The Evil of Patriarchy in Church, Society and Politics

A Consultation
Held at Mount Fleur Conference Center
Stellenbosch
5 and 6 March 2009

Hosted by Inclusive and Affirming Ministries (IAM), in partnership with the Department of Religion and Theology of the University of the Western Cape, and the Centre for Christian Spirituality.
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Foreword and Acknowledgements

On 5 and 6 March 2009 IAM, in partnership with the UWC Department of Religion and Theology (the program for Social Transformation) and the Centre for Christian Spirituality, hosted a very successful Consultation on: “The Evil of Patriarchy in Church, Society and Politics”.

We wish to thank the 39 participants (professors of theology of our leading Universities, members of the South African Council of Churches, clergy and LGBTI individuals) who attended. The five speakers captured the audience with their excellent papers – we thank you for your time and input. The members of the steering committee were Bishop David Russell, Rev Laurie Gaum, Dr Carel Anthonissen (Centre for Christian Spirituality), Dr Christo Lombard (UWC) and myself (Pieter Oberholzer) from IAM. Thank you for the many hours of deliberation and preparation. Finally, we extend our deepest gratitude to ICCO (The Interchurch Organisation for Development Cooperation in the Netherlands) for their generous contribution that made the Consultation possible.

During the past fifteen years we have frequently entered into dialogue with the Churches about the dangers of Fundamentalism in Christianity and how it excludes gay and lesbian Christians from the Kingdom of God. In this dialogue we always acknowledged that patriarchy in Africa fuels this fundamentalism and that in our struggle for inclusion in the Church, we must work with all those who work for gender justice, as women (and especially lesbian women) suffer the most under the violence directed towards them through this male dominance.

What sparked the idea for this conference was when I noticed how the attitude of a few acquaintances suddenly changed towards me as a gay man after they had attended a Mighty Men Conference (MMC) in Newlands, Cape Town. They were under the spell of Angus Buchan, the farmer preacher of “Faith like potatoes” fame. Most of these “friends” had been quite accepting of my being gay, but suddenly something changed and I could sense their cold shoulders. Dr Sarojini Nadar gives an excellent account of the dangers of the MMC in her paper, included in this report. One paragraph from her paper highlights the concern that I felt in June 2008:

“In addition to the relational power, that is evident in Buchan’s statements regarding headship and submission, note also the discursive power evident in both his and his wife’s claims that they speak on behalf of God. For example, Angus Buchan says in his interview on Carte Blanche, ‘I don’t shy away from controversy ….. Homosexuality is against the word of God. I’m not doing this for money. I’m doing this because God told me to’. In the first instance he establishes hetero-normative principles for marriage, and then asserts that restoring these norms is God’s initiative – not his. It is clear how power is established here through an appeal to religious language – after-all one can argue with Angus Buchan, but who can argue with God?”

I personally, am afraid of the combination of patriarchy and fundamentalism and how this “Crusade” is sweeping through the country – and this prompted us to organise this Consultation.

Pieter Oberholzer (Director IAM)
Introduction to the publication of the papers

By Dr. David Russell

We are all called by the very nature of our humanity to work for a shared human community characterised by justice, equity and mutual caring. It is these qualities and values that enable us as fellow human beings, to fulfil our true human potential together, cherishing all creation. However, there are many forces pitted against this commitment to human flourishing, and their roots grow deep. They become manifest in attitudes, behaviours and structures that undermine our human endeavours.

One such factor, not sufficiently acknowledged in its negative impact, is patriarchy – the assumptions and practice of male dominance. In our society there are serious distortions in the way we relate – in the way, from the beginning of human history, relationships have been structured, assumed and imposed. These distortions are rooted in patriarchy that can be described simply as “the rule of men over women”! It is not just the brute fact of the historic rule of men. (Matrilineal societies are surely the exception that proves the rule). Reinforcing this ‘rule by men’ is also the underlying assumption – in times past deeply internalised – that “men are meant to rule”!

It might be thought that with the establishment of our universally acclaimed Constitution and Bill of Rights, that patriarchy’s ‘days are numbered’. Would that this would truly follow. However, although we have clearly made significant gains, the reality on the ground reveals how far we have to go, and how vigilant we need to be.

Yet again, it may appear, in the light of the fact that in today’s world we now have women as prime ministers and cabinet ministers, and sharing in almost every other field of leadership, that talk about “the assumptions and practice of male dominance” may be somewhat dated. This would be to deceive ourselves concerning the many dimensions of patriarchy. It is true that in recent times patriarchy, as a set of attitudes and behaviours, has come under critical analysis and new pressure from the feminist and lesbian/gay liberation movements. Nevertheless, patriarchal attitudes and behaviours still permeate our cultures in ways that perpetuate gender inequality with deep and serious consequences.

In countless households in our country, men regard themselves as the ones to ‘rule the home’. They are liable to get angry and threatened if this is questioned. The degree of domestic violence and assumed rights of sexual imposition is very widespread. We are familiar with the ominous assertion: “This is our culture!” The degree to which the HIV/AIDS pandemic has ravaged homes and communities is to a significant degree due to patriarchal attitudes and behaviours. The hostile cultural prejudice against gays and lesbians, leading to hate crimes and murder, are in no small measure, due to arrogant attitudes, and macho beliefs that are the hallmark of crude patriarchy. There is nothing ‘dated’ about this focus on patriarchy, as a social disease that needs to be seen for what it is, and dealt with.

It is therefore crucial that, while we rightly affirm the rich human qualities within our
cultural roots, we nevertheless need, at the same time, to undertake a rigorous critique of culture. This is precisely with a view to fostering in our cultures, the basic human values of justice, freedom, equality, civic-mindedness and human dignity – which together form the fundamental ethical touchstone of all culture.

The faith communities, equally, must be opened to this rigorous critique. The tenacity and underlying all-pervasiveness of the phenomenon of patriarchy in all cultures is compounded by the fact that the holy books of the monotheistic faiths were written at a time when exactly such beliefs and attitudes prevailed in all their confident and unquestioned dominance. In this way, religion reinforced and legitimised these patriarchal attitudes and structures of human relating. The message that vested interests took on was: “Men rule and men should rule”. Fortunately the holy books of these faiths were not confined to the assumptions of the cultures of their time of writing. A different Spirit shines through and will not be quenched: “Do unto others, as you would have them do to you”; and Paul at his most exalted, witnesses to this human and divine truth: “Love does not insist on its own way”. However, there remains an urgent need for the faith communities to examine their own practice, along with unexamined assumptions and attitudes. There is much that needs changing in this regard. Patriarchy is a blight that harms and hurts, in church and society at large.

It was these urgent challenges that motivated the inviting together of a fascinatingly diverse group of about 30 persons representing a wide range of leadership and experience in our South African political and social milieu. We offer here the papers that were read, along with the record of the discussions that followed in groups and in plenary.

Alas it is not really possible to evoke through the written record, the atmosphere engendered by our sharing together around this topic. As we listened and engaged, we found ourselves motivated in solidarity of renewed commitment to address these issues with clearer focus, when we returned to ‘our places’ of work and community. Patriarchy is a truly destructive phenomenon, and we need to expose it, and tackle it, with that same ‘struggle energy’ by which apartheid was overcome. We trust that those who read the record of this significant Consultation will also find themselves touched by a renewed commitment to focus on these issues with fresh ‘struggle energy’.
The Papers

“Reconciliation between Men and Women”

Prof. Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge -

Deputy Speaker of Parliament; served as a Deputy Minister of Health from 2004 to August 2007, Deputy Minister of Defence from 1999 to April 2004, Member of Parliament and activist for Women’s Rights and Peace.

“The future of humanity will be will be decided not by relations between nations, but by relations between men and women.” D H Lawrence

It is helpful if I define patriarchy at the onset. Patriarchy is a hierarchical system of social organization whereby men hold positions of power over women. Patriarchal ideology is particularly powerful because through conditioning men usually secure the apparent consent of the very women they oppress. They do this through institutions such as the academy, the church, the military and the family. Each of which justifies and reinforces women’s subordination to men with the result that most women internalise a sense of inferiority to men. If conditioning fails to achieve the desired result, men resort to coercion, intimidation and ultimately violence.

Coincidentally, there is an exhibition at the National gallery that we visited yesterday afternoon on patriarchy and some of the uncomfortability with stereotypical notions of male identity. Unfortunately it closes tomorrow.

Women’s resistance to patriarchy has taken many forms, which helped women gain status politically, legally and economically. Despite the gains made, patriarchal socialization and role differentiation remained largely intact. Reactionaries were able to lead a misogynistic counter-revolution between 1930 and 1960.

Feminist Africa makes some interesting observations on women, patriarchy and the military.

• Feminist scholars have begun to analyze the intersection of militarism and patriarchy and the impact of gender roles. We need to deepen and organize ourselves to effectively change mindsets about war and militarism.

• Betty Reardon: “It is in the interest of patriarchy not to reject the legitimating of state violence as much as it is to avoid gender equality. Its exclusive claim to the lawful use of lethal force maintains the patriarchal state and limits the potential challenge to its power raised by rivals and dissidents, including the challenges of democracy and especially women’s equality.

• The reality is that militarism serves to reinforce and reproduce unequal gender relations. The dominant ideology portrays women as weak and passive or victims to be defended by strong men.
• Patriarchal attitudes remain and affect the positions held by women in the military. Women’s involvement in war remains poorly understood and framed by sexist notions of women as bearers of special qualities—physical inferiority and unsuitability for fighting.

There has been a policy shift away from the focus on women’s perspective towards a gender perspective—not only in South Africa but internationally. As women’s equality is more justly reflected in legal frameworks the hold of male power over women has become much more nuanced. Hence we have seen a shift from women’s struggles to gender struggles.

Women’s emancipation was shaped by the needs to address the interplay of gender, race and class identities—triple oppression. In SA the ANC-aligned women’s movement has managed, through self-identified feminist writing and debates, to successfully insert an indigenous feminism that accounted for the interplay of race, class and gender inequalities. Activists who were concerned with national liberation saw this as a springboard for addressing gender inequalities. There was a strong resistance initially by men, supported by some women, who said that we were dividing the struggle.

In 1912 when the ANC was formed, women were not accepted as members. Only in 1931 the Bantu Women’s League (BWL) was recognised as the women’s branch of the ANC, and in 1943 women were formally admitted as ANC members. Its founding president, Charlotte Maxeke, had campaigned hard for the inclusion of women in the ANC. Charlotte’s legacy of resistance saw many famous campaigns, from her fight for the inclusion of women in the ANC, to the mass campaigns of the 1950s (Anti-Pass, Defiance campaigns), to the period from the 1970s when men were in jail and the underground organisation was left to women, to the mass mobilisation of the UDF of the 1980s.

Where we are today is a result of many battles fought by women over many decades, for example, they carried out militant campaigns against the hated pass laws; participated in the underground and armed struggle; suffered restriction, imprisonment, torture and brutal assassination by the old order.

In the period since 1994, the ANC has placed many women in senior positions, as Cabinet ministers, deputy ministers, directors general, and members of parliament. Our ratios have been lauded over the entire world, as many countries boasting older democracies, struggle to find women prepared to make the sacrifice in senior public service. At Polokwane in 2007, 50/50 male/female representation in leadership and all other responsibilities was agreed to by the ANC’s 52nd conference. The numbers are an important step toward gender equality, but have we succeeded in transforming politics and the underlying patriarchy? Are women leaders supported to lead?

Thenjiwe Mtinso argued in the Mail and Guardian in 2007 that the presence of substantial numbers of women in leadership structures does not mean that unequal gender relations become a thing of the past. Experience internationally and in SA shows that a critical mass of women in decision-making is necessary but not sufficient for the resolution of patriarchal power relations. Attitudes tend to lag far behind everything else; quantitative changes play a critical role in achieving qualitative changes.
The entry of women in senior party structures, government institutions and the private sector have changed the face of these institutions and in so doing, has affected the consciousness of emerging generations of young men and women.

This is not to say that the work is over. But we need to recognise the contribution of women in putting women and gender related matters at the centre of the political agenda, our national discourse and strengthening the struggle for emancipation and gender equality. Transformation of gender relations is not the responsibility of women alone and women’s roles should not be reduced to this.

Men also need to internalise these shifts so that the cycles of violence – personal and political – will be not perpetuated. This process can be informed by basic human values like, love and respect for our neighbour.

What are some effective practical tools to address patriarchy? We explore a new interfaith approach that embraces diversity including sexual orientation, and the experience of gender reconciliation workshops facilitated by the Satyana Institute and South African partners. In reviewing the book, Divine Duality: The Power of Reconciliation between Women and Men by the Satyana Institute, I wrote, “I have been looking for a long time to find a way to bring healing and reconciliation between women and men… This work is the answer. We need much more of this work in South Africa.” The experience of my husband and I attending one of these workshops was profound. I saw that we have a tool that can address patriarchy and unite women and men in a struggle for freedom from the shackles that bind both men and women.

In November 2006, I convened and hosted a six-day “gender reconciliation” workshop in Cape Town for Members of Parliament, and leaders from the SACC and NGOs. Gender Reconciliation work brings women and men together to jointly unravel the invisible knots of cultural conditioning relating to patriarchy, gender, sexuality, and society. In this rare forum, the “undiscussables” of gender and patriarchy were jointly confronted and sensitively discussed by women and men together. We plumbed the depths of our experiences, and moved beyond habitual ways of relating to discover new forms of healing between the sexes.

Key to the methodology of gender reconciliation is the application of spiritual wisdom and teachings, which make this work effective across a broad spectrum of religions and cultures. Satyana Institute has trained a group of fifteen professional facilitators in the United States, and is now beginning a new training program with our network of colleagues here in South Africa.

Over the course of the six-day workshop, powerful stories of abuse and violation emerged from the women in the circle. The men listened carefully in silent witness, often choking back tears, as women related stories of violation, oppression, rape, AIDS, and so forth. Afterward, the roles were reversed, and the women sat in silent witness while the men shared their stories of abuse, and revealed the painful masculine socialization in today’s culture of macho conditioning that teaches men to deny their pain, and cover it over with a mask of feigned “toughness.”

After these powerful and tearful sessions of empathic listening to one another, the women
and men created simple ceremonies of honoring and blessing for each other. In this way they acknowledged the healing that had transpired between them, and expressed their mutual gratitude. I remember the men’s ceremony vividly, as the men escorted us into the room, and seated us quietly in a semicircle. The women looked at each other with quizzical looks as they gazed at the other end of the room, where the men had built a large, curious-looking structure. It was a kind of tower, consisting of some twenty or thirty chairs—all carefully stacked and balanced, one upon the other. The structure took up a lot of space, and reached to the ceiling. Then the men explained to us that this tower of chairs represented the patriarchy. The men surrounded the tower, and proclaimed their commitment to dismantle and topple the oppressive structures of patriarchy, that hold both women and men in bondage to a system of oppression and injustice. Then the men reached down in coordinated unison, and each man pulled out one chair from the bottom simultaneously. The women gasped as the entire edifice of chairs came tumbling down with a thundering CRASH! onto the floor.

The symbolism was very impressive. Then the men quickly cleared the chairs out of the way, and lined up before us in a row, and delivered a declaration to the women. Let me just read to you what the men said:

_We have met over the past five days in community as men, and in community with you as men and women. We have listened to each other’s stories—some personal, others told on behalf of vulnerable, degraded, hurt, brutalized human beings—all for no other reason than that they are women, sisters, mothers, and girl children._

_We have heard, too, that through the social structures of power and decision-making, many of our brothers have abused our intended roles of caring and protection—for their own selfish power, personal pleasure, and gain._

_The bonds of humanity have been broken. We acknowledge that we have shared in the unfair and unjust advantage that has upset the Creator’s intended balance of human relationships for love, companionship, and cooperation. We further acknowledge that we have been complicit in breaking the intended dream of equality._

_So now we come forward to say to you: we are sorry. We affirm that we want to start anew . . .. And we ask, will you accept our offer to take responsibility, as we commit ourselves to live out—and challenge and support all men everywhere to live and work for—gender equality, and thereby seek reconciliation?_

After delivering this proclamation, the men bowed to the women in silence. It was a profound moment: to witness a group of South African men—all in key leadership positions—proclaim their commitment to deconstruct the patriarchy, and heal relations between women and men. The women were stunned. We had tears in our eyes, and no one spoke for several minutes. Afterwards, the women proceeded with a beautiful ceremony to honor the men, and the workshop concluded with song, dance, and much jubilation.

**Gender Reconciliation Initiative in South Africa**

An informal Steering Committee for Gender Reconciliation in South Africa was formed in 2007 comprised of myself, Keith Vermeulen of the Parliamentary Office of the SACC, Jeremy Routledge and Judy Connors of Phaphama Initiatives, a national training organization.
implementing the Alternatives to Violence Program (AVP) in South Africa. This steering committee is collaborating with the Satyana Institute to launch a Gender Reconciliation Initiative in South Africa. The goal is to train a cadre of South African facilitators in gender reconciliation, who will initiate gender reconciliation programs in targeted sectors of South African society. The intention is to bring women and men together to jointly embark upon the deconstruction of patriarchal structures, and transform gender relations in our society.

There is a powerful religious precedent for the work of gender reconciliation. For example, the call of every Christian is to fulfill two highest commandments: The first is to love God with all your heart, mind, and soul. The second is to love your neighbor as yourself. There is no more powerful arena in which to apply and fulfill the twin commandments of Christ, than the arena of gender relations between women and men. Let us join together in courage and compassion, and begin this work of gender reconciliation in our country.

This initiative of Inclusive and Affirming Ministries (IAM) and partners constitutes an important step in overcoming our fear of engaging in a struggle we avoid and deny. I believe it is possible to use consensus processes such as the gender reconciliation workshops for women and men in religion, politics and society to find common understandings and unite in the struggle to overcome patriarchy.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS TO NOZIZWE:

COMMENT

Gertrude

The fact is that gender equality can liberate both women and men, like we said in the past, that racism actually oppressed white people as well. The work Nozizwe has done before 1994 was very powerful because without that incredible work we would not have had a 1994.

Q

Laurie

The reason for a conference like this is that there is a main concern amongst a lot of South Africans. The great discourses we are hearing at the moment from the leading party in the government are a bit scary and we fear that a lot of the advances that have been made on gender level and also regarding same-sex marriages are really threatened at the moment. I am sorry that you have to speak for this particular party now, but that is the main voice one hears from the leaders. Maybe it is also the media’s fault that just exemplifies voices like that. But could you perhaps say if you have the same kind of concern and what would be the way forward to address that?

A

The violence in South African is going to need a movement in psychology, due to the high rate of violence.

With regards to the ANC party, I know that there are fears in society. The reason is from statements made by some leading people in the organisation, for example Julius Malema who talked about killing for Zuma and I know that Laurie’s statement arises from Jacob Zuma’s statement that is homophobic. My position is, it is important for South Africans to be vigilant, very vigilant and protective of the achievements made in our country. I had an event last night that very openly celebrates the achievements in our country. For example the laws that allow same-sex marriages. But in this celebration I also read an underlined fear that if we do not hold up these achievements we can easily slide back. And this is what I also was saying about taking one step
forward and two backwards. And actually it means that we really need this kind of movement; we need to step it up.

There are women and men in the ANC who disagree with the statements that were made by Julius that reflects this African Nationalism, which remains strong in the ANC. The ANC was started as an African Nationalist organisation and with the influence of the African Communist Party coming in and playing an important role in the ANC and the ANC reformed a little in terms of being a Nationalist Organisation.

Even though there is this mental recognition that women must lead, within the party you have to really find a way to raise your concerns so that it doesn’t look like you are being disrespectful. That is why I said these women like Charlotte Maxeke must have been up against a much harder struggle, to actually understand how they fought the struggle and won within an organisation that initially did not accept women as leaders.

Q Phumzile

I found your comment on rural women referred to as feminists quite interesting. I would like you to comment on the different labels used in the gender justice world and their potential to divide us, where there are feminists, womenists and African women. In our work where we mobilize women how should we make sure that those different labels don’t divide us?

Q Christo

In the military movement there are many stories of women being sexually abused and it seems that there is a big need for these stories to come out. The women not always having the option to say no and some gaining power and some living with the resentment but most still living with the trauma. So where do we go with these stories? How to use real power not at the expense of women?

Q Basil

A challenge I still struggle with is in our involvement in the black consciousness movement. What black consciousness raised for me at the time was, what was white consciousness like? Can white people find worth and pride that is not tied up with racism in the oppression of black people? My struggle is how I find an identity with pride and worth as a man that is not tied up with the oppression of women? I am still tied up with it. I can’t find it because it is so deeply internalized and there is always the comparative definition.

A

Women soldiers in Iraq reminded me of women in the Air Force. Some of the stories where shown on TV of women soldiers drinking with the boys, really becoming like the boys in the military. That came from a situation where women have to prove themselves. It is like saying you are coming into an institution called the military, and then show us that you have the balls to do what we do.

I said ‘with the women being comfortable’ but it didn’t start off being comfortable. In fact they didn’t even define themselves as feminists, and that includes me, but in the process we have become very conscious about that. At the same time we went through a process of underlying a different kind of feminism because we wanted to define what kind of feminists we were. We came up with South African feminism that is perhaps different
from European feminism and I think this is a feminism that takes account of our own situation in South African and Africa. Some people have defined themselves as womenists, which I think, is fine, you can be a woman and a feminist. These are interesting questions because men can also be feminists and be comfortable with it.

Power and leadership: This actually has to be taught that power can be shared, because you grow up in a competitive environment. Take for example the owning of a phone - I have one and you don’t have it and I am terrified of losing this phone to you.

I tell this story often. A woman actually told this story to us that a different way to look at power is to look at it as if you are in a dark room and one of you had a candle. By lighting the next person’s candle and the next, in the end you have this room that is full of light and everybody is holding light in their hands. It is something that you have to work hard at.

Politicians think that they have to know everything. Politicians are very uncomfortable standing in front of people, saying I don’t know. And this is something that we have to teach ourselves. That we don’t know everything and sometimes the answer is there amongst the people. We do not have all the answers.

I think the stories from the military and liberation struggle need to come out as part of healing. Because some of the men … this documentary was showing human violation rights in some of the ANC military wings, and women talking about their experiences. Some women became generals because they had a sexual relationship with their commanders.

Internalization of patriarchy by men and women - how do we redefine this in relation to white consciousness? Remember in 1994 white South Africans said they felt a load off their shoulders; they were also released from this identity which linked them to racism merely by being white, and were seen as racists and how in fact they themselves had to deal with their own internalization of guilt. And this is where white consciousness can come out and we all celebrate our identities.

My son Simon had difficulty at UCT when he filled in these forms because he had to be either white/black/Indian/coloured. And he said that he had a problem, because I am half black and half white. So this was the way of actually raising this issue. And I think South African needs to continue this conversation.

Post 1994 era I actually observed a situation where the white people started to feel marginalized and it was a situation where black people who fought for many years against oppression in some ways they tried to re-assert themselves but in a way that it excluded others.

That is why we have to continue this conversation in South Africa about racism and how it affected all of us, black and white. Jeremy had a conversation at a dinner table with a leader who was a black man and asked him if blacks can be racists? And this man said no, what are you talking about? But the conversation changed and this man started to give examples of his own racism against whites even in the regime of the ANC.
Thank you for the opportunity to address you today. I have been asked to talk about the patriarchy in relation to lesbian lives. I imagine this choice of topic is intended to give much needed space and voice to the multiple oppressions that lesbians face in a social order that is both sexist and homophobic. When interrogating sexualities in the patriarchy I believe it is imperative to bring heterosexuality as a social construct under scrutiny. For this is the dominant system that needs to be changed if we are to go any way in addressing the continued marginalization of, and attack on, those whose sexualities don’t conform. Studying lesbians, without problematizing the system in which we operate, can obscure and invisibilise how heterosexual power and privilege operate. In this paper I wish to talk about lesbian sexualities as a lens through which to critique the normative sexualities and genders that are integral to patriarchal power. There are many issues that I simply do not have the time to address, including the specifics of the transgender experience, as well as the myriad ways in which heterosexuality manifests within lesbian relationships and lesbian sex. For the purpose of brevity and broad argument I have therefore limited my attention to representations of lesbian sexualities in the broadest sense.

I speak with multiple hats: I am a feminist. I am a lesbian. I am white. I am middle class. I am a woman. These identities sometimes act in contradiction to each other. But they all shape my understanding of the world and my place and the place of others in that world. Inherent to my argument are my own pains, privileges and politics.

We live in a world in which identities, including gender and sexuality, are constructed through hierarchical dichotomies: male-female/man-woman/heterosexual-homosexual. It follows a similar pattern to race with its white-black division, in which white often equals ‘good’ and black ‘bad’. Each dichotomous position comes with its prescribed roles, values, expectations and responsibilities. These positions provide those who inhabit them with ‘socially appropriate’ ways of feeling, thinking and doing. They even tell us what to wear in the morning. The powerful social constructs of how to be ‘man’, ‘woman’, ‘gay’, ‘straight’, also craft the contours of ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ and ‘good’ and ‘bad’ sex.
Biological determinism is at the root of this patriarchal thinking: The notion that bodies determine the superiority of men and the inferiority of women. Let’s remember that sex is only a theory about human beings which divides them into two biologically-based categories (male and female).1

Gender, by extension, is the ‘natural’ splitting of the world into masculine and feminine experiences.2 This split between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ gender identity extends to sexuality with heterosexuality socially positioned as ‘good, mature sexuality’ and homosexuality as ‘bad, primitive sexuality’.3 As such, gender relations in the patriarchy demand a particular sexual system – called heterosexuality. It is a compulsory sexuality. In this way, sexuality and gender are shaped by each other.

Sexuality in the patriarchy has a hierarchy which privileges male sexuality as the active sexuality. Female sexuality on the other hand is passive and its ‘natural’ expression is through motherhood.4 Social pressures are applied on men and women to ensure that ‘real men’ and ‘real women’ only exist within this notion of heterosexuality. Heterosexuality is therefore presented as part of the natural ‘fit’ between male and female bodies.5 This prescribed (hetero) sexuality has a coercive authority6 - those who conform to its demands are included and regulated. Those who do not conform are constructed as outsiders and regulated through exclusion.

Sexuality is regulated through this crafting of a universal, normative heterosexuality on the one hand and deviant, minority sexualities on the other. The deviants are, amongst others, lesbians. These identities are relational, however the tendency is to give attention to the marked other – who represents the deviation from the norm, the anomaly. This may mean that the marginalized becomes the subject of our enquiry while the centre is obscured from scrutiny. Such an emphasis may restrict the challenge we can mount against the normative as the ‘natural order of things’.

Sexuality, like gender, is a social process and is influenced by biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural and other factors. All these factors are mediated through norms, values and roles. In this way sexuality is constructed rather than given. Those sexualities that don’t conform to dominant moulds are stigmatized and pushed to the margins. Non-conforming sexualities are varied and include gay men; transgender people; HIV positive people who are sexually active; women who refuse to have sex with their husbands; women with multiple partners; women who report rape; sex workers and others whose behaviours and identities disrupt gender norms.

Whilst non-conforming sexualities cut across all sexual orientations and genders, this paper limits itself to lesbian sexualities. The lesbian is woman and she is lesbian. In both these senses she is other in the system of the patriarchy that I have already alluded to. She does not inhabit the role of female sexuality; neither does she represent the female gender (which

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3 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
is constructed through relationship with men). Having chosen to not take males as her sexual partner, she defies the heterosexual prescription. She dares to have a sexuality that is potentially autonomous from the male. She disrupts. She must be silenced, invisibilised, insulted, raped or even killed. Her sexuality remains obscured – ‘what do lesbians do in bed? ’; her masculinity undermined – ‘how can she be a man without a penis’. Even when she conforms to the feminine, she is still, by virtue of her sexual expression, a threat. In this sense, the lesbian represents ‘evil’. She is invisibility in plain sight.

She is, in a nutshell, big trouble for the hetero-patriarchy. And ‘gender trouble’ is exactly what we need. For, she has the potential – and I say potential because she is also a product of the patriarchy - to profoundly disrupt the constricting narratives of gay/straight and man/woman.

But the patriarchy responds in very particular ways against those ideas and persons who challenge its hegemony. What is the fate of the multiplicity of sexualities and gender identities that don’t conform to patriarchal norms? Well, as Jacob Zuma supporters would have it, in their public response to a woman who dared challenge his sexual power, simply “burn the bitch!”.

Hegemonic heterosexuality is reinforced through sexism, homophobia and other prejudices. Homophobia is not only a hatred of homosexuals but also a “disciplinary strategy employed against all social subjects to ensure that they comply with society’s preference for heterosexuality” (WT, p25). In this way, conformity to heterosexuality is not only about rejecting same-sex sexuality but also involves upholding the stereotype of male sexuality and male gender. Homophobia reinforces the positioning of lesbians as outside ‘normal’ femininity and as a product of ‘incorrect’ gendering.

Violence and insult are central to homophobia as a social practice. According to philosopher and historian Didier Eribon the insult influences the relationship that gay and lesbian people have to others and the world. And I quote, “the insult lets me know I am not like the others, not normal. I am queer, strange, bizarre, sick, abnormal… I discover that I am a person about whom something can be said, to whom something can be said, someone who can be looked at or talked about in a certain way, and who is stigmatized by that gaze and those words” (my emphases).

If someone calls a lesbian a ‘man-hating dyke’ or ‘stabane’ “…that person is not only trying to tell her something about herself but also letting her know that he or she has power over her. In this way hate speech and insult establish and perpetuate the barriers between the “normal” and the “stigmatized”. The lesbian is insulted as both a woman and as a lesbian, both because of her sexuality and her gender.

The normative citizen, within the liberal state, is both sexed and raced – we know him colloquially as Joe Soap. Citizenship confers upon us those rights and responsibilities that come with equal membership and participation in a community. Is the normative citizen a

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8 Slogan on a poster and chanted by pro-Zuma supporters outside the Johannesburg High Court in the rape trial of Jacob Zuma (See Motsei, M. 2007. The Kang and the Kangaroo Court: The Rape Trial of Jacob Zuma. Jacana Press: Cape Town.
lesbian? I think not.

Marginalized sexualities that don’t subscribe to the gender script are not, despite laws to the contrary, able to lay full claim to the resources, recognition and representations of citizenship.

I have argued that heteronormativity creates the context for the discrimination of lesbians and other gender non-conforming persons. A recent HSRC report reminds us of the extent to which homo-prejudice is entrenched within the social attitudes of South Africans. In this study, 80% of respondents expressed the view that sex between two men or two women is “always wrong”. It is against this attitudinal backdrop that sexualities and genders that contradict the patriarchy are silenced, undermined, and at times attacked. Homophobic and misogynist violence simultaneously reinforce gender and sexual norms. Such violence serves as a social control mechanism that disciplines gender non-conformity.

Rape and sexual assault are commonplace for sexual ‘minorities’ in a world where perceived sexual deviance is under attack. The ‘corrective rape’ of lesbian women are a case in point here. In homophobic discourses the sexual is often invoked. The lesbian woman gets punished or insulted because she ‘thinks she is a man’ or is ‘not man enough’ to ward off the attacks of ‘real men’. She is rendered female and feminine through rape and thereby repositioned through violence into her ‘correct’ gendering. In this way both gender and sex oppression come into play for lesbian women as they are mutually reinforcing systems of power.

Central to women’s oppression is the construction of fear. The fear of discrimination, which is a form of collective control, has a debilitating impact on the basic freedoms of lesbians and all other women. This includes restricting women’s freedom of movement, and the right to make sexual choices and act with sexual agency.

Sexual identities intersect with economic and racial realities, resulting in multiple forms of discrimination. One form of oppression, such as sexual oppression, may be used to support and facilitate other forms of oppression (such as racism, classism and xenophobia).

The particular ways in which black women’s bodies were represented, objectified and violated under colonialism and apartheid, make the combined effect of racism, misogyny and homophobia different for black lesbians when compared with white lesbians. These intersecting discriminations continue to render black lesbians disproportionate targets for homophobic rapes and other hate crimes.

11 International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, Input memo to the UN Secretary-General’s Study on Violence against Women. Prepared by Susana T. Fried and Alex Teixeira.
14 Corrective rape is the prejudiced notion that a lesbian woman can be raped to ‘make her straight’: i.e., to ‘correct’ her lesbian sexuality. ‘Corrective rape’ seeks to justify the rape of those people who are perceived to not conform - or to disrupt - expected gender roles, behaviour and/or presentation. Misogyny and homophobia underpin the prejudice associated with ‘corrective rape’ (OUT LGBT Well-being, 2008).
In addition, research findings confirm that higher levels of ‘outness’ or visibility and the adoption of gender roles associated with the opposite-sex lead to increased vulnerability to homophobic discrimination.16 This means that lesbians who challenge patriarchal gender roles are particularly at risk for attack.

The patriarchy however is not static. It reinvents itself over time. The modernization of patriarchy – through capitalism but also in response to feminism – has meant that women now occupy places in every crevice of the modern patriarchal state. But we must distinguish between being in locations of power and having power…especially the exercise of a kind of power that challenge patriarchal hierarchies of gender privilege. The imperialist feminist, as Zillah Eisenstein calls her, wields power that serves the capitalist patriarchal hegemony.17 These women do not transform oppressive power, rather they use it within not against the patriarchal system. In the context of state feminism this may partly explain why we have many women who hold power in the South African State but none of them, to my knowledge, has spoken out publicly against violence against lesbian women.18 Their silence protects the system.

Religious doctrine and the practice of patriarchy are deeply interconnected. Existing gender and sexual relations have been entrenched through religious discourses. As this gathering is convened under the rubric of Christian faith, I think it is going to be important for us to reflect on the role of Christian scriptures as a key patriarchal narrative. This is not to discount the fact that progressive Christian discourses have also been a powerful source of revolutionary thought and action in support of women’s equality, sexual liberation and the like. But religious narratives are predominantly used to prop up women’s sexual oppression. And this brings me back to the garden of ‘good’ and ‘evil’. That garden of forbidden fruits. I am going to be controversial and suggest that evil is a problematic term for it is seeks to divide the world into those value-laden dichotomies – which are fundamental to the patriarchal system. For evil only exists in relation to its oppositional – good. And the notion of sin is fundamental to the concept of ‘evil’. Who is constructed as evil and sinful? It is evil that is evoked to demonize lesbian and gay sexualities. Remember the construction of heterosexual womanhood through the powerful trope of Eve? She committed the original sin. With this mythical story at its root, retrogressive interpretations of religious law hold gender division as fundamental to society. In this language we find a powerful and fundamental justification for the patriarchal order.

We are reminded here of Genesis 3:16.19 Here we see the discourse of male superiority, women’s subjugation, prescribed heterosexuality and motherhood. These and other bible texts have been used to instruct women to be silent and accept their oppression and constructed inferiority. Such narratives present female sexuality as subject to determination by men. Lesbian sexuality, which does not have male sexual desire as reference point, becomes an abomination. At the heart of these notions lie the constructions of ‘good’ and ‘evil’, ‘male’ and ‘female’, ‘natural’ and ‘unnatural’. There is no getting away from the fact that as long as girls and women are perceived and raised to be the property of men and beholden to male

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19 “Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee”
desire, they will continue to be systematically subordinated.

In conclusion, I have argued that when we explore the discriminations against lesbian women we must interrogate the places where oppressive power lies in the gender system. We can start by making visible the invisible face of that which is represented as ‘good’ and ‘natural’. For we need to understand how the patriarchal normative functions if we want to move beyond it both personally and politically. When we seek to address women’s disempowerment we must confront men’s privilege. When we aim to challenge sexual violence against lesbians we must take on the sexual entitlement of straight men. This requires that we shift the lens to those in relation to which ideas and people perceived as different are constructed.

We have to break the dichotomies of good/evil, male/female, and gay/straight. And we need lots of gender trouble makers to do this work within religious fraternities, in order to challenge the formative myths that perpetuate gender and sexual inequalities.

We know that gender and sexuality are imposed through learning. So our task must be to disrupt and subvert the learnings of the dominant order and so change the way power operates in our society. This resistance should be aimed at a radical transformation in social power relations. Our personal experiences of gender and practice of power must change. For some of us this will mean giving up oppressive power. Others of us will need to assume power in new, shared and affirming ways. It is a mighty task.

In the words of Gayle Rubin “Instead of fighting for immaculate classifications and impenetrable boundaries, let us strive to maintain a community that understands diversity as a gift, sees anomalies as precious, and treats all basic principles with a hefty dose of skepticism”.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS TO MELANIE:

Q Gertrude

Nozizwe emphasised the importance of research and I am just wondering if there is any research around patriarchy re-inventing itself, patriarchy really transforming itself in different context? Have you done any research in terms of pre-colonial Africa where we know that homosexuality is passed on in many communities including the role of Sangomas? Just something around that and how it has been changed.

You problemise evil because evil immediately opposes something good, all the polarities you’ve spoken about. What about the ying and the yang in all of us? What about the good and evil in all of us? I don’t have any answer and I wondered if you could just comment on that. Thank you very much for your eloquent argument.

Q Tammy

We need to be thinking about how we understand gender. And I think Melanie was pointing to some of the problems of understanding gender. And I think the disruption and challenging boundarising of male / female / masculine / feminine / homosexuality / heterosexuality. All of those are absolutely profound and it goes to the root of the link between sexuality and gender and patriarchy as it manifests in a whole lot of other things around

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equality and power. However what I find very challenging is how do we infuse the way we struggle because we are constantly torn between having technology historically causing division between genders and that men and women have experienced life differently and are continuing to experience life differently and yet we need to deconstruct that difference. We need to disrupt this assumption that it is inheritance, it is unity, even the notion, when I think of the reconciliation workshop. Men speak and women speak in one voice and we know that men and women don’t speak in one voice. And yet there are profound commonalities across the other differences. So how do we get out of this? I suppose we go back to Audrey Lord’s notion that we cannot use master’s tools yet Judith Bhatt tells us that all we have to use is the master’s tools. So we are stuck in this construction of gender which guides, controls, regulates everything we think and feel and do. How do we get beyond it?

A Meli

I do not want to be conclusive here, but I think the whole issue of internalization of patriarchy - the organisation that I was with for many years has done some research in this area and Triangle Project that’s joined us this morning has a very powerful piece of research called, “Living the Patriarchy”. I think it is quite a useful way of understanding the notion internalize, which sounds terribly technical. And I think it is quite an acknowledgement that none of us is functioning outside the system. I as a lesbian woman was brought up with the same messaging as any other women in a sense. For me it was really about: ‘What are the possibilities of being in the world, in relationship? How, what do I draw on between how I have sex, how I deal with issues of power with my partner, how I make decisions? Who bangs the nail in the wall?’ One is confronted with all of that stuff in a sense and I think sometimes it is very difficult to craft new ways of engagement when social messages are so powerful. And what we see in some lesbian relationships is a re-enactment, a reproduction. ‘I am the butch one and my partner cooks’, you know all of that. In a sense I become male-identified and my partner becomes female-identified. And I beat her as well when she’s not so good. So I think we are all busy with that. So we all have to confront. I think, how things are being internalized. The struggle is not out there, these terrible people, these terrible heterosexuals who are oppressing us. It is also about what we are doing to ourselves as lesbian women, how we re-enact and possibly remake the kinds of power that have been so powerfully demonstrated to us in our socialisation. So it is a big challenge that is quite deep work stuff, internal work stuff. Women are busy with that as well in our own feminist struggle we re-enact the patriarchal dance often in the way we operate and work.

Gertrude with regard to your point around tradition or culture, I think it is very difficult. I don’t think there’s been enough research done, I think that slowly we are collecting, I suppose, and it is really roots of the research that I’ve seen in oral history, oral testimony. We, I suppose can’t look at LGBT experiences in Africa over pre- and post-colonialism without looking at the fundamental question of the African identity. What does it mean to be African? And if we don’t have that debate and discussion that is the heart of what I think is the LGBT sexuality and that is a force area.

Someone spoke about the whole notion that African culture has been totally
annihilated by colonialism. So what is the African culture we are talking about? I think it is a very painful and difficult discussion to have and I think there is some research out there. I think we haven’t necessarily joined the dots, the deep issues. I think lot of those individually and collectively collective identities have kind of been ravished. How new post colonialism forms of those identities are simply that, post colonial near colonialism. Just some thoughts on that.

Good and evil links to Tammy’s point. I think for me the fact of the matter is that it is important to recognise masculine/feminine principles. I don’t have a problem with that; I suppose those things are a union thing. What I have a problem with is attributing them to typical biological categories. I think those are things that are inherent in all of us. I don’t like the word evil, I just feel it is way too loaded, but what I think is maybe my own issue. But I think that the ideas of polarity, idea of different energies, I suppose that sometimes is in contradiction to each other. How do we bring them together? For me the most important things are to move in and out social identities in a fluent way. If I want to be butch, wear a tie, knock nails into a wall, I should be able to move into that space and should be able to move out of it. I think the idea of fluidity of gender presentation, in thoughts is just not possible in the world we are living in. That is what we need to be moving towards.

Tammy, yes I think it is hard because it offends if we take a position based of our identities. Here I am saying I am a feminist. In a sense I am assuming a label that is quite reductionist but for me again it is about how do we remake these? How do we say for me this is what it means to be a lesbian or to be women? How do we disrupt the idea that one can’t move in and out those identities in a more fluid way?
Who’s Afraid of the Mighty Men’s Conference? -
Palatable Patriarchy and Violence Against Wo/men\(^1\) in SA

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**Introduction**

*Man’s masculinity in the world today, in this 21st century, is being eroded and broken down. And young men – some young men – don’t know what a man is supposed to be!*\(^2\)

So says Angus Buchan, founder of the Mighty Men’s Conference, an annual Christian event for men, that started off with an attendance of just about 4,000 men, with these numbers increasing to 60,000 men in 2008, and a whopping 200,000 men expected to descend on his Greytown farm just outside of Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal, in 2009.

So, what is the message that Angus Buchan is giving to men, in this 21st century when masculinity, according to him, is being broken down and eroded? What is he teaching them about what a man is supposed to be, but more importantly for me as a feminist, can his message help to overcome centuries of patriarchy within and outside of the church, which has contributed to an immeasurable and varied amount of violence against wo/men? Should we welcome Buchan’s steps to “restore masculinity” or should we be afraid of him and his mighty men?

At the end of his essay on “The Social Organisation of Masculinity” in his book, *Masculinities*, Robert Connell says the following of masculinity as a discourse and as an object of study:

> To understand a historical process of this depth and complexity [of masculinity] is not a task for a *priori* theorising. It requires concrete study; more exactly, a range of studies that can illuminate the larger dynamic.\(^3\)

If we are to take Connell’s challenge seriously and if we are committed to understanding how masculinity functions in our society, whether as a measure to overcome gendered violence (in all its forms), or simply to find some measure of peace between the genders, then theorising outside of concrete experiences will be futile. A few years ago, Charlize Theron, the South African actor now famous in Hollywood, was part of a campaign against rape, which used the slogan “Real men don’t rape.” This slogan caused an outcry in certain circles, which felt the campaign, was too “hard-hitting.” Notwithstanding the critique of the

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\(^1\) I borrow the term “wo/men” from the feminist biblical scholar, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, who says she uses this term to indicate that “woman/women” is not a monolithic group or a unitary concept but she also uses it in another way – to include “disenfranchised men.” She says: “writing wo/men in this way invites male readers always to ‘think twice’ and to adjudicate whether they are meant or not,” Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Sharing Her Word: Feminist Biblical Interpretation in Context* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), 186


campaign, it seems in the light of the increasing demand for men to be “real men,” perhaps the spirit of the campaign which Theron supported needs to be revived. There was a focus on masculinity in that campaign which feminist campaigns to end violence have perhaps paid far too little attention to. In wanting to prove that gender is indeed constructed, we perhaps have focused too much on how women are “constructed” and yet have been content to accept essensialised views of men and masculinity i.e. that men are violent, controlling and dominant by nature, whereas women are taught by society to be subservient and humble and kind – “sugar and spice and all things nice.” Perhaps Simone de Beauvoir’s famous statement that “One is not born, but becomes a woman” has to pertain equally to men too, so that we begin to unravel the mystery of how a man is made, and how this “making” of a man in our contexts can either promote or hinder patriarchal violence in our various societies.

The advent of masculinity studies provides a helpful signpost for how we can begin to do this. Masculinity studies is not to be confused with masculinism, although students who enrol for our “Issues of Masculinity and Gender” course in the School of Religion and Theology at UKZN easily confuse the two. Masculinism is the antithesis to feminism. It is an ideological system, which not only believes in, but also actively promotes male power. As Haywood and Mac an Ghaill have explained:

Masculinism is an ideology that stresses the natural and inherently superior position of males, while serving to justify the oppression and subjugation of females. This ideology of males being naturally more powerful, competent, successful and fundamentally different from females is one that can be located in various historical periods.

Masculinity studies, as opposed to masculinism then helps us to understand and deconstruct male power. Understanding the ways in which male power is created and maintained, is a crucial link in overcoming patriarchy together with all its associated evils such as violence, because as numerous studies have shown, at the heart of violence against wo/men is male power.

The analysis of the Mighty Men’s Conference as a phenomenon of masculinity that I will endeavour in this paper is an attempt at a concrete study of the construction of masculinity, as Connell urges us to undertake. However, as Connell says, it cannot be the only study – a wide range of studies is needed. And so, I use the Mighty Men’s Conference, and its founder Angus Buchan, as a case study to “illuminate the larger dynamic.” I recognise that there may be other discourses on masculinity happening in the country too, especially in Black communities of faith. Hopefully other studies will pick this up and further illuminate

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5 Part of the difficulty is that the course is situated within the “gender and religion” programme which has been traditionally associated with feminist theology. The dilemma is similar to what Sally Robinson has noted: “The problem with lumping masculinity studies in with women’s studies or ethnic studies is that masculinity – unlike femininity or blackness – already equates with power, so the empowerment model of women’s or ethnic studies is almost embarrassingly inappropriate.” Sally Robinson, “Pedagogy of the Opaque: Teaching Masculinity Studies” in Judith Kegan Gardiner (ed) *Masculinity Studies and Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 142.
this larger dynamic.\(^8\) I offer this analysis of this phenomenon as one example of a range of attempts at re-constructing or as Buchan himself puts it “restoring” masculinities in SA.

**Background to the Mighty Men’s Conference**

The “Mighty Men’s Conference” was started in 2004, by Angus Buchan, a South African farmer and evangelist of Scottish background. Unfortunately apart from Angus Buchan’s own book *Faith Like Potatoes, The Story of a Farmer Who Risked Everything for God*\(^9\) the subsequent box-office hit movie based on the book,\(^10\) a few interviews with Buchan in the popular media and the DVD’s of the conference, scant academic resources on the MMC exist. Therefore, in this paper I will rely heavily on the popular sources of Angus Buchan’s “theology of masculinity” to construct my analysis.

This is how Angus Buchan, in his own words, describes to Devi Sankaree Govender of the documentary programme, *Carte Blanche*, the “Mighty Men’s Conference” and its goals.

Man’s masculinity in the world today, in this 21\(^{st}\) century, is being eroded and broken down. And young men – some young men – don’t know what a man is supposed to be! There are no role models, no mentors to look up to. What is a man supposed to do? How is he supposed to act? …And so what we did was – I believe, not we, but the Lord – restored masculinity. They are men! You have got to stand up and be counted! You have got to represent your family, your business, and your company. Stop walking around like a, you know, a whipped dog with his tail between his legs. That’s no use to anybody…It’s getting back to basics…. And so that’s why we had the men’s conference, ok? We take the shambok [whip] out and we give the guys a big hiding. And they can let their hair down, and they can cry, and they can repent, and they can go back.\(^11\)

There are a number of significant insights that one can draw from Buchan’s description of the MMC and its goals:

a) That there is a crisis in masculinity.

b) That God (“the Lord”) not the MMC is going to resolve this crisis and “restore masculinity.”

c) That men have to be leaders in their homes and societies – elsewhere he cites their roles as “prophet, priest and king.”\(^12\)

d) That men should love their wives and their wives should respect and submit to their husbands.

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\(^8\) Some have already done so. See for example, Thulani Ndlazi,, “Men in church institutions and religious organisations: the role of Christian men in transforming gender relations and ensuring gender equality”, in *Agenda* 61( 2004), and Radikobo Ntsimane, “Dominant masculinities within the Zion Christian Church: A Preliminary Investigation”, in *Journal of Constructive Theology: Gender, Religion and Theology in Africa*, 12, 1 (2006).


\(^10\) See the official movie website: http://www.globalcreative.co.za/FLP_index.htm accessed on 24/02/2009


\(^12\) In an interview with Joy Magazine, when asked: “What do you hope the results of this conference to be? “ Angus Buchan responded: “Men will take up their rightful positions in the home as prophets, priests and kings” Interview taken from Joy Magazine http://www.joymag.co.za/mag/3-2006/3-2006-angus.php accessed 20 Oct 2008
e) And that men should be able to show emotions and remorse, by crying and repenting.

It is clear from the above that Angus Buchan is determined to “restore masculinity,” and his project looks rather innocuous, perhaps even noble, to the ordinary person on the street. After all as Gloria Steinem has noted:

Make no mistake about it: Women want a men’s movement. We are literally dying for it. If you doubt that, just listen to women’s desperate testimonies of hope that the men in our lives will become more nurturing towards children, more able to talk about emotions, less hooked on a spectrum of control that extends from not listening through to violence…

Notwithstanding Steinem’s plea for a men’s movement, my feminist hermeneutic of suspicion will not allow me to consider this movement as either innocuous or noble, nor as an appropriate answer to Steinem’s call. In fact, I would argue, as I have done elsewhere, that a theology of headship and submission is simply yet another way of promoting violence (in its varied forms) through the insidious myth that men as the stronger sex need to protect women, or to “defend the weak.”

This is what Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen has called soft patriarchy, it seems innocent enough – i.e. “men taking responsibility” is hardly an unpalatable idea, but if “taking responsibility” means asserting dominating and coercive measures, such as religion, to maintain power, then our justice antennas have to be tuned in, so that we are not deceived by this palatable patriarchy, masquerading as “restoring masculinity.”

Based on several studies which show that the principles of male headship and the submission of women to men in most religions and cultures are directly linked to gender violence and, more alarmingly, to women’s decisions to stay in abusive partnerships, I will examine in the following section whether Angus Buchan’s MMC is a step toward positive masculinity or masculinism. I will do this through an analysis of Stephen Whitehead’s and Frank Barrett’s three propositions concerning the ways in which masculine power is created and sustained, focusing particularly on the latter two forms of power.

**Restoring Masculinity or Promoting Masculinism?**

Whitehead and Barrett assert that masculine power is maintained in three ways: the first and most obvious is power as brute force, such as physical violence. The second is power as relational and positional – belief systems that promote hierarchical ideologies which make it obligatory for men (as opposed to women) to be the heads of homes, leaders of

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15 I have noted elsewhere the detailed study conducted by Isabel Phiri in Phoenix on domestic violence in (Pentecostal) Christian homes. Eighty-four percent of the twenty-five women who were interviewed admitted to having experienced domestic violence. They were also all wives of leaders in the church. Her study concluded that it was biblical beliefs, such as those on submission, which made these women stay in abusive relationships. Isabel A. Phiri, “Domestic Violence in Christian Homes: A Durban Case Study,” in *Journal of Constructive Theology* (6, 2 2000),85-110. Mary McClintock Fulkerson makes a similar point about the role of the “discourse of submission,” when she asserts that “One of the most prominent oppressive outcomes of such discourse is the willingness of women to stay in battering situations. Women’s willingness to be battered is often linked to the kind of ecclesiastically supported languages of submission that appear in Pentecostal [Christian] women’s stories.” Mary McClintock Fulkerson, Changing the Subject: Women’s Discourses and Feminist Theology (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 296.
organisations, directors of companies, etc. Finally, they show how masculine power is maintained through “discourses of power.” “Discourses of power” refer to the everyday language, which maintains binary oppositions such as men are strong, women are weak, or that men are rational, and women are emotional etc.17

I think it is true to say that practical efforts to overcome violence against wo/men have often tended to focus on power as brute force and have ignored the latter two ways in which power is created and sustained, that is that power is positional and that power is also maintained discursively i.e. by the language which we use. The ways in which these latter kinds of power are maintained is nowhere more clear than in the discourses and practices of religion.18 Christian men’s movements like the “Promise Keepers” in North America, and its equivalent in South Africa, “The Mighty Men’s Conference,” though they will never claim allegiance to the first kind of power, are certainly quite overt about wanting to “re-claim” these two latter forms of masculine power for ordinary men. Their movements are characterised by these so-called “soft” statements about men’s power.

Take for example, Angus Buchan’s statements to Devi-Sankaree Govender on Carte Blanche, on what he believes about the relationship between husbands and wives. He says,

Husbands love your wives, ok? Children, respect your parents. Wives respect your husbands, submit to your husbands... it’s very easy when your husbands love you, you see, when your husbands are doing the job properly. But what happens sometimes is that the husbands are not doing the job: they not [sic] protecting you, they are not putting bread on the table, they are not disciplining the children – it’s very hard to respect a man like that.19

By setting up this positional and hierarchical relationships between parents and children and husbands and wives (note the command for women and children are the same i.e. respect but not for men), and then admonishing men to be responsible, Buchan sets up a very palatable patriarchy, that is difficult to argue with. When pushed by Govender on the interview as to whether the above principles were not creating a superiority complex for men, Angus Buchan was quick to defend his beliefs:

It’s not a case of saying the man is superior to the woman – never! On the contrary. But there is an order that is established in the Bible. And the Lord Jesus, said, ‘Husbands, love your wives.’ Now if a husband loves his wife, his wife will gladly submit to him.20

Notwithstanding that Jesus actually, never said this, it was the Apostle Paul (or someone writing in his name), it is patent that Buchan establishes a relational power for men, which when maintained and taken to its extreme actually can and does lead to violence against wo/men.

18 It is easier for us to build shelters for abused wo/men, than to ask the difficult questions of why wo/men are abused in the first place. Perhaps Bishop Camara’s statement about the poor can be adapted with regard to gender too – When I build shelters for abused wo/men, they call me a saint, when I ask why wo/men are abused they call me a feminist.
The belief that women must be submissive to their husbands begs the question what are the consequences when women don’t submit? And as I have said before, there is enough feminist research to show that the apparent lack of submission from women is what leads to violence, but also that the belief that men are the heads of the homes, is what causes violence to go unchallenged and women to remain in abusive partnerships. This is a link that is often dismissed as a misunderstanding of headship, but surely we should be sitting up and taking notice of the empirical evidence (i.e. the numerous studies conducted on violence), which suggests otherwise.\(^{21}\)

Angus Buchan’s wife, Jill Buchan in the same interview, reiterates similar views to her husband regarding headship:

> The church of God needs men. They need fathers, they need everything set back in order because it’s not in order, because the church is full of homes that are still struggling with headship and God says he’s going to sort out the church first. He has to re-instate the men, and when he does that, the women will be very happy.

In addition to the relational power, that is evident in Buchan’s statements regarding headship and submission, note also the discursive power evident in both his and his wife’s claims that they speak on behalf of God. For example, Angus Buchan says in his interview on Carte Blanche,

> I don’t shy away from controversy…you can’t sleep with your girlfriend before marriage and abortion is legalised murder. Homosexuality is against the word of God. I’m not doing this for money. I’m doing this because God told me to.\(^{22}\)

In the first instance he establishes hetero-normative principles for marriage, and then asserts that restoring these norms is God’s initiative – not his. It is clear how power is established here through an appeal to religious language – after all one can argue with Angus Buchan, but who can argue with God?

Note the similar discursive power that is evident in his most recent newsletter on his website:

> Dear Brethren [sic]

> Greeting [sic] in Jesus name and a very blessed 2009 for [sic] each of you. Thank you for your friendship in 2008. I said to the Lord at the end of last year: “Lord I don’t know what’s going to happen in 2009, but I think it’s going to be almost impossible to better 2008” (truly the greatest year of my life thus far)...On the 12th of December, while waiting on the Lord for a Word for us in 2009, the Scripture which the Lord Jesus gave to us was Deuteronomy 1: 6 “You have dwelt long enough at this mountain” and in verse eight “See I have set the land before you. Go in and possess the land which the Lord swore (promised) to your fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give to them and their descendants.”\(^{23}\)

\(^{21}\) See the excellent extensive bibliography partner violence on the following website: http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/16days/biblio.html accessed on 26 February 2009


In all the DVD’s of Buchan’s MMC meetings and his interviews, it is very clear that Buchan declares himself as a spokesperson for God, thereby legitimating his views on masculinity. This is often expressed through the phrase “The Lord told me…” Or “Jesus said to me…” etc."

What is also evident in Buchan’s rhetoric is a language of conquest and might and strength. Nowhere is this more clear of course, than in the choice to name these meetings the “Mighty Men’s Conference,” but it is also clear in the passage of Scripture which he claims God gave him for 2009: “Go in and possess the land which the Lord swore (promised) to your fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give to them and their descendants.” It is not insignificant that almost all of the 60,000 men who attended the conference were White and most of them were farmers like Buchan. In the light of the current land crisis in our neighbouring Zimbabwe, and in the light of the bitter debates around land claims in SA, it does not take a leap of the imagination to figure out why Buchan’s message is so attractive to White farmers who throng to his meetings. There is another kind of crisis in masculinity going on for White men, particularly Afrikaner men in post-apartheid South Africa. Given that almost 80% of the men who attended the MMC in 2008 were Afrikaners, one has to ask what are their motivations for attending. What are they longing for?

The crisis for Afrikaner men is that the nature of Afrikaner hegemonic masculinity is being challenged by the democratic order ushered in 1994; by an increase in acceptance of diverse sexual orientations; and not least of all by a steady rise in women’s emancipation. Kobus Du Pisani has described the nature of Afrikaner hegemonic masculinity as “puritan” and describes in detail what this entails and how it is being challenged in post-apartheid South Africa:

Initially the puritan ideal of Afrikaner masculinity was expressed in the image of the simple, honest, steadfast, religious and hard-working boer (farmer)...Patriarchy, the rule of the father, was justified in all spheres of society in terms of biblical texts...Puritan Afrikaners viewed the male-headed family as the cornerstone of a healthy society. The image of the male head of the family was cast in the mould of the ‘good provider’...The Afrikaans churches have held the view that the male head of the family should fulfil a priestly function, by not only providing his family with material things, but also looking after their spiritual well-being.

The similarities between this puritan ideal, which Du Pisani describes, and Buchan’s message are striking. The focus on the man as priest, provider and king in his home are reiterated over and over again in Buchan’s sermons. The greatest threat to hegemonic puritan Afrikaner masculinity was according to Du Pisani “liberalism and homosexuality.” Although homosexuality is still widely frowned upon, Afrikaners, according to Du Pisani, gradually accepted liberalism. He further hypothesises that the core of Afrikaner masculinity, defined by heterosexuality and conservatism with regard to race and gender, although remaining relatively intact, during apartheid, began to be seriously challenged in post-apartheid South Africa, where:

26 Du Pisani, “Puritanism Transformed...”, 167
The number of Afrikaner men in positions of public power is declining and men are not as dominant in the domestic sphere as before…Afrikaner masculinity no longer prescribes ideals of masculinity to South African society at large, to white men in general, or even to Afrikaans-speaking white men. It is thus difficult both to conceive of, and detect a hegemonic masculinity

It is not surprising then that Buchan’s focus on a crisis in masculinity, and men not knowing what they are supposed to do or how to act, would certainly be appealing for a predominantly Afrikaner group of men. Du Pisani notes that despite the threat to hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity in post-apartheid South Africa that “Afrikaner nationalism has not disappeared, and given its record of pragmatic adaptation to circumstances it is conceivable that a new hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity may in due course emerge.”

I would argue that Buchan’s MMC is this new version of Afrikaner hegemonic masculinity that is emerging. The difference is that I suspect that in post-apartheid South Africa, and in the highly globalised increasingly Pentecostalised Christian contexts which we find ourselves in, it won’t take long before this kind of hegemony becomes normative for men who are not Afrikaner either. The “universal” message of the bible as word of God for all ages will be a common denominator for men across the racial spectrum, and even if they do not buy into the ethnic implications of this new hegemonic masculinity (remember Buchan doesn’t speak Afrikaans), the gender implications of this new hegemony will be appealing to them. If left unchecked, through relational and discursive uses of masculine power the MMC will succeed in restoring not just masculinities, but hegemonic masculinities, in its varied forms.

The dualistic and binary nature of Buchan’s sermons further entrenches this insidious hegemony – his distinctions between believers and unbelievers (he says that the greatest sin is unbelief in his opening address to the MMC2008 meeting and that it doesn’t matter how good a person is if he [sic] doesn’t believe in Jesus Christ). He also draws distinctions between education and experience, as if these are mutually exclusive: “I’ve never been to Bible College, but I’ve been to the ‘school of life’. Ok? The school of hard-knocks,” he says to Govender in the Carte Blanche interview. Inherent in his dualistic view of the world, is a dangerous philosophy that validates and justifies the power to conquer, to rule, to take over possessions and people, whether they are the so-called heathen or women or land. This is clear in his interview with Joy Magazine where he talks about the aims of MMC:

> The Sovereignty of God in a man’s life will be looked at. Men will be encouraged to walk by faith and not by sight and to take ownership of what God has given them e.g.: families, businesses and farms. God will restore men’s dignity and break bondages in their lives, setting them free.

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27 Du Pisani, “Puritanism Transformed…”, 172
28 Du Pisani, “Puritanism Transformed…”, 172
Conclusion: Alternative Models for Positive Masculinities

In answer to my question in the title of this paper – I think I have shown that yes- we have to be very afraid of Angus Buchan and his mighty men. Who should be afraid? Women, men and women of differing sexual orientations, children (because you can be sure that he subscribes to the “spare the rod – spoil the child” philosophy, and even the earth, because patriarchy and domination of the earth go together – we should all be afraid.

Am I saying that men’s movements cannot help us overcome violence? No.

Of course we need positive men’s movements to help us overcome violence against wo/men, and it is true that men who perpetrate violence against wo/men need help. However, to lead them down a garden path to a false sense of what it means to be a man, by appealing to outdated and destructive ways of being a man, will do more to aggravate the problem of violence than overcome it. So what are the alternatives? I suggest three for consideration, but this is certainly not exhaustive.

1) Deconstruction of masculinity

What we need to help us overcome violence against wo/men is a deconstruction of masculinity, not a reconstruction of masculinism. This of necessity is an intellectual task as much as it is a popular one. If serious academic reflection on masculinity is not “translated” for men who are searching for positive masculinities, then Angus Buchan’s mighty men will continue to flourish, at the expense of wo/men. As Judith Newton has argued:

…while progressive men actually do have something to learn from popular men’s movements – how to be rigorous, for example, in practicing rather than merely theorising new modes of self-transformation, new ways of labouring on behalf of others, progressive academic men have an important role to play in popular movements as well. They might do much, for example, in situating popular identity work for men in the context of unequal structures of gender, race, sexuality, and class that popular men’s movements often bracket and/or support. They might help push men’s movements, in the words of Michael Schwalbe, to ‘turn men’s feelings of grief, of outrage, of affection for each other, and of longing for richer lives in meaning…toward riskier social action and farther reaching change.’

2) Reconstructing Alternative Forms of Masculinity

Further, this deconstruction of masculinity also necessarily involves reconstructing and transforming – reconstructing values of partnership as opposed to ideologies of headship. In this regard, Carol Flinders’ work on rebalancing the values of belonging (traditionally associated with the feminine) and the values of enterprise (traditionally associated with the masculine) are helpful.

Flinders makes a convincing case for the fact that the world lost balance, when it moved

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33 I’m grateful to my dear friend Eliza Getman for alerting me to Flinders’ work.
from a pre- to a post-agricultural society. She posits that people in a pre-agricultural society lived by what she calls the “values of belonging.” These were the hunter-gatherers, and their society was characterised by the values she puts down in the table below. She describes how continued existence in this age depended on inter-connectedness, with the earth, animals and humans. This interconnectedness in turn encouraged mutuality and partnership and inclusiveness. And of course with the rise of an industrialised society these values were lost. The mistake that we have made over the centuries she argues, is to think of the values of belonging and enterprise, in essentially masculine and feminine terms. She argues for the need for a “rebalancing” of the two groups of values, combining the values of belonging and the values of enterprise.

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<th>VALUES OF ENTERPRISE</th>
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<td>Control and Ownership of Land</td>
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<td>Empathic relation to animals</td>
<td>Control and ownership of animals</td>
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From our foregoing analysis, it is clear that the MMC espouses the values of enterprise, very often to the exclusion of the values of belonging. Flinders’ assessment encourages us to find a balance, but more importantly to recognise that these values are not functions of our gender. So, for example, with regard to the issue of leadership, we need to develop a sense of human value that recognises and celebrates leadership and responsibility regardless of gender. Leadership is a function of ability and responsibility, not a birthright related to whether one has a penis or not, and as long as we keep promoting this latter belief wo/men will have to continue to live in fear of “mighty men.”
3) Finding positive role models

Finally, feminists have often been accused of having problems with the maleness of Jesus. To this we have said: “the problem is not that Jesus was a man, the problem is that more men are not like Jesus!” Inherent in this statement is another alternative, holding up male role models who actually value women (like Jesus), as opposed to those who don’t (like the Apostle Paul). Of course, this does not mean that one should retreat to a “Jesus to the rescue” kind of theology, but I think both the maleness (in terms of sex) and the masculinity (in terms of gender) of Jesus, may provide us with some sense of what a positive model of masculinity might look like. Perhaps there are possibilities to emulate his kenotic act of incarnation (some men certainly need to learn how to stop thinking of themselves as God); his practical acts of servanthood (washing his disciples’ feet); his breaking of cultural and ethnic barriers (his relationships with Samaritans and Canaanites); and of course his transforming of gender norms (his interactions with the woman with the haemorrhage, Mary and Martha, the Samaritan woman etc). Jesus certainly did show the men of his time an alternative masculinity, one that not just tolerates but embraces difference, one that is based on mutuality rather than dominance, partnership rather than hierarchy, and most of all on love rather than fear. He was a mighty man indeed, but fortunately one that we don’t need to be afraid of.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS TO SAROJINI

Q Laurie I disagree a bit with the last part because I think that the MMC does appeal to emotions, male emotions. And that is a very strong new thing that I think a lot of people link onto which is a positive thing. But then on the other hand you’ve made the link with the cultural and political connection between the movement and the Afrikaner identity and where they are, this enfranchise and so on. But could you apply it to Black African patriarchy at present where there could be similarities or dissimilarities?

Q Rowan A lot of the issues stem from Scripture and when the people say “the Bible says...” Anglican Church people are arguing: “No they (gays) can be priests and deacons but NOT bishops because that is headship and that is against the Bible”. You keep running with that kind of concept, this is what the Bible says, but always, as you said, in favour of masculinism.

Q Tinyiko When you were talking about the three forms of power, how masculinity is maintained, I wondered if there wasn’t a fourth, maybe it is somewhere in-between those three. Because one way in which power is maintained is constant and repeated parading and displaying of power. That’s why you have the soldiers marching; that’s why you have the blue light vehicles driving and pushing everyone off the street. I wondered whether that form of power, what you would call it, is already covered by what you referred to.

34 Take for example the Indian proverb: “Kanavane kann kanna deivum” which means: “The husband is the wife’s god in sight -- by worshipping her husband she actually worships God.”
Laurie’s question about the appeal to emotion - Certainly that’s why I said it is palatable, because you know it actually looks like something very good. If one should say getting men together to be able to cry, in a society that says men don’t cry, that’s a good thing. There is some good but when you make it palatable as palatable as that then you forget that there are also really inherent dangers because there are some things that are easier to overlook. But there are other things that contribute which I call life and death issues. And for me this kind of theology promotes death. Really it can lead to that, the ultimate end when we say the man is the head and we see it over and over in research, so that is my concern.

But can this be applied to African patriarchy, would it appeal? That is exactly what I was saying in the end, I can foresee that there is going to be, I mean we are living in a globalised context, where the Bible says a word that comes out of everyone’s mouth, whether you go to a really high Anglican Church up on the hill or whether you go to the African Independence Church, they are caught onto this.

Isabel and I are doing research - wanting to find is there something indigenous to African spirituality, is there something indigenous in African culture that can be used to critique patriarchy. What did they want to do? They wanted Bible study. I’m serious, there was a serious request: “can we go to the Bible and see what the Bible says about it?” So of course it is going to appeal across the nation. You can’t go back to African essentialised culture, or go back to an essentialised Afrikaner culture or English culture because the world has become so small. We all repeat the same things and that brings me to Tinyiko’s point then that repetition reinforces. And so every Sunday when I put my TV on when I am not going to church, you’re hearing the preachers say the same thing and if they keep telling you the Bible is the Word of God, you cannot add, you cannot take out whatever it is a way of maintenance of power. So yes I would agree that it is actually a clear fourth way of maintaining power because it becomes shared knowledge. It is this insider sort of thing, the nudge and the wink we all know, it’s natural, it’s who we are as we all speak the same language.

The more you repeat it, the more everybody gives back to God, kind of thing. So yes I do think there is a fourth way of maintaining power. I hope I have answered some of the stuff regarding the Bible. Thank you.
An African Theology Perspective on Patriarchy

Prof. Tinyiko Maluleke -

Holds a PhD in Theology (specialising in Missiology). He has published more than 50 peer-reviewed articles, more than 15 chapters in books and more than a dozen popular articles. His current day job is: Executive Director, Research at UNISA. He is also the current president of the South African Council of Churches (SACC).

1. A Systematic Approach to Patriarchy

Patriarchy is evil. However to call patriarchy evil is neither enough nor helpful. The notion of evil is mainly a moral category rather than a concrete and scientific one. Patriarchy is not merely evil; it is ultimately repressive and oppressive. It is not merely something to be frowned upon, but something to be combated and overcome. Patriarchy is a supremacist ideology, i.e. it speaks to the supremacy of the male. It is not merely an attitude; it is a comprehensive, systematic ideology; a thoroughgoing theology which is at once physical and spiritual; structural and personal, individualist and communal; human and extra-human. French philosopher, Etienne de la Boetie, writing in 1552 put it thus:

He who dominates over you has only two eyes, only two hands, only one body, no more than is possessed by the least … among the infinite numbers dwelling in your cities; he has indeed nothing more than the power that you confer on him to destroy you. How has he acquired enough eyes to spy upon you, if you do not provide them to yourselves? How can he have so many arms to beat you with, if he does not borrow them from you? The feet that trample down your cities, where does he get them if they were not your own? How does he have any power over you, except through you? What could he do to you if you yourselves did not connive with the thief who plunders you? If you were not accomplices of the murderer who kills you? If you were not traitors to yourselves? … I do not ask that you place hands upon the tyrant to topple him over, but simply that you support him no longer; then you will behold him, like a great colossus whose pedestal has been pulled away, fall of his own weight and break up in pieces.

All systems of domination sustain themselves through complex strategies and complex forms of buy in. Walter Wink identified as central to these strategies the whole notion of delusion – ‘to befool the mind or judgment so as to cause what is false to be accepted as true’. Among some of the central tenets of the delusional dominant system are:

To control society and prevent chaos some must dominate others

Those who dominate may use other people as means towards ends

Men are better equipped to dominate than women; whites than blacks, …

Violence is redemptive
Ruling and controlling is the most important of all social functions

The strongest, richest, largest deserve to survive

Money is the ultimate value

Property is sacred and property ownership is a sacred right

If there is a God, the state owns her

If there is a God, she is revealed only to a few

2. African Theology

Three hundred years ago - in 1700 - a Congolese woman, Kimpa Vita (Christened Beatrice) began posing as a prophetess. She told of her visions of her death and resurrection. Indeed she said she was an embodiment of St Anthony. She gave away all her earthly possessions and launched, arguably the first breakaway movement against the Roman Catholic Church. Her followers were commanded to stop singing Ave Maria and Salve Mundi. Crosses and crucifixes had to be destroyed. She taught that Christ was Black and so were his disciples. According to her Christ would restore the old Congolese kingdom and establish a paradise on earth. In the year 1706 she was arrested and condemned to death. It is possible, as others have done before that this was the first manifestation of African Theology. It can indeed be argued that for as longs as there were African Christians, there has always been African theology. Such a view takes us back to the early church, to St Augustine of Hippo and other early church fathers that led vibrant Christian communities in North Africa. However, African Theology as we have come to know and understand it, is roughly 60 years old. But we must always understand African Theology against this larger and older background. If we do this, we may in fact come to the conclusion that modern African Theology as protest and deviation from theological orthodoxy was inaugurated by a woman.

The little that we know about the Kimpa Vita movement reveals an amazingly agenda for African and Black Theology in Africa – in many ways ahead of the time. We see already there and then a deliberate ‘blackening’ of Jesus and the disciples, 250 years before Albert Cleage’s notion of the Black Messiah. Here is an insistence that Jesus is capable of blackness and so are his disciples. This can only emerge out of Biblical hermeneutic that was different from the prevailing and the received. But it is even more radical. The Kimpa Vita movement also presented a profound critique of the church – both in terms of what it did (meaning liturgical elements and idolatrous symbolisms) as well as what it did not do; which is failure to link up with the socio-political. Hence she forbade the singing of what she saw as empty and route Latin songs and she perused a theology designed to revive falling and fallen societal structures and morals. But the most radical thing about her movement was that here was a young African woman, asserting her leadership skills and insisting that women were legitimate bearers of visions, dreamers of dreams.

Had the Kimpa Vita church survived we can surmise that it might have been a church of men and women as equal witnesses to Christ. Inside the Kimpa Vita church, pictures of
a bearded, blonde and blue-eyed Jesus would not be found. The music and the symbols would have been in vibrant vernacular. Such a church would not have been afraid to read the Bible against itself and against the powers that be. Hers would not have been the church of Jacobus Capitein – a castle church barricaded from the local community; a church in Elmina but neither of nor for the people of Elmina church with one foot in the village and another in the sea! Kimpa Vita’s church would have been a truly local church – a church that would have been truly catholic because it would have been truly local. In this church, women would neither be silent nor silenced. In this way the Kimpa Vita church would neither collude with the patriarchal church of the invaders or the patriarchal norms of the local. Between the Bible and the fallen Congolese kingdom, Kimpa Vita’s church searched for a domination-free way of being human and being church. Though converted and clearly taken by her new religion, Vita sought to make connections with the religion of her people. But what has happened to this tantalizing vision and dream of Kimpa Vita?

Generations of African theologians have battled to embrace and pursue the agenda, which was set by Vita. Like Vita, early African theology recognized and sought to mitigate if not to negate, the foreignness of Christianity as mediated by the West. Christ is African! He is an ancestor and an elder brother. Like us, he suffered, they went on. He was Black like us! But for them, as it was for colonial Christian Theology, Christ was only male and so were his disciples. They ignored his teachings about and dealings with women. Indeed it was not until the advent of Third World Theology a la EATWOT that women started to become a conscious part of African Christian Theologizing – and then only at their insistence.

2. Opportunities: Towards an Agenda

Time and time again African Theology has been caught napping when it comes to issues of women. This means that, by and large African Theology has been at peace with the patriarchy inherited from both Western and African cultures. The logic of patriarchy has been so internalized that even when dealing with similar issues of dehumanization, oppression and exclusion, African theologians have not been able to make the connections. Ideologically and spiritually therefore, African theology has remained largely beholden to the supremacist ideas when it comes to gender relations. For this reason, an angry Mercy Oduyoye, in her Daughters of Anowa, has accused African Theology of being nothing more than a smokescreen from inside which the right noises are made but the same old tactics of exclusion, ignoring, oppression and dehumanization of women occur. Even the most progressive African theologies and theologians routinely and constantly ‘forget’ African women. Church life continues to be ordered along patriarchal lines, from seating arrangements to leadership roles and responsibilities. Nevertheless we must acknowledge that it was within the context of Third World Theological discourses in EATWOT and related organizations that both men and women began to find space and courage not merely to name the male supremacist system of patriarchy but to engage it. It was within South African Black Theological circles that some of the early works unmasking patriarchy in church and theology began to emerge. It was within the contexts of Contextual Theologies that African women began to push for clearer connections and the need for liberation to be unpacked beyond race and beyond culture. Since then, we have seen the emergence of a few male theologians who started making patriarchy an object of study.
Today many opportunities exist for this trajectory to be explored. The challenge of violence in our society can neither be understood nor tackled without dealing with patriarchal supremacist ideas. Similarly the myriad challenges brought about by the HIV pandemic cannot be dealt with without dealing with patriarchy and masculinity issues. The human rights culture that is emerging is a clear opportunity for work against patriarchy. But we will have to deal with the question of what it means to be human as well as the question of who is human and who is not human as a prerequisite to invoking the language of rights as a platform from which we deal with patriarchy. This means dealing with the contradictions not only between being human and being women, but also between being man and being human.

We shall all have to explore how we may effect what Etienne de la Boetie requests of us:

I do not ask that you place hands upon the tyrant to topple him over, but simply that you support him no longer; then you will behold him, like a great colossus whose pedestal has been pulled away, fall of his own weight and break up in pieces.

What does it mean to stop supporting patriarchy – theologically and ecclesiastically? We will need to deal with the delusionary logic of patriarchy buried in our sacred texts – cultural and ecclesiastical texts. We shall have to deal with the subtle hold of sexist idioms, metaphors and insults. Yes there are opportunities for us to deal with the role of art, music and popular culture both in buttressing and in undermining male supremacist practices and beliefs. There is room for us to study patriarchy as a subtle command system, which has sexualized violence. We will have to explore our complicity and our own entanglement in this problem – as perpetrators, beneficiaries and victims at the same time.

There are signs of progress, if the volume of publications and the increased courage with which many speak is anything to go by. But I insist that the patriarchal system is not merely a structural and a mechanical system, it is ideological, theological and spiritual. It cannot be combated only at the level of structures and processes. It is, I wish to suggest, at its toughest, when it poses as a spiritual and cultural system. Cerebral expeditions alone will not suffice. Hence the importance of dealing with the affective aspects of patriarchy – something for which theologians are generally, most poorly equipped.

**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS TO TINYIKO**

**Q Jerome**

I was interested in your Ten Commandments that support a patriarchal society but I was just wondering if you have given any thoughts to what the Ten Commandments for a society beyond patriarchy should be?

**Q Gertrude**

I am quite interested in the quotation of Etienne De La Boetie. He said that you colluded on oppression and patriarchy and I can see it very often in our own behaviour. I know that Nancy Reagan said, “people only oppress you when you give them permission to oppress you”. I’m actually trying to understand as a former battered wife, how do we understand that? I am really grappling with that because I just don’t think of me as an individual who could get out of it, I could rise out of it? But I think of the hundreds and millions of other women and I would just like to get your response to that regarding the quotation because you
I was interested in your very interesting quotation from Etienne De La Boetie: “Don’t topple the tyrant forcefully”, just don’t support him & her within. Now that sounds very ‘Gandhi-ish’. I am a high admirer of Gandhi, but it also links in very well with Steve Biko’s emphasis on “you can only begin with the struggle of liberation when you’ve begun dealing with the myth within”; the internalized… the oppressed… the understanding of ourselves. But the thing about Biko being released was that was the beginning of the fundamental foundation of the struggle for liberation. We start with that psychological liberation, when you search your own humanity, you belief in your own humanity. But time also need toppling and I think that, I’m talking more than revolution and just war, but I also thought that it is very well to say that maybe it is applicable to something like patriarchy. Which I don’t want to start an armed revolution about patriarchy. I just thought the quoting on African theology suggesting African theology only stays with the history of the within, but there is a lot that sometimes needs to go beyond that.

I know you referred to issues of justice, consciousness on her part but would that include, what would Kimba Vika’s church attitude be towards people of gays & lesbians, people of different sexual orientation?

I don’t know what their attitude towards gays & lesbians would be. I could only imagine what that church would look like. But I think that church would be on a better footing to deal with those issues than some of our own churches. Precisely because already then there was openness to diversity that was not common, that was not prevailing. I don’t know, but I think there were seeds already that would make that church able to deal with those things much more positively. Much more helpfully than our churches have done. In facts our churches have been very violent, if you like, in the way the church has dealt with those things. The idea is not that we don’t topple the tyrant; the issue is not to stop us from toppling the tyrant. I think the idea is that one of the most basic, safest, quickest ways of toppling the tyrant is to withdraw support to the tyrant. This is a do-able. Of course this is easier said than done. I agree with you. As students in the US we were always challenged by the African students; you South African Black students, you are 40 million, I can’t remember the total back then, and there are only 1 or 2 million Whites and you can’t even deal with them. What is your problem? So of course it is easier said than done. But I think the importance of knowing and understanding how, it is not just inside, it is not just an internalized problem, it is spiritual and there is a network of connection between the individuals. There is what we call a covenant of people agreeing to keep this thing together. So it is not just merely inside you. It is both inside and outside. If De la Boetie means it in that way, I don’t mean it in that way, definitely not.

Gertrude I struggle a bit to hear you. I think you are saying to me; are you saying that their oppression is only made possible by their agreement to
it? Again it is a very new understanding we need to have, because it is a thin line. You don’t want to say people are oppressed because they agree to it or they ask for it. That is a small distance to move from there to the next step, and that is definitely not what is said and I know that it is sometimes meant like that. But this is to say that a totalitarian system, whether it is patriarchy, a system like apartheid puts in through the boss, or Robert Mugabe puts in. That these systems find a way of getting collusion and biding from the people who are victims. That is always a factor, but these systems would not survive merely through brute force alone. I mean we are talking about the different ways patriarchy sustains itself. Brute force alone is not able to sustain. Brute force alone comes in from time to time and of course the performance and reinforcement come in from time to time. So, one it not saying that people are oppressed because they allow it, it is not just as simple as that. Certainly they are always abducted to walk along with the oppressor. Asiel Bamba is a Cameroonian sociologist, talks about intimacy of oppression until the oppressor and oppressed are so bound together, that they will go down together even though the one is the oppressor and the other is the oppressed. It is a kind of contract/pact of death, if you like, between them and part of that is the biggest loser, the person being oppressed. Of course no one is saying it is as simple as that. You are a woman, you are oppressed by men, it’s because you are agreed to it. But in every system of oppression the system includes delusion that makes people participate in it. That was the point I was making.

The part of the Ten Commandments, I must admit that I have not, at least not in this paper, given the alternative to those things. But certainly if I have to revise this paper for publication I will look at that. But I mean the easy answer is to say just the opposite of those things to begin with. Of course it is not as if you have direct opposites, it is a little bit more complex than that. For example to have a few rules such as people cannot be used as a means to anything. To be a man is not equivalent to be dominated for example. Some of the similar things that have been raised in the other papers. A good antidote for some of the things that I was saying.
Religious discourses supporting patriarchy

Prof. Christina Landman -

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Introduction

Sometime ago I received this call from this Afrikaans-speaking white man. He reminded me that we were at school together and that he was now a lawyer and lead-elder in an affluent congregation in the Eastern Cape. He asked me whether I would come and preach for them one Sunday morning. But he said he has to warn me because this is a difficult congregation. The Church Council is 50% against and 50% for having a woman on the pulpit.

He continued by saying that ten years ago we had a “skepsel” (creature) on the pulpit. That was a way in which some white people referred to blacks. “So they had a black preacher that day and the person who looked after the Church Building found out too late, that a black person was actually going to stand on the pulpit. He had already placed a glass of water for the preacher on the pulpit. So he had to quickly run up and replace the glass with a cup. But he actually had to knock off the ear of one of the best cups in order to put it down there for the black pastor”. “So you see”, he continued, “this episode tore the congregation apart, and now they want to invite a woman to come and preach, but they don’t want the congregation to be torn apart again, so please, if I won’t say anything dangerous and if I could just give them my sermon beforehand so that they could scrutinise it”. So I said “No thank you – I am not going to play the clown on the stage of your theatre of the absurd, because that is not a church – that is a theatre of the absurd. We have laws in this country that give all people access to all activities and it is simply absurd to have such a reaction against women and black people on the pulpit”.

Afterwards I was sad that I became so angry – but the question remained:” Why is the Church not ready?” I told this man; “Call me again when you are ready – you are obviously not ready for a woman”.

Why is the Church not ready? South Africa is one of the countries in the world with the most liberal laws to protect women, and lesbians and gays. We have the domestic violence act, we have the Civil Union Bill, permitting same-sex marriages, and yet the Church is not part of that liberation. The Church is actually part of the problem. Because the laws change things on the surface, but as long as we don’t change the discourse in the deeper structure, we are not going to change. And the Church unfortunately supports these discourses, these religious discourses that actually promote patriarchy and homophobia. The consequence of
that is that South Africa is one of the most religious countries in the world. The 2001 census tells us that 85% of the people indicated that they were involved in some sort of religious activity in South Africa – 80% of them being Christian. And yet – although one of the most religious, we are the country in the world with the highest percentage of domestic violence; the fastest spreading of HIV infection; highest incidence of rape; and of course a very high incidence of homophobia.

This paper consists of 3 parts:

1. Firstly: The religious discourses, and all the faces of discourses, that support patriarchy and determine our understanding of our spiritual and intimate bodies. What are the faces of the discourses that support patriarchy?
2. Secondly: Suggestions of possible deconstructed discourses.
3. Thirdly: How can we reconstruct the Church or faith community? What are the pastoral implications of deconstructed discourses?

Discourse

A discourse is a grand narrative. When a majority of a community believes in it, whether it is “true” or not, it in turn starts to regulate concepts and behaviour in this community. We create a discourse and then the discourse starts creating us.

An example of religious discourse, for instance, is that God has created man to rule over woman. Whether it is “true” or not, when a majority of people believe in it, it turns on us and has dramatic consequences in our lives. One of the sentences you hear most often from men when you deal with domestic violence (rape, abuse and verbal abuse) is: “I am a man, God has made me so”. So the discourses have very, very grave consequences.

Deconstruction

By deconstruction I mean the following. A discourse feeds on placing two poles over against one another - such as man vs. woman; homosexual vs. heterosexual; good vs. evil.

Deconstruction -
- Undermines the bipolarity of discourses and
- Explores the dialogical spaces between binaries.

That is what I hope we will do – it is not easy though!

I usually use this as an example (power point presentation with the example of the naked statue of David by Michelangelo). This is to show how difficult it is to prove the face of a discourse and to show how risky it is to shift deconstruction.

“Who is this?” Delegates answer David. “Does anybody know this man?” It is a 16th century David; plastered by Michelangelo and the past 2 years it has been in New York on exhibition. Now the joke goes that after 2 years it came back like this (power point picture with a statue of David, now extremely fat) – and the delegates laugh. Christina says, “You think that’s funny?”
I showed this to different people to see how they would react. I then showed it to a colleague of mine who has a doctorate in theology and was from another culture, and was extremely offended. He said that he found it very repulsive that a woman shows him a picture of a naked man. Now I haven’t thought about that. But he thought it was extremely inappropriate to do something like that.

I also showed it a few weeks ago to women in Rustenburg because we wanted to start a project amongst the mineworkers. I had a talk with all the social workers, farm workers and they are very well trained and again from another culture. Again I showed the statue of David, before and after the 2 years, and asking who this is. But nobody knew and they could probably show me many statures from their culture, which I wouldn’t know who they are. But after a while one’s face lit up and she said that she knows it is Jesus. And all the women were empowered by the fact that when Jesus was on earth the women looked so well after Him that He put on weight.

This is to show you, identifying the faces of discourses is difficult. To shift them, to reconstruct them is risky. It is contextual, it is local and what I am going to present is my point of view on how discourses formed us, maybe formed you and maybe the suggested discourses are not what you would do or in your context would do in reconstructing discourses. In our lives, my life our gender bodies are directed or run by five discourses.

Spheres which patriarchy wants to control through religious discourses

1. **Marriage** (dominant male subordinate woman)
2. **Church leadership** (the body of Christ is male, therefore gays can’t be part of it)
3. **Intimate bodies** (that God wants to be part of a couple)
4. **Desire** (desire is sinful)
5. **Family/household life** (a family consist of a father, mother and children)

These five discourses control our gender parts. Let’s look at the five suggested discourses that may be different in your case.

1. **Marriage**

**Patriarchal discourse:** The Bible supports marriage as a union between a dominating male and a subordinate female.

**Deconstructed discourse:** The marriage at Cana is not between a strong man and a weak woman. The one way of deconstructing this discourse is going back in history and looking at the marriage at Cana which is not necessarily between a dominant male and subordinate woman, we don’t even know who the bridegroom/bride were. They have found a strong Christian tradition that it is depicted as a parable that Jesus is marrying His disciples through this marriage/wedding ceremony, after this they became His disciples and started to believe in Him. And there is a strong tradition in early Christianity that Jesus married John the Evangelist. If you don’t want to believe me, (Christina shows a picture drawing/imprint, depicting the marriage as proof) So we honour symbols and parables but we cannot stand it in real life. Usually we say that according the Bible God created Adam and Eve not Adam and Steve.
2. Church leadership

Patriarchal discourse: As the body of Christ, the church is male, and the Bible excludes female and gay leadership.

Deconstructed discourse: The pastor/priests presents the multi-gendered body of Christ.

Female leadership

Let us for a moment stand still and look at the verses that exclude women, lesbians and gays from church leadership. Patriarchal discourse is that Jesus and His followers were all men. Men wrote all books in the Bible and Paul explicitly states that women should not be leaders in the Church.

- But the alternative discourse shows that books like Mary Magdalene and the Acts of Thecla are examples of books on female leadership that are excluded from the Bible.
- In 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 the patriarchal discourse is that Paul ordered the women to be silent in the Church. The alternative discourse pose that this is an insertion and appears in different places in the manuscript. Obviously a later monk made added notes next to some of these scriptures that women should rather be silent.
- In Ephesians 5: 22 - 23 the patriarchal discourse reflects that Paul orders the wife to submit to the husband. The alternative discourse would say: It is also a late insertion and appears in different places in the early manuscripts, and it doesn’t reflect the contents of the book that is actually based on equality and inclusion.
- In 1 Timothy 2:11-15 the patriarchal discourse is that women should be silent. The alternative discourse is that Paul did not write 1 Timothy at all. This letter reflects church structure but simply did not exist in Paul’s time but rather from the 2nd generation. I do not see Paul at all as a sexist; on the contrary, if he had really ordered women not to function in the church we wouldn’t have had Christianity as it functions today.

Let me give some affirming texts that are discourses that are not always on the defensive side, for example Romans 16. Usually when I have disagreements with people they say but you are taking things out of the Bible and ask why you are taking Romans 16 out of the Bible. In Romans 16 Paul greets the leaders in the congregation that nine are women who are seen as deacons and apostles. In our Afrikaans translation they should have translated deacon to something else and apostles to something else. After 1982 women were allowed to become deacons, in the 1984 Afrikaans translation the word deacon appeared in the translation. We are just waiting for the word apostle to appear.

I often preach about the five wise virgins. And I use the word virgins because they were young girls - younger than twelve and a half years because at twelve and a half years you were married. If you were thirteen you were already seen as a spinster. These virgins where in a sense the most powerless people of the society. They made no decisions about themselves; the father married them off and then every nine months they would give birth. That was their lives and then they died at the average age of twenty-six. Then Jesus would be there sitting with his disciples talking about virgins. Men when they usually get together do they talk about virgins? No. Do they talk about wise virgins? No. And why were these
virgins wise? These five virgins were wise because they undermined patriarchy and made their own decisions by deciding to take their own oil. The five other virgins that were not wise said that their fathers would provide the oil. They were buying into the patriarchal discourse. The five wise virgins inherited the kingdom.

Homosexuality

You know all the texts that refer to homosexuality:

- Genesis 1:27-28/2:18-25: Two accounts of the creation of the first man and woman
- Genesis 19: Sodom and Gomorrah
- Leviticus 18:22/20:23: Holiness Code: The patriarchal discourse would say that homosexuality is forbidden and a disorder. The alternative discourse is that Israel was a small community and actually the man’s seed symbolically belonged to the nation. Masturbation was prohibited although masturbation in Leviticus 18 is not prohibited for women because no seed is spilled. It is so that there is an ideology behind this. The other day there was this discussion about the Israelites that were prohibited from tattooing themselves, according Lev 19:28. And today you can have all kinds of Christian tattoos. Is that still relevant or not? Alan Brush wrote a book “Facing our differences in the Churches with Gay & Lesbian members” for the World Council of Churches in 1995 regarding the Holiness Code. Christian tattoo themselves today, eat meat containing blood, wear garments with two types of fibre (denims), and appoint priest for duty that may not have any physical defects. As far as I know none of above mentioned is relevant today anymore and they all were part of the Holiness Code.
- Deuteronomy 23:17: Sons of Israel prohibited to become temple prostitutes
- 1 Kings 14:24/15:12/22:46/2 Kings 23:7: Prohibitions against temple prostitution
- Romans 1:18-32: God’s wrath on ungodliness. The patriarchal discourse is seen as women exchanging natural relationships for unnatural with women, and men exchanging natural relationships with women for unnatural with men. Alternative discourse is: Jeremy Punt says the following about Romans 1. Paul is concerned here about the followers of Christ from the gentile stock and they should thus avoid sexual practises of the gentiles who do not know God. Inevitably the practise of these people is seen as wrong. Paul did however not give specific directives for lesbians and gays who know God, or who are in a committed relationship, which does not exploit anyone, because such identities were not readily available in the first centuries then.
- 1 Corinthians 6:9-11: Wrongdoers will not inherit the Kingdom of God
- Ephesians 5:33: The ideal marriage relationship
- Etc

3. Intimate bodies

Patriarchal discourse: Our bodies are sinful.

Deconstructed discourse: We have baptismal bodies and not only gender bodies. Our baptismal bodies are placed on a path of eternal transformation: transfiguration, resurrection, ascension (Elizabeth Stuart). The homosexual body or female body is seen as a problem itself.
4. Desire

**Patriarchal discourse:** Sex is for reproduction. Human rights activists would say homosexuality is okay but don’t go too far, don’t start getting married, having children and things like that because it is unhealthy etc.

**Deconstructed discourse:** We can explore the dialogical spaces between biological fundamentalism (a term used by Graham Ward) and sex as social reproduction (a term used by David Matzko McCarthy). Our bodies have an intrinsic worth whether they are homosexual or heterosexual.

5. Family

**Patriarchal discourse:** God’s will is that the family consists of the father as head of the household, the mother as the caregiver, and children.

**Deconstructed discourse:** The aim of the household is to constitute the body of Christ at home. Finding God within us in our relationships with each other with whom we intimately share household space. We share this with our Eucharistic body. We believe that the first relationships established by Jesus were Eucharistic relationships, examples of how He fed the hungry people, and how He related to people. Christina shows the photo of her standing among the Church Council of a poor Zulu community where she preached. She has a hat on with a gown, as they requested in order for her to preach. The women said you are not going to serve the Eucharist without a hat. The men said if you do not wear a gown how would we know you are the pastor? Through wearing this hat and gown she learned that with these symbols we could deconstruct poverty and reconstruct dignity despite circumstances.

**Pastoral consequences of deconstructed discourses**

Ten things I think the church, any church, can do to reconstruct discourse practises so that we can deconstruct, whether we are male or female, heterosexual or homosexual, so that we can reconstruct the bodies of dignity. And part of this is what I wrote for the Synod of UCSA on their report on homosexuality. Jeremy Punt wrote the part on the Old and New Testament, Allan Boesak wrote the part on Belhar and I wrote the part on the Pastoral Consequences. As you know the Synod did not reject it but referred it. So they were not ready for the recommendations made here. This is more or less based on that but not all of them.

1. It is the task of the church to be a bridge builder, I would consider this also as gender reconciliation between men and women but also sexual orientation, (explore the dialogical spaces) between its male and female/homosexual and heterosexual members, and to act on the challenge of sexism and homophobia in a wise and life-giving way. The church is not the one to say maybe we can slip them in at the back door.

2. It is the task of the church to embrace – and not only to tolerate – ALL its members, and to liberate them from structures and prejudices that keep them from growing towards
God’s love and grace. The church is to confirm all people (female/homosexual) as full members of the church through faith in Jesus Christ.

3. The church must take the incarnation of Jesus seriously and affirm the bodies of women and gays in its liturgies, preaching and language. As Jesus became incarnated, a body, it is the bodiness of Jesus that we must honour in our liturgies, preaching and language.

4. The church must embrace the sexual bodies of its believers, and respects stable and affectionate relationships in which women and gays are safe. The dominant discourse here is that the bodies of gays are under suspicion; there is something wrong with that.

5. The church must affirm that women and gays not only have physical bodies but spiritual bodies (the female body, the gay body) too, that are capable of integrity and experiences of deep spirituality. The church must acknowledge that women and gays (everybody) form spiritual identities that are built on evangelical/biblical convictions. It is not something that is brought in from the back door. Just to remind you about body theology that the believer has at least four bodies. We have the physical body, which is our sexual body, symbolic body that is determined by symbols and scripture, political body (not the ANC body), but a political body with which you take control over somebody else’s sexuality. When you are in a relationship you take control over your partner’s sexuality. You don’t want them to have relationship with somebody else, things like that. It can be healthy and it can be very unhealthy. It can become very unhealthy when you tell him/her she may not wear red, she may not greet the neighbour. That physical body can actually become sick. Then we have the baptismal body, which is the spiritual, Eucharistic body, and the church should affirm all these bodies.

6. The church needs to invite women and gays as co-interpreters of the Bible and co-authors of theologies, so that we can formulate the symbolic body of the believer that is depicted in a healthy way.

7. We as a church need to “restore” ourselves, and to invite our female and homosexual members to tell their stories in the faith community, in order to prepare all of us to confess the body of Christ.

8. Redefining all of us within God’s grace, the pastoral counselling and care of the church need to shift in focus. The church needs to deal in a pastoral and caring way with the experiences of its female and homosexual members, and refrain from trying to convert them from their “wrong ways”. Like you know in Moreletta Park their pastoral care to lesbians and gays is to refry, convert from their wrong ways. Pastoral care in the church really needs to shift from that purpose.

9. In terms of our reading of the Bible and our understanding of bodiness, the church is obligated to marry homosexual people according to the Civil Union Act of 2006, and also to bless these unions in liturgies appropriate to the experiences and needs of the couple.

10. The church should embrace and affirm their women and gay members by ordaining them to the offices of the church. A believing person with the right qualifications, exemplary lifestyle and tested spirituality should be considered for serving the offices of the church.
– independent of their gender or sexual orientation.

11. The church in South Africa heals in three ways. **Diaconal ministries** (giving material support). **Faith Healing** by praising God. I think we need **ritual healing**. In Judaism the women for example take leave from their procreation role, caring role and take on their creative role. And I so much wanted to go through my menopause with other women in a ritual where I would say, what is the spiritual implication? What are the spiritual sources for going through this very difficult time in your life? Men do not want to acknowledge it but they also go through “penopause”. In other countries they actually have clinics for men with “penopause”. The other day I was talking at a conference and I indicated how women over 50 become vulnerable to HIV infection because of their partner’s penopause. The men were so angry with me, they just heard that word.

We need ritual healing in the church. We need to shift our rites of passage. A woman wrote a stunning book on Female Genital Mutilation as a rite of passage and how the church can shift it. Because in Kenya, laws have forbidden female genital mutilation and know it has gone underground and it has become worse. The Church can actually take over these rites of passage in a healing way. By dealing with these rites of passage often these gender stereotypes are fixed.

**Summary**

Our sexual bodies, whether we are male or female, homosexual or heterosexual, our bodies are the site of healthy and intimate relationships and must be acknowledged by the church as such. Our baptismal bodies are the site of deep spiritual transformation irrespective of sex or sexual orientation. Our Eucharist bodies are the sites of forming healthy spiritual relationships. Spiritual bodies are the sites of our evangelical identities.

We were doing some research amongst farm workers in the Hoedspruit area on these small farm communities, called “compound”, a word I haven’t heard for a long time, where there is a lot of poverty. A third of the women said that they are regularly badly beaten by their partners. And we have seen it especially on a Monday. This community has taken control over it. One thing they did was that they started making paintings on the walls where they sort the fruit. And I actually just want to conclude by showing you these paintings which the farm workers themselves, male and female, did (Christina shows the paintings on the power point presentation. These pictures are called “One man can”. The first picture is a man washing dishes with a baby on his back. The second picture is a man feeding a baby. The third picture is no sex-for-work and the forth picture is to drink responsibly). In this very, very poor trust where there is about 95% unemployed and has 80% HIV infection, this woman came and she is actually wearing a T-shirt from the gender commission. She started praising the Lord and singing with us all. We were all there. And to me this was a sign of hope, a sign of a deconstructed discourse.
CONCLUSIONS OF THE GROUP DISCUSSIONS ON THE QUESTION: “The way forward in the Church, Society and Politics”

1. DISCOURSES - Discourses addressed and reconstructed

   a. Moral discourses affecting diversity

   • Moral discourses leave no room for diversity. Diversity is a powerful ‘tool’ if understood and embraced. We need to claim/understand it in ourselves before entering into the arena of challenges.
   • In all the areas identified we need to know who our ‘enemy’ is, use alternative resources and see what can be utilised. Also stimulate and/or create other initiatives.
   • Moral discourses used by the media need to be addressed. The media is the medium that has a major influence on the way the broader public thinks.
   • **Deconstruction**: To bring what is currently used in society on all levels to an end by challenging it with the necessary alternative information and proof.
   • **Reconstruct**: It is an inward/internal process where you have to evaluate and affirm yourself. Broadly it can be seen as the alternative replacement.

   b. Religion

   • The need to focus on new ways of being church was highlighted. Credos and codes of conduct are necessary within faith communities. The new way of being church should include:
   • A collective decision and or movement against patriarchy should be formulated that must -
     a. Be life affirming
     b. Be inclusive
   • Find diverse ways to create awareness within people
   • Find new ways of reading the Bible
   • Encourage spaces for dialogue and include story telling, rituals, plays, music and pictures - share experience (narrative)
   • Include pastors who support with passion and heart the abovementioned ways
   • Recognise that education of faith communities plays an important role in sensitising and creating awareness within the church
   • Make much more of Jesus as an inclusive model
   • Empower new skills in hermeneutics
   • Take responsibility and ownership
   • Reconstruct the 10 commandments in a proactive way.
   • Join forces with other faith communities in deconstructing patriarchy and fundamentalism
   • Establish safety nets for those who might face rejection
   • Follow up/continue theological training
• Recognise the complexity of the context and propose holistic approach e.g. economics, poverty
• Create alternative spaces for inclusion
• Encourage individual initiative processes
• Write pro-actively
• Establish a network where clergy of congregations are supported

c. Patriarchy

“Are we free to be moral?” and “What makes people vulnerable to patriarchy?” are questions that were addressed. No law can touch the space/sphere of patriarchy but only religion can.

Recommendations were:
• Different kinds of interventions are needed for different groups
• Go back to the same problematic area, creating/upholding patriarchy to deconstruct it. Use education as authority and reconstruct it
• Go back in history. Expose people to the way in which patriarchy was historically constructed e.g. history of Christianity
• Go to the teachings of church and revise/reconstruct them
• We want people two know everywhere that patriarchy is NOT ACCEPTABLE and that men and women are equal
• Patriarchy leads to poverty and displacement of many people

2. EDUCATION

1. Patriarchy should be explained within cultural contexts and its impact evaluated within these contexts.
2. We need to go back in history and explain on a social, political and religious level where and why patriarchy started.
3. In this process education was highlighted as being the cornerstone to change patriarchal attitudes.
   • It is necessary that teachers understand diversity in order to make a difference in generations to come.
   • Both teachers and pupils need to be educated on the dangers of patriarchy and the suppression of sexual preference.
4. The discussion of human sexuality should be encouraged to be more open and not be judged as something strange or abnormal.
5. The dangers of the violence of continuing patriarchy need to be exposed. Information plays a vital role in this process of deconstructing and reconstructing through using it as an integrated process with guidelines and reasons why.
6. Accessible literature to guide thinking and alternative rituals should be implemented for reconstructing masculinity and relationships.

3. LEADERSHIP - The vital role of shared and strong leadership

a. Strong leaders who are role models of diversity and willing to represent the discourses that needs to be changed.
b. To start this process we must acknowledge ourselves as leaders in our respective
fields and strengthen our own theoretical understandings.
c. It will remain one of our most important tasks to be vigilant when our leaders  
(especially those in the public eye) are not supporting gender equality or actively  
reproducing patriarchal discourse.
d. The media also plays an important role in this process.

4. GENDER - The process of gender reconciliation

a. Identifiable sectors to recruit people as trainers against patriarchy and violence:
   • Interfaith movement
   • South Africa Council of Churches (SACC) regional
   • Trauma Centres
   • Prisons
   • The HIV sector
   • Conscientious objectors sector – where engaged with issues of militarism
   • Academic sector
   • LGBTI ngo’s sector (also need sensitising to non-inclusive language, etc)
   • Parent sector, socialization at home

b. How do we avoid fear of change?
The community mostly functions in a heteronormative mode, leading to the control  
of women’s bodies consciously and subconsciously. The message must be spread  
in such a way that it shows benefits of gender equality for both men and women.

5. POWER - Challenge structures/sites of power

a. Identify and challenge structures/sites of power, where patriarchy is still upheld  
and implemented.
b. Unmask stereotypes, reclaim and engage contested (challenging) spaces and texts  
c. Structures/sites of power are difficult to challenge and therefore a strategic plan of  
action is necessary to deal with these giants.

6. LANGUAGE - the use of language needs to change

a. Our daily language spoken has a multitude of patriarchal facets embedded into it  
that lead to less gender equality. Language in its various fields has been identified  
as the one way of reconstructing.
b. Engage in the issue of human sexuality broadly.
c. Look at the use of language in scriptures, media, academics etc  
d. Transformation through reconstructing language – inclusive and non-androcentric  
language.

7. CULTURE - Reclaim positive components of culture

How do we overcome deep-rooted belief systems?
   a. Communication in own language  
b. Explain the role of patriarchy and its consequences
c. Explain what is meant by gender equality  
d. Educate teachers  
e. Educate children from a young age  
f. Understand the culture structure and work from their background  
g. Explain that every culture has good and bad components  
h. Educate & explain by being concrete  

8. MEDIA - Vigilance through media and elsewhere  

Moral discourses reflected through the media need to be addressed. The media unfortunately can play a negative or positive role. However, the media remains a vital tool to be used in changing discourses and reconstruct them in the relevant levels of society. The media can be one of the fastest ways to educate the broader public on gender issues, patriarchy, LGBTI issues and sexual diversity.  

9. NETWORK  

A network system is essential in the change-process of patriarchy and other relevant matters. The more people informed and the stronger the network, the more people can be reached. Networking stays crucial in the fight against patriarchy and therefore a well-planned network needs to be part of this process. This planned network should consist of passionate people, who are well informed and would want to contribute to society.
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Madelene Isaacs
Basil Manning
Nozizwe Madladla Routledge
Jeremy Routledge
Melanie Judge
Gertrude Fester
Pieter Oberholzer
Stan Henkeman
David Russell
Carel Anthonissen
Liezl Swartz
Marlow Valentine
Amanda Gouws
Christo Lombard
Judith Kotze
Laurie Gaum
Tammy Shefer
Vanessa Ludwig
Rowan Smith
Elize Morkel
Anlene Taljaard
Cheryl Bird
Yvonne Daki
Gary Paulsen
Retha Benade
Yvette Abrahams