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SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISM AND THE ABUSE OF WOMEN

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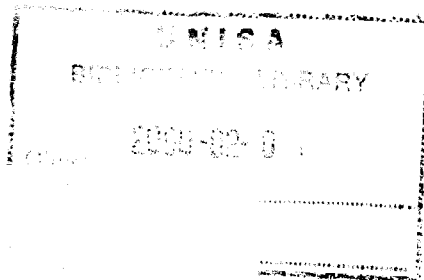
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MASTER'S ABSTRACTS

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SUMMARY

Women have been abused from the beginning of time and it would appear that a patriarchal system has facilitated this abuse. Churches, in general, and Seventh-Day Adventists, in particular, have been silent on the issue of Abuse. It is my thesis that a predominantly confessional Seventh-Day Adventist's view and use of Scripture are foundational to this silence on human rights issues. Adventist eschatology is predominantly apocalyptic in nature, focussing on end-time events, thus, the present is viewed secondary. Human rights issues are marginalised with the focus on evangelism. Thus, relationships are secondary and abused women have not been accommodated within the Seventh-Day Adventist framework of worship and caring.

KEY TERMS:

| | |
|------------------------------|---------------------|
| Abuse | Human rights issues |
| Women | Kingdom of God |
| Adventism | Evangelism |
| Seventh-Day Adventist Church | Mission |
| Anthropology | Patriarchal System |
| Ecclesiology | Confessionals |
| Eschatology | Progressives |
| Apocalyptic | View of Scripture |

*I dedicate this dissertation to three very special women in my life:
My loving and caring wife, Arlene, my precious daughter, Shanelle,
and my Mother.*

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

I would like to introduce my subject of research with a statement by Esther Olson which captured my attention and epitomises the study and research carried out in the somewhat neglected subject of abused women.

“Wife Abuse.

To the ignorant, wife abuse is something a wife has coming to her,
To the naive, wife abuse is a social problem which isn't desirable
yet is somewhat inevitable.

To the curious, wife abuse is bizarre and occurs only in bad marriages.
To Christians, wife abuse is something that happens to non-Christians,
To most of us, wife abuse is depressing, and we'd rather not think
about it.”¹

This striking statement had a significant impact on my thinking. I could not help but wonder; “Is this really how abuse is viewed?” “Is it really something inevitable that only takes place in poor marriages and non-Christian homes?”

As a pastor in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church (from now on SDA), I have been confronted by many people, from all walks of life, who have been abused. I have been faced with heartbreaking situations, confronted with people begging for some sort of relief, and I ask, “Is there anything that can be done to help these people?”

¹ Esther L. Olson. 1973. *No Place to Hide - Wife Abuse: Anatomy of a Private Crime*: 7.

I propose that this is a human atrocity that needs to be addressed, and the Church (from now on, when I use the term 'Church' I am referring to the Institutional SDA Church²) cannot be silent on the issue. Yet, within the framework of my fifteen years of pastoral work, I have come to realize that the Church has a tendency to disregard these issues. The primary focus in its mission seems to be 'evangelism.' The pastor's involvement in caring is regarded as secondary, and human rights issues are marginalised. This has been a constant frustration for me, as I regard the need for pastoral care and counselling to be of equal importance.

It is my thesis that human rights issues are marginalised in the SDA Church context. Yet pastors are confronted with problematic relationships, and worse still, abusive relationships, on a daily basis. It is my aim to research this issue so as to investigate the possible reasons for abusive relationships being marginalised in particular the marriage relationship, but more especially the issues of 'the abused woman.' I postulate that there is a very real need for the SDA Church to rethink its position on pastoral care and counselling. I further wish to state that this dissertation does not depart from the point of view that it is only women who are abused; children, men and the elderly are also victims of abuse (and these too are issues that need to be addressed). By this I am not implying that the mission and purpose of the SDA Church are incorrect, but I am appealing for more of an openness for social involvement to receive equal opportunities.

Furthermore, I will do my research in the Christian context, focussing especially on the SDA Church context and their theology. Because of the limited research within the SDA Church, relating to

² When I use the 'Institutional SDA Church' I am referring to the Church as an institution, focussing on policy, doctrine and numerical growth, as apposed to the Church as a dynamic movement, focussing on people and their individual needs by making theology relevant and more meaningful, yet not denying its own tradition.

abused women, I will also make use of statistics and research from other sources. This paper departs from the point of view that members of the SDA Church, being a part of society, are also to a large extent subject to the same problems of society at large. Therefore, research from other sources can be accepted as relevant.

I further contend, that it is important to note that these sources inform us, that Christians are not immune to abuse, but can also fall prey to it. Researchers have stated over and over again that abuse is not limited to any particular social structure, and that religious belief does not exempt anyone from being a victim.³ “Abuse and family violence are blind to age, social status, colour, culture and creed. There is no typical victim of abuse and no typical perpetrator, except insofar as the victim is overwhelmingly female and the perpetrator male.”⁴ We are also informed by Crowell and Burgess that the consequences of abuse and violence “go far beyond the individual ... victims, affecting their children, families and friends, as well as society at large.”⁵ Olson maintains that according to Maxine Hoffman, “Statistics indicate that one of two women, Christian, or otherwise, is battered at some time during her life.”⁶ She claims that these statistics are based on research conducted by Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz, “which shows that women from *all* socio-economic and religious levels are abused at similar rates of occurrence.” Dobash and Dobash go so far as to tell us that “the family is the most violent group to which they (women and children) are likely to belong.”⁷

³ See Lenore Walker. 1979. *The Battered Woman*; Murray Straus, Richard Gelles & Suzanne Steinmetz, *Behind Closed Doors*: 123 - 152; Esther L. Olson, *No Place to Hide - Wife Abuse: Anatomy of a Private Crime*: 127.

⁴ *Family Violence: A Christian Response*: 1.

⁵ Nancy Crowell & Ann Burgess. 1996. *Understanding Violence Against Women*: 1.

⁶ Esther L. Olson. 1984. *No Place to Hide - Wife Abuse: Anatomy of a Private Crime*: 127.

⁷ Emerson Dobash & Russell Dobash. 1979. *Violence Against Wives. A Case Against Patriarchy*: 7.

These alarming statements remind us that abuse is no trivial matter. We realise that “violence is always with us. It is both historically persistent and immediately topical. It exists in the very structure of society and it repeatedly surprises.”⁸ Many people, including Bible-believing Christians, somehow find themselves in abusive relationships. In actual fact, even though the statistics are very limited, we find from Christian Counsellors and Pastors that the problem is growing at a disturbing rate. Therefore, a significant amount of energy is being consumed by individuals seeking to survive violent family experiences, yet there is very little, if any, help for them. This inhibits their ability to fully enjoy a meaningful life in relationships among family members, friends and in service to their fellow humans and the Kingdom of God.

Certainly these wounded individuals and families deserve a compassionate response from the Church. To remain indifferent and unresponsive is to condone, perpetuate and potentially extend such behaviour. To respond with acceptance, understanding, comfort and practical help is our moral responsibility and tangible evidence of the presence of Christ in the world. As we consider the research and the limited statistics⁹ of abuse, we realize that there is a very real need for the Church in general, and the SDA Church in particular, to rise to the challenge and address this issue. South African women have been abused for many years, and only now as they break the silence with regard to abuse, we realize the horrific extent of this crime.

⁸ Barbra Fawcet. 1996. *Violence and Gender Relations - Theories and Interventions*: 1.

⁹ See Chapter Two of this paper.

During the ‘apartheid era’ the SDA Church kept silent, upholding and practising the principles of apartheid. Referring to the ‘holocaust’¹⁰ of World War II, the Church never said very much about this human atrocity either. If we continue to keep silent with regard to human issues, it is now possible that we may once again fall prey to the same offence, allowing innocent people to be abused through silence and indifference. It is my contention that the Church can no longer keep silent. Phillips claims that “the most important task for the local pastor, ... so far as the victimization of women is concerned, is to break the silence. Breaking the silence means preaching on the issues of victimization of women and it means developing intentional congregational ministries so that the silence cannot creep back.”¹¹

It is very disturbing, that despite all these facts, we still motivate pastors to “...spend more time on *evangelism* and less time in addressing *marriage problems and interpersonal conflicts ...*” (Italics added for emphasis.)¹² The reason for this, is to enable the pastor to be more involved in what Steenberg has called, “active Evangelism.” From this it appears that we are not too concerned about family issues and abusive relationships. Our task is to proclaim the “gospel of the kingdom ... in all the world as a witness to all the nations and then the end will come.”¹³ As Cleveland puts it; “God-called preachers will evangelize to their utmost potential,” meaning they will ‘catch’ people for God. He refers to God’s call of Samuel, Elisha and Paul and says, “the call of God dominated the

¹⁰ See Colin Anthony Phillips. 1978. *A Theology of Victimization: Preparation for Ministry with Victimized women in the Congregational Setting*: 3 - 7. “Most adults have heard the statistics—6,000,000 Jews exterminated, including 1,500,000 children—but we have never integrated its implications into our post-war society. At best we pay lip-service to the Holocaust and treat it an aberration. We are still involved in denial of the Holocaust because our Western civilizations dare not face the meaning of it all.”

¹¹ *Ibid.*: 9.

¹² Presidential Report TC Constituency Meeting December 3, 1995: 4.

¹³ Matthew 24:14 (New King James version.)

landscape of their minds, eclipsing all competing professions, and they bowed readily to the yoke of the Almighty and went henceforth to the task assigned, that of catching people and enlarging the kingdom.”¹⁴

Regarding this ‘Gospel commission’ the SDA Church has always viewed the Bible as being normative.¹⁵ As they face life-threatening issues, it is their understanding of, and their belief in the Scriptures, as well as their determination to prepare the world for Jesus’ second coming, that very often governs their beliefs, values, norms and ultimately their conduct. Mollenkott claims that very often common sense tells us that human beings, who love each other, should relate to each other as friends. “Yet they feel torn because they think the Bible insists on a hierarchy in which the male is closer to God than the female and, therefore, [the man] must rule the relationship.”¹⁶ Too often when these Christians are exposed to abuse, it is this understanding of the Bible and their theology, that tends to keep them in the abusive relationship and causes the Church not to get involved.

¹⁴ Edward E. Cleveland. 1999. *Evangelism: Bringing Light to Life*: 7.

¹⁵ G. Hazel. 1980. *Understanding the Living Word of God*: 72 & 73. “The Protestant principle of the “Bible only” (*sola scriptura*), also often referred to as the “Scripture principle,” was the battle cry of the Reformation. It involves the supreme authority of the infallible Holy Scriptures to the exclusion of all human authority as regards “the standard of character, the revealer of doctrine, and the test of experience.” It is based upon the recognition of the Bible’s inspiration, unity, canonicity, and supreme authority. E. G. White has emphasized that we are to have no other creed than God’s infallible Scriptures: “The Bible [is] our rule of faith and discipline.” She has pointed out that in these last days “God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms.” Seventh-day Adventists generally have refused to allow such extrabiblical norms as tradition, creeds, science, philosophy, and extrabiblical religions, etc. (neither one nor all of these), to determine faith, doctrine, and reforms, but have taken the Bible as providing the “supreme authority” in such matters. We are encouraged to continue this emphasis: “In our time . . . there is need of a return to the great Protestant principle - the Bible, and the Bible only, as the rule of faith and duty.” The consistent historical position of representative Seventh-day Adventists has been that the Bible is our only infallible rule of faith, doctrine, reforms, and practice.”

¹⁶ Virginia Mollenkott. 1977. *Women Men and the Bible*: 46.

Often wives are counselled to “give him his freedom and accept him the way he is.” They are reminded that “they do not relate to God directly but rather through the authority of their husbands and that the wife’s personal development is properly secondary to the husband’s.”¹⁷ Mollenkott goes on to say that many Christian women are told that their anger is only ‘sinful selfishness’ and that they have to overcome it, yet the husband’s anger is treated as normal.¹⁸ This implies that it is our view of Scripture and our theology that have pressured us into thinking in a very specific way about various situations, more especially when we relate to the roll of women in marriage and women in the Church.

In the light of Sakae Kubo’s statement that God is a ‘God of relationships,’¹⁹ and because we claim to be Christians, a people who have by faith accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour, “we must continually ask ourselves how, as Christians, we ought to relate to our fellow human beings.”²⁰ Hereby our view of Scripture and our theology is being challenged to ‘widen its horizons.’ To reflect upon the relevance of the Church and its redemptive role with respect to its mission and with its regard to abused women. The Church needs to find meaningful ways of responding to the challenges of this issue as it promotes the ‘Kingdom of God’ in this world.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*: 48.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*: 49.

¹⁹ See Sakae Kubo. 1993. *The God of Relationships*: 9 - 16.

²⁰ *Ibid.*: 13.

While the SDA Church community has become involved in some areas of human rights issues, there is still much room for a more concerted involvement. As Plantak has said, “It is not enough to possess a social conscience. There is a definitive need for social action too.”²¹

Douglas so aptly reminded us:

“The Church is facing a period of renewed and unusual testing. It faces the reality of having to undergo a process of intellectual readjustment, revisions of its thinking, and certain conceptions of its nature and structure. It has become increasingly clear that the old truths need to be re-defined, and stated with clarity. New truths need to be recognized.”²²

“It is time for sober reflection. The Church cannot rest upon past laurels, for despite its successes, there is still an urgent need for it to understand its nature and function with greater clarity, especially in this age of radical secularity and planetary consciousness. ... For many contemporary Seventh-day Adventist Christians who believe firmly in the biblical tradition, the questions of the integrity and identity of the Church, its authority and unity, and its response to the challenge of its environment are now being raised with a new and almost desperate sense of urgency.”²³

Can the Church therefore, really demonstrate its solidarity with those trapped in a world of pain and abuse? Is there any consistency between what the Church is saying and what it is doing? Does the substance of the Church's deeds reveal the true purpose of the Gospel to the world? Do the structures and policies of the Church serve its ‘true’ mission to the world? Does the Church recognize that these structures and policies are secondary and derivative rather than primary and normative? Is the Church really a caring community?²⁴

²¹ Zdravko Plantak. 1998. *The Silent Church*: 36, 37.

²² Walter B. T. Douglas. 1980. *The Church: Its nature and function*: 57.

²³ *Ibid.*: 54.

²⁴ See Walter B. T. Douglas. 1980. *The Church: It's nature and function*: 58 & 59.

In order to attempt ‘making sense’ of abuse against women, and to establish the urgency of the need to address the problem of abuse, I will in chapter two consider the historical context of women in the Old Testament, New Testament and the Christian Church. Because domestic violence has been seen primarily as a ‘private matter,’ it is especially important to understand how it has been accepted, condoned, normalized and even ignored. I will endeavour to offer a brief historical overview of the problem, from ancient Biblical times down to the reformation and on to the 20th century. Within the framework of this historical context, and in order to acquaint ourselves with the extent of the problem, I will also mention some of the statistics of abused women.

Many of those who have researched the subject of abuse have identified ‘the patriarchal system’ as a major contributing factor to abuse. Historically, we note that this phenomenon extends way back to early biblical times. I propose that it is also necessary to mention this phenomenon.²⁵ I recognize that there are many other factors affecting abusive relationships, but for the purpose of this paper I will only consider the patriarchal phenomenon and I will do so within the historical context in chapter two.

I further concur with Samuel Koranteng-Pipim when he says, that the fundamental issue regarding crises within the Church is, “the way we interpret the Bible.”²⁶ The underlying issue is our *hermeneutic*. In chapter three I will take a closer look at the Adventist’s view of Scripture. I will do so by contrasting the two most prominent approaches to Scripture, namely the ‘confessional’ and

²⁵ Karen L. Bloomquist, Erhard S. Gerstenberger; Gerda Lerner; Murray A. Straus; Kersti A. Yllo; R. Emerson & Russell Dobash; Marie M. Fortune; Carolyn H. Heggen and many others.

²⁶ Samuel Koranteng-Pipim. 1996. *Receiving the Word: 27*.

‘progressive’ view. I will point out that the Institutional Church has a ‘confessional’ approach to the Bible, and how this impacts on abused women.

I also strongly affirm, that our view of Scripture, impacts on our eschatology and anthropology, thus affecting our ecclesiology. This has a profound affect on determining the place of women in the Church and how they will be treated. In chapter four I will take a closer look at aspects of Adventist Theology and it’s view on human rights issues. I postulate that social involvement is present, but it is marginalised and regarded as of secondary importance, as apposed to evangelism.

In the final chapter, I will briefly consider possible ways the Church could address the problem of family violence and abuse. I will attempt to make some conclusions and possible recommendations on dealing with the issue of abuse. What the Church can do to prevent abuse, if anything, and how we can help those in abusive situations and bring healing to those suffering from post-abuse trauma.

As I address the issue of abused women, I do so, not forgetting what Kuitert has pointed out. A theology that endeavours to speak first and foremost to its situation, with relevance to people within their context, may face an identity crisis. However, a theology exclusively concerned with its own identity, focussing on its dogma, becomes irrelevant and may totally disappear.²⁷ At the risk of facing an identity crisis, I concur with Van Wyk’s plea that theology is always contextualised, so that our theology can be relevant and more meaningful, yet remaining loyal to the progressive movement of its own tradition.²⁸

²⁷ As Quoted by A. Gerhard van Wyk in *A Practical Theological Perspective on Adventist Theology and Contextualisation*. 1995. 1(1):132.

²⁸ *Ibid.*: 132 - 145.

Chapter 2

A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF ABUSED

WOMEN

1. The Concept 'Abuse'

In order to establish the context and framework of abused people, we need to look at some 'characteristics' of what is meant by abuse. I recognize that a description of what abuse is in any specific society, or epoch, has very serious consequences and implications for the victims and survivors of abuse. There are, however, no entirely satisfactory concepts to describe abuse. Each concept has its own ambiguities making them dangerous and inadequate. Kingston & Penhale warn that the terms 'marital violence' and 'spouse abuse,' for example, presume that the partners are married. These terms tend to ignore that violence between partners is overwhelmingly male violence against women. The victim may be identified by the term 'battered women,' but this appears to restrict violence to physical assault. This is also ambiguous, giving no indication that violence occurs within the context of private relationships. The term 'battered wives' could be used to avoid this confusion, but this term tends to exclude unmarried couples. There is also the term 'domestic dispute,' but it is far too weak since 'dispute' does not necessarily involve violence.¹

In view of the fact that 'abuse' can take on many forms, it may further complicate a simple description of it. The main categories are usually identified as physical, sexual, financial and

¹ See Paul Kingston & Bridget Penhale. 1995. *Family Violence and the Caring Professions*: 101.

emotional or psychological. But even these classifications are fairly crude and there are endless variations within each category.²

However, for the purpose of this paper, I would like to suggest that the term 'abuse' refers to an 'unequal relationship,' causing the victim to do things they do not want to do, or stop them from doing what they want to do. It is destructive by nature, not only causing bodily damage, but also inflicting mental or emotional harm, involving issues of power and control. Therefore, abuse can mean, among other things; blaming, threatening, intimidation, manipulation, emotional blackmail, enforced isolation, keeping without money, locked in, deprived of food, or using children to enforce compliance. It can also include negative criticism, calling names and belittling comments.

2. A Historical Perspective

Domestic violence and abuse are by no means a new phenomenon and it does not take place within a vacuum. In order to understand the abuse of women, it is important to understand its history and how this plays a role in contemporary beliefs and behaviour, for instance, how the patriarchal system has historically impacted on the Church. The history of most nations has been characterized by violence,³ and it teaches us that abuse is not atypical or anomalous, but is rooted in our earliest existence. From the historical records, we see that abuse has been with us for as long as there have been relationships.

Dobash and Dobash mention that the historical records are limited and sometimes void of any women activity. They say, "Women were rarely remembered as individuals, even when they did something

² See Lenore Walker. 1979. *The Battered Woman*: 71 - 184.

³ See Michael. D. A. Freeman. 1979. *Violence in the home*: 4-6.

memorable. They were nameless, undifferentiated, undistinguished and indistinguishable. They were considered to be all alike. They were merely the members of some man's family. As such, there was little or nothing the historian thought he could write about any particular one of them."⁴ So since 'the woman' was simply a family member she was ignored and not mentioned in history, although historians did find the imagery of women compelling, they seldom wrote of women, considering them in their own human right. She was viewed as simply the property of her husband. Dobash and Dobash point out the Augustine always used the word 'woman' in place of 'wife.' "It was almost inconceivable for an adult woman to be anything other than a wife, and he had no need to differentiate between a woman's gender and her marital status."⁵

According to Martin, the historical roots of wife beating are "... ancient and deep, going back to the first monogamous pairing relationships which, she contended, brought about the subjugation of one sex by another. This subjugation of women to their husbands was sanctioned by the Church and wives counselled that increased devotion and submissiveness were the means of avoiding 'disciplinary' chastisement."⁶

2.1. A Patriarchal System

Jacobs-Malina says that the patriarchal system designates the status of the father or husband as head of the family. This culture fostered the beliefs that the male presence was necessary to keep a woman from bringing any shame upon her family. In her marriage to her husband, he became her

⁴ R. Emerson Dobash & Russell Dobash. 1979. *Violence Against Wives. A Case Against Patriarchy*: 33.

⁵ *Ibid.*: 33.

⁶ Lorna J.F. Smith. 1989. *Domestic Violence: an overview of the literature. A Home Office Research and Planning Unit Report*: 3.

'sanctification.'⁷ She was also considered the weak one, so that he could be seen as the strong one. "Thus the ideal wife/mother in the traditional patriarchal household, achieves her status by self-expenditure on behalf of those above her, as well as those who rank below her in the social hierarchy."⁸ He was also viewed as the patriarch because it was believed that, "the male seed alone provided everything necessary to form his offspring. ... the female provided nothing beyond a place for the seed's growth until birth, followed by nurture and care for the male's offspring after birth."⁹

The wife's most important role in the patriarchal home was to mother her children, nurture and socialize them. Her second most important role was to take care of the animals and see that the family was well fed, as well as anyone who entered the home. "The significance of meals extends beyond the household to include outsiders who enter into relations with the family. The kind and amount of food the family eats, its preparation, the quality and quantity served to outsiders, symbolize how the family sees itself in relation to outsiders."¹⁰

According to Kubo, the Hebrew family system was by nature patriarchal. The 'father' was the authority figure, and because descent was determined through the male, "the son was next in importance to the father."¹¹ This hierarchical structure is maintained by its ideology. "The authority and advantage of the few is to some extent dependent upon its 'acceptance' by the many."¹² The

⁷ Diane Jacobs-Malina. 1993. *Beyond Patriarchy. The image of family in Jesus*: 6.

⁸ *Ibid.*: 4.

⁹ *Ibid.*: 1.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*: 3.

¹¹ Sakae Kubo. 1993. *The God of Relationships*: 76.

¹² Emerson Dobash & Russell Dobash. 1979. *Violence Against Wives. A Case Against Patriarchy*: 43.

ideology is to serve a principle of 'hierarchical order' claiming that it is superior to an egalitarian¹³ system. It is this type of patriarchal ideology that serves to reinforce the authority of those in control,¹⁴ and according to Phillips, it is maintained by emphasizing the negative picture of women in the Bible.¹⁵

According to Dobash and Dobash, "one of the [most powerful] means by which this order is supported and reinforced, has been to insure that women have no legitimate means of changing or managing the institutions that define and maintain their subordination."¹⁶ Therefore, maintaining the strictest control over the activities and involvement of the woman in the Church is important to maintaining a strong patriarchal system. Dobash and Dobash state that it is Christianity, among other religions, that has provided this ideological and moral support for patriarchal marriages, and actively taught men and women to fit into this form of marriage.¹⁷ "In this respect women in general

¹³ The principle of equal rights and opportunities for all people.

¹⁴ Emerson Dobash & Russell Dobash. 1979. *Violence Against Wives. A Case Against Patriarchy*: 43 - 44. "Socialization into an acceptance of the "rightful" nature of the order and its inequities can, if successful, allow such inequities to go unquestioned and unchallenged or to make challenges seem unnatural or immoral. Such a general acceptance of the hierarchical structure means that any challenges to it (from those who are not internally controlled by the idea of its rightfulness) will be met by external constraints in the guise of social pressures to conform (from those who do believe in its rightfulness) and by legitimate intervention both to prevent and to punish deviance. When the ideology legitimizes the order and makes it right, natural, and sacred, the potential conflict inherent in all hierarchies is more likely to produce conflict within the individual and less likely to emerge as overt resistance."

¹⁵ Colin Anthony Phillips. 1987. *A Theology of Victimization: Preparation for Ministry with Victimized Women in the Congregational Setting*: 42. "Patriarchy maintains its ideological goals by holding up negative theological pictures of women to women and by claiming that these reflect divine will because they are in the Bible. Many passages promoting women as equal with men are ignored, thus exposing the ideological priorities of patriarchy."

¹⁶ Emerson Dobash & Russell Dobash. 1979. *Violence Against Wives. A Case Against Patriarchy* : 43.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*: 44.

and wives in particular largely have been denied the means to struggle effectively against their subordination.”¹⁸

According to Kubo, no one has the right to subject another human so as to be their property. Yet, that is what happened with slavery. For a long time, Christianity supported slavery and used the Scriptures to substantiate their position. Slavery became an accepted way of life and we lost sight of its immorality.¹⁹ It is possible that the same has happened with regard to a patriarchal system and the abuse of women.

2.2. A Biblical Record

As we consider the Biblical record, we see that dysfunctional families have been with us since the fall of humanity into sin. Dysfunctional families, Churches and societies are characterised by strict inhuman rules and conduct that manipulate and control others. These rules could be implemented physically, sexually or emotionally, so as to rob members of their freedom of choice. Thus, creating a hierarchical structure, which often identified with a patriarchal system.

Right from the first book of the Old Testament, we find men purchasing their brides. Her position within the family was secured by her fertility. To guarantee that property stayed within the family and to ensure that the clan's perpetuities remain intact, polygamy was the order of the day. Shortly after the exodus from Egypt, women began to inherit land, yet if a woman had a father or a husband, she remained under his authority and could only conclude contracts with his permission.²⁰

¹⁸ Colin Anthony Phillips, *A Theology of Victimization: Preparation for Ministry with Victimized Women in the Congregational Setting*: 44.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*: 71 & 72.

²⁰ See Julia O'Faolain & Lauro Martines (Eds.) 1973. *Not in God's Image*: 86 - 94.

With a specific reading of Scripture, we note that a patriarchal system tends to view women as a mere possession, having no face.²¹ The tragedy is that defenceless women were betrayed and handed over for brutal abuse by ‘godly’ men, whom they had trusted. What makes it even worse, is that nothing was done, or said, in order to protect the women. Instead, the emphasis is again placed on the shame it brought to the men. For instance, Tamar is referred to as the daughter of David. She has no identity of her own, but finds her identity in David.

At the time of Jesus’ birth, rabbinic tradition had reduced women to the lowest status ever. Men avoided speaking to women, including their own wives, in public. Women were forbidden to read the Torah or even to pray aloud in their own homes. A husband was permitted to divorce his wife, if she as much as spoilt the food, or if he found a woman more beautiful than his wife. If a woman spoke too loud at home, or spoke to men in the street, or appeared in public without her head

²¹ See Genesis 16:1-16 and 21: 8-21. In Genesis Chapter twenty-one, we encounter the record of the abuse of Hagar by Sarah and Abraham, and as a result of this abusive conduct, Hagar and her son faced near death. Because Sarah felt that her position in the home was being threatened by Hagar, she had Abraham “send her away” into the wilderness. Yet, it was Sarah’s idea that Abraham take Hagar as a wife so that she could bear him a male heir. Hagar was but a mere instrument and possession for Abraham and Sarah to achieve their own goals.

See Genesis 19:1-11. When Lot’s guests faced the threat of sexual abuse, he was willing to rather give his two daughters to the men of Sodom. He was willing to hand them over, as if they were some kind of possession, to those men inflamed by passion so that they could “do to them as they wished.” In order to protect his guests, Lot was prepared to let those debased men abuse his own daughters.

See Judges 19:25-28. Similarly, in Judges we read of an old man living in Gibeah who was prepared to give his virgin daughter and a visitor’s concubine to perverted men, to be abused by them. Instead, the visitor took his concubine and handed her over to the men, “who raped her and abused her throughout the night.”

See 2 Samuel 13:1-22. There is the story of Amnon who raped his half sister, Tamar. She was a virgin, “and it was improper for Amnon to do anything to her.” Yet, lusting for her, he devised a plan, “pretending to be ill,” he went to bed and had her come to him and prepare special food for him in his bedroom. When she brought the food to him, “he grabbed her and said, ‘come to bed with me, my sister.’” She pleaded with him, “But he refused to listen to her, and since he was stronger than she, he raped her.”

See also Terry Davidson. 1977. *Wifebeating: A Recurring phenomenon throughout history*: 7 - 10.

covered, her husband could divorce her and she was not entitled to any form of financial benefits with the divorce settlement.²²

During the time of Christ, the Talmud described a woman as being “light-minded” and “a pitcher full of filth with its mouth full of blood.” A woman was described “as a shapeless lump [*golem*], and concluded a covenant [of marriage] only with him who transforms her [into] a [useful] vessel, as it is written (Isaiah 54:5): *For thy maker is thy husband.*”²³ Rabbinic tradition held firmly to the patriarchal system. Men were regarded as the absolute authority over wives and children.²⁴

2.3. A Christian Historical Context

According to Dobash and Dobash, Christian principles have had a profound influence on the cultural beliefs of the Western world. In some ways, the early Christians rejected the oppressive hierarchical structure of ‘early Rome.’²⁵ Yet in other ways, they also rejected the reforms that came into vogue

²² Virginia Mollenkott. 1977. *Women Men And the Bible*: 10 - 12.

²³ *Ibid.*: 12.

²⁴ *Ibid.*: 29.

²⁵ R. Emerson Dobash & Russell Dobash. 1979. *Violence Against Wives. A Case Against Patriarchy*: 34. “The early Roman family was the cornerstone of society and was one of the strongest patriarchies known. The family was a religious, educational, economic, and legal institution commonly spanning three generations and presided over by a male head, who was priest, magistrate, and owner of all properties, both material and human, and who had absolute power over everything and everyone. The patriarch decided whether a newborn child was to be allowed to live and join the family or be put in the street to die. He could choose marriage partners for his children, divorce them without their consent, sell them into bondage, and punish or kill them for any wrongdoings.

“There was a very clear and undisputed family hierarchy. The head of the household owned and controlled everything and obviously held the highest status in both his own family and the rest of the society. The training of children from a very early age reflected the fact that boys were to lead, to own, and to control and that girls were to be their subordinates, and there was a marked parental preference for male children, who would continue the family line, its property, and its religion. Name giving also reflected differential worth: males were given three names, designating the individual, the clan, and the family, females usually were given only two names. The one dropped was the first name, which denoted the individual; instead, she was called *maxima* or *minor*, *secunda* or *tertia*.”

with 'latter Rome,'²⁶ with regard to the progressive role women played in society. This contradiction reaffirmed the inequality between husband and wife.

2.3.1. The Middle Ages

The Church history books have been very silent when it comes to abusive relationships. Engel states that, "this silence about violence against women is notable not only in general history of Christianity, but in studies of marriage in Christianity and histories of the family as well."²⁷ However, Rome did see a great deal of emancipation of women, and Christianity experienced somewhat of a paradox regarding women within the thinking of discernable Christian writers. There was a Greco-Jewish bent to keep women out of public functions such as the priesthood. A woman was to be "in all things subject to the rule of man.... And neither can she teach, nor be a witness, nor made a guarantee, nor

²⁶ *Ibid.*: 34, 38 & 39. "The Romans have been credited with exceptionally good treatment of women. Women were educated, played an essential part in religious celebrations, could inherit property, and during some periods had limited rights of divorce. But this was the Rome after the Punic Wars of the second century. This Rome had undergone considerable economic, political, social, and familial change and was quite different from the patriarchal society of the early Empire. "The Punic Wars ended in 202 B.C. They had lasted a long time and brought about conditions that resulted in many changes in the family. The long absences of men meant that women had assumed many of men's responsibilities and had been freed from some traditional controls. The sex ratio changed in favour of female predominance, and many adults did not marry. There was a rise in wealth brought through levies on conquered lands, and this meant an increase of the idle rich and of slaves. Property began to be individually controlled, prohibitions upon female inheritance were diminished, and a class of wealthy women arose. This change in the status of propertied women brought departures from the sole pursuits of wife and mother, and many upper-class women engaged in traditional male pursuits: politics, philosophy, attending military manoeuvres, and joining new religious movements. There was a departure from the severe sexual code, and the single code of the past gave way before a proliferation of laws concerning the distinctions among various types of infidelity, fornication, and adultery. The severity of a specific offense and its punishment varied with the sex, social class, and marital status of the participants."

²⁷ Mary P. Engel. *Historical Theology and Violence against Women: Understanding a Popular Tradition of Just Battery*: 243.

sit in judgment.”²⁸ Yet on the other hand, there was also the acknowledgment of spiritual equality wherein women were not regarded as less worthy than men.²⁹

According to Pellauer, both Roman and early Christian ethics favoured suicide in the face of rape. Augustine, however, felt that consecrated virgins who were raped did not need to commit suicide. In actual fact, Pellauer claims that he forbade them to do so. Confronting the paradox Augustine said:

... What then? Have women not this renewal of the mind in which is the image of God? Who would say this? But in the sex of their body they do not signify this; therefore they are bidden to be veiled. The part, namely, which they signify in the very fact of their being women, is that which may be called the concupiscential part. [Augustine, *Of the Work of Monks*]

But we must notice, how that which the apostle says, that not the woman but the man is the image of God, is not contrary to that which is written in Genesis, ‘God created man: in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them’.... For this text says that human nature itself, which is complete [only] in both sexes, was made in the image of God; and it does not separate the woman from the image of God which it signifies.... The woman together with her own husband is the image of God, so that the whole substance may be one image; but when she is referred to separately in her quality of helpmate, which regards the woman herself alone, then she is not the image of God; but as regards the man alone, he is the image of God as fully and completely as when the woman too is joined with him. [Augustine, *On the Holy Trinity*]³⁰

However, theologically he expressed the theory “that women in themselves lacked the ‘image of God,’ ” and that they could only reflect the image of God together with the male in their lives. Yet, males represent the image of God in themselves.³¹

²⁸ Julia O’Faolain & Lauro Martines. 1973. *Not in God’s Image*: 130.

²⁹ *Ibid.*: 128 - 136.

³⁰ *Ibid.*: 129 - 130.

³¹ Rosemary Ruether. *The Western Religious Tradition and Violence Against Women in the Home*: 32.

Jerome, on the other hand, explicitly made rape the exception to all his censorious remarks regarding suicide. He said: "It is not man's prerogative to lay violent hands upon himself, but rather to freely receive death from others. In persecutions it is not lawful to commit suicide *except when one's chastity is jeopardized.*"³² Almost as if women had another destiny, comments like these persisted down through the ages into our time, and that is why the saying, "a fate worse than death" was attached to rape.³³

Thomas Aquinas, addressing the issue of women within the Christian context, combined traditional notions with Aristotelian biology.³⁴ He claimed that:

"Woman is defective and misbegotten, for the active force in the male seed tends to the production of a perfect likeness in the masculine sex; while the production of woman comes from a defect in the active force or from some material indisposition, or even from some external influence.... On the other hand, as regards human nature in general, women is not misbegotten, but is included in nature's intention as directed to the work of generation. Now the general intention of nature depends on God, Who is the universal Author on nature. Therefore, in producing nature, God formed not only the male but also the female."³⁵

For Tertullian, women were "an occasion of sin." He viewed their beauty to be so dangerous that it brought a scandal into heaven, therefore, they have to be veiled. He went on to say, with reference to God's pronouncement in Genesis 3 verse 16:

³² Mary Pellauer. *Augustine on Rape: One chapter in the Theological Tradition*: 207.

³³ *Ibid.*: 207.

³⁴ Rosemary R. Ruether: *The Western Religious Tradition and Violence Against Women in the Home*: 32. See also Julia O'Faolain & Lauro Martines. 1973. *Not in God's Image*: 118 - 119. "Aristotle taught that women were a secondary biological species. The male contributed the form of the child in procreation. The woman was only an incubator who grew the child in her body. Normatively, every male seed would produce a perfect image of its maker, namely, another male. But at times the lower material principle, represented by the mother, gained aberrant dominance over the higher principle of the father and a "misbegotten male," or female, was born. The female was by nature inferior in her capacity for thought, will, and physical activity. Women were natural slaves and, like slaves, it was their nature to be obedient servants in all things to their heads and masters."

³⁵ Julia O'Faolain & Lauro Martines (Eds.) 1973. *Not in God's Image*: 131.

“God’s sentence hangs still over all your sex and His punishment weighs down upon you. You are the devil’s gateway; you are she who first violated the forbidden tree and broke the law of God. It was you who coaxed your way around him whom the devil had not the force to attack. With what ease you shattered that image of God: man! Because of the death you merited, the Son of God had to die. And yet you think of nothing but covering your tunics with ornaments?”³⁶

The only choice women had was between virginity³⁷ and marriage. John Calvin says of the Middle Ages that it was a time when abstinence from marriage grew into a crazy superstition. Virginity was regarded as one of the greatest virtues to be cherished. Although marriage was not regarded or condemned as something filthy, its dignity was almost totally overshadowed by aspiring to remain celibate. This is one of the main reasons that lead the Church to create laws which forbid priests to marry.³⁸

According to Postan, it was primarily the Church and the aristocracy who determined contemporary opinion during the Middle Ages. From a clerical perspective, celibacy was emphasized. On the other hand, aristocracy regarded its women as an ornamental asset, while at the same time strictly subordinating them to its primary asset, the land. It was during the Dark Ages, when monasticism came to its own and women were seen as the ‘supreme temptress, *janua diaboli*,’³⁹ and misogyny produced its reaction. Church leaders like Gregory the Great, Hugo of St Victor and Thomas

³⁶ *Ibid.*: 132.

³⁷ *Ibid.*: 137. “The ideal of virginity has an illustrious and stubborn history, especially in its bearing upon the formation of the cardinal feminine virtue (chastity). Constantly associated with purity and transcendent athleticism, as well as with treasure hoards, precious stones, private property, special and even magical effects, virginity occasioned a whole mode of mystification. ... There men saw the pure and the valuable, the abstract and the tactile; they saw their own honor and virility on the day of marriage; they saw the opposite of their own ‘lust’, and ‘carnality’; and they saw that a chaste wife was property. Women, the vessels of virginity, nurtured on the mystification, readily accepted it -- that stick wherewith to beat all who were not virginal or chaste and modest. Virginity was woman’s particular security, supremely so on the day of marriage. A woman who was not a virgin on that day could scarcely, it was thought, remain chaste thereafter; and this sort of thing made paternity uncertain, mongrelized the family, and endowed the unworthy with property.”

³⁸ *Ibid.*: 199.

³⁹ Postan M. M. (Ed.) 1975. *Medieval Women*: 16.

Aquinas, never had much praise for the institution of marriage. Albertus Magnus was noted to have said of Marriage:

“Contenance in marriage is a good condition, but not an excellent one, since it is more excellent in widowhood and most excellent in virginity.”⁴⁰

The status of women during the Middle Ages was constantly in a state of flux, and Postan says:

“On the one hand stood subjection, on the other worship; both played their part in placing women in the position they occupied in the Middle Ages, and in dictating or modifying the conditions of their existence in subsequent ages.”⁴¹

Women were socially restricted. Both the ecclesiastic and aristocratic ideas of the position of women were perpetually shunted between pit and throne.

2.3.2. The Renaissance and the Reformation

With the close of the Middle Ages, came a number of changes that affected society. Mercantilism and capitalism began to replace the feudal economy. Protestantism began to challenge Catholicism, and the nuclear family came into vogue and was taking precedence over the family line. These changes served to strengthen the position of the husband. His authority increased while she became more dependent and submissive.⁴² Dobash and Dobash quote the French historian Petiot as having said that in the fourteenth century a slow but steady deterioration of the wife’s position in the home took place.

“She loses the right to take the place of the husband in his absence or insanity.... Finally, in the sixteenth century, the married woman is placed under a disability so that any acts she performs without the authority of her husband or the law are null and

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*: 30.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*: 34.

⁴² R. Emerson Dobash & Russell Dobash. 1979. *Violence Against Wives. A Case Against Patriarchy*: 48.

void. This development strengthens the power of the husband, who is finally established as a sort of domestic monarch.⁴³

The Renaissance brought with it the increase of the education of the upper-class women, thus more and more women were becoming literate. The Bible was being read in the vernacular language. There was a radical move away from cloisters, and marriage was seen to be as good, and possibly better, than celibacy. Protestantism rejected the medieval idea of marriages being a business contract. Marriages were viewed as the ideal state giving rise to the nuclear family. With the rise of this nuclear family, came the increase in the husband's authority and the subjection of the wife, as emphasis was placed on individualism, authority and obedience.⁴⁴

Both Martin Luther and John Calvin promoted marriage and its sanctity. Although, contrary to Anabaptist custom, Calvin loathed the idea that women could function in a priestly capacity.

In 1531, Luther's view of men and women within the marriage relationship was expressed as follows:

“Men have broad shoulders and narrow hips, and accordingly they possess intelligence. Women have narrow shoulders and broad hips. Women ought to stay at home; the way they were created indicates this, for they have broad hips and a wide fundament to sit upon, keep house and bear and raise children.”⁴⁵

Martin Bucer, a Dominican monk, as did Luther, emphasised paternalism, thus giving 'respectable' women more rights. These rights gave an honest woman the right to separate herself from a man who hated her. Bucer stated that the Lord never intended that a woman should be subservient so as to be abused by an unjust husband. A wife is not to be subject to her husband so that he may afflict

⁴³ *Ibid.*: 48.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*: 51 & 52.

⁴⁵ Julia O'Faolain & Lauro Martines. 1973. *Not in God's Image*: 196 & 197.

her with suffering in any way. On the contrary, he said, “being free, she is joined to him in holy marriage that she may be loved, nourished, and maintained by him, as if she were his own flesh, just as the Church is maintained by Christ.”⁴⁶ Therefore, when a wife was subject to affliction by her husband she had the right to go to civil authorities for help.⁴⁷

Terry Davidson informs us that, prior to 1871, husbands had the right to beat their wives with a stick, they were permitted to pull her hair, choke her, spit in her face, and even kick her about on the floor, without facing prosecution.⁴⁸ She claims that this type of punishment and beating came to the fore when ‘man’ became the Patriarch in society, and that these atrocities are continued in the name of the Bible. Davidson states that “it is unsettling – and may shock many readers – to note that the creation story of the Bible was to become the rationale for the long history of legalized mistreatment of women.”⁴⁹

3. The 20th Century

Historically, we have been aware of family abuse, but it is only over the past twenty to thirty years that studies have revealed the extent of the problem. “Yet no accurate statistics exist on the incident of victimization in Christian congregations as compared to the general population. One knowledgeable researcher has suggested that at least four couples in any congregation of two

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*: 201.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*: 201.

⁴⁸ Terry Davidson. 1977. *Wifebeating: A Recurring phenomenon throughout history*: 4.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*: 6.

hundred persons are at the battering stage.”⁵⁰ As we consider the statistics, we realize that the topic of abuse is a very relevant as we face the 21st century.

According to Kingston and Penhale, research done by Dobash and Dobash in England, revealed that in 1971, almost no one had heard of battered women and many did not believe that it actually happened. That is, no one except the women themselves, who were being battered and their relatives, friends, ministers, social workers, doctors and lawyers in whom some of them confided. Sadly, many of those who knew of abuse taking place, thought that it did not affect enough families to be of any concern.⁵¹

Yet studies of homicides between 1957 and 1968 revealed some startling facts. In 1962, of all women who were murdered, 63% were murdered in their own homes. Between the years, 1967 to 1971, of all the women killed, 68% were killed by husbands or lovers.

Crowell and Burgess inform us that in the United States of America (from now on USA,) abuse of women is a major social problem. From national surveys and crime data, it is said that two million women are abused every year. This abuse is overwhelmingly committed by someone close to the victim, such as a husband, boyfriend or ex-boyfriend. Studies have revealed that between 13 and 25 percent of all women in the USA will experience abuse at some time in their life. It is also stated that 3.8 million women were assaulted, and 500,000 were raped between 1992 and 1993.⁵²

⁵⁰ Colin A. Phillips. 1987. *A Theology of Victimization: Preparation for Ministry with Victimized women in the Congregational Setting*: 28.

⁵¹ Paul Kingston & Bridget Penhale. 1995. *Family Violence and the Caring Professions*: 102.

⁵² Nancy Crowell & Ann Burgess. 1996. *Understanding Violence Against Women*: 1.

Smith states, in a Home Office Research and Planning Unit Report, that 2.1 million women were victims of abuse during the years 1978 to 1982.⁵³ From Straus's figures, one can conclude that approximately 1.8 million wives are beaten by their husbands in any one year in the USA.⁵⁴ Kingston and Penhale inform us that health and social care professionals have, over the past twenty-five years, seen a radical increase of victims of family violence and abuse.⁵⁵

Colin Phillips in his Doctoral studies, *A Theology of Victimization: Preparation for Ministry with Victimized Women in the Congregational Setting*, states that, "today we know that one out of six couples experiences violence every year, that violence occurs in as many as 60% of marriages, and that once every 18 seconds a woman is beaten by a man."⁵⁶ He goes on to say that it is only a myth that "the family is a place of bliss."⁵⁷ For it would appear that the home is the most dangerous place on earth.

The human sciences have revealed some startling facts about family abuse and violence. These facts are not only referring to non-Christians, or to those who are not members of the SDA Church. In a brochure prepared by the Department of Family Ministries, at the General Conference of the SDA Church (from now on GC), with reference to studies done within the SDA Church, states that

⁵³ Lorna J.F. Smith. 1989. *Domestic Violence: an overview of the literature*: 11. "In the United States, evidence from the National Crime Surveys from 1978 to 1982 found that an estimated 2.1 million women were victims of domestic violence – defined to include rape, robbery, aggravated or simple assaults – *at least once* during an average of 12 month period. Moreover, an estimated one third were victimized *again* during the 6 months following their 'initial' victimization."

⁵⁴ Michael. D. A. Freeman. 1979. *Violence in the home*: 133.

⁵⁵ Paul Kingston & Bridget Penhale. 1995. *Family Violence and the Caring Professions*: 1.

⁵⁶ Colin A. Phillips. 1987. *A Theology of Victimization: Preparation for Ministry with Victimized Women in the Congregational Setting*: 52.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*: 53.

“statistical evidence”⁵⁸ indicates that abuse and violence within the family has reached *epidemic and global proportions*. It is concluded from these studies that even if there is a lack of statistics in any particular region, it does not imply that there is no abuse taking place within that region.

⁵⁸ *Abuse and Family Violence: A Global Affliction*. 1989: 2 & 3. **Abuse and Violence Ending in Murder/Suicide.** Criminal statistics in 1982 in **England and Wales** indicated one in four murder victims were women murdered by their husbands. In a study between 1983 and 1985 in **Bangladesh**, 50% of women murdered were victims of domestic violence. The New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research in **Australia** indicated that of the homicides solved by police between 1968 - 1981, 42.5 percent occurred within family relationships. Research suggests that in situations where wives are murdered, there is usually a long history of physical abuse. Studies in **Bangladesh** and **India** indicate that victims of abuse within the family frequently find a solution to their problem in suicide.

Battering. An estimated 3 to 4 million women in the **United States** are battered each year by their husbands or partners. One out of every ten women in **Canada** is a battered woman. A **British** study noted husband against wife violence in as many as one in three marriages. Comprehensive studies conducted in **Papua New Guinea** in 1986 indicated that among the representative samples of a number of tribal groups in both rural and urban parts of the country, as many as 67% of wives suffered marital violence.

Significant levels of family violence have also been noted in research from **Austria, Kuwait, Kenya, Thailand, Nigeria** and **Uganda**. By 1989, case studies from 24 **United Nations countries** indicated that domestic violence was a problem in the country.

Assault. A comprehensive analysis of recorded incidents of assault on women in two **Scottish** cities in 1974 revealed that wife assaults was the second most common form of violent crime. Similar statistics exist for **Poland** and **Vanuatu**. An analysis of bodily injury in hospitals in Bogota, **Columbia** revealed that 20% of the cases were due to conjugal violence, with women being the victims of the assault in 94% of cases (an incident rate that holds consistently across international data). An analysis of emergency room cases in Santiago, **Chile** yielded similar results. A study conducted by the University of British Columbia in **Canada** noted that 40% of wife assaults began during the time of the wife's first pregnancy. In one hospital emergency department, 21% of pregnant women seeking treatment had been battered.

Violence as grounds for Divorce. In a trend noted from data gathered in the **United Kingdom, Canada, Egypt, Greece** and **The United States**, violence is frequently offered as ground for divorce. In **Jamaica** in 1980, 16% of divorces were granted on the grounds of cruelty and 25% of women who sought counselling through the court in 1982 complained of violent husbands.

Rape. It is estimated that 30% of all rape victims are also battered women. A woman is more likely to be assaulted, injured, raped, or killed by a male companion than by any other type of assailant.

Child Abuse. The statistical Abstract of the **United States** reports that in 1993 there were 838,232 cases of neglect, 204,404 cases of physical abuse, 129,404 cases of sexual abuse, and 49,123 cases of emotional abuse. Reports indicate that one out of every three girls and one out of eleven boys are sexually abused before they reach the age of 18. At least half of the sexual abuse of children is incestuous abuse. Studies in **Jamaica** and **Samoa** show significant levels of sexual abuse of young women within the family circle. There is vast documentation of the “Battered child syndrome” from most countries and cultures.

Elder Abuse. A 1985 study conducted by the New South Wales Government in **Australia** represents one example of documentation available that elderly women are particularly vulnerable to assault by their grown children.”

According to the GC, the SDA Church and its members are not immune to this plague.⁵⁹ This is emphasized by research initiated by the GC Family Ministries office in 1994, and statistics published by the Southern California Conference Family Ministries Committee in August 1994. These studies reveal that there was a high incident of physical, emotional and sexual abuse within the 8,000 randomly selected respondents.⁶⁰

In research conducted by the Southeastern California Conference Family Ministries Committee in 1994 in which 500 randomly selected SDA members participated, it was found that 43% reported verbal and emotional abuse. This research revealed that 40% of the respondents said they were physically abused in the home before they were eighteen years old.⁶¹

4. Conclusion

We conclude that the problem of abused women and family violence has been with us since the beginning of recorded history. Abuse has also been an integral part of Biblical history, as well as Christian history. The evidence also reminded us that the problem is not only a historical one, but one that is very real and very present. Clearly the SDA Church community is not immune to the problems of abuse and family violence. In actual fact, the abuse of women within the SDA Church context has reached, what the GC has termed, 'epidemic proportions' and it is also of 'global extent.'

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*: 1.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*: 3 & 4. "Significant levels of physical, emotional and sexual abuse were reported by the nearly 8,000 randomly selected respondents ... A range of 8-18% of female respondents reported being sexually abused. (The range indicates the lowest and highest percentages reported in the world divisions for which data is currently available.) Reports of physical (15-43%) and emotional abuse (27-69%) among women were considerably higher than for sexual abuse. On average women reported much higher levels of abuse than men. A range of 4-12% of males reported sexual abuse. Again, reports of emotional (6-37%) and physical (16-55%) abuse was considerably higher than for sexual abuse among males.

⁶¹ F. Kasischke. & A. Johnson. 1994. *Adventists & Family Crises*: 15 - 17.

The outcry of women, the historical facts and statistical data once again remind us of the extent of the problem we are dealing with. Human consciousness and Christian duty compel us to speak out against this human atrocity. It would go against all Christian principles for us to now keep silent, with regard to this issue, when we are aware of extent of the problem.

Chapter 3

VIEW OF SCRIPTURE AND ABUSED WOMEN

After considering the historical background of abuse and seeing the extent of abuse in the 20th century, one wonders why the Church is still silent on this issue. One would think that the Church is the one place in society where women could find compassion and help for their abuse.

This dissertation departs from the point of view that one of the major reasons for the Church being silent with regard to abuse is because of their view and their use of Scripture.¹ SDAs view the Bible as normative² when it comes to doctrinal issues and their dealing with relationship problems. Therefore, in an attempt to address the issue of abused women within the SDA Church, we will need to consider the Institutional SDA's view and use of Scripture.

The SDA Church prides itself in what E G White has said: "God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrine and the basis of all reform."³

¹ A. Gerhard van Wyk. 1995. *A Practical Theological Perspective on Adventist Theology and Contextualisation*: 133. "Regarding the epistemological base of theology, Pinnock states that no theology can begin until some kind of answer is given: 'All issues pale before this one. It is the continental divide in Christian theology. Everything hangs on our solution to it.' The question: 'What is it that I should understand?' is thus important. Greenwalt, on the other hand, argues that it is the interpretation of Scripture which leads to disagreement."

² George W. Reid. 1991. *Is the Bible our final authority?*: 7. "Adventists have heretofore placed the Bible – the full 66 books – in commanding position."
Raoul Dederen. 1974. *The Revelation - Inspiration phenomenon according to the Bible writers*: 11, 17. Dederen maintains that the Scriptures "provide us with that knowledge about God that is from God, authoritative and normative."

³ Ellen G. White. 1888. *The Great Controversy*: 595.

Adventists believe that they are the people to whom White is referring, believing very strongly that “the Bible is the only rule of faith and doctrine.”⁴

Despite the fact that the Scriptures are central to Institutional SDA Theology, we can distinguish a number of schools of thought regarding inspiration and the authority of Scripture. Since the inception of the SDA Church in the mid nineteenth century, the Scripture and its inspiration, revelation, and authority have been a very contentious issue, and both Hasel and Thompson agree that these issues have their roots in the Enlightenment⁵. Knight maintains that Adventists were split over the problem of the Scripture and its inspiration in 1888, and they are still split over it today.⁶ I recognize that even though there are differences, there is also much overlapping.

There is, within the Church, a continuum ranging from a conservative position via a moderate position, through to a liberal position. For the purpose of this paper, we will only consider the two most prominent approaches, namely the ‘Confessional’ and ‘Progressive’ approaches (the two contemporary theologians, Gerhard Hasel [d.1997] and Alden Thompson can be cited as proponents of these approaches, respectively).⁷ We also take note that the Church as Institution tends to

⁴ Ellen G. White. 1888. *Review and Herald and Sabbath Herald*: 449.

⁵ See Gerhard Hasel. 1980. *Understanding the Living Word of God* : 13 - 28; Alden Thompson. 1992. *Adventist and Inspiration: Our History Informs Our Present*: 1; and Alden Thompson. 1991. *Inspiration. Hard questions, Honest answers*: 14, 15.

⁶ George R. Knight. 1991. *Crisis in authority* : 6.

⁷ A. Gerhard van Wyk. 1995. *A Practical Theological perspective on Adventist theology and contextualisation*: 133 & 134. “In my understanding of the Adventist Theological Society Occasional Papers: *Issues in revelation and inspiration* (from now on ATSOP) is correct, the authors of ATSOP see Alden Thompson’s position as very different from their own. It seems that when Pipim speaks of ‘conservative, Bible-believing scholars’ he is referring to himself and a particular group of people who oppose the more ‘liberal’ standpoint of Thompson. From a functional point of view, I have, therefore, grouped the authors of ATSOP together as confessional Adventist theologians. Within the Adventist paradigm they represent the confessional stream. In this Adventist theological stream there are differences in degree but not ontological differences. Although Thompson calls himself a

identify itself more with the 'Confessional' approach rather than with the 'Progressive' approach. I, therefore, consider the view and use of Scripture held by the 'Confessionals' to be largely the norms that govern the Institutional Church's approach and policies in regard to dealing with women and the issue of abuse. It is, thus, important to consider their position with regard to Scripture as we will try to understand why the Church remains aloof with regard to human rights issues.

1. The Confessional Approach and abused women

Regarding the Confessional approach to Scripture, Koranteng-Pipim, who defends a 'high view' of Scripture, says, "Adventism's plain reading of Scripture (the historical-grammatical approach) recognizes that the Bible is (a) fully inspired, (b) absolutely trustworthy, (c) solely authoritative, and (d) thoroughly consistent in all its parts, since it comes ultimately from one divine mind."⁸ This implies that for the Confessionals, some of the most important key concepts regarding Scripture are 'Scriptural Authority,' 'Sola Scriptura,' 'Divine Source,' 'Inerrancy of Scripture,' 'objectivity,' 'lexicographical or historical grammatical approach to interpretation,' 'exegesis' and the 'Bible as the Word of God.' By this it is not implied that the 'Progressive' theologians deny all these concepts. It is that the 'Confessionals' lay great emphasis on the 'supernatural' to the exclusions of any human activity, with regard to the inspiration and interpretation and application of Scripture.

conservative Adventist theologian, he is identified with liberal-progressive scholars by ATSOP. Because of his view of Scripture, hermeneutical approach and integration of other knowledge I have placed him more toward the progressive pole of Adventist paradigm."

⁸ Samuel Koranteng-Pipim. 1996. *Receiving the Word*: 32.

1.1. View of Scripture

The Confessionals regard ‘human reason’ as playing very little to no part in Biblical understanding. ‘Human reason’⁹ is strongly rejected because it is not ‘Biblical’ but ‘human,’ which “results in dissecting the Bible in a way that damages its divine unity and authority.”¹⁰ Thus, the Bible is to be regarded as a ‘whole’¹¹ and Scripture interprets itself. Thereby they link ‘Biblical Authority’ with the inerrancy of Scripture.¹² Therefore, theologians, like Thompson (a Progressive thinker,) are strongly criticized, and accused of letting human reason be their final norm.¹³

⁹ Roy Gane. 1999. *An Approach to the Historical-Critical Method*: 9. “The supernatural element in scripture is a matter of faith; it cannot be proven or disproven by analytical application of human reason. ...

“Subjective human reason judges the Bible in a circular process, with conclusions shaped by presuppositions. This is unscientific by any standard.”

¹⁰ *Ibid.*: 6.

¹¹ Fritz Guy. 1999. *How Scripture should function in Theology*: 19. “It is Scripture as a whole that is the primary source and norm of Christian theological thinking, so ‘when we appeal to Scripture, we appeal to Scripture as a whole.’”

Don F. Neufeld. 1974. *Biblical Interpretation in the Advent Movement*: 118. In Early Adventism the “assumption of the unity of Scripture is evident throughout the early writings, where one part of Scripture is constantly made to explain another. Unity of Scripture of authorship is assumed.” *Seventh-day Adventists Beliefs... A Biblical Exposition of the 27 Fundamental Doctrines*. 1988: 14. “... the Bible may appear to be a jumble of stories, sermons, and history. Yet, those open to the illumination of the Spirit of God, those who will to search for the hidden truths with patience and much prayer, discover that the Bible evidences an underlying unity in what it teaches about the principles of salvation. The Bible is not monotonously uniform. Rather, it comprises a rich and colorful diversity of harmonious testimonies of rare and distinct beauty.”

¹² See Robert M. Johnston. 1999. *The Case for a Biblical Hermeneutic*: 10. “Inerrantists stress the divine nature of the Bible and do not see the human instruments as making much significant impress on the communication. They typically see inspiration extending to the very words of Scripture.”

¹³ *Ibid.*: 10. “Thompson’s effort was immediately opposed by Adventist proponents of the inerrantist position.”

Norman R Gullely. 1992. *An Evaluation of Alden Thompson’s “incarnational” method in the light of his view of Scripture and use of Ellen White*: 70. “In his presuppositions we discover that the real source of Thompson’s thesis is not the Bible nor the writings of Ellen White.”

See also Frank Holbrook and Leo van Dolson (Eds.). 1992. *Issues in Revelation and Inspiration*; Samuel Koranteng-Pipim. 1996. *Receiving the Word: How new approaches to the Bible impact our Biblical faith and lifestyle*; and *A Discussion paper for the 1995 General Conference Session Breakout Groups*.

Thompson informs us that it was in the 1920s when Adventists openly sided with Fundamentalism, “affirming inerrancy and infallibility of Scripture.”¹⁴ In 1980, this decision was affirmed when the fundamental beliefs of the SDA Church were voted and printed in the book, *Seventh-Day Adventists Believe ...*¹⁵, and also in the SDA Church Manual. The view of Scripture was voted as follows:

“The Holy Scripture, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to man the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God’s acts in history.”¹⁶

This decision was further ratified in the ‘*discussion paper for the 1995 General Conference Session Breakout Groups*,’ when it was stated that:

“The Scripture presents its message as revealed from divine sources. Although expressed in our language by humans, it bears the authentic mark of God. Repeatedly we encounter the expression ‘the Word of the Lord came to me’ or its equivalent. Jesus and the New Testament writers accepted the Hebrew Scripture as having unquestioned authority.”¹⁷

¹⁴ Alden Thompson. 1992. *Adventists and Inspiration: Our History Informs our Present* : 3. See Alden Thompson. 1991. *Inspiration. Hard questions, honest answers* : 268 - 269.

¹⁵ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe... A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines. 1988.*: iv. “In publishing this summary the church took steps to assure that it would not come to be viewed as an unchangeable creed. The introduction to the Fundamental Beliefs reads: ‘Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed and hold certain fundamental beliefs to be the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. These beliefs, as set forth here, constitute the church’s understanding and expression of the teaching of Scripture. Revision of these statements may be expected at a General Conference session when the church is led by the Holy Spirit to a fuller understanding of Bible truth or finds better language in which to express the teachings of God’s Holy Word.’ The present volume, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe...*, is based on the 27 short summaries. ... While this volume is not an officially voted statement – only a General Conference in world session could provide that – it may be viewed as representative of ‘the truth ... in Jesus’ (Eph. 4:21) that Seventh-day Adventists around the globe cherish and proclaim.”

¹⁶ *Seventh-Day Adventist Church Manual*: 23.

¹⁷ *A discussion paper for the 1995 General Conference Session Breakout Groups*: 1.

The Scriptures are viewed as God's 'authoritative and normative' Word and the 'empirical context' has no bearing on this authority. For example, Hasel claims that the decision taken at the Jerusalem Council was based solely on the 'authority of Scripture,' arising not from human effort but from 'Supernatural Revelation.'¹⁸ Thereby giving Scripture absolute infallible authority.

Hasel, further, contends that the Scriptures are 'Breathed by God,'¹⁹ hereby making the Bible the very 'Word of God.' Hasel maintains that Bible writers did not originate their messages, but received them from divine sources. It was through divine revelation that they were able 'to see' the truth they passed on. God 'breathed' truth into men's minds. They, in turn, expressed it in the words found in the Scriptures.²⁰ Therefore, Adventists are "totally committed to the Holy Scriptures as God's illumination of Himself and His plan for mankind."²¹

The Scriptures, therefore, are viewed as inerrant. Koranteng-Pipim categorically states that, "all the claims that the Bible makes on any subject – theology, history, science, chronology, numbers, etc. – are absolutely trustworthy and dependable (2 Pet. 1:16-21)."²² Johnston calls these confessional

¹⁸ Gerhard F. Hasel. 1992. *Reflections on Alden Thompson's "Law Pyramid" with a Casebook/Codebook Dichotomy*: 149.

¹⁹ See Gerhard F Hasel. 1980. *Understanding the Living Word of God*: 68. "Paul joined Peter in recognizing the divine origin of Scripture through the work of the Holy Spirit. Paul, when writing to Timothy, made his decisive assertion the Scripture is inspired by God: 'all Scripture is inspired by God ... (2 Timothy 3:16). The Greek word for 'inspired by God' is *theopneustos*, a verbal adjective. Verbal adjectives ending in *-tos* can have an active meaning or a passive meaning. If active its intent is 'breathing God,' that is, producing thoughts about God; if passive, its meaning is 'breathed by God,' that is inspired by God."

²⁰ *Ibid.*: 7.

²¹ Derek C Beardsell. 1990. *The Unfinished Task: Is there Salvation Outside Christianity? Do other Christian Churches also fulfil the great commission?*: 28.

²² Samuel Koranteng-Pipim. 1996. *An analysis and evaluation of Alden Thompson's Casebook/Codebook approach to the Bible*: 63 (Endnotes No. 3).

SDAs – ‘Inerrantists.’ He postulates that they stress the supernatural and focus on the divine nature of the Bible. The human writers of the Bible are but instruments and they do not play a very significant roll in the communication process. Therefore, “They typically see inspiration extending to the very words of Scripture.”²³

Most confessional Adventist Theologians will admit that people do have their own preunderstanding, but they can be overcome and ruled out.²⁴ However, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the lexicographical study of the Bible, most seek to be ‘objective’ and, thereby, gaining an “objective knowledge”²⁵ of the Scriptures. Koranteng-Pipim says that a correct hermeneutic will “always read what is there in the text, not read into the text our own presuppositions.”²⁶ Confessionals, therefore, believe that an ‘objective’²⁷ approach to the Scriptures is to be gained and maintained.

In order to maintain ‘objectivity’ when interpreting Scripture, the grammatical-historical method is employed and regarded as imperative. Although most confessional Adventists would deny verbal inspiration, they maintain that a study of the exact words of Scripture is necessary in order to understand the message of God. The emphasis in interpreting Scripture is placed on exegesis as

²³ Robert M. Johnston. 1999. *The Case for a Biblical Hermeneutic*: 10.

²⁴ William Johnsson. 1999. *Nine foundations for an Adventist Hermeneutic*: 15. “Allowing the Bible to interpret itself also means that we do not impose a prior conclusion on the text.”

²⁵ See Gerhard F. Hasel. 1980. *Understanding the Living Word of God*: 76 - 77.

²⁶ Samuel Koranteng-Pipim. 1996. *Receiving the Word: How new approaches to the Bible impact our Biblical faith and lifestyle*: 29.

²⁷ Gerhard F. Hasel. 1974. *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*: 170. “Anyone who engages in biblical interpretation has willingly or unwillingly a certain preunderstanding. It is a well-known truism that absolute objectivity is not available. It is equally true that one cannot apply the so-called empty-head principle, whereby it is supposed that one can drop all preconceived notions and opinions, come to the text from a completely neutral ground, and engage in biblical interpretation. ... It is a mandate that the interpreter seek to be objective. He must attempt to silence his subjectivity as much as possible if he is to obtain objective knowledge.”

opposed to eisegesis.²⁸ The lexicographical method is used because a very high regard is placed on the literal words of the Bible. Ultimately, confessionals arrive at a position which is very near to 'verbal inspiration.'

From the Confessional viewpoint, therefore, the process of establishing 'true' Church doctrines and standards the Scriptures are to explain themselves and to be regarded as normative²⁹ Hasel claims that the "Bible with its divine authorship and human writers demands that it not be interpreted by external means such as tradition, philosophy, science, and the like but be allowed to function as its own interpreter."³⁰ 'Confessionals' generally refuse to allow extra biblical norms such as tradition, creeds, science, philosophy,³¹ and extra biblical religions, to determine faith, doctrine, and reform. Confessionals claim that the "Bible provides the 'supreme authority' in such matters,"³² hereby excluding any human authority. As Neufeld says, "The Bible is our chart – our guide. It is our only rule of faith and practice, to which we would closely adhere."³³ Thereby claiming 'absolute objectivity' in doctrine and Church standards.³⁴

²⁸ Roy Gane. 1999. *An Approach to the Historical-Critical Method*: 5. "Proper interpretation must get its meaning out of the text. This is exegesis as opposed to eisegesis, which is reading one's own ideas into the text."

²⁹ See Don F. Neufeld. 1974. *Biblical Interpretation in the Advent Movement*: 117 - 121. "Let Scripture explain Scripture. This principle is a corollary of the principle of the unity of Scripture. ... "The bible must be interpreted according to the plain, obvious, and literal import unless a figure is employed."

³⁰ Gerhard F. Hasel. 1974. *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*: 164 & 165.

³¹ See Peter van Bemmelen. 1990. *The Function of the Confessional Statement: Absolute and non-essentials?* : 12 - 15; and George R. Knight. 1993. *Adventists and change*: 14, 15.

³² Gerhard F Hasel. 1980. *Understanding the Living Word of God*: 73.

³³ Don F. Neufeld. 1974. *Biblical Interpretation in the Advent Movement*: 117.

³⁴ See also J.N. Vorster. 1988. *Biblical Studies, Tutorial letter*: 103. Because objects can be observed objectively, a neutral philosophical or 'Biblical' position is claimed. According to Vorster this type of absolutism stems from the philosophy of Scottish common sense realism, claiming that reality is primary and ideas are secondary. Thus, a literal reading of the Bible becomes the authority in all Doctrine.

Confessionals profess that the Protestant “principle of the ‘Bible only’ (*sola scriptura*),” also often referred to as the ‘Scripture principle,’ dominates their interpretation of Scripture.³⁵ Neufeld maintains that an examination of Adventist hermeneutics reveals that, “they worked within the established Protestant system and did not introduce new rules of interpretation.”³⁶ Koranteng-Pipim also states that, “the Bible, and the Bible only (*sola Scriptura*), must be the sole authority over extra-biblical data.”³⁷ Confessionals, therefore, claim that the Scriptures are the supreme authority.

1.2. Implications for abused women

Thompson intimates that Adventists have a ‘Code-book’ approach to Scripture, being a source that supplies us with literal instructions.³⁸ Van Wyk suggests that, the reason the authors of the Adventist Theological Society Occasional Papers (*Issues in Revelation and Inspiration*) do not take exception to this claim, is because they are “in favour of drawing particular rules and principles from the Bible, but those principles are not regarded as human constructions and therefore to a large extent non-debatable - they are absolute.”³⁹ Forgetting their own theoretical and metatheoretical presuppositions, they claim the Bible provides its own correct interpretation. This enables them to

³⁵ See Gerhard F Hasel. 1980. *Understanding the Living Word of God: 72 - 74*, and Norman R. Gulley. 1992. *An Evaluation of Alden Thompson’s “Incarnational” method in the Light of his view of Scripture and use of Ellen White: 79*.

³⁶ Don F. Neufeld. 1974. *Biblical Interpretation in the Advent Movement: 124*.

³⁷ Samuel Koranteng-Pipim. 1996. *Receiving the Word: How new approaches to the Bible impact our Biblical faith and lifestyle: 105 -111*.

“Seventh-Day Adventists generally have always upheld the *sole authority* of Scripture.”
 “Scripture must always be the *sole authoritative source* of human knowledge – above knowledge from nature (science), human experience (psychology), human history, church tradition, etc.”

³⁸ See Alden Thompson. 1991. *Inspiration. Hard Questions, Honest Answers: 98 - 109*.

“Typically a codebook demands *application* more that *interpretation*, obedient *compliance* more than thoughtful *reflection*.”

and Alden Thompson. 1991. *God’s Word: casebook or codebook?: 6 -10*.

³⁹ A. Gerhard van Wyk. 1995. *A Practical Theological perspective on Adventist theology and contextualisation: 134*.

say “the Bible teaches,” “let the Bible speak for itself,” “let Scripture interpret itself,” or “let the Bible writers speak for themselves.” Therefore, according to these authors, the ‘Word of God’ is timeless and not culture bound, supplying absolute and correct information.

According to Olsen, when the Reformers preached, it was never a movement from context to the text, but it always advanced from the text to the context.⁴⁰ So the Confessionals also apply the text to every situation in a very literal way. The Bible is the ‘Word of God’ and it does not become the Word of God through rational interpretation or reinterpretation. This implies that the Bible is acontextual and timeless and cannot be reinterpreted.

Reading the Bible from a Confessional point of view we find they have constructed a theological framework whereby issues regarding the role of women is viewed in a very negative light. Women, therefore, have been robbed of their own identity and their sense of belonging. We hear the plea of women when we read Helen Pearson’s statement:

“As an Adventist woman, I am aware that there is one time more than any other, and one place more than any other, that my needs are not addressed and my experience not utilized because I am a woman. The time: Sabbath morning. The place: the church service.”⁴¹

⁴⁰ V. Norskov Olsen. 1974. *Hermeneutical Principles and Biblical Authority in Reformation and Post-reformation Eras*: 57. “The Reformers’ preaching was never a movement from men, from situations, or from problems to the text, but it always advanced from the text to men and problems.”

⁴¹ Helen Pearson. 1992. *All things to all [wo]men*: 14.

2. The Progressive Approach and abused women

Thompson's inductive methodology confronts the traditional Adventist paradigm, calling for a more progressive approach, and proposes an 'incarnational' model.⁴² He claims that "all Scripture is inspired by God," and that "the Bible is normative, but we must not impose upon it a false unity which would have the practical effect of denying canonical status to certain parts of Scripture."⁴³

Thompson expresses his concern that we should never allow our Christian tradition or our understanding of Scripture to rob us of the opportunity of coming afresh to the Scripture as God speaking through His Word to us today. The Bible is regarded as a 'casebook'⁴⁴ "describing a series of examples that reflect a variety of responses under varied circumstances. None of these cases may be fully defined or prescribed in other settings, but each is described in a manner that could be helpful to someone facing similar circumstances."⁴⁵

In his view of Scripture, Thompson has adopted, what he calls a 'descriptive historical-critical' method without the 'naturalistic presuppositions' of the historical-critical method. He maintains that the 'conservatives' (progressives), on the other hand, have been very hostile⁴⁶ to this modern

⁴² See Alden Thompson. 1991. *Inspiration. Hard questions, honest answers*: 87 - 97.

⁴³ Alden Thompson. 1989. *Who's Afraid of the Old Testament God?*: 10.

⁴⁴ Alden Thompson. 1991. *Inspiration. Hard questions, honest answers*: 110 - 122. Thompson, however, does admit that a casebook approach can become very dangerous without Christ, therefore it is imperative to 'know God' if we are to understand the Bible.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*: 100.

⁴⁶ The historical-critical method is considered to be an extremely liberal approach for the 'Institutional Church.'
See also Samuel Koranteng-Pipim. 1996. *Receiving the Word*: 33 - 38. "The crisis of identity in the Seventh-Day Adventist church is a crisis over Bible interpretation. It arises from the fact that some in our ranks believe they can safely use elements of the historical-critical method without adopting the naturalistic presuppositions upon which the method was founded. However, in the words of one non-Adventist scholar, the attempt to do so is 'as futile and absurd an undertaking as eating ham with Jewish presuppositions.'"

scholarship, and that it has robbed people of a fresh understanding of the Scriptures, thus our Christian experience stagnates.⁴⁷

Rejecting verbal inspiration, Thompson, claims that the Bible writers and not the Bible, were inspired.⁴⁸ He maintains that if an ‘absolute objectivity’ is imposed, when interpreting the Scriptures, interpreters run the risk of imputing their own opinions and meanings onto the text which the Bible writers never intended. For, whenever one comes to the Bible, whether willingly, or unwillingly, they come with a certain pre-understanding.⁴⁹

Thompson, therefore, calls for a hermeneutic which is a process of understanding that “spirals to every higher level as each new part fills out, amplifies and enlarges the understanding reached in the initial investigation.”⁵⁰ He suggests that we need a new model which he has called the ‘soccer model,’ in opposition to a ‘tug of war model,’⁵¹ when interpreting the Scriptures. The soccer model establishes “boundaries and goals [that] are clear. The players kick the ball all over the place, even

⁴⁷ Alden Thompson. 1992. *Adventists and Inspiration: Our History Informs Our Present*: 5; and see Alden Thompson. 1991. *Inspiration. Hard Questions, Honest Answers*: 269-272. “This, despite the fact that at Consultation II (A Forum [Washington, D.C., 1981] sponsored by the General Conference of the SDA Church addressing questions raised by Desmond Ford relating specifically to methodological issues regarding inspiration.) it was the consensus of the working groups that ‘the descriptive aspects of the so-called historical method could indeed be separate from the naturalistic presuppositions and thus could be used by Adventist scholars.’”

⁴⁸ See Alden Thompson. 1991. *Inspiration. Hard questions, honest answers*: 47 -49, 51, 52 & 56.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*: 70, 88 - 92 & 98 - 109.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*: 113.

⁵¹ See Alden Thompson. 1992. *Adventists and Inspiration: Our History Informs Our Present*: 8. For Thompson the ‘tug of war model’ maintains “Hold on firm. Don’t budge an inch.”

in the opposite direction, in order to score in the end.”⁵² So it expresses the importance of contemporary matters rather than a confessional approach.

Thompson’s appeal is that the Bible should not be so much a “Perfect-book-on-the-shelf” as a “Perfect-book-in-the-hand,”⁵³ calling for a new look at our view of Scripture. He proposes an ‘incarnational’ approach to the Scriptures. He states that:

“I believe the time has come for us to break out of our Enlightenment prison and to shift the focus from a *theoretical* perspective to a *practical* one, one that takes seriously our experience with God, with each other, and with Scripture.”⁵⁴

Therefore, his ultimate goal is for ‘liberals’ and ‘conservatives’ to come and work together.⁵⁵

Although Thompson did not primarily construct his ‘incarnational’ model with reference to the problem of abused women, his ‘casebook’ view of Scripture can present us with a model, whereby we may deal with problems like family violence with more of a positive, helpful attitude. He has raised issues that may be meaningful in trying to deal with the problem of abuse and family violence.

⁵² *Ibid.*: 8.

⁵³ *Ibid.*: 140 & 260.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*: 15.

⁵⁵ *A discussion paper for the 1995 General Conference Session Breakout Groups*: 1; Alden Thompson. 1992. *Adventists and Inspiration: Our History Informs Our Present*: 8. Yet many in the ranks of traditional Adventism are averse to Thompson’s appeal, claiming that theologians like him are shaking the foundations of an *objective divine revelation* and are allowing a *relativistic, subjective* approach to rob Scripture of its authority, allowing it to only provide themes for theology, but no norms. “Hence theology drifts unchecked, subservient to the reigning philosophical or scientific consensus. Whenever the content of Scripture is displeasing or regarded as irrelevant, it can be bypassed in favour of present experience. The result is the death of true biblical theology. The Bible student is free to bend revealed facts to his or her liking and to relativize the biblical truth, dissolving the biblical message into the acid of human subjectivity.”

3. Conclusion

Confessionals have an ‘authoritative, inerrant view’ of Scripture. They approach the Bible with a ‘deductive’ approach, thus making no room for ‘cultural conditioning’⁵⁶ or the ‘reinterpretation’ of Scripture. Thus leaving very little room to deal with current, relevant issues such as abuse.

They “take the self-descriptive statement of Scriptures, such as ‘All Scripture is given by inspiration of God,’ and proceeds to deduce what a book inspired by God should look like.”⁵⁷ Yet Crosby points out that there are some very real problems with a pure deductive approach to Scripture. He claims that if we are honest we will have to “admit that prophets can have faulty memories,”⁵⁸ and God evidently does use imperfect people.

⁵⁶ Tim Crosby. 1998. *The Bible: inspiration and authority*: 18. In an article about The Bible and it's inspiration and authority refers to Cultural conditioning. “My concern is by what authority do we dismiss passages of Scripture that run counter to modern cultural norms? If we accept Scripture selectively apart from the guidance of a later inspired writer, then we must have a standard higher than the Bible by which we can judge it. Thus Scripture as it stands is no longer supreme. Instead, we may come to favour some reduced digest of Scripture that conforms to our prejudices. In some circles, for example, the “cation within the canon” tends to be Romans and Galatians and the doctrine of justification. In other circles it seems to be the Sermon on the Mount and the parable of the prodigal son. In a principle based theology, the standard may become some selected essence extracted from the culturally conditioned husks by our own supposedly infallible logic. Thus, instead of wholewheat theology, we achieve at last the pure white flour of palatable truth, which leads to spiritual malnutrition and death. What are the limits of this methodology? What happens if we apply the casebook or code book approach to the Ten Commandments? In a principle-based approach, the exact day of the week in the fourth commandment may not remain important: Under this methodology we may conclude that one day in seven is enough. Were the prophets culturally conditioned? Of course, but so are we. The difference between our bias and their bias is that they wrote under a recognized divine inspiration. Under the culturecentric assumption that our mores are superior, that “newer is truer,” Scripture will always be interpreted to support whatever cause is politically correct at the moment. Only the Spirit of the ages, as mediated through Scripture, can deliver us from our “marriage” to the spirit of our own age. This is not to say that every single command of Scripture applies to us today. Five times in the New Testament Christians are commanded without qualification to greet one another with a kiss. Since Pippim categorically rejects the cultural conditioning argument, are we to assume he does a lot of kissing?”

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*: 18.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*: 19.

Confessionals also take a ‘Scottish common sense’ approach to the interpretation of the texts of Scripture. For instance, the interpretation of Matthew 5:31 & 32, as well as Luke 16:18, is very literal and binding unless ‘adultery’⁵⁹ has been proven.⁶⁰ “In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus declared plainly that there could be no dissolution of the marriage tie, except for unfaithfulness to the marriage vow.”⁶¹ ‘Unfaithfulness to the marriage vow’ is viewed as ‘adultery,’ nothing more, nothing less.

A typical situation is as follows:

“A Christian wife finally sought pastoral counseling at a Christian agency after years of emotional and physical abuse from her husband. She told the counselor she had decided to take her children and leave home because she feared her husband’s escalating violence might result in her death. ... The pastoral counselor asked her *if he’d been sexually unfaithful to her*. When she said he hadn’t, the counselor told her that adultery was *the only biblical grounds for “splitting up a home.”*⁶²

Confessionals, who are generally the Institutional Church and determine the Church’s views, do not allow for any ambiguities. Thus, if the ‘perpetrator’ does not have a sexual relationship outside the marriage, yet physically, emotionally, financially or sexually abuses his wife, she will have no right to divorce him. Their ‘Scottish common sense’ approach to the Biblical text does not accept a perspective approach. This may lead them to conclude that they can obtain an objective reading of the Bible. Thus, there is no consideration of the context in which the offence has taken place.

On the other hand, the progressive approach uses an ‘inductive logic’ when interpreting the Scriptures. It has more of an openness to the context of the victim’s attempt to survey. It approaches “the phenomenology of Scripture [so as] to find out how the Holy Spirit actually works”

⁵⁹ In this case ‘adultery’ refers only to sexual unfaithfulness, that is, if one of the spouses has had a sexual relationship with someone outside of the existing marriage.

⁶⁰ See *Seventh-Day Adventist Church Manual*: 173 - 176.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*: 174.

⁶² Carolyn H Heggen. 1993. *Religious Beliefs and Abuse*: 26.

in current situations. It examines the structure and delves for “structural integrity.”⁶³ Its focus is primarily on the context which provides meaning for the Biblical text and an openness to address the issue of abused women.

⁶³ Tim Crosby. 1998. *The Bible: inspiration and authority*: 18.

Chapter 4

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST THEOLOGY AND

ABUSED WOMEN

In the previous chapter, I have shown how the confessional approach to Scripture has definite complications for abused women. As I further my discussion on abused women, I propose that the SDA Church's view of Scripture has profoundly impacted on its theology and in the issue of abused women. I am departing from the point of view that it is the Confessional SDAs that mostly influence the Institutional Church and they are the most important agents which determine policies and establish SDA Church doctrines. I, however, recognize that although these assertions are mainly focussed on the Institutional SDA Church, many SDA theologians and administrators are challenging these policies and doctrines.

In this chapter, I will introduce and discuss some theological issues that have serious consequences for the SDA Church and its position on abused women. However, owing to the limited extent of this paper I will only consider how its Eschatology and 'Theological Anthropology' has impacted on its Ecclesiology which has certain implications for abused women. I recognize that this is by far not a comprehensive characterization of the view of SDA Theology, but I do assert that these are some of the major theological components that impact on issues dealing with abused women.

1. Eschatology

Eschatology is primarily concerned with the events preceding the second advent of Jesus, the coming itself, and the kingdom that has already come (Jesus' first Advent.) According to König, eschatology

is characterized by the entire history of Christ. König also points out that there is a “tendency to confine eschatology to the future, particularly to those last *things* which have little direct connection with Jesus and his significance.”¹ Thus, giving eschatology an apocalyptic focus.

An ‘apocalyptic-eschatology’ focusses primarily on the events preceding the second coming of Jesus (last *things*), and the coming Kingdom to the exclusion of the present. Bosch asserts that Adventist theology emphasizes this apocalyptic component of the “*coming* Kingdom of God”² to the exclusion of the present Kingdom. He attests that for Adventists the present has no value and is empty, “all that really matters is the glorious future.”³ Yet Bosch does caution that not all Adventist groups will sustain such strong views, but that early SDA beginnings are definitely rooted in the emphasis of the “*coming* Kingdom of God.”⁴ The thesis of this dissertation is that this apocalyptic approach to eschatology, to a large degree, determines the nature of SDA Theology and its implications for abused women.

¹ Adrio König. 1989. *The Eclipse of Christ in Eschatology*: 37 - 47. “The tendency is to confine eschatology to the future, particularly to those ‘last things’ which have little direct connection with Jesus and his significance. ... Since his entire history is described in the same eschatological terms, he himself must be the *eschatos* (the last). The reverse is also true: since he himself is the *eschatos* and *telos* (end or goal), his whole history must be eschatology.

“... Eschatology is teleological Christology — goal-directed Christology.

“Implied by this understanding is that eschatology is not primarily a category of time. It begins with and has for its object a person and involves his whole history.”

² David J. Bosch. 1991. *Witness to the World. The Christian mission in theological perspective*: 32.

³ *Ibid.*: 32. Where he presents the following metaphor as an illustration:

“The church is a tiny lifeboat on a tempestuous sea, busy picking up survivors. The survivors are hauled into the uncomfortable lifeboat where they cling together for fear that the waves might toss them out of the boat. There they huddle, enduring discomfort, cold, damp or the scorching rays of the sun. There is little they can do but sail round and round, looking for more survivors. And their full attention is rivetted on the distant horizon. For one day – nobody knows exactly when, although all kinds of calculations are frequently made – a luxury liner will appear and take them to a safe harbour. They live only for that day. The little lifeboat is their ‘church,’ but in reality it serves primarily to protect them against drowning and sharks and to sustain them in view of that glorious day in the (distant?) future. There is little positive or dynamic relationship between the lifeboat and the sea. The sea, the environment, is hostile, evil, and a permanent threat.”

⁴ *Ibid.*: 32.

Considering Adventist history we note that the ‘Kingdom of God’ focussed primarily on the ‘imminence’⁵ of the physical and universal return of Christ.⁶ Since William Miller’s interest in studying the prophecies in the early 19th century, the emphasis was on the culmination of the ‘blessed hope’ and deliverance from this evil world.⁷ William Miller preached that the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation revealed the ‘time of the end.’⁸ The prophecies were corroborated by the study of historic events as a fulfilment of these Biblical prophecies.⁹ The interpretation of Daniel 8:14, and the meaning of the sanctuary and its cleansing became a powerful tool in promoting a premillennial view of the Second Advent of Christ.¹⁰ This all led to the ‘Midnight Cry’¹¹ being the fulfilment of the ‘loud voice’ of the angel of Rev. 14:9, who was giving due notice to the world of the near

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- ⁵ Zdravko Plantak. 1998. *The Silent Church*: 39 “Growing out of the Advent Movement of William Miller, Seventh-Day Adventism has inevitably inherited some of the beliefs of the early Advent believers of the mid-nineteenth century. The first and foremost of these doctrines was the imminence of the second coming of Christ.”
- ⁶ *Seventh-day Adventists Beliefs... A Biblical Exposition of the 27 Fundamental Doctrines*: 332. “The second coming of Christ is the blessed hope of the church, the grand climax of the gospel. The Saviour’s coming will be literal, personal, visible, and worldwide. When He returns, the righteous dead will be resurrected, and together with the righteous living will be glorified and taken to heaven, but the unrighteous will die. The almost complete fulfilment of most lines of prophecy, together with the present condition of the world, indicates that Christ’s coming is *imminent*. The time of that event has not been revealed, and we are therefore exhorted to be ready at all times.” (Italics added.)
- ⁷ Gerard P. Damsteegt. 1977. *Foundations of the Seventh-Day Adventist Message and Mission*: 13 - 16. “During the early part of the 19th century among evangelical Christians there was an increasing emphasis on the study of Bible passages which alluded to the Second Advent – the parousia. “For some, Miller’s predictions must have implied an instant utopia, especially after the financial depression which prevailed throughout the nation; ... the premillennial ideas of Miller offered a way of the righteous ultrasisms which had failed to redeem civilization. Still others saw in his predictions a culmination of their desires for the ‘blessed hope’ and deliverance from an evil world.”
- ⁸ *Ibid.*: 20. “The expression ‘time of the end’ was taken from Dan. 12:4, 9 and characterized all missionary motives of the Millerites.”
- ⁹ *Ibid.*: 20 - 29. – Their attention was directed to the cosmic signs – the ‘Dark Day of May 19, 1780,’ the ‘Falling Stars on November 15, 1833,’ and the Lisbon earthquake of 1755 – as a fulfilment of the predictions of Matthew 24. The fall of the Ottoman empire on August 11, 1841 was seen as the fulfilment of Revelation 9.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*: 31 - 35.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*: 40 - 44. “The expression ‘Midnight Cry’ had been derived from the parable of the ten virgins (Mt. 25:1 - 13) in Jesus’ eschatological discourse and was seen by Millerites as the symbol of their missionary activity.”

approach of the judgment day.¹² SDAs, thus, find their roots in an ‘apocalyptic-eschatology’ where end events were emphasized rather than human rights issues.¹³

In the *SDA Bible Dictionary*, the ‘kingdom of God’ in its present phase, is presented as a “*spiritual phase*”¹⁴ which will ultimately find its “*culmination in the future kingdom of glory to be set up at Christ’s second coming.*”¹⁵ (Italics are added for emphasis). Only at the close of the millennium, will this kingdom be established on the earth.¹⁶ The *SDA Bible Commentary* when commenting on the ‘kingdom of heaven,’ with reference to Jesus’ first Advent, presents the territory of this kingdom as the hearts and lives of the subjects, who are those who believed in Jesus. This kingdom is referred to as the “kingdom of grace,” and “this kingdom of grace was preparatory to the kingdom of glory”¹⁷ – a future kingdom.¹⁸

¹² *Ibid.*: 41.

¹³ Zdravko Plantak. 1998. *The Silent Church*: 39. In the early Adventist Church “human rights were not thought to be a believer’s concern at a time when Christ’s return was so near that they had to think about ultimate salvation from this corrupt and sinful world.” “According to Bates the social injustices of his time were only a symptom of a much larger disease, namely sin, which would be eradicated only at the second coming of Christ, in the near future. Hence, the proclamation of the overall cure was certainly a higher priority than treating individual symptoms of sin. Bates concluded that, ‘when Christ comes liquor will be forgotten and the slave will be free. The lesser causes are swallowed in the greater.’”

¹⁴ *Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary* Vol. 5: 568 – commenting on Mark 1:15. “... through His parables Jesus had repeatedly taught that the kingdom He had come to establish was, to begin with, a spiritual kingdom.”

¹⁵ Neufeld Don F. (Ed.) 1979. *Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Dictionary*: 644.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*: 644.

¹⁷ See *Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary* Vol. 5 : 318 – commenting on Matthew 4:17.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*: 318 “The kingdom of grace was near in Christ’s day (Matt 3:2; 4:17; 10:7); but the kingdom of glory was future (ch. 24:33). Only when the Son of man should ‘come in His glory, and all the holy angels with him’ would ‘he sit upon the throne of his glory’ (ch. 25:31).”

Adventism's interests lie primarily in the 'other world' where God will take care of all social problems. "Withdrawal from the world and preoccupation with the world to come, supports the tendency toward exclusiveness."¹⁹ Plantak points out that Talbert Shaw claims that, "moral insensitivity and a lack of social vigour flow from a perfectionistic ethic that does not see the will of God as relevant to the racial problems in society."²⁰ Therefore, in Shaw's opinion, emphasis "on individual salvation and a radical eschatology" prevents Institutional SDAs from understanding that the Kingdom of God is not only a future reality, but also a present reality. The long-term views of SDA eschatology, coupled with individualism highly praised by SDAs, blurs the vision of the need for the community to respond to the socio-moral questions of the here and now.²¹

A Theology like that of the Instructional SDA Church, tends to minimize the present Kingdom of God and emphasize the future Kingdom to come. According to König, this eschatology is too one-sided, preoccupied with future expectations which have very little direct connection with Jesus and His significance.²² He claims that this 'viewpoint has restricted eschatology to less than the whole

¹⁹ Zdravko Plantak. 1998. *The Silent Church*: 86.

²⁰ *Ibid.*: 87.

²¹ *Ibid.*: 87.

²² See Adrio König. 1989. *The Eclipse of Christ in Eschatology. Toward a Christ-Centered Approach* : 38 & 39. Referring to Moltmann's definition of eschatology as 'Christology in an eschatological perspective,' he claims that "his work demonstrates that the 'eschatology' in this definition is too one-sidedly preoccupied with Christian expectations for the *future*. ... Since Jesus is the *eschatos* and the *telos*, eschatology may not be limited arbitrarily to any one portion of his history – in this case, that still to come."

He also refers to Barth who, "excludes Christ's incarnation, earthly ministry, and crucifixion. ... [limiting] eschatology to a segment of Jesus' history."

history of Jesus.’ He goes on to say that those who do not view the whole history of Jesus, have limited eschatology to only segments of Jesus’ history.²³

We may conclude that Institutional SDA eschatology is primarily an apocalyptic eschatology,²⁴ and according to Plantak, it is Adventist’s premillennial view of the kingdom that has lead to this apocalyptic emphasis. Institutional SDAs emphasize the fact that this world cannot be changed, it is getting more evil by the day, and society at large will not be improved until Jesus comes the second time.²⁵ It is, therefore, viewed that it is not primarily the duty of the Church to deal with social human problems or try to bring about any changes, since God will do it when He comes. “Hence their pessimistic view of any kind of human-initiated progress in social or moral reforms.”²⁶

I assert that, because of the apocalyptic approach to eschatology, Institutional SDAs are prone to emphasize ‘evangelism’ and tend to minimize the daily needs of people. Issues dealing with women who are facing abuse are regarded as important, but unfortunately it is only of secondary importance. The proclamation of the Gospel becomes divorced from the questions that men and women are posing with regard to daily issues.²⁷

²³ See Adrio König. 1989. *The Eclipse of Christ in Eschatology. Toward a Christ-Centered Approach*: 40. Referring to the eschatological views of Moltmann, Cullmann, W. Kreck Barth, and Bultmann, he claims that, “All these viewpoints have in common their restriction of eschatology to less than the whole history of Jesus. Against each limitation of eschatology to some part of Jesus’ history we must affirm that Christ himself is the *eschatos* and *telos*.”

²⁴ Angel Manuel Rodriguez. 1999. *Wrestling with Theological Differences*: 7. “Since Adventism is an apocalyptic movement, eschatology is essential for its self-understanding and for the message it proclaims.”

²⁵ See Zdravko Plantak. 1998. *The Silent Church*: 42 & 43.

²⁶ *Ibid.*: 11.

²⁷ Walter B. T. Douglas, *The Church: Its Nature and Function* : 64.

2. Theological Anthropology

This dissertation departs from the point of view that a 'theological anthropology' has specific consequences for the Church when relating to issues such as abused women. When the question of anthropology is raised, many will say it is not of primary importance, because the issues 'lie' on the horizontal and not the vertical level.²⁸ Yet, both Plantak and Lategan maintain that there is a growing need for a theology that will address the context of human need.²⁹ Plantak maintains that the Church needs to answer the question raised by David in Psalm 8:4, and examine the doctrine of humanity. He claims that this task is the task of theological anthropology.³⁰ Because SDAs have not developed a theological anthropology, there are certain pointers that come to the fore and have implications for abused women.

As we address the issue of a 'theological anthropology,' we note that Lategan has pointed out that at least two lines of anthropology can be identified in both the Old and New Testament traditions. He terms these two lines of anthropology a 'low' and a 'high' anthropology.³¹ Louw also maintains that in the dialogue of pastoral care, two main streams of anthropology can be identified. The

²⁸ 'Horizontal' level refers to the relationship between humans, and the 'vertical' level refers to the relationship between God and humans.

²⁹ Zdravko Plantak. 1998. *The Silent Church*: 153, 163, 167 & 168.

³⁰ *Ibid.*: 153, 157 - 162. "The Adventist church, like most other Christian bodies, has never attempted to produce a comprehensive theological basis for human rights. There were sporadic attempts within Christendom to justify the notion of human rights on the basis of the doctrines of creation and incarnation and on the basis of so-called natural law. Most of these were of an apologetic nature." See also Bernard Lategan. 1991. *New Testament Anthropological Perspectives in a Time of Reconstruction*: 88. With reference to liberation theology and in the context of a post-apartheid society he claims that there is a "need for more focussed attention to anthropological issues... [There is a] need for theology to function in a context of reconstruction and to minister to the needs of a post-apartheid society. ... [Thus] the urgency of a theological anthropology to guide and sustain the phase of reconstruction is even more urgent."

³¹ See Bernard Lategan. 1991. *New Testament Anthropological Perspectives in a Time of Reconstruction*: 88 - 91.

‘European tradition’ which has been influenced by Reformed theology, where the extreme views focus on the sinful condition of humans. On the other hand, there is the ‘American tradition,’ a client-centred approach, which has been influenced by Carl Rogers and Seward Hiltner. This approach has profoundly influenced the liberal theological tradition.³² This tradition influenced Boison’s Clinical Pastoral Education, which propagates that theologians must study human documents, as well as Bible texts. This view focusses on people being dynamic relational beings. To a large extent the approaches of Lategan and Louw are very similar, but for the purpose of this dissertation I will focus on Lategan’s approach.

We note that according to Lategan a ‘high’ anthropological tradition is epitomized by the *imago Dei* motif of the creation story. He claims that Psalm 8 is a classic expression of this ‘high’ anthropology in the Old Testament, and the exaltation predicates of the Son of Man in the New Testament. This line of thought accepts the basic equality of people, not in their need of salvation, but in the destiny of all humans.³³ For a ‘high’ anthropology, the creativeness and potential of human beings are emphasized.

On the other hand, there is a ‘low’ anthropology which, according to Lategan, finds support in Psalm 22 and Romans 3. Although humans were created in the image of God, they have “all sinned and

³² See D. J. Louw. 1989. *Die ontwerp van 'n teologiese antropologie as basisteorie vir 'n effektiewe pastorale bediening in Predikant en pastorale praktyk*: 4 -10.

³³ See Bernard Lategan. 1991. *New Testament Anthropological Perspectives in a Time of Reconstruction*: 88 & 89. “A very instructive passage ... is the Christological reinterpretation of Psalm 8 in Hebrews 2:5 - 18. What makes the reinterpretation so interesting, is that the psalm represents the classical expression of what we have called a ‘high’ anthropology. ... The poet praises God’s greatness and his kindness to humanity, as revealed in nature. Under the star-studded Palestinian sky, he is overwhelmed by the majesty of God. But even more overwhelming is the thought that God, in his majesty, bestows so much glory on *human beings*. They are almost divine. All the usual attributes of the oriental monarch are transferred on humanity as such. Here we see the human race at the breathtaking zenith of its possibilities – created and destined to reign over the cosmos.”

fallen short of the glory of God.”³⁴ Therefore, humans should not think too highly of themselves and also need to accept their status as sinners, and not try to change the system by their own efforts. Humans are only called to endure this world, and primarily focus on the grace of God and the world to come. There is a resistance to the possibilities of any active social changes,³⁵ and if change should take place it is considered coincidental, a result of evangelistic effort.³⁶

This line of thought accepts the basic equality of people by focussing on their “universal need for salvation.” This equality is, however, only referring to the status of people as sinners and not their real life situations or their creative potentials. This ‘low’ anthropological view of humankind inhibits change and resists the concept of human rights, and focusses primarily on ‘grace alone.’³⁷ A ‘low’ anthropology is, therefore, based on the premise that all human beings are ‘sinners’ in need of salvation.

³⁴ Romans 3:23.

³⁵ Bernard Lategan. 1991. *New Testament Anthropological Perspectives in a Time of Reconstruction*: 88 & 89. “It is clear that the theological support system that undergirds the *apartheid* mindset is based on a ‘low’ anthropology. ... Suffice it to say that this mindset is reinforced by other theological motifs. The sinfulness of people becomes an important building block, which should discourage people to think too highly of themselves. The emphasis on grace alone is interpreted to mean that people should accept the position they are in and not try to change the (social) system by their own efforts. Added to this is the pietistic notion that the focus of the believer should be on the next world, while the present should be endured as best as possible. ... Thus “the human rights movement is often rejected as a misguided humanistic enterprise, based on a false *hubris* which does not take the sinful nature of humanity seriously.”

³⁶ See David J. Bosch. 1991. *Witness to the World. The Christian mission in theological perspective*: 32 & 33. “Most evangelicals would, however, draw a line when it comes to the Church’s direct involvement in structural changes in society. Such changes – which are often indeed regarded as desirable by evangelicals – are rather to be viewed as a possible result of evangelism. The emphasis is on evolution rather than revolution.”

³⁷ Bernard Lategan. 1991. *New Testament Anthropological Perspectives in a Time of Reconstruction*: 88. “A strong argument of those opposed to human rights from a biblical perspective, is that although humans were originally created in the image of God, this was almost immediately cancelled out by original sin. Any biblical anthropology must – so the argument goes – take its departure from the *fall*, which stamps humans as sinful creatures, by nature prone to all that is wrong and evil. Thus sin should be taken seriously, not too much should be expected of human beings, and any optimistic or utopian view of humankind should be resisted on biblical grounds. ... which finds its expression in Psalm 22 and Romans 3.”

An SDA perspective tends to emphasize that human beings are “born with weaknesses and tendencies to evil.”³⁸ It is emphasized that the “universal sinfulness of humanity” is evident by the fact that by nature, humans have a tendency toward evil rather than good.³⁹ Because of the sinful tendency of humans, SDAs tend to focus on the weakness of humans rather than their creative potential. With the emphasis on the sinfulness of people, a ‘deficient’ anthropology comes to the fore, opening the door for the development of an anti-human frame of mind. This leads to serious consequences for the positive self-understanding of people, and severely restricts the belief in and possibilities for positive social change.⁴⁰

From the above pointers, Adventists would most definitely hold to a ‘low’ anthropology, thus moving issues such as abused women into the background. This has led to an emphasis on the winning of ‘souls’ (humans in need of salvation) rather than to challenge the creative potential of people. Although the ‘caring ministry’ is receiving progressively more attention, the main focus is still on ‘soul winning’ – reaching non-SDAs.

3. Ecclesiology

Further, we note that an essentially apocalyptic eschatology and a ‘low’ ‘theological anthropology,’ among other theologies, have definite implications for ecclesiology and abused women. I assert that an apocalyptic-oriented eschatology and a ‘low’ ‘theological anthropology’ has partially set the tone for an SDA ecclesiology. The above-mentioned apocalyptic eschatology and ‘theological

³⁸ *Seventh-day Adventists Beliefs... A Biblical Exposition of the 27 Fundamental Doctrines*. 1988: 78

³⁹ *Ibid.*: 91

⁴⁰ Bernard Lategan. 1991. *New Testament Anthropological Perspectives in a Time of Reconstruction* : 89.

anthropology' are definite pointers to SDAs having a very specific mind set when it comes to its purpose and mission.⁴¹ In essence, this mission is to "announce the arrival of the judgment hour, proclaim salvation through Christ, and herald the approach of His second advent."⁴² SDAs view the Church's primary mission as proclaiming a message that will restore God's true worship, by telling people to turn away from apostasy and to prepare for Christ's return.⁴³

In his foreward to Plantak's book, 'The Silent Church,' Sakae Kubo draws our attention to Max Warren's charge that SDAs have forsaken "all responsibility for this world."⁴⁴ He says the SDA Church has become so otherworldly that it has no present relevance.

"After all, was not the winning of souls the overriding priority and, therefore, should their efforts and finances be diluted into helping the unfortunate? Of course, they would help the poor and sick if it served as a means of winning them to Christ. But helping the poor and sick simply to alleviate their condition and suffering was not enough."⁴⁵

The primary focus, therefore, for the Institutional Church is on 'evangelism.' Joel Sarli, associate secretary of the General Conference Ministerial Association, says "God expects His Church to discipline and fit its members for the work of enlightening the world. ... In every Church the members should be so trained that they will devote time to the winning of souls for Christ. ..." He goes on to say that "the Church is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men."⁴⁶ Alfred McClure,

⁴¹ See Ed Pfeiffer. 1990. *Human Rights and Mission*: 198. "Historically speaking, the SDA Church was always mission-oriented and saw in biblical statements the foundation for its mission outreach."

⁴² *Seventh-day Adventists Beliefs... A Biblical Exposition of the 27 Fundamental Doctrines*, 1988: 152.

⁴³ *Ibid.*: 163 - 168.

⁴⁴ See Sakae Kubo in Forward to Zdravko Plantak. 1998. *The Silent Church*: xii

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*: xii

⁴⁶ Joel Sarli. 1999. *The Ministry of Equipping*: 20.

President of the North American Division (from now on NAD), says “we are called individually and corporately to be a Church whose heart beats with a passion for souls.”⁴⁷ He says the Church is to develop a “culture of evangelism.” Edward Cleveland, a world-renowned SDA evangelist, says “Preachers are God-ordained soul winners.”⁴⁸ Many articles that one reads in the Ministry, an official magazine of the SDA Church, focus on some or other form of ‘evangelism,’ soul winning for the kingdom of God. Yet, very few articles focus on the caring ministry of ‘souls’ and virtually none talk about the ‘creativity’ of humans.⁴⁹

Breadsell, when referring to the mission of the Church, states that the nature of the Church, and “The Great Commission is to make disciples; that is the followers’ task.”⁵⁰ Cleveland says that the primary work of the minister is to proclaim the Gospel, to be involved in evangelism. According to him the evangelistic process is “people-catching,” and “enlarging the kingdom of God.”⁵¹ McClure, in his keynote address at the NAD, 1997 year-end meeting stated that:

“Evangelism in the truest sense is not a duty to be added, a program to adopt, or a technique to learn. Rather it is something we are unable not to do. We are called individually and corporately to be a church whose heart beats with a passion for souls.”⁵²

⁴⁷ Carlos Medley. 1997. *NAD President Calls for New Growth Strategies*: 20.

⁴⁸ Edward Earl Cleveland. 1999. *Evangelism: Bringing Light to Life*: 5.

⁴⁹ For example, the 1999 Ministries contain the following articles: “Evangelism: Bringing Light to Life”; “Seven steps to restoring your church,” (dealing with planting new churches,); “Cosmic Signs through history”; “Spiritual growth through family ministries,” (“Family ministries is distinctive because it is evangelistic.”) and many more.

⁵⁰ Derek C. Breadseel, *The Unfinished Task: Is there Salvation Outside Christianity? Do other Christian churches also fulfil the Great Commission?*: 29.

⁵¹ Edward E. Cleveland. 1999. *Evangelism: Bringing Light to Life*: 5 - 7.

⁵² Carlos Medley. 1997. *NAD President Calls for New Growth Strategies* : 20.

McClure praised God for the growing evangelistic fervour in North America. Spreading the gospel, he said, was the Church's number one priority.⁵³

Very important models for SDA ecclesiology are that of a 'herald' and a 'fortress' model. The 'herald model' focusses on the proclamation of the 'Word.' The resources of the Church are to be used for evangelism and mission. The Church's task is to proclaim the 'Day of the Lord,' and to prepare 'a people' to enter the 'Kingdom of God.'⁵⁴ Yet, Douglas warns that, although SDAs would probably recognise themselves in this model, to totally embrace it can lead to ignoring other 'Biblical images.'⁵⁵

The fortress model, according to Douglas, tends to create radical separation between the 'sacred' and the 'secular.' Everything that is 'secular' is of the world and stands in opposition to the Church and its mission.⁵⁶ Thus, it could be said that because 'politics' is viewed as 'secular,' the Church tends to seek "political neutrality,"⁵⁷ and human rights issues are generally not entertained. Plantak

⁵³ Derek C Beardsell. 1990. *The Unfinished Task: Is there Salvation Outside Christianity? Do other Christian Churches also fulfil the great commission?*: 27 With reference to the task of evangelism, stated that, "studying this subject makes it clear that the task given to the disciples of Jesus Christ is still unfinished; the one essential qualification still awaited is the coming of *the end*. His commission was that His followers were to teach or make disciples or Christians of all nations (Matt 28:19, KJV margin). When the teaching is done, the proclamation made, then *the end will come*. (Matt 24:24). The followers of today have only human methods of measuring the efficiency of progress and the closeness to the finishing line, to that end declared by Jesus himself. He said, *Yes, I am coming soon, and bringing my recompense with me* (Rev 22:12, NEB). One old faithful octogenarian offered the opinion that the teaching may have been completed in the British Isles in the 19th and early 20th centuries and that now the nation lives on borrowed time!

⁵⁴ See Walter B. T. Douglas. 1980. *The Church: Its Nature and Function*: 63 - 65.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*: 64.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*: 66.

⁵⁷ Zdravko Plantak. 1998. *The Silent Church* : 47.

asserts that this tendency “leads to triumphalism and a narrow exclusivism and the Church turning its back on the cry of suffering, desperate humanity.”⁵⁸

Yet, Bosch asserts that this emphasis on evangelism is not to be void of any compassion and humanitarian concerns.⁵⁹ Douglas also says that when considering the relationship between Church and world, it is the ‘servant model’ that focusses on Jesus, the example par excellence of relationships. This model teaches us that “God is to be found and honoured, served and loved, not just in some spiritual or religious activity, but within the world, among men [and women] in their need.”⁶⁰

Thus, the Church is very often involved in education, medical work, caring for the aged, and disaster relief. For example, SDAs are involved in social issues, with the organizing of Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) aimed at bringing relief to disaster-stricken areas. Many in the Institutional Church will regard this involvement as secondary, only a means to an end.⁶¹ It is “not seen as the logical consequence of evangelism but rather as an aid to evangelism.”⁶² Social

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*: 47.

⁵⁹ David Bosch. 1991. *Witness to the World. The Christian mission in theological perspective*: 33. “They (evangelicals) often reveal great sacrificial involvement with the existential needs of the victims of society – drug addicts, refugees, the exploited poor, the sick, and so forth – than many ecumenical who malign them for their lack of social concern.”

⁶⁰ Walter B. T. Douglas. 1980. *The Church: Its Nature and Function*: 66

⁶¹ See Jac Colon. 1998. *Proclaiming the Message Fearlessly*: 20. “Our stop-smoking classes, community services, health emphasis, and any other services we offer are to be open doors for proclaiming the three angels’ messages. They must not become ends in themselves.” See also Edward Earl Cleveland. 1999. *Evangelism: Bringing Light to Life*: 6 & 7. Cleveland says that the end product in preaching is not what matters most in bringing satisfaction to the preacher, but the changed lives of those to whom one preaches is reward enough. However, “the population of the kingdom of God is the supreme purpose of preaching. ... The population of the kingdom of God is the legitimate end product of preaching. Sermons that leave conviction short of conversion fall short of the end objective of this heaven-ordained exercise.”

⁶² David J. Bosch. 1991. *Witness to the World. The Christian mission in theological perspective*: 33.

involvements are seen as instruments affording people the opportunity to hear the gospel.⁶³ For instance, when Gorden Doss addresses the issue of ‘Family Ministries,’ he claims that to have good relationships is important for both personal salvation and for evangelism. He goes on to state that “Adventist family ministries are distinctive because they play a vital role in preparing Christians for the kingdom of God.”⁶⁴ He further asserts that “Adventist family ministries are distinctive because it is evangelistic.”⁶⁵ Thus the focus, when dealing with families, is on evangelism and not on the family.

Institutional SDA ecclesiology is thus focussed on evangelism, a determination to proclaim the “arrival of the judgment hour, ... and herald the approach of His second advent.”⁶⁶ Paulsen tells us that the primary task of the SDA Church is to proclaim Christ to a world which, without Him has no future.⁶⁷

⁶³ *Ibid.*: 33. “... evangelicals today involve themselves with education, medical work and schooling in agriculture in their missionary enterprises. ... [These] schools, hospitals, orphanages and the like are primarily seen as instruments affording pupils, patients and orphans the opportunity of hearing the gospel. By attending to man’s body or mind, they are preparing him for the gospel.”

⁶⁴ Gorden Doss. 1999. *Spiritual Growth Through Family Ministries*: 20.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*: 20.

⁶⁶ *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*. 1995: 11.

⁶⁷ Jan Paulsen. 1990 *Social Service/Social Action – is that also God’s Mission?*: 140.

Plantak maintains that SDAs have never fully permitted social needs to have any real impact on their ministry.⁶⁸ Only when the millennium starts, after Christ's advent, will "the righteous and just social order be established."⁶⁹

4. Conclusion

When considering the SDA eschatology, 'theological anthropology' and ecclesiology, we note that the emphasis is primarily on the 'kingdom to come.' A premillennial approach to evangelism focusses the attention on soul winning, making it the primary task for the Church. The pointers we have considered tend to emphasize the wretched, hopeless and lost condition of human beings, and only when Jesus comes the second time, will He put an end to all this misery. Thus, the tendency is *not* to get involved in human rights issues, such as the abuse of women.

Institutional SDA Theology tends to focus on the salvation for 'souls' in the life hereafter. The emphasis, therefore, is predominantly on God's forgiveness and on salvation beyond the grave. Van Wyk says that "this emphasis tended to spiritualize the gospel and draws a sharp line between the spiritual and bodily needs of people."⁷⁰ Therefore, SDAs do not get concretely involved in socio-political and economic issues. Van Wyk goes on to say that the focus is on, "individual sins, the rottenness of the human heart and human hopelessness in the face of social sins."⁷¹ Plantak says that "because SDAs keenly anticipate a soon-coming, perfect world, they are typically not so concerned

⁶⁸ Zdravko Plantak. 1998. *The Silent Church*: 126 & 126. Plantak quotes Francis Nichol when he wrote that:

"the Business of the church should be the saving of men's souls, that we should leave to others the task of improving society. ... This is not the way to bear testimony to what we believe to be the right program for the church. We think these social reformers are mistaken as to what should be the great objective of the church. We are confident that it is the winning of men's souls."

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*: 42.

⁷⁰ A. Gerhard van Wyk. 1993. *Religious instruction*: 6.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* : 6.

with how persons ought to relate to one another here and now, but with how to reach future goals or ends.⁷²

The implication for abused women is that the accent is mainly on the prohibition of divorce and not so much on pastoral care and counselling so as to prevent divorce.⁷³ Coffin, therefore suggests that when women face abuse, the Adventist Church leaves them with only three options. To stay in the marriage and live with the incessant pain; to face total celibacy after divorce or separation; or to risk being disfellowshipped should she re-marry without 'biblical' grounds.⁷⁴

⁷² Zdravko Plantak. 1998. *The Silent Church* : 130.

⁷³ James Coffin. 1997. *The long Shadows of Divorce, Another look at divorce and church policy*: 13. "Unfortunately, Adventist theology and policy focus almost exclusively on Christ's remarriage prohibition and not enough on Paul's obligations-within-marriage admonition. In practice, we're far more anti-remarriage than anti-divorce. Yet was that what Christ intended by His comment in Matthew 19?"

⁷⁴ See James Coffin. 1997. *The long Shadows of Divorce, Another look at divorce and church policy*: 12 - 14. "Based on Christ's words, Seventh-Day Adventists teach that sexual misbehaviour is the only justifiable reason for divorce and remarriage. No other misconduct, however grievous, provides 'biblical' grounds. ... Thus a man or a woman can blatantly neglect, cruelly demean, or even physically brutalize his or her spouse, and the likelihood of the church disciplinary action is minimal because the 'marriage vow' hasn't been violated."

Chapter 5

POSSIBLE RESEARCH POINTERS DEALING WITH ABUSED PEOPLE

It is my understanding that the SDA Church tends to function within and according to a hierarchical system. One facet of such a system is a patriarchal approach to leadership and relationships. Within such a system women have experienced abuse, not only in the Church, but also in the home. From some statistics it could be concluded that the home may be the most dangerous place for a woman to be. Should she be assaulted in the street, she could make a case against the perpetrator, but when it happens in the home it is viewed as a private matter. Very often, due to its silence, the Church has also taken this approach, in that only once the couple gets divorced, it becomes a Church (public) matter.

A predominantly confessional approach to Scripture has had serious consequences for the SDA Church when relating to human rights issues. This approach tends to ignore the context while focussing on the authority of the text of Scripture. Too often the text is applied to the context without any consideration for the real life situation. Often an abused woman will be sent back to an abusive situation simply because sexual infidelity cannot be proven.

In terms of the Institutional SDA Church's own reading of Scriptural texts, such as Matthew 25, verses 31 to 46, and Luke 4, verses 18 to 19, among others, it cannot be silent on human rights issues. I, therefore, suggest that there needs to be more of an openness to the experience and context in which people find themselves from day to day.

I concur with Plantak that possessing a social conscience is by far not enough. “There is a definitive need for social action too.”¹ The Church has come a long way with its policies on women, yet it still has a long way to go – not very much has been done when it comes to addressing the problem of family violence and the abuse of women. “Adventists will have to answer in the context of their self-understanding, if they want to be relevant to modern society.”² Thus, Plantak says that the SDA Church needs to recognize that “we are in the world and we simply cannot be isolated from the world.”³ However, the open question is ‘how are we to be in the world?’⁴

1. Possible pointers in dealing with abused women?

In order to pose a possible answer to this question, I propose that research in the following areas could provide meaningful solutions for abused women.

1.1. An ‘Incarnational’ approach to the Scriptures?

I propose that Thompson’s ‘incarnational’ model, which I discussed in chapter three, will offer more of a progressive approach to contextual issues, yet maintaining the distinctiveness of Adventist mission and theology. Thompson wants to focus on the relevancy of Scripture. This approach is an attempt to address questions young people are asking today and relevant experiential issues. This model, therefore, offers more of an openness when it comes to dealing with social issues and, more particularly, abused women.

¹ Zdravko Plantak. 1998. *The Silent Church*: 37.

² *Ibid.*: 47.

³ *Ibid.*: 47.

⁴ *Ibid.*: 47.

1.2. A Holistic eschatology?

We have noted that an apocalyptic eschatology within Adventism has had serious consequences for abused women. I am, hereby, not implying that the apocalyptic component of eschatology is unimportant. I am questioning the emphasis placed on the apocalyptic component to the neglect of other components. I, thus, suggest that König has presented a possible alternative to the predominantly apocalyptic eschatology of Adventism. He proposes a ‘holistic’ eschatology, that is “the goal-directed history of Christ,” or what he has termed a “teleological Christology.”⁵ He claims that we are not only to focus on *last events* but also to include the first coming of Jesus. There is, thus, a movement away from supernatural expectations.⁶ This does not imply that specific ‘last things’ are necessarily illegitimate, but that there should not be a tension between focussing on the person Jesus and ‘last things.’

This goal-directed eschatology includes Christ’s incarnation and earthly ministry. König says, “He became a human for the sake of other humans – us.”⁷ By this he claims that Jesus did not only come to erect a ‘spiritual’ kingdom, but that God’s kingdom also liberates people. He never came to bring only peace to our ‘souls,’ ignoring the real storms of daily living. “God is a God of heaven *and earth!*” Thus, meaning is found in service to God and our neighbour, providing an openness for

⁵ Adrio König. 1989. *The Eclipse of Christ in Eschatology*: 40.

⁶ *Ibid.*: 40. “Against each limitation of eschatology to some part of Jesus’ history we must affirm that Christ himself is the *eschatos* and *tells*. This means that from the beginning he was the goal of creation, and that he entered creation in order to bring it to this goal. Thus eschatology is the goal-directed history of Christ, or ‘teleological christology.’
“An implication of this outlook on eschatology is that the goal of creation is in no way attainable apart from Christ. As the study of last things eschatology simply has no meaning unless it is Jesus who ushers in and accomplishes these things. Arresting and catastrophic events may occur, but they will not usher in eschatology (in which the goal is revealed) without Jesus as their instigator and center. In consequence, we need not be exclusively supernatural in our eschatological expectations.”

⁷ *Ibid.*: 87.

pastoral care.⁸ I, therefore, recommend that further research into a ‘holistic’ eschatology, or networking, approach would be beneficial to the SDA Church.

1.2. A Realistic anthropology?

A ‘low’ anthropology within Adventism tends to rob people of their humanity and creativity. It reduces them to mere ‘sinners’ in need of salvation. Lategan, however, proposes a ‘theological anthropology’ that is neither a ‘low’ or a ‘high’ anthropology. He suggests a ‘realistic anthropology.’ He draws our attention to the Christological reinterpretation of Psalm 8 in Hebrews 2:5-18.

Psalm 8 presents the ‘high’ anthropology and “we see the human race at the breathtaking zenith of its possibilities – created and destined to reign over the cosmos.”⁹ Yet, the Christological reinterpretation of Hebrews 2 admits that humans have not fulfilled this high expectation nor realized their potential. However, through the suffering of Jesus the way was opened for “human beings to transcend their own failures and to fulfill this high calling.”¹⁰ Thus, Lategan claims that a radical reconstruction and radical humanization of society is evident at the very start of Jesus’ ministry by

⁸ *Ibid.*: 87 -110. “The goal lies in him and is therefore attained in every phase of his history – including his radical eschatological incarnation and earthly ministry. ...

“Because Jesus is the revelation of God and his reign aims at achieving the purpose of God, the *eschaton* is attained in Jesus’ kingly acts. ... He comes to live beside his own possession in total identification with the lot of humanity. He is their God and calls them back from their straying so that they can be his people. ...

“He comes not only to save souls but to save people, to save the world, and to renew the earth. Thus he not only forgives sins but also heals people.”

⁹ Bernard Lategan. 1991. *New Testament Anthropological Perspectives in a Time of Reconstruction*: 89.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*: 89.

the statement He made in Luke 4, verses 18 and 19. (Lategan also reminds us that the original intent of creation was not cancelled by sin.)¹¹

According to Lategan, this presents us with neither a pessimistic nor an optimistic anthropology. He suggests that hereby we have an anthropology that accepts the seriousness of sin and its devastating effects, but on the other hand also refuses to accept the destructive effects of sin to be permanent. Lategan, therefore, proposes a 'realistic' anthropology which allows humans to recognize and realize their God-given potential.¹² Thus, human rights issues are not to be ignored, nor demanded of God, but recognized as a gift given by a gracious God.¹³ This anthropology opens the door for the Church to address the issue of abused women and could be actively involved in caring for people.

1.3. A Servant Model?

After considering the SDAs ecclesiology, I suggest that Douglas offers a model that sees Jesus as the foundation of all ministry. Instead of a reductionistic view of evangelism, his *servant model* could be meaningfully researched. This model teaches that "God is to be found and honoured, served and

¹¹ *Ibid.*: 89 & 90. "From Heb 2:8b a Christological reinterpretation of the passage takes place. If observed closely, we must admit that very little or nothing of these high expectations have been fulfilled. ... People have clearly not realized their potential. But what we do see is Jesus, who for a little while is made less than angels. ... In going the way of suffering, he opens the way for human beings to transcend their own failures and fulfil their high calling. ... Thus Jesus' life is both an ironic commentary on the failure of humans and at the same time demonstrates the way to overcome this failure."

¹² *Ibid.*: 90. "That is, an anthropology that accepts the seriousness of sin and its devastating effects – effects that not only cause suffering, but also makes service selfless giving, humiliation and even death the way in which a new humanity is born. But – and that is the difference – because it is a realistic anthropology ..., it refuses to accept the destructive effects of sin as a permanent state – neither of world, nor of human beings. It can be of a *functional* nature, aimed at human fulfilment and the realization of God given potential as the real destiny of humans."

¹³ *Ibid.*: 90. "Human rights are rights given by the grace of God to people as his creatures, as his children, in order to fulfil their calling as his image-bearers and to realise their God given potential. It is for this reason that they should be carefully safeguarded and it is for this reason that the Church has a special responsibility to be the advocate for and protector of human rights."

loved, not just in some spiritual or religious activity, but within the world, among men in their need.”¹⁴ Douglas claims that the Church is not better than its Lord, therefore “it must throw itself with ‘riotous loving’ into the furrows of human need, working, if necessary, in revolutionary ways for the promotion of peace, justice, freedom and righteousness.”¹⁵ I, therefore, propose that the SDA Church needs to research and embark on new ways to serve humanity, and Douglas has presented a very meaningful model.

2. Conclusion

I conclude that historically the abuse of women has been with us since the beginning of time. It appears that a patriarchal system of leadership has supported such abuse. Churches, in general, and SDAs, in particular, have been silent on the issue of abuse. It is my thesis that the reason Adventism has generally kept silent, when it comes to human rights issues, is based on its view and use of Scripture impacting on its eschatology, ‘anthropology and ultimately on its ecclesiology.’

I concur with Paulsen when he points out that, “Christ had come for *the very purpose of undoing the devil’s work* (1 John 3:8), and one cannot escape the fact that there are certain vestiges of injustice, inequality, and deprivation in the world, expressions of the devil’s work, which the Church as community must expose and take part in discrediting. The evil which is alien to God’s Kingdom is under God’s judgment. The Church must be an instrument in history to express that judgement.”¹⁶

¹⁴ Walter Douglas. 1980. *The Church: Its Nature and Function*: 66.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*: 66.

¹⁶ Jan Paulsen. 1990. *Social Service/Social Action – is that also God’s Mission?*: 142.

He says that the Biblical message is very clear when it comes to social injustices.¹⁷ When one reads the Gospels, you cannot avoid being struck by the compassion that Jesus had for those who were overcome by the atrocities of society, both physical and mental. He concludes that the Church should be moved with “understanding and compassion towards those who are suffering.”¹⁸

I would like to conclude with a statement Plantak made which presents my sentiments:

“The reason Adventists need to become involved in the world is not because they think they can turn this world into God’s eternal kingdom. On the contrary, Adventists believe and preach that his eternal kingdom is still to come. Adventists must become involved because their God cares and wants them to care for each other. Identifying with Jesus means identifying with the poor, oppressed and those whose basic rights and freedom are denied them.”¹⁹

¹⁷ *Ibid.*: 142. The biblical message with regard to social injustices and inequalities is quite explicit: God’s judgement is on those who perpetrate and pursue the exploitation of their fellow-humans for their own selfish ends. His message to Israel was stern: *Cease to do evil and learn to do right, pursue justice and champion the oppressed (Isa. 1:17); shame on you!.. depriving the poor of justice, robbing the weakest of my people of their rights (Isa. 10:1,2); Is not this what I require of you... to loose the fetters of injustice, to untie the knots of the yoke, to snap every yoke and set free those who have been crushed? Is it not sharing your food with the hungry ... ? Then shall your light break forth like the dawn (Isa. 58:6-8).* God clearly expects his people to *act justly/do justice (Micah 6:8)*, and if they are guilty of grinding *the head of the poor into the earth (Amos 2:7)* God says he will grant them no reprieve. One’s *relationship to the Lord* is expressed by one’s willingness and ability to *dispense justice to the lowly and poor (Jer.22:16)*. Therefore God commands his people: *Seek good and not evil.... Hate evil and love good; enthrone justice in the courts (Amos 5:14,15)*. The Lord who is *gracious and compassionate.... constant in his love, [whose] tender care rests upon all his creatures (Ps. 145:8,9)* is very sensitive to the cries of the poor. So does he expect his people to be (*Ps. 72,103,146*). The alien is another category which God singles out as people who should be dealt kindly with. Exploitation of and denial of basic human rights to the alien is severely rebuked by God (*Ezek. 22:7,29; Dent. 10: 17-19; Ex. 23:5,9; Lev. 19:33,34*). The basis of God’s demand of Israel is quite straightforward: You are to love the alien because *I love the alien... giving him food and clothing (Deut. 10:18)*.

¹⁸ *ibid.*: 143.

¹⁹ Zdravko Plantak. 1998. *The Silent Church*: 48.

Women are crying out for help.²⁰ Women deserve the right to be heard. They deserve the right to have their rights respected, and the Church is the one place where this can be achieved.

²⁰ Sakae Kubo, *The God of Relationships*. : 72. "They want 'freedom from exploitation in the *labour market*, equal pay and employment practices, and quality child care for working women; freedom to develop more meaningful and creative styles of *family life* so that the woman is not left to living vicariously through her husband and children and is not trapped by domestic isolation from the public sphere and by enforced triviality in the thirty years of her life which remains after her children are fully grown; freedom from *sexual exploitation*, and degrading use of her body for entertainment and advertising promotion."

Chapter 6

SUMMARY

The aim of this research project was to investigate the possible reasons why the SDA Church marginalises abusive relationships, but more especially, the issues of ‘the abused woman.’ It was not my intention to negate what the SDA Church has done, and is doing, for humans when it comes to the Gospel. I, however, was appealing for more of an openness to deal with human rights issues with the same tenacity, as when doing evangelism. I, therefore, postulated that there is a very real need for the SDA Church to rethink its position on pastoral care and counselling and abused women.

I approached this research in the following manner:

In chapter one, I introduced the subject of research and gave a short overview of abused women and the SDA Church.

In chapter two, I attempted to establish the historical context of abuse by presenting a short history and some relevant statistics. Because many researches identified ‘the patriarchal system’ as a major contributing factor to abuse, I included a short synopsis in this chapter on the issue. I concluded that, historically, abuse is a very real issue and, statistically, a very relevant issue, and that the SDA Church is not immune to this atrocity.

In chapter three, I departed from the viewpoint that it is the way the Institutional SDA Church views and uses the Scriptures that are foundational to the issue I am addressed. Because Adventists view the Scriptures as authoritative and normative, I contrasted the two most prominent approaches,

namely, the 'confessional' and 'progressive' view and use of Scripture. I pointed out that the Institutional SDA Church has a 'confessional' approach to the Bible, which views the Scriptures as authoritative and inerrant. The focus is that of the Reformers – *sola scriptura*. Interpretation of the text is achieved via exegesis, where the 'nature,' 'core' and 'essence' of Scripture is determined through a lexicographical and historical grammatical approach. I pointed out that from the 'confessional' approach, the text of Scripture becomes the 'Word of God,' making it 'timeless' and acontextual. On the other hand, Thompson, a 'progressive' theologian, maintains that the Scriptures do have errors. He claims that it was, the men who were inspired and not the words. He approaches the Scriptures from a descriptive historical-critical method, without the naturalistic presuppositions. Working, thus, from the context to the text. Thompson presents an 'incarnational' approach to the Scriptures, claiming that the Bible is a 'casebook' and not a 'codebook.' I concluded that the 'confessional' approach has serious implications for abused women. Yet, on the other hand, the 'progressive' approach has more of an openness when it comes to dealing with contextual issues, and, more specifically, abused women.

In the fourth chapter, I discussed some theological issues which, I contend, have an impact on the issue of abused women. I pointed out that an Institutional SDA eschatology focusses on the kingdom that is to come (last events) to the neglect of the present kingdom. Adventist eschatology, therefore, is apocalyptic in nature with a tendency to marginalise social issues. I also pointed out that a 'low theological anthropology' has serious consequences when dealing with abused women. The implication of this 'low' anthropology is that abused women are only sinners in need of salvation, thus they must endure their suffering. I, then, pointed out that, because of the above eschatology and anthropology, the Institutional SDA Church's mission is focussed on evangelism which is very reductionistic in nature. Thus, any social involvement is a means to an end, and seldom an end in

itself. I noted that the primary focus of the Institutional Church is to ‘proclaim’ the gospel to a sinful world so as to prepare it for the second advent of Christ. I concluded that because of this emphasis human needs are regarded as secondary, subordinate to the proclamation of the gospel.

In the last chapter, I proposed that Thompson’s ‘incarnational’ approach to the Scriptures presents more of an openness to dealing with social issues. Thus, I recommended that a *‘prima scriptura’* approach to the Scriptures would be more meaningful than a *‘sola scriptura’* approach. I also recommended that the SDA Church investigate and research the possibilities of developing more of a ‘holistic’ eschatology, which includes the whole of Christ’s history as eschatology, thus giving social and human rights issues equal opportunities within the Gospel. I also recommended that the ‘realistic’ anthropology of Lategan could be very meaningful within the SDA Church. Instead of only focussing on the ‘fallenness’ of humans, to also consider their creative potentials, thus giving abused women the opportunity to rise above their broken self-worth and enabling them to deal with the abuse they are facing, or have, faced.

I, further, recommend that Douglas has presented a very meaningful model for the Church, in the ‘servant model.’ I proposed that further research into this model, keeping in mind the ‘holistic’ eschatology, realistic anthropology, and more of an ‘incarnational’ view of Scripture, could only benefit the SDA’s mission and ministry.

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