

# **Pavement Encounters For Justice**

Doing Transformative Missiology with  
homeless people in the City of Tshwane

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Doing Transformative Missiology with homeless people in the City of Tshwane

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## CHAPTER 8

### Rape and sexual violation against men: the experiences of the homeless community in the City of Tshwane

C Mangayi

#### Abstract

The aim of this chapter is to reflect on rape and sexual violation against men, especially from the experiences of a homeless community in Tshwane. Twenty participants were engaged through Contextual Bible Study method to gain key insights into what could be done to address this crime which is a hidden reality in Tshwane. Based on their reflections of Genesis 19: 1-14, this group suggests a contextual, integrated praxis which consists of a combination of actions to be undertaken in the realms of education, advocacy, provision of safe spaces, compassionate ministry and seeking of divine intervention, in order to address this crime.

#### Introduction

On 16 February 2013, purplegloves.wordpress.com, posted a story of a 33 year-old man who was allegedly raped in Kroondal in the North-West Province by six men who drugged him and put a plastic bag around his head before violating him. This attack happened while the victim was walking to work. DC, who initially posted the story, wrote:

I was brought up to believe that men are supposed to be strong and never to admit to any form of weakness. To be raped is to admit that you are unable to protect yourself and hence may not be able to protect others. It is no wonder then, that men are raped more often than is reported, especially during war and conflict, which is not surprising since rape is more about violence and control than sexual satisfaction. All this means that such a crime will keep occurring (whether or not there is political instability), since the perpetrators are almost certain their targets will not go to the authorities (Purple Gloves: 2013).

Even though, according to Interpol (2012), South Africa is known as the world's rape capital, rape and sexual violation against men, especially in the context of homelessness, is in the main not known to the public, as DC rightly articulated in the foregoing article. Certainly, there are people who have suffered and are still suffering in silence from this crime in South Africa, and specifically in the City of Tshwane. Hence, this matter needs to be probed so that it can be addressed for the sake of justice and collective wellbeing. In order to achieve this, humanity as a whole, including those on the margins, such as the homeless, needs to stand together in creating a just society in Tshwane. In general, conventional wisdom in dealing with issues such as rape and sexual violation relies on the government and other public

institutions to come up with solutions. Usually, the shape of these solutions is elitist top-down and might at times overlook the desires and wishes of communities on the margins, such as the homeless in cities such as Tshwane.

Going against this elitist top-down wisdom, this research – with a view to liberation and transformation – worked with the homeless (a community on the margins) to describe, analyse, reflect and come up with solutions to address the issue of rape and sexual violation against men. Hence, this chapter attempts to answer this question, i.e. what will the insights be from a local homeless community on how to address rape and sexual violation against men in the inner City of Tshwane?

Rape and sexual violation against men is one of the issues that the Meal of Peace project of the Department of Christian Spirituality, Church History and Missiology in the College of Human Sciences at the University of South Africa, in consultation and partnership with Tshwane Leadership Foundation and the Homeless Forum, chose to probe as part of a community-engaged action research project in missiology. Other issues associated with homelessness that are being probed include land dispossession, justice and healing for the individual, human dignity, poverty, marginalisation and the quest for collective wellbeing, economic justice, silenced voices and forming of habits. Overall, this research is aimed at “doing justice in the context of homelessness” in the inner City of Tshwane through holistic, reflexive and dialogical processes. This particular chapter makes a missiological contribution in terms of sharing insights from those on the margins for a praxis geared to addressing the issues that might have affected specifically those homeless men who may have been raped and sexually violated.

What is considered rape in South Africa? The Sexual Offences and Related Matters Act (SORMA) of 2007 stipulates that when “any person (A) who unlawfully and intentionally commits an act of sexual penetration with a complainant (B), without consent of B, is guilty of the offence of rape” (Department of Justice and Constitutional Development 2007: 11). What about sexual violation? SORMA explains that “Sexual violation includes any act which causes: a) direct or indirect contact between the genital organs or anus of another person or, in the case of a female, the breasts or mouth of one person and the genitals or anus of another person; b) the masturbation of one person by another person; or c) the insertion of any object resembling or representing the genital organs of a person” (Department of Justice and Constitutional Development 2007: 9). Having defined rape and sexual violation in the context of South Africa, I will now highlight the extent of rape generally and specifically, as it relates to male rape.

According to Rape Crisis, “The South African Police Services crime statistics have only recently classified male rape for what it is and this was guided by SORMA. Previously, this offence was categorised as indecent assault” (Rape Crisis 2012)<sup>1</sup>, most likely because of perceived ideas about masculinity, as DC remarked earlier. Also, on the other hand, because rape had been “narrowly defined to refer only to the unlawful penetration of a penis into a vagina (in other words, only a man could rape a woman)” (Artz and Smythe 2013:61). Yet, with reference to male rape in prisons, Rape Crisis further states:

Male rape is extremely rife in South African prisons. It often goes undetected, as victims’ lives are threatened by fellow inmates. This unfortunately highlights the grim lack of determination and will by the South African government to stamp out male-on-male rape. About one in 30 men (3.5%) in South Africa have been raped by a man, according to a study by the Medical Research Council. The study shows that almost 10% of South African men have experienced sexual violation by another man (Rape Crisis 2012).

Police crime statistics released in September 2012 state that in 2011/2012 there “were in total 64 514 sexual offences reported countrywide for that period” (Rape Crisis 2012, see also ISS 2012), but unfortunately these numbers exclude men. Simply put, society still perceives female rape as common and women as the only victims of rape and sexual violence in South Africa. In the same vein, Rivonia Naidu-Hoffmeester and Rajiv Kamal of the University of South Africa News state that “Despite these frightening statistics... rape in South Africa is so common it barely makes the news” (Naidu-Hoffmeester and Kamal 2013)<sup>2</sup> and they further add, “with the exception of the recent death of 17-year-old Anene Booysen, who was gang-raped, mutilated and left for dead, which has stirred the wrath of South Africans frustrated by a national epidemic of sexual violation” (Naidu-Hoffmeester and Kamal 2013). Sadly, men are usually the perpetrators of this violent and dehumanising crime.

Nevertheless, in agreement with the findings of the Medical Research Council referred to earlier by Rape Crisis, this chapter submits that there are men who are vulnerable and at risk. Many have been victims of rape and sexual violation by other men. Yet in a society where men seem to be seen as powerful and in control, vulnerable and at-risk communities (such as boys, homeless men, homosexual men, refugees and asylum seekers) who are violated and raped go unnoticed and unreported. For this reason, I submit that Police statistics are not telling the whole story. Hence, this study engaged through a Bible-based group discussion a group of homeless

<sup>1</sup> I have used a number of internet sources in this chapter due to lack of academic references, and documented data which has a particular focus on the rape and sexual violation against men who are not in prisons.

<sup>2</sup> Same comments as for footnote 1



people which included men, in the hope of getting exposure into, and helping to break the silence about male rape in the City of Tshwane.

Accordingly, the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) cautions: “It is important to remember that sexual offences suffer from low reporting rates and the crime statistics are thus not a good indication of the actual number of cases” (ISS 2012: 2). The prospect of an improvement in the reporting rate of male rape remains particularly bleak until such time as social transformation and awareness-raising regarding this phenomenon could help in creating “safe spaces” where men could report rape and sexual violation against men. These safe spaces could be provided by public institutions such as the State, Non-Governmental Organisations and churches and should be run by trained professionals capable of journeying with men who have survived rape. At present, men (even those who are in prisons) find it difficult to report rape, for fear of being perceived as weak and powerless in a society which naturally sees them as powerful and in control.

Therefore, from the outset, I state that this contribution is venturing into an “obscure terrain” where documented data are scarce and the primary sources (who are homeless) involved in this research could be speculative in their inputs. Nevertheless, I contend that this issue deserves to be investigated and researched as it aims: 1) to shed light on why men rape men, especially vulnerable and at-risk men; 2) to discern how we can individually intervene to stop this rape from happening; 3) to understand conditions and situations which make men vulnerable and at risk and; 4) to put in place a plan of action on how we can address the issue.

The chapter starts by presenting the background, followed by methodology and theological reflection from the perspective of some trained readers of the Bible. Then findings gathered through this encounter will be presented and discussed, so that key insights coming from the voices of the homeless (i.e. emerging voices) are highlighted. Finally, a brief plan of action will be suggested.

## Background

Generally, Rape Crisis amongst others have said that the causes of rape and sexual violation could be traced to a prevailing culture of violence<sup>3</sup> in the

<sup>3</sup> A ‘culture of violence’ argument includes the following: South Africa is a country where a substantial proportion of the male population historically bonded in a violent and highly militarised context. Smythe D. says that both the universal conscription of white men and the absorption of many black men into the liberation struggle have contributed to a culture that sees violence as a legitimate means of resolving conflicts – a culture where ‘tough, aggressive, brutal and competitive masculinity is promoted’ [Office on the Status of Women report. REF. 53] and weakness is regarded, with contempt, as ‘feminine’. Through this violent struggle, South Africa has developed what many commentators refer to as a ‘culture of violence’, or at least an easy acceptance of violence. [Jacqueline Cock’s submission to the Office on the Status of Women report].

country and are associated with political transition and sexual violation<sup>4</sup> (Rape Crisis 2012). Simply put, the fact that we have a culture where tough, aggressive, brutal and competitive masculinity is promoted has made us come to accept violence, including sexual violence, as a way of life. This, in turn, causes more violence. Rape Crisis also said that there is a correlation between rapid political reform and rising levels of crime, including sexual violence. Admittedly, I assume that these causes could be generally relevant in understanding rape and sexual violation as we have come to experience it in South Africa. But I still contend that it would be interesting if these causes were specifically reflected upon in the context of rape of men by men, especially vulnerable men and at-risk men such as the homeless. Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of this chapter to do so.

Nonetheless, rape and sexual violation against men in prisons is being studied or documented – for example, in the works of Sasha Gear<sup>5</sup> (cited by Zinhle Mapumulo) from the South African Office of Just Detention International. Gear stated that the awaiting-trial section of prisons has a really bad reputation for sexual violation. She said:

This is when people are particularly vulnerable and the living conditions are far worse than in the convicted sections. The first few days in prison are a delicate time, because that is where inmates are tested to see if they are capable of violence or if they are persons who will be forced into a feminised prison identity. If you are less aggressive, other inmates see you as feminised and not a real man, which in turn makes you a target for sexual abuse (Gear cited by Zinhle Mapumulo 2010).

In terms of service, SORMA say that known victims of rape and sexual violation in prisons receive services such as, inter alia, Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) and compulsory HIV testing, post-trauma counselling and legal recourse support (Department of Justice and Constitutional Development 2007: 22). SORMA also acknowledges that victims and survivors of rape suffer in a multi-dimensional manner. Hence, from a government perspective, the establishment of an “inter-sectorial” committee comprising of representatives from the departments of Justice and Constitutional Development, South African Police Service, Correctional Services, Social Development, Health and National Prosecuting Authority (Department of Justice and Constitutional Development 2007: 45) is a much-needed infrastructure.

<sup>4</sup> Rape Crisis asserts that certain commentators linked the rising levels of crime to political, economic and social trends which, although accentuated by rapid political reform, originated before the political transition.

<sup>5</sup> Sasha Gear is currently Programme Director at Just Detention International’s newly-established South African initiative – a health and human rights organisation working to prevent sexual violence in all forms of detention. She previously worked at the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation where she did extensive work on sex, sexual violence and masculinity in men’s prisons, and on developing understanding of the situations of ex-combatants in post-apartheid South Africa.

Yet, for men who perpetually live in danger and are exposed on the streets of our cities, such as the homeless in Tshwane, there is a lack of a “tailor-made,” dedicated organisation and infrastructure which could study and provide support to victims of rape and sexual violation against men. This is one of the reasons this study opted for engaging this group directly, in order to get their inputs and insights for an eventual practical action. Thoughts about the expressed wishes of this group of homeless people are included at the end of this chapter.

### **Research Methodology: Contextual Bible Study**

As stated earlier, this study is part of a community-engaged action research aimed at “doing justice in the context of homelessness” in the inner City of Tshwane. With specific reference to this Bible study, twenty (9 men and 11 women) homeless<sup>6</sup> people who agreed to participate in this research were divided into four small groups. They were involved in a Scripture-based focus group discussion known as “Contextual Bible Study” (CBS)<sup>7</sup> developed by Gerald West. Drawing from West’s book entitled *Contextual Bible Study*, Kritzinger (1998: 10-18) explains that CBS is a process based on four central commitments: 1) reading the Bible from the perspective of the South African context; 2) reading the Bible in community with others; 3) reading the Bible in critical consciousness (by taking nothing for granted and by asking constant why questions); and 4) reading the Bible for transformation. In relation to Justin Ukpong’s (2000:12) historical and hermeneutical directions in Africa, CBS falls within Phase III which is concerned with a Biblical interpretation that is proactive, where recognition of the ordinary reader is given centre stage in the African context, as subjects of Biblical interpretation. Also, this phase is dominated by liberation and inculturation methodologies.

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<sup>6</sup> The homeless who participated included foreign citizen refugees and asylum seekers from Zimbabwe, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Lesotho, women who became homeless as result of domestic violence and internally-displaced people who came to the CoT to look for employment.

<sup>7</sup> Contextual Bible Study (CBS) was developed by Gerald West and the Ujamaa Centre staff. CBS is a form of the See-Judge-Act method. Firstly, Contextual Bible Study is always situated within the social analysis and needs of particular communities of the poor, the working-class and the marginalised. It is their perspective on reality that shapes the whole Bible study. Secondly, Contextual Bible Study provides a way of doing theological analysis and “reading the signs of the times.” The Bible is read carefully and closely in order to hear its distinct voice within its own literary and socio-historical context, thereby providing a theological resource from which to reflect on and engage with our social analysis. And thirdly, Contextual Bible Study always ends with emancipatory action. The process ends with a re-engagement with the local context, using the theological resources provided by the Bible study to plan for social transformation (West and The Ujamaa Centre Staff 2011: 4).

For the purpose of this study, the CBS that was conducted with the homeless group incorporated these four commitments in that it firstly attempted to read the Bible from the perspective of a topical issue, namely the rape and sexual violation of men in the context of homelessness in the City of Tshwane (CoT). Through this interaction the group tried to understand the issues associated with male rape and how these issues affect the homeless people in the CoT.

Secondly, the Bible (specifically Genesis 19:1–14) was read in community with others i.e. trained readers (theologians) and ordinary readers of diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds (these were local participants from the homeless community). According to West (1993:15), reading the Bible together with others requires a conversion to community consciousness; trained leaders are to refrain from sharing their scholarly insights with ordinary readers, and all members of the Bible study group to be active subjects in the process. Such an interactive process will have a transforming effect on all participants. This implies that social, cultural and class differences between people in the group had to be overcome by emancipating all participants.

Thirdly, Genesis 19:1-14 was read in such a way that the issue of rape of men was interrogated to extract meaning in relation to our contemporary context. This text was not taken for granted because, although the Bible is considered the Word of God, it also “reveals the fingerprints of human biases and interests” (Kritzinger 1998:15). Nevertheless, this Biblical text was used in a “prayerful and intelligent way in order to hear the voice of God for our particular context” (Kritzinger 1998:17) in relation to the rape of men who are homeless.

Finally, Genesis 19:1-14 was read in such a way that clues for transformation found in this text could assist in formulating a praxis framework. In other words, this text was read with expectations in terms of giving us directions on how to change the situation in which the homeless people find themselves, since it envisaged that both “personal and social transformation should take place together” (West 1993:24).

Furthermore, in terms of the process, CBS includes elements of group dialogue and Freirian codes<sup>8</sup> in that questions are posed to Bible study group participants, while at the same time sufficient time is allowed for small group discussion among peers. Each small group chose a scribe (who captured individual inputs on newsprint) and appointed a person from the group to present their inputs to the big group. At the end of each session, all these inputs from small groups were collected on the newsprints and were

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<sup>8</sup> According to Terre Blanche & Durheim (1999). Freirian codes involve three stages i.e. 1) description (what do you see happening in the play or text?) and first analysis (why is it happening?) 2) real life and related problems and 3) action planning (what can we do about it?)

captured as primary research data, as shown later under the section on encounterological reflection in this chapter.

The passage of Genesis 19:1-14 was used as a hermeneutical key and as a tool to unlock and guide the interaction in the group. This Old Testament text narrates a story whereby the people of the city of Sodom stormed the house of Lot, demanding that he release his two male guests (who, according to the Bible, happened to be angels) so that they could “have sex with them” (verse 5) without consent. The collective and reflective discussion of this text was structured around questions to highlight some issues at play in relation to rape and sexual violation against men. Ten questions based on Genesis 19:1-14 were generated by the trained reader, in this case the author, to guide this encounter. The following questions were posed:

1. What is this text about?
2. What does Lot do when he sees the strangers?
3. What do other men of Sodom want to do to these strangers?
4. Why do the men of Sodom want to rape these men?
5. How does Lot intervene to stop the rape?
6. Why do the men of Sodom want to rape Lot?
7. What do Lot and the strangers have in common?
8. In what contexts in our society do men rape men?
9. Why do men rape men?
10. How can we address the issue?

In relation to the praxis cycle, questions 1-3 guided small groups to describe what they see happening in the story. Questions 4-9 guided small groups to analyse and reflect on issues associated with rape of men by men and to promote a value-based behaviour. Question 10 stimulated small groups to sketch a transformative plan of action with regard to their particular context in the City of Tshwane. Responses of participants to these questions are presented later in the section on “encounterological” reflection.

Since, the “Bible does not speak by itself, and we have to interpret it” (Kritzinger 1998:17), one of the purposes of the Bible study was to search for ways to interpret Genesis 19:1-14 critically and faithfully for our context, so that its relevance might become clearer to homeless people in Tshwane, and that God might indeed speak to us today. Although this historical story is located in a different socio-political and geographical

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<sup>9</sup> The term ‘encounterology’ was coined by JNJ Kritzinger in his article, *Faith to faith: Mission as Encounterology*. An approach of encounterology requires: a) a holistic and reflexive process that considers seven different dimensions of the encounter and b) a dialogical approach in which a Christian enters into a journey of mutual witness with a follower of another faith.

context from that of the participants, it did help the participants – starting from this text – to move to a more or less similar issue (i.e. rape and sexual violation against men) in their context. Admittedly, the interpretation of these ordinary readers of the Bible is not expected to be on a par with that of trained readers. This is perhaps because they come from different theological formations where they live and face different life challenges.

Hence, in the following section, I highlight the usual interpretative insights of this text by some trained readers, specifically Bob Utley's commentary, Open Thomas Scott's commentary of Genesis and views of other theological scholars in relation to this text. These are some of the resources that I, as one of the trained readers belonging to the evangelical sector of the church, am inclined to use for hermeneutic purposes. I submit that these resources come mostly from the conservative evangelical sector of the church and do not necessarily represent the views of trained readers from other sectors of the church in South Africa. Views expressed by these trained readers will be briefly compared to views and insights of ordinary readers of this text in a way which captures insights for action in our context from the emerging voices of ordinary readers.

### **Theological reflection of Genesis 19:1-14 on rape and sexual violation against men**

Theological interpretations of Genesis 19:1-14 on the issue of rape and sexual violation against men should be placed within the context of the Old Testament narrative in one the cities of plains known as Sodom (Genesis 14:2). According to the *New Bible Dictionary* edited by Douglas and others, "Sodom became synonymous with brazen sin (Isaiah 3:9; Lamentations 4:6; Jude 7). Whereas Ezekiel 26:49 lists the sins of Sodom as pride, prosperous complacency and "abomination," Genesis 19:4, 5 concentrates on sexual perversion, particularly homosexuality" (Douglas et al. 1962:1003).

I have observed in some Evangelical and Pentecostal sectors of the church in South Africa that certain interpretations of Genesis 19:1-14 tend to overlook other sins of Sodom by putting emphasis only on homosexuality which, I think, does not do justice to the text.

On homosexuality, Bob Utley (2010) writes that the Bible condemns it as a destructive lifestyle and that it is contrary to the will of God for His creation, because on one hand it violates God's command of Genesis 1 to be fruitful and multiply, and on the other hand it characterises pagan worship and culture (cf. Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:26-27; and Jude 7) and it reveals a self-centred independence from God (cf. I Cor. 6:9-10). Homosexuality was apparently common in Canaan (cf. Lev. 18:22; 20:13). It was also common in the Roman Empire of Paul's day (cf. Rom. 1:26, 27; I Cor. 6:9; I Tim. 1:10).

However, I contend that whenever homosexuality is condemned in some sectors of the church it is also important to assert the principles of God's love, justice and forgiveness to all rebellious human beings. In South Africa, for instance, the church is divided on this issue. Theologians such as Steve de Gruchy and Paul Germond (1997:3) argued that "there are no Biblical or theological grounds on which people should be disinherited and made to be aliens in the household of God because of their sexual orientation." I concur with De Gruchy and Germond and further suggest that no one, particularly not a Christian, has the right to act hatefully and arrogantly towards people because of their sexual orientation: "Prayer, concern, testimony and compassion do far more in this area than vehement condemnation" (Utley 2010:98). Also, in keeping with mutual respect, human dignity and human rights enshrined in the South African Constitution and Bill of Rights, tolerance and acceptance are commendable. Furthermore, it must be acknowledged that sexuality is a gift from God for humanity's well-being, joy and a stable society. However, Utley states that "this powerful God-given urge is often turned into rebellious, self-centred, pleasure-seeking, 'more-for-me-at-any-cost' living (cf. Rom. 8:1-8; Gal. 6:7-8)" (Utley 2010:98). Hence, I submit that any distortion related to sexuality which amounts to rape and sexual violation against men is one such perversion. Rape of whatever sort should therefore be strongly condemned, criminalised and punished, because rape not only degrades this God-given urge, but also disfigures its joy and beauty as it produces sorrow, pain and torment. Thankfully, by divine protection, the two guests of Lot in Sodom did not go through this experience (see Genesis 19: 11).

The narrative took place in a city of Sodom near the Dead Sea round about 100 BC. Two angels, men in human form, speech and dress, were met at the gate of the city of Sodom by one of its elders by the name of Lot. Lot seems to be the only one to address these visitors who resolved to spend the night in the square. Utley states that "as a leader, Lot is obviously aware of the homosexual activities of the inhabitants which he had probably observed several times" (Utley 2010:98). Hence, adds Open Thomas Scott's commentary, he urged them strongly to spend the night in the safety of his home, "aware that insults and (abuse) awaited them in the street" (OTS commentary in Lindner 2008).

With regard to Lot, the OTS commentary of Genesis (in Lindner 2008) writes that his character was upright, and on the whole his example good. He waited for an opportunity to entertain strangers, setting an example of hospitality in the midst of an overwhelming situation of abomination. But, having used all reasonable means to protect his guests, he ought on no account to have made a proposal concerning his daughters (see v.8) which was entirely inconsistent with every moral obligation. It may indeed be ascribed, continues the OTS, "in part to the excessive perturbation of his

mind; but probably his judgment was rather perverted, and his feelings blunted, by the conversation and example of his profligate neighbours (see 1Cor 15:33)” (OTS in Lindner 2008).

In the same vein, Guthrie et al. (1967:98) add that “Lot although lacking in Abraham’s spiritual strength, was a righteous man at odds with his ungodly environment. Outside Lot’s family, there was not one righteous person in any quarter of the city.” Verse 4 implies, comments Utley, “that every single man in the town, both young and old, had become homosexuals, or at least, bisexuals” (Utley 2010:99). This narrative, writes the OTS, “conveys more forcibly an idea of the extreme and unparalleled wickedness of Sodom and is a most beautiful example of giving intimations concerning practices too shameful to be mentioned, in language which excites no other sensation than horror and indignation” (OTS in Lindner 2008).

Insights from the preceding paragraphs rightly depict a contrast between a good character (Lot) and bad characters (other inhabitants of Sodom). Lot portrayed, to use the words of Alister E. McGrath, “ways of thinking and ways of acting that are appropriate to the Christian community of faith” (McGrath 2006:619). So explicitly put, Lot embodied to some extent the mind and the actions for an alternative way of life in Sodom. Although the story related in this text (Genesis 19:1-14) is thousands of years old and happened in a context very different from our context in the City of Tshwane, the meaning of this text for our contemporary world can only be derived by reading “back into” (West 1993: 35) the text.

When we do this, it becomes apparent that one can learn something from this old story about a practical way of being a neighbour to those in need, such as the two strangers in this story. Yet what happened in this story at that time should not be expected to happen in our contemporary context. Nevertheless, Lot’s example stands out. This is in some way what McGrath articulated when he said: “A distinctive way of thinking and acting exists, nourished by the gospel, sustained by the grace of God, oriented towards the glory of God” (McGrath 2006:619). I suppose Lot sought, as he probably learnt from Abraham, to keep the Moral Code of Jehovah in the midst of an alien and ungodly territory. He displayed this, in the words of the OTS, by “setting an example of hospitality in the midst of triumphant abominations.” Yet his suggestion to give over his daughters to the Sodomites was inconsistent with every moral obligation. It speaks to the subjugation – also sexually – of women in the world of the Old Testament. This, to some extent, highlights the flaws that still exist in social organisations which perpetuate sexual abuse of those perceived to be powerless. This subjugation of women is somehow related to the way in which vulnerable men are also abused in this society, as it is substantiated in the story of the gang rape of the 33-year old man, which I related in the introduction to this chapter.



The other inhabitants of Sodom, on the other hand, embodied the depravity of their Dark Ages and thought and acted against the Moral Code. They embodied a type of wickedness which was not only an abomination but also shows disrespect for, and disregard of, other human lives. Regardless of the fact that rape and sexual violation against men or any other human being is horrible, it is also dehumanising and hurting at the most intimate aspect of being human. Maybe they did this because, as Josephus said in his book *Antiquities of the Jews* 1:11:3, the angels were beautiful creatures and excited the lust of the men of Sodom. Hence, the inhabitants of Sodom chose to do this. Nevertheless, "This (intended) homosexual gang-rape would probably have killed the visitors. It is obvious from Verse 9 that this would have also happened to Lot's daughters and even to Lot himself" (Utley 2010:99). In relation to this text and the foregoing argument, I therefore contend that the mission of God's people in similar contexts in contemporary times has to counteract this kind of behaviour anywhere in society.

Christopher Wright rightly states in relation to this story that the mission of God's people, "is to be the community who live by the ethical standards of the ways of God, so that God can fulfil his promise to Abraham and bring about the blessing of the nations. Our ethics and God's mission are integrally bound together" (Wright 2010:83). Furthermore, he states that "the mission of God operates within this fallen world, that the most glorious promise of blessing stands alongside the most terrible words and actions of judgement, and that the people of God are called to live like Abraham in a world like Sodom" (Wright 2010:83-84).

Hence, the happenings in ancient Sodom still serve as an example or a metaphor of the fallenness of the world as well as of contemporary South African society – fallenness marked by "cruelty and oppression," expressed in this story by perverted and violent sexual immorality and other sins. It also depicts the apparent violence and abuse of trust and power that accompany sexual violence. Lot attempted to use his power and authority as a leader in the community to stop this wicked act from happening. Sadly, in the words of Wright, "The world has not changed much from the world of Sodom. The mission of God's people has therefore not changed either. We are still called to be those who are taught by Abraham's example and who are committed to 'walking in the way of the Lord' by 'doing righteousness and justice'" (Wright 2010:86).

Individually and collectively, we are bound to promote righteousness and justice, specifically in the context of rape and sexual violation of men in the City of Tshwane. From the aforementioned discussion, I agree with McGrath, Wright and the commentaries in terms of depiction and metaphoric representation of this text. I am also in agreement with the call to uphold righteousness and justice by setting up alternative

communities in this fallen world we live in, as this is in line with the purpose of this study i.e. imagining ways to address rape and sexual violation against men with its associated issues of oppression, power abuse, gender-based and sexual orientation-based violence and xenophobia, as related to our context. Yet I contend that when reading this text, overemphasis on homosexuality as the only sin that exists should be resisted. Thus, it is important to interpret this text in relation to other scriptures associated with Sodom. I will now table the inputs of ordinary readers of this text we encountered during the CBS process.

### **Encounterological reflection of Genesis 19: 1 – 14 on rape and sexual violation against men**

According to Kritzinger (2008), an approach of encounterology requires: a) a holistic and reflexive process that considers seven different dimensions of the encounter; and b) a dialogical approach in which a Christian enters into a journey of mutual witness with a follower of another faith. Essential to encounterology is praxis as reflexivity i.e. being critical, creative and integrative. The seven dimensions of encounterology include: praxis as agency (affirming personal identity), praxis as spirituality (affirming the depth and diversity of motivation), praxis as contextual understanding (seeing a community theologically), praxis as ecclesial scrutiny (examining the church in context), praxis as interpreting the tradition (using theological sources skilfully) and praxis as discernment (planning for authentic action).

This approach of encounterology was an important framework to which we kept referring in our minds as we engaged the group through Contextual Bible Study. It assisted us to affirm personal identities, as well as the depth and diversity of motivation of both the ordinary as well as the trained readers of Genesis 19:1-14. It helped us to read this Old Testament text critically and skilfully in a way which helped the groups to reflect on contemporary context, church praxis and theological resources in relation to planning for authentic action.

Insights from the findings are summarised in what follows. According to the participants, their impressionistic view of the text is a story which confirms the fact that men are vulnerable to rape in some contexts. It portrays cruelty against strangers and reflects xenophobia. It also speaks of rape as a show of power. The text also speaks of hospitality. Without reading behind the text, the ordinary readers see in this narrative the vulnerability of men and cruelty against male strangers which for them amounts to xenophobia. Also, they see in this text a sign of hospitality. I observe that on their first impression of the text, these readers make a connection with a current issue i.e. xenophobia and cruelty to strangers which have been happening in South Africa for the past three years. I somewhat assume that this issue has had a negative impact on this group, since some of these homeless people are also foreign citizens.

Furthermore, the participants saw Lot as one who welcomes and invites strangers (Groups 1 & 2). He took up the role of a servant (Groups 1, 2 & 4) with humility and showed kindness (Group 1) to strangers. All groups concurred that Lot is a model for hospitality – as he offered a meal as well as a place for the guests to stay overnight. For these groups, it is clear that strangers in need are to be cared for – with food and shelter. Hence, Lot is for them a model citizen as he sought to care, support and provide safety and protection for these foreign guests.

In contrast, with regard to the other inhabitants of Sodom, all groups stated that they wanted to rape the strangers. Group 4 added that they disrespected them because they were foreigners. Furthermore, in his intervention to stop this rape, Lot sought the safety of his guests by ‘closing the door’ (Group 1), by being ‘protective (Group 2 & 3) of his guests and pleaded with the people of Sodom ‘not to hurt’ (Group 2) nor ‘commit this immoral act’ (Group 3) or ‘do anything bad’ (Group 4) to his guests. All groups said that in his desperation, Lot offered (against all moral and ethical codes) to give his daughters to be violated, to guarantee the safety of his guests.

Lot was seen as obstructing the implementation of this crime. Hence, they wanted to rape him too because he was willing to protect strangers (Groups 1 & 4) and refused to hand over the strangers to them (Groups 2 & 3). Also, because he was also a foreigner (Groups 1 & 3) and they could not leave before satisfying the sexual desire (Group 2). The commonality between Lot and the two guests was also highlighted, which is perhaps what prompted Lot to act the way he did. They were all foreigners (stated by all groups), all males (Group 1), all religious men (Group 3), and all were in the minority (Group 3). They also had in common kindness and willingness to protect the vulnerable (Group 1) and fought against the evil (Group 2) that these people wanted to do.

With reference to our context, participants of Group 1 said that men rape men when men have feelings for other men and grown men are sleeping with young men (Group 1). It happens also in prisons (Groups 2, 3 & 4), in isolated places reserved only for men (Group 2), in long distance trains (Group 2), at work places (Group 3), in night clubs (Group 3) and in abusive homosexual relationships (Groups 2 & 4). Group 4 also added that it happens in male prostitution situations and sodomy in rural areas and in situations where HIV-infected women gang-rape men (Group 4).

Among the causes which influence men to rape men, Group 1 said it was watching too many pornographic movies<sup>10</sup>, being attracted to other men (Group 1) and to show power (Group 1, 3 & 4). Also, a lack of women in some places like prison (Group 2, 3 & 4) and the evil desires which burn

<sup>10</sup> It seems inconsistent for homeless people to watch pornographic movies because they don't have homes or private spaces. After clarification, we learned that this input came from homeless people who live in the back yards of Salvokop in cardboard shacks.

inside them (Group 2) influence men to rape men. Group 4 added that sexual lust, anger for revenge and materialistic love (Group 4) influence men to rape men. Finally, it was stated that intoxication and drugs abuse (Group 3) and the HIV myth (Group 3 & 4) influence some men to rape men.

In terms of suggested actions to address the issue, education and disseminating knowledge is suggested by all groups as the most important action – to hold seminars and workshops on issues (educate offenders and survivors, teach about sexual orientation, teach about parenting and family education, legislation about this crime and its consequences and educate on respect for humanity) pertaining to rape and sexual violation against men (all groups). Other actions suggested included to advocate against rape and sexual violation against men and set up support groups for men (Group 1), create a space where men can report rape<sup>11</sup> and encourage survivors to seek legal recourse (Group 2), inject prisoners so that they are less active sexually and stop alcohol and drug abuse<sup>12</sup>(Group 3) and we need not judge but show compassion, treat with love (Group 4) and seek God’s help and transforming power to intervene (Groups 1 & 4) in changing hearts.<sup>13</sup>

### **Synthesis: Emerging voices of the ordinary readers**

What have we heard from the ordinary readers i.e. the homeless people in the inner City of Tshwane about this portion of scripture? Calls for actions to stop rape and sexual violation are regularly made by prominent leaders in our society. Commenting on the cruel murder and rape of Anene Booysen, for example, Professor Makhanya said: “We all need to pause and consciously reflect on the values of respect for life, and the dignity of each fellow human. We are all part of civil society and rape and violence affects every one of us. No one is exempt. We cannot sit back and wait for others to set the foundation for change – that role belongs to all of us” (Makhanya, cited by Naidu-Hoffmeester and Kamal 2013). Although Makhanya’s comment was made in relation to female rape, his call for action is equally valid for male rape. I concur that, in the face of such crime, society cannot indeed sit back and do nothing – it is a collective role to transform society.

It begins by knowing who the vulnerable members are in society and, in the case of this study, it is the homeless folks. Furthermore, these

<sup>11</sup> Male rape victims need a space of their own where they can report rape and sexual violation. The group suggested a space where they will be listened to with dignity and respect.

<sup>12</sup> This suggestion from the group is far-fetched and might contravene South Africa’s Bills of Rights. This kind of thing requires individual consent, which I don’t think people can agree to grant. Nevertheless, this suggestion speaks to some extent of the frustration people feel about male rape in prisons.

<sup>13</sup> Regardless of the fact that the group had different belief systems, all participants of these two groups felt strongly about divine intervention. Hence, they saw this as an important element that should be integrated with other interventions.

vulnerable groups must be engaged as we envisage transformation. Hence, we believe that the insights gained from this homeless group are useful for pastoral praxis and action. Drawing from the inputs and insights of the homeless group, I make the following recommendations:

1. This group ascertains the reality of rape and sexual violation against men, at least for the vulnerable communities living on the margins of society such as foreigners, young men (boys), prisoners and powerless men in secluded places. This shows that some men, especially the vulnerable, can be raped and also confirms the findings of research I alluded to earlier. They also portrayed rape and sexual violation against men as cruel, inhumane and xenophobic. For the group, the people of Sodom symbolise disrespect to other humans, especially the foreigners, as they saw the vulnerability of these two strangers in the story as an opportunity to abuse and violate them. Therefore, I recommend ongoing social analysis into this issue as long as it exists in our society, specifically in the inner City of Tshwane.
2. For this group, Lot is a symbol of 'good' hospitality – his warm welcome of strangers, and his reverence and kindness to them set him apart as a model to emulate. He is also seen as a defender and protector of the 'weak' and vulnerable strangers in the city maybe because he himself shared some commonalities with these strangers. But his act of offering his own daughters to be raped in order to protect his guests should not be emulated, as it is against all moral and ethical codes. The group's descriptions of Lot concur with those of Bible commentators which are linked to his faith in the God of Abraham. Therefore, we can emulate Lot by setting up compassionate and advocacy ministries for the benefit of the vulnerable.
3. With regard to our context, the group affirms that rape and sexual violation against men happen in contexts where men have feelings for men, grown men abuse boys, in secluded places, in long distance trains, in prisons, in male prostitution situations and in homosexual relationships. However, under the South African Constitution, people have the right and freedom to be homosexual or to be in homosexual relationships. Per se, homosexuality and positive and loving homosexual relationships are permissible in the broader society. It is when rape occurs within homosexual relationships or among homosexuals, that it is sexual violence. Hence, even if I hold a different view of homosexuality as a sexual orientation, I am under a moral and ethical obligation to respect, to be fair and to love those of a different sexual orientation from mine. The affirmation by groups

that men are raped is proof that, as it is with women, men are equally susceptible to rape and sexual violation in our context, even in places that supposed to be safe such as homes and public transport. Therefore, I recommend that individually and collectively we embrace and cultivate an ethical, value-based code of conduct which promotes protection, safety and love for all citizens.

4. With regard to the causes, the group lists things such as watching too many pornographic movies, sexual lust, a show of power, a lack of women in places like a men-only prison, intoxication and the HIV myth which influence this behaviour. For the group, these causes are not linked to a socio-cultural and historical context of violence, as research with regard to the rape of women has shown. I recommend further study about causes of male rape, with reference to homeless people in cities.
5. In terms of action to be taken in addressing this issue, the group highlighted as key aspects advocacy, creating a safe space for victims to report this crime, legal assistance, setting up compassionate ministries and seeking also divine intervention for transformation. A safe space in particular will hopefully address the low reporting rate associated with rape in general and male rape in particular. It is also important to highlight the fact that this group added divine intervention as one of the actions for transformation. It implies that the Creator is the only one who is able to bring lasting change. Furthermore, these actions suggest an integrated, multifaceted response to the issue, as opposed to piecemeal responses. Thus, it is important to bear in mind Johan Roux's suggestion that "creating a continuum of empowering care" for destitute people will undoubtedly call for continued and combined efforts by many role-players" (Roux 2008:326). Partnership for diaconal service, as well as seeking divine intervention, will be necessary to bring about real transformation which begins in the hearts of people.

## Conclusion

This chapter makes a contribution to Missiology as it looked at actual people and their real needs, in order to address those needs with solutions and options emerging from the margins. It is dealt with from a Biblical study and reflection, both from a scholarly and an ordinary angle.

This study affirms that rape and sexual violation against men is a reality and a serious problem in our context, being particularly rife in prisons. Yet, according to the local homeless group, it is also happening in

contexts where men have feelings for men, grown men sexually abuse boys, men are in secluded places, men in long distance trains, men in prisons, in male prostitution situations and homosexual relationships. Vulnerable communities living on the margins of society, such as foreign nationals and strangers, young men and boys, prisoners and powerless men in secluded places are at risk and fall victim to rape and sexual violation against them.

In terms of a pastoral plan of action, insights from the local homeless community highlight an integration of the following aspects: education, advocacy, creation of a safe space, compassionate ministry and seeking divine intervention. In relation to mission in the context of homelessness, I suggest that these insights should inspire an articulation of a contextual integrated praxis geared to on-going analysis, reflection, pastoral action and evaluation. The focus of such praxis will be on “doing righteousness and justice”, becoming an alternative community – as did Lot – in the midst of this fallen world.

As a first attempt, this study answered the main question posed at the beginning and further unearthed crucial issues associated with rape and sexual violation against men, which I feel still deserves to be further investigated analytically and systematically by other studies. Also, the lack of literature relevant to the topic remains a serious challenge for meaningful academic engagement.

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