weight of significant specific exceptions, and that heuristic categories often obscure some historical realities even as they illuminate others."[46]

As Castelli speaks of comparing "Christian" women with "Spartan" or "Athenian" ones, the same applies to comparing the Graeco-Roman and Zimbabwean contexts: "One would not

[44]Musa W. Dube, "Searching for the Lost Needle: Double Colonization and Postcolonial African Feminisms," in *Postcolonialism and Religion* (ed. M. Althaus-Reid and J. Thompson; Vol. 5, part 2 of *Studies in World Christianity,* ed. M. Althaus-Reid and J. Thompson: Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 213.

[45]Elizabeth Castelli, "Gender, Theory and the Rise of Christianity: A Response to Rodney Stark," *JECS* 6 no. 2 (1998): 230.

[46]Castelli, "Gender, Theory and the Rise of Christianity," 231.

necessarily be comparing analogous institutional constraints and freedoms, nor comparable experiences of social pressure or ideological frameworks."[47]

No two contexts can be exactly the same as not only customs, class issues and ideology differ, but also in this case two thousand years of history intervene. It is important to be aware of what Scott refers to as "the dilemma of difference"[48] in order to ascertain what common ground there is. For instance, the term "woman" does not mean the same thing for all women. Sara Mills comments that different groups of women will bring different perspectives to what the word "woman" signifies.[49] Gisela Bock points out that there is even a difference in men's and women's history.[50] Until recently, history has been written by men and about men, but women have a history of their own. Not only do women have a history different from that of men, but different women also have different histories. As Dube has pointed out, not all women are "universally oppressed" for all have different histories.[51] Black women, for example, may consider themselves apart from white women whom they may class as "oppressors," rather than "oppressed" and within the category of "woman" there are differences in nationality, class, sexuality, culture, place and time.[52] Even within the Zimbabwean context there are major tribal differences as well as ones of class and race. Scott asks:

> If there are so many differences of class, race, ethnicity and sexuality, what constitutes the common ground on which feminists can organize coherent collective action? What is the conceptual link for women's history or women's studies courses among what seems to be an infinite proliferation of different (women's) stories? (The two problems are linked: is there a common identity for women and is there a common history of them that we can write?)[53]

Dube considers that it is important to review what is essential[54] and this is what I have attempted to do here. Though the Graeco-Roman and Zimbabwean contexts are so different in many ways, there is a common thread which unites these women across time and place. The similarities are not only those in the pre-colonial *habitus* of patriarchal attitudes of men towards women. It must be remembered that colonialism also had an effect, particularly in reinforcing the *habitus* as the

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[47]Castelli, "Gender, Theory and the Rise of Christianity," 235.

[48]Joan Scott, "Women's History," in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing* (ed. P. Burke, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 51.

[49]Mills, *Michel Foucault*, 76.

[50]Gisela Bock, "Challenging Dichotomies: Perspectives on Women's History," in *Writing Women's History: International Perspectives* (ed. K. Offen, R. R. Pierson and J. Rendall; Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), 26.

[51]Dube, "Searching for the Lost Needle," 214.

[52]Dube, "Searching for the Lost Needle," 219.

[53]Scott, "Women's History," 57-58.

[54]Dube, "Searching for the Lost Needle," 220.

colonists came with their patriarchal *habitus*, justified by biblical reading. This *habitus* strengthened rather than challenged that already existing in the pre-colonial tradition.

On the surface it would appear that the situations of the Graeco-Roman world and the world of Zimbabwe today are very different. The Graeco-Roman world was patently hierarchical with an *Imperator*, whilst Zimbabwe is, at least in theory, democratic. However, when one probes beneath the surface, it is evident that this democracy is often a veneer. Power is invested absolutely in the President, who is able to rule by decree if he should deem fit and who has consistently passed amendments to the Constitution which place more and more power in his hands till he is able to rule as a dictator. The power of the chiefs in the rural areas is virtually absolute and these chiefs are appointed by the President and so can be seen to be an extension of his power.

This is very much a reflection of the traditional context into which the church came and, as will be seen, the church's own structure has not challenged this hierarchical *habitus* but fitted into it, with the Bishop being regarded as the ultimate authority and the priests being looked up to as "Father," with all the cultural implications that entails. In addition, the church today has been able to use the discourse and structures of the *habitus* of the church of the later (Pastoral) epistles to reinforce a patriarchal and hierarchical *habitus* that was already the *habitus* of Zimbabwean tradition. Because of the strength of the prevailing *habitus*, together with the *habitus* of the Western church of the nineteenth century, which was also patriarchal, there has been little incentive to challenge the structures and so the church has on the whole conformed to them.

Traditional interpretation of the Pauline material has tended to strengthen the church's patriarchal stance. Those responsible for interpreting this material and thereby influencing the formation of *habitus* have found in the Pauline tradition a means of confirming their own existing patriarchal attitudes. Thus the Pauline material has been influential in continuing the patriarchal hierarchal *habitus* already found in the prevailing culture.

6. **Conclusion**

Finally I will attempt to critique the Zimbabwean situation as regards women in the light of the Pauline tradition. Having explored what the *habitus* dictates today regarding women in the Zimbabwean context, I shall consider how the church has been able to utilise the Pauline tradition either to cement or to attempt to change the *habitus* and how far it has been allowed to use the biblical writings to maintain the patriarchal tradition of the church. Again, it is very difficult to find written evidence of particular passages being used in particular situations as these texts tend to have been quoted in sermons or in teaching situations, which are not recorded. The Zimbabwean

situation is still largely oral and, as few people actually write down their thoughts, documentary evidence is slim.

I shall go on to suggest that the church needs to examine its own attitudes and reinterpret or reassess those Pauline passages which denigrate women. These texts arise from Paul's context and are embedded in the *habitus* of that context. Integrity demands that the Pauline writings, and indeed nearly all biblical discourse, is recognised as being patriarchal and detrimental to women. One option is to discredit the Bible completely, using a hermeneutics of suspicion, as recommended by feminists such as Mary Daly.[55] I shall suggest that a practical and useful option is firstly to examine the limitations of the Bible (in particular, in terms of this study, the Pauline writings) and use this to shock the reader into awareness. Then, however, these texts can be re-interpreted and re-signified. The texts which are used particularly to denigrate women can be countered with other texts that allow women to resist abuse and change attitudes.

An answer to the contradictions that apply lies not only in re-interpreting and re-signification but also in education as a means of empowerment. Bourdieu himself recognises the power of the *habitus* and that it is very difficult to break its power.[56] It is through education that new modes of behaviour can be explored and practised, leading to new generative principles being formed so that a fresh mindset can be established, bringing about a change in the *habitus* which is the only means by which effective change can take place.

[55]Masenya, *How Worthy is the Woman*, 38.

[56]Moi, "Appropriating Bourdieu," 1033.

CHAPTER 2
WOMEN AND THE LAW IN ZIMBABWE

1. Introduction

In this section I shall discuss the various laws regarding women passed by the government of Zimbabwe over the years. At the time of independence, there were few laws which were aimed at improving the status of women. Since independence in 1980, there have been laws passed which were designed to improve the lot of women in general. These have given them equal pay for equal work, allowed them to inherit property and prohibited discrimination on the grounds of gender, and yet it will be seen that the situation of women is, in fact, not much improved.

I will start off by commenting on the Constitution, which can be expected to enshrine values which may later be codified into specific laws. The Constitution, it must be remembered, was agreed upon after years of civil war and was overseen by the former colonial authorities. It deals with matters relating to citizenship, human rights, the governing executive, the composition and procedures of parliament and the public service. As, since Independence it has been amended over four hundred times, it is now a document vastly different from that originally conceived. In only one section, however, does it deal with gender issues; in Article 23, "Protection from discrimination on the grounds of race, etc."

As it was influenced at its outset by the colonial authorities, it is not surprising that its provisions reflect principles of Western *habitus*, which are largely based on biblical principles. The Constitution itself is not the *habitus* but is part of one of those practices – in this case legal practice - that make up the *habitus*. It is an extremely important part of this practice as it gives the foundation for all decisions made in the courts. However, as I shall show, its principles are often in conflict with those of the traditional *habitus*. This conflict itself has been enshrined in the Constitution in that it has made provision for the application of practices which go against the principles defined by the Constitution but are in accordance with customary law. Customary law is the oral tradition which arose over the years and was established before colonialism and before the Western *habitus* influenced social life. Although many amendments have been passed nothing has been done to resolve this conflict. A discussion of these problems paves the way for a study of how the Church has responded to these practices and the principles behind them.

An example of this conflict can be seen in an incident in Parliament on 4 October 2006. The House of Assembly was debating the Domestic Violence Bill. During debate on the Bill, an

opposition (Movement for Democratic Change) member, Timothy Mubawu, contributed with these words:

> I stand here representing God Almighty. Women are not equal to men … It is a dangerous Bill and let it be known in Zimbabwe that the right, privilege and status of men is gone. I stand here alone and say this Bill should not be passed in this House. It is a diabolic Bill. Our powers are being usurped daylight in this House.[1]

He went on to say that the law "promoted Western cultural values,"[2] implying that the traditional Zimbabwean values were different from those enshrined in the law. He further stated that there should be laws concerning how women dressed as "some of the dressing by women is too inviting," and that "[w]omen leaders in Government, judiciary and Parliament should be exemplary by at least marrying."[3] All these statements reflect an attitude of mind that believes that women are to blame for any lack of morals shown by men and that a woman's role is primarily that of wife and mother. They come from a man who, by virtue of being male, has already been privileged in the past. He is a representative in an institution, namely Parliament, an institution which supports the legal practice and, in fact, makes the laws. It is interesting that though there was a great deal of criticism against him in the debate, he was in no way held accountable by Parliament for an obvious breach of the spirit of the Constitution. He was, however, held accountable by his party who suspended him from their national council. A protest march was organised by the Women's Coalition, but when they approached the police for permission to hold the march, Inspector Mutizira at Harare Central Police Station asked them why they wanted to "litter the streets" with their demonstration.[4] It was quite clear that police had little sympathy with the views of the women.

Mubawu also received open support for his views. In the debate he was supported by Chief Midzimurema who said that the feeling in the rural communities (where customary law prevails) was that the Bill could cause breakdown of marriages because men would not want to remain with their wives if the wives reported them to the police for abusing them. He asked for the Bill to be modified in such a way that it would take account of customary and traditional values.[5] He was

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[1]"Debate on Domestic Violence Bill persists," *The Herald (Zimbabwe)*, n.p. [Cited 12 September 2007]. Online: http://www.kubatana.net/html/archive/legisl/061005herald1.asp?sector=WOMEN&year=0&range_start=1.

[2]"Debate on Domestic Violence," n.p.

[3]"Debate on Domestic Violence," n.p.

[4]Bev Clark, "Domestic Violence Kills." n.p. [Cited 12 September 2007.] Online: http://kubatanablogs.net/kubatana/?m=200610&paged=2.

[5]"Debate on Domestic Violence," n.p.

supported in this by another parliamentarian, Zacharia Ziyambi, who said: "We should take the proposed law to the people because we seem to be fighting against our cultural values."[6]

It is clear that, whatever constitutional law may rule, the attitudes engendered by the *habitus* of customary law are very strong and cause conflict.

2. The constitution

The Constitution of Zimbabwe has little to say on the issue of women's rights, except for a general statement in the Declaration of Rights. Here it says:

> 23:1(a) No law shall make any provision that is discriminatory either of itself or in its effect and
>
> (b) no person shall be treated in a discriminatory manner by any person acting by virtue of any written law or in the performance of the functions of any public office or any public authority.
>
> (2) For the purposes of subsection (1), a law shall be regarded as making a provision that is discriminatory and a person shall be regarded as having been treated in a discriminatory manner if, as a result of that law or treatment, persons of a particular description by race, tribe, place of origin, political opinions, colour, creed or gender are prejudiced -
>
> (a) by being subjected to a condition, restriction or disability to which other persons of another such description are not made subject.[7]

However, it immediately qualifies the provision by ruling that it does not apply in matters of customary law.

> (3) Nothing contained in any law shall be held to be in contravention of subsection (1)(a) to the extent that the law in question relates to any of the following matters -
>
> (a) adoption, marriage, divorce, burial, devolution of property on death or other matters of personal law.
>
> (b) the application of African customary law in any case involving Africans or an African and one or more persons who are not Africans where such persons have consented to the application of African customary law in that case.[8]

Furthermore, the Constitution itself discriminates against women in that it allows a person to inherit citizenship through his or her mother or father, and a wife through her husband, but makes no

[6]"Debate on Domestic Violence," n.p.

[7]Government of Zimbabwe, Constitution of Zimbabwe as Amended to No. 16 of 20 April 2006 [Cited 7 Sept 2007.] Online: www.chr.up.ac.za/hr_docs/constitutions/docs/ZimbabweC(rev).doc, 18.

[8]Government of Zimbabwe, *Constitution*, 18.

provision for a husband to claim citizenship through his wife.[9] The principle behind this is that women traditionally go where their husbands go, so it is not believed to be necessary for men to emigrate to be with their wives. The effect is to limit freedom of choice for women who may wish to marry foreigners and stay in Zimbabwe.

3. Specific laws relating to gender

Although the Constitution gives scant regard to women's issues, since 1980 several laws have been passed which ostensibly protect women. Again, these laws reflect principles behind the legal practice that contributes to the *habitus* but are limited by the fact that the Constitution allows precedence to the practice of customary law. Some significant laws passed have been:

- the 1980 Equal Pay Regulations Act which entitles women to equal pay for equal jobs and also time off for breastfeeding;[10]
- the 1982 Legal Age of Majority Act which grants legal majority to all people over the age of eighteen, allows daughters to inherit from their father's estate and permits women to be guardians of minors and to administer estates of deceased persons;[11]
- the Labour Relations Act (1985) which grants maternity leave and outlaws any discrimination in the workforce in terms of promotion, wages, training, retrenchment or recruitment;[12]
- the Matrimonial Causes Act No 33 (1985) which allows equal sharing of property on divorce;[13]
- various maintenance amendment acts which provide regular payment by the non-custodian parent, even in the case of customary law;[14]
- the Deceased Persons Family Maintenance (Amendment) Act (1987) which prevents relatives of the deceased from seizing property from the surviving spouse (usually the wife was

[9]Government of Zimbabwe, *Constitution*, 2-3.

United Nations Children's Fund, *Children and Women in Zimbabwe: A Situation Analysis Update* (Harare: UNICEF, 1994), 55.

[10]United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report* (Harare: United Nations, 2000), 122.

[11]UNDP, *Human Development Report,* 122.

[12]UNDP, *Human Development Report,* 122.

[13]UNDP, *Human Development Report*, 122.

[14]UNDP, *Human Development Report*, 123.

the one who suffered this) and children by allowing the spouse and children to stay in their home and continue using anything they had been using before the deceased's death.[15]

- the Domestic Violence Act (2007) (mentioned above) which was intended "to make provision for the protection and relief to victims of domestic violence and to provide for matters connected with or incidental to the foregoing."[16] The Bill is broad based and covers almost all possibilities of domestic violence, but it does not specify marital rape as a crime and neither does it rule on violence which takes place in the context of a customary marriage.

These acts look good on paper, but do not take into account entrenched patriarchal attitudes on the part of law enforcers. The principle of the *habitus* which controls the attitudes whereby women are considered inferior, always remaining minors,[17] is too powerful to be overcome by these laws and so, as shown in 2.2 of the constitution, there is provision made to protect this by protecting "customary" law. In this way the practice of constitutional law is seen to be veiling its power in order to protect the power of the practice of customary law and thereby further reducing women's rights.

4. Customary law and general law

There is a vast difference, however, between what the general law of the country states and what pertains on the ground, especially in the rural areas where the customary law system is administered by the traditional chiefs. The problem lies in the frequent clash between general law and customary law. The UN Human Development Report points out:

> In Zimbabwe the existence of customary laws that affect the bulk of the population alongside other normative structures such as the church, the community and family means there would be some tension in accepting state laws as a dominant framework of behaviour.[18]

It is usually recognised that the written word is more powerful than the oral one precisely because it is written down and therefore immutable and able to be preserved. In the case of general and customary law, however, oral law in this instance is very powerful. It is to be remembered that traditional society in Zimbabwe has been until very recently oral and in fact in rural areas, where

[15]UNDP, *Human Development Report*, 123.

[16]H.B.9, 2006 (Government Printer, Harare), 1.

[17]Women and Law in Southern Africa, *The Shadow of the Law: A Market Survey of Justice Delivery in Zimbabwe - What's in it for Women?* Draft copy (Harare: WLSA, 1999), 59.

[18]UNDP, *Human Development Report*, 126.

customary law prevails, there is little knowledge of the written law and the written statutes are not generally available.

Although general, or constitutional law is also powerful because it is upheld by the judiciary and the police force, its power has been deliberately veiled by the clause in the Constitution which allows precedence to customary law in rural areas or in marriages taking place under customary law. What happens is that people choose whichever law meets their needs at the time and, when customary law pertains, it is usually interpreted by men in terms of the patriarchal traditions of the rural society and can differ from area to area.

Customary law is, by its very definition, oral law and not written down. This makes it even more open to broad interpretation. It also makes it more powerful as the constant repetition of the oral tradition has empowered it and imprinted it on the subconscious minds of the people. In this way its dictates have come to be seen as the natural order of things, even over and above the written law. It is also to be remembered, in terms of the *habitus*, that, as Bourdieu has pointed out, someone brought up in a system is less likely to question that system and more likely to perpetuate it because he or she accepts it blindly.[19] Customary law is passed down from birth and therefore accepted more readily than law that has been imposed from outside.

I have shown in chapter 1 how the repetition of practices, according to Bourdieu, has caused them to become embedded in social consciousness. Oral tradition is not only repetitive in itself, but incorporates rituals and so reinforces itself by repetition of these rituals. In this way the past, which has by its practices reproduced a person and how that person perceives the world, continues to have an effect on the present. The traditions are internalised and expressed in ways of looking at the world, in values and principles, all of which contribute to the *habitus*. This results in a person acting in accordance with the values of the society, "social necessity turned into nature, converted into motor schemes and body automatisms."[20]

Sometimes the custom means that harmful practices are encouraged. For example, in a case where a boy has assaulted a girl, some parents will not charge the boy as they would rather follow the customary route and receive compensation, insisting that the offender marry the girl.[21] The girl herself may not be consulted as her rights are not considered important. According to customary law, the parents and family are the ones who make decisions about marriage rather than allowing the girl to do so. Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA) points out that "there is a tension between the state and the patriarchal value setters over women's rights, for example, to control their

[19]Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (trans. R. Nice; Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 67.

[20]Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 69.

[21]UNDP, *Human Development Report*, 128.

reproductive and productive capacities and over women's rights to their children on the dissolution of relationships."[22]

A good example of this conflict between laws was the case of Magaya v Magaya[23] which upheld the man's rights according to customary law so the wife could not inherit her husband's property. In this particular case, a Shona man died without leaving a will. He had two wives, the first of whom had had only one child, a daughter. The second wife had later borne him three sons. Initially, the court granted the inheritance to the daughter but, when the son appealed, the court revoked this ruling, concluding that under customary law women could not be treated as adults and sue in their own right for seduction damages, nor consent to marriage on their own and inherit property. The son immediately evicted Ms Magaya from her house. She then challenged the hearing in terms of the Constitution but lost on the grounds that this fell under the rule of customary law which, in Shona tribal tradition allows males rather than females to be heirs.[24]

There are several different principles operating in this judgement. Firstly there is the principle that women are traditionally not regarded as adults, but always remain children.[25] They are, therefore, unable to act in their own right or to own property as adults. Secondly, there is the principle that it was regarded as right that women should not inherit in customary law because they would eventually marry and leave the paternal family for a new family. This would disrupt the patrilineal society in which they existed.[26] An important underlying principle behind this is that of power, namely that, where male power over property, including women, is challenged, customary law is invoked and women lose their right to be considered as adults. It is interesting in this case that two value systems are operating in tandem to uphold male power preserves. On the one hand, customary law, influenced by traditional values, dictates that the woman cannot inherit, and on the other hand constitutional law protects the right of the customary law to implement this. The fact that the practice goes against the principles laid down in the Constitution, which is based on Western, biblical principles rather than traditional Zimbabwean ones, does not appear to have relevance in this context.

But we see an example where general law prevailed in the case of Mudzingwa v Mudzingwa,[27] again to the detriment of the woman. In this case a man escaped paying maintenance because he had

[22]WLSA, *The Shadow of the Law*, 9.

[23]Interights Commonwealth Human Rights Law, *Magaya v Magaya* n.p. [cited 2 January 2005]. Online: http://www.worldlii.org/int/cases/ICHRL/19999/14.html.

[24]ICHRL, *Magaya v Magaya*, n.p.

[25]WLSA, *The Shadow of the Law*, 59; Elinor Batezat and Margaret Mwalo, *Women in Zimbabwe* (Harare: SAPES Trust, 1989), 19.

[26]ICHRL, *Magaya v Magaya*, n.p.

[27]WLSA, *The Shadow of the Law*, 11.

married his two wives in civil ceremonies. Because these marriages were contracted under general law, they were considered bigamous. General law does not allow for polygamy, and therefore the rights of the first wife would always be upheld in the case of a divorce but the second wife has no legal claim for maintenance. If, however, the two women had been married according to customary law, with the unions therefore being considered legally polygamous, the second wife would have had a right to maintenance. The two systems are in conflict but it would appear that whichever law is dominant the woman is the loser. In this case, though she had married in good faith, she found herself without support.

In both cases, as has been shown, it is clear that the "natural" view - the view dictated by *habitus* - is that a woman has fewer rights than a man, that she does not have the status of an adult and that men have priority in terms of customary law. The problem encountered here is, on one hand, that the Constitution dictates that women have rights, especially those spelt out by the Legal Age of Majority Act. On the other hand, the ruling that customary law prevails in cases where people have been married under customary law or where they appeal to customary law courts means that the Constitution is in fact underwriting customary law. Women, therefore, do not in fact have the rights they appear to have. So the Constitution, whilst appearing on one level to engender equality, in reality upholds the power and status of men.

These laws are engendered by and have in turn engendered certain attitudes to women that sustain the ideology of the *habitus* whereby women are kept in subordination.

5. The view of women according to Zimbabwean culture

It is important to consider the Zimbabwean concept of what is a woman. We shall see later that Graeco-Roman women were thought to be defective males when held up against the standard of perfection represented by the Graeco-Roman male. Even though the end result in both societies is that women are considered inferior, the root cause appears to be different. The traditional Zimbabwean cultural *habitus* is based on the idea of community. It can be seen from traditions and rituals that society centred round the concept of community. It was from this that women's identity developed, out of her role in the community. And the role of women in the community was essentially that of child-bearer. Gelfand writes: "A man's status in Shona society depends on the possession of a wife or wives and the number of children he has, whereas that of a woman revolves

around the quantity and quality of her offspring."[28] Oduyoye comments that a woman's identity, unlike that of a man, was totally focussed on her biological functions.[29]

Magesa further clarifies this issue, explaining that the roles in the society were aimed at the survival of the society and at ensuring that it functioned properly.[30] A woman's role in this society was to bear children and the rituals surrounding women relate purely to their roles as child-bearers and mothers. It is easy to follow this train of thought and see how this role came to be regarded as inferior. Women are seen to be physically weaker than men and it is but a small step to come to identify lack of physical strength with inferiority and moral weakness. Magesa explains this:

> Gender role or division of labour in Africa was founded on the culturally assumed collective inferior state of the female sex. The biological factor, as is easy to see, was decisive in this. Because the woman was perceived as generally physically less strong than the man, it was concluded that she was inferior in every way.[31]

He goes on to point out the circle of reasoning. Because women are biologically weaker, they are considered inferior. If they are inferior, this explains why they are biologically weaker. If they are physically weaker, they need to be protected physically and this protection soon extends to a moral protection and with it comes a presumption of moral weakness. The inference which is then taken from this is that they are not made at the same level of humanity as the male. This conclusion is reflected in the traditional customs, which are seen to be embodied in customary law and it is necessary to consider the gap that exists between the general, constitutional law of the land and the demands of customary law.

I shall now move on to consider various practices which are given strength in customary law, particularly household practices. These practices are reflective of the general traditional view of women which contribute to the *habitus* and in turn have consequences to the lives of women, such as the spread of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV).

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[28]Michael Gelfand, *Growing Up in Shona Society* (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1979; repr., Gweru: Mambo Press, 1992), 1.

[29]Mercy A. Oduyoye, "Women and Ritual in Africa," in *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition and the Church in Africa* (ed. M. A. Oduyoye and M. R. A. Kanyoro; New York: Orbis Books, 1992), 22.

[30]Laurenti Magesa, "Differences that Bind the Liberation of Women in Africa," *African Ecclesial Review* 35 (1993): 46.

[31]Laurenti Magesa, "Differences that Bind," 47.

5.1. **Lobola**

Arnold Sibanda, one of the editors of the journal, *Social Change and Development*, writes that the Zimbabwean political economy is

> a political economy of inequality between the sexes, of chauvinism of the male sex and oppression, backwardness and exploitation of a large section of the female population. All this injustice is fortified by an ideological, legal, political and psychological superstructure which is overwhelmingly patriarchal.[32]

And the Human Development Report of 2000 reflects the same understanding when it reports: "The enormous challenge for women in Zimbabwe is that both themselves and men have internalized patriarchal values which exclude the feminine not just in principle but in practice."[33]

Sibanda is expressing in another way Bourdieu's idea of *habitus* which he here refers to as a "superstructure." Like the *habitus*, what he is referring to is a patriarchal structure composed of ideologies, legal and political practices, rituals and psychological attitudes. All these are part of the discourse and practices that make up the *habitus.* But it is to be remembered that the *habitus* is not a fixed structure; it generates and reproduces further attitudes and practices which contribute to reinforcing it even more. It is maintained by the repetition of established rituals of the society and it is this repetition that reinforces the *habitus*, the ideology. It becomes so unquestioned by this repetition that it is seen as "natural"; the values it proclaims are internalised not only by men but by women. This in turn continues to reinforce patriarchy with power, supporting the "superstructure" to which Sibanda refers. One of the prime rituals, arising from tradition, which bolsters up patriarchy in Zimbabwean society is that of *lobola*.

Lobola, exchange of goods or, in modern times money, for a wife, is an excellent example of the power of *habitus*. As will be seen, it began as a protection of the rights of both the men and women, but coupled with patriarchal attitudes, has come to be a means by which men can oppress their womenfolk. It is so entrenched that it is now a "structuring structure"[34] and no-one would consider sidestepping it for fear of losing family protection, standing and, indeed, power.

Traditionally, *lobola* was an important stage of the marriage process. It was a mutual sharing as the two families were brought together in marriage.[35] The whole family, on both sides, was brought

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[32]Arnold Sibanda, "The Political Economy of Rape," *Social Change and Development* 13 (1986): 6.

[33]UNDP, *Human Development Report*, 135.

[34]Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 53.

[35]Women in Law in Southern Africa Zambia, "Lobola - A Price for A Bride." [Cited 20 May 2005.] Online: www.wlsa.org.zm/pages/26apr01p1.htm, 1.

into the process of negotiation and celebration. The groom supplied cattle for the party and the bride's parents also provided food in the form of a goat. It was also seen as insurance, for if the man was able to give *lobola*, this meant that he would be able to support a wife. In addition, the wife brought to the marriage many material goods such as pots, pans, cloths and this could at times be even more valuable than the amount of *lobola* given.

If there was no *lobola* ritual, there would be no marriage as far as the families were concerned.[36] Any couples who married without going through the process would never be able to gain the support of their families if they had problems which is why very few couples even today would consider omitting the process.

The system conveyed certain rights to both the men and the women. It meant that the woman could not be arbitrarily expelled or divorced by her husband and ensured her of the protection of her husband, that he would maintain her and grant her other conjugal rights.[37] It was commonly seen, too, as a mark of respect on the part of the man and of gratitude to the women's family for bringing her up. On the other hand, it transferred ownership of the woman's labour to the husband's family which meant that in a rural setting she could no longer work in her family fields but had to work for her husband and his family.[38]

It also gave the woman's reproductive rights to her husband's family.[39] It would appear that, in Ndebele culture, the full "payment" is only made when the woman bears a child[40] but in Shona culture the full amount is paid on marriage so that in this culture it is more of a "bride price." Married women lived at the husband's home and the children belonged to their father's lineage.[41] The father had full rights over the children and could claim them in the case of a divorce.

Nowadays, however, the whole system has become much more monetary and there are stronger implications of buying and selling, even though this may be reasoned away as a "thanks" offering for all the parents have done in raising the daughter.[42] If the *lobola* has not been paid in full, on the death of the wife her parents have been known to refuse to bury her till the payment is made.[43] Even out of marriage, if a man makes a girl pregnant and pays damages equal to *lobola* without marrying her, this gives him visitation and other rights over the children.[44]

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[36]WLSA, "Lobola," 1.

[37]WLSA, "Lobola," 2.

[38]WLSA, "Lobola," 2; UNICEF, *Children and Women in Zimbabwe*, 45.

[39]Batezat, *Women in Zimbabwe*, 47; UNICEF, *Children and Women in Zimbabwe*, 45.

[40]WLSA, "Lobola," 4.

[41]Batezat and Mwalo, *Women in Zimbabwe*, 47.

[42]WLSA, "Lobola," 2.

[43]WLSA, "Lobola," 2.

[44]UNICEF, *Children and Women in Zimbabwe*, 45.

This system can also work against women because if her family does not have the money to pay back the *lobola* in the case of a divorce, she is forced to stay in an unhappy marriage. She will often do this, too, because otherwise she would lose her children.[45]

WLSA cites some examples of how *lobola* can deny women their human rights as implied in the constitution. In the following instance, the woman could not even regain her rights after the husband's death:

> In other instances, the payment of 'lobola' has tied the woman to her husband's family even after his death. Mrs C. was sued by her late husband's family for adultery, as she was in a relationship with a widower. This was inspite [sic] of the fact that her husband had been dead for 6 years. Their claim was that our client was still married to the family because of the payment of 'lobola'.[46]

WLSA concludes:

> In modern times, men have interpreted 'lobola' as giving them ownership of their wives. This attitude has been thought to encourage wife beating. Additionally, the link between 'lobola' and economic activity has created the inherent danger of economic interests overriding the intention of unifying families.[47]

WLSA goes on to comment that *lobola* is a form of male control over women, especially their bodies.[48] Today, the price of *lobola* is linked to how highly educated the bride is and the beneficiary is no longer the wider family but the father who stands to gain a small fortune from the marriage.

There are both positive and negative aspects for women in the custom of *lobola*. In healthy circumstances, the tradition can build up trust and understanding between the families and can increase community. The money helps the bride set up house, indicates that the husband is financially able to support her, and is perceived as a form of thanks from the groom to the bride's parents for bringing her up and educating her.[49] On the other hand, a man can use it to justify abusing his wife because he believes he has "purchased" her. WLSA again:

> Although many deny that payment of 'lobola' constitutes the purchase of a woman, the fact that a man or his family has parted with resources - either money or cattle - in order to

[45]UNICEF, *Children and Women in Zimbabwe*, 45.

[46]WLSA, "Lobola," 3.

[47]WLSA, "Lobola," 3

[48]WLSA, "Lobola," 4.

[49]Gary Smith, "Marriage Tradition in Africa: Lobola," n.p. [cited 20 May 2005]. Online: http://azaz.essortment.com/africanmarriag_rntr.htm.

> acquire a wife affects the man's perceptions of the nature of the marriage relationship. Many male respondents in our research state that they have purchased the women and therefore they are property to them.[50]

Coupled with this ritual of *lobola* is the deep seated custom of polygamy which is an ingrained principle of the *habitus* and therefore very difficult to change.

5.2. **Polygamy**[51]

Polygamy is a well-entrenched system in Africa. Although in Zimbabwe the number of polygamous marriages is relatively low, the value system, or *habitus*, which underlies it remains. In Shona society it is taken for granted.[52] It was originally a means by which men acquired status and labour as the more wives a man had, the more children he could have and the greater would be his labour force.[53] This gave him wealth and status.[54] Of course it also benefited the wives as it gave women security in a society where they were expected to marry. Although in an urban environment the labour is not as necessary any more, the idea of status remains and there is a tendency towards informal unions with "girlfriends" or mistresses. A common phrase to describe this is that men have their "small houses" (*mainini*), a phrase that has become common parlance to express the fact that they have mistresses whom they set up as "wives" in separate households. This is symptomatic of a mentality that still regards polygamy as part of the *habitus*, as "natural." This, combined with the fact that it is usually the wealthier men who can afford these multiple households, serves to enhance further the status of men in the eyes of a patriarchal society and further disempowers women, both those who are legally married to these men and those who are in these informal unions and therefore have no legal rights.

Both *lobola* and polygamy contribute to certain attitudes to women whereby men are seen to be superior. Even though many women are, in fact, the breadwinners because of death and migrant labour, the *habitus* regarding men as breadwinners is strong and enables them to regard their wives as subordinate.[55] This in turn leads to attitudes which affect women's choices and their situation in life, causing problems in the case of divorce and contributing to abuse.

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[50]WLSA, "Lobola", 4.

[51]As already explained in Chapter 1, I prefer to use the word "polygamy" when referring to polygyny as this is the more common meaning of polygamy and the word most frequently used in written material on the subject.

[52]Gelfand, *Growing Up in Shona Society*, 19.

[53]UNICEF, *Children and Women in Zimbabwe*, 47.

[54]Michael Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples: An Ethnography of the Contemporary Shona with Special Reference to their Religion* (3d ed. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1987; repr., Gweru: Mambo Press, 1991), 49.

[55]UNICEF, *Children and Women in Zimbabwe*, 49.

5.3. **Men as breadwinners**

There is a general belief that men are the breadwinners and as a result that their needs have priority when it comes to work.[56] In addition men resent women who are in charge over them as traditionally and culturally they do not consider this appropriate.[57] It can be seen here that the force of tradition (or *habitus*) remains even when on the surface the situation has changed. Women today are, in fact, in professions and run their own businesses, but the underlying attitudes which dictate their inferiority still remain. This idea is reinforced by traditions which emphasise the priority of the male. One such tradition is that women are not adult and therefore cannot make decisions for themselves. WLSA points out that in some customary courts women are treated as "quasi-minors" and are expected to have a male relative to represent them.[58] Also, for example, in customary law a woman's access to land is not considered to be a fundamental right.[59] Traditionally she is only allowed access to land through a male guardian in whose name the land rights can be registered.[60] It is the man who decides whether or not to give a piece of his land to his wife. Widows can be denied grazing rights if they refuse to be inherited by their husband's kinsmen and, while divorced men have grazing rights, female divorcees can only have them if they have custody of the children, which is rare in the rural areas.[61] As a result, few women have benefited from the land redistribution exercise and, where they have been given land, they have not received title deeds, so have no security of tenure.[62] In the rural areas, for instance, the chiefs may deny them their right to purchase land and, if they do not know the law or have no money to challenge the chief's interpretation of the law in a court, they can do nothing to help themselves.[63] So the practice, because it has been repeated over the years, becomes a structure in itself. It is a structure which sets up further structures which emphasise that only men have the right to land.

Ironically in the rural areas the majority of households are headed by women whilst the men work in town or out of the country. At the time of writing this majority was sixty percent,[64] though it

[56]Mary Tandon, "Can the Law Prevent Discrimination Against Women?" *Social Change and Development* 13 (1986): 11.

[57]Tandon, "Can the Law?" 11.

[58]WLSA, *The Shadow of the Law*, 58.

[59]UNDP, *Human Development Report*, 129.

[60]Gaynor G. Paradza, "Women's Access to Land," *Southern African Political and Economic Monthly, incorporating Southern African Economist* 14 (2001): 47.

[61]Paradza, "Women's Access to Land," 47-48.

[62]Paradza, "Women's Access to Land,"47.

[63]WLSA, *The Shadow of the Law*, 24, 28.

[64]UNDP, *Human Development Report*, 138.

is probably increasing during the present period of economic instability as more and more men seek employment out of Zimbabwe. Women work long hours, often fulfilling the roles of mother, farmer and informal sector worker and they are the ones who bear the cost of food production and clothing and educating the children.[65] But the decisions are still made by the men even if they are away from home.[66] In these areas women are still (illegally, in terms of constitutional law) considered to be minors and so cannot get finance or credit for fertilizers, seeds or equipment.[67]

In the town, many women are expected not only to undertake full time work in the commercial sector, but then also to do all the domestic work, which makes it more difficult to compete with men in the workplace. Women workers, for instance, find they have to get up at 4:00 a.m. to do the washing, make food and get to work by 7:00 a.m. They finish work at 4:00 p.m. and only get home at around 7:00 p.m. because of difficulties of getting transport, often having to walk most of the way home because of the high cost of this transport. By the time they have prepared the evening meal, cleaned and ironed, it is midnight when they get to bed for a few hours sleep before starting all over again. They accept this as "normal" because they have been trained from childhood that a wife's role is to look after the house.[68] Even though, in terms of constitutional law, women have a right to equal pay and equal work, this does not help them when they have to work full time in jobs and then do a full day's housework at night often with no help from their husbands who regard housework as "women's work."[69] Wallace Bozongwana points out that this is the traditional role for wives: "While the man's obligation is to feed, clothe and comfort his spouse, the woman is expected to cook and bear children for the man. She must prepare bedding, please the husband, remain faithful and bring up children strictly according to custom."[70]

According to UNICEF, girls are expected to do the housework as well as going to school whilst boys are exempt from household chores.[71] In the present time of economic hardship parents tend to withdraw girl children from school so that they can afford to educate the boys as they believe that girls will ultimately marry and leave home and the family will not benefit from educating them.[72]

Again, it can be seen in term of the *habitus* that beliefs that are there from birth become ingrained and even in the face of changed conditions are not readily changed. The fact that Zimbabwean men traditionally see themselves as the breadwinners contributes to their view that

[65]UNICEF, *Children and Women in Zimbabwe*, 49.
[66]UNICEF, *Children and Women in Zimbabwe*, 49.
[67]Batezat and Mwalo, *Women in Zimbabwe*, 19.
[68]Gelfand, *Growing Up in Shona Society*, 10.
[69]UNICEF, *Children and Women in Zimbabwe*, 97.
[70]Wallace Bozongwana. *Ndebele Religion and Customs* (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1983), 8.
[71]UNICEF, *Children and Women in Zimbabwe,* 97.
[72]WLSA, *The Shadow of the Law*, 22.

women are subordinate and therefore always answerable to them. It can, and often does, lead to domestic violence, which is a major problem in Zimbabwean society.

5.4. **Violence**

The problem of violence against women is enormous. A survey of 1 000 women, conducted by the Musasa Project (an organisation which seeks to aid women who suffer from domestic violence) and publicised in a handout,[73] revealed that one in four women are kicked, beaten, slapped or hit, one in twenty-five are pushed, kicked or hit in the stomach while pregnant, one in four suffer marital rape, one in twelve are assaulted with a dangerous weapon and one in six are prevented from getting a job or going to work. This violence is reflective of entrenched attitudes that regard women as subordinate. The same handout lays down one of the causes of domestic violence as being traditional values and beliefs and attitudes. These attitudes stem from principles that have been held by men for generations.

Bourdieu has explained how, through symbolic power, those with symbolic capital can control other people, both their bodies and their beliefs, because there is a generally accepted way in which people are expected to act. He shows, too, how the body is shaped and controlled by the belief system, or *habitus*. He explains that symbolic power works through controlling the bodies of others and how they should act. He states:

> Bodily hexis is political mythology realized, *em-bodied,* turned into a permanent disposition, a durable way of standing, speaking, walking and thereby of feeling and thinking. The opposition between male and female is realized in posture, in the gestures and movements of the body, in the form of the opposition between the straight and the bent, between firmness, uprightness and directness . . . and restraint, reserve and flexibility.[74]

It is the power of these beliefs that dictate how people should bear themselves, how they should dress, how they should speak. A woman in traditional Zimbabwean culture, for instance, is expected to kneel when speaking to a man and, when speaking to him, she is expected to look down, not into his eyes. This not only emphasises her inferiority but also inscribes upon her subconsciousness that this is how culture expects her to be and to act. As Bourdieu says, these expectations of behaviour "inscribe the most fundamental principles of the arbitrary content of a culture in seemingly

[73]"Domestic Violence and its Magnitude," distributed by the Musasa Project, undated.

[74]Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice,* 69-70.

innocuous details of bearing or physical and verbal manners, so putting them beyond the reach of consciousness and explicit statement."[75]

This inscription of male power on the bodies of women is very much seen in the violence committed against women. Bozongwana tells us of how early traditional training at the ceremony after the first menstruation reinforces the *habitus* that declares women can be beaten: "In some communities, she may be attacked with switches while naked. This is said to harden her so that when her husband beats her, she won't feel much pain."[76] This is aggravated by the belief that women are seen as the property of men[77] and that single women do not command respect in the community as they are expected to be married[78]. Because women are often dependent on their husbands for money, especially in a rural situation, and their work in the home is seen as having no monetary value,[79] they are particularly vulnerable to abuse and are not in a financial position to fight back through the courts. As children, boys are taught to be dominant and aggressive and girls are encouraged to be subservient home-makers. So it can be seen that the *habitus* is perpetuated through the use of actual and symbolic violence and strengthened by the teaching and upbringing of children and by the reinforcement of beliefs. In addition, women contribute to this violence to some extent because they accept this behaviour. But they accept it because the power of the *habitus* is so strong that they cannot question it and, if they did, the symbolic power exerted by men is too great to be opposed.

Because of the frequently held view that women are children, wife-beating, though illegal, is tolerated or, if it comes to court, is treated lightly as a purely domestic affair with offenders being given mild sentences.[80] One woman reported:

> I was never beaten very seriously, just slapped and maybe fisted. The only time he beat me and I reported to the police was when I had followed him to work to ask for money. When he got back home after work, he beat me up and took me to my brother's house and told them to reprimand me, as I had no respect for him. I was taken to the clinic to have my forehead stitched as he had head butted me several times.[81]

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[75]Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 69.

[76]Bozongwana, *Ndebele Religion*, 21.

[77]UNICEF, *Children and Women in Zimbabwe*, 5

[78]Musasa Project, *Domestic Violence and HIV/AIDS: Two Linked Epidemics: A Research by Musasa Project on the Relationship Between Domestic Violence and Women's Vulnerability to STIS and HIV/AIDS*, (s.n. 2003), 6.

[79]UNDP, *Human Development Report*, 138.

[80]UNICEF, *Children and Women in Zimbabwe*, 57.

[81]Musasa Project, *Domestic Violence*, 4.

Rape is largely seen as being the fault of the woman, who "asked for it" and, in the absence of victim-friendly courts, many cases go unreported. An example of this attitude of blaming women for sexual abuse can be seen when in 1992 over a hundred male students on the University of Zimbabwe campus stopped a woman on campus who was wearing a mini skirt and stripped her of the skirt,[82] declaring that it was "uncultural" for African women to "expose" their bodies.[83]

Rekopantswe Mate, from the Department of Sociology at University of Zimbabwe, recalls an incident in 1991 when there were power blackouts at the university. Male students took advantage of the anonymity of darkness to gather together and converged on the woman's residence, singing sexually suggestive songs, shouting lewd comments and making personal threats to the female students, calling them "whores." They would not allow them to leave the residence and threatened any woman outside it. As soon as the lights went on again they dispersed rapidly.[84] She also comments that girls were regularly beaten up by boyfriends but they tolerated it because of what was known as the "third year syndrome." This was the expectation that by their third year in university the girls should have a marriageable boyfriend, or be pregnant, or engaged, or else married with a child. In order to achieve this, they were prepared to put up with abuse from their boyfriends.[85] What is particularly notable about these cases is that the students are not generally from "traditional" backgrounds: as they usually need extremely good 'A' level results to gain admittance to the university, they are what would be thought of as the academic elite of the country. This is an example of how deep the *habitus* runs which decrees that women are subordinate to men and that men can treat them however they want.

More recently in June 2005 there was much talk about the fact that a woman in Bulawayo was beaten up by a gang of young men because she was wearing trousers. Frequently the women belonging to "Women of Zimbabwe Arise" (WOZA) movement are arrested and imprisoned when they hold peaceful demonstrations concerning the economic collapse of the country. Regularly on 14 February each year they hold peaceful marches, sometimes giving out roses as signs of peace, and are as a result arrested, beaten and humiliated. Over the weekend of 22-23 April 2007, over eighty members of WOZA were arrested because they protested against the frequency of power cuts. Eighteen of them were stripped and held in police cells. They remained naked for the whole day. Another member of the group, Clarah Makoni, was beaten across the kidneys by police who

[82]UNICEF, *Children and Women in Zimbabwe*, 49.

[83]Rekopantswe Mate, "Gender Violence at UZ: Some Personal Recollections," *Social Change and Development* 40 (1996): 16.

[84]Mate, "Gender Violence," 16.

[85]Mate, "Gender Violence," 18.

later drove her into the bush where she was forced to crawl under an electric fence and run through scrub land to the nearest road, her clothes torn and covered in dirt and vomit.[86]

In 1983 the police carried out a blitz on women in public places whom they accused of being prostitutes.[87] Many women enjoying a relaxing evening out with their friends found themselves arrested and humiliated. This is symptomatic of the traditional belief that women in public places may be prostitutes[88] and condemns women to the private world of the home, where they are subordinate to their menfolk. Patricia McFadden comments:

> In the period immediately after independence in many societies of this continent, women who were unaccompanied by an adult male and dared to enter the public arena after the formal working day was over, were and still are susceptible to arrest and criminalization as "whores", as "un-decent" women who should be locked away for their own protection because "good women" are at home feeding the children and catering to the sexual needs of their husbands after the sun goes down.[89]

In terms of the Sexual Offences Act of 2001, marital rape is a crime, but in terms of the cultural *habitus*, sexual violence in marriage is acceptable and a woman will seldom report it for fear of victimisation by her relatives. One woman reported: "Yes he forces me to have sex many times especially after quarrelling, even when I am swollen, he wants to have sex. If I say I don't enjoy it when I am like this he says 'you forget that I paid lobola' (bride price) and he forces me."[90]

This is yet another example of the power of the *habitus.* It declares that a woman is a child and therefore subject to men, that women's bodies are to be hidden and that they must not imitate male roles (for example, in wearing trousers). This *habitus* is stronger than constitutional law which purports to protect the interests of women.

Most women will seek help from their relatives, friends or in-laws and, as their concern is the family's reputation, these are more likely to treat such violence as an internal matter. If women go out of the family for help, they risk being thrown out and abused by their relatives.[91]

In the previously mentioned research project carried out by the Musasa Project, of 759 women interviewed, 73 per cent said that they suffered rape at the hands of their partners. The attitude of the men was that as they had paid *lobola*, they now had exclusive sexual rights over their wives and

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[86]Associated Press,"Women Protesters Stripped and Jailed in Zimbabwe, Says Women's Group," n.p. [cited 22 April 2007]. Online: http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2007/04/22/africa/AF-GEN-Zimbabwe.php.

[87]WLSA, *The Shadow of the Law*, 128.

[88]Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*, 316.

[89]Patricia McFadden, "Men in Women's Spaces: Collaboration or Subversion?" *Southern African Political and Economic Monthly,* incorporating *Southern African Economist* 14 (2001): 36.

[90]Musasa Project, *Domestic Violence*, 5.

[91]Musasa Project, *Domestic Violenc*e, 11.

their wives were expected to accommodate them or suffer violence.[92] Many women therefore have no control over their own sexuality. If they were to refuse to have sex with their husbands they feared they would be accused of unfaithfulness, would be thrown out or that their husbands would find other partners and possibly infect them with HIV/AIDS.[93]

Another facet of *lobola* and of men regarding women as subordinate appears in concerns about divorce and inheritance.

5.5. **Divorce**

In the case of divorce the consent of both families is needed. In the Shona tradition adultery is regarded as a cause for divorce if the woman should be the offender, but if it is a man, then this is not a cause.[94] Here again it can be seen how a different value system pertains for men and women. Other reasons for divorce are denial of conjugal rights (on both sides) and barrenness in the wife. If the lack of children is proven to be the fault of the husband rather than the wife, the husband's family will try to cover this up by quietly bringing his brother in to the wife without the husband's knowledge so that any children then born will be acknowledged as belonging to the husband. If it is the wife who is barren, she is sent back to her own family and the *lobola* has to be returned.

In the case of a divorce where there are children, again the wife is sent back to her family and, unless *lobola is* returned, which necessitates the support of the woman's parents for the divorce, the mother loses custody of the children and all property except her pots and clothing which she brought to the marriage.[95] She can call on her family's protection if maltreated by her husband, but this avenue is often not taken because of the fear of losing all rights over the children. Many women would choose to be left in abusive relationships rather than lose their children.

Women tend not to opt for divorce for the above reasons and also because they are unable to afford the cost of the divorce. In the event of a divorce, however, they often will not claim maintenance because of the fear that this will give the husband a way to seize the children and so they will suffer silently in poverty.[96] In the case of an unmarried woman bearing a child, if she includes the name of her child's father on the child's birth certificate she thereby surrenders guardianship and needs the father's permission to put the children on her passport.[97]

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[92]Musasa Project, *Domestic Violence*, 20.

[93]Musasa Project, *Domestic Violence*, 23.

[94]UNICEF, *Children and Women in Zimbabwe*, 45

[95]UNICEF, *Children and Women in Zimbabwe*, 45.

[96]WLSA, *The Shadow of the Law*, 79.

[97]UNICEF, *Children and Women in Zimbabwe*, 55.

5.6. **Inheritance**

Although the Deceased Persons Family Maintenance (Amendment) Act clearly protects the wife and children of a deceased man, according to custom the husband's family could claim the property. Few men opt to bequeath their property to their wives, perhaps because they do not trust them to manage it properly or because they fear that they may marry again and the property will go to another family.[98] This frequently leads to a situation where the husband's relatives take over the property and throw the wife and children out, leaving them totally destitute.[99]

6. **HIV/AIDS**

A consequence of these customs, practices which reinforce the *habitus*, is often HIV/AIDS and Zimbabwe has one of the worst infection rates in Sub-Saharan Africa. According to a UNAIDS/WHO 2006 report, updated on 26 April 2007, twenty percent of the population of Zimbabwe are living with HIV - a percentage only exceeded by Swaziland and Botswana.[100] For women it is worst with six out of ten women between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five being HIV positive. There is a very high rate of unfaithfulness in marriage. A group of seventeen-year-old black African girls in a private school in Bulawayo informed me, as a matter of course, that they expected that their future husbands would be unfaithful to them as "that's what happens." It is, again, a clear example of the power of the *habitus*. These highly educated girls who are often very aware of their rights are powerless against the force of a tradition which dictates that men can regard them as property to be acquired and used as they like. Constitutional law cannot deal with this situation, even though it may make laws forbidding it, because the underlying *habitus* is too powerful to be negated. In the Musasa Project survey it was revealed that eighty-four per cent of the women had partners who had other sexual partners. Their handbook, which seeks to empower women to make a stand and to raise their self-esteem, states: "Society condones promiscuity by men and women are expected to accept their husbands having extra marital affairs and continue having unprotected sex with them. This puts women in such relationships at risk of infection."[101]

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[98]Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*, 317.

[99]UNDP, *Human Development Report*, 122; Maya Cawthorne, "The Third Chimurenga," in *Reflections on Gender Issues in Africa* (ed. P. McFadden; Harare: SAPES Trust, 1999): 55-83.

[100]"Sub Saharan Africa HIV and AIDS Statistics," n.p. [cited 21 June 2007]. No author given. Online: http://www.avert.org/subaadults.htm.

[101]Musasa Project, "Rise and Shine: Empowerment Handbook on Gender Violence and HIV/AIDS" Book 2: Dealing with Your Reproductive Health, HIV and AIDS Issues,(s.n. 2003): 40.

This is also a major contribution to the spread of HIV/AIDS but *lobola*, too, has its part to pay. Smith comments:

> The modern usage of Lobola does not always have a happy outcome, however; there are many instances when families use Lobola to acquire money to pay their debt. Worse still, some men see women as "goods" that have been paid for. . . . There is even a reported relationship between the Lobola custom and spread of HIV/AIDS. . . . The custom is seen as a monetary transaction and the wife as a bought object; the husband often feels free to acquire mistresses and hence increases the possibility of infection, which in turn can be transmitted to the wife.[102]

Women are the most vulnerable victims of HIV/AIDS and it is here that their subordinate status is clearly revealed. Because women are considered subordinate they fear to refuse to have sex in a marriage even if they know their husband will infect them. Secondly, it is hard for them to demand to protect themselves and many men refuse to wear condoms. The Musasa project pamphlet records: "Most women are dependent on their husbands for money and usually once the husband refuses to use a condom women are forced to accept this for fear of losing his financial support."[103]And again:

> Further, society considers a woman who carries condoms or insists on using them to be a "loose woman". A wife who insists on using condoms with her husband may be beaten and accused of being promiscuous. Introducing condom use usually results in physical, mental, economic or sexual abuse of the woman.[104]

Another customary practice which exposes women to infection whilst emphasizing her subordinate status is that of widow cleansing. It is a tradition, not openly spoken of but quoted by the Musasa Project, in which a man in the family is chosen to have sex with a recently widowed woman as her husband is being buried.[105] If either is infected, the infection will be passed on. Similarly, the custom that gives the wife to a brother of the husband[106] exposes her to the same risks.

HIV positive women tend to be blamed for contracting the disease and are often abandoned by their husbands or boyfriends and relatives. The Musasa research project revealed that ten per cent of women interviewed said they would not tell their husbands if they were infected with a sexually

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[102]Smith, "Marriage Tradition in Africa," n.p.

[103]Musasa Project, "Rise and Shine," 40.

[104]Musasa Project, "Rise and Shine," 40.

[105]Musasa Project, "Rise and Shine," 40; Cawthorne, "The Third Chimurenga," 76 refers to "humiliating mourning processes that widowers are not subjected to."

[106]Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*, 214.

transmitted disease.[107] They feared being beaten up and accused of unfaithfulness. UNICEF comments on STDs in general: "Today, STDs in women are stigmatized and considered a source of shame, while in men they are seen as a rite of passage into manhood, and even something to boast about."[108]

It is an enactment of the principle by which women are considered to be weaker and a potential source of shame to their husbands or fathers. More emphasis is placed on a woman's purity[109] than that of a man and women are usually the ones considered at fault in getting a disease, whatever may be the facts of the matter.

7. **Women and the law**

In this chapter I have considered how the Constitution provides for women in Zimbabwe and what customary law contributes to the *habitus* in this respect. The cultural view of women is very important in how these laws play their part as this view is perhaps a more accurate reflection of the *habitus* than of what the Constitution demands. It is important now, however, to see how the these attitudes to women affect the practices concerning women in the area of the home and traditional practices in terms of both customary and constitutional law. It has been seen that there is a clash between the laws and it could be questioned why women under customary law do not fight for the rights granted under constitutional law. Women, especially those in the rural areas, find it difficult to stand up for their rights for several reasons.

- Sometimes the family threatens to withdraw its support if the women go to court[110] and in the customary courts the proceedings are informal, with comments and advice coming from all those present - often mostly male - and the woman stands to lose everything if her family will not stand by her.[111]
- The Declaration of Rights is not accessible to the poor because of simple ignorance or else they do not have the money to pay the costs of legal help[112] and they cannot defend themselves because they simply do not know how to go about it. In some courts they are regarded as minors and have to have a male relative to represent them.[113] The WLSA report comments:

[107]Musasa Project, *Domestic Violence*, 18.
[108]UNICEF, *Children and Women in Zimbabwe*, 84.
[109]Gelfand, *Growing Up in Shona Society*, 19.
[110]WLSA, *The Shadow of the Law*, 17.
[111]WLSA, *The Shadow of the Law*, 18.
[112]WLSA, *The Shadow of the Law*, 24.
[113]WLSA, *The Shadow of the Law*, 58.

> An interesting feature of the proceedings of cases observed in the local courts is not just the constant appeal to customs, traditions and African culture, but also the consistent rejection of general law principles. The concept of majority was repeatedly rejected and every opportunity taken to underline that it had no application. Even when witnesses gave evidence and they were asked their age and upon their indication of being 18 years or above, chiefs repeatedly took the opportunity to advise them that their majority status was irrelevant and that in traditional law they were subject to the authority of their parents, families and elders.[114]

- The women know that the patriarchal attitudes in the courts are compounded by the fact that most officials are male. Justice Gwaunza is quoted in WLSA as having written that "the fact that our legal system is male dominated, results in the process and outcome of justice in all cases (including sexual offences against women) largely reflecting the views, values and beliefs of men; patriarchal beliefs about women's role and nature."[115]

We see in this how the practice of the law is being used as a reinforcement of values dictated by the *habitus*. The fact that men tend to be in control of the legal practice means that they can use this practice to continue to define the patriarchal system. Justice Gwaunza goes on to point out how the entrenched attitudes of the *habitus* are re-enacted in the way men are dealt with in court. She says of court judgements in rape cases:

> The judgements have all too often been too lenient, leading many to wonder whether some of the deeply entrenched attitudes, assumptions and myths as regards a woman's position in life may not influence the sentences meted out to rapists, as well as what the judicial officer considered to be extenuating circumstances.[116]

- The present state of economic collapse has had a further detrimental effect on the status of women. Firstly, because of poor nutrition, deteriorating and highly expensive health services and re-emergence of disease epidemics such as malaria and tuberculosis, life expectancy is now thirty-four years for women (the lowest in the world) and thirty-seven years for men[117]. Zimbabwe has one of the highest mortality rates in the world for women in childbirth. In addition, because of jobs being destroyed, the destruction of opportunities for labour on farms, and the high cost of schooling whereby girls are withdrawn from schools, more women than ever are in prostitution or "temporary relationships."

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[114]WLSA, *The Shadow of the Law*, 59.

[115]WLSA, *The Shadow of the Law*, 123.

[116]WLSA, *The Shadow of the Law*, 123.

[117]Integrated Regional Information Network (UN), "Adult Population to Die Before Age 40, Says UN Report," n.p. [cited 7 April 2006]. Online: hhtp://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportid=58698.

In addition, there is the problem that women are left looking after households while their menfolk go out of the country and do not always send back money to them. The former Archbishop of Matabeleland, Pius Ncube, in an interview with *The Age* in Australia, pointed out that women bear the brunt of the economic collapse:

> "People are very depressed," he says, and the women suffer most of all. "The woman is usually the provider for the children, for food, for clothing for school fees. The men, they run away. They take off, go to Johannesburg and never come back." The women are left behind with the children and the struggle, and it kills them before they reach middle age.[118]

Many girls who have been taken out of school are forced to marry. A report from *Zim Online* tells how fathers may give away a daughter without her consent to a richer man in return for food and economic support. The report tells the story of one of these girls:

> Tariro Muchina was barely in her teens late last year when her father "sold" her off into an arranged marriage in the small-scale farming district of Nyamajura, about 250km east of the Zimbabwean capital, Harare. Twelve months down the line, the 14-year-old Muchina, who was literally dragged screaming all the way into "marriage", appears to have come to terms with her fate. "I had to leave school to marry this man despite his age. My father insisted that I do it to save my younger brothers and sisters from hunger," Muchina says, opening up only after much persuasion. Muchina is married to a balding and pot-bellied 65-year-old man who has some teeth missing but owns a grocery shop - an immensely important factor in this hunger- and poverty-stricken community. Showing surprisingly little bitterness for someone robbed of her youth in so cruel a manner, Muchina sums up her story in just a few sentences. She says: "I would have preferred to continue with school. But we are poor and there was no money for food or anything at home. Although it [the marriage] was arranged for me, I had to agree to it. That is the only way my family could survive. In turn, my husband provides food for them."[119]

A report by IRIN (UN) pointed out that women farm workers were mostly casual labourers.[120] Because they were seen as part of a male-headed household, their rights were often ignored, they were not given leave or bonuses and earned very low wages so that they had to supplement their wages through activities such as beer-brewing and prostitution. In the land allocation exercise women seem to have received less than twenty per cent of land and they no longer have access to the clinics or schools on the farms. And then there are even simple things like nappies and sanitary

[118]Chandler, Jo, "Beyond the Fear," *The Age.* n.p. [cited 12 May 2007]. Online: http:www.theage.com.au/news/in-depth/beyond-the-fear/2007/05/11/1178390544630.html/?page=fullpage.

[119]Zim Online (SA), "Girl-Children Sacrificed into Marriage as Hunger Bites in Zimbabwe," n.p. [cited 16 May 2006]. Online: http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/may16_2006.html.

[120]Integrated Regional Information Network (UN), "Situation of Farm Workers Worsened," n.p. [cited 31 October 2003]. Online: hhtp://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportid=47005.

pads which are now unaffordable to most women, the lack of which further reduces their dignity and status.

In the "Operation Murambatsvina" of 2005, homes and vendors' stands were demolished and people were told to return to their rural homes. Widows and divorcees were particularly disadvantaged as they had no rural homes to return to because property often stays with the former husband's side of the family and women generally do not own land in rural areas. The situation was aggravated for women married to men of foreign origin as they have no rural homes to which to return. In addition, it was estimated that 40 800 urban families were headed by women who provided for their families by selling vegetables. With the destruction of the formal sector, these women were left unemployed.[121] An example is given of an eighty-two year old woman whose children were all dead who was caring for nine orphaned grandchildren for whom she provided by renting rooms in her house. When her house was demolished, she no longer had any income and was left destitute.[122]

All this leaves women particularly vulnerable, often forced into prostitution in order to survive. Though on paper their status seems secure, in practice it is very insecure.

8. **Conclusion**

It can be seen from this consideration of the status of women in Zimbabwe that their situation is complex. On the one hand the Constitution, the codified expression of the legal practice contributing to the *habitus*, declares that they have rights equal to those of men and grants these rights in laws passed by Parliament, but the same Constitution also nullifies these rights by making them subject to customary law. Traditional practices are more in tune with the *habitus* of customary law and the Constitution would appear in many ways to be merely a means of placating possible objections (often made by those 'outside' the system and the culture) as to the subordinate status of women. It must be remembered too that the Constitution and the legal practices surrounding its enactment was largely imported in an effort to bring about a settlement in the situation in Rhodesia, as the country was then called. The various acts passed after independence appear to uphold the Constitution but all these are rendered ineffective by the provision that customary law applies in a traditional environment. WLSA sums up the situation when it says:

[121]Anna Tibaijuka, "Report of the Fact-Finding Mission to Zimbabwe to Assess the Scope and Impact of Operation Murambatsvina by the UN Special Envoy on Human Settlements Issues in Zimbabwe,"[cited 15 August 2005]. Online: www.unhabitat.org/documents/ZimbabweReport.pdf, 43.

[122]Tibaijuka, "Report of the Fact-Finding Mission," 44.

> Our previous research shows people move freely between customary law and general law picking and choosing their remedies as they meet their needs. Although the state legal system provides for the integration of the customary law and general law in the courts there is a persistent practice of constantly distinguishing them as two separate entities.[123]

The Constitution, therefore, can be seen to be in conflict with practices which have a more normative influence on society and is largely subject to those practices and the *habitus* they represent. The real symbolic power appears to lie in the area of customary law and it is through enactment of the rituals of this law that the *habitus* is maintained.

[123]WLSA, *The Shadow of the Law*, 5.

CHAPTER 3
WOMEN AND THE CHURCH IN ZIMBABWE

1. Introduction

In the previous chapter I considered the situation in terms of women and their status in the eyes of the law in Zimbabwe, pointing out that there was frequently a tension between what the law decreed and what actually happens. I now turn to their situation in terms of the Christian church and consider whether the church has challenged the practice of the law as regards women, or whether it has reinforced the prevailing *habitus* as it underscores the status of women.

I will consider the difficulties that are inherent in such a study and then suggest that colonial history has contributed to reinforcing the existing *habitus* of traditional Zimbabwean society. This has left the church in an ambivalent situation as it faces patriarchalism in Zimbabwe. The church has tended to reinforce the *habitus* rather than challenge it and this can be seen in its approach to teachings on marriage, divorce and sexuality as well as on its perception of power. I shall go on to consider two organisations in Zimbabwe, the Mothers Union and Youth for Christ, and how they have responded to the situation there.

Although my focus in this work is on the Anglican church in Zimbabwe, and especially in the province of Matabeleland, I will also refer to other churches as they necessarily influence each other in their teaching and in their practices as regards women in their congregations. I have focussed on the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches, however, as these were present at the inception of the church in Zimbabwe and have had much opportunity to influence local attitudes and customs.

2. Problems of enquiry

It has been almost impossible to access documents and records of the Anglican church in Matabeleland. Even the National Archives do not seem to have copies of synod records and a search through the files in the diocesan office yielded only a few incomplete records, and none at all for some years. My main source of reference has been the minutes and personal records compiled by Mr David Graham Townshend, a delegate to these synods for the years 1994 to 2000.

As far as other church business is concerned, minutes of Standing Committee meetings show no trace of any discussion on gender issues ever having been initiated. This in itself indicates that women and their hopes and fears are low on the agenda, especially when one realises that the

Committee consists mainly of men. There does not appear to be any diocesan campaign to address problems women may have.

3. Colonialism and Zimbabwean patriarchy

The general attitude to women's issues seems to be to ignore them and hope they will go away. Certainly any moves to embrace women on a footing equal to men have until now been resisted. The *habitus* of traditional life in Zimbabwean society dictates that a woman's role is to be subservient to her father and then her husband and the church seems to be happy to maintain this *status quo.* It has never officially challenged it and the teaching of a major churchwomen's organisation, the Mothers' Union, underscores this belief.

The fact is that the church coming into the country in the 1890s came from a society which had no regard for women's equality and did not give women the vote nor even listened to their voices. It was a society which focussed on men and their concerns. As pointed out by Tosh,[1] men's clubs were the fashion and in literature the masculine hero was predominant: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, R. L. Stevenson, Rider Haggard were all authors who glorified male heroism and intellect. The concept of "empire" demanded manly qualities and the strength which mastery over other nations required. Colonial subjects were viewed as children, the colonialist as the strong, manly figure.[2] Women were denied the vote and the home was considered to be their area of concern.

The society held much the same view about gender relations as did traditional African society and so it did not question many of the practices which held women in subordination. As will be seen, where it did question the practice, as in the case of polygamy, it did not challenge the underlying principle, so was ineffective against it. If we consider this from the point of view of the *habitus,* we can see that the church was coming from a patriarchal context itself into another patriarchal context. In this way it was not surprising that the church conformed itself to the prevailing *habitus.* Sheer repetition of these practices within the church itself has led to the situation being regarded as "normal." The very power of the *habitus* has enabled the church to close its eyes to the challenges in this area presented by the worldwide church and to close ranks against any threat to the *habitus.*

An example of how patriarchy has been seen as normal and part of the *status quo*, could be seen during the 36th Synod of the Anglican church in the diocese of Matabeleland in 2000. At this meeting it was debated whether to allow the visit of a woman priest from a diocese which supports

[1]John Tosh, "What Should Historians Do with Masculinity? Reflections on Nineteenth-Century Britain," in *Parchments of Gender: Deciphering the Bodies of Antiquity* (ed. Maria Wyke; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 71.

[2]Tosh, "What Should Historians Do," 79-80.

Matabeleland financially. The secretary wrote: "Some delegates thought that she should not be allowed to come. Some delegates thought that this was a ploy to acclimatise our people to women priests."[3] It is interesting to note that such statements may well be a reflection of the attitude of the recorder as another person who attended that synod has no recollection of such sentiments being expressed. In point of fact, the woman did come to Zimbabwe, but was not allowed to function as a member of the ordained clergy and no official record of her visit appears in diocesan documents. The point here, however, is that this opinion, held by a man, has now been set down as the official historical opinion of the matter, with its implication that all at the synod were negative about the visit and were united in their disapproval of ordained women.

4. **The church and customary law**

As pointed out in my first chapter, the church and its practices do not exist in a vacuum. The church is an institution which derives from the Western tradition. It arose within the *habitus* of Europe and developed its practices and structures there. In being imported into Africa, it carried with it its past history. Bourdieu has shown that the *habitus* is a product of history which, as time has gone on, has produced practices which have formed yet more of its history. He says of the *habitus*:

> It ensures the active presence of past experiences, which, though deposited in each organism in the form of schemes of perception, thought and action, tend to guarantee the "correctness" of practices and their constancy over time, more reliably than all formal rules and explicit norms.[4]

The church in Europe has imported into Africa a patriarchal, hierarchal system which has easily been integrated into the already existing system of male chiefs and male supremacy. In a similar way, the *habitus* of constitutional law has also been imported and integrated easily into traditional patriarchal patterns. Just as the courts are presided over by a hierarchy of judges, the church is presided over by bishops. Both the law and the church are institutions and in each of these institutions there are roles to be played. Because the roles have been repeated over many generations, they are now regarded as being "natural": they are embodied into the institution itself and cannot be seen as separate from it. Bourdieu writes:

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[3]Diocese of Matabeleland. J*ournal for the 36th Synod*, (2000), 9.

[4]Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (trans. R. Nice; Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 54.

> [T]he *habitus* is what enables the institution to attain full realization: it is through the capacity for incorporation, which exploits the body's readiness to take seriously the performative magic of the social that the king, the banker or the priest are hereditary monarchy, financial capitalism or the church made flesh.[5]

In this way the roles played by both judge and priest or bishop are regarded as natural, because they have become so embedded in the institutions they represent. People come to regard these roles as being "natural," but this is yet another example of the *habitus* at work. They are neither questioned nor criticised and the very maintenance of these roles give the institutions permanency. The people inhabiting these roles are no longer seen as individuals but are regarded as representatives, in fact as symbols, of their institutions and therefore wield the whole power of these institutions. In terms of the tradition into which they have been imported, the role of chief there is also institutionalised (and given further legitimacy and power by inclusion in Parliament, the institution which governs all the other institutions). The two contexts, Europe and Africa, therefore dovetail in that these institutions feed and nourish each other.

The church exists in relationship with the laws of the country and especially we see how it relates with customary law. It tends not to challenge areas which may work against the liberation of women but usually upholds whatever is decided in the community courts. These community courts are the "traditional" courts presided over by the rural chiefs rather than by representatives of the judiciary, where the appeal is made to customs and culture rather than principles of general law.[6] The church itself has often found itself in conflict. On the one hand, it has incorporated the Western attitudes of patriarchy into its teachings but on the other hand there are elements of its teachings which are in conflict with traditional culture. In those areas where the missionary activities of the church challenged the practice of customary law, it tended to lead to more confusion. For instance, in the case of the Mtshabezi girls' primary school run by the Brethren in Christ church between 1908 and 1968, the girls often fled there as a refuge from marriages arranged by their fathers. The church school found itself upholding its own Western *habitus* which, while patriarchal in essence, nonetheless ruled against many of the customs of traditional society. It therefore came in direct conflict with the *habitus* of customary law which demanded that the girls submit to their fathers' arrangements for them. At times fathers pursued them to the school and tried to remove them by force or else beat them, denounced them and left them half dead. Many girls were then forced to

[5]Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 57.

[6]Women and Law in Southern Africa, *The Shadow of the Law: A Market Survey of Justice Delivery in Zimbabwe - What's in it for Women?* Draft copy (Harare: WLSA, 1999), 59.

make the school their permanent home as they were no longer permitted to go back to their homes.[7] In these sorts of cases the church came into conflict with the practice of the law, but in other cases the church conformed to customary law by encouraging women to fulfil the demands of that law.

WLSA, in a section relating to the effect of the church on women's status, points out that, while the formal justice system, that of "general law" (the system presided over by the judiciary and governed by constitutional rather than customary law), shows a greater regard for women's rights, some churches do not encourage recourse to this system as they consider that such equality is contrary to teaching, especially that which relates to inheritance, marriage and sexuality: "One explanation is that the law applied in the formal justice system, particularly in the area of women's rights, is contrary to biblical teachings, for example, a woman is expected to submit to her husband and suing him may be regarded as a failure to submit."[8]

WLSA does not give specific biblical references, but it would appear to be referring to teaching such as that in Ephesians 5:21-25 where women are told to be subject to their husbands. In the same publication it is shown that the church expects women to obey their husbands: "Other obstacles include societal biases that treat women as subordinate to men and thereby expect them to 'obey' their husbands."[9] Betty Ekeyo contextualises this by showing how teaching on Ephesians 5:22 and Colossians 3:1 leads women to accept an inferior status and put up with difficult marriages when she says: "In a very subtle way the Church encourages women to endure the hardships of marriage relationship as a necessary martyrdom."[10]

The church here is seen to be supporting the teaching and attitudes in customary law of gender inequality. It uses the Bible, its own legal code, which in turn has sprung from the discursive practices of centuries, to support this discriminatory system and to maintain its structures and teachings.

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[7]Wendy Urban-Mead, "Girls of the Gate: Questions of Purity and Piety at Mtshabezi Girls' Primary Boarding School, 1908-1940," *Le Fait Missionaire* 11 (2001): 75-76; also published in *Brethren in Christ History and Life* 25 (2002).

[8]WLSA, *The Shadow of the Law*, 138.

[9]WLSA, *The Shadow of the Law*, 55.

[10]Betty Ekeyo, "Women, for How Long Not?" in *Feminist Theology from the Third World: A Reader* (ed. U. King; London: SPCK, 1994), 144.

5. Church teaching

5.1. The use of the Bible

It is interesting to note how, through much of colonial history, the church has been able to use the values of Christianity to uphold traditional customs. Anna Johnston has shown, when writing of the London Missionary Society, that the missionaries introduced the Bible as a symbol of something "eternal, unchanging and universal."[11] With the coming of Christianity to new areas, such as Africa, the Bible was presented as an object of ultimate power and it was often used to justify colonial actions.[12] But in Africa, especially, the Bible was soon translated into local languages which therefore transferred some of this power to those of the local population who were able to read it and interpret it in ways that the missionaries had not intended it.[13] It is important to realise that much of the power of the biblical text lies in the way it is interpreted and the context in which it is read. In this way, the locals were able, to some extent, to appropriate the power of the Bible to themselves. In itself this is good, but not when that power is used to reinforce a *habitus* that is detrimental to one section of humanity.

Sugirtharajah, for instance, shows how Hindu interpreters were able to use Scripture to defend their traditional practices, for example by using the Old Testament to validate worship practices similar to those in the Saiva community.[14] In a similar manner, the local Zimbabwean culture was able to use the biblical texts to emphasise the thinking of the *habitus* on the status of women. The clergy, trained in the Bible in a colonial setting, which, with its ideals of coloniser and colonised, superior and inferior, was soaked in patriarchalism, were thus further equipped to keep women in their inferior position.

Ekeyo shows how the church has not been of assistance to women in Africa. She writes:

> The coming of the missionaries, about a century ago, should indeed have been very good news to the African women, but now, besides the cultural norms and taboos that bound her and held her in subjection, two other oppressive elements have been added to her world: the loaded interpretation of certain biblical passages, and the predominantly male church ministries and institutions.[15]

[11]Anna Johnston. "The Book Eaters: Textuality, Modernity, and the London Missionary Society," *Semeia* 88 (2001): 13.

[12]Johnston, "The Book Eaters," 28.

[13]Johnston, "The Book Eaters," 29 and Gerald West. "A Real Presence, Subsumed by Others: The Bible in Colonial and Postcolonial Contexts," *Semeia* 88 (2001): 202.

[14]Sugirtharajah, Rasiah S. "Imperial Critical Commentaries: Christian Discourse and Commentarial Writings in Colonial India," *JSNT* 73 (1999): 108.

[15]Ekeyo, "Women, for How Long Not," 139.

There are several elements of the *habitus* to be seen here. Firstly we see here how a practice, in this case the traditions of culture, resist change. The power of the *habitus* as it resides in cultural norms and taboos is very great indeed and their constant repetition helps them become more and more resistant to any change. These norms and taboos are reinforced by other elements of the *habitus*, especially those which manifest themselves in structures. The "legal code" of the *habitus*, the Bible, and the acting out of that code in ministries and institutions which are predominantly male maintain the patriarchal aspects of the *habitus.* Ekeyo's point is that the interpretation of passages and the male leadership of the church serve as reinforcements to the *habitus* and make it even more resistant to being changed. Regarding biblical interpretation, she gives us an example of a sermon, bearing in mind that it was a man who was doing the preaching: "A sermon on the woman who washed the feet of Jesus with her tears manages to ignore Christ's love for the woman as a person and instead concentrates on her abject sinfulness. Christ is portrayed as pitying women as morally weaker vessels. "[16]

This example shows how the focus is on the woman as a sinner rather than on the positive aspects of Jesus' ministry. The woman as a person is ignored and only her sinfulness is emphasised, contrasting the superiority of the (male) Jesus to the weaker woman.

Church teaching has often leant on a loaded interpretation of passages which emphasise women as subordinate (e.g. the whole story of Adam and Eve, that Eve was created after Adam and that she was to be blamed for the Fall) and teaches that they are to "obey" their husbands (e.g. Eph 5:22). Oduyoye comments: "It seems that the sexist elements of Western culture have simply fuelled the cultural sexism of traditional African society. . . . African men, at home with androcentricism and the patriarchal order of the biblical cultures have felt their views confirmed by Christianity."[17]

Mercy Oduyoye, in her introduction to the book she co-edited with Musimbi Kanyoro *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition and the Church in Africa*, supports the view taken by Ekeyo that women are often invisible. This is a book which takes a long hard look at the effect of rituals and the effect of Christianity on the *habitus* of African society. Oduyoye writes: "African women theologians have come to realise that as long as men and foreign researchers remain the authorities on culture, rituals and religion, African women will continue to be spoken of as if they were dead."[18]

We will see later how the Pauline tradition tended to regard women as invisible. This is reflected also in the church in Africa. Again Oduyoye says: "These churches, which most often take the form

[16]Ekeyo, "Women, for How Long Not," 145.

[17]Oduyoye, "Calling the Church to Account: African Women and Liberation," Ecumenical Review 47 (1995): 479-489 taken from *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy* (New York: Orbis Books, 1995), 486.

[18]Mercy A. Oduyoye, and Musimbi R. A. Kanyoro, eds., *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition and the Church in Africa* (New York: Orbis Books, 1992), ix.

of patriarchal hierarchies, accept the material services of women but do not listen to their voices, seek their leadership or welcome their initiatives."[19]

The problem is that whilst the structures in the *habitus* are being maintained by men, they will continue to be patriarchal and oppressive to women. And Rosemary Edet acknowledges that Christianity proclaims liberation and sexual equality but remarks that it is a theoretical proclamation which is not acted out in reality because, if it were, then women would have been liberated from all their oppression. She concludes: "Christianity legalises and reinforces the oppression of women and their subjugation to men in all aspects of life."[20]

Whilst on paper the church may declare equality (as in the case of the Zimbabwean Constitution), in practice this simply does not happen. All legal church documents are couched in exclusive language and readings are from exclusive language translations of the Bible. Often the King James version, with its androcentric language is especially popular.[21] Some liturgies which are gender inclusive are used, such as the 1989 South African Prayer Book, but this is not always the case, with many churches still using gender-exclusive forms of liturgy. Simply to change the language of the Bible from exclusive to inclusive does not, of course, do away with the androcentric bias of the Bible as a whole. It is a collection of writings, written, translated and interpreted and compiled by men and for men and changing the language will not change that. What can be hoped for by the use of inclusive language will be to change at least partially the subliminal message given by the use of androcentric language to women that they are somehow excluded from the full message of salvation. The ideal, of course is to create translations of the Bible which render it possible for women to identify with the Christian tradition.

It is important therefore to consider some aspects as to how the teaching of the church acts as a force to prevent the full liberation of women and to consider how the male leadership influences this teaching.

5.2. **Marriage and divorce**

In Zimbabwean culture, celibacy is not an option for women, and the passages from the Pauline tradition which allow for voluntary celibacy are not emphasised at all. In the Anglican Church, the Mothers' Union is a very strong organisation for women. It has its equivalent in the Roman Catholic

[19]Oduyoye, "Calling the Church," 480.

[20]Rosemary Edet, "Christianity and African Women's Rituals," in *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition and the Church in Africa* (ed. M. A. Oduyoye and M. R. A. Kanyoro; New York: Orbis Books, 1992), 35.

[21]Oduyoye, "Calling the Church," 481.

church in the St Anne's League. By its very name, the Mothers' Union promotes marriage and motherhood and women grow up knowing that their function in life is to be a mother.[22]

5.2.1. *Polygamy*

The church has always taken a strong stand against polygamy emphasizing the teaching of Genesis 2:24 to justify the importance of monogamy. It has, however, only been partly successful and in many cases has simply driven this underground as it were, as men take on mistresses instead of formal unions. The force of the *habitus* in this area is very powerful and the church teaching itself can be very detrimental to women. The Catechism of the Catholic Church reads thus:

> 2397 The predicament of a man who, desiring to convert to the Gospel, is obliged to repudiate one or more wives with whom he has shared years of conjugal life, is understandable. However *polygamy* is not in accord with the moral law. "[Conjugal] communion is radically contradicted by polygamy; this, in fact, directly negates the plan of God which was revealed from the beginning, because it is contrary to the equal personal dignity of men and women who in matrimony give themselves with a love that is total and therefore unique and exclusive." The Christian who has previously lived in polygamy has a grave duty in justice to honour the obligations contracted in regard to his former wives and his children.[23]

As it can be noted, this paragraph relates only to the predicament of the man. He is the active principle in this situation. This is another example of the *habitus* in operation. The norms that make up the *habitus* do not need to be communicated to those sharing these norms as they are taken for granted. In this case it is to be seen that it is the man's predicament that is outlined but the woman is invisible and simply a victim of circumstances. It is the man who is the prospective convert, not the woman. The church, as perceived in this passage, does not consider the problems of the woman who is in a polygamous relationship and wishes to convert, nor that of the woman who will be cast out of the marriage. Fr Eugene Barrett, formerly priest-in-charge of the Roman Catholic church in Tshabalala suburb in Bulawayo, developed this point in an unpublished paper.[24] Firstly, the woman is sent home in disgrace and now will live under the cloud of being a divorced, rejected wife, and

[22]An informal discussion with Mrs Rachel Ncube, a member of the Mothers' Union, revealed to me that this was how she saw her existence as a woman, how she justified her life. When I asked about those who were unable to have children or who did not marry, in some respects she could not accept such a notion, but when pressed said that all women were mothers regardless and that the term "Ma" in Ndebele was applicable to all women and means "mother". Similarly all older women are "gogo" ("grandmother") regardless of whether they actually have grandchildren or not.

[23]*Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Zimbabwe: Mambo Press,1992), 550.

[24]Fr Eugene Barrett, "Christian Marriage in Shona Society," (Graduate Diploma in Humanities and Holistic Development, All Hallows College: Drumcondra, 1996), 21.

secondly, if *lobola* was paid when the customary marriage took place, she will have no rights over her children. In Roman Catholic canonical law she has those rights, but in terms of customary law, the husband has full rights over the children. In a case like this customary law will take precedence over canonical law which has been imposed, as it were, from outside and does not carry the weight of the *habitus* of the local people. In this way the *habitus* of local tradition exerts its power to the detriment of the woman who loses all rights over her children and the church is helpless to rectify the situation.

Thirdly, a woman who is a second (or later) wife may not have a Roman Catholic marriage. Because Roman Catholic church law only recognises monogamy and considers marriage as indissoluble,[25] a woman entering into a marriage as a second wife cannot be considered to be legally married. The Catechism states: "Polygamy is incompatible with the unity of marriage."[26] and as the woman is not considered to be married in the eyes of the church, she is considered to be committing a grave sin in entering into a sexual union with a man outside marriage. The Catechism has no guidelines for this case as to whether she may or may not receive Holy Communion (the Eucharist). The implication is that she may not receive Communion as she is living in a state of sin. The Catechism states: "Anyone who desires to receive Christ in Eucharistic communion must be in the state of grace. Anyone aware of having sinned mortally must not receive communion without having received absolution in the sacrament of penance."[27] She is thus faced with the option of either being excluded from the church or removing herself from the state of sin by leaving her husband.

Fr Barrett poses several questions: "Is this woman to return to her parents and await another suitor? Is she to leave her children behind her in her husband's village, as they customarily belong to him? Where can she go?" And he concludes: "I believe that the woman is not free in this context, to make a free decision as a person, as the customary law is so strong, and the maternal nature so binding, she cannot leave her children, nor leave her husband either."[28] In this way Fr Barrett is asking questions that can challenge the *habitus*. In asking these questions he is showing up assumptions that are made because of the *habitus*, because they are taken for granted. In this case, the woman is expected to sacrifice her spiritual good because she will not be able to participate in the Eucharist, a fundamental part of church life. In fact the Catechism states that the people are

[25]*Catechism*, 403.

[26]*Catechism*, 407.

[27]*Catechism*, 355.

[28]Barrett, "Christian Marriage," 23.

obliged to receive Holy Communion at least once a year.[29] Again, whichever choice she makes, she is the loser.

Then the use of language in this passage is strongly patriarchal. The man is "obliged to repudiate" his wives. This is the language of hierarchical power. The man is subject to an obligation imposed on him from above (the church, acting presumably on God's orders in Genesis 2:24) and he "repudiates" his wife who is here treated as an object with no possibility of action in her own right.

This language also highlights a tension in the passage. On the one hand the woman is an object to be cast aside, but on the other hand it speaks of "the equal personal dignity of men and women." The overall tone, however, does not emphasize this equal dignity. In addition there is further tension in the total rejection of polygamy contrasted with the man's obligations to his wives and children. Again the language is that of power and obligation - a patriarchal hierarchical church imposing its structures as a pattern to be followed with the man in the marriage able to dispose of his wives as possessions. It speaks of "a love that is total," but refers to the man's "grave duty in justice" for the man to honour his obligations. It implies that the later wives cannot be loved and therefore they are further reduced to "objects" without status or feelings.

In the Anglican church the teaching is also against polygamy. The Constitutions and Canons of the church of the Province of Central Africa (CPCA) state the principle of monogamy: "The Church of the Province believes that marriage, by divine institution, is a lifelong and exclusive union and partnership between one man and one woman. Its law and regulation are based on this belief."[30] However, discussion with clergy in the Anglican Church suggests that here the situation is handled differently. In this type of case, while the church does not approve of polygamy, the man would be accepted into the church together with his wives, but he would not be allowed to take on any more wives.[31]

Another issue Fr Barrett raises stems from the statement in the passage: "[Polygamy] negates the plan of God which was revealed from the beginning." This issue is one which clouds the whole affair. Firstly, the idea of revelation gives further power to the stance on polygamy. If the command to monogamy came from God, it cannot be questioned. But there is also a tension in logic here. The implication is that monogamy was always the norm, was "natural" from the time of creation, but it is known that in Old Testament times polygamy was fully accepted - it was part of the *habitus* of the

[29]*Catechism*, 355.

[30]Church of the Province of Central Africa. *Constitution and Canons* (s.n.,1996), 58.

[31]I was unable to find a written reference for this as the Anglican church does not have doctrinal statements as does the Roman Catholic church, but I was informed of this stance by the Bishop of Matabeleland, the Right Reverend Wilson Sitshebo.

time - and Jesus and the New Testament do not speak against it though monogamy is presumed to be the norm by then. The Western Church imported this teaching of the supremacy of monogamy to Africa, where polygamy was regarded as a normal practice. So there is a conflict in the *habitus* of the two cultures. On the one hand the practice of polygamy is condemned as against the law of God and yet the teaching as seen in the passage from the Catechism reinforces certain principles of the *habitus* whereby women are seen as objects, passive participants, whose predicament is not considered. In this way the church is reinforcing patriarchal power and the *habitus* of culture.

5.2.2. *Divorce*

The church subtly encourages women to stay in destructive marriage relationships for two reasons; one is the teaching on divorce and the other the teaching on submissiveness and martyrdom. The Roman Catholic Catechism bluntly states:

> 2384 Divorce is a grave offense [*sic*] against the natural law. . . . Divorce does injury to the covenant of salvation, of which sacramental marriage is the sign. Contracting a new union, even if it is recognised by civil law, adds to the gravity of the rupture: the remarried spouse is then in a situation of public and permanent adultery. . . . Divorce is immoral also because it introduces disorder into the family and into society.[32]

Several points arise here. Firstly, the question raised is, what is "natural law"? It seems that it is a function of the *habitus* to be seen as "natural." What is practised in this area is the norm. In some parts of the world, for example, polyandry is considered normal. What is "natural" to humans is that behaviour dictated by repetition which gradually acquires power to structure and control. This "natural" law tends to change with different cultures and certainly today permanent marriage is often no longer considered the norm. In fact, it is an example of how *habitus* can change so that what used to be considered "natural" or "normal" no longer has that power. What is relevant here to this study is that the church is enforcing a system as "natural" which can in certain circumstances be very detrimental to the lives of women.

Furthermore, the Catechism states that marriage is a "sign of the covenant of salvation." Elsewhere the Catechism, in section 1617, calls it "the sacrament of the covenant of Christ and the Church"[33] and says:

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[32]*Catechism*, 550.

[33]*Catechism*, 397.

> 1661 The sacrament of Matrimony signifies union of Christ and the Church. It gives spouses the grace to love each other with the love with which Christ has loved his Church: the grace of the sacrament thus perfects the human love of the spouses, strengthens their indissoluble unity and sanctifies them on the way to eternal life.[34]

It is significant that the reference given for this is from the records of the Council of Trent - a council which was held between 1545 and 1563 and consisted only of men. The fact that it is still quoted shows how, in terms of Bourdieu's theory, it has now become embodied history and is not questioned. For this image of Christ and the Church is itself a patriarchal and hierarchical image, an image by which the woman (the "Church") is shown as subservient to her husband ("Christ") just as Christ is obedient to God (Eph 5:23).

The implication of this ruling on divorce is to discourage women from seeking help in abusive situations and to encourage them to stay in those relationships. The WLSA report states: "It was also pointed out in one group that people do not usually open up because they feared being judged as failures for example, if they told the Church that they were having marital problems."[35]

It would seem to be saying that women must make a choice between being abused and unhappy or divorcing and remaining alone and unsupported, for within the Roman Catholic church remarriage is forbidden and, while in the Anglican church it is allowed, it is necessary to gain special permission for remarriage. To be alone and unsupported is intolerable for a woman in African tradition, so there is little choice for her. If she decides to divorce and seek remarriage according to custom, the Roman Catholic church labels her an "adulteress" and she is cut off from Holy Communion, again an intolerable situation for a believer.

And, finally, the Catechism calls divorce "immoral." It says "it introduces disorder into the family and into society" but it would seem that the alternative for a woman, to remain in a violent and abusive marriage, would have an even more deleterious effect on society, affecting not only her but also her children.

In the Constitution and Canons of the Church of the Province of Central Africa, Canon 23 (5) on the nullity of marriage gives one of the reasons for nullification as being, "the fact that unknown to the man and not condoned by him the woman was pregnant at the time of the marriage by another man not her deceased husband."[36] There is no provision made for the possibility that the man may have children born out of wedlock; only the woman is penalised. This is a clear example of the double standards sometimes practised against women and to which the church is party. It works

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[34]*Catechism*, 407

[35]WLSA, *The Shadow of the Law*, 136.

[36]CPCA, *Constitution and Canons* (s.n.,1996), 61.

alongside the double standards of the society and reinforces them. It does not support this teaching with Scripture nor does it refer to statements about divorce.

5.2.3. *Lobola*

The attitude of the churches can best be expressed by quoting Bishop Wilson Sitshebo, Bishop of Matabeleland, who exclaimed, "*Lobola* is customary!" The custom is fully accepted and there appears to be no attempt to examine the negative implications for women. The issue does not appear to be addressed in churches at all and the *habitus* runs so deep that it may not be questioned - nor does it even occur to anyone to question it. The issue of possession and buying and selling is usually side-stepped and *lobola* is seen as an offering of thanks to the bride's parents for bringing her up. When I challenged some female students on this, as to why the groom's parents should not also be thanked, there was a reluctant admission that the bride's parents were losing an "asset" to the groom's family. The students themselves were so influenced by the *habitus* that they could not see the implications of the custom as explained in Chapter 2. Though these marriages are conducted in church, the church closes its eyes to this custom which benefits men by its connotations of buying and selling of commodities.

6. **Power and subordination**

6.1. **Power**

Power in the church is patriarchal and hierarchical. In both the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches there is a clear hierarchy, with the Pope/Archbishop/Bishop at the top of the tree, and then the different levels of clergy (Archdeacon/Dean/ Parish priest), with the laity, as it were, at the bottom. Because of the fact that the world-wide Roman Catholic church does not ordain women at all and the Anglican church in Zimbabwe does not either, this means that the majority of decisions are made by men.

Within Anglican church structures men play a dominant role. In 2005-2006, Standing Committee, the committee responsible for matters concerning the running of the diocese, consisted of twelve elected men and one co-opted woman who was simply there because of her financial expertise. The committee elected to represent the diocese in the election of new bishops consists of a majority of men with only one woman. Those elected to represent the diocese at Provincial Synod

were again men with only one woman and the committee responsible for diocesan education projects consists only of men. Frequently the lay members of synods do choose women to represent them, but these committees are usually divided into equal numbers of clergy and laity and as only men can be ordained as clergy, this swings the balance heavily in favour of male representation. The Chapter, which is the advisory body for the Bishop, consists only of clergy and is therefore a totally male committee. There does not appear to be any scriptural base to the predominance of men in this case, but rather it can be seen as an effect of the *habitus* whereby those electing members to committees tend to think of men as being more suitable than women.

At parish level, the situation is different as many women are elected to parish councils and as church wardens, but it can be seen that while women may have a say in the running of parishes, the real power is invested in the hands of men. The parish councils have no power in dictating daily church policy as a whole; that power resides in the committees that are predominantly male.

The structure conforms to that of the cultural *habitus* where there is a chief of the area (male) whose chiefdom is subdivided into wards, each under a headman.[37] While this is not to say that tribal culture derives from the church, it is likely that the structures in the church are reinforced by the thinking behind the patriarchal *habitus*, for the church in Zimbabwe can be seen to be upholding the local *habitus* and confirming it. In the Anglican church, the Bishop is seen as "Baba," the priests are traditionally looked up to as "Father" and deference is paid to them. Bishop Theophilus Naledi, former Bishop of Matabeleland, showed how he considered himself as at the top of the hierarchical tree in these words in his charge to the 34th Synod of the Diocese of Matabeleland:

> You are my people, the Sheep of my flock and I am your rightful Shepherd. I want to lead you, bless and increase you, but I have a word for some of the rams who think they lead the flock. I am the Shepherd but they are rebellious rams. Are you a wild flock that you think your rams can lead the flock. You are oppressing the other rams and sheep, you are hogging all the spiritual blessings, gifts and ministries to yourselves and your preaching is muddied water. Submit to me, listen to my voice and remember you are but sheep yourselves. . . . You say you are only following in the footsteps of your predecessors. Should you follow them or me. Follow me only and teach the flock to follow me only and then I will lead you to rich pastures.[38]

The Bishop is clearly the one in charge, and his use of the metaphor of the sheep and shepherd, with its reference to John 10:11, implies that he sees himself as a direct representative of Jesus. His last sentence, "Follow me only and teach the flock to follow me only and then I will lead you to rich pastures," with its echo of Psalm 23, even links him closely to God, as do his phrases, "lead you,

[37]Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*, 106-107.

[38]Diocese of Matabeleland. *Journal for the 34th Synod*, (1996), n.p.

bless and increase you." "I," therefore, is a symbol of divine power and is in contrast to "you" and (on one occasion) "they," who are clearly inferior in status. The "rams who think they lead the flock" are "rebellious," portrayed as rebelling against the "Good Shepherd" - rebelling therefore against God himself, not just a Bishop. They are oppressing their people, "hogging all the spiritual blessings." These are powerful words of criticism and portray the "rams" (a male image representing priests who do not act as the Bishop wants) in a decidedly inferior light. The flock is shown as even more inferior - "wild" and easily led. The Bishop's call to "Submit to me, listen to my voice and remember you are but sheep yourselves" presumably again refers to the rams whom he is putting on a level with the mere ("but") sheep. It would be difficult to find anywhere a clearer example of a Bishop's understanding of himself as the power at the head of the diocese. He is using engendered metaphoric language which contributes to masculine hierarchy and, in addition, is using terminology which, in a rural country like Zimbabwe, is a very powerful symbol. It is strongly reminiscent of Paul's view of his own apostleship which I shall show as carrying a divine authority. It is also a patent example of how the church has used the Bible to entrench its own hierarchical power. This is a significant feature of the *habitus*, to institutionalise its practices and to use them to regulate behaviour and further entrench its ideology. The passage is also an example of gendered language as the Bishop is clearly addressing himself to men, the "rams." Though he is primarily addressing (male) clergy, the suggestion is also that he is speaking of his entire flock as men ("other rams"). Once again we see the power of the *habitus* in that women are taken for granted and invisible. They do not even need to be addressed as they do not count.

The very image of God as incontrovertibly male and as understood in patriarchal/hierarchical terms is used to further entrench the structures. Again, in the same charge, Bishop Naledi said this:

> The destruction of the Holy Scriptures is giving us what is called "gender inclusive language." In some of the Bible Versions published today every effort is expended to avoid names or terms that carry any semblance of sexuality. It is now declared that God can not [*sic*] be our Father any longer, but to call him "Our Mother" would be just as bad, and Jesus is not His son but He can't be His daughter either. Any religious body [not] supporting the points the good and old fashioned father makes, is plainly not a Christian Church let alone a Catholic one.[39]

This is a very strong veto against the use of inclusive terms, where people using such nomenclature are condemned as not even being Christian. Again, it is an example of the use of an authoritarian power to subdue other opinions. It rules out any challenge to the *status quo* and excludes any

[39]Diocese of Matabeleland, *Journal for the 34th Synod*, (1996) n.p.

viewpoints contrary to its own. This exclusion of differing views is another feature of the *habitus* and one which strengthens it by excluding challenge.

The passage appeals to Scripture in terms guaranteed to arouse the emotions. It speaks of the "destruction" of Scripture, without giving any evidence to back it up. It is all addressed in vague language which appeals in particular to the male viewpoint. Again, the Bishop is apparently appealing to the men in the congregation and getting them to agree with him by means of the threat that, if they do not do so, they are not Christians. In addition he dichotomises men and women by talking of "our Father" and "Our Mother" and of Jesus as "son" and "daughter." In this way he forces his listeners to choose a definitive stance and causes a division between men and women in general. It is clear that he wishes them to opt for the masculine stance as not to do so would condemn them in his eyes, which are presented as the eyes of the church. This highly condemnatory passage also carries his patriarchal authority as Bishop and with that authority he completely eradicates the possibility of any non-gendered stance to Scripture.

Furthermore, a comment in a church magazine is symptomatic of the teaching that men are hierarchically superior to women, supported by biblical teaching: "Adam abused the authority granted him over the whole earth to try and duck responsibility for his own actions and blame the woman - a derivative of himself. Eve too abused that 'acquired authority' to share the blame with the snake for her own gullibility and naivety."[40] The idea expressed here is that Adam has been invested with authority "over the whole earth," but woman has only "acquired authority," not a true authority and is seen as a "derivative" of man, something less than a man.

Another clear indication of this attitude to women is in the church's refusal even to consider ordaining women as priests or deacons. At a synod in 2003 I recall hearing women referred to by an unidentified male as "the source of all evil" when it was suggested they should be ordained as deacons. At an earlier synod Bishop Theophilus spoke for many of his clergy when he said in his charge to the 32nd Synod of the Diocese of Matabeleland (1994):

> The ordination of women as such is just the tip of the iceberg - What follows is more disturbing and shakes the foundations of our faith - e.g. The denial of the Fatherhood of God, the denial of the maleness of Christ, the rejection of God's plan of creation in creating male and female of human species. . . . "Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position" (2 Pet 3: 17-18).[41]

[40]Jonathan Sithole, "Think on This Responsibility," *Ascent*, 46, no. 4 (January 2005): 3.

[41]Diocese of Matabeleland. *Journal for the 32th Synod*, (1994), n.p.

This passage is a good example not only of the rejection of the ordination of women but is yet another example of an argument designed to reinforce patriarchal structures in the church. The aim of the passage is to frighten the delegates to the synod into refusing to accept women into the priesthood, but it goes much further than that. Before considering what the Bishop actually said, it is useful to consider Bourdieu's views on how the *habitus* protects itself.

Firstly, as mentioned in Chapter 1, certain people are invested with symbolic capital which in turn gives them power. Someone like a Bishop has great symbolic capital. Moi tells us that:

> Such individuals become spokespersons for the *doxa* and struggle to relegate challengers to their position as *heterodox*, as lacking in capital, as individuals whom one cannot *credit* with the right to speak. The powerful possessors of symbolic capital become the wielders of symbolic power, and thus of symbolic violence.[42]

The Bishop, then, is in a position to use his power to silence anyone who challenges the *habitus*. In this case, too, he is speaking at a synod, a meeting where the church as an institution seeks to re-establish itself and ensure its existence along the lines of the *doxa*. The very setting of a synod reaffirms the *habitus* of the church. It takes place in a cathedral, a building which epitomises the institution of the church, with the Bishop and his officers robed and seated in the nave, official representatives of the order. This is underlining the symbolic power with which the institution and its officers are invested. The Bishop refers to himself as "we," further emphasising the fact that he represents the entire institution. The ritual of the synod establishes who is in power. It also reaffirms tradition as it is repeated time after time and gains power from this repetition.

Bourdieu has shown how the *habitus* defends itself against change by rejecting anything that challenges it. He states:

> [T]he *habitus* tends to ensure its own constancy and its defence against change through the selection it makes within new information by rejecting information capable of calling into question its accumulated information . . . and especially by avoiding exposure to such information.[43]

So whatever is seen as challenging the *habitus* is seen as a threat and is to be rejected. The bishop here is rejecting any challenge to the patriarchal structure of the church by ruling against any discussion, thereby censoring knowledge within the church. By his sequential argumentation he

[42]Toril Moi, "Appropriating Bourdieu: Feminist Theory and Pierre Bourdieu's Sociology of Culture," *New Literary History* 22 no. 4 (1991): 1022.

[43]Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 61.

suggests that a decision now will influence all decisions in the future, decisions which may destroy the whole church. He also indicates that as Bishop he has knowledge and insight which other people do not have. He refers to "the tip of the iceberg." This suggests that, while those who threaten the established order can only see a small part of the picture, as Bishop he can see the full picture.

To accept women, it implies, is to reject the whole of Christianity and all its values. The language is excessive, patriarchal and hierarchical, reflecting the patriarchal and hierarchical structures of the church. It also indicates that the knowledge on which the entire church is grounded is being threatened. The threat is that in accepting women, the delegates will be rejecting all the male values of the church (the Fatherhood of God, the maleness of Christ) and will be a denial of the two clearly demarcated sexes. These values are assumed, the *habitus* taking this dichotomy of male/female with the superiority of the male (God, Christ) for granted. The fact that the "dear friends" (implied as male because of the gendered tone of the passage) will "fall" also implies a hierarchy.

Then the Bishop quotes from Scripture, using thereby the official discourse of the church to reinforce his argument. The passage, 2 Peter, to which he refers, talks of those who have a view which opposes that of the writer. These are "lawless men" who are threatening the existence of the whole church. As Bourdieu has shown, those who threaten the *habitus* become the victims of symbolic violence. In this case they are branded as being completely outside society. This further reinforces the teaching with a scriptural basis, confirming the *habitus* with a legal code. In this passage the Bishop is using the *habitus* of traditional Zimbabwean culture in conjunction with that of the traditional male-orientated church to reinforce his opposition to women's ordination.

This is also a good example of the paranoia that can be aroused by the very idea of women in authority. It is symptomatic of the fears of many men in the Zimbabwean church who envisage a situation where they may lose their power over women. It is not within the scope of this dissertation to argue the case for the ordination of women, but the fact is that almost all the rest of the Anglican communion have accepted this without denying the foundations of their faith, as implied by Bishop Naledi. In this context, "God's plan in creating the male and female of human species" certainly implies that God's plan for women is that they should be subordinate to men and clearly demarcates the dichotomy of the *habitus* in separating male and female. The *habitus* whereby men are seen as superior is regarded as "normal" and supported by interpretation. And this attitude is even carried over into the area of the laity. For instance, in 2001, the Mothers' Union wanted to give their workers salary raises but were not allowed to do so because then their salaries would amount to more than those of the priests.

This patriarchal attitude is also seen in the writing of reports. In the Constitution and Canons of the Church of the Province of Central Africa the articles are written from the viewpoint of men. For example, a Resolution from the 3rd Provincial Synod of 1959 on Racial Discrimination endorses the Lambeth Conference of 1958:

> The Conference affirms its belief in the natural dignity and value of every man, of whatever colour or race, as created in the image of God. In the light of this belief the Conference affirms that neither race nor colour is in itself a barrier to any aspect of that life in family and community for which God created all men. It therefore condemns discrimination of any kind on the grounds of race or colour alone.[44]

In this passage, exclusive language is used and additionally no mention is made of discrimination against women. Though this resolution was drafted nearly half a century ago, before women's rights were considered to be really an issue, it is quoted in this booklet, published in 1996, and no alteration is made to show awareness of gender inequalities. This is a good example of the power of the *habitus* in that it did not even occur to the creators of this resolution that women should be included. It is also significant that the Constitution of both the Province and the Diocese of Matabeleland is written in gender exclusive language with its implication that all office bearers should be men, even though in actual fact the offices which relate to the laity are not reserved for men. For instance, the Constitution, when dealing with rules concerning provincial officials, states: "The Provincial Chancellor shall be an official of the Province appointed by the Episcopal Synod. He shall be an advocate or a barrister or a legal practitioner"[45] and the Acts of the Diocese of Matabeleland states of the membership of Standing Committee: "The Standing Committee of the Diocesan Synod shall consist of . . . three laymen elected by the House of Laity"[46] and of the election of churchwardens: "A Churchwarden shall begin his duties on being admitted to office by the Archdeacon."[47]

The repetition involved in the use of exclusive language leads people to think subconsciously that the references pertain to men and so even in situations where, for example, women can hold positions of authority, the inference is that these positions are reserved for men only. Gradually women are habituated to this and cease to question but presume that they are of less account than men. Such is the strength of the *habitus* that no one questions this use of language.

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[44]CPCA, *Constitution and Canons*, 88.

[45]CPCA, *Constitution and Canons*, 31.

[46]Diocese of Matabeleland. *Acts of the Diocese*, (s.n., 1990), 6.

[47]Diocese of Matabeleland. *Acts of the Diocese*, 9

6.2. **Subordination**

While there is a general idea prevalent in the Church in Zimbabwe (and carried over too from a cultural basis) that the male is the head of the family and that women are to submit, it is extraordinarily difficult to find documented examples of such teaching. Documents such as the Mothers' Union Service Book and the Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church are drafted overseas. The Mothers' Union Service Book is published in the United Kingdom and the Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church is drafted by the Vatican. Because they come from cultures which are more aware of gendered language, they are couched in language which is very careful to emphasise the equality of men and women and the mutuality of marriage roles. However, the actual situation is different and it is only by reading between the lines that one can begin to analyse the implications.

The indigenous culture of Zimbabwe is hierarchical and patriarchal, with the husband the acknowledged "chief" of the household unit. Women are subordinate and their role is to submit. Aune Musopole describes their role and the attitudes it engenders: "Women from generation to generation have blindly accepted that men are of great value and that marriage means loving, even if the husband harasses them. They have accepted attack and aggression as being neutral; they have believed that manliness means power, and womanliness means passivity and submission."[48]

The belief of women in passive acceptance of their lot in this situation serves to make women today in Zimbabwe accept uncritically the passages in the Bible which are chosen to reinforce submission. It therefore causes them to accept their subordinate position without question. Oduyoye comments: "It is generally admitted that the large dose of Christianity that has been part of the socio-cultural Westernization of Africa, especially in terms of women's education, vocations and the interpretation of marriage, has oriented women to accept the meaning of helper as subordinate."[49]

The Church, generally, keeps silence and allows the cultural norms to prevail but in many subtle ways reinforces male headship and thereby reinforces the *habitus* of Zimbabwean society. The role of women in the church is seen to be one of service, with men in leadership positions. The Mothers' Union in the Anglican Church and the various women's leagues in the Roman Catholic church all emphasise service. They find support for this teaching of service in doctrinal statements of the church. For instance Pope John Paul II, writing to the faithful all over the world, emphasised that in the gospel women are called to serve[50] and, in fact, the whole concept of Mariology emphasises the

[48]Aune Musopole, "Sexuality and Religion in a Matriarchal Society," in *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition and the Church in Africa* (ed. M. A. Oduyoye and M. R. A. Kanyoro; New York: Orbis Books, 1992), 205.

[49]Mercy A. Oduyoye, "Calling the Church," 481.

[50]Pope John Paul II, *The Calling and Mission of the Lay Faithful* (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1989), 48.

Virgin Mary's service and submission and holds this up as an ideal for women. Coupled with this emphasis on service is the fact that it is men who are in leadership roles and this is taken as a model for life - that men are leaders and women are there to serve. This contributes to the emphasis in the Zimbabwean *habitus* on the fact that women are there to serve, not to lead.

Furthermore, there is the traditional belief that women remain minors even if, in law, they have majority status. A traditional greeting, still used today, is "how are the children [*abantwana*]?" This greeting is inclusive of the whole family, meaning not only the children, but also the wife. The husband is called "Lord," suggestive of subordination. The liturgy itself reinforces this in the final blessing of the marriage service, which reads:

> God our maker, you have consecrated marriage
> as a wonderful mystery
> a sign of the spiritual unity
> between Christ and his Church;
> look in mercy on these your servants
> that *N* may love his wife
> as Christ loved his bride the Church
> And also that *N* may love her husband
> as the Church is called to love her Lord."[51]

In addition, in the tradition of the Anglican prayer book, the woman is still "given away" in marriage as if she is a possession.

An area in which the church appears to have compromised with culture to its detriment is that of teaching about women's sinfulness. The Church Fathers tended to concentrate on passages such as 1 Timothy 2:11-15 to show that women were to blame for the Fall. It has been relatively easy, then, for clergy to find support for their attitudes in the traditional teaching of the church and use it to underscore the cultural belief of women's weakness. This sort of teaching ties in well with cultural attitudes that women are sources of shame and dishonour for their fathers or husbands. It makes women feel guilty, that it is their own fault if they are victimised and abused. And the teaching that they are saved only through childbearing causes even more guilt, especially in African society where motherhood is emphasised and infertility is regarded as shameful.[52]

All these principles and practices lend support to the hierarchical structure of patriarchy. It is never considered that this ideology contradicts the Constitution of Zimbabwe in its provisions against gender discrimination, and that it instead acquires strength and solidity from its affinity to the *habitus* of customary law.

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[51]Church of the Province of Southern Africa. *An Anglican Prayer Book* (CPSA: Cape Town, 1989), 468.

[52]Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, and M.S. Copeland, eds. *Violence against Women* (Concilium Series: London: SCM Press ,1994), xiv.

7. Sexuality

Mercy Oduyoye details four reasons why, in African culture, one cannot enter a Christian house of prayer:[53]

- If the woman has just given birth to a baby.
- If a woman is menstruating.
- If a woman has uncovered hair.
- If a man or woman is unwashed after intercourse.

It is significant that while all four of these apply to woman, only one applies to a man. In African culture the notion of what is clean and unclean is strong. Women are disadvantaged because of their sexuality. Even the condition of giving birth, an occasion of great joy especially in a culture which sets great store by fertility, is at the same time a condition which renders a woman unclean. The church does not seem to have addressed this major factor of disempowerment for women, who are condemned to subordinate roles because of their sexuality. In fact, the message of the Old Testament, with its similar proscriptions, reinforces this aspect of the *habitus*.

The fact of women's "uncleanness" leads to a spatial exclusion from churches and from being involved in their religion. Bruce Malina speaks of "clean" versus "unclean" and talks of "unclean" as being "matter out of place."[54] He goes on to say:

> Clean and dirty, then, are matters of degree. But please note one thing here. Wherever people perceive dirt, we can presume that some sort of order exists. Dirt presumes a system, a set of line markings or definitions. Otherwise one would never know that anything was dirty, unclean, or out of place to begin with. Further, dirt presumes that persons, places and things do get out of place, since dirt is matter out of place. In this connection, our society calls people out of place (negatively) "deviants."[55]

By implication, then, women are "matter out of place"; they are deviants and something that is placed "outside" because they are not considered fit to be "inside."[56] Women are therefore relegated to the place of dirt. This tradition of the *habitus* can be seen as directly corresponding to that of first century Mediterranean society with its clearly defined purity rules whereby women were considered

[53]Mercy A. Oduyoye, "Women and Ritual in Africa," in *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition and the Church in Africa* (ed. M. A. Oduyoye and M. R. A. Kanyoro; New York: Orbis Books, 1992), 20.

[54]Bruce Malina, *The New Testament World*. (Revised ed. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 153.

[55]Malina, *The New Testament World*, 153.

[56]Malina, *The New Testament World*, 177

"unclean" much of the time. In this particular area the Bible is easily used to confirm the *habitus* of traditional Zimbabwean society.

In some ways the church ignores women's experience just as the Pauline tradition so often does. In traditional African culture there are many rituals surrounding childbirth, rituals which validate the experience that the woman has had, but in the church there is no such validation except for reception of the baby through baptism. This is in no way a recognition of the mother's experience but rather a denial of it as the baby is, according to Catholic doctrine, cleansed of its inherited original sin, which implies a fault in the mother and the birth process. Whilst some of these Zimbabwean rituals, being cleansing rituals, would not be in accord with the church's teaching that uncleanness is no longer an issue, nonetheless there is no recognition in the church that the woman has had a defining experience.

Furthermore, the teaching on birth control removes from women power over their own sexuality. The Roman Catholic Catechism states categorically that "every action which, whether in anticipation of the conjugal act, or in its accomplishment, or in the development of its natural consequences, proposes, whether as an end or as a means to render procreation impossible is intrinsically evil."[57]

This binds women to a life of childbearing and pregnancy with no possibility of choice. It also confirms them in their role as childbearers and allows them no possibility of escape. In this way the (male) church acquires further power and control over women.

And, finally, there is the issue of a man inheriting his relative's widow, which has parallels in the Old Testament levirate marriage custom. This custom may well have positive implications for a woman who is willing to enter the new relationship in that she is taken care of and protected. If, however, she is forced, it removes from her the right to make her own decisions about her future. This is another cultural issue which does not seem to have been addressed at all and, in fact, could be supported by selective biblical teaching.

[57]*Catechism*, 547.

8. Education

Education is a critical tool for changing the *habitus* of a society. Ironically, it is also very influential in maintaining the *habitus* in that the values of the society are upheld in what is taught both explicitly and implicitly.. It is, however, through education that taboos and prejudices, symptoms of the *habitus* can be examined and practices challenged by looking at their origins and presuppositions and new generative principles can be formed so that a new mind-set can be established.

The track record for the various churches in Zimbabwe regarding education has been good but there has always been the problem that the education of girls has not been regarded as important as that of boys. In times like that of the present economic crisis, it is girls who are removed from school first. In any case, the question is not only whether the churches are educating girls but rather whether this education is empowering them or disempowering them. It is very difficult to estimate what happens in classes as the syllabus is a guide only and interpretation is up to the teacher.

There are, however, several organisations which focus on women's issues and I shall consider two which are divergent in their teaching and attitudes. I have selected the Mothers' Union as an example because it is arguably the most powerful influence on Zimbabwean women in the Anglican church. Traditional women who are church-goers are members of the Mothers' Union and they are taught and influenced by the senior women in the organisation. Youth for Christ, the other organisation I have chosen, is interdenominational and is a singularly good example of what one group is attempting to do in the field of empowering women. Largely its influence is upon young people and for this reason is very important in education.

8.1. The Mothers' Union

The Mothers' Union of the Anglican Church is open to all women over the age of eighteen who are communicants. It is no longer necessary to be a mother to be enrolled. The members must understand the Five Objects, the first of which is "To uphold Christ's teaching on the nature of marriage and to promote its wider understanding."[58] However, it is not clear what the Mothers' Union considers this teaching to be. The text associated with it is Mark 10:6-8 which speaks of the dichotomy in roles of male and female, ordained by God from creation, and the complete unification of man and woman in matrimony. No guidelines are given for interpretation. This is left up to the teacher who may emphasize whichever interpretation she wants and couple this with any

[58] *Mothers' Union Service Book* (London: Mothers' Union, 1987), 13.

other passages which may support her individual viewpoint. In this way the *habitus* can be maintained. It is the older women - those most in accord with traditional custom - who do the teaching and thereby strengthen the structures that bind women to service and submission.

The role of the Mothers' Union in the church seems to be one of service. The branches look after church linen, catering, etc. It is largely a self-help organisation and in this respect has empowered many women by teaching them household skills and providing them with a mutual support system. It seems to advocate the traditional role of wives. Though it is considered to be a very powerful organisation this power appears to be manifest in its ability to proscribe or discipline its members rather than in affecting the attitudes of the wider church to the status of women. There is no record of the Mothers' Union having ever challenged the church on its treatment of women.

8.2. **Youth for Christ**

The Youth For Christ organisation in Matabeleland stands out as a source of empowerment for women. Mrs S. T. Cotton, the projects officer, outlined to me the work done in this regard.

There are some flats in the industrial sector of town which are appalling examples of poverty and overcrowding. With thirteen people living in one room, rape, incest and disease is rife. What Youth For Christ are doing is to take women from this situation and conduct "Women in Motion" courses for them. They are taught, for a start, hygiene and child-care and given food supplements. Then eight of them at a time are taken to a house in a distant suburb where, for a weekend, they are looked after. They are encouraged to read texts which empower them and teach them that they are special. There are six biblical passages which are emphasised in these courses on empowerment. The creation of woman in the image of God (Gen 1:26-28) is affirmed so that women will see themselves as being worthy in their own rights. This is followed up with John 10:10, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" in order to teach them that they too are recipients of Christ's salvation. Mark 5:25-29 is used to encourage them to "break rules" which denigrate women, to challenge structures which declare that they are unclean and therefore not equal to men in their value to the community. As the woman in the gospel story broke the purity rules which cut her off from the rest of humanity and approached Jesus without fear, these women are taught that they too are part of humanity and are not to be denigrated as "unclean" or "impure." They are told about the persistent widow and the judge (Luke 18:1-8) in order to teach them to demand their rights in the face of male oppression and then they are taught about salvation in Christ with John 20:1-15, ("Woman, why are you weeping?"). They are encouraged to be positive and embrace life,

for if they "cry too much" they will not receive salvation, so they are encouraged to "[a]rise and shine for your light has come" (Isa 60:1).

They are also educated in practical matters such as food preparation and trained in having job interviews. They are shown that they can stand up for themselves without the aid of men. Some then go on to the Samkele Training Centre, where they are taught vocational skills such as welding, carpentry, cookery and gardening. The younger girls also attend school. In this way the women are encouraged to challenge the *habitus*, though of course they accept that *habitus* without even knowing about it. They start to develop new practices which will over time lead to new structures and new social roles.

In addition to this, Youth For Christ also holds seminars on domestic violence and human rights, which both men and women attend. These seminars are done by invitation, but to date only the Roman Catholic church has invited them in.

Thirdly, Youth For Christ runs a crisis pregnancy centre in a house in the suburbs. This is for girls under the age of eighteen years. The girls are registered with a clinic and then given training in motherhood. If a court appearance is necessary, Youth For Christ councillors accompany the girls to victim friendly courts.

Finally, Youth For Christ have courses based for junior and senior school girls which are designed to make the girls think about the consequences of wrong decisions and to enable them to defend themselves against sexual abuse.

All Youth For Christ programmes are biblically based. Of "Women in Motion," the publicity pamphlet writes: "The aim of this ministry is to help poorer women recognise their own self-worth, develop self-esteem and find ways to relieve their poverty. This is done through spiritual nurture, counselling, education programmes and income generating activities."

Youth For Christ is not allied to any particular denomination and is another example of an organisation working quietly on its own. It can be seen that it uses biblical teaching to challenge areas of the *habitus* that are detrimental to women and to change attitudes gradually but effectively. Some of the women revert to their established ways but many manage to break free and find a new empowerment.

9. **Conclusion**

I have examined the role of the church in Zimbabwe where it has made little effort to challenge existing structures or customs. Not only in the field of gender issues, but also in the political arena

the church as a whole has tended to keep quiet and safe and not challenge the *status quo*.[59] Its inactivity in this area is also a reflection of its lack of concern for the rights and status of women because women have been profoundly affected by the political turmoil, losing homes and livelihood as well as suffering from the domestic violence arising from male insecurity and helplessness. The church, coming into a tradition which held certain attitudes to women, seems to have been unable to transform or even challenge the society, but has largely conformed to it and adapted to its value system.

Oduyoye has commented on this when she said: "In terms of being with the people in crises, the church in Africa, with the significant exception of some clergy and lay leaders, has usually stood aloof and remained mute."[60]

As has been seen, the church has often tended to close its eyes to customs that may not always accord with gospel teaching as in the case of widow inheritance and *lobola.* The church is also remarkably silent on the issue of domestic violence, a disturbingly increasing problem in Zimbabwe.

Women have not been able to take leadership roles of any importance in the church in Zimbabwe. In the Anglican Province of Central Africa and in the Roman Catholic church there is not even discussion about ordaining women. All this means that there can be little change in interpretation of biblical passages which emphasise the inferiority of women. The hierarchical structure of the church in general is patriarchal and this also is the image of Christ which the church presents. The church has been able to continue in this attitude as it is men who have been in the position of interpreting the Bible and preaching it. Oduyoye comments on this: "By and large, it would appear that African women have remained dependent on male exegesis and male theology: they have accepted male interpretations of biblical events as universally and historically normal."[61]

Because of male interpretation of the Bible and theology, male viewpoints have prevailed. The traditional view of women as subservient has been reinforced by biblical teaching. Oduyoye criticises African churches for continuing to marginalise women. She writes: "Although nineteenth-century missionary theology has been revised or discarded in most areas of the world, the Western

[59]Note here, however, must be made of the Pastoral letter in the crisis, "God hears the cry of the oppressed" issued by the Zimbabwean Bishops Catholic Conference on 5 April 2007 which challenged those responsible for the violence and note should also be made of the activist role of the former Roman Catholic Archbishop of Matabeleland, Pius Ncube, who has spoken out against violence and injustice in the country. This is in strong contrast to the pastoral message issued by the (Anglican) Bishops of the Province of Central Africa following their Episcopal Synod on 2 April 2007, which carefully refrained from any challenge to those perpetuating violence.

[60]Oduyoye, "Calling the Church ," 487.

[61]Oduyoye, "Calling the Church,"486.

churches in Africa continue to disseminate neo-orthodox theology from pulpit and podium, in academic journals and religious tracts."[62]

Women make up a large proportion of the congregations of churches, yet, as has been seen, they have very little say in decision-making on a meaningful level. The Mothers' Union in the Anglican church and the Legion of Mary in the Roman Catholic church are expected to play a role of quiet service behind the scenes.

I have shown, too, how the Bible has been able to be used as a tool to reinforce the *habitus* and keep women in submission. But, as will be shown later, what is vital is to concentrate on interpretations of passages which will include and validate women and their experience, if necessary re-interpreting them.

So it seems that Christianity has tended to conform to the cultural values of society rather than being a force for change. Ideally Christianity should be a transforming, liberating movement but, Oduyoye remarks: "On the whole, we can say that Christianity has converted the African people to a new religion without converting their culture."[63] While, of course, it is neither necessary nor desirable that the faith should change the culture entirely, in areas where culture is detrimental to the dignity of humanity change should take place. The objective of such change is not to convert people to a particular faith, but to use the positive aspects of a faith to uphold human dignity. It is to be remembered that Christianity was very influential in the development of much of sub-Saharan Africa and so can still be regarded as an important influence.

One area in which the church has been able to challenge the *habitus* and bring growth has been seen in the case of Youth for Christ. It is too early as yet in its programme to judge the long term effects but it is already apparent that some women are beginning to be empowered. They, in their turn, will empower other women and help men to realise that change is needed. The church, on the whole, however, has done little to change its patriarchal stance. In many ways the patriarchal attitudes in the church and in Zimbabwean society are reflective of those in the first century Graeco-Roman world. Of course, the root causes of these attitudes are different in each case, but it has been comparatively easy for teachers, priests and missionaries to find confirmation of the *habitus* in the Bible as it is a patriarchal document speaking to a patriarchal society. It will be seen in the next chapter that many of the views held by Graeco-Roman society support those views held by traditional Zimbabwean society and in this way will have enabled it to maintain its patriarchal *habitus*.

[62]Oduyoye, "Calling the Church,"480.

[63]Oduyoye, "Calling the Church," 481.

CHAPTER 4
WOMEN IN THE WORLD OF THE FIRST CENTURY MEDITERRANEAN

1. Introduction

To assess the church's response to traditional Zimbabwean culture, we can look at how Paul responded to the Graeco-Roman culture in which he operated. In many respects the *habitus* of that society resembled that of traditional Zimbabwean society. Whilst in the purely academic sense it is problematic to compare such different contexts, it is also important to realise that, at least on a superficial level, there are many points of similarity. The people who interpreted the writings for congregations and for church policy were not always academics. They saw (and still see today) the points of similarity without examining whether the root causes and sociological history are the same. They came, and still come, to conclusions in which biblical tradition is used to reinforce cultural tradition because they appear similar.

The construction of a world view in both the Zimbabwean and the Graeco-Roman contexts has been patriarchal and hierarchical. For instance, in both societies, training was very important. In the Graeco-Roman world, the practice of swaddling meant a child, from the very early moments of its existence, was embedded into the structures of patriarchy and hierarchy. This swaddling entailed shaping babies' bodies by bandaging and massaging. Heads were re-shaped and noses corrected. Great emphasis was placed on male sexuality and the penis was shaped and moulded from birth.[1] Similarly, in Shona tradition, during the first few days of a baby's life, the head and face are shaped by hand[2] and, as the children grow, their sexual organs are examined and shaped, with boys being given special herbs to improve their sexual potential and girls' genitalia being shaped in a way that is thought to be pleasing to future husbands.[3] In first century Mediterranean society, when women gave birth to girls they said it had been a "bad" pregnancy and when they gave birth to boys it was termed a "good" one.[4] In Shona society, when a baby boy is born, two shrills are given but if it is a girl only one.[5] The signal is clear from the beginning in both societies that boys are more to be desired than girls. In this way, in both first century Mediterranean and traditional Shona society we can see how, as the body is shaped and trained, so is the mind, and attitudes are formed so that

[1]Aline Rouselle, *Porneia: On Desire and the Body in Antiquity* (trans F. Pheasant; Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 52.

[2]Gelfand, *Growing Up in Shona Society*, 2.

[3]Gelfand, *Growing Up in Shona Society*, 17-19.

[4]Rouselle, *Porneia*, 48.

[5]Gelfand, *Growing Up in Shona Society*, 2.

traditions may be upheld. The different expectations for men and women were made clear from birth and the *habitus* maintained through training as they grew up.

It is important to examine the status, role and expectations of women in the first century Mediterranean world as this is the context in which Paul was writing and so we will be able to see how Paul accepted or retained some customs and rejected or warned against others. An echo of many of the customs can be seen in Zimbabwean society today, even if the basis for these practices is different, and so it will be possible to see how the church today reinforces these customs or else criticises them, just as Paul did.

It is, however, very difficult to come to a clear and accurate estimation of the role of women in the Graeco-Roman world of the first century. Walter Scheidel considers this, asking how it can be possible to find out anything meaningful about people, in this case women, when very few records or traces have been left.[6] There are several reasons for this. The sources tend to be from records and accounts written by men, reflecting their patriarchal outlook and masculine agenda. The writers, artists and leaders of the time were predominantly male and, as men writing about women, anything they have recorded reflects their viewpoint rather than that of women. (Sulpicia and Sappho were women who reflected their experiences in poetry, but they were exceptions.) For instance, a poet, writing of his love, will generally not to speak accurately of his beloved but will sing her virtues as he perceives them to be rather than as a reflection of something universal in her; a son mourning his mother will also mention only what he regarded as her virtues. As no diaries written by Roman women have been found, there is no way of knowing what were their hopes, dreams and inner fears.[7] Authors such as Aristotle, Pliny, Trajan, Tacitus and Plutarch wrote of women, as did Celsus, to name but a few.[8] Only men were physicians and little was known of female bodies because they rarely had opportunities to examine women. Medical works were written only by men, for example Galen, Soranus, Rufus of Ephesus and Oribasius, doctor to the Emperor Julian[9] and these physicians were addressing their work to the husbands of the women so that the husbands could retain control over their families.[10] It is through the (male) writers of the time and the Church Fathers reflecting back and interpreting that we get much of our picture of first century Mediterranean women. In

[6]Walter Scheidel, "The Most Silent Women of Greece and Rome: Rural Labour and Women's Life in the Ancient World (I)," in *Greece and Rome* (ed. I. McAuslan and P. Walcot. Second series. Volume 42. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 203.

[7]Moya K. Mason, "Ancient Roman Women: A Look at Their Lives," n.p. [cited 16 May 2005]. Online: http://www.moyak.com/researcher/resume/papers/roman_women.html.

[8]Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion: The Power of the Hysterical Woman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 101.

[9]Rouselle, *Porneia*, 8.

[10]Rouselle, *Porneia*, 40.

addition, those men who were writing were usually from the class of the urban elite,[11] so they reflected the values and attitudes of that class. There is little evidence of what the lower classes experienced, thought or felt.

On the other hand, in terms of Bourdieu's theory of the *habitus*, it is through these very descriptions that we come to see the reality of how women were perceived. Because men were describing women as they understood them or wished them to be, they were projecting on them their own ideals and values and in that sense creating women in their (men's) imaginations. Sometimes they were writing in order to confirm their own status by comparing women as being deviant, of a lower status. Seneca, for example, portrayed women as having "weakness of mind" and Juvenal's *Satire 6* is a hymn of misogynism.[12]

In this way, women were inscribed upon male consciousness as being weak and liable to sin. Bourdieu has pointed out that "[B]elief is . . . an inherent part of belonging to a field."[13] Belief – as, in the example of Juvenal and Seneca, the belief that women are frail – is stated repeatedly and this belief becomes part of the group consciousness and so becomes a reality. Women were often portrayed in literature and art as symbols, not as "real women,"[14] and were being used to make a point about domestic life or morals or as a symbol of a physical ideal. But this portrayal itself then became the reality. If they were being represented as ideal, then ordinary, real-life women could not live up to the ideal, which further reinforced the judgement that they were inferior, of a lower status than men. This, therefore, contributed to the concept that women, in practice, were too weak to live up to men's ideals. They were destined to be labelled as "different" or "other."

By defining women as "other" in this way, men were by implication showing that they, the men, were the opposite. They were "normal" and women were "other." As we have seen, when there are dichotomies, there is necessarily a value judgement. In "good" and "bad," "weak" and "strong," for example, there is an implicit judgement that goodness and strength are better than weakness and badness. If men are considered the "norm" in terms of the *habitus*, and women are "other," women are being portrayed as inferior, as deviant. This serves to confirm men's status and to reinforce their patterns of patriarchal power and it then becomes the reality that women are weak. Often the status

[11]Suzanne Dixon, "Roman Women: Following the Clues," n.p. [cited 16 May 2005.] Online: http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/romans/roman_women_print.html and J.P. Hallett, "Women's Lives in the Ancient Mediterranean," in *Women and Christian Origins* (ed. R. S. Kraemer and M. R. D'Angelo; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 20.

[12]University of Wales, Lampeter. "Women in Roman Philosophy," n.p. [cited 16 May 2005.] Online: http://www.lamp.ac.uk/~noy/romanphi.htm.

[13]Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (trans. R. Nice; Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 67.

[14]Dixon, "Roman Women," n.p.

of women has to be interpreted by means of reading between the lines, assessing what women were doing and how they were regarded by seeing what is not said, as much as by recorded evidence.

2. Women in the Graeco-Roman world

2.1. The concept of "woman"

It is important at this stage to understand how the concept of "woman" was perceived in the Graeco-Roman world. First of all, it is to be noted that "man," in particular in the physical understanding, was the criterion of what a human body should be. "Man" was perceived as the ideal. In fact, Laqueur shows that the view of gender was of a "one sex" body.[15] The perfect, ideal body was that of a Graeco-Roman, free, adult male. Women were seen as "inverted" men. Their sexual organs were considered to be exactly the same as those of men but were in the wrong places in that they were placed opposite to those of men: "Women . . . are inverted and hence less perfect men."[16] Galen believed that this physiology of men and women, while not the cause of sexual hierarchy, was a reflection of that hierarchy, and reinforced it.

Men's bodies were considered to be hot, which was much to be desired (as long as the heat was not excessive[17]) while women's bodies were less so. Galen therefore saw this as proof that while humans were the most perfect of the animals, men were more perfect than women because they had "an excess of heat."[18] In addition, because the male seed was considered to be hotter, it was then more perfect and more powerful than that of women, which was cold and therefore weaker.[19] Laqueur points out that, for this reason, it was believed that man had superiority over women:

> But being male and being a father, having what it takes to produce the more powerful seed, is the ascendancy of mind over the senses, of order over disorder, legitimacy over illegitimacy. Thus the inability of women to conceive within themselves becomes an instance – among many other things – of the relative weakness of her mind.[20]

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[15]Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud.* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 25.

[16]Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 26.

[17]Anne Carson, "Putting Her in Her Place: Woman, Dirt and Desire," in *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World* (ed. D. M. Halperin, J. J. Winkler and F. I. Zeitlin; Princetown: Princetown University Press, 1990), 137.

[18]Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 40.

[19]Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 40.

[20]Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 59.

The concept of boundaries was vital in the differing view of the sexes. In any society, people who cannot maintain the proper boundaries are considered to be feared. In Graeco-Roman society, women fitted into this category. A woman crossed boundaries on marriage as she moved from her father's home to that of her new husband.[21] Furthermore a woman was unable to control her lack of boundaries. She was seen to change shape; swelling, shrinking again, leaking and being penetrable.[22] Her body changed its functions each month and altered in pregnancy. These were all aspects of an inability to preserve her boundaries and the task of men was to keep her within these boundaries.

The male body was hard, strong, impenetrable and dry. This dryness, it was believed, was the ideal state. Wetness, in men, was something that was not to be desired as it had a weakening effect. Emotion, such as fear, anxiety, envy and love, was considered to be wet and capable of diminishing a man.[23]

Women's bodies, by contrast, were soft, porous, wet and could be penetrated.[24] It is this ability to be penetrated which was important in considering the aspect of gender construction. As regards same-sex unions, for instance, it was not that the partners were of different genders that mattered, but that one was penetrated. A proper man was penetrator, not to be penetrated, and so men who took on the "womanish" role were considered to be acting out of place and were classed as weak and on a par with women.[25] Laqueur writes: "Yet whether between men or between women, the issue is not the identity of sex but the difference in status between partners and precisely what was done to whom."[26]

Ruth Karras points out that the gender roles were of more significance than those of sexuality. Those who were penetrated were classified as feminine, those who penetrated as masculine. Women who took the active role, however, were not seen as masculine but as "gender transgressors"[27] so women could not even in this instance be seen as achieving the male standard.

Because women's bodies could be invaded, their boundaries able to be crossed, they were subject to pollution. Pollution, or dirt, as defined by Carson, is matter out of place, matter that has crossed a boundary.[28] Since they were subject to pollution, women in general were judged to be

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[21]Anne Carson, "Dirt and Desire: The Phenomenology of Female Pollution in Antiquity," in *Constructions of the Classical Body* (ed. J. I. Porter; Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2002), 77.

[22]Carson, "Dirt and Desire," 79.

[23]Carson, "Dirt and Desire," 80.

[24]Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 32.

[25]Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 53.

[26]Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 53.

[27]Ruth Karras, "Active/Passive, Acts/Passions: Greek and Roman Sexualities," *AHR* 105 no. 4 (2000): 1255-1256.

[28]Carson, "Dirt and Desire," 87.

weak and at greater risk than men.[29] Carson comments: "In sum, the female body, the female psyche, the female social life, and the female moral life are penetrable, porous, mutable, and subject to defilement all the time."[30]

It was believed that it was their moistness more than anything else that caused women to be weak,[31] emotional and irrational and which caused them to sin. The "hard" and "dry" male body was the ideal of stability so women, being "wet," "soft," and changeable, were symptomatic of instability. All this indicated instability and therefore, to the Graeco-Roman male mind, an inclination to transgress. Because it was believed that the external body reflected the inner body,[32] this meant that women's natures were weak and vulnerable. From this it is but a short step to the belief that women are prone to immorality and it was assumed that women were more susceptible to erotic desire than were men and that, once aroused, they were sexually insatiable.

To sum up, women were seen as defective males and as such could never achieve the perfection of men. Laqueur says:

> In a public world that was overwhelmingly male, the one-sex model displayed what was already massively evident in culture more generally: *man* is the measure of all things, and woman does not exist as an ontologically distinct category. Not all males are masculine, potent, honorable, or hold power, and some women exceed some men in each of these categories. But the standard of the human body and its representations is the male body.[33]

As will be seen later, this ideology was perpetuated through myth and ritual. It is a function of the *habitus* to perpetuate itself in this manner, thereby reinforcing the traditions and beliefs and further strengthening them. In this way the ideology based on the body became factual and natural to the Greeks and the Romans and became the base on which their social life was based. So that they would not be polluted or pollute, women were confined to the home and kept within strict boundaries.

I have chosen to take a look at both Roman and Jewish women in the Graeco-Roman world of the first century Mediterranean. Paul was a Jew and was therefore influenced by the *habitus* of his Jewish upbringing, but he was also a Roman citizen and writing to a world dominated by Rome, so that the principles and practices of the Roman *habitus* influenced him. The Deutero-Pauline writers and writers of the Pastoral Epistles were also writing in a Roman world, with the patriarchal

[29]Dale Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 32, 198-199, 226.

[30]Carson, "Dirt and Desire," 87.

[31]Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 33.

[32]Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 18.

[33]Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 62.

Graeco-Roman stance on women and their status in society. I will be considering those areas which are in some respects parallel to those I have considered in the Zimbabwean context, namely domestic life and approaches to marriage, divorce and inheritance as well as how women were affected by religion and possibilities of activity in the public sphere. It will be seen that there are many parallels in lifestyles for Graeco-Roman women and traditional Zimbabwean women. Jewish women reflected many of the same concerns and similar principles of *habitus* as their Graeco-Roman counterparts, but in many areas their lives were more circumscribed than those of Roman women. In both contexts women were low on the hierarchical scale. Even though some appeared to have a certain amount of power, this power was granted by men and was, therefore, also circumscribed by them.

As previously pointed out, the *habitus* is often characterised by the formation of dichotomies. As we saw in the case of Zimbabwean culture, there were distinct dichotomies between public and private, honour and shame and visible and invisible. Just as Zimbabwean women are relegated to the domestic arena, are potential sources of shame to their menfolk and are largely invisible in writings and records, so first century Mediterranean women tended to be subject to similar dichotomies. The basic dichotomy, as we have seen, was that which governed male and female and expressed itself in dichotomies such as penetrable/impenetrable, wet/dry and hot/cold. These in turn led to further dichotomies, such as public and private, a dichotomy which governed the lifestyle of men and women.

There is always the danger, in considering dichotomies, that the person who is considering them is inscribing dichotomies from his or her own context, rather than describing those pertaining to the context under consideration. In this particular instance, it is impossible to compare the dichotomies of the first century Mediterranean with those of present day Zimbabwe and yet, at least superficially, there are elements of similarity. One can only consider these areas as a platform from which interpretation has been able to be used to reinforce these dichotomies in their own contexts.

2.2. **The dichotomy of public versus private**

Graeco-Roman society was highly patriarchal. In terms of the *habitus* the father had absolute power. He was *paterfamilias*, the head of the house, and had the final say in all matters. He even had the legal power to punish a member of his household with death. Though in some spheres women, particularly those of the Roman upper classes, were extremely influential and wielded great power, this power was always under the control of men who could withdraw it at any time they wanted. My focus in this study will be on Roman women, though Greek women led far more

restricted lives. Women of Sparta, however, it should be noted, were on more of an equal footing with men.[34]

Largely, women exerted a degree of power in the private sphere, the sphere of the home, whilst men wielded power in public. Though some women acted in the public sphere, as will be seen, this was not the norm.[35] Their area of influence was within the family unit, out of sight of public life, within their boundaries and they were generally expected to remain there and not make themselves obvious in public, where they ran the danger of being polluted or causing pollution.[36] Philosophers' writings, inscriptions and epitaphs reflect the ideal woman, according to the *habitus*, as being domesticated.[37] There is, for instance, an epitaph on the tomb of one "Claudia" which reads:

> Stranger, my message is short. Stop and read it. This is the unlovely tomb of a lovely woman. Her parents gave her the name Claudia. She loved her husband with all her heart. She bore two children, one of whom she left on earth, the other beneath it. She had a pleasing way of talking and walking. She tended the house and worked wool. I have said my piece. Go your way.[38]

Like other epitaphs of this era it emphasises the feminine virtues of being a good wife, mother and housewife. The principle of the *habitus* whereby women were there to serve men meant that women's lives were lived in private, their roles being daughter, wife, child-bearer, and mother. If they stepped out of this role, men perceived them in negative terms, associating their activity with a breakdown in moral standards and fearing domination by women. Gail Corrington-Streete, for example, shows how women who were not subordinate to men were termed "prostitutes" or "whores" and were regarded as being dangerous, but when they fulfilled their subordinate, domestic role, they were considered "good."[39] A woman who was "outside" the home had transgressed boundaries and was therefore a source of pollution.

Tomkins points out that a "good" woman was expected to be silent and submissive. He quotes Aristotle as declaring that while man was made for courage and command, woman was made for obedience and holding her tongue.[40] Women's roles were passive; action was for men. These areas of "public" and "private" will be considered under the categories of domestic life and public life, of

[34]Deborah F. Sawyer, W*omen and Religion in the First Christian Centuries* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 55.

[35]Sawyer, *Women and Religion*, 29.

[36]Carson, Putting Her in Her Place," 156.

[37]James M. Arlandson, *Women, Class and Society in Early Christianity* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1997), 35.

[38]Quoted in Dixon, "Roman Women," n.p.

[39]Gail Corrington-Streete, *The Strange Woman: Power and Sex in the Bible* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 74.

[40]Stephen Tomkins, *Paul and His World* (Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2004), 143.

women's work and what was considered men's work as well as under the categories of religion and literature.

I shall consider the various aspects of a woman's role, that of the household and that concerning the times when women ventured out in public.

2.3. **Domestic life**

The principles of honour and shame were important because women were potentially threatening to the honour of their menfolk. As child bearers they were responsible for the integrity of the male line and this is always a potential source of shame for men. They were potential sources of shame for their fathers and husbands because they were a ready source of pollution.

The first role a woman had was that of daughter. Daughters were considered a burden to their fathers as there was a constant danger that they might bring shame on to the family through immoral acts. Ecclesiasticus 42:9-11 expresses the fear that fathers felt:

> Unknown to her, a daughter keeps her father awake
> the worry she gives him drives away his sleep;
> in her youth, in case she never marries,
> married, in case she should be disliked,
> as a virgin, in case she should be defiled
> and found with child in her father's house,
> having a husband, in case she goes astray,
> married, in case she should be barren.
> Your daughter is headstrong? Keep a sharp look-out
> that she does not make you the laughing-stock of your enemies,
> the talk of the town, the object of common gossip,
> and put you to public shame.

Though this is Jewish writing, not Graeco-Roman, and written before the Christian era, about 180-175 B.C.E. it is symptomatic of the worries a father experienced over his daughter's chastity in the Graeco-Roman culture too. One of the principles of the *habitus* declared that women, as mentioned before, were prone to transgression because they were not built like men and their bodily functions were not like those of men. A woman's sexual appetite was thought to be insatiable[41] and therefore a man's task was to protect her honour and, in doing so, to protect his own.[42] Women were not considered capable of protecting themselves and their honour and needed a male protector,

[41]Carson, "Putting Her in Her Place," 142.

[42]Bruce Malina, *The New Testament World*. (Revised ed. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 50.

either a father, a husband or a guardian. This practice in turn reinforced the patriarchal structures of the time whereby women were seen as dependent on and inferior to men.

Girls did not have their own personal names but took their father's middle name and feminized it, a clear sign of how they were embedded in the honour of the father and his household. In some ways this was even more restrictive than the continuing custom today of taking the father's surname where at least girls have their own first names. In the first century girls were in this way simply seen as offshoots of their fathers and were thus denied any individuality or existence in their own right. The fact that they took their father's names emphasised that they were dependent on their fathers for their very existence, for women were considered to be the passive partners in conception. A woman was thought to be impotent and therefore merely a recipient for the potent male sperm.[43] Fathers had absolute control and could sell their daughters into slavery or force the married ones to get a divorce if it suited them. Girls were under the authority of their fathers until they got married, at which stage they came under the authority of their husbands. If the father or husband died, a male guardian would be appointed for them.[44]

According to Rouselle, these girls remained girls (*parthenos*) until puberty, at about twelve or fourteen, after which they became women (*gunē*), whether they were married or not.[45] On the other hand, Boyarin explains that there was a difference between a virgin and a woman. A woman's life was divided into two seasons, the season of her virginity and that of her maturity. The two seasons were defined by her defloration, the moment when she was transferred from one state to the other.[46] A woman became a woman, therefore, when she was "marked" by a man and a virgin, as one who has escaped this event, is not considered to be a woman.[47] The husband's role from then was to domesticate her just as he domesticated his land and animals, rescuing them from a savage, unproductive state and making them fruitful.[48]

Girls were given away in marriage when their father and husband-to-be deemed fit but were considered ready for marriage as soon as they experienced the onset of puberty. Their marriages were arranged by their fathers and they themselves had no say in choosing their husbands. Very often husbands were chosen because political alliances needed to be cemented and were cast aside when the alliances were no longer advantageous.[49] So it can be seen that the fate of women was

[43]Rouselle, *Porneia*, 30.

[44]Judith P. Hallett, "Women's Lives in the Ancient Mediterranean," in *Women and Christian Origins* (ed. R. S. Kraemer and M. R. D'Angelo; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 18.

[45]Rouselle, *Porneia*, 58.

[46]Carson, "Putting Her in Her Place,"144.

[47]Daniel Boyarin, "Paul and the Genealogy of Gender," *Reproductions*, 41 (1993): 12.

[48]Carson, "Putting Her in Her Place," 149.

[49]"Republican and Imperial Women in Politics," n.p. [cited 16 May 2005]. Online: http://nefer-seba.net/essays/republican-and-imperial-Roman-women-in-politics.

firmly set in male hands. Ultimately they had no say in their futures and men dictated the course of their lives.

The marriage contract was in effect an agreement between the males to transfer a woman from one household to another. As a household was headed by a master, marriage entailed transferring a woman from one master to another.

The marriage ceremony itself highlighted the vulnerability of women and reinforced their boundaries.[50] The bride wore a veil which was seen as a symbol of honour, for no respectable woman would be seen in public without a veil. The Greek word for this veil had three meanings: "headbinder," "battlements of a city" and "stopper of a bottle." All three of these meanings signified protection for the woman: she was a vessel sealed by the veil against dirt and loss and the veil symbolised her purity.[51] As a bride she came to her husband protected from pollution by her veil and the moment when her husband lifted the veil was the moment that they became married, the moment when the boundary of her person was "invaded" by the vision of her husband.[52] In allowing the man to lift her veil, the woman was relinquishing her own honour and placing herself under his protection and within his honour.[53]

There were two types of marriage. In marriage with *manus* the woman had no rights to property. The Roman wife's property in this case all went to the husband on whom she was legally dependent and he had full control of that property. She had no rights whatsoever to deal with her possessions nor any rights over her children.

The other form of marriage, which became more frequent by the third century B.C.E., was "free marriage," whereby a woman remained attached to her father's house, kept her own property and therefore had some freedom to divorce her husband if necessary.[54] However, because she was still in some respects under her father's control, her father could force her into divorce if he so wished and also had some control over her wealth.

This meant that legally women were never in a position in which they could do what they wanted with their property. In practice, though, the woman could spend money on her son's education or career and some wielded considerable control over their wealth. Terentia, Cicero's wife, had her own personal fortune and made investments on her own authority. But again, the power of the

[50]Carson, "Dirt and Desire," 90.

[51]Carson, "Dirt and Desire," 90.

[52]Carson, "Dirt and Desire," 91.

[53]Carson, "Putting Her in Her Place," 156.

[54]Susan Martin, "Private Lives and Public Persona: Women's Life in Greece and Rome," University of Tennessee. n.p. [cited 16 May 2005.] Online: http://www.dl.ket.org/latin2/mores/women/womenful.htm

habitus meant that women did not have any rights because of their own merit, but were simply granted the ability to do things if it suited men.

Women were expected to marry and have children. It was practically unheard of for a woman to remain single and even those who took vows of celibacy did so for only a limited time. The average life expectancy of citizens of the Roman Empire was twenty-five years and Brown records that, in order for the population to remain stationary, each woman would have had to have an average of five children.[55] In 19/18 B.C.E., Augustus made it compulsory for women to marry.[56] This was largely because he needed to increase the birth rate because he required soldiers for his army. It was a decree made not out of concern for family life, but in order to use his subjects for political ends. In accordance with the principles of the *habitus*, women were regarded as vehicles for the birth of male children (female children did not count) and if men did not marry and have families they were not allowed to inherit.[57] On the other hand, where a woman had more than three children, she was given the privilege of being exempt from being under a guardian,[58] again a privilege accorded by the male hierarchy.

As a mother, a woman had dignity and freedom but she never stopped being under the control of her husband. On marriage she moved in with her husband's family, but she remained an outsider, a stranger, until she bore a son, which she was expected to do as soon as possible. In the case of infertility it was common for women to be blamed and then it was usual for her to offer her husband a divorce. In the event of divorce, when children were involved, the mother would lose the children who would remain in the father's household. Sons were much desired as they brought a security and a status to the family in that the line was now guaranteed. Pliny, for instance, as explained by Richlin, recommends various materials which will help to conceive a son. She states:

> [T]here are hints here and there that boy babies are better, and a complete absence of recommendations aimed solely at conceiving a girl baby. So though there is nothing here to indicate any widespread genocide, there does seem to be an assumption that women will be trying to have male children.[59]

[55]Peter Brown, T*he Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 6.

[56]Sawyer, *Women and Religion*, 21.

[57]Rouselle, *Porneia*, 36.

[58]Hallett, "Women's Lives," 18.

[59]Amy Richlin, "Pliny's Brassiere," in *Roman Sexualities* (ed. J. P. Hallett and M. B. Skinner; Princetown: Princetown University Press, 1997), 212.

Again, the principle of the *habitus* was that women were passive participants in the parenting process, the reproductive vehicle rather than the one who played an active part.[60] Their chief role in the home was to produce and rear a male heir for their husbands.[61] They were therefore not of value and prime consideration was given to the rights of men. After the birth the infant was given a medical examination and then presented to the father. The father claimed his son by taking him in his arms (he did not take a daughter into his arms). If he did not want to claim a child, either because it was weak or defective or else because it was a girl (and as a girl it was automatically considered weak and defective simply because it was not male), the baby was abandoned. The mother had no say in whether the child was kept or abandoned.[62] Although Richlin does not presume genocide of baby girls, it did sometimes happen that girls were left to die from exposure purely because they were girls and were therefore less wanted.[63] Harris quotes the dramatist, Poseidippus, who wrote: "Everyone, even if he is poor, rears a son/But exposes a daughter, even if he is rich."[64] Even though this is satire, Harris comments, there is probably a truth behind it and his study estimates that it was likely that girls were exposed more often than were boys.[65]

Though some women exerted considerable influence, Cato the Elder (195 B.C.E.) predicted disaster should wives receive rights that would free them from being subordinate:

> Review all the laws with which your forefathers restrained their licence and made them subject to their husbands; even with all these bonds you can scarcely control them. What of this? If you suffer them to seize these bonds one by one and wrench themselves free . . . do you think that you will be able to endure them: the moment they begin to be your equals, they will be your superiors.[66]

The very way in which this passage is written reflects the patriarchal attitude of the time. It also shows an underlying fear of women who may be on an equal footing with men and who are perceived as a threat to the status of men. Because belief of the time was that women were licentious and needed to be controlled, they could not be trusted to act responsibly.

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[60]Marilyn B. Skinner, "*Quod Multo Fit Aliter in Graecia. . .*" in *Roman Sexualities* (ed. J. P. Hallett and M. B. Skinner; Princetown: Princetown University Press, 1997), 8.

[61]Skinner, "*Quod Multo Fit*," 8.

[62]Rouselle, *Porneia*, 51.

[63]Mason, "Ancient Roman Women," n.p. and Elizabeth A. Castelli, "Gender, Theory and The Rise of Christianity: A Response to Rodney Stark," *JECS* 6.2 (1998): 235.

[64]William V. Harris, "Child-Exposure in the Roman Empire, " *JRS* 44 (1994): 4.

[65]Harris, "Child-Exposure," 5.

[66]Constance F. Parvey, "The Theology and Leadership of Women in the New Testament," in *Religion and Sexism: Images of Woman in the Jewish and Christian Traditions* (ed. R. R. Ruether; New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), 120.

Society of the early Roman Empire was clearly stratified. Firstly, in the aristocracy as it were, there were the senators and equestrian classes. Then came the free-born plebs, the rural peasantry, the slave-born freedmen and, at the bottom, the slaves.[67] Within these classes, women had different roles. In the lower classes, for instance, women were not expected to have so many children as they could not afford it and only those women who were free or freed were allowed to marry. Marriage was not for slaves.[68]

Women of the higher classes did, however, receive an informal education and could read and write. Their task in the household as mothers was to educate the children as well as to administer the house. A picture recovered in Pompeii shows a young girl holding a book.[69] It is, however, to be noted that they were taught these skills not because they were thought to be equal in intelligence to men, but in order that they could teach their sons in particular to read and write. Priority for education was given to male children. A woman's role was to support the patriarchal structures by further empowering males to take their place in that structure. Mary Evans comments that some women were accomplished in art and literature[70] and the poetess, Sappho, is preserved in history.[71] Mason is of the opinion that girls did receive some education and learned to read and write[72] while Hallett speaks of the poetess Sulpicia.[73] These educated females, however, were the exception rather than the rule. There is the impression that at least those women of the elite classes were literate, though in general it was not considered acceptable for women to be too educated in case they should threaten the status of their menfolk. Juvenal, for instance, writing at the end of the late first or early second century, mocked women who had opinions on Homer, grammar and ethics. He wrote:

> But most intolerable of all is the woman who as soon as she has sat down to dinner commends Virgil, pardons the dying Dido, and pits the poets against each other, putting Virgil in the one scale and Homer in the other . . . Let her not know all history; let there be some things in her reading which she does not understand. I hate a woman who is for ever consulting and poring over the "Grammar" of Palaemon, who observes all the rules and laws of language, who like an antiquary quotes verses that I never heard of, and corrects her unlettered female friends for slips of speech that no man need trouble about: let husbands at least be permitted to make slips in grammar![74]

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[67]Paul R. C. Weaver, "Social Mobility in the Early Roman Empire: The Evidence of the Imperial Freedmen and Slaves," *Past and Present* 37 (1967): 3.

[68]Hallett, "Women's Lives," 32; Mason, "Ancient Roman Women," n.p.

[69]Moses Hadas, *Imperial Rome* (Nederland: Time-Life International, 1968), 129.

[70]Mary J. Evans, *Woman in the Bible* (2nd ed.; Carlisle: Paternoster Press,1998), 39.

[71]Sawyer, *Women and Religion*, 56.

[72]Mason, "Ancient Roman Women," n.p.

[73]Hallett, "Women's Lives," 26.

The Stoic school stressed the dignity of women-men relationships though they saw this equality as being expressed in traditional family roles, that is in the private sphere. The real power that women had lay in the circle of their friends and families, but the ideal woman of art and literature was always expected to be modest, self-sacrificing, loyal and obedient. In this way, their power was circumscribed and they were expected to stay within their boundaries which were boundaries set by men.

2.4. **Public life: business affairs and inheritance**

Roman women had certain legal rights. They could inherit property, make wills, be partners in legal contracts and had rights when it came to divorce.[75] They could be citizens and even magistrates. But most were still considered inferior and remained under the domination of their husbands. They could not vote, nor could they hold public office or serve in the military forces. Before about 30 C.E. they were not even permitted to accompany their husbands abroad when they were sent there by the government or army. But this did not stop some of them having an interest in politics. Inscriptions from Pompeii show that some did exert influence; for example one of two which were painted on the side of a house shows that a certain Caprasia was exerting influence in getting her choice elected: "Nymphodotus, along with Caprasia asks you to vote for Marcus Cerrinus Vatia for the aedileship: he is worthy of office."[76] Also, Hortensia, the daughter of Quintus Hortensius Hortalus, in 42 B.C.E. made a successful appeal in the forum against a special taxation of wealthy women. This, however, was unusual and went against custom.[77] It is furthermore yet another example of how men allowed women to exert influence as long as it was on their behalf and promoted the patriarchal hierarchy of the *habitus*.

Most women remained under legal and financial guardianship, firstly of their fathers and then of their husbands. If a woman was not married (or was widowed) and her father had died, she had to have a guardian appointed to consent to her business dealings as women were considered too frivolous to do such things on their own. But they were exempt from guardianship if they had more than three children, though few qualified. Gradually, however, this institution of guardianship began to crumble and women were able to name their own guardians or even to avoid having them at all. Some women managed to gain a great deal of power and manage their own properties. Martin

[74]Juvenal S*atirae 6. Ancient History Sourcebook*. n.p. (trans. G. G. Ramsay.) [cited 20 May 2005.] Online: http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/juvenal-satvi..html.

[75]Parvey, "Theology and Leadership of Women," 119.

[76]Mary R. Lefkowitz and Maureen B. Fant, *Women's Life in Greece and Rome* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1992), 152, quoted in Mason, "Ancient Roman Women," n.p.

[77]Sir Paul Harvey, ed. *The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press: 1937), 216.

quotes from the epitaph on the tomb of one Turia, a wife who found herself acting out public roles with bravery and decisiveness.[78] But her motivation is shown as being that of self-sacrifice and devotion to her family; these were feminine virtues which made acceptable a motivation which would not be necessary in the case of a man. It was acceptable for women to act thus if it was for the benefit of her family, in fulfilment of the feminine virtues of love, caring, good housekeeping and chastity, virtues regarded as principles of the *habitus*.

As far as appearing in public went, this was permissible for Roman women and they attended Roman public baths, religious festivals, amphitheatre events and races. However it must be noted that in these cases they were still under the authority of their husbands, fathers or guardians. Their lives were centred around the home and these forays into public were done knowing this and often in the company of their husbands or in order to serve their husband's interests.

2.5. **Work**

There was a clear division of labour between men and women. Agriculture was largely for men while women's work was largely centred on the home although peasant women may have also worked in the fields.[79] Scheidel quotes from the pseudo-Aristotleian *Oikonomikos* the justification for this division: "the gods have made one gender (the women) fit only for a "seated" way of life but too weak for activities out of doors, while the other gender (the men) were less suited for domestic work but strong enough for labour that required motion."[80]

Women were expected to be able to produce cloth - spinning, weaving and sewing - and even the elite women sometimes made their husbands' garments. In addition, women often supervised their estates and they ran their households. They were able to do business for their husbands, supervising and administrating, but did not earn money in their own right. They also sometimes held public posts whereby they helped to arrange public festivals.[81] But again, this was done in the service of men and to promote male interests.

There were, however, quite a few women who were office bearers. Arlandson quotes inscriptions that show a woman as a member of the civic finance committee, women as *demiourges* (that is, public workers), civic magistrates, sponsors of the contests and *gymnasiarchs* (rulers of the cultural

[78]Martin, "Private Lives and Public Persona," n.p.

[79]Scheidel, "The Most Silent Women," 211.

[80][Aristotle] *Oikonomikos* 1.1344 a 3-6, quoted in Scheidel, "The Most Silent Women," 205.

[81]Lynn R. Li Donnici, "Women's Religions and Religious Lives in the Greco-Roman City," in *Women and Christian Origins* (ed. R. S. Kraemer and M. R. D'Angelo; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 86.

education centre).[82] But it is also to be noted that these were very much in the minority and policy was in fact determined by men.

An inscription found at Sillyum in Psidia tells us of an exception to the rule:

> The council and the people honoured the priestess of all the gods and hierophant for life and one of the ten chief citizens, Menodora, daughter of Megacles, *demiourgos* and gymnasiarch for the provision of oil, who gave on behalf of Megacles, her son, 300 000 silver denarii for the maintenance of children and further gave both in her own gymnasiarchy and in the office of her son, as *demiourgos*, and in the gymnasiarchy of her daughter, to each councillor 85 denarii, to each member of the body of elders 80 denarii, to each member of the assembly 77 denarii.[83]

It is to be noted that this Menodora appears to have made a decision on her own and that she did not have a guardian. She is an example of a wealthy woman who had power and prestige though she was not in the official ranks of council or assembly.

Some women were in what today would be considered professional jobs. There was a female physician in Tlos, Lycia, and the inscription on the tomb of Panthia, a doctor's wife, reads: "[you] raised high our common fame in healing - though you were a woman you were not behind me in skill."[84] The noteworthiness of her skill as a (female) physician must, however, be balanced against the phrase, "though you were a woman." Patriarchy is evident even where women are being praised and it is considered surprising that a woman should be as skilful as a man.

Another picture found in the ruins of Pompeii shows a Roman matron selecting a goose in a meat market.[85] Women went out to the market as part of their domestic duties and were involved in buying and selling. Sometimes women owned or worked in small shops and it is to be noted that some widows grew rich in business, though married women could not earn money in their own right. But again it needs to be pointed out that these women were few. By and large, women remained in the home and exerted their influence there.

The lower classes worked in a very wide range of jobs as they had fewer restrictions than the upper classes. They could be nurses, midwives, dressmakers, fishmongers, bankers and even gladiators and work on the land, though they often worked alongside their husbands. Tombstone epitaphs mention husbands and wives working as goldsmiths and tailors, and we know from Acts

[82]Arlandson, Women, *Class and Society*, 32.

[83]Arlandson, Women, *Class and Society*, 29.

[84]Arlandson, *Women, Class and Society*, 48.

[85]Hadas, *Imperial Rome*, 151.

and the Pauline writings that Prisca and Aquila worked together as tentmakers. Parvey mentions that there were even women shipbuilders in Claudius's reign.[86]

2.6. **Religion and clubs**

It would appear that religion was open to all as long as they had the basic qualifications and had money. The cult of Dionysius began as a female fertility cult though later it included both men and women as did the mystery religions. Women attended religious festivals, for example the *Ambarualia* and the *Lupercalia*. There were, however, some religious festivals that were open only to women. The festival Thesmophoria, of the cult of Demeter Thesmophorios, was open to free married women while the Adonis festival which took place in the summer was open to women of every class, status and age.[87] The cult of the Vestal Virgins was limited to virgins who were taken at the age of between six and ten, and bonded for thirty years to serve at the temple of Vesta. It is to be noted, however, that these women were ultimately under the control of the *pontifex*, a male priest who had full authority to chastise them. The festivals of Isis, Adonis and Vesta were all to do with fertility, a woman's concern. These religions, as Corrington shows, were sometimes a means of empowering women.[88]

One way women gained power through religion was to gain "embodied power" - *enthousiasmos* - by being possessed by a male God.[89] Pythia, the priestess of Apollo at Delphi, for instance, was "entered" by the male God and was possessed by him. This parallel between spirit-filled prophetesses and sexual debauchery led to a deep suspicion in the Christian church of ecstatic manifestations, for example Montanism. Such women were seen as immoral and as controlled by the male deity. Noteworthy is the fact that these women were not perceived as having religious power in their own rights, but that it had to come through a male deity. It is also interesting that for spirit-filled men there was no such suggestion of sexuality as there was for women.

A few women, like the Vestal Virgins, were able to find a form of empowerment by seeking temporary celibacy, as a short-term escape from the control of a father or husband. Life-long celibacy, as said before, was not an option for a woman, but though it went against all the social and legal norms of the time, it was a temporary way by which a woman could become symbolically male.[90] On the other hand, Sawyer calls the cult of the Vestal Virgins an "example of male-defined

[86]Parvey, "Theology and Leadership of Women," 119.

[87]Li Donnici, "Women's Religions," 95.

[88]Gail Paterson Corrington, "The 'Divine Woman'? Propaganda and the Power of Celibacy in the New Testament Apocrypha: A Reconsideration," *AThR* 3 (1988): 210-213.

[89]Corrington, "The 'Divine Woman'," 210.

[90]Corrington, "The 'Divine Woman'," 212.

idealized womanhood."[91] They were, she believes, empowered and idealised according to male social values. While the cult gave to de-sexed women some male powers, the women were controlled by men (the Emperor was the high priest) and effectively gave up their entire fertile period of life. So men were able to harness the power of the women to their own use; they could use the power of the Vestal Virgins to regenerate Rome by denying women their femininity.[92]

2.7. **Myth and literature**

Myth and literature are important elements of the maintaining of the *habitus*. Education takes place through these means and it is education which reinforces the *habitus*. These are part of the practice of initiation which Bourdieu considers essential to belonging in terms of the *habitus*.[93] It is through the repetition of myths and the inscribing of belief on the body by means of the written word (literature) that these beliefs are incorporated into the society and come to be perceived as the natural order.

In considering first century Mediterranean myths and literature, it has to be accepted that such literature tends to voice the opinions of the male literate elite which were reflections of the *habitus* and accepted without question. One can nonetheless read in it a reflection of how people perceived life. Mythology gives a perspective on how many people viewed their world.

In Roman mythology, the female gods took part in war and were physically aggressive - male characteristics. They were not particularly feminine in their attributes, and their depiction in statues is of ideal physical womanhood rather than as individuals. Minerva, identified with the Greek goddess Athene, was the goddess of eternal virginity and also the goddess of war. She is often depicted as of masculine stature rather than feminine, with helmet and shield. But others, like Juno, Venus and Artemis, represent ideal virtues of womanhood. In all these examples it can be seen that these depictions of women served to enhance the male, the "norm" of humanity, and preserve the patriarchal values of the *habitus.*

Myths also reinforced beliefs in the characteristics of women. There were many myths in which women changed their shapes – Io who became a heifer, Medusa whose head sprouted snakes and Callisto who became a bear, to name but a few. Pandora was a woman in myth who transgressed her boundaries by opening a box which she was not permitted to open while some women were

[91]Sawyer, *Women and Religion*, 127.
[92]Sawyer, *Women and Religion*, 128.
[93]Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 68.

unreliable containers themselves. Zeus had to take Dionysius from Semele and Apollo rescued Asclepius from Coronis.[94]

In literature, mythology and art, women tended to be stereotyped and idealized. Women were seen as emotional, care-givers, either chaste or dishonoured; they were depicted in extreme terms as virtuous and good or impure and bad. They were not seen as people but as examples of how the female deviated from the norm of male stability and perfection. When they were depicted as powerful (as with Minerva) they were given male characteristics.

We can also learn about attitudes towards women from writings of the time. Take for example the following extract from Seneca's *To Marcia on Consolation 1.1*:

> If I did not know, Marcia, that you were as far removed from womanish weakness of mind as from all other vices, and that your character was looked on as a model of ancient virtue, I should not dare to assail your grief — the grief that even men are prone to nurse and brood upon — nor should I have conceived the hope of being able to induce you to acquit fortune of your complaint, at a time so unfavourable, with her judge so hostile, after a charge so hateful. But your strength of mind has been already so tested and your courage, after a severe trial, so approved that they have given me confidence.[95]

Marcia's strength of mind is depicted as male. Seneca comments that she is "removed from womanish weakness of mind" which is alluded to as a vice. He refers to her character as a "model of ancient virtue," virtue being a quality associated with men rather than women. He states that "even men" feel grief, as if it is a shameful thing. So, while praising her, he is making it clear that it is her non-female characteristics he admires, not her female ones. She is admired for how she reflects the ideal of male perfection.

Juvenal, in his sixth Satire, vilifies women. He portrays them as wanton, deceitful and shallow. He says it is more preferable to have a male lover than a wife (6.3) and that "their sins of lust are the least of all their sins!" (6.3) Though this is satire, satire tends to reflect opinions currently held[96] and these are reflections, once again, of the *habitus* and furthermore the fact that they are written down gives them a power to renew the beliefs behind the *habitus.*

Later, Seneca praises Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi. But what he is praising in her is her quality as a mother, a bearer of sons. If she bore daughters, these are not mentioned because they were not important:

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[94]Carson, "Dirt and Desire," 79-80.

[95]Quoted in University of Wales, Lampeter, "Women in Roman Philosophy," n.p.

[96]Juvenal *Satirae*, n.p.

> Twelve births did she recall by as many deaths. The rest whom the state never knew as either born or lost matter little; as for Tiberius and Gaius, who even the man who denies that they were good will admit were great men, she saw them not only murdered but left unburied. Yet to those who tried to comfort her and called her unfortunate she said: "Never shall I admit that I am not fortunate, I who have borne the Gracchi."[97]

Hierocles in *Concerning Marriage* discusses the advantages of marriage. He writes:

> Further still, besides the procreation of children, the association with a wife is advantageous, for in the first place, when we are wearied with labours out of the house, she receives us with officious kindness, and recreates us by every possible attention. In the next place, she produces in us an oblivion of our molestations. . . . Then, however, the wife being present becomes a great solace on this occasion, by making some inquiries about external affairs, or by referring to, and considering together with her husband, something about domestic concerns, and thus, by her unfeigned cheerful eagerness, affords him a certain exuberance of pleasure and delight. [98]

This is written from the man's point of view and, while it shows that the wife runs the household, it is clear that she is praised for her service to her husband and for her fertility rather than any other strengths she might have. Her role is to bolster up the patriarchal system and reinforce her husband as head of the family. As we can see in Epictetus, women were considered to exist for the pleasure of men:

> Immediately after they are fourteen, women are called "matrons" by men. And so when they see that they have nothing else but only to be the bedfellows of men, they begin to beautify themselves, and put all their hopes in that. It is worthwhile for us to take pains, therefore, to make them understand that they are honoured for nothing else but appearing modest and self-respecting.[99]

Again, we perceive the principle of the *habitus*, whereby women are seen to be vehicles of pleasure for men, with no thought in their minds but to please men. They are named "matrons" by men, they are bedfellows of men, they beautify themselves for men and the entire focus of their lives is for men. Their role is passive and any honour they get from men is as a recognition of their passivity.

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[97]Seneca, *To Marcia on Consolation*, 16.2-4, quoted in Lampeter, "Women in Roman Philosophy", n.p.

[98]Quoted in University of Wales, Lampeter, "Women in Roman Philosophy," n.p.

[99]Epictetus, *Enchiridion*, 40, quoted in University of Wales, Lampeter, "Women in Roman Philosophy,"n.p.

2.8. **Conclusion**

In terms of the *habitus* of the first century Mediterranean, Roman women were seen to be embedded in the male and were valued in terms of how much honour they brought to him. They were always potential sources of shame, first to their fathers and then to their husbands. Women were trained from an early age in the virtues that were expected of them, just as men were taught what to expect of women. Though a few women were more liberated than others, their place was clearly defined by men, their activities permitted by men, and to venture out of their place was to risk vilification.

Sawyer sums it up:

> [N]o woman was perceived as equal to a man in terms of her worth to the state. The Roman world may have offered a great degree of liberation to women when set in contrast to their role in Greek society, but it was patriarchal to its core: in its legal system, its government and its domestic organisation. If women did gain emancipation it would always be limited by these constraints. It would be liberation within a patriarchal structure, rather than liberation from that structure.[100]

3. **Women in the Jewish Diaspora of the first century**

The problems with assessing the lives of women in the Roman Empire are also applicable to Jewish women with the additional problem that many of the writings which are used to build up a picture of first century Jewish women are actually much later works, from the third or fourth centuries.[101] In addition, few women are mentioned at all in Jewish historical writings. When they are mentioned it is men who are writing of them and they are often spoken of in terms of hostility and ignorance.[102]

Jews in the first century Mediterranean living outside Israel to some degree maintained their separateness by maintaining their traditions, but in many ways they lived lives fairly similar to those of their non-Jewish counterparts. Hellenistic culture was very pervasive and infiltrated Judaism to a large extent, blurring the boundaries between Jews and Gentiles and Jews often adapted themselves to the Graeco-Roman *habitus*.[103] Sawicki has described how, over time, a colonising force has a subtle effect on the indigenous population. She writes:

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[100]Sawyer, *Women and Religion*, 30.

[101]Ross S. Kraemer, "Jewish Women and Women's Judaism(s) at the Beginning of Christianity," in *Women and Christian Origins* (ed. R. S. Kraemer and M. R. D'Angelo;. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 35.

[102]Kraemer, "Jewish Women and Women's Judaism(s)," 53.

[103]Kraemer, "Jewish Women and Women's Judaism(s)," 56.

> Like the British in India in our more recent past, Roman administrators cultivated indigenous collaborators. By the time those collaborators had grandchildren, imperial institutions had become indigenized into the culture in many respects. The Roman presence, together with Hellenistic culture generally, was taken to be the natural, ordinary state of affairs, by people who "didn't see it coming."[104]

Generally, however, for women their traditional roles meant that they were bound to the home. The books of Judith and Esther served as role models for women of that time, teaching them traditional values. The book of Sirach, written between 200 and 175 B.C.E., says: "A silent wife is a gift from the Lord" (Sir 26:14), showing that, as in Graeco-Roman tradition, the *habitus* expected women to be silent.

3.1. **Women in the home**

The woman's sphere was strictly limited to the home. The Talmud declared that the purpose of marriage is "to grind corn, suckle children, be a beautiful wife and bear children."[105] The wife was responsible for the housework, for the dough offering and it was her responsibility too to keep account of her menstrual cycle.[106] She also performed religious practices in the home such as the preparations for Passover and lighting the lamp at Sabbath. She ensured that the traditions were carried out but, though within the private sphere she wielded great power, legally she was under the control of first her father and then, on marriage, her husband, just as were Graeco-Roman women.

3.2. **Marriage**

At the onset of puberty most women entered adulthood by marriage, intercourse and children. Marriage was a contract arranged by the father and the husband had the right to divorce his wife, but the wife did not have the right to divorce her husband, although there are a few recorded exceptions to this rule. For instance, Salome, the sister of Herod the Great, divorced her husband. After the first marriage, when widowed, the rules changed slightly as the woman was more able to arrange her own future marriages, but as widows they were not allowed to manage their children's affairs.

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[104]Marianne Sawicki, "Spatial Management of Gender and Labor in Greco-Roman Galilee," in *Archaeology and the Galilee Texts and Contexts in the Graeco-Roman and Byzantine Periods*. (ed. D. R. Edwards and C. T. McCollough; New York: University of South Florida, 1997), 8.

[105]Babylonian Talmud, Ketubot 56b, quoted in Parvey, "Theology and Leadership of Women," 120.

[106]Sawyer, *Women and Religion*, 81.

Within the marriage a wife was under her husband's control and was expected to keep out of the public eye. Evans writes:

> The "acquisition" of a wife is compared with that of a Gentile slave. A man had a duty to "feed, clothe and maintain" his wife, whereas "the wife's duty was to carry out the household tasks, and to wash her husband's feet, a task which the slaves could not be compelled to do."[107]

A woman had no property rights. Theoretically she could inherit land, but in practice male heirs took precedence and she could own land only through a male guardian.

3.3. **Religion**

Women were of secondary status from birth. This was because they were disadvantaged owing to the notion of uncleanness. Their lower status was marked by the fact that boys were circumcised to mark full entry into Judaism, but girls had no such right of passage and were therefore never of full standing and had no spiritual role in the society.

Women could not enter the Temple precincts any further than the court of the women and were not to be counted as part of the quorum in the synagogue. This meant that they could not hold a service, nor could they take any active part in one. Religious study and discussion was for men. In the synagogue women came to listen rather than to learn. Evans quotes the words of the Talmud: "[L]et the words of the Torah rather be destroyed by fire than imparted to a woman . . . whoever teaches his daughter Torah is as though he taught her obscenities."[108] The principle behind the *habitus* here dictates that women cannot be entrusted with sacred things which are reserved for men alone.

The Jews of the Diaspora, of course, were not governed by the Temple and, indeed, after 70 C.E., the Temple no longer existed. But the traditions, the principles which had arisen from the practices which formed the *habitus*, still remained and continued to influence the role of women in Judaism long after the practices themselves had ceased.

In Israel, however, women did bring certain offerings to the Temple and female members of priestly families could eat certain special offerings.[109] Some inscriptions show women as members

[107]Evans, *Woman in the Bible*, 34.

[108]Evans, *Woman in the Bible*, 36.

[109]Kraemer, "Jewish Women and Women's Judaism(s)," 63.

of the council of elders and as financial contributors to the synagogue, but these are few and far between and tend to refer to women who lived outside Israel and after the second century.[110]

Women's involvement in religious life was further limited because they spent so much of their lives in a state of ritual uncleanliness, when menstruating, pregnant or after childbirth. This, coupled with the fact that circumcision was obviously a rite of membership for men only, meant that they could never be fully involved in their religion though religious practices in the home - in the private sphere - were usually performed by the mother.[111]

3.4. **Public lives**

Women were expected to observe restrictions in public. As with Graeco-Roman women, men's potential shaming through their women was a constant threat. They needed to be sheltered and protected just as non-Jews were and when they went out into the marketplace and synagogue they were expected to be accompanied by relatives, servants or slaves. In public their conversation with men was to be restricted to what was absolutely necessary, especially if they were married women. Jewish women could only conduct business affairs under the control of a guardian.

Legally Jewish women could not testify in court. Josephus writes: "From women let no evidence be accepted because of the levity and temerity of their sex."[112] They received little formal education. Like Graeco-Roman women they were considered weak and liable to commit transgressions.

3.5. **Women of power**

On the other hand, there are instances of women who wielded much power in spite of the restrictions placed on their gender. The writer Josephus writes of Drusilla, her sister, Berenice, who was queen with her brother Agrippa II, and Herodias, all powerful women of their time. Philo, in a study of a Jewish community of male and female philosophers, the Therapeutae, tells us: "And the women also share in this feast, the greater part of whom, though old, are virgins in respect of their purity."[113] However these women, being old and virgins, could be regarded as symbolically male and therefore as special cases.

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[110]Kraemer, "Jewish Women and Women's Judaism(s)," 63.

[111]Sawyer, *Women and Religion*, 82.

[112]Quoted in Evans, *Woman in the Bibl*e, 35.

[113]Philo, *On the Contemplative Life, or Suppliants*, 68. n.p. (trans. C. D. Younge), Hendrickson Publishers, [cited 20 May 2005]. Online: http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/rs/rak/courses/999/therap.htm.

We learn much of another exception, Babatha, whose papers were discovered in a cave. She was a well-off woman who was educated and left behind papers showing her legal transactions. She was married twice and inherited land firstly from her father (after a legal struggle) and then from her husbands. When her second husband died she seized his land as a debt repayment for money she had lent him for his daughter's dowry (the daughter being that of his first wife). She also claimed it as a repayment of her own dowry, as a widow was entitled to do. This started a legal battle which appears to have lasted for the rest of her life.

In 125 B.C.E. she subpoenaed her son's guardians and charged them with inadequate maintenance:

> Babatha daughter of Simon son of Menahem -- through her guardian for this matter, Judah son of Khthousion -- summoned John son of Joseph Eglas, one of the guardians appointed by the council of Petra for her son Jesus the orphan of Jesus, saying: "On account of your not having given . . . to my son, the said orphan . . . just as "Abdoobdas son of Ellouthas, your colleague, has given me receipt, therefore I summon you to attend at the court of the governor Julius Julianus in Petra the metropolis of Arabia until we are heard in the tribunal in Petra on the second day of the month Dios(?)or at his next sitting in Petra."[114]

Subsequently she had the guardians dismissed.

In 128 C.E. she lent her husband, Judah, 300 denarii, again with the help of a guardian as she was illiterate, and in 131 C.E. we read of the legal battle over her inheritance of her husband's goods:

> Before the attending witnesses who also affixed their signatures, Babathas (sic), a Maozene woman, daughter of Simon, summoned Miriam, an En-gedian woman, daughter of Beianos, to accompany her in person before Haterius Neros, legatus Augusti pro praetore, wherever his venue may be, [to answer] why you seized everything in the house of Judah son of Eleazar Khthousion my and your late husband . . . and, equally important, to attend before the said Neros until judgment. Miriam replied, saying: "Before this I summoned you not to go near the possessions of my and your late husband [and according to?] the . . . and prescriptions (?) of Judah my husband you have no claim against the said Judah regarding his estate and . . . "[115]

There is also evidence of the scholar, Beruria, who lived in the second century C.E. and was one of the few women to teach Talmud. She was so highly respected that her comments and opinions are

[114]P. Yadin 14. (trans. from eds. N. Lewis, Y. Yadin and J. C. Greenfield, *The Documents from the Bar Kokhba Period in the Cave of Letters*, Greek Papyri (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Shrine of the Book, 1989)), quoted in Catherine M. Murphy," The Babatha Archive," n.p. [cited 20 May 2005]. Online: http://www-relg-studies.scu.edu/facstaff/murphy/courses/sctr026/babatha.htm.

[115]P. Yadin 26, quoted in Murphy," The Babatha Archive," n.p.

quoted in the Talmud. Often her views were attributed to a rabbi rather than be acknowledged as those of a woman;[116] such was the influence of the *habitus* which denied that a woman could possess great academic ability. Again, however, these women are exceptions. The fact that so much note is taken of them shows that they were different, that they did not act according to the same norms as most women or according to men's expectations.

3.6. **Conclusion**

The definitive events of a woman's life - menstruation, marriage and defloration, and childbirth - were all solemn duties for her but all made her unclean because they involved shedding of blood. So, if she was to fulfil her prescribed role as a woman, she was, in effect, being condemned to a life of continual impurity. In this way a woman was sentenced always to be a second-class citizen. Even the cleansing rituals of birth defined her status as the ritual for a boy took seven days and that for a girl lasted fourteen days and the size of a family was reckoned in terms of how many males there were; females were not counted.

The fact of a Jewish woman's gender therefore tended to diminish her opportunities to participate in the social, political and religious life of the time. She was restricted to the home and family and had no official public role to play. In many respects her life was very similar to that of a Gentile Roman woman, but the need to retain her sense of separateness as a Jew meant that restrictions were more strictly enforced.

4. **Toward a comparison between Graeco-Roman and Zimbabwean women**

It can be seen how, in the Graeco-Roman world, the principles behind the practice of the *habitus* were at work, just as is the case of traditional African women in Zimbabwe. These principles defined the place of women. Clearly these situations cannot be seen as the "same" because Zimbabwe is post-industrial, post-colonial and modern whilst the Graeco-Roman world was pre-industrial, colonial and antique. However, there are similarities in the situation. For instance, the same sorts of dichotomies existed in the first century Mediterranean world and in traditional Zimbabwean society, namely "man/woman," "good/bad" and "strength/weakness." These hierarchical dichotomies were taken to be "natural" by both men and women and were not contested. In fact they were culturally created and maintained by the leaders of society, whether they were poets, philosophers and writers or tribal chiefs and legislators. In both societies men are

[116]Sawyer, *Women and Religion*, 56.

seen to be clearly associated with strength, given the power to be decision-makers, protectors and owners, whilst women are subordinate and vulnerable, having few legal rights. Men in both societies have control over the destiny of women and women, always considered as minors, remain under the control of their menfolk.

The principle of honour and shame is important in both societies. Women are vulnerable to shame and are seen as a potential source of shame. Men are compelled to protect the honour of women, which resides in their own honour, and, in defending their women's honour, they are in fact defending their own. Women are also considered, in both contexts, as being sources of uncleanliness and are therefore condemned to a secondary status. In both contexts, on marriage, the woman's reproductive rights are transferred to the family of the father. As child bearers, women are responsible for the integrity of the male line and this is always a potential source of dishonour for men.

In both societies, a woman's infertility is deemed to be her fault and then it is usual to offer the husband a divorce, in which case children remain with the father, rather than go with the mother as the children represent the male line and belong to the father's family. Equally, in both the context of marriage with *manus* and in the Zimbabwean context, women have no rights to property. Theoretically, the woman can inherit land, but in practice male heirs take precedence or women can own land only through the agency of a male guardian. In both Jewish and Zimbabwean cultural law, women can only conduct business affairs under the control of a guardian.

In both contexts, women are powerful within their domestic sphere but ultimately the men have the power to make decisions, arrange marriages for their daughters and disperse their possessions.

Traditionally, women are largely "invisible" in both societies. Their domain is that of the home and when they venture out it is only because men have allowed it. For the most part women's voices are silent as records are kept by men. For example, epitaphs written by a husband, as in the case of Turia, show only what the men considered important and writings about women, having been written by men, show women as they are perceived by men. In the Zimbabwean context there are no written records of what women traditionally perceived or felt about themselves.

In both cases, the prevailing *habitus* of both societies has a direct influence on this study. In the case of traditional Zimbabwean society, the *habitus* renders change very difficult as was the case of first century Mediterranean society, of which Paul was a member. The church, coming into Zimbabwe, could adapt the Pauline tradition easily to fit the context because of the superficial similarities with the Graeco-Roman context, no matter what underlay these two contexts.

The *habitus*, in which Paul had been brought up both as a Roman citizen and Jew, meant that it was very difficult for him to meet the challenges posed by the teachings of the new religion,

Christianity. As we will see with Paul, in many ways he was unable to make the changes, though in others he was able to take some steps towards meeting the challenge.

CHAPTER 5
THE PAULINE MATERIAL

1. Introduction

Many of the letters which were traditionally associated with Pauline authorship are now considered not to have been written by Paul but by later writers. Till recently, the Church regarded Deutero-Paul and Pastorals as Pauline and therefore as carrying his authority. For the purpose of this study I will refer to these works as the "Pauline tradition." I consider this important as for centuries these letters carried the authority of Paul, so much so that legal systems, attitudes to women, and society's norms in general were based on Paul's teaching as understood in all the so-called Pauline epistles.[1] The Pauline material was taken at face value and systems were built around it on Paul's authority. It became part of the normative discourse of Christianity and contributed to the *habitus* of Christianity, the practices of which are continued today.

There are two ways of looking at the Pauline tradition. It has often been regarded as totally male-centred, patriarchal and hierarchical. This is evident in certain passages, which often are quoted out of context to promote the subordination of women, especially 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, 1 Corinthians 14:24-5, Ephesians 5:21-33, Colossians 3:8 and 1 Timothy 2:8-15. These passages are used to support the chauvinism of the tradition and emphasize the subordinate position of women not only at that time but as a rule for time to come. The Church Fathers did not doubt the Pauline authority of this tradition and their views of women and their status derived largely from how they read this material. They and many others over the centuries simply took it for granted that women were subordinate in the early church as this fitted in with their views on the inferiority of women. They found it easy to take verses from later epistles such as Timothy and use these to justify their restrictions on women. For example, Tertullian wrote alluding to 1 Timothy 2:11-15:

> *You* are the Devil's gateway. *You* are the unsealer of that forbidden tree. *You* are the first deserter of the divine law. *You* are she who persuaded him whom the Devil was not valiant enough to attack. *You* destroyed so easily God's image man. On account of *your* desert, that is death, even the Son of God had to die.[2]

[1]Sawyer, *Women and Religion*,100.

[2]Tertullian, *De Cultu Fem*. 1,1, quoted in Rosemary R. Ruether, "Misogynism and Virginal Feminism in the Fathers of the Church," in *Religion and Sexism* (ed. R. R Ruether; New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), 157.

We see here how Tertullian constructs male identity by vilifying women. It must be remembered that his audience would have been male and, by this attack on women, he is reminding men that they are not like women and were therefore not responsible for the Fall and its consequences. At no stage does he substantiate what he says but he alludes to the creation myth, a myth which has become embodied history and therefore is considered natural and factual. He also claims Pauline authority for this attack by his reference to 1 Timothy, a reference which was then used by New Testament exegetes to confirm the naturalness of women's inferiority. As Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza points out:

> Since exegetes of the New Testament take it for granted that the leadership of the early Christian communities was in the hands of men, they assumed that those women mentioned in the Pauline letters were the helpmeets and assistants of the apostles, especially of Paul.[3]

In the Zimbabwean context, as I have shown in Chapter 3, there is strong patriarchalism. Women are expected to submit to their husbands. It is, as I have mentioned in Chapter 3, very difficult to find any written evidence of how this has been reinforced. The culture is largely oral and searches of libraries have revealed no written treatises on the actual use of the Bible by missionaries in terms of women's affairs. In addition, the fact is that the patriarchal cultural *habitus* concerning women's place in society resembles that of the biblical world. This would mean that it would hardly be necessary to spell it out as the subordinate status of women would be taken for granted. However, Lloyda Fanusie comments:[4]

> The many setbacks faced by women in Christianity are usually rooted in the Scriptures that, for the most part, are a heritage from the Jewish patriarchal system. Such attitudes have been taken for granted from the period of the early church and further confirmed by the sociocultural influences of developed communities that have embraced this religion and continued to misapply generic terms to promote male supremacy over female.

Here he has shown how influential religion and Scripture are in reinforcing the prevailing *habitus* regarding the subordinate status of women.

More recently, passages which advocated the subordinate status of women have sometimes been explained away and the Pauline tradition depicted as promoting the equality of women, showing how women were to be found in leadership positions in the church. Feminist theologians have taken

[3]Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (London: SCM Press, 1983), 48.

[4]Lloyda Fanusie, "Sexuality and Women in African Culture," in *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition and the Church in Africa* (ed. M. A. Oduyoye, and M. R. A. Kanyoro; New York: Orbis Books, 1992), 140.

great pains to demonstrate how Paul and his tradition can be interpreted as having acted to liberate women. They acknowledge the patriarchal elements in Paul but they also point out that it is often the interpretation that employs androcentric models which see women as marginal figures[5] and that reconstruction of women's roles is needed.[6] Schüssler-Fiorenza emphasises, for instance the leadership roles women played,[7] as does Margaret MacDonald.[8]

The tensions within the tradition can be seen as examples of conflict between the prevailing *habitus* of the first century Mediterranean and the challenges posed by the new gospel of Jesus. As seen in the previous chapter, the first century *habitus* regarded the male as normative. The ideal was the Graeco-Roman, free male and women therefore were considered as "not normal," or even as defective, and certainly as lesser in some way and so called to be subordinate to men. At times the Pauline tradition appears to have broken away from its first century Mediterranean *habitus*, but frequently it is found to be bound by the *habitus,* unable to break free of it because it was unable to change the practices of the time or even the principles deriving from these practices, principles and practices which were so deeply ingrained that it was too difficult to change them.

This chapter will examine this tension in the Pauline tradition and how, while in some ways revolutionary in its approach to women, it was yet bound by the *habitus* and unable to break away from its patriarchal bonds. Pagels calls Paul "a man in conflict."[9] She writes: "While he affirms the liberation of slaves and women, he declines to challenge the social structures that perpetuate their present subordination."[10] She believes that Paul challenged and changed racial structures but abided by sexual ones and that while he was content to do away with circumcision and kosher laws, he still observed marital and social conventions.[11] I am not sure that the use of the term "liberation" is really appropriate in view of the strength of the *habitus* in the first century, but perhaps it would be better to say that Paul was possibly more affirming than one could expect in that he often went against existing norms. Like many Jews of the Diaspora, he was influenced by Hellenism and was exposed to a Graeco-Roman *habitus.* He reached out to the Gentile world and had companions who were not Jewish and he fought to do away with circumcision as a test of being a follower of Christ, but, as with the status of women, he did not challenge the basic social structures, working within them rather than challenging them to change.

[5]Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, "Missionaries, Apostles, Co-workers: Romans 16 and the Reconstruction of Women's Early Christian History," in *Feminist Theology: A Reader* (ed. A. Loades; London: SPCK, 1990), 63.

[6]Schüssler-Fiorenza, "Missionaries, Apostles, Co-workers," 64.

[7]Schüssler-Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 219.

[8]Margaret Y. MacDonald, "Rereading Paul: Early Interpreters of Paul on Women and Gender," in *Women and Christian Origins* (ed R. S. Kraemer and M. R. D'Angelo; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 199-220.

[9]Elaine H. Pagels, "Paul and Women: A Response to Recent Discussion," *JAAR* 42 (1974): 544.

[10]Pagels, "Paul and Women," 544-545.

[11]Pagels, "Paul and Women," 545.

I turn now to Galatians 3:28 in order to begin to understand how the Pauline tradition was infused by the Graeco-Roman *habitus*. This passage has been used by gender critics to claim gender equality proposed either by Paul himself or, if not by Paul, at least within the pre-pauline early Christian communities.

2. **Galatians 3:28**

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." This text has often been quoted as the definitive text showing Paul's radical approach to women. It has been used to show that all people are full members through baptism: circumcision no longer counts and nor does gender. But there are very differing interpretations of this passage, especially in view of the contradictions in 1 Corinthians 11:3-16, and these indicate also the same sort of tension which exists in Paul.

Parvey believes that this verse opened possibilities for a new state whereby men and women can be equal "in Christ." She says, "The inter-time ethics of Paul was no mere accommodation, or coping device, to deal with an extraordinary circumstance. It was a projection of a new vision of the once segregated human family now united in the common promise and future of Christ's community."[12]

And Hayter writes;

> What Galatians 3:27ff affirms, then, is that all the baptised are one in Christ. "In Christ", racial, social and sexual distinctions are transcended and transformed. What is good and God-given in them is retained, but those aspects which have become distorted or perverted - including male dominance - are to be removed, in theory and in practice, from the Christian community.[13]

Generally this text is taken to show that Paul sets aside gender distinctions, although he does not set aside differences which come from God (1 Cor 11:3-16 and Rom 1:18-32). It has been hailed as a text which shows men and women as being equal in the eyes of God and has been the justification for women no longer being excluded from roles in the church simply because they are women.

While, as I will suggest later, it is possible to use this text in a liberational way, it is also important to see it in the context of the *habitus* of the time. As has been shown in chapter 4, the free, Roman, adult man was considered to be the ideal and women were considered to be defective

[12]Parvey, "Theology and Leadership of Women," 135.

[13]Mary Hayter, *The New Eve in Christ* (London: SPCK, 1987), 139.

males. The society was undisguisedly patriarchal and man was the active, participating gender. The very practices of the society upheld these values: circumcision, for instance, was for men only. It was a practice that admitted men to full membership of their society and women, being excluded from this practice, necessarily remained of an inferior status.

The statement in Galatians 3:28 can, however, also be differently interpreted if we take its context into consideration and read it in the light of the Graeco-Roman *habitus*. We can see how the order of the statements in this text upholds the hierarchy. First comes (male) Jew and Greek, then slave and free and only then male and female. Paul cannot escape the hierarchical structures of the *habitus* whereby the woman features last of all. This is emphasised by his surrounding statements. In 3:26 he states: "for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God" and in 3:29: "And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise." It is evident that he is addressing men and that "all" become "one in Christ Jesus" by becoming the standard - free, male Graeco-Romans.

Meeks,[14] Briggs[15] and Boyarin[16] suggest that Galatians 3:28 is part of a baptismal formula of the early church. Baptism signified entry into a new creation and in this new creation there was no room for divisions in terms of race, status or gender. Meeks considers that the formula is a "performative utterance"[17] which, in being expressed, becomes real. He suggests that the act of baptism reverses the division of Genesis 2:21-22, undoing gender difference and inequality: "Where the image of God is restored, there, it seems, man is no longer divided – not even by the most fundamental division of all, male and female."[18] This interpretation rests on the concept of the androgyne, the myth that the first created person was one-sexed or bisexual,[19] and from this comes the idea that in baptism there is a return to the state of creation, gender is erased, the result of the fall is eradicated, and all gender divisions cease.

Briggs contends that baptism does away entirely with the concept of male and female while Boyarin suggests that this refers to spiritual rather than social status. Paul, longing for a oneness in humanity that transcends the physical, differentiates between the body and spirit. While the spirit is without gender difference, the body retains its differences in terms of gender and race.[20]

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[14]Wayne A. Meeks, "The Image of the Androgyne: Some Uses of a Symbol in Earliest Christianity," *HR* 13 no. 3 (1974): 165-208.

[15]Sheila Briggs, "Galatians" in *Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Commentary* (ed. E. Schüssler-Fiorenza; New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1994): 218-249.

[16]Daniel Boyarin, "Paul and the Genealogy of Gender," *Representations* 41 (1993): 1-33.

[17]Meeks, "The Image of the Androgyne," 182.

[18]Meeks, "The Image of the Androgyne," 185.

[19]Meeks, "The Image of the Androgyne," 185 and Boyarin, "Paul and the Genealogy of Gender," 4, 9.

[20]Boyarin, "Paul and the Genealogy of Gender," 2.

Troy Martin, on the other hand, contradicts this in considering the statement in the context of circumcision, which is a focal point of the message of Galatians as a whole. He suggests that Galatians 3:28 is not proclaiming the end of the male/female dichotomy, but rather maintaining that it is not relevant for deciding who will enter the Christian community through baptism.[21] Women can be as fully members as men can, because circumcision no longer counts.[22] Once in the context of the community, however, the Christian still has to accommodate the differences in gender, race and culture which are maintained by the *habitus* of the society. He sees this passage as being a response to a pastoral situation, rather than a proclamation about gender status.

The one-sex model can have further ramifications. Because the free, Roman male was seen as the norm, an essential part of the ideology of the *habitus,* the belief arose that women could become part of this unity only by becoming symbolically male, a concept later picked up and developed by Church Fathers who saw the only way to redemption for women being through their taking on abstinence and denying their feminine natures. As Rosemary Ruether writes: "[I]t was normal to speak of the virgin who lived 'the angelic life' as having transcended her female nature and having become 'male' . . . this led to a belief that in the Resurrection there would only be male bodies, all females having been changed into males."[23]

It is also significant that in other epistles Paul does not mention gender equality. In 1 Corinthians 12:13 he says: "For by one Spirit we were all baptised into one body - Jews or Greeks, slaves or free." Paul is here addressing Christians who have gone too far in being Spirit-filled and are threatening to become undisciplined and antinomian.[24] In Colossians 3:11 the Pauline tradition takes it even a step further: "Here there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man." In this passage Paul is not concerned with entrance to the faith or with oneness in Christ and therefore does not see it necessary to mention the male/female distinction. In the Letter to the Colossians he mentions circumcision and the fact that circumcision does not relate implicitly to women therefore excludes them completely.

In terms of the *habitus* this passage would in fact appear to maintain the values upheld by the Graeco-Roman world. That world had a very clear definition about male and female as well as about the dualism between flesh and spirit. If Paul, in the passage in Galatians, is outlining an equality in the spirit whilst maintaining gender differences in terms of roles and status, he is in no way countering the *habitus*. In the equivalent verse in 1 Corinthians he is in fact defending the

[21]Troy W. Martin, "The Covenant of Circumcision (Genesis 17:9-14) and the Situational Antitheses in Galatians 3:28," *JBL* 122 no. 1 (2003): 118.

[22]Martin, "The Covenant of Circumcision," 121.

[23]Rosemary R. Ruether, "Misogynism and Virginal Feminism in the Fathers of the Church," in *Religion and Sexism* (ed. R. R. Ruether; New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), 160.

[24]Boyarin, "Paul and the Genealogy of Gender," 8, 13.

habitus and it is with this in mind that the tension arising from reading Galatians must be understood. As Boyarin says: "No feminist critical perspective will be progressive if it is dependent on fake and prejudicial depictions of Judaism or, for that matter, so-called paganism."[25] It is essential to understand the *habitus* of the world in which Paul was writing to appreciate his message.

3. The Pauline tradition regarding the public and private spheres of the first century Mediterranean world

When dealing with dichotomies it is important to make two distinctions. Firstly, dichotomies are not always as clear cut as one would like them to be. We have seen that the dichotomy of male and female, for instance, is not always clearly defined. In the Graeco-Roman world there were, indeed, male and female, but then there were also men who took on female roles or women who "became male." The boundaries defined in terms of the dichotomies could sometimes be crossed and, as we have seen in considering the roles of women in the Graeco-Roman world, sometimes women did in fact operate in the public sphere.

A further problem arising from the use of dichotomies is that these dichotomies can sometimes lead to replication. Kathleen Gerson comments that "any vision of dichotomous gender distinctions is not only inaccurate; it is also an ideological construct that justifies and reinforces inequality."[26] The very use of dichotomies can lead to the strengthening of these categories.

However, having said this, certain categories do arise, though one needs to treat them with caution. One of the dichotomies arising from the *habitus* of the first century Mediterranean is that of public/private. As we saw in the previous chapter, women were expected to marry and have children and were largely confined to the domestic sphere. Paul and the tradition that arose in later writings found themselves caught in a tension between women who were acting in the public sphere of the growing church (though, of course, it operated initially in the private sphere in the form of house churches) and the private roles that women were expected to fill in terms of the *habitus*. I shall start by looking at the teaching of the Pauline tradition on the domestic roles that women filled.

[25]Boyarin, "Paul and the Genealogy of Gender," 3.

[26]Kathleen Gerson, "Moral Dilemmas, Moral Strategies, and the Transformation of Gender: Lessons from Two Generations of Work and Family Change," *Gender and Society* 16 no. 1 (2002): 10.

3.1. **Paul and the private sphere**

As has been seen in Chapter 4, the *habitus* largely restricted women to roles in the private sphere of the first century Mediterranean world. This was the sphere of the home where, though the man was the head of the household, women had considerable influence within certain boundaries. The Pauline tradition is based on the prevailing *habitus* and reflects the ideology of the time.

3.1.1. *Marriage*

In various translations of the Pauline teachings it seems that the concepts concerning marriage are unusual in that in certain of the writings there appears to be an emphasis on mutuality in the marriage relationship. This, as shall be seen, however, was often due to the ideas of the interpreters who translated the Bible, rather than to be found in the Greek text itself.

In 1 Corinthians 7:2-6 Paul wrote:

> But because of the temptation to immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not rule over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not rule over his own body, but the wife does.

It would seem from this translation that the husband and wife here have exactly the same rights and the wife is not to be treated as property. In fact, different Bibles translate v.3 in different ways. The King James Bible says that the husband should "render unto the wife due benevolence," the New International Version that "the husband should fulfil his marital duty" and the Jerusalem Bible says: "The husband must give his wife what she has a right to expect." The literal translation of the Greek reads: "The husband should give back to the wife what is owed." Interpreters today might see this in terms of equal rights, but the first century *habitus* regarded it in a different way. "What is owed" to the woman by the man was quite different from "what is owed" by the woman to the man.[27] Paul could therefore, in reality, be seen to be upholding the *status quo* rather than challenging it.

Equally, in 1 Corinthians 11:12, after his affirmation of man as head of the woman, Paul goes on with a surprising observation when he says; "Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God." It looks on the surface as though Paul is here transcending the *habitus* of

[27]Elizabeth A. Castelli, "Gender, Theory and The Rise of Christianity: A Response to Rodney Stark," *JECS* 6 no. 2 (1998): 245.

women's subordination but, when one considers what has preceded this, his exhortations on the veil and the comment in v.9, his inability to escape the *habitus* of his culture is clear.

In v.9 he categorically states that women came from men and were created for men and in v.12, when he says that man is born of woman, he is not contradicting his earlier statement and saying that men derive from women, but rather is giving men the priority of status. Furthermore, when he says "all things are from God," he is claiming a divine ordinance for maintaining the *habitus*. However it and the following verse are read, it is clear that Paul is giving priority to the male.[28]

It can also be noted that, in terms of the one-sex model, Paul is echoing the *habitus* of the time. We have already seen that there was a belief in the primal androgyne and Paul may here have been referring to that though it must be remembered that this would not mean sexual equality but rather absorption into the male. Jervis notes that Paul is maintaining the difference between the sexes but also wanting to preserve unity. He wants men and women to experience unity in Christ, a return to the primal unity of creation, but he also needs them to remain aware of difference. Jervis comments: "What Paul wants his reader to know is that the unity of man and woman in Christ does not obliterate the diversity of the sexes, but rather establishes it in all of its glory – and believers should not disguise this."[29]

It is also evident that Paul regards marriage from a male point of view and is legitimating a view of marriage which was hierarchical and patriarchal according to the prevailing *habitus*. We further see this in 1 Corinthians 7:32-35 where it appears that he judges married women as less dedicated than men.

The later Pauline tradition apparently also has the same problem when it comes to this conflict. In Ephesians 5:21-30, though this is a passage that shows a very male bias, the Pauline tradition speaks of a measure of mutuality in that while women are to be "subject" to their husbands, husbands should love their wives "as their own bodies." But we must remember that this is not as liberal as it seems, because men are to love women as "their own bodies," i.e. as their own *male* bodies. Women are not to love men "as their own bodies," for their *female* bodies were considered inferior. In addition, the Pauline tradition accepted hierarchical patterns within marriage as seen in Colossians 3:18-24, Ephesians 5:21-6:9, 1 Timothy 2:8-15, 3:4 and Titus 2:2-10.

In Colossians 3:18-24, the status of women is clearly set alongside that of children and slaves. They were considered of a low status, just as children and slaves were. The emphasis on this passage is obedience and even though the word used for the condition of women is not "obey" but

[28]David E. Garland, *I Corinthians*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Michigan: Baker Academic, 2003), 529.

[29]L. Ann Jervis, "'But I Want You to Know . . .': Paul's Midrashic Intertextual Response to the Corinthian Worshipers (1 Cor 11:2-16)," *JBL* 112 no. 2 (1993): 246.

"be subject to," the difference in meaning is minimal and in reality the implication is the same. In fact, what the Pauline tradition is doing here by saying "as is fitting in the Lord" is to give the *habitus* the power of divine command so that it could not be challenged.

Ephesians 5:21-6:9 presents a similar emphasis on the hierarchy of family life. Again women are expected, through divine command, to be subjected to male headship. Women are to be subject *in everything* to their husbands. Furthermore, husbands are to love their wives, "as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her." Not only are women seen to be inferior to men, but it is clear in this statement that the Pauline tradition shared the common view that women are subject to "uncleanness," that they are potential sources of shame to their husbands or fathers. Men are told to "love" their wives, but women are told to "respect" their husbands. This, coupled with the repetition of the duties of slaves and children, continues to emphasise the patriarchal hierarchal structure of the first century Mediterranean *habitus*, to which the Pauline tradition conforms.

In 1 Timothy 2:8-15, and 3:4 this hierarchical structure is further developed and emphasised. By this stage, in the later tradition of the Pastorals, the role of women was clearly defined as one of silence and obedience. This will be further dealt with below, but it is clear that here men were in control of their households and the female role was one of silence and submission. In Titus 2:2-10 this same hierarchical principle was again given divine authority.

Paul, as seen in 1 Corinthians 7:12-16, appears to have accepted mixed marriages. Women in the first century were expected to follow the beliefs of their husbands:[30] it was one of the virtues expected of wives. Allowing mixed marriages suggests that this need not be the case. It is, however, important to note that Paul is not saying here that believers are permitted to enter into a marriage contract with unbelievers but rather that if they are already married and one person came to belief in Christ that this is not an indication for divorce. Paul, as has been seen so frequently, is here not attempting to change the social order but maintaining the *habitus* as far as possible.

3.1.2. *Divorce*

On the subject of divorce Paul writes: "To the married I give charge, not I but the Lord, that the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does, let her remain single or else be reconciled to her husband) - and that the husband should not divorce his wife" (1 Cor 7:10-11).

[30]Margaret Y. MacDonald, "Reading Real Women through the Undisputed Letters of Paul," in *Women and Christian Origins* (ed. R. S. Kraemer and M.R. D'Angelo; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 214.

Admittedly, he is here talking about separation rather than divorce for the woman, but nonetheless it was not generally accepted that women could divorce their husbands, though husbands could divorce their wives. However, in Romans 7:1-3 Paul writes:

> Do you not know, brethren, - for I am speaking to those who know the law - that the law is binding on a person only during his life? Thus a married woman is bound by law to her husband as long as he lives; but if her husband dies she is discharged from the law concerning the husband. Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress.

He makes it quite clear that a woman cannot divorce her husband. He does not turn it around for men and say what men can or cannot do. The woman's role is passive - she "is bound," "is discharged," "will be called an adulteress" - she is not actively seen to be doing anything. Paul's ideal is still that of the silent, submissive wife of the Graeco-Roman and Jewish tradition.

3.1.3. *Celibacy*

As in other areas of Paul's teaching, there are differing views of his advocacy of celibacy. Some researchers consider this advocacy as radical, especially as Emperor Augustus had passed a law compelling marriage and denying privileges, inheritance and independence to unmarried people (cf. Chapter 4).[31] When Paul says, in 1 Corinthians 7:8, "To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is well for them to remain single as I do," he is giving women an independence they did not have in society for a woman was always under guardianship, either of her father or her husband, and this command from Paul gave them an option to stay single.

In addition, the option to remain single allowed women responsibility for their honour, which until then had always been bound up in men. As MacDonald points out:

> By approving of the widow's choice to remain unmarried, Paul is sanctioning a life where the woman is removed from the immediate protection of a male and is responsible for representing her own honour and the honour of her community to the outside world. . . . To give unmarried women in the community responsibility for defending their own honour and the honour of the community is a remarkable gesture within the context of first century society.[32]

[31]MacDonald, "Reading Real Women," 211, Sawyer, *Women and Religion*, 21 and MacDonald, "Rereading Paul," 249.

[32]MacDonald, *Early Christian Women*, 152.

This is one way of interpreting Paul's actions. There is, however, another aspect to it. Peter Brown explains that in the authenticated Pauline writings the theme of celibacy arises only in 1 Corinthians.[33] He shows that Paul's view of the sanctity of the body[34] is in sharp contrast to the view held by the Graeco-Roman world where, for men, there was much sexual freedom. The Corinthian society shared in this Graeco-Roman *habitus* and the Corinthian Christians were becoming involved in excesses of all kinds. Paul attempts to address this problem and impose discipline on the community in his first letter to Corinth.[35]

Meanwhile, according to Brown, a group of devout followers reacted by renouncing marriage and sexual relations in order to build a new society.[36] Paul did not approve of such a stand and did not want celibacy for the whole church as he felt that it was safer to be married in order to control immorality (1 Cor 7:9). This, however, is not to deny that he did appear to consider that celibates lived lives better prepared for the trials to come (1 Cor 7:26) and that he believed that those who were not married were better fitted to following the Lord faithfully (1 Cor 7:32-34). What Paul was doing, however, was unwittingly laying the groundwork for future generations to advocate celibacy as the ideal.

When Paul writes, "it is well for them to remain single as I do," he is also making himself the model to be copied. In this he is adhering to the *habitus* which dictated that maleness was the ideal. Giving women the option of celibacy meant not only offering them control over their honour, but also, in giving them the chance of denying themselves the possibility of bearing children, offering them the possibility of becoming symbolically male. Even if celibacy did allow women a freedom they had not had before, in another respect it led to the reinforcing of the *habitus* which entrenched the superiority of the male and in which the one-sex concept of creation was embedded.

And as far as widows are concerned, Paul suggests that a widow "is happier if she remains as she is" (1 Cor 7:40). In view of Paul's expectation of an imminent eschaton, it is hardly surprising that he is more concerned that people should focus on the "affairs of the Lord" than on marriage and reproduction.

Furthermore, Brown points out that many of the converts to Christianity found the purity codes of the Jewish faith appealing.[37] While Paul does not accept the necessity for circumcision and the Jewish food laws in Christianity, many of his followers found the discipline of the Jewish faith

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[33]Peter Brown, T*he Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 52.

[34]1 Corinthians 6:15.

[35]Brown, "The Body and Society," 52.

[36]Brown, "The Body and Society," 53.

[37]Brown, "The Body and Society," 59.

attractive: “Sexual prohibitions had always distinguished Jews, in their own eyes at least, from the sinister indeterminacy of the gentiles. These were now asserted with exceptional vigour.”[38]

This was another source of tension between the *habitus* and the teaching of the early church.

3.2. **Paul, women and public life**

3.2.1. *General Remarks*

There is no doubt that women in the early church took on a more public role than was usual. Firstly, there is evidence that they participated in public worship. In 1 Corinthians 11:5 Paul refers to “any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled.” There is much discussion about the veiling of women, but an important point that is often glossed over is that women were obviously praying and preaching in public. Women such as Junia and Phoebe were co-workers who stood side by side with the men, not in subservient positions. Paul uses the same Greek verb - *kopiân* - to describe both his work and teaching and also that of women[39] which signifies that the work was the same and not different for women.

Evans makes the point that women were prominent in nearly every church where details are known[40] and MacDonald shows that women hosted meetings, were patrons, influential missionaries, had honoured titles and were generally publicly visible.[41] Tomkins indicates that though Paul greets sixteen men and only eight women, on the other hand he praises only two men but four women.[42] Torjensen has shown that epitaphs from Egypt, Phrygia, Greece and Sicily indicate that women were presbyters and deacons.[43] She has also shown that during the first three centuries of the church office was ungendered. In the catacombs are pictures that show women in ministry. She describes one picture of seven women round a semi-circular table on which are loaves of bread, with the central woman apparently presiding.[44]

In the early church, house churches were important. The fact that meetings took place in house churches meant that they were taking place in the private sphere where it was acceptable for women

[38]Brown, “The Body and Society,” 60.

[39]Schüssler-Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 169.

[40]Evans, *Woman in the Bible*, 129.

[41]MacDonald, “Early Christian Women,” 209.

[42]Stephen Tomkins, *Paul and His World* (Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2004), 146.

[43]Karen Jo Torjesen, “Reconstruction of Women’s Early Christian History,” in *Searching the Scriptures Vol. 1: A Feminist Introduction* (ed. E. Schüssler-Fiorenza; New York: Crossroad, 1993), 293.

[44]Torjesen, “Reconstruction of Women’s Early Christian History,” 294.

to take a leading part.[45] This brought women into the leadership of the church, at first in private capacities, but then they moved more into the public sphere as they taught, prophesied and preached.

The fact that the writer of 1Timothy makes such a point of forbidding women to take public roles in church indicates that possibly the opposite was happening.[46] Maloney suggests that the very fact that so much space is given to women's behaviour in this letter indicates that their active participation and leadership roles were of great concern to the writer of Timothy.[47] Horrell indicates that women in leadership positions at this time were regarded as leaders in a "false" faith. He comments:

> On the specific subject of leadership among the so-called false teachers little is revealed. However, it seems clear that the "false" forms of the faith allow women to take leading roles, or at least, that women regard themselves as legitimate teachers and propagators of this faith.[48]

Regarding the order of widows, Charlotte Methuen comments that if the instructions in this letter were descriptive rather than prescriptive it is likely that they were reflecting a view of widows that showed what the writer thought should pertain, rather than what was actually the case.[49] The ministry of widows, which I shall consider in more detail when commenting on the Pastoral Epistles, appears to have been to pray and to advise, comfort and support other women.

In 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 Paul appears to insist on women being silent in church. This is in direct conflict with his instructions in 1 Corinthians 11:5 where he gives instructions as to how women should dress when praying in public. It is often suggested that this is a later interpolation.[50] However, again, it has in the past been interpreted as carrying Paul's authority and is, once more, a reflection of the tension in the Pauline tradition.

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[45]Schüssler-Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 177.

[46]Joanna Dewey, "1 Timothy," in *The Women's Bible Commentary* (ed. C. A. Newsom and S. H. Ringe; London: SPCK, 1992), 354.

[47]Linda M. Maloney, "The Pastoral Epistles," in *Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Commentary.* (ed. E. Schüssler-Fiorenza; New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1994), 377-378.

[48]David Horrell, "Leadership Patterns and the Development of Ideology in Early Christianity," S*ociology of Religion* 58 no. 4 (1997): 332.

[49]Charlotte Methuen, "The 'Virgin Widow': A Problematic Social Role for the Early Church?" *The Harvard Theological Review* 90 no. 3 (1997): 294.

[50]Bart D. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 38.

To conclude, MacDonald says: "In short, the references to specific women in Paul's letters indicate that women's leadership in this early period was neither different from that of man nor of a lesser value to the community than the contributions of men."[51]

As I have commented before, there appears to be a tension in Paul. The *habitus* of the first-century Mediterranean world was such that women were regarded as subordinate and had clearly defined roles, but on the other hand the new faith appeared, if perhaps only to a limited extent, to allow women an active role. The teaching in Genesis 3:28, however it is interpreted, indicated some sort of equality for male and female and there were some communities which took this, perhaps, further than Paul had intended. Commentators, as it has been seen, tend to differ in their opinions as to how far this female liberty went, but the point I am making here is that there was (and still is) this tension in interpreting Paul's words and in assessing the impact of them on the society of his time.

3.2.2. *A consideration of the roles of specific women*

It is helpful at this point to consider specific women who are mentioned by Paul and who were in public leadership positions in the church. The church in Corinth, for instance, had three women leaders - Chloe, Phoebe and Prisca[52] and there was no indication that these women had a different role from that of the men.

3.2.2.1. Phoebe

Two terms are used for Phoebe in Romans 16:1-2. The first is *diakono*s, a term which is specifically masculine and for which there was no female equivalent. There was no special office of deaconess in the church of that time, so it is to be concluded that Phoebe's work was the same as that of any other male *diakono*s. Later translators and commentators struggled with this and translated the term as "deaconess," largely because they could not conceive of the notion that a woman might carry out the same roles as a man.

The other term used in relation to Phoebe is *prostatis*, a word which in contemporary literature implies "leading officer," "president," "governor," "superintendent." MacDonald indicates that it also could suggest that she was a benefactor[53] and Horrell surmises that she was a person of some social standing as she is described as a patron of many.[54]

[51]MacDonald, "Reading Real Women," 209.

[52]Schüssler-Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 219.

[53]MacDonald, "Reading Real Women," 206.

[54]Horrell, "Leadership Patterns," 326.

Furthermore, as Elizabeth Castelli has noted, she is not named in relation to a husband, brother, father or guardian which leads one to surmise that she lived and acted independently of the typical legal relationships of the time which situated women in relationship with male family members.[55]

3.2.2.2. Prisca

Prisca and Junia (see below) are defined not as "wives" but as "fellow workers" or *synergos*. This term implies some status of authority in the early church and is also applied to Timothy and Apollos. We are told in Acts 18:26 that Prisca taught Apollos, an unusual task for a woman, and we know that of the three times she was mentioned in conjunction with her husband, Aquila, twice she was placed first, which suggests that she had a role senior to his.[56] Castelli has discussed how her role was later interpreted as being that of missionary to women only, although the above fact seems to contradict this idea.[57]

3.2.2.3. Junia

In Romans 16:7 Junia is called an apostle. This was a very important designation, one that suggested she had seen Jesus and had been commissioned by him to spread the gospel. This term was so unusual for women (and it is used in the masculine) that for a long time it was believed that *Junian* referred to a man and it was translated as Junias, with the verse following describing her and Andronicus as "men of note among the apostles." But early on it was known that she was female and Chrysostom wrote: "O how great is the devotion of this woman that she should be counted worthy of the appellation of apostle."[58] The editors of the English translation of his work were so appalled at the thought that a woman may have been an apostle that they decided that there must be a mistake as it was considered impossible for a woman to have been an apostle.[59] By this time the *habitus* of the church was based on firmly hierarchal and male-dominated principles that people accepted as "natural" and suggestions that it might have been otherwise simply could not be entertained, but it is clear that in Paul's church there was room for such a role for a woman.

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[55]Elizabeth A. Castelli, "Romans," in *Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Commentary (*ed. E. Schüssler-Fiorenza; New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1994), 279.

[56]Castelli, "Romans," 279.

[57]Castelli, "Romans," 279.

[58]From The Homilies of St John Chrysostom, Vol. 11, p.555, quoted in Evans, *Woman in the Bible*, 124.

[59]Evans, *Woman in the Bible*, 124; Castelli, "Romans," 280.

3.2.2.4. Euodia and Syntyche

Euodia and Syntyche, mentioned in Philippians 4:2-3, may have been a missionary pair[60] who worked with Paul on an relatively equal basis for they "worked side by side" with him. Of course, in terms of the *habitus* equality as we understand it today was impossible. They were working only because Paul allowed it and were therefore still under male authority. In terms of *the habitus* complete equality was impossible yet they appear to have had great authority in the community. Schüssler-Fiorenza comments: "Paul considers the authority of both women in the community at Philippi so great that he fears that their dissension could do serious damage to the Christian mission."[61] The indication is that they were engaged in teaching and evangelising and held positions of leadership in the ministry of the church.[62]

3.2.2.5. Others

Also mentioned are Mary (Rom 16:6), Tryphaena and Tryphosa (Rom 16:12), all apparently workers "in the Lord," a phrase which indicates that they were missionary workers and evangelists, and Appia (Phlm v.2). These are mentioned in passing, but it is apparent that, like the others, they were known in the church and therefore must have had some sort of public role.

It would, therefore, appear that to some degree women were moving out of the private sphere in the new church, even if it can also be argued that ideologically the attitudes of the people were still heavily influenced by the *habitus*. However, as the church moved out from the private sphere of house churches and women became more active in public, the outside world found itself threatened and indeed some people within the church felt this also. The church, an alienated minority under threat of prosecution,[63] retreated from any challenge it might have hoped to make and embraced the practices of the first century Mediterranean *habitus*. The writings of the Pastoral Epistles reflect a later church which was geared to fit in with the *habitus* of the society surrounding it. They represent a defensive strategy by which the church hoped to compromise with the world and adapt to the values of society in order to be accepted. They reflect the church as a patriarchal household and as a model of the household as it was believed it should be. By this time the church was characterised by

[60]Carolyn Osiek, "Philippians," in *Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Commentary (*ed. E. Schüssler-Fiorenza; New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1994), 246.

[61]Schüssler-Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 170.

[62]Louise Kretzschmar, "Hermeneutics, Culture and the Apostle Paul's View of Women," *Women's Studies* 2 (1990): 42.

[63]Schüssler-Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 261.

strong male leadership and women were expected to remain in the household and behave themselves, adhering to the values of obedience and submission.[64]

The writer of 1Timothy 2:8 states: "I desire then that in every place the men [*andras*] should pray." Public prayer was now the preserve of the men, not women. The active role in the church was by this time reserved for men. The church had moved out of the household, into the public sphere and the world around would not accept women in public roles, even within the limitations that Paul placed on some, as in the Corinthian community.

Likewise, the church offices were exclusively for men, for the hierarchical order had firmly established itself in the church. In 1Timothy 3:1-7 the role of bishop is reserved for a man, "the husband of one wife" and men alone are deacons, also "the husband of one wife" (1 Tim 3:12). On the other hand, there is a suggestion in v.11 of the same chapter that women could also be deacons with "the women likewise," but this has tended to be glossed over and the interpretation of the whole passage taken to indicate that only men were deacons. In Titus 1:6 we are told that elders, too, were to be "the husband of one wife."

It is clear that by this stage the hierarchy of the church was firmly in the hands of men. There is a strong sense that the bishop was top of the hierarchical tree and that power to rule resided in his hands. We read in 1Timothy 3:4-5: "He must manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way; for if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how can he care for God's church?" This is a reflection of a patriarchal, hierarchical structure, far removed from the house churches of the earliest communities and now firmly relegating women to the private sphere, away from the eyes of the public.

4. **Patriarchy and hierarchy**

The first century Mediterranean was a patriarchal, hierarchal society and Paul cannot escape the bias imprinted by the *habitus* of this society. Paul's self-image, his view of apostleship and even his view of God is purely patriarchal and hierarchal. In this respect we see no conflict between the prevailing *habitus* and the ideas of the new church though the tension was more apparent in what women did in the church.

Evans writes of patriarchy:

> In a patriarchal society, social and cosmic reality is defined according to the way in which the male members of the society perceive reality. That is, male members of the society

[64]Schüssler-Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 290.

> define both male and female roles and values; the male way of understanding reality is then internalised by all. The society becomes a man's society where women are allowed a place.[65]

Ruether[66] indicates that, in patriarchy, men are viewed as the "norms of humanity" and women as deviations from that norm, while Haas suggests that women in that sort of society are defined in relation to men; they are not people in their own right and have no power.[67] Men are the ones who have the authority, power and value. Evans then goes on to say that this is not true of Paul, but I would not agree with her. There is plenty of evidence that he saw reality in male terms. Certainly, as has been seen, in the first century Mediterranean world, women were defined in terms of maleness and it would appear that Paul and his tradition were writing to and for men, with women largely invisible, even though in some respects there seems to have been a tension in him as he tries to reflect the liberating message of the gospel.

5. **Paul's self-image and his image of apostleship**

Having discussed the ways in which Paul views the roles of women in the public and private spheres, I now turn to a consideration of Paul himself as seen in his own writings and that of the Pauline tradition. His character permeates the writings and we can see from this reflection how he perceives the world in terms of the one-sex male model of perfection. We see in these writings not only how he sees himself in terms of a model of apostleship - a male standard for others to follow - but also how he interprets his apostleship itself in terms of the *habitus* and its ideal of the masculine. In the light of this consideration I will suggest that, in fact, he does not regard women so much as equals as co-operators with him, but to act as co-operators they had to share his ideology of a ministry that was essentially male-centred. To be partners with him, they had to become symbolically male in that they had to adopt male values.

I shall begin with a discussion of the imagery Paul uses to describe his ministry. The Pauline tradition continued this tradition, too, and many of the images are from the Pauline tradition rather than from Paul himself, but we must remember that for centuries these were regarded as having the apostle's authority and as being representative of his thinking.

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[65]Evans, *Woman in the Bible*, 63.

[66]Rosemary R. Ruether, *Sexism and God Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), quoted in McCant, "Inclusive Language," 176.

[67]Guenther Haas, "Patriarchy as an Evil that God Tolerated: Analysis and Implications for the Authority of Scripture," *JETS* 38 (1995): 322.

5.1. **Pauline imagery**

Pauline imagery was taken from the world of men and there was little to which a woman could relate. It was a world of athletics and warfare, military service, competition and also of agriculture.[68] These images, furthermore, reinforced the *habitus*. As Perkins writes: "[T]extual representations do not just reflect, in some unproblematic way, reality and social institutions, but, rather, help to create and maintain them."[69] By using masculine imagery, Paul reinforces the belief that ministry is male-centred and the *habitus* was therefore further entrenched.

5.1.1. *Warfare*

Paul's images frequently concern the trappings of war. In 1 Thessalonians 5:8, he talks of the "breastplate of faith," the "helmet . . . of salvation"; in Romans 13:12 he tells his readers to "cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light." There is an interesting comparison here. Remembering that the feminine was traditionally associated with mystery and confusion ("darkness") and men with reason and intelligibility ("light"), Paul is here subtly, though possibly not consciously, encouraging male values and discrediting the feminine.

In 2 Corinthians 6:7 we read, "with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left" and in 2 Corinthians 10:3 Paul says: "For though we live in the world we are not carrying on a worldly war, for the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds." Furthermore in Romans 8:37 Paul declares: "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us."

In 1 Corinthians 9:7, Paul asks: "Who serves as a soldier at his own expense?" and in the Pauline tradition of 2 Timothy 2:3-4 the Christian is compared with a soldier: "Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier on service gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to satisfy the one who enlisted him." In 1 Timothy 6:12 we read: "Fight the good fight of the faith." This is the language of men and of patriarchy, a language of domination and aggression, far removed from the female sphere of the home, of nurture and conservation.

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[68]Judith Perkins, *The Suffering Self: Pain and Narrative Representations in the Early Christian Era* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 343.

[69]Perkins, *The Suffering Self*, 12.

5.1.2. *Athletics*

Athletic games were mainly for men although in Greece a few women did take part. Meeks reports the example of the three daughters of Hermesian of Tralles, who won prizes in the Isthmian, Pythian, Nemeian, and Epidauri games each year between 47 and 41 B.C.E.[70] But in most cases men were the competitors aiming for the wreath, for the prize. Though there were instances of women gladiators, too, this was really a man's pursuit. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 9:24-5: "Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable."

He goes on (v. 26-7) to describe how he trained himself as a Christian: "Well, I do not run aimlessly, I do not box as one beating the air; but I pommel my body and subdue it." And in 2 Timothy 2:5, the Pauline tradition uses the metaphor again: "An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules."

Again, these images are directed at men. Also in Galatians 2:2 and 5:7 Paul talks of the Christian "running . . . in vain" and "running well." Very few women had part in such pursuits: these are the images chosen by someone seeing through a male perspective and writing to men.

5.1.3. *Agriculture*

"It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops" (2 Tim 2:6). Though women were involved in some forms of farming like gathering the cut sheaves, weeding and hoeing,[71] the images used were masculine. In 1 Corinthians 9:7 Paul states: "Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Who tends a flock without getting some of the milk?" The planter, the shepherd, the ploughman and the thresher (v.10) were male occupations. The implication, once again, is that the Christian faith was for men, not women, and if women wanted to be active in the faith they had to adopt a male ideology and aim at becoming "male."

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[70]Wayne A. Meeks, "The Image of the Androgyne: Some Uses of a Symbol in Earliest Christianity," *HR* 13 no. 3 (1974): 168.

[71]Walter Scheidel, "The Most Silent Women of Greece and Rome: Rural Labour and Women's Life in the Ancient World (I)," in *Greece and Rome* (ed. I. McAuslan and P. Walcot. Second series. Volume 42. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 212.

5.2. **How Paul perceived himself**

There is little doubt that Paul saw himself in patriarchal/hierarchal terms. Patriarchy, as defined by McCant, literally means "rule of the father."[72] Men are in control: they dominate women who have to submit to them. The language of patriarchy is that of control, of status and power. It is evident that Paul regards himself as high on the hierarchical tree. In Romans 1:1 he says he was "called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God." He sees himself as somehow different, special, and, as we see in 1 Corinthians 7:17, this was undoubtedly as hierarchically superior and in authority: "This is *my rule* in the churches" (my italics). Furthermore he claims to be more in touch with God than others. In 1 Corinthians 14:37-8 he writes: "If any one thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that what I am writing to you is a command of the Lord. If any one does not recognise this, he is not recognised."

He further claims a special authority when he says, in 1 Corinthians 9:1: "Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus, our Lord? Are you not my workmanship in the Lord?" and in Galatians 1:1 he says: "Paul an apostle - not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead." His authority and position, as he sees it, were given to him directly by Jesus Christ and his position is therefore unassailable.

He describes himself as a "father" to his followers (e.g. 1 Cor 4:15; 1 Thess 2:11), a very patriarchal image. As Schüssler-Fiorenza explains, by using this term he introduced into the new church the idea of it being a patriarchal family: "Thus Paul made it possible for later generations to transfer the hierarchy of the patriarchal family to the new family of God."[73] He was preparing the way for the Church to preserve the *habitus*, an ideology in which to be male was to be superior, to lead, and in which women were to become inferior, passive participants, only to be allowed an active role by adopting "male" virtues.

6. **Paul's image of God and Jesus**

It would appear that Paul's image of God and of Jesus Christ is one that he expresses in patriarchal/ hierarchical terms. Power, glory, majesty, rule are the terms with which he expresses his understanding of God.

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[72]Jerry W. McCant, "Inclusive Language and the Gospel," *RelEd* 94 (1999): 173.

[73]Schüssler-Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 234.

6.1. **God seen in terms of male power and glory**

There is abundant evidence that Paul's view of God is patriarchal. In Romans 1:20, he speaks of God's "eternal power and deity," in Romans 1:23 of the "glory of the immortal God" and in Romans 3:24 (also Gal 1:5), God is identified with "glory." The letter to the Ephesians reveals God not only as Father, but as Father of glory (Eph 1:17) before whom he "bows the knee" (Eph 3:14) and from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named" (Eph 3:15), an image of patriarchal lineage. The Pauline image of God is one of father, brother, husband, the ruling patriarch, where caring necessitates dependence and submission. In Ephesians 4:6 we are told of "one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all."

God is also seen as powerful and conquering. Ephesians 1:19 emphasises the "immeasurable greatness of his power" and his "great might." The writer of 2 Corinthians 4:7 speaks of God's "transcendent power" which belongs to God alone and in 2 Corinthians 6:7 of "the power of God." In 1 Corinthians 4:20 the kingdom of God is described as power: "For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power."

The Pauline tradition brings this all together in 1 Timothy 1:17 where these all come together in a hymn of praise to a powerful, male God: "To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen."

Even when God is seen as love and mercy, this does not tend to be a nurturing, compassionate love, but a love associated with power. Paul, in Romans 9:17-8 writes: "So then he has mercy upon whomever he wills, and he hardens the heart of whomever he wills."

Even creation itself is seen in terms of power, as seen in Romans 9:21: "Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for beauty and another for menial use?"

6.2. **God as judge**

Not only is God seen in terms of power, but he is also seen as a judge, a purely male occupation in the first century Mediterranean world. Paul frequently talks of the judgement of God (Rom 2:2, 5, 5:16) and in Romans 9:28 we are told that he will "execute his sentence." In Romans 2:16 we have: "God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus" and in Romans 3:6 Paul writes: "For then how could God judge the world?."

6.3. **God is to be feared for his wrath**

This male, aggressive God, the judge, the powerful One, is a God to be feared. The writer of 2 Corinthians 5:11 refers to "the fear of the Lord," for God is a God of wrath, as in Romans 5:9 ("the wrath of God"), Romans 9:22 ("what if God, desiring to show his wrath"), Ephesians 5:6 ("the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience") and 1 Thessalonians 2:16 ("God's wrath has come upon them at last").

6.4. **Patriarchal images of Christ**

Showing Jesus Christ in terms of patriarchal power created a situation in which the male power of the *habitus* was further concretised. In Romans 1:4 Christ is described as having been "designated Son of God in power" and in the end times he will "deliver the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power." He too has glory as of God, as seen in 2 Corinthians 4:4 ("the gospel of the glory of Christ").

Jesus is clearly placed high in a hierarchy as can be seen in the following passages by Paul, but even more often in the Pauline tradition. In each case, these are patriarchal terms because patriarchy is essentially a hierarchical structure. The "patriarch" is at the top of the pyramid, an authoritarian character with the others below him. In these examples Jesus is shown as being "high," above all others, judging them and meting out reward and punishment.

- Philippians 2:10-11: "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."
- Colossians 1:15: "He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation:
- Colossians 2:10: "the head of all rule and authority."
- Ephesians 1:20-22: "which he accomplished in Christ when he raised him from the dead and made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come; and he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church."
- In 2 Timothy 4, the image of Christ the judge is evident (v. 1): "Christ Jesus who is to judge the living and the dead," (v.8) "the Lord, the righteous judge."

7. The dichotomy of visible/invisible

Another dichotomy which supported the first century Mediterranean *habitus* and was another aspect of patriarchal hierarchy was that of visible and invisible. Women were invisible as people in this world. There were, indeed, statues and pictures of women and writings about them, but these were not of women as people, but portrayed women as ideals or else as caricatures. Jacobs has shown how Eve, for example, was seen through male interpretive eyes. She writes:

> Having, according to the Genesis narrative, been made from man, she has since then mainly been made by man, that is, she has been looked at with male interpretative eyes ever since. Eve's story has therefore mostly been that of male estimation, male honour, male anxiety, always with a strong dose of male authority added to it.[74]

In the writings of the Pauline tradition, too, women are largely invisible. Women of history are barely mentioned and Paul and the Pauline tradition addressed themselves to men in subtle ways which caused men to be visible, the ones at the forefront, while women were largely forgotten.

7.1. Invisibility of women in the Pauline tradition

As we have seen, Paul in several instances accepts women in leadership positions in the church, but on the other hand often he seems not so much to be rejecting them or putting them on a lower level, but to be simply unaware of them.

7.1.1. *Mentions of women in biblical history*

Very few women in biblical history are mentioned by Paul, while many of the patriarchs are mentioned. He names Sarah, Rebekah, and Hagar. When they are mentioned, women are mentioned in terms of fertility - particularly in terms of bearing sons - or infertility. They are memorable because of their ability or inability to carry on the male line. This emphasises the importance of the male blood line. In the Graeco-Roman world it was the male blood tie which was important[75] and, in both Roman and Jewish law, inheritance was through the male line. When Paul shows these Jewish women bearing sons, we are reminded that it was through this male line that the promises of God were passed. Again, the *habitus* was reinforced when Paul speaks of the importance of the

[74]Maretha Jacobs, "Eve: Influential Glimpses from Her Story," *Scriptura* 90 no. 3 (2005): 766.

[75]Judith P. Hallett, "Women's Lives in the Ancient Mediterranean," in *Women and Christian Origins* (ed. R. S. Kraemer and M. R. D'Angelo; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 129-130.

male and that women are important only in so far as they are vessels bearing male seed. It is also to be noted that this was also a reflection of the belief that the woman was merely a recipient of male seed and played no part herself in the actual act of conception and therefore had a passive role to play in the regeneration of the species.[76] Again, the *habitus* was underlined: women were less important than men.

Sarah is mentioned along with Abraham in Romans 4:19, but whilst Abraham is an example of faith, Sarah is simply an example of a barren womb. (Note it is not the person of Sarah who is important here, but her womb.) In Romans 9:11 she is mentioned again, this time to tell that she bore a son. Again, it is not she herself is not important, but that she bore a son to carry on the line.

In Romans 9:11 Rebekah is also mentioned, to tell us that she "conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac," but again it is the conception and continuance of the line that Paul is emphasising.

In Galatians 4:21-26, Hagar and Sarah are spoken of in terms of childbirth and having sons. But they are given as examples of the covenants: "One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar." Sarah is the "free woman" who, again, is important because she bore a son. It is also significant that Rebekah and Sarah have no creative power in themselves; they bear sons only through the intervention of God and are powerless themselves as women.[77]

In Galatians 4:4 we are told: "But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman." Women bear sons; if they bear daughters it is not mentioned. Women are seen as vehicles for men to be born, not as people. It is in bearing sons that they fulfil their roles as women.[78]

Eve is mentioned in 1 Timothy 2:13-14 and in 2 Corinthians 11:3, both in the Pauline tradition rather than by Paul himself. It is significant that Eve is not mentioned in the Old Testament after Genesis, until the Apocrypha. The Old Testament at no point blamed the woman rather than the man for the fall.[79] She was purely an example of someone who was deceived by the serpent's cunning. It is only in the intertestamental period that she was mentioned in the work of Ben Sira, though not by name, when he said: "Of the woman came the beginning of sin, and through her we all die" (Sir 25:24) and it is from this point that she became associated with sin and evil.[80] The association in 1 Timothy, confirmed by what was presumed to be the voice of Paul rather than a later apostle, acquired the force of dogma and was influential in determining the official role of women in the

[76]Aline Rouselle, *Porneia: On Desire and the Body in Antiquity* (trans F. Pheasant; Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 30.

[77]Deborah F. Sawyer, *Women and Religion in the First Christian Centuries* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996),143.

[78]Sawyer, *Women and Religion*, 141.

[79]Jacobs, "Eve," 767.

[80]Jacobs, "Eve," 767.

church for centuries to come.[81] Furthermore, in terms of the one-sex model of humankind, we have seen that creation was a creation of unity. In the blaming of Eve, the divorce of male and female became total. Galatians 3:28 may have indicated a return to unity, even if only in a spiritual sense, but these passages, especially that of 1 Timothy, set women aside as completely different, inferior and subject to evil.

In 1 Corinthians 15:19 and in Romans 5:12-21 it is man whom Paul blames for the Fall, but this is mentioned only to emphasise that it was through a man that the world was saved: "For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead" (1 Cor 15:19). Again, man has the active, superior part.

7.1.2. *Women's experience not valued*

It is not just that the Pauline tradition ignored women, but it would seem that in that tradition women's experience did not exist and had no value. Paul, for instance, mentions the resurrection appearances but never mentions Mary Magdalene's part in the story. It is possible that he did not know it, but that seems unlikely.

Though women seem to exist only in terms of childbirth, nonetheless Paul negates this most vital experience of women. In 1 Corinthians 3:1-2 he goes so far as to adopt the role of mother. In doing this he completely negates any value womanhood might have and cuts women out of any role, passive or active. In Romans 8:23 he tells us that "the whole creation has been groaning in travail" but then goes on to say that "we wait for adoption as sons." Labour, the woman's effort, no longer counts for anything. It is completely invalidated by Paul. There may be labour, but we do not become heirs through this act of childbirth but by adoption, a process for which women are not needed. Also, it is noteworthy that we are adopted as "sons," that daughters are not included. It is a reminder, too, of the belief of the *habitus* that it was sons, not daughters, that were wanted. Sons continued the line: they continued the patriarchal *habitus* which denied any active significance to women.

As far as marriage is concerned, a married woman is seen in terms of her husband. She is never treated as a person in her own right. She can be passed on to relatives, as seems to be the case in 1 Corinthians 5:1. We are not given details of this incestuous union, but we know that it was against both Roman and Jewish law. The suggestion is that she was simply an object, to be used as required. In Romans 7:1-3, we are told that a "married woman is bound by law to her husband as long as he lives" and that "she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her

[81] Jacobs, "Eve," 769.

husband is alive" but Paul expresses no such obligation to faithfulness for her husband. This reflects Jewish law and therefore is an indication of how Paul's mind-set is still according to the Jewish *habitus* in some respects.[82]

Equally, in Colossians 3:20-21 children are told to obey their parents, but then the writer goes on to say: "Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged." The implication is that only fathers count and that mothers have no role to play.

Phoebe is only mentioned once (Rom 16:1), yet she must have been important in the church as she was a *diakonos*. Similarly, Prisca and Junia were quite obviously leaders in the church, but are mentioned only in passing. Equally, Nympha (Col 4:15) is mentioned with "the church in her house," and Chloe (1 Cor 1:11) in terms of "Chloe's people." These women must have been well-known,[83] but are merely mentioned, whilst male leaders such as Titus and Timothy are more fleshed out. In addition, whilst other *diakonos* such as Tychicus (Eph 6:21) are referred to as "beloved brother," when Paul refers to women (e.g. Phoebe) they are simply "our sister" or "helper."[84] Similarly Syntyche and Euodia (Phil 4:2-3) who "have laboured side by side" with Paul "in the gospel" (a phrase which indicates their apostolic ministry - for example in 2 Cor 10:14; 1 Thess 3:2)[85] and who were obviously church leaders are only mentioned as quarrelling with each other.

So women, whilst clearly having status in the early church and being accepted as leaders, are largely sidelined by Paul. They do not speak - their words are never reported - and they are never developed as characters which would indicate that, to Paul and the whole Pauline tradition, they were of a status secondary to that of men.

7.1.3. *Women regarded through a different lens.*

Paul regards women through a different lens from that through which he views men. Of course, this is in accord with the first century *habitus* which held up a one-sex model of humanity in which women were, as has been explained before, regarded as defective males. In this they were seen differently from the way in which men were regarded. In 1 Corinthians 1:20, for instance, Paul writes: "Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age?" As women could not be scribes, debaters and orators this implicitly excludes women from the clever and the wise. Furthermore, this reflection is a reminder of the wisdom tradition. In this tradition *sophia* is

[82]Beverly R. Gaventa, "Romans," in *The Women's Bible Commentary* (ed. C. A. Newsom and S. H. Ringe; London: SPCK, 1992), 318.

[83]MacDonald, "Reading Real Women," 201.

[84]Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, "Missionaries, Apostles, Co-workers," 64.

[85]Kretzschmar, "Hermeneutics," 42.

portrayed as female. We see her in Proverbs as an attractive, seductive woman, to be desired and sought after. But, nevertheless, the wisdom tradition belonged to men, the *sophoi.*

The *sophoi* were wise men, teachers of rhetoric who, from 450 B.C.E. travelled through Greece and taught students in order to prepare them to take part in public life.[86] Men were the producers of knowledge and held the power in their hands. All through the centuries it is those who produce knowledge who hold power for they can influence people's minds. This power was purely male and not open to women, yet another reminder that Paul was very much a man of his time, steeped in the *habitus* of his world. The *habitus* regarded women as imperfect and therefore not able to produce knowledge. As I have shown in Chapter 4, women with knowledge and learning were regarded as threats to the "natural" order. Women, in contrast with men, were emotional and irrational and could not be trusted with the power that came with the production of knowledge.

In 1 Corinthians 6:16, Paul writes: "Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her?"

It is clear that for him prostitution was a feminine occupation and the suggestion is therefore that the "members of Christ," being "joined" to a prostitute were men. Prostitutes were of the female order and therefore apart. Although male prostitution was a feature of pagan worship, men who were prostitutes were the "penetrated" and therefore were regarded as womanly and defective like women. Furthermore, the excess and imbalance reflected in prostitution only confirmed that women are defective. Women, it appears, could be expected to be out of control because that is part of their "defective" nature but real men, who are the target of Paul's criticism here, should not behave in this way because man were expected to be rational and controlled.

In 1 Corinthians 7:9 Paul writes: "To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is well for them to remain single as I do. But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion." Whilst "the unmarried" is masculine, "widows" and all the third person pronouns after that are feminine, so Paul is suggesting that women are the ones who should marry, rather than be aflame with passion and he does not include men in this. Again, it was not acceptable for men to be out of control as that would open them to accusations of being "womanly" and emotional. The gender critical lens of Paul implies that women, not men, are unable to control their passions as "proper" men were in control.

Paul appears to differentiate between what men and women can do in church. In 1 Corinthians 14:34-5 Paul writes: "As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silence in the

[86]Oskar Seyffert, "Sophists," *The Dictionary of Classical Mythology, Religion, Literature and Art,* (rev. and ed. H. Nettleship and J. E. Sandys. New York: Gramercy Books, 1995), 596-597.

churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as even the law says." Paul here appears to be upholding the tradition that it was shameful for a woman to speak in the public sphere, but equally it implies that women did indeed have a role in the church of that time, as is apparent in his greetings to women leaders and his comment that women should be veiled when praying or prophesying (1 Cor 11:5). Although this passage is often explained away as referring to gnostic practices or simply as a cultural comment, it is an indication that Paul is torn between his traditions and a more radical approach to the role of women in the church. Traditionally, according to the *habitus*, men were the ones who produced knowledge and proclaimed it and to allow women this role would give them a power which perhaps would not be tolerated.

Where women are named, they are frequently not valued. One example of this is spoken of by Eriksson.[87] He suggests that in 1 Corinthians 13:10 women were associated with the tongue speakers and their experience was belittled. Women's religions, such as the Dionysius cult, were associated with frenzy and confusion, such as would arise when everyone was speaking in tongues. The "noisy gong" and "clanging cymbal" could also be seen as references to these cults.[88] The male was identified with reason, with intelligibility and logic, and the female with the dark powers of the earth goddesses, with mystery, incomprehension and unintelligibility.[89] So, in 1 Corinthians 12-14, Eriksson suggests, prophecy is associated with men because it is intelligible and tongue speaking, characteristically unintelligible, with women.

As far as the musical instruments were concerned, the pipe and the lyre were by 500 B.C.E. played by women and were associated with religious frenzy because they aroused emotion. So women were by implication here associated with tongue speakers and Paul writes: "Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. He who prophesies is greater than he who speaks in tongues." (1 Cor 14:5). It would appear that while he is accepting women's experience, he is implying that men's experience has more value. This is again a reminder, too, that the area of oratory and wisdom was reserved for men.

Furthermore, Paul's images of women are all concerned with marriage and childbirth. For example, 1 Thessalonians 2:7: "But we were gently among you like a nurse taking care of her children" and 1 Thessalonians 5:3: "as travail comes upon a woman with child." It is interesting that Paul again likens himself to the nursing mother, once again in this way negating the role of women by the implication that he is better able to perform the role. In 2 Corinthians 11:2 the writer suggests that he has betrothed the Corinthians to Christ as a bride is betrothed to her husband. It is significant

[87]Anders Eriksson, "'Women Tongue Speakers, Be Silent': A Reconstruction Through Paul's Rhetoric," *BibInt* 6 (1998): 80-104.

[88]Eriksson, "Women Tongue Speakers," 97.

[89]Eriksson, "Women Tongue Speakers," 94.

that in the Old Testament Israel was frequently likened to a bride to the Lord, but very often she was an example of an unfaithful wife. So even though the image, as he uses it, is not negative, to the Jewish mind at least there would be negative connotations. In addition, as MacDonald points out: "The association of Christ with husband comes to be understood as a description of social reality and ultimately provides justification for male impunity in the face of female fallibility."[90]

The *habitus* is again being confirmed. Men's experience is valid; women's is unimportant. The man is the active participant (the writer represents Paul as doing the betrothing); the wife is considered, even though the passive partner, to be weak and susceptible to failure.

7.2. **Paul addresses himself to men.**

There is much evidence that Paul, though writing to the church at large, is subconsciously writing to men, not to women.

7.2.1. *Use of masculine gender*

Although it can be argued that Paul's use of the masculine gender is inclusive, just as until recently "he," "men," "mankind" etcetera was, in English, taken as being gender inclusive, there are times when it is evident that this is, in fact, being used as gender exclusive in the context in which it is written. This is, of course, in accord with the *habitus* as, in terms of first century Mediterranean thought, men were the only sex and women were simply, as it were, inferior offshoots. In addition it is important to remember that repetition strengthens the *habitus* and gives power to it. The constant repetition of the masculine gender reinforces the strength of the suggestion that men are the ones who are important and that women are invisible and to be considered as inferior.

Paul and the Pauline tradition consistently addresses the "brothers" (*adelphoi*) and seldom is the word used in the feminine. In 2 Thessalonians 3:6 we are told: "Now we command you, brethren . . . that you keep away from any brother who is living in idleness." The implication is clearly that the word "brethren" relates to "brother" and is meant exclusively, not including women. It can be argued that Paul's persistent use of the masculine gender - e.g. "saints" and "Jews" are always masculine and he always uses male pronouns and participles - subconsciously excludes women readers or hearers. Even if at that time the masculine gender was read as gender inclusive

[90]MacDonald, "Reading Real Women," 244.

and was acceptable practice, it nonetheless rendered half of humanity invisible[91] and was a cue for the developing church to treat women differently from men.

But the Pauline use of gender is not the only evidence that the letters are addressed to men. Men, as knowledge producers, were the ones who were in charge of disseminating knowledge. Whatever speculations may have occurred, at this stage in time there is no real evidence of any gospels or epistles written by women. Even though it appears that women were leaders in the early church, knowledge production itself was still in the hands of men and decision-making power resided in men, so women did not need to be addressed.

Paul's terminology often gives away that he was talking to men. In Romans 8:14-15, talking of salvation through the Spirit, he says: "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are Sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back in fear, but you received the spirit of sonship." This is not a case of the masculine gender being used to include women, but a case of explicitly excluding women. Sons can only be men - *huios* cannot also mean daughters. The implication is clearly that only men can be saved.

Again in 1 Thessalonians 5:5 he says: "For you are all sons of light and sons of the day." This is exclusive language: women are not part of Paul's audience. In addition, the implication is that if sons are of the light and of day, daughters (women) are of the dark, of night. There is an implied judgement on women here.

7.2.2. *Paul's male perspective*

It is evident that frequently Paul is perceived to be seeing the world through a male perspective. This, of course, is inevitable, not only because he was male, but also because the *habitus* dictated that maleness was the natural order and it was through the lens of the one-sex model that the world was viewed.

In Colossians 3:22, the Pauline tradition states: "Slaves, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters." Men were heads of the household and in charge of slaves. There was no consideration that women may be running households even though we know that women such as Lydia appeared to lead their own households. So it continues: "Masters, treat your slaves justly." The treatment here of the household code clearly shows that the Pauline tradition sees the household as dominated by men with the real power in the hands of the master.

When writing, in 1 Thessalonians 4:4, to the "brethren" on how to live a holy life, Paul says: "that each one of you know how to take a wife for himself." It is, again, clear that even if "brethren"

[91]McCant, "Inclusive Language," 172.

is meant to be gender inclusive, in fact Paul is talking to men and seeing life as men saw it. He is not concerned about how women should be acting out their lives as Christians. Similarly, in 1 Corinthians 10:1 he says: "our fathers were all under the cloud." Again, this refers only to the men of history; women are not counted.

We read in Romans 2:17: "But if you call yourself a Jew and rely upon the law and boast of your relation to God and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed in the law . . . a teacher of children." This automatically excludes women as in Jewish culture only men were instructed in the law and men were teachers, not women. Again we can see that knowledge production and dissemination lay in the hands of men, not women and that, in this area, women were simply invisible.

Equally, in the first century Mediterranean world, men were judges. When Paul writes: "Why do you pass judgement on your brother?" (Rom 14:10 with echoes in vv. 13 and 22) he is again excluding women. A judge held real power. It was up to him to interpret the law and prescribe it. This needed rationality and objectivity: a woman, emotional and irrational, would not have been deemed fit to hold this office.

Finally, in 1 Corinthians 15:42-50, Paul speaks of the resurrection of the dead. He talks of the first man, Adam, who was dust, and the "last Adam" from heaven: "Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven." He speaks only of men being raised and spiritual: nothing is said of women. Creation was of a man – woman came later and was inferior. Salvation was seen as brought about by a male – again a woman simply would not have been good enough.

7.2.3. *Circumcision*

Circumcision was a sign of entry into Judaism. All baby boys were circumcised on the eighth day. It was a ritual which made a person a Jew, the defining act by which a man identified himself as an Israelite. It was an extremely powerful ritual by which men were admitted into their society but it also had the power to exclude those who had not been part of such a ritual, namely non-Jews and women.

As an initiation rite, circumcision was an extremely important feature of the *habitus*. Firstly, the repetition of the rite was a strengthening feature which imprinted itself upon the *habitus*, so that it became part of the collective subconscious, part of the embodied history of the group. Secondly, it was a discursive practice which clearly demarcated who belonged to a particular community and was in itself a generative principle. It achieved the power of a structure to regulate society so that

those "inside" would be identifiable from those "outside." This particular rite, in addition, marked the body of all males so that there could be no doubt of their membership in an historical community. This marking, furthermore, excluded women even more completely than male non-Jews who, unlike the women, could enter the society by undergoing the rite. Because this rite could not apply to them, women were automatically excluded from full membership of their faith and were therefore lesser members.

Paul at no stage condemns circumcision as a Jewish initiatory rite, but he considers it unnecessary for Christians. In Galatians, especially, Paul speaks about the fact that circumcision is no longer necessary in the new community and this led him into much conflict with the more traditional Jewish leaders such as Peter. In Galatians 5:6 he writes: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any avail, but faith working through love." In the new community, he declares, as he did in Galatians 3:28, that there are no sexually determined boundaries which discriminate between people. Therefore circumcision, the rite by which a man specifically became a full member of his faith, is no longer valid. While this may not have been of much importance to the Gentile community of the church, it was revolutionary for the Jews and led to many problems for Paul as he fought with Peter and those who wished to make it compulsory. Yet it also reflects the tension in Paul as he could not escape the *habitus* whereby the ritual of circumcision was ingrained on his consciousness. His very frequent references to it show how deeply the *habitus* was ingrained and have the effect of excluding women.

In Romans 2:25-29 Paul writes:

> Circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law; but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? Then those who are physically uncircumcised but keep the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law. For he is not a real Jew who is one outwardly, nor is the true circumcision something external and physical. He is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart, spiritual and not literal.

The gist of this passage is that, for the Christian, circumcision is not a physical affair but a matter of the heart, a fact which by implication could include women. But the continual reference to circumcision, a "men-only" matter, implies that Paul's audience was one of men, not women. His example was one chosen for men to relate to, one to which women could not relate. To put it the other way round, if a preacher chose to refer in a sermon to the experience of childbirth, the pregnancy, the labour pains, etcetera, as an example of a way of coming to faith, men would find it very difficult to relate to it and feel excluded as they would never have experienced it. This is more-

or-less what Paul is doing here. So even when circumcision is most criticised (for example, Gal 5:2ff; 6:11ff, 1 Cor 7:18-19), there is an insensitivity to and omission of the half of humanity who were excluded by this rite.

In Philippians 3:3, Paul writes, "[F]or we are the true circumcision" and in Colossians 2:11 it is stated: "In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ." Yet, in Philippians 3:4, Paul gives one of his reasons for confidence as the fact that he is a full (i.e. circumcised) Jew. Though it can be argued that the first two examples can technically include women, the argument in Philippians 3:4 continues to be an example that this sort of discussion was being viewed through the eyes of men and implicitly excluded women. In addition, the fact that Paul uses this metaphor which is applicable only to men is another example of how he was unable to escape the *habitus* of his time.

7.2.4. *Marriage*

Though, as pointed out before, there is much mutuality stressed in Ephesians 5:21-33, the likening of the husband to Christ is strongly hierarchical and stressed traditional marriage as the Christian ideal. It reinforces the traditional ideas of the wife being subordinate[92] and show marriage as the ideal, in contradiction to Paul's views on voluntary celibacy in 1 Corinthians 7:25-27.

When it comes to celibacy, though Paul's views are radical, he sees even this through the male perspective. In 1 Corinthians 7:25-27, he is addressing men:

> Now concerning the unmarried, I have no command of the Lord, but I give my opinion as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. I think that in view of the impending distress it is well for a person to remain as he is. Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek marriage. But if you marry, you do not sin, and if a girl marries she does not sin."

And also: "let those who have wives" (v.29) implies that it is addressed to husbands only.

Paul's likening of the husband to Christ shows a patriarchal view which is a man's point of view and this is confirmed when he says: "[L]et each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband." The "you" refers to the husband: he is addressing men, not women.

The second person is used when referring to men, but the third person when referring to women. Paul is addressing his remarks to men. The reference to a woman comes across merely as an aside,

[92]Schüssler-Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 269.

as a concession. This is continued in 9:5 when Paul includes himself with the men: “Do we not have the right to be accompanied by a wife, as the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?”

7.2.5. *Cause and effect is centred on man*

Taking up the point outlined above, men are the active participants in history. In terms of the *habitus* it must be remembered that maleness was equated with power, stability and the active role. The female condition was weakness, instability and passivity. In Romans 5:18-19, Paul states: “Then as one man’s trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man’s act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man’s obedience many will be made righteous.”

Not for Paul the action of Eve and the salvific assent of Mary (submissive though that was); he emphasises that men influenced the course of history and women appear to have had no role to play but that of passivity.

7.2.6. *Men as heirs*

Although women in first century Mediterranean society could inherit, they often did not have the freedom to use their inheritance as they wished but usually had to have a guardian appointed for them. In Judaism, women could inherit too, though usually men took precedence. For Paul, however, it is clear that men are the heirs. In Romans 8:1 he says: “for the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the Sons of God” and in v.29 he uses the image of the Son, the “first-born among many brethren.” He goes on, in 9:3-5 to imply that the inheritance belongs to men, not women, for we must remember that only the circumcised - i.e. men - were full Israelites and that he uses the exclusive term “sonship” (cf. also Rom 9:26, 27):

> For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen by race. They are Israelites, and to them belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises, to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ.

All this belongs to the true heirs, the remnant, who are men (cf. Rom11:4). This is also evident in Galatians 3:7: “[I]t is men of faith who are sons of Abraham” and 3:26: “But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a custodian; for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith.”

And the precedence of inheritance for men is voiced also in Galatians 4:6-7: "And because you are sons . . . you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir." The inheritance is clearly male (1 Cor 4:8: "you have become kings"). Women simply do not feature. Though some, like Osiek, may argue that in Christianity even women can have the status of sonship and be heirs[93], this does not remove the fact that, in order to be heirs, women must become "sons" - i.e. become men. As we have seen in the issue of celibacy, here again women can only be fully accepted if they become symbolically male.

Paul's viewpoint of Israel is that Israel was male and took its descent purely through men. In Romans 11:26 he refers to Israel as Jacob and declares (11:28) that the Jews are "beloved for the sake of their forefathers" and that Christ came to them "in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs" (Rom15:8). Women are secondary and invisible.

8. **The church of the Pastoral Epistles**

The Pauline tradition was very much representative of its time in many respects. As Elizabeth Castelli [94] has shown, terms such as "the early church" are generalised and tend to reduce into one category what was, in fact, a diverse movement. The church in its earliest days consisted of scattered household communities with different social and ethnic bases. There were those who still considered themselves as Jews as seen in Acts 15 and who still deemed it necessary to follow the Jewish circumcision laws, but on the other hand there were those (like Paul) who wanted to break out of the Jewish mould. There were groupings in different areas of the Mediterranean world who were not only geographically diverse but also had different cultural identities. And there were those who held different viewpoints depending on by whom they had been taught (1 Cor 11-12). However, there were patterns and groups that influenced the formation of Christian attitudes to women.

9. **Women in the Pastoral Epistles**

One of the early problems faced by the various groups was the problem of conflict with society. The strength of the *habitus* was such that the church conformed to it even in areas where at first it may have been tempted to challenge it. Paul's message of "[D]o not be conformed to this world" (Rom 12:2) was subsumed by the message of the Pauline tradition to aim to "lead a quiet and peaceable

[93]Carolyn Osiek, "Galatians," in *The Women's Bible Commentary* (ed. C. A. Newsom and S. H. Ringe; London: SPCK, 1992), 334.

[94]Castelli, "Gender, Theory and the Rise of Christianity," 230.

life" (2 Tim 2:2). In the early days, when the church met in the private sphere, in house churches, there was no difficulty with women taking leading roles as the private sphere was "their" sphere, the home, the place where they could stand out. It was a "safe" sphere as here men allowed women to have a certain power. However, as MacDonald points out, the fact that this movement was so influential and was taking place in the private domain meant that it was seen as a threat.[95] MacDonald quotes Celsus as saying: "Religion which should properly be tied to the public domain of men has become privatized and feminized."[96] Men were threatened by the fact that the private sphere was exerting control over the public and that women were playing a major role in the formation of the new church.[97] It may have been true that, in order to play this role, women had to conform to the ideal of maleness, but the fact was that, whatever the terms, some women stood out.

Though the early church appeared to have women in leadership positions, it would seem that often this was a superficial change as the attitudes engendered by the *habitus* of the first century Mediterranean world were too deeply ingrained to be changed. By the time the Pastoral Epistles were written, however, this veneer of women's liberty had all but disappeared as the church conformed more and more to the *habitus* of the world around it and adopted a hierarchal structure. The church community was faced with several problems.

Firstly, the church wished to have the good opinion of contemporary society. We see this particularly in such passages as 1 Timothy 2:1-2, 3:7, 5:14 and 6:1 and in Titus 2:5 and 3:1-2.[98] If, as was the case, the *habitus* of the world around dictated that women were inferior and only allowed to take passive roles, the fact that women were in any sort of leadership positions in the church would bring criticism upon the community.

Secondly, the church was faced with a multitude of teachings. It was, therefore, concerned to define what was correct belief and what were false teachings. For example, 1 Timothy 6:3 declares: "If any one teaches otherwise and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching which accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit, he knows nothing."

These letters show concern about what is termed *heterodidaskaloi,*[99] and though the writer is vague about what exactly constitutes false teaching there is obviously concern that the community should adhere to what he considers as the true teaching – a teaching by that time in close conformity with the *habitus* of the society.

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[95]Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion: The Power of the Hysterical Woman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 112.

[96]C. Cels 3:55, quoted in MacDonald, *Early Christian Women*, 113.

[97]MacDonald, *Early Christian Women*, 113.

[98]Maloney, "The Pastoral Epistles," 367.

[99]Maloney, "The Pastoral Epistles," 368.

Thirdly, there is now a clear hierarchal structure in the church. The pattern of the church is that of a patriarchal household. God is the head, with Christ the son and heir. Under them are the bishops and deacons with the rest of the community following.[100] Women are to take the lesser role, according to the writer of the Pastorals. They are to "be sensible, chaste, domestic, kind, and submissive to their husbands, that the word of God may not be discredited" (Titus 2:5), which Maloney points out is just what was demanded of slaves.[101]

That some women who turned to Christianity were married to non-Christians was seen as a challenge to male authority and, as the church became more "public," so it became more important, if it were to be socially acceptable, to reduce the role of women to one of submission and service. MacDonald comments:

> As we consider texts from the Deutero-Pauline authors and Apostolic Fathers we will witness greater circumspection in relation to the marriage-free life, a greater insistence on the importance of the believing woman's subjection to her husband, and a more pronounced association of early church women's lives with the desire to promote social respectability.[102]

By the time the Pastoral Epistles were written the teaching on celibacy and on widows was more restrictive than in earlier Pauline material and widows belonged to a recognised order. The word "widow" has been attested as having the meaning of a woman who was living without a man,[103] which means that the term could have included virgins, women who had never been married. This could account for the need, as far as the writer of Timothy is concerned, for limiting the order of widows and urging younger women rather to marry. It certainly makes sense of the apparent contradiction in the instruction that a widow should be the wife of one husband (1 Tim 5:9) and where it is said: "So I would have younger widows marry" (1 Tim 5:14). If this were their second marriage they would be ineligible for the order of widows when their husbands died. Younger women, therefore, are not to be enrolled as widows but are expected to marry and to conform to the teaching of society to "give the enemy no occasion to revile us."

This, coupled with the age restriction, conforms to Augustus' ruling on marriage. It also ties in with the general idea of women's weak nature as it implies that young women are unable to control their passions and will become immoral if they do not marry. And yet the order of widows was very appealing to women as it offered them a freedom from male domination. Bassler comments:

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[100]Maloney, "The Pastoral Epistles," 367.

[101]Maloney, "The Pastoral Epistles," 369.

[102]MacDonald, *Early Christian Women*, 144.

[103]Methuen, "The Virgin Widow," 287.

> The widows of the Pastoral Epistles were, like the vestal virgins, under special restrictions, but, again like the vestals, these restrictions were not those binding ordinary women. Indeed, widows were remarkably free of these ordinary restraints. Freed from the hierarchical dominance of either father or husband, freed from the demands of childbearing and rearing, freed even from pressing economic concerns, the "widows" were granted a degree of freedom usually reserved for the *hetairai*, yet now enhanced by ecclesiastical respectability and esteem.[104]

The status of widow is in the Pastorals, therefore, now restricted to women over the age of sixty, who have had one husband and a good record of behaviour. They have to have had children and provided service to the "saints" (presumably the men!).

It is evident that the community to which the Pastoral Epistles was addressed was experiencing conflict. In terms of what was actually happening in the church as regards the roles women were enacting there seems to have been tension with the *habitus* of the society. Evidently women were taking active parts in worship and teaching, but the society around would not be able to accept this as it was contrary to the *habitus*. As time went on it became harder and harder to maintain any challenge to the *habitus.* The church therefore chose to conform to the *habitus* which, by its very nature, was what they considered the right thing in view of the commonly held views about the construction of gender. Paul, though he had affirmed more active roles for women, had made no attempt to alter his or the church's view on how women were deemed defective men so the *habitus* had not been changed at all in this respect. Cochrane sums up the situation of the church in the time of the Pastoral Epistles in these words:

> Obviously, the early Pauline community of equals stood in conflict with the Graeco-Roman patriarchal society. The way to overcome this tension was a gradual process of *adaption* to the norms of the patriarchal world. To become more acceptable in the eyes of society the authors of the Pastoral Epistles stress emphatically the secondary role of women.[105]

The general ideal of women presented in the Pastoral Epistles is that they are by nature weak and even wicked and that they should aim to be beautiful and well-behaved. In 1 Timothy 2:9-10 the writer says: "[W]omen should adorn themselves modestly and sensibly in seemly apparel, not with braided hair nor gold or pearls or costly attire but by good deeds as befits women who profess religion." They are to be submissive - "let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness" (1 Tim 2:11-15) - and are to be trained to love their husbands, and submit to them. Only domestic virtues

[104]Jouette M. Bassler, "The Widow's Tale: A Fresh Look at 1 Tim. 5:3-16." *JBL* 103 no. 1 (1984): 36.

[105]Renate Cochrane, "Equal Discipleship of Women and Men: Reading the New Testament from a Feminist Perspective," in *Women Hold up Half the Sky: Women in the Church in Southern Africa* (ed. D. Ackermann, J. A. Draper, and E. Mashinini; Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1991), 34.

are to be sought after. The writer of Titus 2:5 writes that older women are to train the young women "to be sensible, chaste, domestic, kind and submissive to their husbands, that the word of God may not be discredited." These values are important, it is shown, in order that the church may not be discredited in the world around it.

Women's roles are now restricted to teaching other women and 1 Timothy 2:12-13 permits no woman to teach or have authority over men but orders them to keep silent. The fact, however, that the writer of Timothy forbids women to teach is an indication that women were teaching or else it would not have been be necessary to make this pronouncement.[106] Maretha Jacobs comments:

> Apart from the broader context of 1 Timothy, a world in which the public sector was regarded as the domain of men, while women were mainly restricted to the private sphere, it seems as if the Pastor had to deal with a specific "threat" to his church from some religious opponents. One aspect of their teaching was probably that they offered freedom from the oppressive patriarchal structure that characterised the Greco-Roman world and was increasingly characterising the church. [107]

It would seem that this was against the standards of the world around and was therefore to be avoided in order to compromise with society. But Maloney also is of the opinion that it is not only the world outside that was threatening the community, but also that forces within were exerting pressure. She writes:

> I read here a frightened would-be authority on the defensive against powerful and intelligent opponents who are *not* attackers from the outside, but are themselves, at this point, active leaders within their local communities. Rather than find communities in which a few "upstart" women are seeking a voice and pursuing sensational oddities preached by outsiders, I find communities in which women are well organised (too well, from the author's point of view), women who preach, teach, prophesy, travel, preside at worship, and preserve certain "Pauline" traditions that are anathema to the author of the Pastorals.[108]

Though there was a concern about what the rest of the world thought, the indication is that members of the community itself were finding a tension between what they believed in terms of the *habitus* and what was happening in the church. In addition the command that women could teach only other women was a way in which women would come to internalise the fact that they were inferior, and unfit to teach men and would therefore limit their function to the household sphere.[109] This would be

[106]Maloney, "The Pastoral Epistles," 370.

[107]Jacobs, "Eve," 770.

[108]Jacobs, "Eve," 770.

[109]Joanna Dewey, "Titus," in *The Women's Bible Commentary* (ed. C. A. Newsom and S. H. Ringe; London: SPCK, 1992), 361.

an internalisation of the *habitus* through repetition of teaching and is, in fact, what happened as women began to accept more passive roles in church life as the "natural" way for them.

In the Pastorals, the way to salvation by this stage seems to be not through faith, but through gender. In 1 Timothy 2:13-15 we read: "For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet woman will be saved through bearing children, if she continues in faith and love and holiness, with modesty."

Women are now triply branded. They are, by order of creation, secondary citizens; they are the ones who caused sin to enter the world and they are, because of this, apparently not included in Christ's redemption and can be saved only by childbirth. Adam is declared totally innocent of the first sin and men are, by implication, the ones who receive salvation because of their gender. The teaching of the *habitus*, whereby a woman's role is to be mother and wife is embedded here to the extent that women are not able to be saved by the redeeming act of Jesus but can only be saved by their actions, namely by bearing children.[110]

Furthermore, this passage builds on certain other aspects of the *habitus* of the first century Mediterranean. In terms of the views of the time, the first-born son had a higher status than that of younger children and so had authority over them. When the writer of 1 Timothy says: "For Adam was formed first, then Eve," he is declaring that women can take no active part in the church in terms of teaching men as they would therefore be going against God's ordained order.

Women are portrayed in the Pastorals as "weak women, burdened with sins and swayed by various impulses, who will listen to anybody and can never arrive at a knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim 3:6-7). They are also not fitted for teaching as they are easily deceived (1 Tim 2:14). Young women especially are wanton, pledge breakers, idlers, gadders, gossips, busybodies who should marry and have children and stay at home (1 Tim 5:11-14). This was a sure way to prevent young women from taking an active part in church life and speaking in public, especially as it conformed to the belief of the time which saw women as inferior and weak. In Titus 2:3 we are told: "Bid the older men to be temperate, serious, sensible, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. Bid the older women likewise to be reverent in behaviour, not to be slanderers or slaves to drink." The negative command is there only for women, not for men, with the implication that the women are the slanderers and drinkers, not men.

[110]Maloney, "The Pastoral Epistles," 370.

10. **Consolidation of patriarchy in the church**

It is important to remember that Paul and the members of the early church could not escape the thinking of their *habitus* and were to a great extent bound by it. Though their way of thinking about women conformed to the one-sex model, yet we sometimes see a tension, for instance in the fact that women did take leadership roles in the church. By the time the Pastoral Epistles were written, however, hierarchal structures were fully accepted in the church and the world was viewed through a male perspective with women being eased out of these positions. This aspect of the Pauline tradition was taken up by the church in its formative years and developed into an institutional misogynism, a case where the practices of the *habitus* formed structures which developed power in themselves to control and subjugate women. It was patriarchal language, such as the Christ-husband image, for example, which contributed to an emphasis on male domination. MacDonald writes: "The association of Christ with husband comes to be understood as a description of social reality and ultimately provides justification for male impunity in the face of female fallibility."[111]

As time went on, the church selected passages, often out of context, and concentrated on them. Christianity stopped challenging the world, but urged its members to conform more fully to the *habitus* of the world and to be model citizens.[112] It is largely the Pastorals and its household codes which are quoted by Church Fathers from the second century onwards. The texts which showed women as leaders and in a positive light were rarely discussed.[113] For instance, Clement praised the heads of the households in Corinth for keeping patriarchal order[114] and Ignatius of Antioch likened the bishop to the image of God.[115] Tertullian went even further. McCant writes:

> Tertullian forbids women to teach even if their doctrines are orthodox. He protests that "it is not permitted for a woman to speak in church, but neither is it permitted for her to teach, nor to baptise, nor to offer eucharist, nor to claim for herself a lot in any manly function nor to say [in any] sacerdotal office" (*De virginibus velandis 9.1*). Paul is his authority (*De monogamia 12*). When women engage in any public ministry they are usurping male legal rights. Since laity, by right of baptism, had the right to baptise and offer the Eucharist in the absence of clergy (*De monogamia 12*), Tertullian excluded women from both the clergy and the laity (*De baptismo 12*).[116]

[111]MacDonald, "Rereading Paul," 244.

[112]Sawyer, *Women and Religion*, 115.

[113]Sawyer, *Women and Religion*, 15.

[114]Quoted in McCant "Inclusive Language," 178.

[115]Quoted in McCant "Inclusive Language," 178.

[116]McCant "Inclusive Language," 179.

Because the church has focussed on teachings on the headship of man (1 Cor 11:2-16; 14:34-36), the patriarchal structure of marriage (Eph 5:21-33 and Col 3:18) and the submissive behaviour of women (1 Tim 2:9-15 and Titus 2:3, 5), it has given an example to society as its missions spread to the world that the church should conform to the world in these respects, not challenge it. When faced with tensions between the world and the church's teachings, the example of the Pauline tradition shows that to conform tends to be the norm. The new church was largely unable to break out of the culture of the first century Mediterranean and the developing church, as time went on, was less and less able to do so. As it developed Christianity did not challenge the world but competed with it to entrench and increase male power. It confirmed and strengthened the *habitus* so that it achieved more and more power through its institutional structures and its documents such as the Bible and other writings which were often derived from biblical teachings. This enabled the Bible to be used, over the passage of time, as a tool to support a discriminatory system and to be imported to new mission fields such as Africa and be used there, not to challenge, but to reinforce existing discriminatory practices.

11. **Conclusion**

The reason for much of the continuation of lack of awareness or even denigration of women today is that there has been an emphasis on certain passages in the Bible that fit the cultural pattern, especially the Pastoral Epistles. Mercy Oduyoye comments on this: "Instead of promoting a new style of life appropriate to a people who are living with God 'who has made all things new,' the church in Africa continues to use the Hebrew scriptures and the epistles of St Paul to reinforce the norms of traditional religion and culture."[117]

The Bible is a discursive practice well suited to furthering the *habitus* of patriarchal societies. It is not always Paul's message itself, however, which fuels these attitudes but how it is interpreted. Parvey states: "The subordinated role of women in the Christian tradition is not so much a problem caused by Paul as it is a problem of how the Christian tradition has since chosen to interpret Paul."[118] Pamela Thimmes says: "How the synagogue and the church use and read the Bible has religious, political and cultural implications for women and for men. The issue of how one reads is

[117]Mercy A. Oduyoye, "Calling the Church to Account: African Women and Liberation," *Ecumenical Review* 47 (1995), taken from *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy* (New York: Orbis Books, 1995), 480.

[118]Constance F. Parvey, "The Theology and Leadership of Women in the New Testament," in *Religion and Sexism: Images of Woman in the Jewish and Christian Traditions* (ed. R. R. Ruether; New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), 137.

further informed by *who* does the reading."[119] It is often how the passages are read that gives authority to the *habitus* and past interpretations in particular have fuelled misogynism.

We have seen that the Church Fathers tended to be misogynist in their approach to women. They emphasised readings from Genesis and 1 Timothy 2:11-15 to justify their hate language against women and these interpretations have become established in the minds of an androcentric and patriarchal church. Some examples of this hate language have been pointed out by various commentators.

Rosemary Ruether,[120] for example, points out that the Fathers often quote Genesis 1:27 without verse 28, implying that only men are made in God's image. She also quotes St Augustine as declaring that woman alone cannot be God's image, but only is such if she is joined to a man. Claire Murphy quotes Tertullian: "Do you not know that you are each an Eve? God's sentence on your sex lives on into this generation. Therefore the guilt is of necessity with you still."[121] She also quotes Clement as saying: "[A]s for woman it is unworthy to even think about her nature." And Louise Kretzschmar quotes Jerome: "Wretched woman, burdened with sins carried about by every wind of doctrine, always learning and never reaching knowledge of the truth."[122]

Because these ideas tend to fit in with how traditional Zimbabwean society regards women, the church has, instead of being in a position to challenge the *habitus,* been in an ideal situation to confirm patriarchy in the society. Western ideas have been imported into the Zimbabwean context and have been there to support a *habitus* already there. It is not only, of course, in Zimbabwean society that this has happened. In Western tradition the same has often occurred as it did in the Graeco-Roman world of the early Church. The point is that the Church has been brought into a context that is detrimental to women and, instead of working for the liberation of women, its androcentric bias has been available to reinforce the prevailing *habitus* which has strengthened attitudes against women and restricted them further.

I am not here comparing two analogous institutions in the church of Paul's time and of Zimbabwean society today. They are poles apart but there are nevertheless similarities. They are both hierarchical and patriarchal and frequently essentialistic in their attitudes towards women. They have both reserved the production of knowledge for men. In the church in Zimbabwe today

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[119]Pamela Thimmes, "Marking Boundaries Inside and Outside: The Ongoing Tasks of Feminist Hermeneutics," in *Escaping Eden: New Feminist Perspectives on the Bible* (ed. H. C. Washington, S. L. Graham and P. Thimmes; New York: New York University Press, 1999), 281.

[120]Rosemary Ruether, "Misogynism and Virginal Feminism in the Fathers of the Church," in *Religion and Sexism: Images of Woman in the Jewish and Christian Traditions* (ed. R. R. Ruether; New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), 153, 156.

[121]Claire Murphy, *An Introduction to Christian Feminism* (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1994), 53-54.

[122] Louise Kretzschmar, "Hermeneutics, Culture and the Apostle Paul's View of Women," *Women's Studies* 2 (1990): 39.

women are still not considered for ordination and very few preach so patriarchalism is strengthened by male voices in colleges and from the altar. The voices of women are silenced now as they were in the early church and, even though many women fulfil important roles, they are not recognised and given value.

The Human Development Report challenges the situation of women by saying: "The enormous challenge for women in Zimbabwe is that both themselves and men have internalized patriarchal values which exclude the feminine not just in principle but in practice."[123]

This is a challenge which should be taken up by the church and responded to in order that the biblical teaching may confront the traditional attitudes where they are detrimental to women and improve their situation. It requires, as Pamela Thimmes has said, "a new survey of the territory."[124] It is to a consideration of such a new survey that I will now turn my attention.

[123]United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report* (Harare: United Nations, 2000), 135.

[124]Thimmes, "Making Boundaries," 282.

CHAPTER 6
CHALLENGING THE *HABITUS*

1. Introduction

It has been seen that there are at least superficial similarities between the traditional role of women in the Zimbabwean-African context and that of the Graeco-Roman world, the context out of which and to which Paul was writing. Similarly, the church in Zimbabwe is addressing women out of their context and also to that context and in many ways the church has experienced a tension between the *habitus* of the gospel and that of culture, just as the Pauline tradition did. The church has frequently adopted the patriarchal Pauline approach in its message to women today in the Zimbabwean-African context, often treating women as if they are invisible or as if they are inferior in status to men.

Before considering how the church can take up the challenge to confront traditional attitudes and transform the *habitus*, it is necessary to consider the meaning of change: what change is, what sort of change is desirable and how far this change should go.

As Bourdieu shows, the *habitus* resists change. It is a product of history, formed by past experiences which then become regarded as natural and internalised. Bourdieu writes that it is "the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product."[1] This embodied history becomes part of the structures of a society and it is extremely difficult to change them as they are part of the thought processes of that society, the *doxa*. And yet according to Bourdieu change is possible. He writes that what is necessary to bring about discussion of what has previously has been taken for granted is an objective crisis which is necessary if the *doxa* is to be questioned. This could take the form of a challenge of the power structures from social groups, such as women or ethnic minorities. But, he adds, crisis alone may not be enough as only the dominated classes tend to want to change the *doxa* while the dominant classes defend it.[2] Furthermore, as Moi points out: "For Bourdieu, crises also provoke a redefinition of experience, giving rise to new forms of language. When the everyday order is challenged by an insurgent group, hitherto *unspoken* or *private* experience suddenly finds itself expressed in public, with dramatic consequences."[3]

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[1]Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (trans. R. Nice; Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 56.

[2]Toril Moi, "Appropriating Bourdieu: Feminist Theory and Pierre Bourdieu's Sociology of Culture," *New Literary History* 22 no. 4 (1991): 1027.

[3]Moi, "Appropriating Bourdieu," 1027.

When the dominated recognise their right to speak publicly they are given power and legitimise their experience. The expressed word carries power when it is uttered publicly and "the way to change goes through the verbalization and analysis of the unspoken and repressed rules that govern our behaviour."[4] So change is not impossible as far as Bourdieu is concerned though, because it is grounded in practice, it can only occur when the social structure is in a state of conflict. This is a Marxist view of social change but has its relevance to gender studies because it is only through highlighting the *doxa* in all its imperfections that the *habitus* can be challenged.

Catherine Albanese refers to the "reality of change."[5] It is a necessary and inevitable part of life: where there is no change, there is stagnation and death. The Anglican Church of the Province of Central Africa, for example, is proving resistant to change, especially in areas such as the ordination of women and in its socio-political role, and it is rapidly losing effectiveness. Its most promising clergy have left the country and there are few ordinands in the colleges. It is left with priests who are mostly over the age of retirement but are unable to retire as there are no younger priests to take their place. Parishes are disintegrating, the whole Province is riddled with dissension, there is little money and no new ideas are coming in. Change is part of life and is necessary.

The traditional culture of Zimbabwe has undergone an inevitable change. As Tzvetan Todorov has pointed out, a culture that does not change dies.[6] Colonialism had an effect on the traditional way of life. Whatever the rights and wrongs of the colonial situation were, the change has taken place and the clock cannot be turned back. Whilst it is true that the *habitus* of traditional Zimbabwean life still largely pertains, especially in the area of gender relations, there are other areas in which it has been affected by colonialism which in some cases has reinforced the *habitus* and in others has diluted the attitudes which reflect the *habitus*. For instance, the structures, although perhaps not the underlying attitudes, of communal life - the life lead in the rural areas - have been influenced. People have moved to urban areas and been affected by Western capitalist ideals and behaviour which they then carry back to the rural areas. It was seen, for instance, how the Mtshabezi girls' primary school inculcated ideals that conflicted with those of the traditional *habitus.* The girls affected by this would have their ideas altered in certain ways and this would affect future generations. This is perhaps the sort of crisis to which Bourdieu refers when he talks about agents of change. It leads to a conflict between the traditional *habitus* and the new ideas.

The ideals of the *habitus* which pertain in rural areas cannot always be translated to the urban areas. For instance, in the case of a death in the family, the community would congregate at the

[4]Moi, "Appropriating Bourdieu," 1029.

[5]Catherine L. Albanese, "Refusing the Wild Pomegranate Seed: America, Religious History and the Life of the Academy," *JAR* 58 no.2 (1995): 206.

[6]Tzvetan Todorov, "The Co-Existence of Cultures," (trans J. Borossa), *The Oxford Literary Review* 19 (1997): 3.

home of the bereaved and sing all night, with the extended family providing food and shelter. The community and family were one in this, they lived together and acted together. When this happens in the urban areas it is now a great problem for a family as there is not a supportive community and they no longer have the resources to cater for a large number of people and then to transfer all the guests and the body to the burial ground, often in the rural areas and many kilometres away. But the *habitus* still dictates that this should happen and it causes great hardship for families. Inevitably, though, it will change as new generations begin to refuse to bear this load. In the same way other beliefs inevitably but very slowly alter to suit new socio-economic situations.

There is, also, movement to and from the towns and the rural areas. New ideas are carried to the more traditional culture, the new generations begin to adopt ideas conveyed by the media and by those who have travelled and lived elsewhere and so change slowly takes place.

The *habitus* is, however, also very resistant to change. Even the Western world still clings to patriarchalism, as evidenced in the resistance to the consecration of women as bishops in some churches such as the Church of England. Parratt writes of religious change in Botswana: "While there are few formal structures for traditional religion in the urban centres its underlying thought-forms and assumptions remain influential."[7] The coming of Christianity may have made surface changes, but the *habitus* tends to take these outside influences and adapt them to fit its own attitudes. The aspects of the new faith that strengthen the demands of the *habitus* are accepted into it and those which challenge it are set aside or rejected.[8] Change will not happen quickly but has to be a gradual process of assimilation.

But the principal question concerns what it is that has to be changed. There is always the problem of ethnocentrism, of the danger of interpreting other cultural values in the light of one's own. But Schüssler-Fiorenza says of biblical hermeneutics:[9]

> A feminist theological hermeneutics having as its canon the liberation of women from oppressive patriarchal texts, structures, institutions, and values maintains that - if the Bible is not to continue as a tool for the patriarchal oppression of women - only those traditions and texts that critically break through patriarchal culture and "plausibility structures" have the theological authority of revelation. The "advocacy stance" of liberation theologies cannot accord revelatory authority to any oppressive and destructive biblical text or tradition.

[7]Saroj N. Parratt, "Religious Change among Women in Urban Botswana," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 25 no.1 (1995): 73-84.

[8]Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice,* 60-61.

[9]Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (London: SCM Press, 1983), 33.

In the same way, areas of the *habitus* which oppress women call out for change. It is from women of those cultures which hold those beliefs that the calls come loudest: Mercy Oduyoye, Lloyda Fanusie and Betty Ekeyo are, for example, women who share the cultural background but who recognise the need for liberation of women. It is necessary to restore women to dignity and this may mean changing the *habitus*, though that process will inevitably be very slow. Sometimes, it would not be necessary to change the culture so much as to go back to its roots.

The key to change in the attitude of the church in the area of gender issues lies mainly in education and the re-contextualising of Bible passages from a fresh, gender sensitive point of view, in order to challenge and change the *habitus*. Unless that is done there can be no hope of a change of stance. Once this has taken place, new principles will have been set in place to underscore new practices which will in time become part of the subconscious and lead to fresh structures in the church and in society. I have already mentioned the work of Youth for Christ in this respect as the workers there attempt to inculcate in the women new practices which will improve their self-esteem and lead them away from an oppressed outlook and lifestyle.

But of course, it is not enough only to change the women. The *habitus* of men must be challenged and changed also. It is also not enough that academics debate these issues and write about them in academic journals, but it is an education that must be taken to the people in the pews. Sibanda says: "Legislation on its own is not enough but must be coupled with education against feudalistic and capitalist thinking and practice"[10] and, in a footnote, Oduyoye writes:

> In Africa, generally, the historical-critical method of biblical scholarship has remained within the universities. Biblical models of human relationships, which fit well with the African traditional work-view, have been accepted as unchanging norms for all times and all peoples. It is not surprising, then, that anything other than a literal reading of the Bible is unacceptable.[11]

People must be encouraged to read the Bible in the light of modern scholarship, not simply to accept old ways of thinking that do not challenge and are no longer relevant.

2. **The use of the Bible**

Madipoane Masenya identifies several ways in which the Bible can be used as a tool for the liberation of women rather than as a means of oppression. One way, she suggests, is to examine

[10]Arnold Sibanda, "The Political Economy of Rape," *Social Change and Development* 13 (1986): 12.

[11]Mercy A. Oduyoye, "Calling the Church to Account: African Women and Liberation," *Ecumenical Review* 47 (1995), taken from *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy* (New York: Orbis Books, 1995), 489.

texts about women to counteract those that are used to oppress them.[12] She suggests reinterpretation of famous texts or finding ones that have been forgotten. Schüssler-Fiorenza suggests not only balancing texts with others that liberate women, but also examining contradictions and challenging the authority of such practices.[13] Equally, Rosemary Ruether says: "Whatever denies, diminishes, or distorts the full humanity of women is, therefore, to be appraised as not redemptive."[14] Dube is of the opinion that "feminist biblical interpretation focusses on restoring the canonicity of the Bible by insisting that what is normative, what is the authoritative word of God, is only that which embraces the liberation of women and, indeed, all the marginalized people of God."[15]

This all indicates the necessity to examine yet again the Bible and texts which denigrate women. It also necessitates acknowledging that the Bible is rooted in patriarchy and that it reflects that patriarchalism. To avoid an admission of this is a form of dishonesty. It is important to recognise where women are victimised and to use these instances to highlight abuse so that it can evoke a response from the readers.[16]

The Bible is of great significance in the lives of women in Africa and, as such, is of great importance in the re-training of minds into new ways of thinking about the status of women. It would not be helpful to women simply to reject the Bible as a patriarchal document because in this book lie many of their hopes and aspirations. To remove this would be to remove the basis of faith for many people.

The Bible is, in fact, the basis for much of the social life in the Western world. It is a constitutive part of the *habitus* and a discursive practice that has become one of the structuring structures of society. In many ways it is the written formulation of the *habitus* and in this respect forms the basis for strategies and the vocabularies of society. In Western literature, for instance, knowledge of the Bible is taken for granted and allusions abound. It is hard to understand the subtleties and implications behind many of the works if one does not have some sort of biblical background. But it is necessary to admit that the Bible is patriarchal, that it was written "largely if not exclusively by men, for men and generally about men in a language which, when it does not demonize women, usually marginalizes them or renders them invisible."[17] This patriarchalism has been internalised

[12]Madipoane Masenya, "The Bible and Women: Black Feminist Hermeneutics," *Scriptura* 54 (1995): 194.

[13]Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, and M.S. Copeland, eds. *Violence against Women*. (London: SCM Press (Concilium Series), 1994), xxi.

[14]Rosemary R. Ruether, *Sexism and God Talk: Towards a Feminist Theology*, quoted in Musa W. Shomonah Dube, "Scripture, Feminism and Postcolonial Context." In *Women's Sacred Scriptures.* (ed. by Pui Lan Kwok, and E. Schüssler-Fiorenza. Maryknoll: New York; Orbis Books: London, 1998), 46.

[15]Dube, "Scripture, Feminism and Postcolonial Context," 47.

[16]Frederick W. Schmidt, "Beyond a Biblicistic Feminism: Hermeneutics, Women and the Church," *Feminist Theology* 11 (1996): 67.

[17]Madipoane Masenya, *How Worthy is the Woman of Worth?: Rereading Proverbs 31:10-31 in African-South Africa.* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 33.

and become the foundation upon which many of the attitudes of the *habitus* have been laid and, as Christianity has been imported into other societies, the terminologies from the Bible have been aids to the further entrenchment of patriarchalism which already exists in those societies.

Having admitted this, texts which are detrimental to the status of women can be highlighted in order to illuminate what has happened so that, perhaps, it may not happen again. However, as Schüssler-Fiorenza has stated: "Neither a total rejection nor a total acceptance of the Bible is called for. Instead, every biblical passage on women must be carefully analysed and evaluated for its androcentric implications."[18]

In this way, as Masenya has suggested, the Bible is used as a means by which women can be shown that they are indeed oppressed.[19] The androcentricism of the Bible is admitted and there is then a possibility of re-interpretation and redemption.

2.1. **Recontextualise passages which blatantly denigrate women**

Frederick Schmidt, in questioning how women who are involved in the church may have been transformed by feminist hermeneutics, considers the position taken by various feminist scholars such as Phyllis Trible, Carolyn Osiek and Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza who would like to see tradition rehabilitated. He writes that "the message of the Bible is liberation and where that message is found, God speaks. Where it cannot be found liberationists employ tools of interpretation which will aid them in reconstructing 'an early Christian history in which women are not hidden and invisible'."[20]

Apart from the story of Adam and Eve, there are several texts taken from the Pauline tradition which are used to entrench attitudes that denigrate women. But gender sensitive critics have examined these passages and can often offer one sort of a solution or another for them. For growth in sensitivity to gender issues it is important for those in church ministry and teaching to be aware of possibilities of other, more liberating but nonetheless valid interpretations.

2.1.1. *Ephesians 5:21-33*

As I have pointed out before, this passage proclaims the importance of a patriarchal structure of marriage. It has a decidedly male bias and is based on a hierarchy in marriage, with women subject

[18]Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (London: SCM Press, 1983), 13.

[19]Masenya, *How Worthy is the Woman*, 37.

[20]Schmidt, "Beyond a Biblicistic Feminism," 66.

to male headship in everything. In vv. 26-27 the implication that women need cleansing and purifying while men do not indicates that women are the weaker vessels and are naturally corrupt and unclean, with the potential to shame their menfolk. It declares the inferiority of women and, even in its expression of mutuality in marriage, there is an imbalance as the one-sex model of humanity suggests that men love women as they love themselves, as the ideal of perfection, whilst women are only able to love men imperfectly as *their* bodies are imperfect.

This type of teaching may lead to abuse of women[21] and ensures that wives will be submissive in the home and the church. If they stand up for themselves or question their husbands or menfolk, they can be made to feel guilty because they are sinners by nature and are resisting the word of God. It fits in perfectly with the traditional African ideal for marriage and its teaching is an example of the church compromising with the *habitus* of culture rather than challenging it.

It is important that the patriarchal ideology of this passage is recognised, but then it should be acknowledged that there is considerable evidence that it is Deutero-Pauline in authorship and reflects a church of a later era than the unquestioned Pauline letters.[22] This later church, it must also be remembered, was extremely diverse and this passage may well not be a reflection of the ideology of the whole church but rather of a development within the church. Naturally the fact that it is Scripture lends it authority, no matter who the author is, but if it is not Pauline in authorship it can be argued that it was a later development and not part of the ideal of the earliest days of the Church. The cultural context then would be one in which misunderstandings about relationships in the Christian community were beginning to arise and it was becoming necessary to develop a defensive strategy to safeguard the new church. Therefore, these rules were laid down, reflecting an ideal marriage that would be acceptable to social norms, but not one that was true to other teaching in the Bible nor one that should be a rule for all times and all places.

Contemporary interpretations, moreover, place this passage in a modern context and comment on the mutual relationship of husband and wife expressed in this passage;[23] that the wife shows respect to her husband and the husband in turn cares lovingly for his wife. This is to acknowledge that the one-sex model no longer pertains today and that the text can be understood anew within a different understanding of humanity. Different aspects of the text can be emphasised. For instance, the husband is told to give himself up for his wife as Christ gave himself up for the church - that he is to be prepared to *die* for her. Furthermore, Shivanandan explains that the word used for "submit" is

[21]Betty Ekeyo, "Women, for How Long Not?" in *Feminist Theology from the Third World: A Reader* (ed. U. King; London: SPCK, 1994), 144.

[22]Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion: The Power of the Hysterical Woman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 232.

[23]Mary Shivanandan, "Feminism and Marriage: a Reflection on Ephesians 5:21-33," *Diakonia*, 29 (1996): 11.

hupotassô, which carries the meaning of a voluntary submission as contrasted with the word *hupakouô*, used in Ephesians 6:26 to mean obedience. Kesich explains that *hupotassomenoi* is used in Ephesians 5:21 in the sense of mutual subjection out of reverence to Christ.[24] It is a yielding in love, not unquestioning obedience. Shivanandan concludes: "Clearly the text signifies that both the man and the woman are to voluntarily submit in love to each other in the Lord but specifically the wife is to lovingly submit to her husband. In turn the husband is to give himself up for his wife."[25]

I am not suggesting that the reality of this passage is not extremely hierarchal and patriarchal in its purist interpretation, but what I am suggesting is that it is possible to teach other interpretations as being more liberational for women and that such teaching would challenge the Zimbabwe-African church community to take a new look at marriage relationships. It is a way of using a text as an instrument to challenge the *habitus* rather than simply allowing the *habitus* to determine the meaning and application of the text.

2.1.2. *1 Corinthians 11:2-16*

This passage about the headship of men and the veiling of women has been a contentious text as regards women and their status. In terms of the one-sex model of the Graeco-Roman world, this passage clearly shows that women were considered to be of secondary importance, derivative from men and therefore, it is to be presumed, inferior to them. There seem to be several issues at stake in this text: that women should cover their heads when praying, that women were created from men and therefore secondary to them and that men have the headship.

There does, however, seem to be frequent agreement that the issue of the conduct of the Corinthian women was the basis of the problem and that Paul was addressing that issue. It is often thought that some women were praying and prophesying without covering their heads. Troy Martin discusses the fact that in Roman custom women frequently worshipped with uncovered heads while men covered their heads at prayer.[26] Paul is discouraging this practice as a woman's hair was considered to arouse passion in men and threatened to be an instrument of shame to them.

The veil was an important symbol of the status of women in the first century Graeco-Roman world. Carson tells of a cosmological myth whereby Zeus threw a veil over the head of Chthonie,

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[24]Veselin Kesich, "St Paul: Anti-Feminist or Liberator?" *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 21 (1977): 130.

[25]Shivanandan, "Feminism and Marriage," 13.

[26]Troy W. Martin, "Veiled Exhortations Regarding the Veil: Ethos as the Controlling Proof in Moral Persuasion (1 Cor 11:2-16)," in *Rhetoric, Ethic and Moral Persuasion in Biblical Discourse* (ed. T.H. Olbricht and A. Eriksson; London: T&T Clark, 2005), 262-263.

the goddess of the underworld, and married her.[27] It was by this means that the goddess was tamed, transformed and renamed. The symbolism is evident in this, in that it was by veiling women that they were tamed and domesticated.

Furthermore, the veil was a means by which female pollution could be controlled.[28] It set boundaries and not only sealed her from pollution, but protected the outside world from "leakage," or pollution, by the woman. Carson comments: "No decent woman is seen in public without her headdress; only children, prostitutes and maenads run about unveiled."[29]

Dale Martin indicates that the head was considered the most divine part of the body, ruling the rest. The body, he says, was simply a vehicle for the head.[30] So when Paul writes, "the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband" (1 Cor 11:3), he is indicating the superiority of men and reminding us that men are made in God's image in a way that women are not. Man is "the image and glory of God" whereas woman is "the glory of man" and does not reflect God (1 Cor 11:7). Man is made in God's image, but the suggestion is that woman is not in any image and is simply there in a subordinate position. Man is the ideal, the epitome of the one-sex model, while women's bodies were considered as different from men's bodies, defective in their difference and, because they were considered porous and penetrable,[31] they were also thought to be more at risk from the threat of pollution and contamination. In that case, as Martin says, "To veil a woman . . . meant not only to protect her but also to civilize her; to guard her from invasion and penetration but also to protect society from the dangers and chaos represented by her femaleness. It meant to keep her intact, but also to keep her in place."[32]

These interpretations of this passage are therefore seen to be very detrimental to the status of women and the fact is that this passage was written in the context of a patriarchal world. In terms of the theory of reinterpreting or recontextualising such passages it is necessary to consider other ways of reading these texts.

When Paul writes, "the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God," both Kesich and Jervis focus on the meaning of the word *kephalē* as being that of "source"[33] and having a relational aspect. In this way it is interpreted as an historical statement of the origins of human relationships rather than a statement of hierarchal position. Now

[27]Anne Carson, "Dirt and Desire: The Phenomenology of Female Pollution in Antiquity," in *Constructions of the Classical Body* (ed. J. I. Porter; Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2002), 89.

[28]Carson, "Dirt and Desire," 89.

[29]Carson, "Dirt and Desire," 89.

[30]Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 30.

[31]Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 32.

[32]Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 235.

[33]Kesich, "St Paul," 137; L. Ann Jervis, "'But I Want You to Know . . .': Paul's Midrashic Intertextual Response to the Corinthian Worshipers (1 Cor 11:2-16)," *JBL* 112 no. 2 (1993): 240.

clearly Paul was writing within the bounds of his *habitus,* a *habitus* which held it as natural that women were inferior and subordinate to men and it is not valid simply to ignore this.

Similarly, the veil has been the subject of much interpretation. Caird [34] and Kesich[35] both point out that the word used in the Greek text is *exousia*, which means authority rather an actual veil. Kesich determines that the veil is therefore symbolic of authority, rights and freedom and signifies a woman's freedom and dignity to reflect the glory of God in her own right.[36] Caird takes this as meaning that the woman can act on her own authority, not having to rely on that of her husband.[37] Again, these arguments, do not take into account the context within which Paul was writing. As I have shown above, a veil was considered a necessary part of women's attire, to protect her from pollution and as a sign of her subservience. Furthermore, if the veil was a sign of a woman's freedom and dignity, this does not explain why a man did not have to wear such a sign. The word used to signify veil, *exousia*, is far more likely to signify that she was "covered" by her husband's authority, that it was the male honour which protected her and his house from shame.[38]

Having accepted the patriarchy and hierarchy of this passage, it can be suggested that this command of Paul's is not to be taken as prescriptive for all time, but that it is a response to certain cultural norms of the time. It is also to be noted that the letter does not restrict the gifts of prayer or prophesy to men alone (v.5) but includes women. So this teaching does not exclude women from ministries in the church. There is also the interpretation of mutuality in the relationship of man and woman as expressed in vv. 11-12 and this can be seen elsewhere in the Pauline tradition and used to challenge cultural norms which reflect a subordinate position of women.

Caird concludes by suggesting that not all of Paul's pronouncements were meant to be normative for future generations: "[T]he authority which a woman should wear on her head, whether it be a veil or her own natural covering is not to be worn in response to an unchanging natural decree, but only out of deference to the accepted conventions of the society in which she lives."[39]

In many of the passages that are used to emphasise the subordinate nature of women, the argument is cultural rather than theological or reflects the *habitus* of the time and it has to be remembered that Paul was writing for certain people in a certain situation, a situation in which people do not necessarily find themselves today.

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[34]George B. Caird, "Paul and Women's Liberty," *BJRL* 34 (1972): 277.

[35]Kesich, "St Paul," 141.

[36]Kesich, "St Paul," 141.

[37]Caird, "Paul and Women's Liberty," 277.

[38]Anne Carson, "Putting Her in Her Place: Woman, Dirt and Desire," in *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World* (ed. D. M. Halperin, J. J. Winkler and F. I. Zeitlin; Princetown: Princetown University Press, 1990), 156.

[39]Caird, "Paul and Women's Liberty," 278.

In the case of some passages, however, it is very hard to find interpretations which allow for liberation for women. In these cases contradictions should be noted and the texts balanced with others which counter them.

2.1.3. *1 Corinthians 14:34-36*

The most important point about this passage is that it directly contradicts Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 11:5 that women were praying and prophesying, which has led some to suggest that this is an interpolation by a later author. Whether or not that is true, it is a passage which is used to silence the voices of women in the church and needs to be examined in that light.

Kretzschmar sees this passage as an example of Paul accepting cultural conditions of the time which now have been taken as being a law of God and to show that women are secondary.[40] But there is also the suggestion, if one takes it in the context of vv. 27-33 that this is not an issue about women but about church order.[41] The passage (vv. 27-33) which precedes it suggests that there was chaos in meetings because everyone was speaking in tongues at once and that Paul was trying to bring order out of this chaos. In the case of this passage it is more helpful to look at the cultural conditions and what Paul was saying about those rather than emphasising his extremely contradictory words. Another alternative would be to highlight the contradictions and thereby question the validity of the objections that attempt to silence the voices of women.

2.2. **Counter texts with others that allow women to resist abuse and change the *habitus***

Some texts, such as 1 Timothy 2:8-15, so obviously propound the inferiority of women and their subordinate status, that there is no other interpretation possible. In this case it is necessary to counter these texts with others that are more life-giving and provide balance. There has been a suggestion that when the writer says, "I permit no woman to teach," that the tense could also be interpreted as, "at present I am permitting no woman to teach,"[42] indicating that it is only a temporary state of affairs. This is extremely unlikely firstly in view of the picture we see of the church in the Pastoral Epistles, a context which appears to be largely intolerant of women in leadership positions and secondly in view of the abusive statement in vv. 13-15.

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[40]Louise Kretzschmar, "Hermeneutics, Culture and the Apostle Paul's View of Women," *Women's Studies* 2 (1990): 39.

[41]Kesich, "St Paul," 144.

[42]Kretzschmar, "Hermeneutics," 44.

But texts such as this one can be set into perspective by considering other texts which put women in situations of leadership, such as those which mention women leaders (Rom 16:1-17 and Phil 4:2-3). The allusions to Eve as the originator of sin can equally be countered with those texts (e.g. Rom 5:12-21) where the writer attributes the blame to Adam. Likewise texts such as Ephesians 5:21-33 can be countered with teaching on the unity perceived by interpreters such as Meeks in Galatians 3:28 and examination of texts which show women in leadership roles in the community.

It is true that, against the background of the Graeco-Roman *habitus*, these texts are not in fact proclaiming equality as we understand it today as being equality of status and dignity between the sexes. The *habitus* governing the Graeco-Roman world would argue that the woman should aim to become "male" if she were to have any sort of status, and even then it would only be a symbolic status. It is, therefore, important now to read these passages in the light of a modern view of life, from the perspective of a *habitus* which has a different viewpoint on liberation, without the misogynism of the first century *habitus*. This is not to say one should ignore this misogynism because that would not be an honest assessment. It needs to be acknowledged and recognised and rejected for what it is and then replaced with more affirming interpretations or texts, as indicated above. In seeing the Bible as a liberating document (whilst also admitting that it has oppressive elements too), feminists may be accused of bringing in their own interpretations but it is to be remembered that, as Masenya has pointed out, there is no interpretation of the Bible that is value-free.[43] Interpretations are always subjective.

2.3. **Take a new look at suffering and oppression**

Much of the Bible's teaching on suffering and its glorification of Christ's suffering has been used in a way that has been detrimental to women. Suffering and service are seen as inescapable aspects of Christianity and in this way the suffering of women has been legitimated by the church. It is through emphasizing women's lot as being one of suffering that women have been kept subservient. Perkins writes: "[T]extual representations do not just reflect, in some unproblematic way, reality and social institutions, but, rather, help to create and maintain them."[44] The discursive practice of the Bible creates and maintains the ideal of the suffering, silent woman. For centuries, for instance, Mary has been held up as the ideal of womanhood and motherhood; silent, submissive and suffering at the foot of the cross.

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[43]Masenya, *How Worthy is the Woman*, 163.

[44]Judith Perkins, *The Suffering Self: Pain and Narrative Representations in the Early Christian Era* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 12.

A reading of 1 Timothy 2:15 indicates that it is a woman's lot to suffer through childbearing because of Eve's sin. This causes guilt and offers no way of escape from the guilt. Women are also taught that service and suffering are Christ's way and that they should embrace this to be more Christ-like.

A more holistic approach to this and one which would be more enabling to women would be to teach a view of God as suffering *with* his people, rather than legitimising suffering with the example of Christ. Schüssler-Fiorenza and Copeland suggest countering texts which glorify suffering by texts which show Christ's concern for those who suffer and his empathy with them, texts such as Luke 4:18-20, and Matthew 20:25-26.[45]

2.4. **Examine contradictions in Paul**

Masenya[46] and Schüssler-Fiorenza[47] also suggest that contradictions in Paul as regards women be examined and that the authority of practices which abuse women be challenged. As mentioned before, there are contradictions. For instance 1 Corinthians 11:5 and 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 appear to be contradictory about the role of women in the church, just as Galatians 3:28 and the various mentions of women as leaders in the church are contradicted in 2 Timothy 2:8-15. The patriarchal church has tended to emphasise the texts that suit them (for example 2 Tim 2:8-15) and gloss over those which empower women. These empowering texts need to be brought to the fore and taught to women in order to challenge and change the *habitus.*

Practices in the church which militate against women can also be challenged on scriptural grounds. In the case of polygamy, Fr Barrett has suggested:

> In a polygamous marriage of indigenous peoples, could it be said that the second wife instead of being repudiated, be allowed to live with her husband in peace, and retain her dignity as a married woman, and rear her children. Perhaps the Christian influence of her husband and the charity shown her, would speak louder than the public humiliation she will experience by being sent away? [48]

[45]Schüssler-Fiorenza and Copeland, *Violence against Women*, xx.

[46]Masenya, "The Bible and Women," 196.

[47]Schüssler-Fiorenza and Copeland, *Violence against Women*, xxi.

[48]Fr Eugene Barrett, "Christian Marriage in Shona Society," (Graduate Diploma in Humanities and Holistic Development, All Hallows College: Drumcondra, 1996), 26.

This is a course of action in which the church, when faced with the choice of acting against women's interests or of compromising with culture can make a life-giving move to remedy a situation.

3. **The power of "sisterhoods"**

Sisterhoods in the church have been mentioned in terms of the Anglican Mothers' Union, and there are many such institutions among women. Oduyoye says:

> [S]isterhoods (whether of market women, church women or professional groups) have been the backbone and source of energy for women's economic and social change. The very least the church can do is to make a conscious effort to promote and support women's study meetings as well as refresher courses for clergy and lay preachers on women's issues in order to enable the church to understand and to take effective steps against sexism.[49]

It has frequently been commented that the power of women in African societies is formidable[50] and this is a resource which could be tapped as the church challenges traditional practices which are harmful to women, but it is important first to educate the women that their lot is not inescapably one of inferiority and suffering. For the fact is that many women are not even aware that they are oppressed but consider their lot as acceptable and in so doing often collaborate in continuing their state of oppression.[51] By re-educating these sisterhoods (using some of the methods outlined above), women can in turn re-educate other women in their circles and so affect many lives.[52]

It is also important to reach the youth and teach them another way. As mentioned in Chapter 3, Youth for Christ is doing a vital job in Zimbabwe in teaching women and young girls to take pride in themselves and resist abuse.

4. **Rehabilitation for the church**

Copeland has outlined stages in rehabilitation for the church.[53] Firstly, the church should acknowledge the misogyny of the past and that this misogyny has contributed to violence against

[49]Oduyoye, "Calling the Church," 487.

[50]Laurenti Magesa, "Differences that Bind the Liberation of Women in Africa," *African Ecclesial Review* 35 (1993): 49.

[51]Mary J. Mananzan, "Feminine Socialization: Women as Victims and Collaborators," in *Violence against* Women (ed. E. Schüssler-Fiorenza, and M.S. Copeland; London: SCM Press (Concilium Series), 1994),44.

[52]MacDonald, *Early Christian Women,* 202.

[53]Mary S. Copeland, "Editorial Reflections," in *Violence against Women* (ed. E. Schüssler-Fiorenza, and M.S. Copeland; London: SCM Press (Concilium Series), 1994),121.

women. This means that the church should examine structures and teachings which proclaim the subordination of women and the superiority of men and see how, as a church, it has failed to challenge the cultural *habitus* and indeed has often strengthened it.

Secondly, the church needs to develop a feminist theology of pastoral care. It should, as Copeland expresses it, discard the "aesthetic of submission" and instead proclaim an "aesthetic of liberation."[54] It should reassess its own role in society and in culture, seeking to find out where it has encouraged women to suffer in silence, with the role model of Christ before them, rather than proclaiming Christ's concern for those who are oppressed and the need for liberation.

And finally, the church needs to accept that it is in many ways responsible for the broken pastoral situation many women face. In particular, at this moment in Zimbabwe's history, the church is doing almost nothing to reach out to those women who are being victimised by the political situation. It keeps silence over abuse of young women in youth camps, it does not take responsibility for women suffering abuse because of poverty, forced into prostitution and suffering with HIV/AIDS. It does not, as Oduyoye says, proclaim a new value system, an attempt to form a new *habitus*, and it does not appear to be challenged at all by the issue, simply promising women that their reward for suffering will be in heaven.[55]

Fortune summarises the need for a pro-active role by the church in the future:

> [T]he commitment must be to a much broader and deeper change in our religious institutions. It will require a commitment to challenge the patriarchal core of our collective religious life where we have allowed religion to serve a patriarchal ideology and practice which has historically turned a deaf ear to the exploitation of women and children.[56]

The tensions I have suggested in the Pauline material have been continued in the church through the centuries and are noticeable in the church in Zimbabwe. Whilst patriarchal values continue to exist in the church, these tensions will remain and women will continue to be marginalised. The church needs to be challenged to confront the cultural values and practices of the *habitus* in order to empower women and restore them to their rightful status.

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[54]Copeland, "Editorial Reflections," 121.

[55]Oduyoye, "Calling the Church," 487.

[56]Marie M. Fortune, "Clergy Misconduct: Sexual Abuse in the Ministerial Relationship," in *Violence against* Women (ed. E. Schüssler-Fiorenza, and M.S. Copeland; London: SCM Press (Concilium Series), 1994),117.

CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSION

In this study, I have approached the material of the Pauline tradition and of the Zimbabwe-African context from a gender critical position. I have done this by means of the concept of *habitus* as outlined by Pierre Bourdieu as this is a useful means of understanding why people do what they do and why they find change difficult. Bourdieu's approach provides a terminology by which we can understand how communities become predisposed to a certain value system and how this system pre-determines their thoughts and actions. The *habitus* is made up of discursive practices which arise over time and they in turn form structures, which then become structuring structures. All these form the building blocks of cultural attitudes which are in turn confirmed by the enactment of rituals and become embodied in the history of the society. These rituals and the ideologies they represent come to be regarded as the natural state of affairs and it is then very difficult to question them or change them as they are seen as normal and therefore unchallengeable. Bourdieu has also, however, shown how change is in fact possible within the parameters of the *habitus* through crisis and challenge and I have suggested means by which this can be attempted in the Zimbabwe-African context today.

In terms of the status of women in Zimbabwe, the Constitution and the laws subsequently passed by parliament are very clear in upholding women's equality. This Constitution and its laws are important parts of the *habitus* as they are written down, which gives them power. They are formal discourses and rituals are enacted around them to confirm them. They have behind them the backing of various discursive practices such as the legal system and the police. It must be remembered, however, that these laws do not spring from the *habitus* of traditional culture but have been imposed by colonial practices and Western ideals. The situation is complex as the Constitution exists in tension with customary law. This customary law, being oral law, may be expected not to have the power of written discourse, but in fact it has a stronger power in that it has not been imposed from outside but has formed over centuries in the minds of the people themselves and has the whole power of the *habitus* behind it. It has been strengthened over time by practices and rituals which have caused it to become embodied in the minds and lives of the people. When the two laws come into conflict, usually customary law pertains as its ideology runs deeper and this law completely opposes constitutional law when it comes to gender issues.

According to the *habitus* of customary law, women regard motherhood as their "natural" calling. They are trained by the rituals and practices of their culture to see this as their ultimate and only destiny. Their function in life, they believe, is to look after the men and to bear sons for their

husbands and traditionally they have perceived - and been allowed to perceive - no other possibilities for their future. Practices have been constructed which legitimate this role of motherhood as their only future and the Constitution simply does not have the power to destroy this ideology. As I have shown, they have few rights outside family life and, though the basis for this subordinate position is not, as in the Graeco-Roman world, the one-sex model whereby women are expected to become symbolically male, it is nonetheless similar to that world in many respects as regards rituals, expectations and roles. Though the two worlds cannot be equated there are similarities in the construction of gender roles and women in both contexts are relegated to an inferior position.

The role of the church in the Zimbabwean context has largely been one of conformity. The church has not challenged customary law but has simply accommodated itself to its teaching. Where it might have confronted traditional views of women with liberational interpretations and affirming texts, it has remained silent and priests and people have been able to find in the Pauline tradition confirmation of the customary laws which subjugate women. Part of this has been caused by the fact that the colonial church itself was coming into Africa from a patriarchal setting. The Western world at the end of the nineteenth century did not doubt that women were subordinate and that their calling was to remain in the home as mothers and wives. This gave them no reason then to challenge what they discovered of the status of women in Africa. Ideals long internalised by the *habitus* continued and were accepted by the church. In the area of polygamy, the church did make an objection, but this has been superficial and has not affected the deeper understandings of the *habitus* as men continue to have multiple liaisons, a practice which has been accepted into the *habitus* and has come to be considered as normal.

The very structures of the church have proclaimed patriarchy and hierarchy, with the bishops at the head, surrounded by the “lower orders.” Their authority is not to be questioned and they are seen as “baba,” or “father” - patriarchal concepts which do not allow for the possibility of women being in authority. Women are considered to be there to serve rather than to lead and women's organisations within the church promote this ideal.

The organisation of Youth for Christ has been singled out for special mention as a non-denominational Christian organisation which is attempting to challenge the *habitus*. It seeks to re-educate women with teachings from the Bible that affirm women, by showing them alternative behaviour patterns and by improving their self-image. Until they can re-educate the men, too, however, they will continue to face the tension between what the women are learning about their own dignity and status and what men expect of women.

Turning to the first century Mediterranean world, I have shown how women were primarily regarded as defective males. In terms of the discourse of the times, the free, adult, Roman male was regarded as the ideal and anything that did not come up to that standard was considered inferior. While men were considered to be hard, dry, impenetrable, rational and stable, women were seen to be soft, porous, "wet," emotional and changeable, and not capable of rational thought or responsibility in public life. They were suited only for household tasks, the chief of which (as in the Zimbabwe-African context) was to bear sons. Their chief role was to be mothers of sons and caregivers within their family.

The women of the first century Mediterranean world were under the control of men, just as Zimbabwe-African women are traditionally considered to be answerable to their menfolk. In neither context did women have "rights" as such or authority over their own lives, except in rare cases. They had no rights to land, could seldom inherit and were expected to remain at home, submissive and obedient. In the case of Jewish women the *habitus* was similar and women there, too, were largely confined to the home. It is, however, difficult to assess the full lives of women as what we read tends to come from male writers who were regarding women through the lens of the *habitus* and projecting on them their male image of what it was to be female or what they wanted of women.

The Pauline tradition sprang from the *habitus* of its time. Paul was a Jew and a Roman citizen. He was the ideal: a freeborn, adult, Roman and male. He was also brought up in understanding of the Torah, the discursive practice which showed Jewish men how to see the world. As a Jew of the Diaspora he was heavily influenced by the Hellenistic world and was deeply entrenched in the *habitus* of his time. To him the one-sex model pertained and, whatever roles women took in the church, they could only carry out these functions because they were allowed to do so by men and not on a fully equal footing. Later, when the church became more of an organisation, the men removed from women these functions and maligned any women who did not obey, further entrenching the *habitus* of the time.

In addition, Paul's very way of expressing himself underscored patriarchy. His language was hierarchical, he addressed himself to men rather than to women, who remain mostly invisible in his work, and he perceived himself in terms of a hierarchical patriarchal model. Some critics have pointed out that he did give women some space in the new church but it must be remembered that their power was limited and this situation was soon altered by the pressure of the patriarchal *habitus* of the early church.

Thus, the Pauline tradition reveals a tension in what was happening in the early church. This tension was one between women taking some leadership roles, together with an awareness of the

challenges of the gospel, and the extremely pervasive power of the *habitus* of the first century Mediterranean which was detrimental to the status of women. A similar tension has been observed in the church in Zimbabwe, where traditional *habitus* has been underscored by the patriarchal aspects of the Pauline tradition rather than the church being a liberational force for women. As the Pauline tradition was ultimately unable to break away from its own prejudices and implement a freedom for women which would resist cultural pressures to conform, so the church in Africa, and particularly in terms of this study in Zimbabwe, has been unable to challenge the existing structures of patriarchy and hierarchy. This has contributed at the least to a denial to women of ministry in the church and, at worst, to violence and abuse against women, justified in the name of religion.

I have suggested that there is a way that this situation may be addressed. Using models described by Madipoane Masenya and Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, I have suggested that there are strategies that can be set in place that will challenge the *habitus* and lead to new ways of thinking that will in turn lead to a change in the structures that underlie the *habitus*. These models largely rely on education and looking at the biblical texts in a new way. It is necessary to confront the patriarchy in the biblical texts and not to ignore it. I have suggested, especially in terms of the most problematic Pauline texts, recontextualising these passages from a modern feminist point of view.

Other ways in which to transform the *habitus*, I have proposed, are to counter texts that abuse women with other texts that allow women to resist abuse and change the *habitus*. These texts would improve the self-image of women and build up their confidence. It would also be useful to take a new look at suffering and oppression. These must not be denied but seen as they are in all their horror. The suffering of women can no longer be justified by the model upheld by the *habitus* of Mary, the ideal woman who suffered and was silent and submissive. These texts which show the suffering of women need to be highlighted and seen for what they are and a new outlook needs to be taught whereby suffering for women is no longer glorified.

It is important to reach the youth and teach them another way. Youth for Christ is doing a vital job in Zimbabwe in teaching women and young girls to take pride in themselves and resist abuse but this is a very limited attempt and other initiatives by various denominations are isolated and very localised in their effects.

The way in which these models can be taught to women in Africa is through the power of "sisterhoods" or women's organisations. Women in African societies have great power within these societies and this resource can be a formidable tool if the church is to challenge traditional practices which are harmful to women. Firstly, however, the women need to be shown that their lot is not inescapably one of inferiority and suffering. Many women are not even aware that they are oppressed but consider their lot as acceptable and in so doing often collaborate in continuing their

state of oppression. I have shown how this, too, is a way in which the *habitus* confirms itself. People tend to mix with people who agree with them, they avoid situations which challenge their ideas and, by conforming to the *habitus*, continue their own oppression. In addition, those who do challenge the ideas upheld by the *habitus* tend to be ostracised, which in turn discourages more questioning. By re-educating these sisterhoods (using some of the methods outlined above), women can in turn re-educate other women in their circles, show them their state, and so affect many lives.

The process of changing the *habitus* is inevitably slow but the possibility of change lies in the *habitus* itself. I have shown how these very aspects that support the *habitus* can be used to challenge it. The Pauline tradition can indeed be used as a force for liberation rather than oppression. It can be about transformation as people are led to question those practices which prevent them living full lives and women in particular can be taught to realise their full potential.

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