

**AN INCARNATIONAL CHRISTOLOGY SET IN THE
CONTEXT OF NARRATIVES OF SHONA WOMEN IN
PRESENT DAY ZIMBABWE**

by

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SUMMARY

Implicit in the concepts Incarnation, narrative, Christology, Shona women of Zimbabwe today is the God who acts in human history and in the contemporaneity and particularity of our being. The Incarnation as the embodiment of God in the world entails seizing the *kairos* opportunity to expand the view and to bear the burdens of responsibility. A *theanthropocosmic* Christology that captures the Shona holistic world-view is explored. The acme for a relational Christology is the *imago Dei/Christi* and the baptismal *indicative* and *imperative*. God is revealed in various manifestations of creation. Human identity and dignity is the flipside of God's attributes.

Theanthropocosmic Christology as pluralistic, differential and radical brings about a dialectic between the *whole* and its *parts*, the uniqueness of the individual, communal ontology and epistemology, the local and the universal, orthodoxy and orthopraxis, *Christology* and *soteriology*. God mediates in the *contingency of particularity*. Emphasis is on life-affirmation rather than sex determination of Jesus as indicated by theologies of liberation and inculturation. At the interface *gender, ethnicity, class and creed*, God transcends human limitedness and artificial boundaries in creating *catholic space* and advocating all-embracing *apostolic action*. Difference is appreciated for the richness it brings both to the individual and the community. Hegemonic structures and borderless texts are viewed with suspicion as totalising grand-narratives and exclusivist by using generic language. The *kairos* in dialogue with the Incarnation is seizing the moment to expand the view and to share the burdens, joys and responsibility in a community of equal discipleship.

In a hermeneutic of engagement and suspicion, prophetic witness is the hallmark of Christian discipleship and of a Christology that culminates in liberative praxis. The Christology that emerges from Shona women highlights a passionate appropriation that involves the head, gut, womb and heart and underlies the circle symbolism. The circle is the acme of Shona hospitality and togetherness in creative dialogue with the Trinitarian *koinonia*. The Shona Christological designation **Muponesi** (Deliverer-Midwife) in dialogue with the *Paschal Mystery motif* captures the God-human-cosmos relationship that gives a Christology caught up in the rhythms, dynamism and drama of life.

KEY WORDS

Incarnational Christology; narrative Christology; inculturation, contextualization,, Shona women of Zimbabwe, sacramental view, symbolic modern view, pluralistic theology, Africa theology, Liberation theology, Cosmotheanthropocentric Christology, theanthropocosmic Christology, narrative reading of the Bible; differential radical Christology; stages in consciousness raising.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
Summary.....	i
Keywords.....	i
Acknowledgements.....	vi
 Chapter One: Introduction	
Stating the problem.....	1
1.1 Objectives.....	2
1.2 On methods.....	4
1.2.1 The Incarnation.....	5
1.2.2 Narrative.....	12
1.2.3 Transcendental theological epistemology.....	14
1.2.4 The critical-rational-pragmatic approach.....	15
1.2.5 Contextual historical point of departure.....	18
1.2.5.1 The historicity of theological interpretation.....	21
1.2.5.2 The hermeneutic of suspicion.....	23
1.3 The scope of the thesis.....	33
1.4 Organization of Work in chapters.....	35
 Chapter Two: Incarnational Christology	
2.0 Approaches of an Incarnational Christology.....	38
2.1 Sacramental theocentric (<i>from above</i>) view.....	39
2.1.1 Biblical foundations of sacramental Christology.....	41
2.1.2 Extra-biblical foundations of sacramental Christology.....	41
2.1.3 The relation <i>word</i> and sacramental Christology.....	44
2.1.4 The problematic of sacramental Christology.....	44
2.1.4.1 The metaphysical problem.....	45
2.1.4.2 The separation of Christology and soteriology.....	45
2.1.4.3 The challenge of Feminist theology.....	46
2.1.4.4 Modern, symbolic, anthropocentric (<i>from below</i>) view.....	56
2.2.1 Historical overview of anthropocentric Christology.....	59
2.2.2 Modern Christological symbols.....	62
2.2.2.1 Liberation theology.....	62
2.2.2.2 African Christology.....	68
2.2.2.3 Pluralistic Christology.....	73

2.3	Functional-horizontal (<i>from the side</i>).....	77
2.4	<i>Theanthropocosmic</i> Christology.....	78
2.4.1	Inculturation Approach.....	79
2.4.2	The Theocentric (<i>from above</i>) dimension of (African) Shona Christological synthesis emphases and different Christological approaches.....	81
2.4.3	Incarnation as the affirmation of people's lives.....	85
2.4.3.1	Christ the Ancestor.....	87
2.4.3.2	Christ the Chief.....	92
2.4.3.3	Christ the Elder Brother or Sister.....	95
2.4.3.4	Christ the Master or Mistress of initiation.....	97
2.4.3.5	Christ the Healer- <i>Christus Victor</i>	98
2.4.3.6	<i>Cosmotheanthropocentric</i> Christology.....	102
2.5	Conclusion.....	103
 Chapter Three: Narrative Christology		107
3.1	Overview of the historical origins of narrative Christology.....	109
3.2	Narrative-historical approach and faith stories of Shona women.....	112
3.2.1	Myths, proverbs, symbols of life, rituals as sources of Shona women's identity.....	113
3.2.2	Shona women and the power of naming.....	117
3.3	The validation and vindication of the irreplaceable and singularity of Each human being with regard to a person's history and life.....	123
3.3.1	The Christian distinction of otherness.....	125
3.3.2	Shona anthropology.....	127
3.4	Narrative reading of the Bible for an inclusive Christology.....	134
3.4.1	Gender inclusive narrative reading of Genesis 1-3.....	134
3.4.2	Christianity without boundaries: narrative reading of Galatians 3:26-28.....	136
3.4.1	Conclusion.....	138
 Chapter Four: The Narratives of Shona Women		
4.1	Introduction.....	140
4.2	Self-identity of Shona women.....	142
4.3	Shona women's Christian self-understanding.....	143
4.3.1	In the family.....	144

4.3.2	In the ethnical-tribal group.....	147
4.3.3	In social class.....	154
4.3.4	In the church-denomination.....	158
4.4	Shona woman, who do you say that I am?.....	161
4.4.1	Jesus in the family.....	162
4.4.2	Jesus in the ethnic-tribal group.....	164
4.4.3	Jesus and social class.....	166
4.4.4	Jesus in creation.....	168
4.4.5	Jesus in the church-denomination.....	168
4.5	Shona women <i>alive</i> to what God is doing in their midst.....	171
4.5.1	Christ as the answer to the questions Shona women ask in the family.....	172
4.5.2	Christ as the answer to the questions Shona women ask of the ethnic-tribal group.....	173
4.5.3	Christ as the answer to the questions Shona women ask in society today.....	175
4.5.4	Christ as the answer to the questions Shona women ask in the church today.....	176
4.6	Shona women tell of how faith in Jesus has changed their lives.....	176
4.6.1	Jesus in the family.....	177
4.6.2	Jesus in the ethnic-tribal group.....	180
4.6.3	Jesus and social class.....	183
4.6.4	Jesus and the church-denomination.....	186
4.7	Christian discipleship – being women for others.....	189
4.7.1	Christian discipleship and the family.....	189
4.7.2	Christian discipleship and the ethnic-tribal group.....	190
4.7.3	Christian discipleship and social class.....	191
4.7.4	Christian discipleship and the church-denomination.....	194
4.8	Celebrating awareness.....	195
4.8.1	Shona women praising and thanking God.....	196
4.8.2	Shona women’s prayer of petition.....	197
4.8.3	The <i>Our Father</i>	199
4.8.4	Shona women’s prayer, song and poem of hope.....	200
4.9	Conclusion.....	202

Chapter Five: The Approximation of a Radical and Differential

Theology for Today	206
5.1 The <i>no big deal</i> stage.....	210
5.2 The <i>eye-opening stage</i>	213
5.2.1 The dual nature of cultural, biblical and church traditions.....	214
5.2.2 The contingency of particularity.....	227
5.2.3 Situating the subject.....	234
5.3 The <i>passion</i> or <i>appropriation</i> stage.....	240
5.3.1 Prophetic advocacy – a male and female journey.....	246
5.3.2 <i>Circle</i> symbolism from the <i>round hut</i> , <i>womb/matrix</i> and <i>heart</i> and the passion for an inclusive Christology.....	254
5.4 Conclusion.....	256

Appendices

Questionnaire I.....	259
Questionnaire II.....	267
Glossary of Terms.....	270
Bibliography.....	283

List of Plates

Fig. 1, map on Zimbabwe provinces.....	34
Fig. 2, map on Shona ethnic groupings.....	35
Fig. 3, the storyteller.....	105
Fig. 4, storytelling.....	106
Fig. 5, Winnowing woman.....	139
Fig. 6, Map on geographical location of Shona women.....	142
Fig. 7, Shona women's poem.....	201
Fig 8-11, Shona women winnowing, pounding, selecting and grinding nuts for peanut butter.....	204

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 STATING THE PROBLEM

The Incarnation sets Jesus Christ as the *Word who became flesh and dwelt among us* (Jn. 1:14) and is thus called **Emmanuel** (*God with us*, cf. Mt 1:23). In other words, there is stress on the immanence and self-agency of God. God in Christ is understood as a living dynamic presence giving humanity full life and salvation.¹ This is an attempt to make Christ's message of salvation relevant to a particular social context or community of faith. The question, *who do you say that I am* (Mk 8:27=Mt 16:13=Lk 9:18) addressed to the apostles by Jesus is a question that confronts every Christian of every nation, culture and time. As such the response to the Christological question is reciprocal in that in defining the Christ of faith, the believer reaches a certain Christian self-understanding (identity). Consequently, it is true to say that every Christian has some dominant faith-image(s) of Jesus. It is noteworthy that to say that Jesus is *the Christ* (cf. Mt 16:16=Lk 9:18= Mk 8:28) is to make an act of faith with soteriological import.

The task of this thesis rests on the following syllogisms. If God made man and woman in the **imago Dei** (*image and likeness of God*, cf. Gen 1:26-27), then, human beings differentiated as female and male reflect, remind and reveal the Creator. If God is a Trinity of persons, then, in analogical language, each of the divine persons should be described in both masculine and feminine attributes. It also follows that no human being, female as well as male, can authentically represent God to the exclusion and detriment of the *other*. If in the Incarnation Christ assumed human nature, and if Jesus is the *Gospel* (Good News) of God for Shona women, *the Christ, Emmanuel, and a living dynamic presence*, then, what questions concern *Godself* most about Shona women, and who do Shona women say *What God in Christ is?* If Shona women experience Jesus as the Christ, then, what is their faith response? These questions are implied by the keywords to the thesis, *Incarnation, narrative* (Gospel or Story), *Christian discipleship, faith experience* and the subsequent *faith response* in the quest for a contemporary, relevant, vibrant, inclusive and reciprocal Christology. What is at stake for believers, female as well as male, is the appropriation of theological anthropology as inherent in creation and in the baptismal categories, namely, the *imago Dei/Christi* and the subsequent burden of responsibility expressed as *stewardship* and the *baptismal vocation*, respectively. The guiding principle for the equality of believers is Galatians 3:26 that reads:

¹ A glossary of terms in bold-type is given in the appendix.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female: for we are all one in Christ Jesus.

In a patriarchal church and society there is cognitive dissonance in that there is *androcentric bias* in the naming of God and the response in faith. This is obvious in that at the pinnacle of a pyramidal church, God has the same names and language as the rulers, namely, *Fathers*. The ramifications of this patriarchal stance impinge adversely on women. Men control the codes of naming and rituals. God is used to justify the exalted male supremacy. We have women in a men's church. Only males can represent Christ sacramentally. Women are excluded from the centres of power, namely, the Papal Magisterium, and from quintessential doctrines like the Trinity and Christology, *per se*. Men speak *for*, *about*, and *without* women. At best we have half-truths of faith (defined by men without the other half of the human race). At worst, we have distorted truths by way of the patriarchal definitions of women.

1.2 OBJECTIVES

The main task of the thesis is the quest for a Christology *with*, *by*, and *for* Shona Christian women. The Christology serves both as a corrective for orthodox Christology as well as expands the view of the Incarnate Jesus whom we confess as the Christ. The pivotal point is the confession or article of faith, *Jesus is the Christ* (see also the Nicene Creed). Implicit in the classic Christological title *Jesus Christ* is the mutual influencing of the *ontic* (of being) and the *noetic* (of knowledge), of Christology, soteriology, and consequently, of *method* and *purpose* of the Christological quest. Consequently, in a reciprocal Christology, by answering the question, *Who is Jesus*, the women should simultaneously come to know *who they are*. The Ursuline Roman Catholic nun, Bernadette Mbuy-Beya of the Democratic Republic of Congo in her book, *Woman Who Are You* (1998) seems to take this line of Christological quest.

This is not just a rigid and stagnant affirmation, but it is an act by which believers proclaim Jesus experienced as the Christ in praise and thanksgiving and consequently, assume a distinct identity as Jesus' disciples. In the Incarnation, we see God as the God who acts. God in Christ takes the initiative in affirming our full humanity. The French liberation theologian, Marie-Dominique Chenu (Gutierrez 1983:51-52) captures this view well when she says *to evangelize is to incarnate – to en flesh the Gospel message in time*. With all this in mind, I pursue the Incarnation as both a method in theology and as an act of embodiment of Christ in the world.

First, the main *point of departure* is the faith experience of Shona women. This is in accord with orthodox theology's tenet of theology as **fides quaerens intellectum** (*faith seeking understanding*, cf. Anselm of Canterbury – 1033-1109). The line I follow is that of orthopraxis

that has strong overtones of liberation theology. According to the Latin American protagonist of Liberation theology, Gustavo Gutierrez (1988:9), theological reflection is the *second act* that follows critical analysis of the believer's cultural and historical situatedness.

Second, concerning the task of *engendering Christology*, the patriarchal paradigm of Church shows how for centuries women have been alienated and excluded from theology. For almost two thousand years of Christianity we have been listening to androcentric and patriarchal Christological monologues (unilateral or monolithic discourses). It can be said that in an inclusive paradigm, gender by definition cannot and should not be a limiting value but an expanding one, simultaneously holistic, eclectic, trans-specific and encompassing of diverse impulses in the affirmation of all life. The act of confessing Jesus as the Christ implies that every believer engages and should engage actively in the theological discourse

Third, the *narrative paradigm* employed in this thesis is intended to give Shona women a platform and a voice in taking their long overdue and rightful place at the table of theological discourse. As both *locutors* and *interlocutors* in the process of *fides quaerens intellectum*, Shona women thus become proactive agents of history, who, in a new Christian self-understanding are able to speak for themselves as opposed to being pale imitators of men. I see Mercy Amba Oduyoye's *Daughters of Anowa* (1995) as groundbreaking in this respect. I am also inspired by Christina Landman's *The Piety of South African Women* (1998). Musimbi Kanyoro and Wendy Robins' *The Power We Celebrate* (1992) and Oduyoye and Kanyoro's *The Will to Rise* (1992) as efforts in introducing women's ways of *seeing, knowing and doing* in theological discourse. I am aware that feminist theology, since its inception a few decades ago has the primary concern of giving women their rightful place at the table of theological discourse and in the centre of church life (see Oduyoye's *Thalita Qumi!* 1990). What is new about my contribution to the Christological dialogue is the arrival of Shona women in their *family, clan, ethnic, class and creedal* diverse access points, at the scene of theological discourse. I see a similar approach in Isabel Ipawo Phiri's doctoral thesis, *Chewa and Christian: Women's Experience in Central Malawi* (1997).

Fourth, in a *contextual-historical* approach, I intend to give a greater recognition to the alignment of *faith*, (creedal), *ethnic* (tribal), *gender* and *class* access contexts in theological discourse. This, in turn, sets the contemporaneity of Christ or the particularity of the Incarnation in historical relief. In a dialogical Christology in touch with the accents posed by theologies of Liberation – Black, African, Feminist and postmodern and process thought, I acknowledge the *difference*, not only between men and women, but also, between women

themselves in their particularity as locutors and interlocutors in theology and in the wealth it brings to a universal or all-embracing Christology.

Finally, following the *critical-rational* approach, and the feminist appropriation of the Old Testament prophetic critical tool, I engage in the hermeneutic of suspicion. There is concern for a Christological synthesis that is both inward and outward looking. In other words, primacy is given to the coherence, cohesion and justification of Shona women's Christology. It is hoped that the contemporary Christ symbol emerging from Shona women's perspective speaks in the local idiom and provides answers to the questions that the women ask. In a plea for orthodoxy, there is concern for a Christology informed by tradition (the legacy of ecumenical councils and creeds and other ensuing theological attainments). In other words, there is concern that the contemporary Christ in the particularity of the Shona women's situation should be in continuity with the Jesus of Nazareth that was believed and worshipped by Christians through the ages as the Incarnate Word of God – **vere Deus, vere homo** (*true God and true man*), who preached the *good news* of the *Kingdom* or *reign of God* (*basileia toû theoû*), died and was raised from the dead for our salvation. In the contextual narrative-historical perspective, there is a quest for a Christology informed by the past, sensitive to contemporary needs and with hope for the future.

1.3 ON METHOD

Concerning method in my Christological synthesis and analysis, I see this as an interdisciplinary task influenced by scientific (induction, deduction, abduction) – neutral observer-rational- objectivity, phenomenology, sociology, psychology and historiography. Here I give a brief explanation about the methods used, namely, *Incarnation, narrative, transcendental, critical-rational-pragmatic* and *contextual-historical*. The Bible, Church tradition, culture and human experience as texts and sources of theology are understood as historically conditioned. The pertinent issue is the openness or growth of divine revelation. I see the response of faith as an engagement in creative love. Thus we read in the Gospel that *God is love* (1 Jn 4:16). The Jewish philosopher, Martin Buber (McGrath 1994, 1997), in exposing the *I-Thou* relationship of God, humanity and the world is a good representative of a relational Christology. Buber portrays God as the *Ultimate Thou* in this relationship. The Jesuit priest, Martin R. Tripole (1995:646-665) points out that in the mutual influencing of love and justice grounded in theology, love is the *ultimate* and justice is the *penultimate* value. In other words, I see the women's self-knowledge and self-actualization as a response in faith that is the flipside of the believer's answer to the Christological question addressed to every believer in what C.H. Dodd

(Robert H. Culpepper 1966-1988:432) calls the *contingency of particularity*.³ Liberation theologians (Gutierrez 1983:52, cf. Chenu) accentuate this point in the tenets, *to know and to love God is to do justice*. The medieval Franciscan theologian Duns Scotus (cf. Philip Sheldrake 2001:164) captures this view by saying that *theology is doing God*. I acknowledge that African theologians have captured the ontological theological epistemology *vis-à-vis* the African communitarian ontology and epistemology (cf. John Pobee 1996:166-167).

1.3.1 THE INCARNATION

The Incarnation is about God's self-limitation in the person and work of Jesus Christ. It tells about the transcendent, supra-rational and omnipotent God, who, in self-limitation, enters our world of particularity or limitedness in terms of time and space and in becoming human like us. In becoming self-positing in Christ, God as *Emmanuel* is immanent, compassionate and all-embracing love. In seeing the *Incarnation* both as a method and a *goal* or *aim*, I concur with Lonergan (1971:73) that the hermeneutic key to the meaning of the Incarnation lies in all other carriers of meaning, *intersubjective* relationships, the *artistic*, the *symbolic* and the *linguistic*.

There are two views of the Incarnation, both of which have an important bearing on a contemporary Shona women's Christology. One view advocates the Incarnation as co-eval with creation, where the second view characteristic of orthodox Christology subscribes to the unique and specific revelation of god in the Christ-event (life, work, suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth). Orthodox Christology thus concentrates on *special revelation*. The former view subscribes to the *transcendental* methods of theological epistemology – *natural theology* and *general revelation*. There is emphasis on the understanding that humanity created in the image and likeness of God has an inert or infinite capacity for comprehending the infinite. The main representative of this view in patristic theology is Justin Martyr (100-165 CE). In his doctrine of the **Logos spermatikos** (*seed-bearing word*), Justin argues for the idea that from the beginning of creation God prepared for the final self-revelation in Christ (McGrath 1994,1997:10-11). In the theology of *inculturation* or *situational, contextual theology*, it is understood that culture as text is a **praeparatio evangelica** (*a preparation of the Gospel*). In other words, culture mediates the Gospel, evangelization and faith.

The protagonist for the doctrine of special revelation, the Swiss theologian, Karl Barth (1886-1968) presents a *theanthropology* that borders on *humanism* by saying that through the

² Duns Scotus, cf. Allan B. Wolter's *The Philosophical Theology of Duns Scotus* (1990:69-97).

³ C.H. Dodd, in *The Bible Today* (1956:1-7)

Incarnation, *man is the measure of all things, since God became human* Gutierrez 1988:6).⁴ God is described as intervening in human history at a point in time and with the specific intention of redeeming humanity from sin. In the classical concepts of *election* and *covenant*, this view of the Incarnation causes problems of an exclusive arbitrary God. The problem of divine arbitrariness is highlighted in the Exodus incident of the crossing of the Red Sea (Ex 15) when God is imaged without qualms as an impassionate Warlord, who wipes out the Egyptians as enemies of Israel by drowning while the latter crosses the sea dry-shod. St Augustine of Hippo (354-430), in *De Trinitate* (*On the Trinity*) shows elements of humanism by arguing that, *if God is indeed to be discerned within creation, we ought to find God at the height of creation* (McGrath 1994,1997:188). Drawing from Genesis 1 and 2, Augustine concluded that the height of creation is human nature. Psalm 8 too is often cited to justify the lordship over nature – a lordship often implicated in humanity's despoliation of the environment. Humanism drawn to excesses is implicated, for example, in Nazism that in its ideology of the pure race carried out the Jewish holocaust (extermination of Jews in gas chambers – Auschwitz). Other examples are found in racial apartheid, and even, the apartheid of gender. Patristic Christological debates that culminated with the Chalcedon Council (454 CE) formulation concentrated on ontology – the relation of the two natures of Christ, divine and human at the expense of *soteriology*.

Concerning the relation of faith to culture, or, the mediating role of culture in Christology, Clifford Geertz (1973:89) unambiguously highlights an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by which human beings communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life. He adds:

Sacred symbols function to synthesize people's ethos – the tone, character, and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood – and their world view – the picture they have of the way things in sheer actuality are, their most comprehensive ideas of order. In religious belief and practice, a group's ethos is rendered intellectually reasonable by being shown to represent a way of life ideally adapted to the actual state of affairs the world view describes, while the world view is rendered emotionally convincing by being presented as an image of the actual state of affairs peculiarly well-arranged to accommodate such a way of life.

Geertz (1993:87) claims that religion as a cultural system has a marked idiosyncrasy, power and bias and the vistas it opens and the mysteries it propounds are another world to live in. What does this mean in terms of Christ's historical, biological, ethnical and cultural particularities? What is at stake here is the contingency of particularity. An emphasis on this expands the view

⁴ Karl Barth, in *Christengemeinde und Bürgergemeinde* (Zollikon-Zurich:Evangelischer Verlag, 1946:36); English version: *Against the Stream: shorter Post-War Writings* 1946-52 (1954)

of the Incarnation by taking note of new impulses in Christology. Culture and all human experience are taken seriously.

Concerning the relation of faith to culture, or, the mediating role of culture in Christology (theology), according to Pope John Paul II (Dermot Lane 1992:8), inculturation is bringing the power of the Gospel into the heart of culture(s). Efoë Julien Pénoukou of Benin (cf. Shorter 1988:78), in a theological understanding of inculturation sees a link between Christology and inculturation.⁵ As a protagonist in pointing to the link between inculturation and the Incarnation, Pope John Paul II (Lane 1992:8) exposed the organic and two-way link between Christianity and culture as follows:

*The synthesis between culture and faith is not just a demand of culture, but also of faith. A faith, which does not become culture, is a faith, which has not been fully received, not thoroughly thought through, not fully lived out.*⁶

Shorter (1988:59-63) strikes the same note when he says that inculturation is a prerequisite for every lived faith.

The quintessence of an incarnational Christology is that God's self-revelation continually unfolds within a people's lived experience as God guides and leads them to full humanity and dignity. Christianity and the Gospel then can be said to be dynamic and challenging at all times and in all cultures as they become better understood and lived by each people. This is an attempt to make Christ's message of salvation relevant to a particular social context or community. In the presence of an all-consuming secondary culture introduced by Westernization and globalization, the pertinent question in this thesis is, *whose culture and whose experience is important for an incarnational Christology?* An equally important question for a contextual theology is, *who judges whom, culture or the Gospel?*

In the Roman Catholic Church, the emphasis on an *incarnational theology* as synonymous with *inculturation* or *evangelization* found impetus with the Second Vatican Council's (1963-1965) promulgation of a theology sensitive to the *signs of the times*. The Council urged for the need for dialogue between culture and the Gospel (Italian: **aggiornamento**). *Aggiornamento*, then, denotes the need to modernize the Church and the Christian faith in the upsurge of a technologically and socio-economically and politically changing society. The protagonist of the theology of *the signs of the times*, Pope John XXIII (Gustavo Gutierrez 1988 xlv-xlvi) explains that we have to understand from the outset that *it is not that the Gospel has changed: it is that*

⁵ Efoë Julian Pénoukou, in *Eglises d' Afrique Propositions pour L' Avenir* (1984).

⁶ John Paul II, in *Catechesis Tradendae* (1979).

we have begun to understand it better. He adds that awareness of the historical development of revelation compels us *to seize the opportunity and to expand the view.*⁷ Such a contextual theology takes culture and all human experience seriously. This essay explores what such a confession means for the African Christian in general and for Shona women in present day Zimbabwe in particular.

The Ghanaian Anglican theologian, John S. Pobee (1992:34-41) identifies two other aspects of *aggiornamento*. These are **kenōsis** (*self-emptying*) and **skenōsis** (cf. the Greek **skenoō** denoting *a tent, dwelling, abode, lodging*). *Kenōsis* theologically can denote the *kenōsis* of the Father (Rosemary Radford Ruether 1983,1993:1-3) and of Christ (Philp 2:6-11) – also known as the *self-emptying* (*self-limiting* or *condescension*) of God in *special revelation* as seen in the person and work of the incarnate Jesus of Nazareth (Pobee 1992:34). Here Pobee explains that inculturation is sometimes described as the need for dialectic in the transmission of faith involving the *kenōsis* of the Christian tradition and the *kenōsis* of African cultures that culminates in a **tertium quid** (*third position*) – *skenōsis*. In this dialectical approach, the Roman Catholic theologian of the Pontifical Council of Culture, Louis Luzbetak (1988:81) identifies three poles. These are the Gospel, church tradition and local culture.

The Christological question confronts us with the task of *contextualization and inculturation or evangelization*. Pobee explains that *skenōsis* in its Greek origin denotes *the tabernacling of the soul of the eternal and non-negotiable Gospel of Christ* in the culture or life situation of a people. The Incarnation, then, demands that the lived faith experience of Shona women should be taken seriously. A Zimbabwean (Manyika ethnical group) Roman Catholic priest, Frederick Chiromba (1994:11) underscores this view when he says that inculturation or evangelization is about *feeling at home in one's culture and the culture of our time*. He elaborates that this is a movement towards a *New Jerusalem*. This idea is captured by the African Synods of Bishops (Rome 1994) in adopting the model of the church in Africa as *Family*.

The urgency for an inclusive operational paradigm for an Incarnational Christology is shown in that today because of Westernization and globalization, we talk about the confluence of cultures. Awareness to the reality of cultural pluralism in any social context like that of Shona people of Zimbabwe today adds a new dimension to inculturation as inclusive of what the Ugandan Roman Catholic priest, John Mary Waliggo (1988:12) calls *interculturalism*. The latter admits to cultural interdependence or mutual influencing for the enrichment of cultures.

⁷ Pope John XXIII, the words dictated to Cardinal Gigognani on May 24, 1963, shortly before the pope's death. The citation is found in Peter Hebblethwaite's *Pope John XXIII: Shepherd of the Modern World* (1985-198-199)

The African philosopher, Kwasi Wiredu (P.O. Bodunrin 1990:177) aptly recognizes the process of inculturation or interculturalism as involving a creative tension between the old and the new, local culture and other cultures, indigenous culture and Christian culture, culminating in a synthesis that admits to new possibilities that will both fulfil and transform the old culture by asserting that:

[F]or a set of ideas to be a genuine possession of a people, they need not have originated them, they need only appropriate them, make use of them, develop them, if the spirit so moves them, and thrive on them. The intellectual history of mankind is a series of mutual borrowings and adaptations among races, nations, tribes, and even smaller sub-groups.⁸

Concerning the aspect of cultural continuity and the anthropological concern to maintain an African identity within the Christian identity, it can be said that there is a real sense in which we can talk of the Shona culture or Shona women's conceptual frame of reference within this cultural mix. It is in this context that culture can correctly be understood as a *praeparatio evangelica* (a preparation for the Gospel). We acknowledge the mutual influencing of the *old* and *new*. By the same note, this is a recognition that inculturation does not take place in a cultural vacuum.

The new approach to social research is to analyse and synthesize any particular social context as a pluriform of cultures. This approach is as old as Christianity itself as noted by Anton Wessels in his book, *Europe, Was it ever really Christian?* (1990). According to Dermot Lane (1992:9), the Gospel exists in an inculturated form. Wilfred Cantwell Smith (John Hick 1973:124) concurs with this view in asserting that Christianity very early on consisted of a confluence of cultures, namely, Greek, Roman, Latin-Mediterranean, Germanic and Celtic. Smith says:

It is clear, for example, that Christianity has developed through a complex interaction between religious and non-religious factors. Christian ideas have been formed within the intellectual framework provided by the Greek philosophy; the Christian Church was moulded as an institution by the Roman Empire and its systems of laws; the Catholic mind reflects something of the Latin Mediterranean temperament, whereas the Protestant mind reflects something of the northern Germanic temperament, and so on.

Nevertheless, inculturation is an acknowledgment of both reciprocity and a distinctive identity between cultures and the Gospel and of the particularity of the Christian message for a particular people in spatio-temporal categories. In emphasizing the primacy of the Gospel over culture, Pope John Paul (Shorter 1988:229) warns of the danger of *culturalism*. Jeremy Punt (1993:319) accentuates this point when he says that the universal character of the Gospel is that

⁸ Kwasi Wiredu, in a Paper, *What is African Philosophy*, presented at the William Amo International Symposium in Accra, Ghana (24-29 July 1978).

it not only tests every culture, but also, it allows every people to make a contribution to the Kingdom of God (the *reign of God*).

The problem of cultural imperialism or ethnocentrism is an inevitable element in a situation of cultural pluralism. The height of cultural imperialism exists in the evangelizing activity of early missionaries to Africa (*albeit*, as people of their time). Western ideas and values were imposed on the converts. In this paradigm, the missionaries operated in a dual mind-set of Western-African, superior-inferior, sacred-profane, sophisticated-primitive that put Christianity and the local culture into opposing camps. Christianity itself was under the tutelage of Western culture. The local culture was thus undermined and denigrated to primitive and pagan. The dialogue between the culture of Shona women and Christianity does not in any way detract from recognizing the pluriform of cultures in present day Zimbabwe and in Christianity itself. It is obvious that there is no pure Shona culture or Christian culture in present day Zimbabwe. Through the processes of Westernization and globalization, there is a cultural mix or a confluence of cultures to an unprecedented degree. There is the danger of *Interculturation* or *multiculturalism* becoming an imperialistic ploy in the sense of the emergence of a secondary culture based upon market forces, consumption mentality and the *integration effect* of democratic practices – the emergence of an all-consuming secondary culture (Jeremy Punt 1993:318). In a differential approach to an inclusive incarnational Christology, it is essential to recognize the many levels of reciprocal influencing. From this position, I acknowledged from the outset the phenomenon of cultural pluralism.

The point I want to emphasize at this initial stage is that the codes and modes with which one operates, such as, gender, class, creed and ethnicity as found within a particular social context, do not have to function with theological and philosophical ideas in different cultures as *either/or* (exclusive) but rather as *both/and* (inclusive). In other words, the interrogation and investigation of “space and time” between and beyond the present oppositional cultural contexts and elements, for example, between what is Western and African or Eastern should vibrate conterminously in a mixing of *both/and* of an inclusive theology or theory of faith. What I intend to do in this thesis is to devise a dot-pattern portrayal of overlapping and particular – agreements, disagreements and particular elements in a dialectic of Christianity and the Shona women of Zimbabwe today’s world view or frame of reference in view of the pointers of gender, creed, ethnicity and class within the ambience of an incarnational Christology.

In the contingency of particularity, there is general agreement that the incomprehensible God cannot be straight jacketed or confined into any human mould, but nevertheless, in theological epistemology, God can be approximated through the use of human images and analogies. But

orthodox Christology and other male-dominated Christologies (Liberation and African) are fraught with problems for Shona women's Christology. God is reified as male, and with this, the male becomes the norm for full humanity. The *maleness* of God is extrapolated from the *maleness* of the historical Jesus of Nazareth. For the Roman Catholic Church, up-until-today this is a non-negotiable issue. There is failure to realize that it is not the sex but salvation attained through Christ that is determinative for full life in God. The theology of inculturation strongly supports the image of Christ as *Ancestor*. But *ancestor* in a patriarchal society is clearly male. However, this stance is challenged by matrilineal societies in Africa. Taking note of the existence of patriarchy in a matrilineal society, the challenge is taken further by the existence of matriarchal societies (e.g. among the Lobedi people of South Africa who are under the Mudjadji Queenly Dynasty – cf. S. Thorpe 1996:77-91) in Africa. In this context, Mercy Amba Oduyoye, in *Daughters of Anowa* (1995) urges the notion of the proto-ancestor as *ancestress* in a matrilineal society of Ghana. The guiding principle is that God is neither *male* nor *female*. The corollary is that God/Christ is *above* and *beyond* human ancestors.

Feminist theologians expose the problematic of African theologies of liberation and inculturation. They point to *cognitive dissonance* in that from the premise of the contingency of particularity, the historical, ethnic, and racial particularities of Jesus are accepted today as contingent, whereas his maleness (at least in the Roman Catholic Church is not ascribed contingency. Thus the maleness of Christ is problematic in a way that his Jewishness is not. In Liberation theology, the *Black Christ* and *Black Messiah* are Christological models attempting to overcome the problem of *racism* – specifically the problem of Christ being used to justify the use of the white middle-class male as the norm for full humanity. Liberation theology done from the standpoint of the poor, advocates God/Christ as clearly a *Kenotic, Subversive Liberator* who takes the side of the poor (Ex 3:1ff; Lk 1:46-56; 4:18-21). But theologies of liberation fail to take account of the fact that *sexism* or *androcentrism* is the root problem of all other *archisms*. Liberation theologians fail to realize that there can be no true liberation without the liberation of women from patriarchy. Adrienne Rich (Pamela K. Brubaker 1999:65) concurs with this view by saying :

*The decision to feed the world is the real decision. No revolution has chosen it. For that choice requires that women shall be free.*⁹

I am inspired to say that the decision to engage women in Christological discourse is a proper one; this the patriarchal church has not taken seriously. For it means that women shall be free.

⁹ Adrienne Rich, in *Hunger (for Audre Lorde)*, in *The Dream of a Common Language* (1978:13).

I understand theology or a theory of faith to be a composite way in which different or opposing avenues of classical and modern theologies – Western, African, Eastern can be deconstructed (analysed) and reconstructed (synthesized) into a meaningful theological interpretive whole of an incarnational Christology (the creedal or faith context) critically aligned to the Shona (the ethnic or tribal context) women (the gender context) and the class context (the socio-economic and political context) in the societal setting of present-day Zimbabwe. Such a contextual experiential theology makes the Shona woman's epistemological stance that of a subjective knower as opposed to the Cartesian and positivist stance of an objective knower in quest for a neutral science. Alternatively, the Shona women's Christological interpretive or hermeneutic key that vindicates the Jesus story as a meta-narrative to illumine and give meaning to their lives stands in opposition to the postmodernist's aversion for foundationalism and grand narratives. My main emphasis in this thesis concerning the field of faith experience of the Shona women in present-day Zimbabwe is that the Bible, tradition and human experience are important sources of an incarnational Christology.

1.3.2 NARRATIVE

The stories of Shona women in present day Zimbabwe are pursued as contextualizing the key ideas of the incarnation. Stephen Crites, in *the Narrative Quality of Human Experience* (1971) made an important suggestion that human experience is inherently narrative. The narrative approach is further justified in that both the Bible and the Gospel have the narrative *genre* (form). Alistair E. McGrath accentuates this point by assigning the Bible the title of *The Biography of God* (1991). Narrative is an important tool for discerning or appropriating personal identity. For example, for the appropriation of Christian identity through lived faith experience, the Jesus story (person and work of Christ or the *Christ-event*) is seen as the *meta-story* that illumines the story of Shona women. Shona women reflect on and consider the question, *who Jesus Christ is* and *what God in and through Christ is doing in their midst*. In other words, as part of the cosmic drama, the women tell of divine self-communication (revelation) as it enfolds in their experiences and relationships with God, other human beings and the world. The believer's life is thus seen as part of the continuation of the Christ story. According to Ronald Thiemann (1983:158), in a story that has a plot, coherence, movement and climax, characterization is the appropriation dynamics for personhood. Shona women should learn more about themselves as the divine story enfolds and as they strive to be Christ-like. This encounter with God also experienced as divine salvific will and love confirms and invokes their deepest longings and possibilities as they experience enlightenment, transformation and healing.

Concerning the appropriation of Christian identity through a creative dialogue of the Jesus story, culture and the contemporary situation of Shona women, narrative theology has the advantage of leading naturally to an emphasis on ethics. This is particularly true in the sense that what is transmitted through narrative is the Christian ethos in creative dialogue with Shona ethos. The appropriation process involves decision-making through a process of *seeing*, *judging* and *acting*. Thus issues of love, justice, peaceful co-existence, and friendship have their foundation in Christianity in dialogue with culture and the contemporary situation. Madan Sarup (1988, 1993: 133) concurs with this view when he says that narrative tradition has a three-fold competence, namely, *know-how*, *knowing how to speak* and *knowing how to hear* through which the community relationship to itself and its environment is played out. He adds that in the narrative form, statements of truth, justice and beauty are often woven together. As the women listen to each other, their stories illumine each other – the women come to know each other better, to learn from one another and to bond in solidarity. Narrative theology is psychotherapeutic in that through solidarity and engagement in ritual and ceremonies, narrative has the unique power to heal or to destroy.

The Shona women's perspective is also followed in full consciousness, as Pobee (1992: 19-20) notes that, *every contextual theology is partial truth, never the whole truth*. In other words, I acknowledge the relativity and particularity of my Christological proposal. By the same note, I am aware of the urgency for me to engage in dialogue with other theologies in striving for accountability in theologizing. The question, *whose story* and *whose Christology* is pertinent in my position of mediating Shona women's narrative theology and Christology. In an effort to transcend the politics of difference, the Shona women's perspective as undergirding a holistic view of life and holistic truths of faith acknowledges and appreciates similarities (commonality or common humanity) and differences as introduced by the elements of *gender*, *class*, *ethnicity*, *creed*, *politics*, *age*, and the *environment*. This orientation is also a conscious striving for a holistic theology that is life-affirming in the service of others, an attempt to make the Gospel really *Good News* for the Shona women of Zimbabwe today - to make Shona women feel at home in their own faith and culture.

As a person operating within an inclusive theology or theory of faith, I have chosen in this thesis to explore in depth the four contextual areas of experience of *gender*, *class*, *ethnicity* and *creed* while keeping the other equally important factors in the background. The reason for this delimitation of the operational field is that one cannot pretend to be an all-rounder in a research into a problem of a very complex social context, namely, that of the Shona women of Zimbabwe.

1.3.3 TRANSCENDENTAL THEOLOGICAL EPISTEMOLOGY

According to the Canadian Jesuit philosopher-theologian, Bernard Lonergan (1904-1984), the *transcendental method* is a *rational-critical* approach that tries to give answers to *a priori* questions – to the incomprehensible (1971:11-25). The idea of transcendental theological epistemology posits Shona women and men as authentic locutors and interlocutors in Christological dialogue. Shona women, illumined by the story of Christ consciously appropriate their creation and baptismal status and dignity. This is a conscious appropriation of a Christology with soteriological resonance. The Incarnation affirms that God in Christ speaks to us in our temporal, historical and cultural particularities. In Jesus Christ God is self-positing. In other words, God reveals God. Divine self-limitation has several implications. God in Christ transcends our gender, ethnic, class, and creedal particularities to create catholic space for this discourse. But God speaks in human words. God speaks in and through every person and creation. God speaks symbolically in the grandeur of creation.

The German Jesuit, Roman Catholic theologian, Karl Rahner (1904-1984) is credited for championing the transcendental method of theological epistemology. In this, Rahner argues that humanity has an infinite horizon or inert capacity for understanding the ineffable divine mystery (1996:20-21,31-35). Rahner (E.L. Mascall 1971:235) explains that humanity is graced with the **potentia oboedientialis** (Latin: potency to obedience – humanity's ability to react to God's revelation and revealed law). He (1996:33-35) understands this inert capacity for all knowledge *pre-apprehension* (German: **vorgriff**) of being to be synonymous with *a priori* arguments to theological epistemology. Thus, in what he calls the *first level of operation in the 'fides quaerens intellectum'*, Rahner makes a distinction between the *rudes* (uneducated) and the **theologi** (professional theologians). The problem with this view is that for almost two thousand years the patriarchal church has misled us to believe that the latter group consists almost entirely of men.

Rahner also harmonizes with the German romantic theologian, Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) concerning the understanding that human beings are able to transcend finiteness in comprehending the infinite and that every person is open to knowledge about God. Schleiermacher, in *The Christian Faith*, argued for religious experience as a *subjective feeling* (German **Gefühl**) of *absolute dependence on God* (W. Waite Willis 1987:18). Bernard Lonergan exposes the problem of human subjectivity in trying to comprehend the incomprehensible, the answers are never complete and reveal only partial truth (1971:11). He adds that:

Where other methods aim at meeting the exigencies and exploring the opportunities proper to particular fields, the transcendental method is concerned with meeting exigencies and exploring the opportunities presented by the human mind itself (1971:14).

Lonergan, like Rahner and Schleiermacher, points to a significant aspect of the relation of theology to faith, namely, the fact that every person (believer) engages in the transcendental method.

A priori arguments for divine epistemology underlie the doctrine of *general revelation*. General revelation, in turn, is the content of *natural theology* that has its chief protagonist in the Dominican medieval Roman Catholic theologian, Thomas Aquinas (1224/5-1274). In his *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas gave systematic treatment of the *ontological* arguments on the existence of God. In his theory of **analogia entis** (*analogy of being*), Aquinas demonstrated that God is revealed through creation (McGrath 1994, 1997:44-45, 162-163) – that we can use analogies from creation in theological epistemology.

1.3.4. THE CRITICAL-RATIONAL-PRAGMATIC APPROACH

The critical-rational-pragmatic approach is an attempt to integrate *theory* and *practice* in theological Discourse. According to W.C. Kaiser (Kaiser & Silva 1994:221) **theōria** (*to see*) is a Neo-Aristotelian Term that in the Antiochene School usage meant there was a vision of the spiritual at the heart of historical events in Scripture. What is at stake here is a theology at the service of faith and a Christology that leads to transformative praxis. In other words, there is creative tension between *orthodoxy* (correct thinking) and *orthopraxis* (correct doing). Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) is credited as the father of practical theology. According to Ronald F. Thiemann (1983:149-150), in his *The Christian Faith* (1963) and *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultural Despisers* (1959), Schleiermacher is able to link the *feeling of absolute dependence* to the *redemptive action of Jesus*. In portraying a theology at the service of faith, Schleiermacher is able to link intellectual rigor with practical relevance.

Immanuel Kant (Antony Holiday 1997:48-50), in the *categorical imperative*, champions the autonomy of the individual *qua* rational being. His conception of personhood is a reconciliation of theory and practice – pure reason and practical reason. Kant saw rational beings as *ends in themselves* in the *republic of rational beings* or *kingdom of ends*. In the kingdom of ends, Kant's *maxim* or categorical imperative is that each member must treat the other members not only as means to an end, but also, as ends in themselves.¹⁰ Kant's contribution is important in laying emphasis on the movement from the *particular* to the *universal* when we are compelled

¹⁰ Immanuel Kant. in *Grundlagen* ('Groundwork' of the *Metaphysics of Morals*)

to treat human beings as autonomous moral agents. This is also a movement from theory to praxis.

Today the outcry for the womanist and feminist movements is the affirmation of women *qua* women. The South African woman, Suzanne Williams (Wallace & March 1991:118) echoes Kant's sentiments when she expresses a paradigm shift from considering women as *mothers of the nation to women in their own right*. Rebecca West (Danna Nolan Fewell 1993:237-238) expresses the same feelings when she says that she knows people call her a feminist when she expresses sentiments that differentiate her from a doormat or prostitute. In the abortion-pro-life debate, women claim the autonomy of the individual by demanding the right to make decisions about their own bodies. It is true that woman understood unilaterally as mother and wife has been circumscribed to the home or private sphere. Subsequently, woman has been alienated as subordinate and submissive to man. Some cultural practices have been open to abuse in the patriarchal alienation of women. Woman is reduced to a marketable commodity, a thing to be owned or disowned or a thing to be used or misused. I concur with Oduyoye (1995:11) that the single woman or single mother has been negated as prostitute and hence, a thing to be owned by all men. It is also true that mothering the body politic is an expensive vision (Oduyoye 1990:43).

I see Bernard Lonergan's critical-rational approach (Jim Kanaris 1998:295-310) as most enlightening. Here I make a distinction between unconscious appropriation or common sense orientation and conscious differentiation of knowledge. I see the former as constituting *naïve knowledge*, where the latter is characteristic of *mature faith*. I want to emphasize what Lonergan calls pragmatics. This is particularly in connection with the problematic of language and its users. Jim Kanaris (1998:296), explains that *pragmatics* as a *semiotic term* and in contrast to its sister branches, that deal with the *internal relation between signs* (syntactics) and *that to which they refer* (semantics) denotes the *relation of signs to their users*. Kanaris (1998:297) captures the hermeneutic key to Lonergan's pragmatics in the expression *the 'ins and outs' of love*. He cites Charles W. Morris, to explain that here pragmatics deals with the biotic aspects of semiotics.¹¹ And, according to Ralph Fasold (Kanaris 1998:297-298), pragmatics is about everything human in the communication process, psychological, biological, and sociological.¹² Kanaris (1998:298-299) shows that although Lonergan's *cognitive theory* centres on the individual as a subjective knower, nevertheless, it buys into Jürgen Habermas's *inter-subjective discourse theory*. This is particularly true on the grounds of the *ins and outs of*

¹¹ Charles W. Morris, in *Foundations of the Theory of Signs, Vol.1,2: Toward an International Encyclopaedia of Unified Science*, (1938).

¹² Ralph Fasold, in *The Sociolinguistics of Language* (1990:176).

love in relation to formal pragmatism. For Lonergan, *interiority* or *internalisation* denotes a personal appropriation of oneself as an experiencing, understanding, judging and decision-making being. But this is an intersubjective activity in that *interiority* presents the self-consciously subjective knower as an engaged subject encountering worlds of meaning that require the collaborative validation of personal and interpersonal dimensions of experience. In other words, interiority is attainable at the end of a long journey of personally enacted, though inter-subjectively occasioned feats of understanding. Kanaris (1998:302) explains it is personally enacted in that Lonergan leaves it up to the readers to appropriate themselves as knowers. Alternatively, it is intersubjectively occasioned in that self-knowledge is spawned by the creative mediation of the insights of other would-be knowers (Lonergan 1971:7).

Concerning Lonergan's theory of differentiated consciousness (1971:272), Kanaris (1998:303) explains that Lonergan distinguishes between *theoretically* and *interiorly differentiated-consciousness*. Where the former deals with syntactic-semantic achievement within the realm of theory, the latter is a pragmatic achievement. Theoretically differentiated consciousness then is a purely logical, scientific and semantic predisposition to relate things explanatorily to one another and not just descriptively to us. Kanaris says that Lonergan understands that a purely logical or semantic account cannot possibly be the whole story. Needed, too, is the dynamic viewpoint of the self-appropriating and intersubjectively constituted subject who must critically engage theoretical thought forms not only to the canons of logic, but also with regard to the canons of experience. For Lonergan (1971:84), then, interiorly differentiated consciousness represents *self-knowledge that understands the different realms of meaning, knowing how and when to shift from one to the other*. I see this as a hermeneutic key to my endeavour for a differential approach to a Shona women's Christology.

Kanaris (1998:304) explains another important aspect of Lonergan's critical-rational pragmatics – the transcendental pragmatics of language as grounded in the *ins and outs of love*. The hermeneutic key for this is Lonergan's characterization of religious experience as a *being-in-love*. In other words, Lonergan (1971:107, 272) sees *being-in-love* as denoting differentiated consciousness that deliberates, makes judgments of value, decides, and acts responsibly and freely. This consciousness urges conversion and possesses *a basis that may be broadened and deepened and heightened and enriched but not superseded, as ready to deliberate, judge and decide and act with the easy freedom of those that do all good because they are in love*. Kanaris (1998:310) sees the *outs of love* in Lonergan's transcendental pragmatics of language in anthropology and method that is totalising and alienating. According to Kanaris (1998:309-310), in Lonergan's transcendental pragmatism of language, divine grace is the foundation of both method and anthropology, since the *ins and outs of love* depend on a wholly other whose

love, as the condition of loving precedes, penetrates and transcends the method and process of inquiry. Kanaris concludes that in the transcendent pragmatic method, Lonergan manages to show that *being-in-love* is always and everywhere tied to a context made up of several factors – urges for awareness of our historical rootedness, to an understanding that our being in the world religiously and reflectively is not easily uprooted. Consequently, this guards against escape routes to some ahistorical vantage point. According to Kanaris, Jerome A. Miller captures this view well by saying:

*The underlying purpose of functional specializations of theology is not to 'heighten' theological consciousness by releasing it from the throes of historicity but precisely to deepen our sense of the inescapability of history.*¹³

I see subjective and intersubjective critical-rational-pragmatic appropriation of Christology as problematic in a patriarchal church. In a situation where there is the secularisation of knowledge into sacred-profane and theory-praxis, there is simultaneously gender dichotomy. Thus men are the *logós* (*mind* as denoting superior mind) and women are the **a-logoi** (*mindless*) or *heretics* in theological discourse (Ruether 1983,1993:125). Consequently, men as definers of codes control culture and ritual where women are neurotic churchgoers and permanent occupants of the pews. For two thousand years patriarchal monolithic theological and Christological discourses have led us to misunderstand that only male discourse is orthodox. By the same token, in a situation where God/Christ has the same face and name as the male hierarchy, classical theology/Christology has misled us to think that God/Christ is male and only males can represent the divine in the sacraments.

1.3.5 CONTEXTUAL HISTORICAL POINT OF DEPARTURE

I want to emphasize the faith experience of Shona women as an authentic starting point for a contemporary Christological discourse. I understand the *self* as historically and socially constituted in a process of conscious becoming. This is implied in the concepts of Christian *self-understanding*, *self-affirmation* and *self-actualization*, where, concurring with the Danish philosopher-theologian, Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), being a *self* here means that the believer's convictions, passions desires and actions are shaped by the story of God/Christ (Joe R. Jones 2000:441-442). Joe Jones says Kierkegaard asks questions like:

Are you a self... or are you a mere cloudy-image of your time and culture... are you yet a self... ready to decide your existence and take on responsibility for how you live?

In pointing to the discrepancy between theory and praxis in most cases, Kierkegaard insists that *thinking the thought that you are called to love the neighbour is not itself loving the neighbour.*

¹³ Jerome A. Miller, in *All Love is Self-Surrender: Reflections on Lonergan after Post-Modernism*, cf. *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies*. 13.1 (1995:78)

In other words, authentic knowledge about Jesus should spur the believer into action. This is what underlies the notion of **metanoia** (*conversion*) in Christian praxis.

According to Krister Stendal (Jerry K. Robbins 2000:207), the etymology of *metanous/noia* is from **meta-** (*afterwards*) and **noia** (*thought*) as denoting an afterthought or afterthoughts. *Metanoia*, then, in Christian conscious becoming, does not only mean *repentance* from sin, but also denotes the change of mind or consciousness that accompanies a different way of seeing. This is what Oduyoye (1995:11) implies when she says of herself that, standing at a critical fork of patriarchy and matriarchy, *I refuse to be thrown into an overly patriarchal pot without seeking a way of crawling out.*

What I want to emphasize here is the importance of Incarnation understood as God's coming into our world of temporality and placedness – the importance of God affirming and expanding our limitedness in terms of time, place and perception or positionality and different ways of seeing. In a differential pluralistic Christology, Patrick Keifert (1985:78) claims that theological reflection is crossing a threshold...entering into an unfamiliar room. Keifert asks incisive questions:

Is this new room a labour room or a morgue? Will Christology in this new room labour to give birth to a new and vibrant orthodoxy and orthopraxis? Or will it die shy and embarrassed for lack of moral and spiritual fortitude, or intellectual and practical wisdom?

Keifert is emphatic that the answer to the question of morgue or labour room lies in marking the powers and limits of Christology and pluralism. In other words, in a dialectical Christology, or an understanding and praxis, I have to acknowledge the strengths and limits of the different perspectives (ways of seeing) and the various analytic tools. Concerning the participants in public Christological reflection, I agree with Keifert (1985:82), that we must recognize and welcome women and the poor as newcomers into this labour room.

In opting for the contextual-historical starting point, I am informed by Liberation theology's tenet of *theology as first act* – the critical reflection on the experience of women as informed by faith and the Bible/Gospel, church tradition and Shona culture (Gustavo Gutierrez 1988:xxiv,5). Other emphases include, the historical development of revelation, meaning as historically construed, narrative or story theology as implicit for a historical context and the sociology of knowledge as a resource for structuring an inclusive Christology. I recognize the contributions of the historian-philosopher-theologian, Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923), the hermeneutist-philosophers Hans-Georg Gadamer (b.1900) and Paul Ricoeur, the social-critics Karl Marx (1818-1883), Jürgen Habermas (b.1929), and Antony Giddens (b.1938), the psychoanalyst, Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), biblical scholarship, feminist theology, process theology and

postmodern thought to the understanding of the individual as an active agent in appropriation of Christian life, the historical and cultural conditioning of knowledge or divine revelation and the relation of the individual to community (church and society) .

In a narrative approach and a contextual incarnational Christology, I intend to bring the *past*, *present* and *future* into a healthy balance. In modernity (from the 16th to the 20th century), the contextual and the historical dimensions were split into a systematic theological approach (the present day phenomenological or positivistic portrayal of things) and a historical approach (with emphasis on doctrines, views and dogmas of the past). The contextual-historical approach gives greater recognition to a satisfactory mixture of the contextual dimensions of the present, the historical contextual dimensions of the past (cultural heritage) and assumed contextual dimensions of the future. In the modernist approach, the contextual, phenomenological and positivist dimensions (present), the historical (past) and the eschatological (future) were treated separately in many academic disciplines, discourses or sciences. In theology, these were treated as three approaches and this division further led to separate theological disciplines such as systematic theology (dogmatic, fundamental theology, etc.) in which the past determined and dominated the present situation. And as if the past was a totally different dimension in a unified vision of life, people in the discipline of Church History started the discipline of the history of doctrines and dogmas as a separate discipline within theology. Finally, the future interpreted solely as eschatology was understood as God Him/Herself (the German Roman Catholic theologian Karl Rahner – 1904-1984) and/or as the future of humanity (1996:297-298). In our contextual-historical approach, the past, present, and future can be seen as a unified whole in which God, humanity and the cosmos are fully engaged in a responsible, accountable and transparent encounter. The contribution of contextual theologies (liberation, African, black and feminist theologies) in the latter part of the 20th century in deleting the artificial division of past, present and future dimensions of theology or theory of faith cannot be overemphasized.

Troeltsch is recognized as the *father of historical relativism* (Knitter 1985:26). Troeltsch (Paul Knitter 1985:23), as an interdisciplinary thinker, embracing philosophy, history, sociology, ethics and politics highlighted issues pertinent to a contemporary theology or Christology. According to Paul E. Garret (1993:676), Troeltsch contributed important insights that include the understanding of (a) *Christianity as historical and relative phenomena*, (b) *Christianity as a social phenomenon*, and (c) *theology as a practical discipline*. According to Paul Knitter (1985:24), Troeltsch, like many other Scholars of his time, became increasingly aware of the fact that *the human being was not just a rational and a social being but also a 'historical' being*. Knitter explains:

This means that everything humans are and produce is limited by their historical context and is subject to the law of historical development. Historical contexts are many and they are always changing. Therefore everything in them including the entirety of human culture and knowledge - is both limited and changing ... The historical quality of all human achievements therefore excludes all absolutes, that is, all 'one and only' or unchangeable truth claims. Historical consciousness ... seems to imply a radical relativity of all cultures. Troeltsch, in his intellectual honesty, felt he had no choice but to assent to this historical consciousness and the cultural relativity it demanded.

But Troeltsch, in his book, *The Absolute of Christianity* (1971), wrestled with the problem of *relativism* of culture and knowledge – particularly in matters of faith. For, according to Knitter (1985:24-25), if all is relative, it seems that *anything goes* (see Paul Feyerabend's *Against Method* – 1975, 1988, 1993). An anarchy of values results in which nothing can be asserted to be really right or wrong. Troeltsch was convinced that historical consciousness urges for a new form of Christianity that responds to the *signs of the times*. Christianity, then, would have to be open to new answers to new questions and this could be done without compromising the spirit or essential message of the Gospel.

In theological epistemology, Troeltsch argued for *metaphysics of 'immanent transcendence'*. He saw the transcendent, Absolute, and infinite God as *coterminous with history*. In this way, he acknowledged God as present and dynamic within the unfolding of finite history. He saw a form of *participation, continuity, and sharing* between the infinite and the finite. Knitter is right in asserting that, in grounding his metaphysics of immanent transcendence in a psychology of *transcendent subjectivity*, Troeltsch anticipated theologians like Karl Rahner and Bernard Lonergan. Troeltsch added one more central element to the understanding of the contingency of particularity, namely, that *although the Absolute is present and manifest in all of history, no historical manifestation of the Absolute can be absolute! That would contradict the nature of the Absolute and the nature of the historical* (Knitter 1985:26). Of equal importance is the fact that Troeltsch saw theology as a practical discipline. In this we see the roots for the modern impulse on the interplay between theory and praxis (orthopraxis rather than orthodoxy). Troeltsch made a relevant contribution with regard to three contemporary theologies, postmodern, narrative and liberation.

1.3.5.1 THE HISTORICITY OF THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION
Concerning the historicity of theological interpretation (*hermeneutics*), representatives of this theory are seen in Gadamer and Ricoeur. According to Gary Comstock (1986:117), Ricoeur claims that narrative is indispensable for understanding God's work in history. Gadamer

(b.1900), borrowing from the philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), ascribes to the historical movement of understanding. In the hermeneutic universe, Gadamer recognizes interaction between the historicity of the reader and the historicity of the text and sees the meaning as attained in what he calls the *fusion of horizons*. According to Norman Blaikie (1993:64), for Gadamer, understanding is not a reconstruction but a mediation or translation of the past meaning into the present situation. As such, the collusion with another's horizon can make the interpreter aware of his/her deep-seated assumptions or prejudices. Gadamer asserts that at the fusion of horizon when the taken-for-granted assumptions are brought to critical self-consciousness, understanding can be possible. Another important intimation of Gadamer is the mediatory role of language in hermeneutics. He argued that since language is the universal medium of understanding, then, understanding is about translation or interpretation of language. Gadamer emphasized the importance of participation or belongingness in language as the mediation of our experiences of the life-world (Blaikie 1993:65).

According to Blaikie (1993:67) Paul Ricoeur, following on Martin Heidegger and Gadamer formulated the semantics of discourse that provides the foundation for the general theory of interpretation. The stress is on interpretation concerned with meaningful action. For Ricoeur, to read is to join the discourse of the text with that of the reader. In arguing for *distanciation* from original author's intention in the hermeneutic discourse, Ricoeur maintained that it is not possible to say that reading is a dialogue with the author since the relation of the reader to text is different from that between two speakers in a discourse. On the historicity of interpretation, Ricoeur stresses that discourse is an event in time in which something happens when someone speaks. He concludes that distanciation allows for several interpretations of the text.

For Ricoeur (1977) the point of departure in hermeneutics is the position of faith or the experience of the believer of faith community. It is an on-going revelation rooted in the original or special revelation. Grounded on the Judeo-Christian pluriform faith expressions, the reflection of faith calls for a variety of discourses (*prophetic, narrative, prescriptive, wisdom and hymnic* – five distinctive genres of biblical discourse) that are *polysemic* (bring in a variety of meaning) and *polyphonic* (introduce a number of voices). Ricoeur (1977:28), against the positivist understanding of immediate self-consciousness through rational discourse, is emphatic that there is mediated understanding or appropriation in faith seeking understanding. He is able to extrapolate this aspect with clarity by showing the mutual inclusiveness of prophetic discourse and narrative. In the mutual influencing of *prophetic discourse* and *narrative discourse*, Ricoeur (1977:3-8) is able to show that God is the chief *actor* – the *double author of speech and writing*. According to David E. Klemm (1989:274), Ricoeur shows that *narrative discourse* names God in the third person past tense as actor in founding events for the

faith community where *prophetic discourse* names God in the first person future tense as the voice behind the prophet. From the stance of the third article of the Nicene creed Ricoeur demonstrates that God, speaking through the Holy Spirit is at once the *signifier* and the *significant*. In the concept of historical contingency, the reader or interpreter brings in apprehensions and exigencies from culture, society and church community into theological discourse. But it is God who is able to transcend the believer's particularities in mediated self-understanding. He echoes Barth's stance of special revelation – that God is self-positing in Christ. There is emphasis on the understanding that God unequivocally posits humanity in Christ. The believer's story is illuminated by the God-story. Other important elements Ricoeur brings out in the mutual marrying of prophetic discourse and narrative are active participation or engagement of the believer and prophetic witness or testimony. In other words, understanding spurs transformative action.

1.3.5.2 THE HERMENEUTIC OF SUSPICION

In a differential approach to Christology, insights from the hermeneutists of suspicion are invaluable. A hermeneutic of suspicion is a tool for overcoming biases or arbitrariness that lead to ideological captivity or impassés in interpretation. According to Robert McAfee Brown (1978:80-85), ideological captivity is the underlying factor in a *status quo* theology. In interpretation of texts like the Bible, there is also the problem of *eisegesis* as opposed to *exegesis*. According to Brevard Childs (1970:107-114), *eisegesis* by definition denotes reading one's ideas *into* (Latin: *eis*), rather than *out of* (Latin: *ex*) the text of Scripture. The presuppositions or prejudices we bring into the text affect what we draw from it. It is now common practice that biases or presuppositions should be acknowledged from the outset so that they are open to public scrutiny.

Concerning the use of analogical theological language, Lonergan asserts that transcendentals are comprehensive in connotation, unrestricted in denotation, and invariant over cultural change. By this, I understand that the essence of divine truths never change while the *form of* divine revelation changes due to the historical and cultural conditioning that poses new insights and demands new answers to new questions. Martin Buber (Douglas John Hall 2000:6) puts this view in a nutshell in saying that God as the *Ultimate Thou* is '*the inexpressible meaning that does not die with the waning of a religion or the decline of human doctrine.*'¹⁴

According to Douglas Hall (2000:6-7), what is at stake concerning the recovery of the *redemptive meaning* of God in Christ is the status of the Bible as God's Word in human

¹⁴ Martin Buber, in *I and Thou*, trans. By Ronald Gregor Smith (1937:113)

language in relation to Christian life and mission as inseparably linked with language. Hall (2000:7) concludes:

Let us recognize from the outset that the doctrine of the Incarnation of the word of God constitutes a permanent critique of human language. Whatever positive meaning the enfleshment of the divine 'Logos' may have for faith (and as the central confession of the Christian movement its meaning is symbolically inexhaustible), its negative import is clear: if God's word must finally, by God's own counsel, be expressed in a life; if the mystery of the love that has generated that word can only be revealed through the medium of the crucified one and communicated to us through the on-going presence of a transcendent and indwelling Spirit, then nothing less than this incarnate, Spirit-illuminated Word may be allowed to assume the position of intimacy. Our words, even when they are wrested from the agony of deepest thought, even when they represent the refined and trustworthy meditations of the centuries, fall far short of the truth that they strive to attain... If God's word alone is sovereign, then all our words are relegated 'a priori' to the realm of relativity.

What Jacques Ellul (Hall 2000:10) calls the *humiliation of the Word* in Christian life, is synonymous with what Dodd calls the *scandal of particularity*.¹⁵ Ellul (Hall 2000:11) exposes the alienation of people when language is used to serve *banal ends* and claims that in so doing, the word is consequently devalued. Concerning liberating language for liberation, Jean-Marc Ela (Pobee 1996:164) is right in suggesting the *Passover of language* as a *Paschal Mystery* analogy.¹⁶

Liberation theologians, including feminist theologians appropriate Marx's social analysis for understanding the dynamics of *structural* or *systemic* alienation or marginalization of people. Thus social analysis that includes structuration theory is an attempt to unravel the dynamics of systems (communities and institutions). In other words, it is a way of unmasking how the public sphere operate as a centre of power – the power that is, can be used as a double-edged sword in being at once empowering and alienating on individuals or groups of people. For example, in a situation where the rich grow richer and the poor poorer, insights have been gained on how those who have power can misuse it to dominate while those who have no power are reduced to a resource (Joan Chittister 1998:6). Alternatively, in pyramidal hegemonic structures, it has been shown how God and the rulers have the same names and language. In other words, it is an attempt to expose how God is used to justify unjust and oppressive structures. Social critique or structuration theories also expose possibilities for transformation or reclaiming the public sphere.

¹⁵ Jacques Ellul, in *The Humiliation of the Word*, translated by Joyce Main Hanks (1985:155-160).

¹⁶ Jean-Marc Ela. in *My Faith as an African* (1988:44).

In social analysis and psychoanalysis, both Marx and Freud see religion as a tool or weapon. As such, it is a double-edged sword in being at once alienating and empowering people. In a situation where the rich grow richer and the poor poorer, the rich inherit the earth and the poor are prescribed martyrdom for a *pie in the sky* – utopia to be attained in heaven, Karl Marx (David McLellan 1971,1980:23) criticizes religion as an *opiate* (drug – tranquilliser) for the proletariat. Marx's criticism is important in the realization that salvation as mediated by Christ is an *already* and *not-yet* aspect. We now believe in realized eschatology as well as in eternal life to come. Beverly Harrison (Pamela K Brucbaker 1999:69) concurs with Marx about the historicity and transformability of both gender and economies. But for Harrison, this can be achieved, not by armed struggle, but through human moral agency. She echoes Marx in saying that:

*Since the arena of divine/human relations is this mundane flesh and blood world, we have no problem with the assumption that sensuous labour and bread are even more foundational to the life of the spirit than is prayer.*¹⁷

According to Werner Post (1977:74-75), in his critique of capitalism, precisely, in the historico-materialistic dialectics, Marx delineated the capitalist dynamic of self-surpassing progress. Marx appreciated history as a dynamic process whose starting point is real life. From this he extrapolated that the circumstances and the distribution of poverty and riches is also a historical result, the consequence of human action, and therefore something that is essentially changeable. In this Marx depicts the gradual alienation of the worker from his/her labour that culminates in reducing people to marketable goods. He goes on to show that at this stage, the situation is conducive to a revolution by the proletariat as a way forward to an egalitarian society. Thus human action in the progression of history is able to transcend the social exploitation that generated it.

Social analysis enables us to see that classism, racism and sexism are not natural but they are systemic sins. The potential problem of this stance is the tendency to turn a blind eye to individual sins – it fails to take full account of Christ, who, while showing a predilection for the poor and marginalized, was also concerned about the salvation of all people, rich and poor. By the same token, it does not fully account for the fact that systemic oppression tarnishes both the oppressed and the oppressors. The Black theologian, Deotis Roberts (Millard J. Erickson 1991:171) is careful to point out that, in a twist of irony, the oppressed are sometimes oppressors themselves and that authentic liberation should lead to reconciliation.¹⁸

¹⁷ Beverly Harrison, in her inaugural address, *The Power of Anger in the Work of Love: Christian Ethics for Women and Other strangers*, in *Making the Connections: Essays in Feminist Social Ethics*, edited by Carol S. Robb (1985).

According to N.W.H. Blaikie (1993:99), *structuration theory* as post-Marxian, is illuminating on the *ontology* of recurrent social practices and their transformations since it is concerned with the nature of human action, the acting self, social institutions and the interrelations between action and institutions. In short, structuration theory is concerned with the relationship between agency and structure. The chief proponent of structuration theory is the Englishman Anthony Giddens (b.1938) in his works, *Capitalism and Modern Social theory: An Analysis of the Writings of Marx, Durkheim and Max Weber* (1971), *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (1984), *The Consequences of Modernity, Modernity and Self-identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (1991), and *Beyond Left and Right: The Future of Radical Politics* (1994). According to Ira J. Cohen (Stones 1998:280), Giddens' construction is an antithesis between two positions collectivism and subjectivity that find common ground on the idea that everything in social life, from encompassing world-systems to an individual's state of mind originates in social *praxis*. Cohen adds that for Giddens in creative dialectic with other social thinkers, and, on understanding the mutability and perversity of praxis, it is out of the question to insist upon the centrality of one mode of conduct, or to envision an inevitable destination for history, or to claim that insidious practices or structures thoroughly dominate our lives. Giddens' theory of the consciousness of the acting subject is insightful. Cohen (Stones 1998:283) claims that Giddens is innovative in giving us the image of the individual beginning with the postulate that she *knows how to act*. He adds that Giddens then goes on to infer a hierarchy of mental activity – *the discursive consciousness, practical consciousness and the unconscious* at the top, middle, and bottom levels of operation, respectively.

In the structuration theory, Giddens lays emphasis on the basic human need for *ontological security*. He suggests *ambivalence* as a common reaction to modernity and conceives the root of this ambivalence as a counterpoint between empowerment and risk. In explicating the politics of modernity, Giddens gives invaluable insights into what he calls the *politics of life*. This is emancipatory politics – the struggle for freedom from poverty and deprivation, political oppression and social exclusion. For Giddens, life politics encompasses personal struggles to achieve satisfying and secure life-styles and relationships, as well as ecological, feminist, and other movements that seek new ways of life in a post-traditional world. The pertinent question is how we should live our lives in a world of reflexivity (individualism, materialism) and globalization where traditions have given way, and the awareness of risk continually disturbs our ontological security. Thus Giddens manages to lead us into the unseen structuring of the familiar without losing sight of what we have noticed in the past. In other words, he directs us to creative dialectic between tradition and modernity (Cohen, cf. Stones 1998:286-288).

¹⁸ J. Deotis Roberts. in *Black Theology in Dialogue* (1987:15-19).

The German sociologist-philosopher, Jürgen Habermas (b.1929) is a proponent of the Critical theory. In his works *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962), *Between Facts and Norms*, *Knowledge and Human Interest* (1968), *Legitimation Crisis and The Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas, drawing on Marx, exposed the *colonization* of the *public sphere* or *life world* by political and economic powers. The central tenet of Habermas's *communicative rationality* is that meaning is reached by negotiation or social consensus. Habermas is in dialogue with Kant's kingdom of ends ethic, and Gadamer's historicity of interpretation, and Ludwig Wittgenstein's conception of language as a plurality of language-games (William Outhwaite, cf. Rob Stones 1998:205-214; David Schalkwyk 1997:116-131). According to Outhwaite (Stones 1998:209), but against Gadamer, Habermas argues that understanding needs to be supplemented by a materialistic critique of power and exploitation. I find Habermas' communicative theory approach illuminating especially in my concern to create a platform for women in the public sphere of church and society – the concern to engage men and women as equal dialoguing partners.

In his *psychoanalysis*, Freud (Knitter 1995:128) has shown that the image of *God the Father* is a neurotic projection of the cradle-father-figure. Freud and Marx (Ruether 1983,1993:162) have exposed the mechanism of patriarchal binary logic. They claim that this is the trajectory of secularising knowledge into *male-female*, *rational-irrational*, *aggressive-emotional*, *superior-inferior* as rationalizations or *projections* of negative elements of culture and society on women. Women are thus alienated as *other* in misinterpreting of *difference* as *inferior*.

Feminist theologians in a patriarchal church and society expose cognitive dissonance between the '*is*' and the '*ought*'. In a situation where God is reified as male and concurrently the highest ministerial positions are attached to the male priesthood, feminist theologians expose the missing element in theological or Christological discourse and church life. For example, they show how for about two thousand years the church has operated like a bird trying to fly with one wing. In other words, they show how in the long history of Christendom the church has given us at best half truths of faith and at worst distorted truths of faith by way of patriarchal negation of women. Alternatively, feminist theologians show not only how what Pope John Paul II has called the *feminine genius* (women's gifts and talents) have been under-utilized, but also how the church has been impoverished by not tapping this gift of women.

In an attempt to reclaim the public sphere for women as well as men, feminist theologians see the Bible and culture as prototypes for structuring emancipatory models for the liberation of women (Schüssler-Fiorenza 1984:xiii-xvii, 58-63; Ruether 1990:22-33). They recognize the patriarchal stamp of both culture and the Bible, but they read these texts with women's eyes.

Schüssler-Fiorenza (1884: xiii), while acknowledging the dual character of the Bible in being used simultaneously to oppress and affirm women, says this of the Bible as a feminist heritage and a resource:

The biblical vision of freedom and wholeness still energizes women in all walks of life to struggle against poverty, unfreedom, and denigration. It empowers us to survive with dignity and to continue the struggle when there seems to be no hope for success.

Ruether advocates the appropriation of the Old Testament *prophetic tradition* in the agenda for the liberation of women. In a patriarchal church, she recognizes the pollution of the prophetic stance by the *sociology of knowledge* (1983,1993:32,62-63) and warns also against the ambiguous nature of the *sociology of knowledge*. In this, she points to the blind spot on the patriarchal lens by saying:

Although Yahwism dissents against class hierarchy, it issues no similar protest against gender discrimination.

Because of the *sociology of knowledge*, Ruether (1990:25-33) recognizes in prophetic tradition *promise and betrayal* for the liberation of women. She emphasizes that prophetic faith sets God in tension with the ruling class. As such, it is subversive in announcing a God who is active in history to overturn unjust structures of society – a God who affirms the full humanity of all people. Both Ruether and Schüssler-Fiorenza see patriarchal censorship of the Bible in giving at best half-truths and at worst, distorted truths about women. Schüssler-Fiorenza (1984:106-115; 1983, 1994) calls the patriarchal censorship of women's experience *amnesia*, that is, *forced forgetfulness*, where Ruether (1990:25-33) calls it a *betrayal*. Consequently, in feminist biblical scholarship, Schüssler-Fiorenza (1983,1994:xvi) adopts a historical-theoretical analytic of patriarchy by highlighting the fundamental premise that women in the past have not just been marginalized and oppressed, but they have also been historical agents, who have produced, shaped and sustained social life in general and early Christian socio-religious life in particular. She advocates the project of *anamnesia* – conscious remembrance or recovery of models for the emancipation of women. Thus feminist theologians recover muted voices of their foremothers and foresisters through *deconstruction, suspicion, remembrance, revisioning* and *proclamation* (Schüssler-Fiorenza 1984:15-22). Concerning Christology, Schüssler-Fiorenza's *In Memory of Her* has its point of departure from the Gospel story of the woman who anointed Jesus with costly ointment (Mt 26:6-13). In reproaching the disciples who thought this was too extravagant since the money could have been used in aid of the poor, Jesus said:

Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me. For you will always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. In pouring this ointment on my body she has done it to prepare me for burial. Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told 'in memory of her'. (Emphasis is mine).

There is emphasis on the *counter-cultural Christ* who affirmed women in a patriarchal society. Thus **anamnesia** (conscious remembrance) entails that wherever the story of the crucifixion is told, true discipleship will be seen in the story of the women at the foot of the cross who were faithful to the end when the male disciples deserted Jesus. By the same token, authentic missioning cannot afford to be silent about the story of women being the first to be missioned with the message of the resurrection. Megan McKenna, in *Leave Her Alone* (2000), takes a different emphasis using John's version of the same episode. Jesus says:

Leave her alone. Was she not keeping it for the day of my burial? (The poor you always have with you, but you will not always have me.) (John 12:7-8)

McKenna (2000:17-19) explains that Jesus' words are loaded with Christological incarnational and soteriological resonance. By anointing, the woman affirms Jesus as the Christ (*the Anointed One*) as well as making a pious and passionate act of worship. Jesus challenges unspoken hypocrisy of the opponent, Judas who, in a twist of irony, betrays Jesus in greed for money. McKenna claims that Jesus exonerates the woman by declaring openly *Leave her alone!* She adds that implicit here, is that the woman *is with him* and that *he is with her*. She explains that the challenge to the believers even today is, *where are we? Whose side are we on?* The same thread runs through increasing feminist writings like, Mercy-Amba Oduyoye and Musimbi Kanyoro's '*Talitha Qumi*'! (1990), Mbuy-Beya's *Woman, Who Are You?* (1998), Nyambura J. Njoroge's *Woman, Why Are You Weeping?* (1997). A broader perspective concerning the Bible, Church tradition and culture as sources of theology is seen in *Digging Up Our Foremothers* (1996), by Christina Landman *et al.*

Intratextuality is the emphasis of Postmodern reading and writing the body- emphasis of French feminists like Hélène Cixous *to read is to make love by taking care of the other... to know how to read a book is a way of life*. Intratextuality denotes the understanding that there is no reality that exists independently of language. Thus, words always refer to other words. Postmodernism, as the name implies is concerned mainly with offering a radical critique for grand-theories or meta-narratives of modernity such as introduced by the *Enlightenment* (German: **Aufklärung**) period. According to Max Charlesworth (1996:190-191), postmodernism is against foundationalism or universalization of knowledge that erodes morals and denies local knowledge or tradition (with its pluralism and variety) in favour of universal and abstract truths, the disenchantment or dedivinization of nature through manipulation and exploitation, and the emergence of individualism and the consequent collapse of community. In short, it redirects us to the values and beliefs which modernity denies. As such, it promotes environmental or *green* values, feminine or non-patriarchal ways of thinking and acting, the restoration of community and civic concern and the emergence of new forms of spirituality. Graham Ward (1996:225, 229-230) calls this the postmodernist idea of *plenitude* (fullness).

Cixous identifies between the masculine and feminine economies. The latter she calls *écriture féminine*. Whereas she identifies the masculine economy with the exploitative and alienating capitalism, she describes *écriture féminine* as *writing the narrative of the other, the narrative repressed in the masculine economy. It articulates how the gift of the other is presented and received*. In short, *écriture féminine* welcomes the arrival of the other and allows the letting be of the other in all its strangeness.

Advanced biblical scholarship has introduced new insights through multifarious interpretations of ancient texts. According to Ian A. du Rand (1997:6-8), these can be grouped into the *diachronic* and the *synchronic* approaches. The diachronic is what underlies the *historical-criticism* that includes *form criticism* (German: **formgeschichtliche**) and *redaction criticism* (German: **redaktionsgeschichtliche**). For example, we now know that the Bible and the Gospel are largely narrative in form or *genre*. Redaction criticism is concerned with theological authorial intention through his/her editorial arrangement – the additions, omissions and manipulation of sources. The synchronic method lays emphasis on *textual immanent*, that is, the unit of the text and the relation of the reader to the text. Thus underlying *deconstruction* in text analysis are *structural analysis (linguistic surface relationships)* and the *structural (narrative structure)* approaches. There is, in turn, stress on autotextuality – that the text has an independent life outside the author. In other words, various readers and interpreters can always bring in and draw out new insights.

Structural analysis has shown that Genesis 1-2 creation accounts are myths rather than factual descriptions of God's creation of the world. According to Danna Nolan Fewell (Steven L. McKenzie & Stephen R. Haynes (1993: 239-240), the feminist biblical scholar, Phyllis Trible (Nolan, in McKenzie & Haynes 1993:240) uses rhetoric analysis (uses persuasive argument) to show, for example, that the Hebrew **ādām**, literally meant *human* as denoting that the first human, **ādāmah** was created from the humus (earth). Linguistic structural analysis concerning feminist criticism of Genesis 2-3, points out that the history of interpretation has shown more misogynistic tendencies than the actual text. Furthermore, she argues that the etymology of *helpmate* is from the Hebrew word **ezer** (*helper*) and concludes that woman is the crown of creation rather than God's afterthought.

Feminist theologians, however, must resist the temptation of *reversed sexism*. In a form of reversed male chauvinism, matriarchy can be just as oppressive as patriarchy. As in the case of racism and elitism, patriarchy distorts men as well as women. Women must also acknowledge the differences between women themselves as spurred on by race, ethnicity, age,

denominational affiliation and social class. Feminist theologians must resist introducing a new totalising grand narrative in opting for a pluralistic Christology.

It is important to note that in any system - family, clan, church, society, the individual is, or groups of people are placed in an intricate web of being. In a situation where the individual is held in higher esteem than the group, e.g. western-type Cartesian individualism, group interests tend to be compromised. The reverse situation is true, for example, in African/Shona communal ontology and solidarity. In the God-humanity-cosmos interconnectedness, humanocentrism has resulted in the despoliation of the environment.

Evolutionary theology and process thought put emphasis on what I see as **creatio continuata** (*continual-creation*) – divine providence and governance. God is *in* and *with* creation – labours with creation to its climactic end. The protagonist for evolutionary Christology is the Jesuit priest, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955). Teilhard de Chardin, in his book, *The Phenomenon of Man* (1959), portrays God in Jesus, as being in and with creation in a process of becoming whose climactic point is the *Omega-point* (1959:71). Thus for Teilhard de Chardin, Christ is this *Omega-point*. The Irish Roman Catholic priest, Diarmuid O’Murchu (1999), who, in following *quantum theology*, as well as appropriating the Genesis creation status and dignity of humanity, concludes that *when God made us, God created Godself* (Inclusive language is my rendering).¹⁹ This view is also in line with *Process theology* that describes God as a dynamic presence moving *in* and *with* creation (John Cobb). According to Robbins (1992:80), in process Christology, God is understood as present and active power of creativity, who, in primordial and consequent natures, tirelessly directs the world to its best actualization. Jesus is the one who reveals God by virtue of the power or presence of God dwelling in him. There is no interruption of the order of things, Jesus is continuous with God’s general providence, a recapitulation of God’s pervasive activity in the world.

According to Clifford Cain (1991:26-27), six tenets of process theology are, that *reality is a process* (it is, dynamic, not static), *reality is alive*, from the understanding that to experience is to incorporate, the corollary is that *reality is interrelated* (things affect each other), *all reality has intrinsic as well as instrumental value*, *God is immanent in all processes*, and *God shares the experiences of all things*. Process Christology ascribes to *degrees Christology*. According to Norman Pittenger (Robbins 1992:81), in an incarnational universe, God is present in different degrees of intensity. Norman Pittenger (Robbins 1992:87), in *the Word Incarnate* (1959) and *Christology Reconsidered* (1970) maintains that Jesus’ work is to crown creation, that is, to

¹⁹ Diarmuid O’Murchu in a workshon I attended that was held in Pretoria from 12-13 June 1999.

bring wholeness and integration to life and not just to forgive or rescue it. David Griffin (Robbins 1992:80) describes Jesus as God's supreme act of self-expression and self-actualization. Hartshorne (Robbins 1992:79) saw the cross as a symbol of God's love and portrayed God in Christ as suffering *with* humanity. Cobb (Jerry K. Robbins 1992:87) argues that disharmony in the world is overcome when the human will is aligned with God's particular aim for it through Jesus *vis-à-vis* the story of God. Jesus, then, is the highest instantiation of God's creative-redemptive love. There is an echo of the orthodox understanding that in the *Christ-event*, Jesus showed total obedience to the divine salvific will in total self-giving love (John Macquarrie 1988:277,302-303).

Eco-feminism, in stressing the interconnectedness of God, humanity and cosmos, sees the world as God's *Body* (Greek: Gaia, cf. Sallie McFague, in *Models of God* – 1987:672; 1988: 671-673; Ruether 1992) or the *divine womb* (Hebrew: **rechem**, cf. Ruether 1983,1993:56). Sallie McFague (1988:671-673) emphasizes that the metaphor of *the world as God's body* echoes organic Christology, namely, the image of the community of faith as the Body of Christ. As in the Incarnation, God is understood as immanent creative love that affirms embodied life. God is a dynamic presence *in* and *with* creation that labours to give life. Consequently, the world is seen as the bodily presence or sacrament of the invisible God. Thus the Bible informs us that the whole of creation is good (Gen.1:31) since it is infused with sacramentality. The Jesuit poet Gerald Manley Hopkins could say, *Creation is charged with the grandeur of God*. Dermot Lane (1992:11) accentuates this view when he says:

Our universe in the light of the Incarnation is symbolic and sacramental and it is these qualities of the universe that give culture its potential theological significance. The whole life from the speck of cosmic dust to the personification of that dust in the human being is shot through symbolically with divine life.

McFague emphasizes the fundamental aspect of human existence - that human beings are part and parcel of an intricate web of life. In this awareness that human beings exist in interdependence with other creatures, salvation is expressed in terms of the interconnectedness of creation that challenges human beings *to see God in all things* and to exercise the role of *stewardship* over all forms of life. In other words, salvation in God is concerned with both physical and spiritual needs (McFague 1988:672). By the same token, salvation is a reality to be experienced in this world as well as in eternity. Alfred North Whitehead (Jane Kopas 1986:13) strikes the same note when he says that Christianity invites us to practise what he calls *expansive relationality*. I understand this as a dialogical or discursive relationality. Various aspects of our relational situatedness have to be negotiated in affirming life.

The main problem of this view is that it tends to compromise the unique revelation of God in the historical Jesus of Nazareth. For example, it lays emphasis on *general* rather than *special revelation* whereas a fuller view of the Incarnation should take note of both views of divine revelation. Karl Barth (1886-1968) in opposition to *Liberal theology* argued that there is no point of contact between fallen humanity and God through general revelation. In his adage, *God reveals God*, Barth (1975:1,1.137) argues that general revelation does not take full account of the salvation wrought through Jesus Christ in the way special revelation does.

Borrowing on the Catholic theologian, Yves Congar (John Wijngaards 1999:1640), I want to emphasize the concept of a *living tradition* as regards the creation and baptismal *Magna Carta* of the equality of believers as affirmed by an Incarnational Christology. Congar explains that a *living tradition* resides in the minds of believers who consciously or unconsciously live by it in a history that comprises activity, problems, doubts, oppositions, new contributions, and questions that need answering. The Roman Catholic theologian, John Wijngaards says that Cardinal John Henry Newman reminds us here that:

The absence of dogmatic statements is no proof of the absence of impressions or implicit judgments, in the mind of the Church. Even centuries may pass without the formal expression of a truth which had been all along the secret life of millions of faithful souls.

In other words, I am determined to retrieve the living tradition that affirms the full humanity of men and women as sons and daughters of God and co-heirs with Christ – a tradition that engages women and men as equal partners in defining quintessential doctrines, liturgies and decision-making.

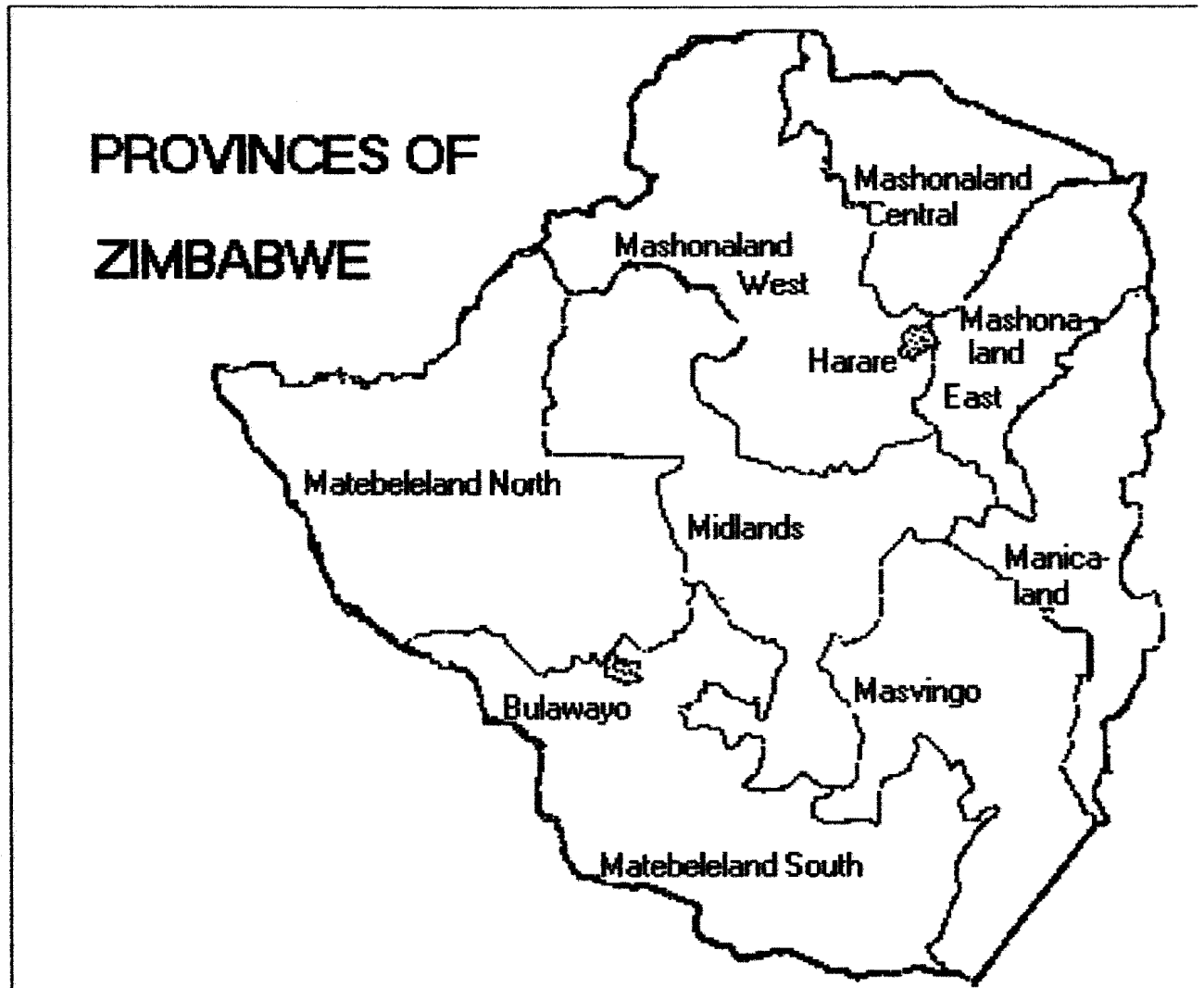
1.4 THE SCOPE OF THE THESIS SUMMARISED

The thesis pursues an African Christology from the standpoint of the experiences of Shona women of faith in present day Zimbabwe. I recognize that the women's perspective as undergirding a holistic view of life and holistic truths of faith, acknowledges and appreciates similarities (commonality or common humanity) and differences as effected by the elements of *gender, class, ethnicity, creed, politics, age, and the environment*. As a person operating within an inclusive theology or theory of faith, I have chosen in this thesis to explore in depth the four contextual areas of experience of *gender, class, ethnicity and creed* while keeping the other equally important factors in the background. The reason for this delimitation of the operational field is that one cannot pretend to be an all-rounder in a research into a problem of a very complex social context, namely, that of the Shona women of Zimbabwe.

Shona culture is many hued (has many layers). Consequently, it is a misnomer to talk of a pure Shona culture in view of the confluence of cultures and the different ethnic groups of Shona

peoples. The major ethnic groups of the **Shona** tribes (a sub-group of **Bantu** [People]) considered here are **Karanga, Zezuru, Manyika, Korekore, and Ndau** (see **Figures 1 and 2** maps on ethnic groupings and their geographical location).²⁰ Women's perspective and definitions are taken seriously in a narrative incarnational Christology. A pluriform of cultures, Christian denominations and religions are considered in the quest for a contemporary Christology.

Figure 1



From the outset, I want to acknowledge my stance or presuppositions. As a Shona, Karanga, Roman Catholic and religious woman I see myself as providing a view from within. In other words, my status in this research is that of a participatory observer. I am not sure whether to call myself a feminist or post-feminist. But while I see my previous stance for the Master of Theology Dissertation: *Christ the Ancestor: Shona Christianity and the Roots for Feminist Liberation Praxis* (2000) as definitely operating in a feminist paradigm, I see the present research as taking me further to probe behind and beyond feminism in as much as I have to go

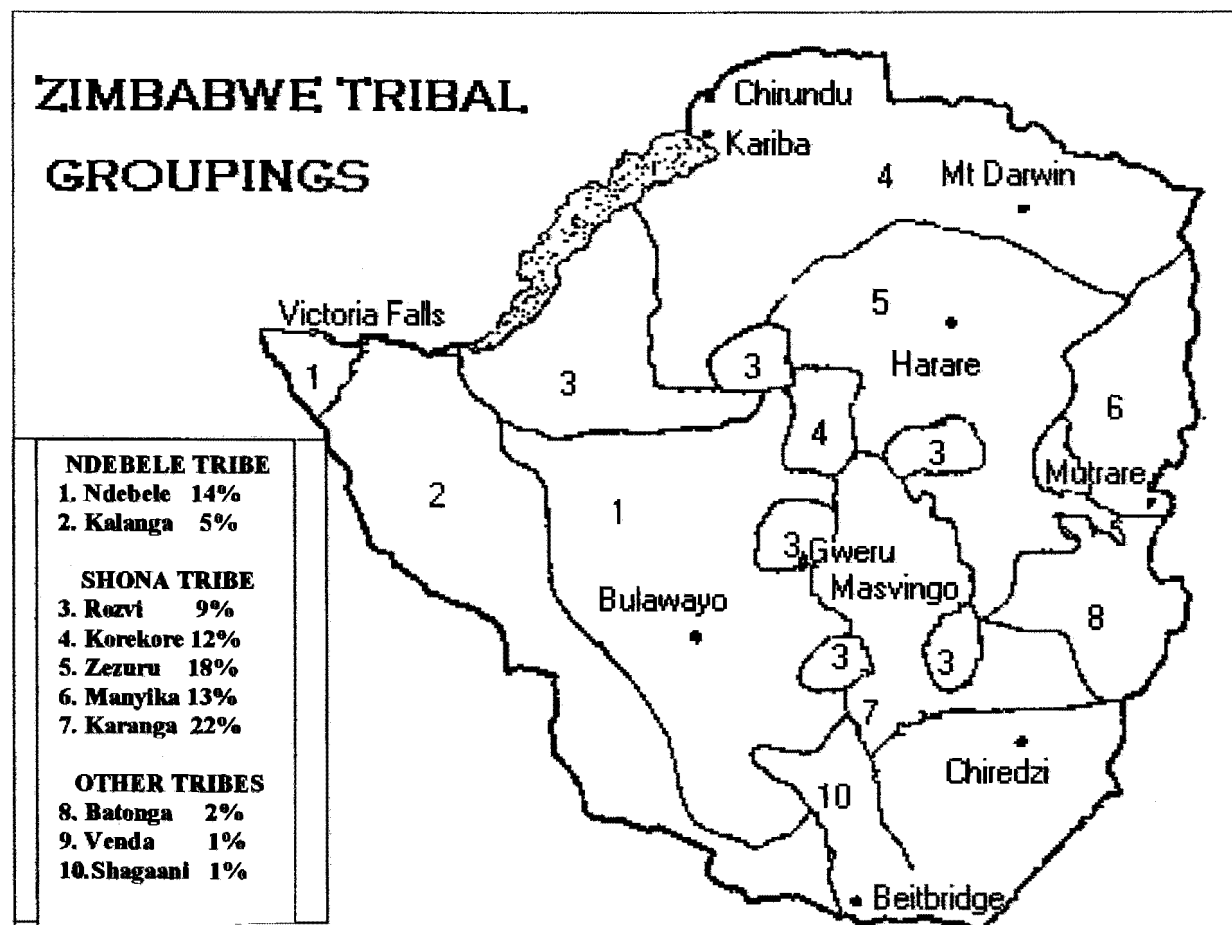
²⁰ Maps are an adaptation of those of Deanna Swaney, in *Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia: A Travel Survival Kit* (1992:58-59).

behind and beyond the image of the androgynous God. In this case I am more in line with a post-feminist stance. I agree with Erasmus van Niekerk, that post-feminism operates on a *both/and* inclusive scheme in overcoming sexism (1996:27-48).

1.5 ORGANIZATION OF WORK IN CHAPTERS

The work is divided into five chapters. In the introductory chapter I give the proposal and specify the aims and objectives, and scope of the thesis for a Shona women's Incarnational narrative Christology. In exposing the methods and analytic tools, I concurrently engage in literature review.

Figure 2



Chapter Two gives an explication of an Incarnational Christology. Two approaches are identified, the Sacramental view, dominating orthodox or classical Christology, and the Modern Symbolic view, that gives a more plastic definition of the Incarnation. The latter is more inclusive than the former but both have their strengths and weaknesses. The pertinent issue in the sacramental view of the Incarnation is sacramental representation as inclusive of men as well as women and as it impinges on analogical theological language, and the mutual participation of women and men in church life. In the final analysis, I see the two different views for an Incarnational Christology as emphases for an inclusive, contemporary and vibrant

Christology. A historical overview shows the church's constant search for a Christology that gives redemptive value to human life. The historical development of revelation is demonstrated. In inculturation as (synonymous with the Incarnation) a creative dialectic between culture and the Gospel, various cultural expressions are explored mainly to show how God in Christ transcends our particularities and creates *catholic place* in the within of our particularities.

Chapter Three explains *narrative* as a method of doing theology. As such, the method is as old as the Bible, and in particular, the Gospel, in that the main *genre* is *story* or *narrative*. Thus we have the *Story of God* (McGrath 1991) and *the Story of Jesus Christ*, respectively. The historical and conscious use of narrative as a method in theology is explored. Emphasis is put on the narrative quality of experience. The Shona linguistic tools – world-view or frame of reference is pursued in myths, proverbs, songs, riddles, totems and naming system. History as *his/story* is narrative. The recovery of the redemptive memory of women latent in patriarchal texts involves new readings or deconstruction – *revisioning, remembering, reconstruction and proclamation* (Schüssler-Fiorenza 1984:15-28) to retrieve *her/story*. The unique individuality of a person in history is explored in creative dialectic of the Christian identity and the Shona concept of **unhu** (*personhood*, cf. *Bantu* and the Bantu principle of *ubuntu*).

Chapter Four explores the Christological narrative of Shona women. As such, it is structured storytelling. Emphasis is put on conscious Christian becoming. The guiding principle is the creation and baptismal status of the *imago Dei/Christi* and the roles of *stewardship* and/or the *baptismal vocation – the common priesthood and discipleship*. Situating the subject differentially in family, ethnic group, social class and denomination repeatedly is a way of introducing different ways of seeing. In consciously defining who Jesus is and what God in Christ is doing in their midst, the women come to understand who they are and what and how Christ is challenging them to in a living faith that is forward-looking and liberating.

Chapter Five is a critical appropriation of the Shona women's Christology in the quest for a participatory Christology. I see the Shona women as giving birth to a radical and differential Christology. It is radical because it introduces new voices in the public theological discourse – women as well as men take their rightful place in a circle of mutual dialoguing partners. I spell out the gist of the Shona women's Christology and analyse the Christology in terms of relevance, orthodoxy and coherence. The first aspect concentrates on advocacy for the full humanity of women as well as men and the particular contribution of the Shona women's Christological perspective to the universal church's current understanding of Christology. For the criteria of orthodoxy and coherence, the Shona women's Christology is set in creative

dialogue with other Christologies, namely, orthodox, contextual, the various strands of liberation theology and pluralistic Christology.

The hermeneutic of engagement is a conscious appropriation of the Paschal Mystery analogy. Here the motifs of dying in order to give life, the prophetic stance and the cost of discipleship are highlighted. The Shona Christological designation **Muponesi** (*Deliverer-Midwife-Mediator-Redeemer*) captures the quintessence of Shona women's Christology. The impulse is for passionate conscious becoming. This is a necessary element for a contemporary, relevant Christology. The discrepancies between theory and praxis, and between the visions of life and apparent inaction are seen as accounting for different people and denominations being at various stages of consciousness concerning the passion for an inclusive liberating Christology. The discrepancies between theory and praxis and between vision of life and apparent inaction are seen as accounting for different people and denominations being at various stages of consciousness concerning the passion for an inclusive, liberating, contemporary Christology. There is internal and external critique in adopting the prophetic stance. This is put symbolically in the image of an open circle that expands to include *others* and contracts in critical inward looking.

Implicit in a hermeneutic of engagement is the understanding that an authentic Christology spurs believers into liberative praxis. The *circle* symbol is taken from the shape of a Shona *round hut* kitchen, the *womb* or *matrix* and the *heart*. The Kitchen with a central fire is not only woman space, but also the centre of communal action or togetherness. The circle too is symbolic of Shona hospitality that is very accommodative to the *other*. In reflection on and appropriation of Christology, the open circle highlights the need for involvement of all people in mutual partnership in the God-humanity-cosmos relationship. Here the *womb* or *matrix* is a trajectory of the interconnectedness of people in their diversity in an intricate web of being. The *heart* that is anticipated by the central fire for a people in mutual togetherness is symbolic of the Trinitarian *koinonia* and in particular, the Holy Spirit who in condescending-love penetrates the centre of our being in our diverse particularities.

CHAPTER TWO

INCARNATIONAL CHRISTOLOGY

2.0 APPROACHES OF AN INCARNATIONAL CHRISTOLOGY

There are many nuances to an incarnational Christology. In this context, I recognize two main approaches to Christology, namely, *ontological* (of being) and *functional*. These resonate on the *person* (who Christ *was* and *is*) and *work* (what he *did* and *does*) of Jesus Christ, respectively, as an existential faith response. The basic tenet of the Incarnation is that God is present and acts in human history and the world as a dynamic liberating presence. A good definition of the *Incarnation*, according to Dermot Lane (1992:10), is the creative coming of God and humanity in the *Christ-event*, the appearance of the universal within the particular, the entry of the absolute into the relative, the manifestation of the eternal into the temporal, and the revelation of the infinite into the finite. In recognition of the historical and cultural conditioning of the Incarnation, in this chapter I intend to explore three main views, namely, the *traditional sacramental* or *theocentric* (*from above*), the *modern symbolic* or *anthropocentric* (*from below*), and the *functional* (*horizontal, from the side*) as heuristic paradigms of the Incarnation. I finally, postulate the *theanthropocosmic* (God-human-cosmos inter-connectedness) incarnational Christology that takes into consideration positive differential emphases of these views and radically makes creative space and time for an inculturating and engendering narrative Christology.

In understanding culture as mediating Christology, it is true to say that a Christology that takes human experience seriously is also a Christology of inculturation. This is the content of contextual or situational Christology. The narrative method of Christology is explored in Chapter Three and Shona women's narrative is the content of Chapter four. Narrative Christology is implied in the understanding of human experience as an *incipient story* or *narrative*. For our task, we are interested to know what Shona women say from the standpoint of faith and the depth of their existence, about *who* Jesus Christ is and whether they experience him as fulfilling their hopes and desires.

Underlying a perspectival approach is the concept of the *sociology of knowledge* (cf. Ruether 1983,1993: 63). This can be used as a resource for structuring a Christology from the faith experience of Shona women. But in a hermeneutic of suspicion this sociology of knowledge can be understood as a double-edged sword in the tendency simultaneously to empower and yet disempower, to be life affirming and yet demeaning, and accommodating and yet alienating. In

other words, the dual nature and function of each perspective mentioned above is acknowledged and in a hermeneutic of suspicion, each view or perspective is exposed and appraised for its strengths and weaknesses. Pertinent issues here are the quest for full humanity in Jesus Christ and inclusive paradigms of being church for women as well as men. In other words, there is the search for inclusive theological anthropology, language and images, and for the full appropriation of the baptismal status and vocation.

2.1 SACRAMENTAL THEOCENTRIC (*FROM ABOVE*) VIEW

The traditional-sacramental view of Christology is what underlies classical or orthodox Christology, in general, and Roman Catholic theology, in particular. The traditional sacramental view of the Incarnation offers a theocentric (*from above*) approach to an *ontological* (the presence of eternal life in humanity) and *functional* Christology. The point of departure in sacramental Christology is the affirmation of the divine Incarnation - God's permeation of human lives and all created reality. In Greek metaphysics and conceptual framework, there is belief in (a *Logos Christology*) Jesus Christ as the eternal Word of God - the *Logos* through whom God created the world (Jn 1:1-4). The Incarnation then is the indwelling of the eternal *Logos* in Jesus Christ - the *Word* that *became flesh* (Jn 1:14).

The Christology is Incarnation-centred in the sense that there is belief in God's intervention in human history in the unique or singular Incarnation of the historical Jesus of Nazareth. The Christology rests on three important tenets (a) the fallen condition of humanity, and consequently, (b) that salvation came only from the side of God, and (c) that the atonement for sin in order to be effective and acceptable to God, must come from the side of humanity and must therefore be effected by a *God-man*. This is the quintessence of Anselm of Canterbury's [1033-1109] **Cur Deus Homo** (*Why God became man*)?²¹ This too is the content of special revelation - God's self-limiting or condescension in the *Christ-event* (birth, life, death and resurrection of Christ for the salvation of humanity).²²

Orthodox theology gives us both *substantial* (cf. substance - Greek: **prosōpon**) and *organic Christology*. For example, patristic Christological discourses concentrated on substantial presence (the *two natures* of Christ, *divine* and *human*) of God in Christ. Emphasis was put on metaphysical questions of *person* and *procession* or *generation* of the divine persons. According to McGrath (1994, 1997:352), the view of the Incarnation that emerged from such a

²¹ Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) in *St Anselm: Cur Deus Homo?* (1962, pp. 191-301)

²² John Macquarrie tentatively (1991:19) attributes the coining of the term *Christ-event* to Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976)

theocentric (descending) Christology thus affirmed the presence of the divine nature or substance within Christ. In other words, in the doctrine of hypostatic union, it was understood that the divine nature assumed the human nature in the Incarnation. McGrath adds that the substantial presence of God in Christ as stemming from the Alexandrian School, in turn, portrays salvation or soteriology as *deification*.

Another aspect of substantial Christology found in sacramental theology gives the elements *bread* and *wine* as being transformed to the *Body* and *Blood* of Christ in Eucharistic consecration. Further elaboration of the doctrines of the Eucharist and the Church gives us an organic Christology in the postulates of believers as members of Christ's body (cf. 1Cor 12:12-13) and the model of the church as **Mystici Corporis** (*the Mystical and/or Sacramental Body of Christ*). In the doctrine of the Eucharist that affirms the *real presence of Christ*, in the celebration of the Mass, it is understood that God in Christ is made visible, tangible and palatable in the elements of *bread* and *wine* (Mt26:26-28=Mk 14:22-24=Lk 22:17-20). As stipulated in the Niceno-Constantinople Creed (318-325 CE), and concluded in the Chalcedon formulation, in the doctrine of the *hypostatic union* (unity of the two natures of Jesus Christ) there is affirming of the full deity and humanity of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, namely, that Jesus is **vere Deus, vere homo** (*true God and true man*). In other words, there is concern to affirm the Christ that can be worshipped.

In order to understand the dynamics of the sacramental view of the Incarnation, it is necessary to define what a *sacrament* is, and its functions as found in sacramental theology. According to McGrath (1994,1997:496), the classic definition of sacrament is *a visible sign of invisible grace*. In Tillichian terms of correspondence between a symbol and the thing signified, McGrath adds that Augustine emphasised that sacraments do not merely *signify* grace, but also in some way, they evoke or enable what they signify. Tillich stressed the same point in saying that a symbol participates in the reality it signifies and points beyond itself (1968:I.136). According to McGrath (1994,1997:352) in Byzantine theology, we have the foundations of portraying God in images or icons.

According to June O'Connor (1985:59-60), the traditional sacramental view, borrowing from Plato's (472-347 and Aristotle's (384-322 B.C.) philosophies, offers a vision of wholeness and enables a sense of integration. As a neo-Platonic concept, there is a trajectory of a symbolic and sacramental universe in which the part stands for the whole, the things of this world figure another world, and all created reality is connected by a web of being. In this *gestaltic approach*, O'Connor (1985:61) aptly explains that orthodox Christology affirms that God is both visible and invisible, and both transcendent and immanent. The Incarnation, then, provides a model by

which the perceived separation between spiritual and sensual sensitivities, inclinations and desires may be overcome.

2.1.1 BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS OF SACRAMENTAL CHRISTOLOGY

Concerning the biblical foundation of orthodox sacramentality, in the Old Testament Yahweh is perceived as transcendent and spiritual, yet God is revealed again and again in and through sense experience like the *burning bush* (Ex 3). In the *Logos* motif, the Christian Scriptures (John 1) claim an even more dramatic identification of the invisible and the visible. The acme of the *proclamation of the Word* (Greek: **kērugma**) is that Yahweh not only reveals *Godself* in and through the *Christ-event*, but God is in fact the *spirit* or the *Word become flesh*.

In the New Testament sacramental Christology is implicit in the Eucharistic and organic model of Christology cited above and in Matthew 25, verses 31 to 46. In the latter example, Christ is portrayed as present in the distressing disguise of the hungry, thirsty, poor, sick, stranger and prisoner. Elsewhere in the New Testament, sacramental Christology can be construed in its root metaphors of the *Body of Christ* (Eucharistic and organic Christology) and *mystery* (Greek: **mustērion**). McGrath (1994,1997:495) shows that the New Testament origin of the term *sacrament* is *mysterion* as denoting the saving work of God in general, and that in sacramental theology a connection was made in an early stage between the *mystery* of God's saving work and the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist.

2.1.2 EXTRA-BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS OF SACRAMENTAL CHRISTOLOGY

According to McGrath, sacramental theology, in its origins in Roman North Africa third and fourth century Christianity, finds protagonists in Tertullian (160-225), Cyprian of Carthage and Augustine of Hippo (354-430). In Tertullian's writings, the Latin term *sacramentum* is transposed for the Greek *mysterion* as denoting the sacraments and symbols and rites that were linked with this mystery. Another important contribution of Tertullian is to highlight in military terms of an *oath* and, in the understanding of sacrament as *sacred oath*, the importance of sacraments in relation to Christian commitment and loyalty to the church. It was Augustine, who in the Donatist controversy, emphasized the relation between a sign and the thing it signifies (McGrath 1994,1997:396).

McGrath (1994,1997:496) shows that in the period of sacramental theology's development *par excellence*, the later Middle-Ages, further clarification of the term *sacrament* is seen in the works of Hugh of St Victor (1096-1141) and Peter Lombard (born in Lombardy at the turn of the 12th century). Hugh pointed out four essential components of the term sacrament, namely, (a) a physical element (bread, wine, water, etc.), (b) a likeness to the thing signified, (c)

authorization (institution by Jesus) to signify the thing in question, and (d) the efficacy by which the sacrament is capable of mediation or transmission (of grace). In this context, it is noteworthy that Hugh proposed the *Incarnation*, the *Church* and *death* as sacraments (McGrath 1994,1997:498). Lombard, following on Augustine, refined Hugh's definition of sacrament and his major contribution was to highlight the dual function of sacraments as *sanctifying* as well as *signifying* (McGrath 1994,1997:499).

In Roman Catholic sacramental tradition, the model of the church as *Mystici Corporis* as developed in the Middle Ages, has its protagonist in Thomas Aquinas (1224/5-1274) and was later fully developed by Pope Pius XII.²³ The Roman Catholic Church recognizes seven sacraments (baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, penance, marriage, extreme unction or the anointing of the sick and ordination) from the beginning of sacramental theology up until today.

According to the Dutch theologian Hendrikus Berkhof (1979:247-348) it was during the Reformation in the Protestant *personalistic* conception of sacraments that a link between the doctrines of sacraments and justification was forged. Reformed theology came up with a triad of *word* and *sacraments* (baptism and Eucharist) as means of transmission or mediation of human salvation accorded by God in Christ. Thus the sacraments were reduced to two and the *proclamation* of the Word (*kerugma*) was understood as the central means of transmission (McGrath 1994,1997:499-500). The chief protagonists in this reductionist move are Martin Luther (1483-1546) and John Calvin (1509-1564).

In his treatise *The Babylonian Captivity* (1521) Luther initially recognized only three sacraments (baptism, Eucharist and penance). In this stance, Luther maintained that all three sacraments were subjected to a miserable captivity by the Roman curia and subsequently robbing the church of her freedom. Shortly afterwards, Luther, in placing emphasis on a *visible sign*, reduced the sacraments to two (baptism and Eucharist). It was Calvin, in his treatise *The Institutes* (IV. xiv,3) who gave primacy of the Word over the sacraments in mediating grace (Berkhof 1979:348). In Reformed theology, it can be asked whether the Word has the status of a sacrament. Berkhof gives a negative answer. He explains that the Bible is here clearly not designated the status of sacrament because it is the source from which other transmission media derive their content.

Another important shift closer to the modern understanding of the Incarnation exists in what Berkhof (1979:347) terms a tendency to view sacrament more as a fruit of the Incarnation or as a function of the Church as *primordial sacrament* (German: **ur-sakrament**) and to interpret

²³Thomas Aquinas (1224/5 –1274) in his *Summa Theologiae*, Qs.34-40. Pope Pius XII, in the encyclicals

sacraments more in an *encounter* framework. According to McGrath 1994,1997:473-475), protagonists of this view in New Catholic Theology include the Jesuit theologians Henri de Lubac and Karl Rahner, the German theologian Otto Semmelroth, the Swiss theologian Hans Ur von Balthasar (1905-1988), and the Dominican Belgian theologian Edward Schillebeeckx (1914 -).

According to McGrath (1994,1997:474), De Lubac, in pre-Vatican II writings, shows patristic sympathy in designating the church the status of sacrament that represents God and/or makes God present and from the moment of institution (by Christ) it is the very continuation of Christ. Semmelroth, in his book *The Church as Primordial Sacrament (Ursakrament)* developed this view. Balthasar adopts a strongly Incarnational approach to his understanding of the church as an *elongetur Christi (the elongation of Christ)* in time and space. Thus according to the Anglican theologian, John Macquarrie (1990:63), in the Incarnation, Balthasar sees the *kenōsis* (self-emptying) of God in Christ.²⁴ Rahner, in neo-Aristotelian and Thomistic (cf. Thomas Aquinas) categories affirms the concepts of the Church as *primal sacrament* and gives a transcendental Incarnational Christology. Rahner comes close to Reformed theology of the Word in his book *Hearers of the Word* (German: *Hören des Wortes* - 1963). He also shows leanings to Thomas' neo-Aristotelian argument for the existence of God in claiming that human beings have a *potentia oboedientialis* (inherent capacity) that enables them to transcend their finiteness in comprehending the infinite. According to Macquarrie (1990:306-308), Rahner gives us a twofold formula, namely, that *Christology is transcendent anthropology, anthropology is deficient Christology* – stressing that Christ is the archetype for full humanity.²⁵

Macquarrie adds that in Rahner's Christology, the Incarnation is seen as the beginning of *divinisation*.²⁶ Semmelroth demonstrated the idea of God's ability to use the material order to bear witness to the spiritual.

Schillebeeckx, in his work, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God* (1963), further relativised the word sacrament. Thus for Schillebeeckx (1963:16) Christ is the *primal (primordial) sacrament*. In this stance, he emphasised that whatever sacramental character the church has derives from its relation with Christ (McGrath 1994,1997:475). It is also noteworthy that Schillebeeckx shows leanings to the encounter-Incarnation sacramental analogy. Schillebeeckx (1963:14), in his proposal of Christ as the Sacrament, *par excellence*, gives the axiom *Christ is God in a human way and man in a divine way*.

Mystici Corporis 1943) and *Mediator Dei* (1947).

²⁴ Hans Ur von Balthasar in *A Theology of History*, (Sheed & Ward, 1963, p11).

²⁵ Karl Rahner, in *Theological Investigations*, vol.1 (Darton, Longman & Todd – 19961, p164, n.1).

²⁶ Karl Rahner, in *Theological Investigations*, vil.5 (Darton, Longman & Todd –1966, pp.161, 197-292); *Foundations of Christian Faith* (Darton, Loneman & Todd 1978. pp. 178-203)

From the foregoing discussion, it can be asked whether it is correct to say that Jesus Christ is a sign, sacrament or symbol of our salvation or transcendent reality. Paul Tillich (1886-1965), the protagonist of the symbolic or correlation method in theology stops short at calling Christ a symbol (Macquarrie 1990:301). According to Macquarrie (1990:302), Tillich agrees with Barth in acknowledging Jesus as the Christ of God and the mediation of *new being* (human salvation) but deviates from Barth in admitting that there is revelation outside the specifically Christian tradition. From the above discussion, it can be said that there are areas of mutual influencing of sacramental and Word Christology.

2.1.3 THE RELATION OF 'WORD' AND 'SACRAMENT'

The main protagonist of evangelical theocentric Christology in the encounter framework of the Incarnation and sacramentality is Barth. In his doctrine of *special revelation*, and, in the axiom *God reveals God*, Barth is diametrically opposed to general revelation. In his book *The Humanity of God* (1960), Barth, portrays the *Word* as the embodiment of God. In this respect, Barth sees God as self-positing in Christ. In the Incarnation or the understanding of revelation as *Dei loquentis persona* (*God's personal speech*), Barth (1975:1.i.103, 132-156) portrays a God who comes, speaks, and acts. He emphasizes that in freedom and *aseity*, *God meets humankind* in the *history of salvation* – properly understood as *Heilsgeschichte* (Jesus' birth, work, suffering, death, resurrection and ascension). In the Incarnation, Barth postulates a *theanthropology* that is underscored by his axiom that *humanity becomes the measure of all things since God became human* (Barth 1960:11,46-52; Gutierrez 1988:6). We have seen this line of thought in Rahner's portrayal of human beings as hearers of the word in transcendental theological epistemology and in Schillebeeckx's postulate of the Incarnate Jesus as the *sacrament of the encounter with God*.

2.1.4 THE PROBLEMATIC OF SACRAMENTAL CHRISTOLOGY

The traditional sacramental view of the Incarnation is very problematic today in several ways. Crucial to our concern for a relevant contemporary Christology is the question whether the sacramental Incarnational Christology such as outlined above is possible in our time. I agree with Erickson (1991:11) in acknowledging that orthodox Christology is criticised today for its several elements. *Firstly*, it is too preoccupied with philosophical (metaphysical) questions of *pre-existence, person* and *procession* of the three divine persons to take full account of the work of Christ. *Secondly*, it is too hierarchical and androcentric (offensive especially to women). *Finally*, sacramental Christology presents a static or monolithic view of *sacrament* in view of changing perceptions due to new insights of faith. Erickson (1991:11-12) adds that, consequently, orthodox Christology has faced challenges in three areas of theological development. *Firstly*, the rise of historical consciousness, accompanied by the formulation of

critical methodologies for the study of the Bible has introduced some radical implications for Christology. *Secondly*, widespread social and political changes, for example, the global awareness have called into question the universality and normativeness of Jesus. *Finally*, the awareness that we are in the midst of a cultural shift from modern to postmodern has meant that the whole approach to intellectual problems should be revised or even replaced. In other words, there are pertinent questions challenging accepted paradigms of sacramental Christology. Implicit in this is a modern paradigm shift from the traditional sacramental view to the modern symbolic view of the Incarnation.

2.1.4.1 THE METAPHYSICAL PROBLEM

The traditional sacramental or theocentric Christology lays stress on an ontology that overshadows the humanity of Jesus. According to Berkhof (1979:280), the Chalcedon doctrine of *hypostatic union* (unity of the two natures) was for many centuries later interpreted to mean that in the Incarnation, Jesus assumed the impersonal human nature since the concepts of *anhypostasis/ enhypostasis* meant that Jesus' human nature is passive so that, negatively, it possesses no human *I*. This is exacerbated by the duality of natures that obscures the unity of the person. In this way Christ's genuine and full humanity has been misconstrued for many centuries. The highly static notions of the two natures, in turn, gave static quality to Christology. The German theologian, Monika Hellwig (1989:467) notes that classical Christology is problematic in giving syllogisms that proceed from the *unknown to the known* – from the assumptions of what it means to be divine to attempts to harmonize what it means to be human with the pre-established content of the divinity claim. Consequently, orthodox Christology's selective consideration of the historical events resulted in separating Christology from soteriology – the person from the work of Christ. According to Hellwig, it was Rahner who exposed the static quality of orthodox Christology in suggesting that Chalcedon might be the starting point, but it must not be seen as a static end-point of Christology for all time. This was precisely a call to go beyond Chalcedon or classical Christology.²⁷

2.1.4.2 THE SEPARATION OF CHRISTOLOGY AND SOTERIOLOGY

Concerning classical theology as being Incarnation-centred, according to Van Niekerk (1980:124), classical Christology gives a unilateral view of Jesus Christ in resonating on the nativity rather than the crucifixion, the Incarnation rather than the death and resurrection of Christ. The unity of Christology with soteriology is highlighted in the title, *Jesus Christ* and the profession of faith: *Jesus is the Christ* (Walter Kasper 1976:37). The hermeneutic key for the unity of an ontological and functional Christology can also be found in Rahner's assertion that

²⁷ Karl Rahner, in an Article *Current Problems in Christology* (cf. *Theological Investigations* 1961-I 149-200)

the question about personal existence is in truth a question about salvation (1996:40). The Jesuit theologian, Walter Kasper, accentuates that the centre and content of a Christology that claims to be an interpretation of this faith affirmation is the cross and resurrection of Jesus.²⁸

He highlights the problem of severing Christology from soteriology by concluding that:

A unilateral Jesuology as much as a unilateral kerygma Christology does not go far enough. Where the cross and Resurrection become the mid-point, that also means however an adjustment of a one-sided Christology orientated to the Incarnation. If the divine-human person Jesus is constituted through the Incarnation once and for all, the history and activity of Jesus, above all the cross and Resurrection, no longer have any constitutive meaning whatsoever. Then the death of Jesus would be only the completion of the Incarnation. The Resurrection would be no more than the confirmation of the divine nature. That would mean a diminution of the whole biblical testimony.

Another problem exists in the separation of Christology from the doctrine of creation. Although the logos Christology portrays the pre-existent Christ as participating in creation, nevertheless, an Incarnation-centred Christology can be said to be rather detached from the events of human societies in an enfolding and continually changing history. In the understanding that the Incarnation is coeval with creation, we take note of the unity of primal and continual creation – creation and divine providence or governance. Schillebeeckx (cf. Lane 1992:11) underscores this view by saying that Christology is *consecrated creation*.²⁹ In the unique and singular Incarnation of Jesus of Nazareth, classical Christology presents a soteriology that sets the Incarnation as necessitated by the fallen condition of humanity. God in Christ (the God-man) intervenes in the salvation of humankind from sin. In other words, orthodox Christology concentrates on the unique or singular Incarnation in the person of Jesus of Nazareth at the expense of the many advents of Christ in the world, the church and human experience. In this stance, Hellwig (1989:467) is right in claiming that the desirable timelessness and universality that lifted classical Christology out of its particular culture and setting in order to be adaptable to all times and peoples had to pay a great price – bear the mark of a certain irrelevance to the burning issues of contemporary society. She adds that classical Christology is inadequate in the sense that it seems to explain rather than to challenge what is going on in the human community.

2.1.4.3 THE CHALLENGE OF FEMINIST THEOLOGY

The challenge of Feminist theology is very relevant for a Christology that takes the experiences of women seriously. There is the problem of sacramental representation and the use of exclusive God-language, the monopolization of ordained ministry by the clergy and the

²⁸ The German theologian, Walter Kasper became Cardinal in the year 2000.

²⁹ E. Schillebeeckx, in *Interim Report on the Books 'Jesus' and 'Christ'* (London: SCM Press, n.128)

consequent exclusion of women from the centre of church life and quintessential doctrines. Other inherent problems include biological reductionism as seen in the nuptial argument of sacramental representation and the patriarchal theory of *equal but different* 'vis-à-vis' other concepts of *complementation*, *collaboration* and *mutual partnership* of men and women in the Church's mission. In highlighting the problem, it is relevant to ask with Van Niekerk (1996:27-48), *Does belief have two genders?* Alternatively, we can ask, *Does God have gender?* A negative answer shows that in patriarchal reification of God as *male*, woman's *imago Dei/Christi* is a reduced one. Furthermore, in what Marilyn Strathern (Fiona Bowie 1998:50-51) calls *merographic connections*, woman's person has no independent existence. In other words, man subsumes woman in exclusive God-language and man becomes paradigmatic for full humanity. Strathern explains that merographic readings show that *nothing is in fact ever simply part of a whole because another view, another perspective or domain describes it as 'part of something else.'*³⁰ There is cognitive dissonance with a theology that subscribes to God as *neither male nor female* and to the unity and equality of believers in the new dispensation (Gal 3:28).

Feminist theologians seeking to reclaim their *baptismal vocation* decry the exclusion of women from the priesthood, a move that makes *man* the sole representative of Christ in the sacraments. Ida Raming (Elizondo & Grienacher 1980:3-13), in an Article *From the Freedom of the Gospel to the Petrified 'Men's Church'*... aptly shows that because important church offices of leadership and pastoral ministry are bound up with ordained ministry, there is monopoly of the entire sacramental system, namely, jurisdiction, teaching, decision-making, and administration. Elizabeth Grössman (1998:85) concurs with this view by saying that, in actual fact, there is the monopoly of the adult function in the life of the church by the male clergy. Women make up the majority of church congregations, but in a twist of irony, it is as Van Niekerk (1996:37) asserts that men are power brokers and women as worshippers are theophobians. In other words, men are definers of codes and women are neurotic consumers. A case in point is that the papal Magisterium is comprised of the male clergy (bishops and cardinals). Here the Dominican woman theologian Marie Henry Keane (1988:10) is right in saying that cognitive dissonance exists in that men speak *for* women *about* women *without* women. For the purpose of this study, the spotlight is on an inclusive paradigm of the Incarnation that fosters vital participation and equality in sacramental representation in all areas of being church for men as well as women. Consequently, the denigration of ministerial priesthood to women particularly in the Roman Catholic Church today is for radical feminists what the **filioque** (*and- the-Son*)

³⁰ Marilyn Strathern in *After Nature: English Kinship in the Late Twentieth Century*, 1992, pp. 72-73 explains merographic connections as exposing the incomplete homology of analogy.

clause of the Creed was for the Eastern Orthodox Church.³¹ In other words, for radical feminists, membership to the church stands or falls on this issue.

In patriarchal justification of the monopoly of sacramental representation, there are notions of men and women as *equal but different, complementation, collaboration and mutual partnership* in the Church. Here we can pause and ask, *Does 'difference' mean 'inferior'?* And again, *Does 'complementarity' mean the 'filling in of gaps'?* A negative answer exposes elements of *secularisation* and *projection* hypotheses in sacramental Christology postulated by Sigmund Freud and Karl Marx, respectively (cf. Van Niekerk 1980,1988:5-7,14-17). In the *secularisation hypothesis* (which operates with a strong division between church and the world), patriarchal binary logic separates knowledge into male-female, sacred-profane, mind-body, rational-intuitive, active-receptive, superior-inferior, dominant-controlled. In the *projection hypothesis* (Ruether 1983,1993), there is rationalization to boost the masculine ego while negative elements are projected on women. Patriarchal gender dichotomy is thus characterised by the value for hierarchy and unilateral power. According to Elaine Graham (1995:341-344), there are unexamined assumptions resonating on questions of *gender identity, gender relations* and *gender representation* in theology and Christian *praxis*. In patriarchal sacramental Christology, the basic assumption is that gender is determined or fixed. But it is a known fact that whereas sex differentiation into male or female is biological or natural, gender is a category of human experience and human nature. Alice Kehoe (1990:139) accentuates this view in saying that gender is an *organon* (product of thought, system of logic or thinking). In other words, the differentiation into *masculine* and *feminine* characteristics is a social construct. By the same note, human values in relation to gender identity and relationships shape *gendered metaphors of God* (Graham 1995:343).

Patriarchal theological anthropology that subscribes to the maleness of God/Christ and makes the male and male experience normative for representing God and full humanity shows *cognitive dissonance* with the sacramental dynamics of wholeness, integration, relatedness or connectedness, similarity and continuity. In the nuptial symbol of the Church and sacramental representation, feminist theologians (Raming in Elizondo & Greinacher 1980:4) claim that the Marian symbol is under the tutelage of the male clergy and is thus offensive to women. Thus in the sacralization of the male clergy, Christ is the bridegroom and the Church is his bride. Consequently Mary the mother of God is the model of both the church and the motherhood of women. In the economy of salvation, Mary is as such the *New Eve*.

³¹ It is understood that the *filioque* is the cause of the split in the Church between the East and West in 1054 C.E.

In the *Adam-Eve First Fall motif* and the literal interpretation of the second story of Creation (Gen 2-3), Tertullian (Longenecker 1984:90, cf. Tertullian's *On the Apparel of Women* – 202 C.E.) labels women temptresses or the seducers of men and because of this he attributes their subordination and subservience to men as a curse. This view is elaborated in patriarchal soteriology. In the God-man scheme, and in the patriarchal self-justification and projectionistic stance, there is claim that since sin came through woman, so Christ was borne of woman (Mary as the new Eve) (Anselm of Canterbury 1962:263). In classical theology, Mary as the *New Eve* was seen to symbolize the redemption of the female sex (cf. the teachings of St Augustine 345-430, Tertullian, Martin Luther). In what Mary Daly (1985:73-77) calls *Christolatry* (Christ being used as a scapegoat for the marginalization and oppression of women), Asian women (cf. Grössman 1998:85-86) are right in claiming that the Christian virtues of *servitude* and *self-sacrifice* are the tools for the patriarchal justification for the subordination, subservience and oppression of women. Oduyoye (Oduyoye and Kanyoro 1990:46-47) concurs with this view by maintaining that where women have internalised patriarchal domination, they suffer from *martyr-complex*. And, according to Mary Daly, they do this in *imitatio Christi* (the imitation of Christ).

Augustine and Aquinas (Ruether 1983,1993:95) show that woman's *imago Dei* is a reduced and diminished one. In saying that man alone can represent God and woman not, Augustine gives primacy to man and secondary status to woman. Nevertheless, in the motif of *helpmate*, the primary becomes more complete with the secondary.³² Thus we have the theory of *complementation*. According to Prudence Allen (1987:21-22), in patriarchal sex and gender differentiation (politics of difference), we recognize three positions, namely, *sex polarity*, *sex complementation* and *sex unity*. In sex polarity there is acceptance of significant differences between men and women to the extent of affirming male superiority. Sex complementarity acknowledges the fundamental equality of worth and dignity of women and men while at the same time arguing for significant differences between the two sexes. Sex unity argues that there are no philosophically significant differences between the sexes, and consequently, that men and women are fundamentally equal. Prudence explains that Aquinas argues for a double theory – sex polarity, on the level of nature and sex complementarity on the level of grace. By comparison, the sex and gender differentiation of two German women theologians and philosophers, Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) and Edith Stein (1892-1942) ascribes to sex complementarity.³³ Allen (1987: 22; 1993:389-411) adds that these three Roman Catholic theologians do not admit to sex unity in their belief in the integration of body and soul. Sex unity, in admitting to the neo-platonic dichotomy of body and soul, devalues the body, and, in

³² Augustine of Hippo, in *DeTrinitate* (7.7.10).

turn, women. Aquinas (Ruether 1983,1994:96), subscribing to Aristotelian anthropology reduces woman to a *misbegotten male*. According to Aquinas (cf. Grössman 1998:74-75), woman's existence has no independent meaning since she was created for the purpose of procreation.³⁴ Reformed theologians, Calvin and Barth see the justification of the subjection and subservience of women in the order of creation (Ruether 1983,1993:98-99).

Up until today, the Roman Catholic Church, in ascribing to the *real presence of Christ* in the Sacrament (Eucharist), reserves sacramental representation to the male priesthood (Balthasar 1996:188). The Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith elaborates this view in the document, *Inter Insigniores* (1976). Art.5 of this document declares that:

The Church, in fidelity to the example of the Lord, does not consider herself authorised to admit women to priestly ordination.

The groundwork for the above decree is found in Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Sacerdotalis Caelibatus* (1967). Pope John Paul II in the encyclical, *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* (1994) not only unequivocally endorsed this declaration, but also made the question of the priesthood of women a closed issue.³⁵ The basic tenet here is the absolute Fatherhood of God, the maleness of Christ in divine self-communication, and the representation of Christ by man in the economy of salvation (Ferdinand Menne, cf. Elizondo & Grienacher 1980:20). According to Thomas Rausch of Loyola University in Los Angeles, California (1999:170-172), in the church's teaching of the *Apostolic or Petrine office or sacramental representation*, the priest by virtue of the sacrament of *ordination* is said to represent Christ or to act both **in persona Christi** (*in the person of Christ*) and **vice Christi** (*in the place of Christ*). Similarly, in the *nuptial* understanding of the Church as both the Body and Bride of Christ, the priest is said to act **in persona ecclesia** (*in the place of the church*). Here the Roman Catholic Jesuit theologian, Avery Dulles (Rausch 1999:173-174) emphasises the importance of the ordination representation role of the priest in terms of the church as sacrament.

According to Balthasar (1996:185), the above argument for the exclusion of women from ordained priesthood rests on three tenets, namely, the normative practice of Christ, then of the apostles and then of ecclesiastical tradition. Balthasar rightly shows that the last two arguments as appealing to up-to-now uninterrupted tradition are weak since there is no sufficient proof that this practice could not be altered in view of important insights or changed cultural traditions. He shows that whereas the practice of uninterrupted tradition holds true to the Eastern Orthodox

³³ Edith Stein is a German-Jew-convert who became a Carmelite nun and was killed in the Gas Chamber.

³⁴ Thomas Aquinas in *Summa Theologica* 1.93.4-10.

³⁵ Pope John Paul II, in *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, made a futile attempt to declare papal infallibility on the teaching of the male priesthood..

Church, this does not obtain for the Western church (1996:186-188). Ida Ramming (1980:7-12) and Longenecker (1984:89-90), citing the *Didascalia Apostolorum* (third-century document), concur with Balthasar by exposing that women enjoyed leadership roles of deaconesses in the pristine church (approximately, from the first to the fourth century). Raming (1980:8-9) shows that in several Gallican synods of the fourth and sixth centuries, there is the rise of anti-feminist currents that saw the height of clericalization and divested women of the *diakonia* (deaconate). Raming adds that important theologians (Tertullian, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas as shown above) consolidated the sacralization of worship, and consequently the patriarchal monopolization of the priesthood. Today other mainstream churches (e.g. the Episcopate or Anglican Church and the Dutch Catholic church), that have women priests, challenge the Roman Catholic Church's tenacious stance on the male priesthood (Grössman 1996:82).

Concerning *authorization* (the will of God or Christ) for sacramental representation to the Twelve Apostles, patriarchal theologians point to Christ's call of only men apostles (Balthasar 1996:188, cf. Mk 3:14f.) But Feminist theologians (Grössman 1998:70,84; cf. Cardinal König in a speech in Vienna – 1993, Edith Stein and other Germany theologians since the 1930s), using the same arguments of authorization by Christ also claim that there is *no theological justification* for the exclusion of women to the priesthood. Consequently, they claim membership and participation in a community of coequal discipleship (Schüssler-Fiorenza 1984:75,91). They appeal to the Old Testament portrayal of the masculine and feminine character of God, and the Gospel portrayal of Christ as having both men and women disciples, and in particular, entrusting women (in the person of Mary Magdalene) with heralding the good news of the resurrection (Jn 20:1f.). Schüssler-Fiorenza (1984:26) aptly shows that New Testament Scholarship questions whether Jesus did ordain anyone to the priesthood, as we understand ordination today.

In the nuptial symbol of Christ as the bridegroom and the church as the bride, Mary the **Theotokos** (*God bearer*) is seen to incarnate God and to provide a perfect model of *motherhood* for women and the Church. Thus both masculine and feminine symbols of God are under the tutelage of the male priesthood. Mary's role in the Incarnation is highlighted in her saying *yes* (**fiat**, cf. Lk 1:38) to God's salvific plan. Balthasar sees an extension of Mary's *fiat* in her posture at the cross. In this, he recognizes a *silent assent* and an *invisible part of the sacrifice*. He thus concludes that *it is completely unthinkable that Mary should pronounce the words of consecration, This is my Body; I absolve you*. Balthasar, following Pauline nuptial ecclesiology (1 Cor 11:7,12:Eph 5:21-27) assigns the Church and Christians a feminine character. According to Balthasar, Mary-synagogue-Church is the archetype of this all-embracing femininity. Thus Balthasar maintains that in the Church's assent to God, *even the man, even the priest, is in this*

respect feminine, Marian. But Balthasar (1996:196-197) also emphasizes the mutual *complementation* of the male and female images of God by asserting that the Marian symbol complements the Apostolic-Petrine sacramental office. In this stance, Balthasar gives primacy to the Marian symbol over the Petrine office. Thus Balthasar (1996:193,196) concludes:

The woman who would strive for the male role in the Church thus strives for something 'less' and denies the 'more' which she is. This can be overlooked only by a feminism that has lost the sense for the mystery of sexual difference, which has functionalised sexuality and attempts to increase the dignity of woman by bringing about her identification with man.

Balthasar explains that priestly representation has a dual nature. The positive aspect is that the one who represents has been authorized by the one he represents to make present some of the latter's superiority or dignity. He says because of this double character of representation, the apostolic office is open to abuse, particularly when it justifies the false exaltation of the priest as *another Christ*. The negative side is that the representative cannot claim any of this superiority or dignity for himself. The Christological significance of priestly ministry is *service*. He is emphatic that the apostle or God's steward is servant of all and that it is no more than the service of transmitting divine gifts. As such the priest is simply an instrument of transmission.

The American feminist theologian, Tina Beattie (1998:54-65) concurs with Balthasar concerning the liberation potential of the Marian symbol but comes to a different conclusion concerning its sacramental character. In both Balthasar and Beattie, Mary's humanity is the solution against a seemingly *docetic* (that Jesus only appeared to be human) interpretation of the humanity of Jesus in orthodox Christology. Beattie (1998:63, cf. Kallistos Ware) accentuates that *Theotokos is the touchstone of true faith in the Incarnation*.³⁶ She explains that there can be no doctrine of the Incarnation without Mary. And again, in the vertical and horizontal dimensions of the Incarnation, Beattie explains that Mary's humanity is as necessary to the Incarnation as God's divinity. She adds that when we lose sight of God, Mary's Son is not divine and that when we lose sight of Mary, God's Son is not human. But where Balthasar points to Mary's role and dignity in the plan of salvation as exclusive of ministerial priesthood, Beattie says it does. Beattie (1998:62) asks the following incisive questions concerning the liberation potential (reclaiming) of the Marian symbol:

What does it say about patriarchy with its paternal genealogies that God excludes the human father, but not the human mother in the incarnation? What does it say to those who insist that the male body is an essential mediating presence between humankind and God in the Eucharist, when the first act of consecration took place between a woman and God from which the male was explicitly excluded?

³⁶ Kallistos Ware, in *Theotokos in the Orthodox Tradition*, 1997.

Beattie thus urges that we should approach Mary in a way that is attentive to the voices and experience of women, while also nurturing her symbolic potential to communicate the awesome mystery of the Incarnation. Beattie is close to affirming the priesthood of Mary - the mother of Christ, *full of Grace* (Lk 1:28).

It can be said that the Marian symbol as portrayed by Beattie is still exclusivist. In a deconstruction revisionist approach, Bowie (1996:42) is right in cautioning against building new hegemonic feminist paradigms. In Bob Schantz's punning on the concept of the *flight into Egypt* (Mt2:13-15), we have a *both/and* symbolic approach. We need both the images and roles of Joseph and Mary in our understanding of the God-human-cosmos incarnational relationship. The rehabilitation of the Marian symbol by feminist theologians that affirms the quintessence of Mary's dignity and role in the Incarnation (the embodiment of Christ in the world), is seen in Mother Teresa of Calcutta's claim that Mary the *Theotokos* was the first priest (after Christ) going out to serve Elizabeth her kinswoman who was also pregnant, and was in her old age (Lk 1:39f).³⁷ By the same token, the Dutch theologian, John Wijngaards (1999:1638-1640), exposes a long history of important theologians (patristic writers, popes, doctors of the church) in the church who ascribed to the priesthood of Mary. The tradition affirmed Mary Virgin and Mother as a model priest. Balthasar (1996:1189) concurs with this view when he says that Mary is depicted in countless miniatures (portraits) as the only one standing under the cross, catching Christ's blood with the uplifted sacred chalice. He adds that especially in Eastern theology, Mary appears as the definitive incarnation of the divine *Sophia* (Wisdom), the one who gathers and nurtures in her womb all the seeds of the *Logos* – scattered throughout creation and the history of salvation. Wijngaards (1999:1638) explains that Mary's priesthood was inferred from the doctrines of *Theotokos* and *The Immaculate Conception*. He (1999:1639) shows that it was St Albert the Great, Doctor of the Church (1200-1280) who formulated the classic solution that Mary has not received the sacramental character of ordination, but she possesses the substance of the sacrament in abundance. Little did he realize that this was to have significant consequences in the exclusion of women from ordination merely based on their sex!

Balthasar (1996:185-198), like Aquinas, admits to the *double* theory of sex and gender differentiation. Following on patristic anthropology and Pauline nuptial ecclesiology, he gives theological weight to the male priesthood. The point of departure is the natural order of the sexes (*order of creation*) and the supernatural Christian order (*authorization by Christ*) that makes man and woman *equal but different* (complementary) and consequently justifies the

³⁷ Mother Teresa of Calcutta, in a speech given at the 43 rd International Eucharistic Congress, Nairobi,

differentiation into the *male vocation* of 'priesthood' and the *female vocation* of 'motherhood'. The second creation story in which woman (Eve) was made from man (Adam) is cited by both Paul (1Cor 11:7) and Balthasar (1996:188-189) in the order of creation argument for the superiority of man over woman. Balthasar (Anton Strukelj 1993:377-388), from the doctrine of the Trinity, and like Augustine, maintains that man alone represents the image of God both by *nature* and by *grace*. By taking a firm stand on the concept of the maleness of God and of the Incarnate Jesus Christ, Balthasar maintains that whereas the pre-existent Christ as an agent of creation or *Sophia* (Wisdom) can be understood as feminine (1996:189,195), the Incarnate Jesus as representing the Father in the world can only be understood as male. In the former stance, Balthasar concurs with the feminist claim of the Wisdom tradition that sets the Second Person of the Trinity as the Wisdom (Greek: **Sophia**; Hebrew: **Hokmah**) of God (see also 1Cor. 1:23-24). But in the doctrine of the Incarnation, Balthasar, concurring with the above Declaration of the Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith (Strukelj 1993:379-380) and with patriarchal binary logic of man-woman, soul-body, active-receptive, respectively, argues that the male is the *word* (German: **Wort**) where the female is the *response to the word* (German: **ant-wort**) or the *counter-image* (German: **ant-litz**). In other words, in this scheme of thought and following on Aristotelian embryology, the sperm is virile while the ovum is passive.

Adele Reinhartz (1999:83-103) is right in asserting that patriarchal anthropology is a trajectory of divine *epigenesis* (*generation and filiation*). *Reinhartz* explains that following on Aristotelian embryology, and in the language used to describe the *father-son, God-Jesus* relationship, the male sperm is understood as the vehicle for the *logos* and *pneuma* of the father. *Reinhartz* concludes that epigenesis is at one and the same time the key for understanding the revelatory function of Jesus in the world, and poses problems for feminist theology by focusing on the masculinity of both God and Jesus.

In his allocution to the Italian Catholic jurists in December 1972, Pope Paul VI (cf. Nadine Foley 1980:28-29) admits to biological reductionism in defining woman's vocation as essentially and specifically that of a mother. Pope John Paul II is close to biological reductionism by ascribing a *womb-shaped vocation* to women (Caldecott 1996:76). In *Mulieris Dignitatem* (1988, art) he defines woman's unique vocation as that of mother and wife. But John Paul II is close to Balthasar in assigning women both biological and spiritual motherhood. In the encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* (*The Gospel of Life* -1995), and in the *Letter to Women* (1995), John Paul II talks about the *feminine genius* as women's special contribution to the mutual partnership of men and women in promoting life and in Christian salvation (Caldecott

1996:69). In this stance, John Paul II is close to the German-Jew Catholic woman philosopher, Edith Stein's postulate (1892-1942) of the *feminine ethos* and the French postmodern feminist, Helene Cixous' postulate of *écriture féminine* (*feminine writing or economy*). According to Allen (1993:399), for Stein the feminine ethos denotes the women's intrinsic quality to look towards the holistic, to be concerned with the development of people, to practice empathy etc. Graham Ward (1996:229-230) shows that Cixous understands *écriture féminine* to write the narrative of the *other*, the narrative repressed in the *masculine economy*. As such, *écriture féminine* welcomes the other; it gives voice to the other, allows the strangeness of the other to appear and to question the writer. In short, it gives space (*plenitude*) to know, write, read, love, and take care of the other. (1996:225). But as mentioned above, feminist theologians, such as, Mary Daly see patriarchal rationalization of the so-called feminine character in marginalization and oppression of women.

Besides biological reductionism, what is at stake here is the question whether *mutual partnership* of men and women in mission is possible in a situation where the concept of *equal but different* justifies hegemonic structures. The answer is negative. I agree with Shantz (1995:7) in asserting that in the patriarchal church, men enjoy social power that they naturally do not want to relinquish. The logical conclusion to this, also accentuated by the warped and limited realization of women's gifts to the church, is that *tokenism* is the order of the day. For example, in the encyclical *Christifideles Laici* (1994, par.51) John Paul II assigns women in particular, and the laity, in general, the role of *collaboration* in the priestly ministry. By the same token, the homily and administering of sacraments are a priestly preserve. Laymen have reclaimed the role of deacon in the ordained ministry design, and women not. By the same note, according to the *Codex Iuris Canonici* (1983), laymen have reclaimed the so-called non-sacramental lower ordinations (lector, acolyte). In the common priesthood of believers, women and laymen can share marginal roles of catechists and caregivers (praying for and with the sick). *Complementation* here means that the women fill in gaps. This is underscored by the concern for the *shortage* of priests. In such cases, women may act as *Extraordinary Ministers* of the Eucharist, where bishops and priests are *Ordinary Ministers*. In this context, Van Niekerk (1996:44-46) is right in maintaining that as long as the male priesthood remains, Mary, virgin mother and Immaculate Conception and assumed into heaven is the *gender crumb* that falls from the table of the Magisterium. If God is (androgynous in character) *neither male nor female*, if the concept of men and women being equal in worth and dignity holds true, then true complementation requires the need for both men and women in positions of leadership in the church. In this way the church is enriched and balanced relationships are forged when women can make up for what is wanting in men, and *vice-versa*. I propose that the shortage of priests

may be one of the *signs of the times* for the long overdue rehabilitation of women to the centre of the life of the church and to quintessential doctrines.

I agree with the concept of *equal but different* insofar as we understand the human being as possessing both feminine and masculine characteristics and insofar as we welcome difference as enriching the community rather than meaning *inferior* and therefore a means of marginalizing or excluding the *other*. I therefore concur with the American feminist theologian, Regina Bechtle (1998:39), in asking, *does gender so define us that one kind of experience excludes the other? Do men and women experience God in the same way, or in unique though complementary ways?* She adds that the answers lead to painful and divergent theological and pastoral conclusions. In taking the *feminist principle*, differences are critically interpreted and negative elements are appraised as (dehumanizing) not in accordance to the will of God and positive elements are appreciated and promoted as gifts (promoting full humanity and dignity) to enrich the individual and the faith community. There is thus stress on the celebration of difference.

Concerning the former aspect, it is true to say that *to care is to be human* and *vice versa (to be human is to care)*. In other words, *nurturing* for one's young is intrinsic to both *motherhood* and *fatherhood*. This view is particularly true today in a situation where men and women may take paternity and maternity leave and husbands can labour or empathize with their wives in giving birth.

In conclusion, I pause to ask, is there a paradigm shift from the traditional sacramental view to a modern symbolic view of the Incarnation? Are we seeing the modern impulse for the continuity of the unique and singular Incarnation of the Historical Jesus of Nazareth within the many advents or Incarnations of God in church and society today? This view is explored in the modern symbolic or anthropocentric view of Christology below.

2.2 MODERN SYMBOLIC - ANTHROPOCENTRIC (*FROM BELOW*) VIEW

An anthropocentric (*view from below*) Incarnational Christology has its point of departure in the human Jesus, who is, nevertheless, the *Emmanuel (God among us)*. We can say that both Christianity and Shona Christology are concerned with the affirming of the full humanity or dignity of persons. The acme of human dignity is the creation status of the *imago Dei*. Christianity adds to this the baptismal status of the *imago Christi* (Ruether 1983,1993:19, cf. 1 Cor.12:12-13; Gal.3:26-28; 4:5-7) in which believers are made sons and daughters of God and co-heirs with Christ in equal siblingship relationality (Ruether 1983,1993:136-138). Richard Longenecker (1984:75) underscores this notion of the full humanity in Christ by appealing to

Galatians 3:28 as the Christian *Magna Charta* that rules out cultural, social and gender discrimination among believers. An American theologian, Leonard Doohan (1992:168-177) accentuates the *adelphoi koinonia* as stressed by Vatican II's model of the church as the *People of God in Communion*. Doohan adds that underlying this view is the understanding of the *universal call to holiness* (cf. *Lumen Gentium* 40.3). He explains that the post-Vatican II Conciliar understanding of this call to holiness (full humanity for all people) can be understood as the *baptismal vocation* (1992:171).

There is stress on God's unity with humanity, and/or creation or history - on the three theological co-ordinates God-humanity-world/cosmos that give us a *theanthropocosmic Christology*. This is my operational framework for an Incarnational narrative Christology that takes seriously the experiences of the Shona women of Zimbabwe today. This means that in a Christology of reciprocity, we can discover in the Incarnate Jesus, *vis-à-vis* our experience of being human, the fullness of humanity. Such a Christology is tenable in a narrative theology patterned on the *meta-story* - the story of God in the Incarnate Jesus of Nazareth. Kasper (1976:48) highlights this point when he says that a Christology *from below* is possible when Jesus is taken as a real symbol of God - when the divine Incarnation takes away nothing of the autonomy and originality of humanity, but is the unique highest instance of the essential realization of human reality or possibilities. Thus it can be said that an anthropocentric Christology affirms the contemporaneity of God/Christ. In the contingency of contemporaneity, the Incarnation and inculturation are mutually inclusive terms. For an Incarnational Christology set in the context of the narratives of the Shona women of Zimbabwe today, the pertinent question to ask is, *What does the good news of God among us mean? And if Jesus brings salvation for humanity, or, precisely, if Jesus is the answer to the questions that Shona women ask, what does it mean to be human?*

I propose that in the modern symbolic or anthropocentric view of Christology, the terms *sacrament*, *symbol* and *metaphor* are mutually inclusive. This is also true in the sense of both *semiotics* (the study of signs) and theological language as being characteristically analogical. McGrath (1994,1997:345) notes that the symbolic presence of God points to the possibility of the same presence being available to others. Paul Tillich (1968:I.136), in his correlation method to theological epistemology, captures this view by asserting that symbols point beyond themselves to the mystery of God, and, indeed, participate in the mystery. Metaphor in God-language refers to the use of finite human analogies to comprehend the infinite. The use of metaphor here is an attempt to understand Christology or the Incarnation in terms of embodied life - the various embodiment of God/Christ in the world or human faith experience. It has been noted above that there is conceptual difference in the historical use of the terms. In other

words, in the paradigm shift from the traditional sacramental to the modern symbolic views of the Incarnation we have seen the emergence of a more plastic understanding of the terms *sacrament*, *symbol* and the *Incarnation*. The new paradigm takes note of the views of contextual theologies, process thought and liberation theology (including Black theology and feminist theology). There is thus a broadening rather than a total rejection of orthodox doctrines and symbolic formulations. As different from the orthodox sacramental Christology that ascribes to a fixed (two natures), hierarchy and gender dichotomy, the modern symbolic view of the Incarnation is non-hierarchical in its emphasis on interconnectedness of the coordinates God-humanity-cosmos.

There are, however, those like Sallie McFague (June O'Connor 1985:60) who argue that the modern world view is secular and non-sacramental as characterised by disunity, discontinuity, and separation, in turn, as trajectories of the sceptical tradition, *vis-à-vis* the traditional sacramental sensibilities to unity, continuity, and connection. McFague argues that the modern view of the Incarnation is metaphorical rather than sacramental and symbolic. In making a distinction between *symbol* and *metaphor*, McFague argues that whereas symbolic statements affirm that something is something else, (the word is flesh, the bread is the body), metaphoric statements (are paradoxical) *always contain the whisper, 'it is' and 'it is not'*.³⁸ There is an echo of the use of *apophatic* language in theology. This is known as *via negativa* (*the negative* or *apophatic way*) to theological epistemology. It is an acknowledgement that finite, mortal, rational human beings can never fully comprehend the infinite, immortal and supra-rational God. McFague makes an important contribution here in appropriating the Protestant concept to the use of symbols. This asserts that the denial of likeness is as important as the affirmation and that this is compatible with the *both/and* inclusive approach (as different from the *either/or* exclusive perspective). In other words, in the creative dialectic of the traditional sacramental and the modern views of the Incarnation, we are urged to take note of unity and separation, continuity and discontinuity and distinction and similarities. According to June O'Connor (1985:62), while it is true that people today are acutely aware of the relative and perspectival character of knowledge, the process character of perspective and the ways in which social location shapes perception and vision, and yet it is also true that we moderns are heirs of the sceptical tradition as well as the faith tradition. O'Connor (1985:61) thus asks an incisive question that points to the mutual influencing of the traditional sacramental view and the modern symbolic view:

But is the modern awareness, this contemporary sensibility which has been shaped by the Enlightenment scepticism, epistemological relativism, and the empiricism of modern science

³⁸ Sallie McFague. in *Metaphorical Theological Models of God in Religious Language* (1982).

finally and conclusively at odds with the sense of unity upon which the concept of symbol and sacrament are built... Is there not a modern sacramental sensibility as well?

O'Connor rightly concludes that sacramentality remains a rich meaningful category for many people today not only for those who find that the traditional formulations satisfy their spiritual theological needs, but also, for those who, dissatisfied by past formulas and formulations, seek to give new expression to the richness of sacramentality. Hellwig (1989:466) highlights this paradigm shift in Christology by asserting that today there is a new wave of interest in grounding Christology more intensively, extensively, and attentively in the full human and historical reality of Jesus.

With all this in mind, I proceed to explore the ample examples of the modern orientation to sacramentality, and the use of human images, symbols and metaphors for God from the standpoint of faith experiences. I therefore try to offer a historical overview of the paradigm shift from the traditional sacramental view to the modern symbolic view of the Incarnation. An important observation from this perspective is that every theology or culture has its own symbol(s) of God or Christ. It is even more important to highlight the contributions the various strands of an *ascending* Christology make to our understanding of the Incarnation. In appreciating the mutual influencing of *descending* and *ascending Christologies*, I concur with Rahner (Hellwig 1989:467; Gregory Havrilak 1989:127-128) in seeing Chalcedon as a starting-point but not a *terminus* (end-point) for a Christology open to the signs of the times and consequently, to enrichment or growth through new insights or developments in revelation.³⁹

2.2.1 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF ANTHROPOCENTRIC CHRISTOLOGY

In the foregoing discussion, we have seen the tendency or impulse to a theology *from below* in the Protestant *personalistic* approach and the interpretation of sacrament within the *encounter* framework. Here, I explore the contributions of the Protestant theologians, John Calvin, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Paul Tillich, Jürgen Moltmann, and John A.T. Robinson and the Roman Catholic theologians Rahner, Piet Schoonenberg, Schillebeeckx and Walter Kasper to the development of ascending Christology. Berkhof (1979:191) sees traces of ascending Christology in Calvin's postulate of Christ as *mediator*. Here, Calvin, working within the O.T. (covenantal frame) asserts that *Christ had to become man in order to fulfil the office of mediator*. Berkhof adds that because Calvin also worked within the framework of Chalcedon, he comes very close to separating the two natures of Christ.⁴⁰ According to Berkhof, Schleiermacher radically abandoned the Chalcedon framework. Starting from the side of man, and using the category of German idealism, Schleiermacher presented Jesus as the archetype,

³⁹ Karl Rahner, in *Current Problems in Christology*, (Article - 1500 anniversary of the Council of Chalcedon).

the true human existence as God eternally intended. He emphasized that due to the constancy of Jesus' *God consciousness*, one can speak of an existence of God in him.⁴¹ In his book, *Jesus – God and Man* (1964), Pannenberg tried to incorporate history into Christology. According to Hellwig (1989:471) the trend to insert Christology in history came to fruition in Moltmann's work, *The Crucified God* (1974). I have noted in passing Tillich's existential and correlation method in theology that lays stress on symbolic representation.

According to Hellwig (1989:471), another important contribution to the development of an *ascending* Christology is from biblical interpretation. Biblical hermeneutics attempted to situate Jesus in his Jewish culture - Jesus as a first-century Jew concerned particularly with questions of the covenant, election, and messianic expectations. Thus in the Jewishness of Jesus we have the challenge of a Christology with soteriological questions, a Christology deeply situated in this-worldly concerns. More important still, situating Jesus in the Jewish culture gives us access, not only to influences that Jesus had to his contemporaries, but also to influences that shaped him. Here the contribution of the British Anglican theologian and Bishop, John A.T. Robinson to the understanding of the contemporaneity of Christ is important. According to Van Niekerk (1982:152) and Erickson (1991:220-224) in his works, *Honest to God* (1963) and *The Human face of God* (1973), Robinson attempted to present a Christology or theological anthropology that highlights Jesus Christ as *the human face of God - God for us all*. There is an echo of Bonhoeffer's (David Bosch 1991:375) postulate of Jesus as a person *for others*. In the context of the Incarnation, we can more appropriately say that Jesus Christ is a person *with, for and among us*. The aspect of the *contingency of contemporaneity* or the *particularity of the Incarnation* is the contribution of the theology of inculturation, particularly as an impulse of Vatican II's advocacy for a theology of the *signs of the times*.

According to Berkhof (1979:291), Piet Schoonenberg replaces the *two-nature enhypostasis*-doctrine of Chalcedon with the *covenant-frame* (design). This puts him in a vantage point of affirming Jesus' full humanity. Van Niekerk (1982:147-148) notes that Schoonenberg presents a pastoral orientated Christology. In this perspective, God in Jesus Christ acts and embraces all human life and activity as gift and grace. By the same note, people and creation become sacraments of the encounter with God – God's gift to us is mediated by the gift of the other person, and the God-human-cosmos interconnectedness is realized at different operational levels.⁴²

⁴⁰ John Calvin, *Institutes* (II,xii-xiv)

⁴¹ Friedrich D.E. Schleiermacher, in *The Christian Faith* (par.94).

⁴² P. Schoonenberg, in *Hij is en een God van mensen* (1969).

Although still operating on a theocentric Christology scheme, Rahner (1996:31-32, 298) made an important contribution to an ascending Christology in his postulate of humanity as a *transcendental being* – endowed with an infinite capacity or natural *orientation* (Latin: **desiderium**) toward *immediacy* to God or humanity as confronted with an *infinite horizon* of experiencing and comprehending God. Thus for Rahner, the *Incarnation of God is the unique and highest instance of the actualization of the essence of human reality* in history (1996:218). Kasper (1976:35-36) postulates a Christology of reciprocity – a Christology of complementarity between the earthly Jesus and the risen and exalted Christ, the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith. In this he concludes that the starting point of Christology is the phenomenology of faith (1976:28). It is a relational Christology emanating from the *encounter* of Jesus Christ and the believer or community of faith.

Schillebeeckx, in *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, aptly shows the mutual influencing of the concepts of sacrament and symbols. According to Hellwig (1989:477), Schillebeeckx thus manages to diffuse the tension between *one person and two natures* in the Chalcedon hypostatic-union doctrine. He does so, precisely because he is able to show the element of person that has remained constant even as the semantic content of the term has changed over the centuries. She says the contingent element is the implication of presence and the possibility of an encounter that offers high intelligibility in contemporary Incarnational Christology. Thus we have the elaboration of the sacramental view from static iconographic to more plastic and dynamic symbols of God in Christ that take note of syntheses, insights and gains from liberation, political, existentialist, feminist, and process theologies. The latter are all attempts to make sense of the presence and work of God in Christ in terms of contemporary reality.

The Roman Catholic German theologian, Johannes Baptist Metz (cf. Hugo Assmann 1975:31-35,90; Hellwig 1989:471) made a similar contribution as Moltmann. In his political theology, according to Hellwig, Metz made an attempt for a political Christology in which the Christ-event becomes a paradigm for the whole human life as we live it today in both the private and public spheres. Assmann (1975:90) Metz presents a critical reaction against the modern tendency to relegate faith to the private sphere. Metz postulates that the *memory* of the suffering people is *dangerous memory*. He adds that as *redeeming memory*, it constitutes the subversive content of the Christian message (Assmann 1975:31,35).⁴³ Herein, we have the roots of liberation theology's tenet of *God's Memory*. According to sixteenth century Spanish

⁴³ J. B. Metz, in *Political Theology and The future in the Memory of Suffering*, in 'New Questions on God' - Concilium. 76 (1972).

Missionary, Bartolome Las Casas (cf. Gutierrez 1993:194; 1988:xxvii), *God has the freshest and keenest memory of the least and most forgotten*. As such, it is redeeming memory because God has a *predilection* or preferential option for the poor and marginalized of society.

2.2.2 MODERN CHRISTOLOGICAL SYMBOLS

In a pragmatic and heuristic approach, I attempt to expose the Christological symbols of various modern theologies, namely, the different strands of Liberation theology (Black, feminist), African, (contextual or inculturation) theology and process theology in the context of the ascending view of the Incarnation and Christology. In a hermeneutic of (ideological) suspicion, the problem areas of each Christological construct are exposed.

2.2.2.1 LIBERATION CHRISTOLOGY

It is important to note that the common denominator for Liberation theologies is that God, who is *Love*, takes on the image of a prophetic and iconoclastic Christ who identifies (sacramental Christology) and takes sides with the poor, the marginalized and the oppressed of society. Salvation in Black, liberation and feminist theologies, is understood in terms of liberation and *humanization*. In the North American context of post-slavery racial discrimination (socio-economic and political marginalization of blacks), exponents of Black theology James Cone (1986,1990:55-74,85-86,119-124) and Albert Cleage (cf. Cone & Wilmore 1979:101-1105) propose the *Black Christ*, and the *Black Messiah*, respectively. From the Latin American context of poverty, Leonard Boff, in *Jesus Christ Liberator* (1978) and Jon Sobrino, (in *Christology at the Crossroads* -1978), give the image of *Christ Liberator*. Women and feminist theologians, by virtue of the fact that they tend to be excluded from the centre of church life, to be relegated to the margins, bring the view from the underside of history, periphery or margins in search for an inclusive, relevant and viable Christology. Feminist theologians' Christological proposals include the *Iconoclastic-Kenotic-Prophetic-Servant-Messiah* (Ruether 1983, 1993:134-138).

In the mutual influencing of the person and work of Christ - Christology and soteriology, the prophetic principle emphasises the unity of love and justice. *God is love* (1Jn 4:16). Thus love is the ultimate truth where justice is the penultimate truth. According to the Jewish philosopher and theologian, Martin Buber (McGrath 1994,1997:246-247) and Paul Tillich (1968:I.14f.), in the *I-Thou* relationality, God is the *Ultimate Thou*, *Ultimate* or *Other*, respectively. In the Christian response in love, Liberation theologians (Gutierrez 1988:118; Brown 1978:90) emphasize that to *know* or *love* God is to do Justice (Brown 1978:90). Thus the Christian is called to creative love in *other-directed services*. In liberation theology, according to Gustavo Gutierrez (1983:52, cf. Dominique M, Chenu), nuances of the incarnation include, to *enflesh* the

Gospel message in time. The Gospel as *Good News*, and in a prophetic or kenotic Christology advocates passion or love for justice. Salvation is understood as aspiring for full (life) humanity in Christ as well as redemption from sin. Situational or contextual theologies, search for an image of Christ that reflects the local culture's image or the Christ that speaks the local idiom or language. In other words, Christ as *Emmanuel*, at the centre of the Christian's life and viewed *vis-à-vis* the daily lived experience should constitute *Good News*.

Another important tenet of Liberation theology is what the Brazilian theologian, Hugo Assmann (cf. R. M. Brown 1978:61) coined the *epistemological privilege* – their way of knowing God. Cone (1986,1990:119) accentuates this view when he says that the meaning of Jesus is an existential question. We know who he is when our lives are placed in a situation of oppression.

Cone goes on to describe the *Blackness of God* – the God who identifies with and has a predilection for the oppressed. This vantage point of the oppressed has biblical roots in the Israel Exodus paradigm (Ex.3:1f.). In the Old Testament, Yahweh has a predilection for the **anawim** (*the poor of Yahweh*) as seen in the trilogy of widow, orphan and stranger (cf. Ex 22:21-24; 23:9; Lev 19:33-34; Deut 27:19; 24:17)) and Yahweh advocates a Jubilee year (Lev.25:1f.) to offset imbalances both in the use of land and in society. The Christ of the Gospel's mission agenda is subversive in that it overturns oppressive structures (Lk 4:16-21; see also the *Magnificat* – Lk 1:46-56). The Christ of the Gospel identifies with the oppressed (Mt 25:31f.). According to C.E. Curran (1968:36), the etymology of *anawim* is from the Hebrew **ani** as denoting God's *posture of stooping over* or reaching out to the poor and marginalized of society.

O'Connor (1985:64-66) is right in asserting that the feminist view is inherently sacramental in its attempt to recover the underlying unity that has been masked by patriarchal dualism, and to unearth holistic imagery that captures the sense of unity in the divine-human-cosmos relationship. Feminist images of Christ that capture new ways of envisioning the contemporary Christ include Ruether's postulate of Jesus as the paradigm of *redeemed humanity* – who is encountered in our redeemed sisters as well as brothers. In urging the *both/and* way of thinking, Ruether in turn, explains the contingency of Jesus' biological, ethnical, historical provenance saying that just as we do not absolutize either the Jewishness or the social class of Jesus, we must not allow ourselves to absolutize his maleness.⁴⁴ Rita Brock's Christological proposal is the image of Jesus as *healing presence* and *restorer of wholeness*. Sallie McFague, as noted above, opts for the metaphor of *friendship* that finds Christological importance in

⁴⁴ Rosemary Radford Ruether, in *Feminist Theology and Spirituality*, cf. *Christian Feminism: Visions of the New Humanity* (ed) Judith I. Weidman (1984) p. 21.

John's Gospel saying, *you are my friends* (15:15). McFague (cf. John C. Hoffman 1987:173-185) also calls Jesus the *Parable of God*, where she sees *parable* as an extended *metaphor*.

But Liberation theology is problematic mainly in submitting to theological *reductionism*. There is tension between our understanding of the universal God/Christ and the God of the oppressed. There is also a reductionist view of sin. Liberation theologians highlight structural sin and seem to cast a blind eye on the sin of the individual or the sins of the oppressed themselves. A North American Liberation theologian Deotis Roberts (1974) succinctly summarizes the problem as a failure to fully take into account the connection between liberation and reconciliation. It is a failure to realize that in a situation of oppression, the dignity of both the oppressor and the oppressed is tarnished (Erickson 1991:171; see also Brown 1978:67-68). Likewise, sin tarnishes both the oppressed and the oppressor. By the same token, Liberation theologians fail to realize that in a twist of irony, the oppressed are sometimes oppressors themselves. But theological *reductionism* also exists in feminist theology. In this context, I disagree with McFague's (cf. Hoffman 1987:177) interpretation of Jesus as a *metaphor* with the consequent conclusion that Jesus of Nazareth as a parable of God both *is* and *is not God*. In other words, McFague is compromising the divinity of Christ.

The North American Black theologian, James Fowler (Erickson 1991:166-167) explains the variety and nuances in Black theology. Fowler differentiates Black theologians into two camps – *ideological theologians* (e.g. James Cone, Albert Cleage, William R. Jones) and *theologians of balance* (e.g. Deotis Roberts, Major J. Jones, Warner Traynham). He explains that the first group shows *individuated faith* that operates on an *exclusive either/or* scheme, where the second group shows *conjunctive faith* that is accommodative or *inclusive* in adopting a *both/and* framework. In feminist theology we have a similar distinction of radical or revolutionary and reformist feminists.

According to Denise Ackermann (1988:15-17), revolutionary feminists (e.g. Mary Daly, Naomi Goldenburg, and Carol Christ) have chosen to work outside the mainstream church because they consider the patriarchal stamp (in its symbols, language and paradigms) as a hopeless denial of an integrated self-concept for women. The pertinent question here, according to Ruether (1983,1993:116-138) is, *Can a male Saviour save women?* Ackerman (1988:16) explains that the revolutionary feminists mentioned above have resorted to the *Goddess religion* with the conviction that a female deity or divine principle is necessary if women's experience is to be included in a religious world-view. On the other hand, reformist feminists (e.g. Rosemary Radford Ruether, Schüssler-Fiorenza, Letty Russell, Sallie McFague, and Phyllis Trible), although frustrated by the patriarchal model of the church, nevertheless, choose to work within

the mainline church, but advocate an inclusive model of liberation that takes women's experiences seriously and seeks a new vision for all humanity.

Reformist feminists, for example, recognize the dual nature of the Bible of being at once a primary source of theology and having a patriarchal stamp. In deconstruction reading (hermeneutics of *suspicion*, *remembrances* and *proclamation*) of the Bible, they view the Bible as a prototype for structuring emancipatory praxis for women (Schüssler-Fiorenza 1984:xvi-xvii, 15-22). They come up with the image of the Synoptic or Kerygmatic Christ who reinstated women in the culture and religion of his time. In a post-feminist stance, I go along with reformist feminists but go beyond that in reading across the *sacred domains* (Fiona Bowie 1998:42-47) of *gender*, *race*, *class*, *creed* and *ethnicity*. Here I will attempt to use the *sociology of knowledge* (experience of women) as a resource for structuring inclusive images of Christ (God).

In the concept of the *congregatio fidelium* as a community of co-equal discipleship (Schüssler-Fiorenza 1984:91), we can look at the Christ of the Gospel as empowering both men and women in many ways. The Kenyan theologian Anne Nasimiyu-Wasike (1989:126-134) rightly sees the Christ of the Gospels as an egalitarian Christ. Nasimiyu Wasike argues that in his teaching of the Kingdom of God, Jesus used analogies from the life experiences of both men and women. For example, in the teaching of the good news of the *basileia*, Jesus used twin parables reflecting the experiences of men and women of his day (cf. Mt 13:31-32 and 33; 25:1-13 and 14-30; Lk 15:4-7 and 8-10). Jesus the Rabbi went against the culture of his day in making the *Torah* available to women and in discussing theology with women (Jn 4). Christ had both men and women disciples (Ruether 1983, 1993:153), and Jesus the Rabbi had both men and women *sitting at his feet* (Lk 10:39). Ruether (cf. Lk 1:38; 8:1-3; 11:27-28; Mk 3:34:35) shows that membership to the Christian community was a free choice or response of faith *vis-à-vis* biological roles or ancestral heritage. According to Erickson (1991:584-585), in the *Kingdom ethic*, Jesus taught *symmetry of responsibility*. For example, in addressing patriarchal alienation of women as *prostitutes*, Jesus not only made both men and women accountable and responsible for the sin of adultery, fornication and divorce (Mt 5:27-32), but also firmly made men responsible and accountable for these sins. In the Israel of God, Jesus asserted that women too were *daughters of Abraham* (Lk 13:10-17). In other words, Jesus maintained that women had a rightful claim to Abraham as their ancestor and to the Jewish heritage as fully-fledged participants in the covenant of God (Erickson 1991:587).

Liberation Christology, like orthodox Christology has a patriarchal stamp and Feminist theology presents an *internal critique* of Liberation and African theologies. This highlights the

blind spot of a patriarchal lens or the problem of the *sociology of knowledge* in theological epistemology in general, and in appropriating the prophetic image of Christ, in particular. There is a real sense in which African women view the Christological constructs of Liberation and African theologies as *meta-stories* or *grand narratives* in the negative sense of the terms. Liberation theologians fail to see that woman as a social category represents the poorest of the poor or the oppressed of the oppressed. Today we see a paradigm shift in Liberation theology – a shift from *liberation to reconciliation*, *liberation to reconstruction* theology. Like orthodox theology, liberation theology is fraught with *merographic connections* (links subsuming woman in man). Concurrent to this is a shift in leadership models, namely, from Moses to Nehemiah. Thus the prophetic memory is amnesiac of women (e.g. Miriam, Deborah, Esther, Judith). Development programmes talk of the *African Renaissance*.⁴⁵ We can ask with Emmanuel Katongole (1998:29-49) a searching question: *Which story and whose renaissance?* Katongole (1998:31) goes on to question:

What is 'African' in the Renaissance, apart from the fact that it is a story played out on the continent? Is African Renaissance just another way of 'naming' Africa, this time as the privileged parade-ground for the struggles of global forces and new battleground for multi-nationals as well as urban minority elite interest... Where does my semi-literate rural mother stand in this African Renaissance?

Katongole gives a negative answer to the last question. He says that his rural semi-literate mother does not recognize herself in the story since she does not experience the actualization of all the promises of the global economy. Women in both church and society have what Chung Hyun Kyung (1996:53) calls *anthropological poverty*. The Bishop of Lubumbashi diocese, Democratic Republic of Congo (Zaire) accentuates this view in maintaining that women in church and society are *a forgotten multitude* (Bernadette Mbuy Beya 1995:8).⁴⁶

A case in point showing that Liberation and African theology, in particular, does not take full account of the liberation of women concerns of the post-independent Zimbabwe era. In the Zimbabwe liberation struggle, men and women fought side by side against oppression on racial grounds. And, when the war was over, women came back from the frontiers doubly bent–carrying children they have had with comrades in arms who had long since *aborted fatherhood*.⁴⁷ Shona women, particularly, single mothers have to fight for access to land and other means of livelihood (proprietary rights). As such, women fight for a fraction of the *lion's share* in relation to their male counterparts. Oduyoye (Oduyoye & Kanyoro 1990:43) is right in asserting that for women in African society, *mothering* the body politic is an expensive vision.

⁴⁵ The President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki and the President of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni, introduced the idea of the *African Renaissance* in Cape Town, May 28-29, 1997.

⁴⁶ Bishop of Lubumbashi Diocese, Zaire, in the Easter Pastoral letter - 1989.

For example, women are seen in the forefront of protest marches in support of resilient dictatorship governments.

But Feminist theology too has often been criticised for presenting the perspective of middle-class white women – as a vision that does not take full account of the experiences of African women who are mainly involved in *survival theology*. In other words, feminist theology has to acknowledge differences among women themselves due to *social class, race, ethnicity, and creed*. It has to avoid the danger of universalizing women's experiences.

Merographic readings of the claims of feminist theology show another totalising tendency in the question of *abortion* and the feminists' claim of autonomy over their bodies. According to Bowie (1998:50-51), recent developments in technology and embryology have thrown light over the foetus as a gendered person with full human rights. This is an area I find difficult to reconcile with the feminist theologians' claim to full humanity for all people and the sanctioning of abortion for personal gains.

It is important to note that revolutionary feminists risk the danger of throwing the baby out with the bath water, for example, in rejecting the concept of self-sacrifice and/or the Lordship of Christ. Whereas the designation Christ as *Lord* has masculine overtones, particularly in patriarchal societies, there are feminists who accept the *lordship* of Christ perceived as *empowerment*. Rebecca Pentz (cf. Erickson 1991:590-591) explains that Christ's Lordship can be understood as *power over for* rather than the hegemonic and exploitative use of *power over as power against*. Concerning the concept of *self-sacrifice*, whereas I find it legitimate for women to reject patriarchal definitions that are consequently imposed on women, I understand that suffering in the life of a Christian is inevitable. In the concept of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's (1906-1945) postulate of the *cost of discipleship*, witnessing to Christ entails going the whole way of the cross. In the concept of *nachfolge* (*come follow me*; cf. Mk 1:17, 2:14; Jn 21:23), Bonhoeffer (1959:79) is emphatic that *when Christ calls man, he bids him come and die*. In this context, Bonhoeffer (1959:37) says that *costly grace* is the Incarnation of God. This view is implicit in the Christian value of prophetic witness. The etymology of Christian *witness* is *martyr* in a tradition where many saints have given up their lives for Christ. Oduyoye (1990:47) harmonizes with this point by saying that in situations where martyrdom is freely chosen, it is a noble cause. Self-sacrifice underlies the Liberation theologians' principle of *solidarity with* or the *option for the poor* and marginalized of society.

⁴⁷ See Ursula Pfafflin's Article. *The Abortion of Fathers* (*Encounter*: 1997, p.59-77).

2.2.2.2 AFRICAN CHRISTOLOGY

African theology as belonging to the inculturation category, is concerned with religious-cultural issues – the image of Christ that fits into the African cultural world-view. For example, Charles Nyamiti, a Roman Catholic Priest from Tanzania calls Christ *Our Ancestor*. I see the category of *Ancestor* as inclusive of other familial images, namely, Christ the *Chief, King, Brother/Sister Ancestor, Master of Initiation, and Healer*. Thus in the mystery of the Incarnation, we understand that God in Christ assumed full human nature – became human like us in everything except sin (cf. Heb 2:17-18; 4:15). African theology as having an *ontological* and communitarian *epistemology* looks for a holistic Christology in which salvation is for a people in community. In this context, there is a quest for salvation of the whole person, mind and body and for a salvation that covers the whole spectrum of life - a salvation that includes the whole cosmos.

The Roman Catholic theologian Aylward Shorter (1988:80) aptly notes that, as such, the Incarnation depicts Jesus' own *enculturation*. Concerning inculturation as engaging a concrete and actual way of life, it is important to note that in the Incarnation, Jesus assumed the concrete historical realities of a particular people – the Jews and adapted himself to the human condition and context of first century Palestine (Osei-Bonsu 1991:348). C.H. Dodd (Culpepper 1988:43) refers to the human condition, especially in its limitations peculiar to a particular people or culture, as the *scandal of particularity*.

Concerning our consciousness to the modern phenomenon of *cultural pluralism*, and our understanding of Jesus Christ as the subject of inculturation and *interculturalism*, Shorter (1988:80-81) distinguishes several positive values in the analogy of the Incarnation. These are (a) that the subject matter of inculturation is Jesus himself, (b) the Incarnation shows that Christ needs human cultures in the spread of the Good News of the Kingdom, (c) that in the Incarnation the cultural education of the earthly Jesus, his adoption to a specific human culture inserted him into the whole historical process of communication between cultures, and by adopting a given culture, Jesus accepted the ways in which that culture influenced and was influenced by other cultures, and (d) the logic of the Incarnation is that every cultural reality is graced and transformed.

It can be said that authentic inculturation, understood in our concern for the movement from the particular (the African Bantu Christ) to the universal Christ, has to be in dialogue with the pluriform of cultures within African society and Christianity. In interculturalism, it is important to note that cultural contact fosters the exchange of ideas or a borrowing of ideas especially from the dominant culture. It is in this context too that inculturation or interculturalism is

theologically synonymous with the *evangelization* of the Gospel. Thus a French Liberation theologian, Marie-Dominique Chenu (cf. Gutierrez 1883:52) aptly asserts that *to evangelise is to en flesh, to incarnate the Gospel in time.*

Thus in *interculturalization* we note that in the Jewish tradition, Jesus was known, for example, as the *Son of God, Davidic King/Messiah* and the *Apocalyptic Son of Man*, and in the Greco-Roman religious world view he was named *Lord* (Greek: Kyrios) and the *Word* (Greek: Logos). The emphasis is on the embodiment of Jesus Christ in concrete human situations. According to John Mary Walligo (1986:20) the Incarnation is a guiding principle to inculturation. In the context of *general revelation*, the Incarnation can be seen as coeval with creation. In the apologist Justin Martyr's doctrine of the *Logos spermatikos* (seed-bearing Word) and in the modern understanding of culture being a *praeparatio evangelica*, we can see culture as having *semina verbi* (*seeds for the Word*) or having a kernel for divine revelation (McGrath 1994,1997:10-11; Shorter1988:76-77). Judith Bahemuka (cf. Mugambi & Magesa 1989:1-16) echoes Justin's *Logos spermatikos* theme in her postulate of the *Hidden Christ* of African Traditional Religion.

Among protagonist for the designation of Christ as the *Master or Mistress of Initiation* are the Kenyan theologian (veteran of African theology), John Mbiti and the Roman Catholic Bishop of Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso, Anselm Sanon (cf. Schreiter 1991,1997:85-102). The designation of Christ as *Master or Mistress of Initiation* in Christian evangelization presupposes the sending authority, the mission or initiation project and discipleship. This can be set in creative dialogue with the **Missio Dei** (*Mission of God*). The spotlight is on God's plan for creation as understood in the theological elements of **creatio ex nihilo** (*creation from nothing*) and *creatio continuata* (continual creation or divine providence). It can be said that the concept of divine self-revelation (self-agency) in and through the person and work of the incarnate Jesus of Nazareth, in turn, emphasizes that the Master or Mistress of Initiation is acquainted with the divine **oikonomia** (*plan or salvific will*). Concerning divine agency in leading creation to its destiny or **plērōma** (*fullness*), Christian understanding of Christ's total commitments to this is emphasized in his total obedience to the will of the Father and his self-giving love (John Macquarrie 1977:312-313).

In a dialectic with Western anthropology seen as a trajectory of the Cartesian principle (Rene Descartes [1596-1650], in John Veitch 1986:167-168), **cogito ergo sum** (*I can think or doubt, therefore I exist*), Mbiti (cf. Luke Lungile Pato 1989:56; Pobee 1992:66) summed up the African communal identity and epistemology in the principle **conatus ergo sum** (*I am related, therefore, we are or I belong, therefore I am*). Mbiti explains that in traditional African society,

there are no irreligious people since to be human is to belong to the whole community - to participate in the beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and festivals of the community (cf. Bahemuka 1989:2). According to Vincent Mulago (1992:126), the Bantu ethic is an ethic of participation and communion with others. The Anglican Archbishop, Desmond Tutu harmonises with the ethic of *ubuntu* by accentuating that *a person is a person through other persons* (cf. Luke Lungile Pato 1997:54). We can see that the Bantu principle is a trajectory of the essential cultural elements of corporate personality, collective conscience and responsibility. In this African communal ontology and epistemology, Mbiti (1970:107-109) explains that the process of attaining full humanity involves the continuum from before birth to life after death and a process of empowerment in a series of *rite-de-passage* (initiation rituals).

In the Christianity / African culture dialectic, the bishop of Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso, Anselm T. Sanon (cf. Oseu-Bonsu 1990:356), sees Christ the Master of Initiation as someone who went through initiation rites of circumcision, naming, and the presentation in the Temple. He underscores that the death and resurrection of Jesus is the final initiation event. Sanon (cf. Robert Schreiter 1991,1997:96-97) calls the paradoxes of the initiation project *decentring*. Sanon describes the paradoxes of *liminality* or *rite-de-passage* as involving *separation* and *detachment - burial* and *return to life, death and approach to a new mode of existence* or knowledge. This, in turn, is parallel to the Christian Paschal and Baptismal symbolisms of *natural birth* and *spiritual (supernatural birth) rebirth* ('*of water and the Spirit*' - cf. Jn 3:4-5) or being *baptised in Christ's death* and *being united with Christ in his resurrection* (Rm 6:1-11). In other words, there is recognition of the motif of suffering culminating in joy and service (the attainment of full humanity) in the initiation process. A pedagogical outlook shows that all this is compatible with a holistic view of the redemptive history that involves the whole of Christ's person and life in the *Christ-event*. Luke Lungile Pato of the College of the Transfiguration, Grahamstown, South Africa (1997:57) acknowledges this concept when he says that young men and women initiates go through hardships and sometimes intense suffering as undergirded by the act of female and male circumcision - a suffering sometimes causing death.

Pato explains that the initiates and their masters or mistresses are engaged in serious discussions in which the former are offered guidance on life's issues by the elders and that all this is intended to cultivate a mature and positive attitude towards people and life in general and to enable the young to develop a sense of responsibility towards themselves and others. He adds that after the initiation the initiates are considered adults capable of marriage and taking up leadership positions in the community.

Among the protagonists of a cosmotheandric Christology is Efoé Julian Pénoukou of Ivory Coast and François Kabasélé of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Pénoukou (cf. Robert Schreiter 1991,1997:24-51) emphasises the relational attributes of the co-ordinates God-humanity-cosmos. In the Christ-event, he sees God as an essentially relational God and describes the cosmotheandric and soteriological relationship as a *being there with*. Kabasélé (Schreiter 1991,1997:122) concurs with Shona cosmology in describing Christ as the *First Rain*.

John Waliggo (cf. Mugambi & Magesa 1989:90-109) presents a Christology that connects the person and work of Christ. Waliggo follows the theme of *rejection based* on the biblical concept of *the stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone* (Acts 4:11; cf. Ps 118:22) for his Christological construct. He sees *rejection* as a common denominator in the Suffering Christ and the suffering of the Africans when he says the single root cause of the African's suffering is *rejection* (cf. Mugambi & Magesa 1989:97). Without underplaying self-inflicted suffering among the African people, he nevertheless portrays how suffering of the African people is largely (the suffering of the innocent) from external forces. There is an echo of the *Suffering Servant* biblical motif (Is 53) because the cross portrays the suffering of the innocent and suffering on behalf of others on the part of Christ.

Cece Kolie of Guinea (cf. Schreiter 1991,1997:128-150) represents the proponents of the appellation, *Christ the Healer*. Kolie (Schreiter 1991,1997:132-138) lays emphasis on African holistic healing. The Nigerian, Akintunde E. Akinade (1995:190) accentuates this point in claiming that the African's cry for salvation is a cry for health and wholeness. In a comparative approach, Oduyoye (cf. Akinade 1995:188) shows that holistic healing is compatible with Christ's healing ministry. She alludes to Morton Kelsey's claim that the latter makes about 20 percent of Gospel narratives.⁴⁸ This view is underscored in Matthew's assertion:

And he went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing every disease and every infirmity (Mt 9:35=Mk 6:6).

Jesus Christ as Healer *par excellence* promises help to his *extended family*. The promise is linked with reward in the reciprocal relationship of love and the keeping of the commandments:

Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son; If you ask anything in my name I will do it (Jn14:13-14).

The name of Jesus carries power that brings good health. The Book of Acts is full of such healing miracles. Examples include the healing of the cripple at the gate Beautiful (Acts 3:1-10), healing of the people in Samaria from unclean Spirits (Acts 8:4-9), the healing of Aeneas

the cripple at Lyda (Acts 9:32-35) and the raising of Dorcas (Tabitha) from death (Acts 9:36-41). The apostles are portrayed as having the healing mantle of the Lord. This is shown in that in Jesus' own life, power to heal was seen to go from him on the mere touching of the fringe of his garment (Lk 8:43-48). This too was done in a reciprocal relationship of faith.

African theology's Christological postulates are problematic as regards *syncretism*, *ethnocentrism* and *sexism*. Paul Knitter (1995:195) sees religious *syncretism* as analogous with *the baking method*. By this we understand that in the dialectic of Christianity and African culture, the latter must not be absorbed, changed, or transformed in such a way as to lose its identity. For an Incarnational Christology, *religious syncretism*, and *cultural imperialism* cause the main problem of compromising the unique Christian claim for Jesus, namely, the salvation wrought through the person and work of the Incarnate Jesus of Nazareth. Cultural imperialism as a historical problem is recognized in the early missionaries' suppression of African ancestral beliefs and practices negating them as *primitive*, *pagan* and *fetish*. In a negative sense of Eurocentrism, the missionaries imposed their own cultural symbols and values as normative to Christianity. According to Cain Hope Felder (1993/4:47,50), ethnocentrism or Afrocentrism as the opposite side of the same coin with Eurocentrism is recognized in reactionary theologies that show an equally hierarchical, gender-insensitive, racially exclusive *centrism*. He adds that a Christology sensitive to the multicultural nature of the church universal must not demean, vilify or minimise the contribution of other cultures. Afro-centrism as advocating *apartheid of cultures* is a criticism raised against for example, Black theologians and African theologians who advocate exclusive and reductionist images of Jesus as the Black Messiah (Christ) and Christ the Ancestor (Proto-Ancestor), respectively. Pope Paul VI (1975:29,85-86) in Vatican II advocacy for inculturation highlights the problem of compromising some truths of faith and syncretic *tokenism* or *reductionism* as follows:

The individual churches...have the task of assimilating the essence of the Gospel message and of transposing it, without the slightest betrayal of its essential truth, into the language that these particular people understand... (Evangelii Nuntiandi, No.63). What matters is to evangelize man's culture and cultures (not in a purely decorative way as it were by applying a thin veneer, but in a vital way, in depth and right to their roots)... always taking the person as one's starting-point and always coming back to the relationships of people among themselves and with God (Evangelii Nuntiandi, No.20).

According to Keith Eitel (1988:328-332), among the protagonists of Black theology, John Mbiti is criticised for making culture co-equal with biblical revelation. In so doing, there is a tendency to compromise the objective and unique revelation of God in the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth. John Parratt (1983:91) aptly notes that authentic inculturation has to

⁴⁸ Morton Kelsey in *Healing and Christianity in Ancient and Modern Times*.

acknowledge the uniqueness and finality of Christ's revelation and the judgment of every other revelation, religion, or culture by that criterion.

John Taylor (John Mutiso-Mbinda 1986:75) succinctly puts the challenge of African theology for a Eurocentric Christology as follows:

Christ has been portrayed as the answer to the questions a white Man would ask, the solution to the needs the Western men would feel, the Saviour of the world of the European world-view, the object of historic Christendom. But if Christ were to appear as the answer to the questions the Africans are asking, what would he look like? If he came into the world of African cosmology to redeem Man, as Africans understand him, would he be recognizable to the rest of the universal church? And if Africa offered him the praises and petitions for her total uninhibited humanity, would they be acceptable?

In a twist of irony, notice the gender exclusive language of the above quotation – also as found in African theology. For decades God/Christ of African theology has been portrayed as exclusively male. In African contextual theology, and in the contingency of particularity, Jesus has rightly been portrayed as the Black Christ, the Ancestor, etc., but in a patriarchal church there is disparity in that the portrayal of Jesus as a Feminist or a Woman is seen as an anomaly or anathema (heresy). Oduyoye (1995:180) poses the feminist challenge to African theology by asserting that:

Sometimes African theology, African God-Talk, seems no more than a pretentious smoke screen that dissipates on close examination...African theologians have not related their God-Talk to issues of justice. Hierarchical and oppressive terms like Omniscient, Ruler, or All Mighty translate into race, relations as racism and into gender relations as sexism.

In a post-feminist and post-patriarchal perspective, the pertinent question I pose here is, *If Christ is the answer to the questions Shona women ask today, who do they say that Christ is, and what do they say that God in Christ is doing in their midst?*

2.2.2.3 PLURALISTIC CHRISTOLOGY

An impulse different from inculturation but that has a bearing on Justin Martyr's postulate of the *Logos Spermatikos* present in every people or religion, concerns the contribution of religious pluralism to an Incarnational Christology. Exponents of *inter-religious dialogue* include the Indian Roman Catholic theologian, Raimundo Panikkar (in *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*), the English theologian, John Hick, (in *God has many Names* –1982), the Roman Catholic theologian, Paul Knitter (in *No Other Names* - 1985). Religious pluralism challenges traditional assumptions about the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. It is a challenge from outside the Christian tradition introducing other ways of seeing and evaluating Christology. In inter-faith dialogue we come to realize that we all share the same moon, or, that there are many ways to climb the mountain. In other words, we come to realize that there are common concerns

especially in the area of living what Knitter (1995:204) calls *God's life* of love – underlying the notions of *nirvana* in Buddhism, the Hindu view of the *Ultimate* in *Brahman* and the Moslem teaching of *tawhid* and the Christian doctrine of the *Economic Trinity*. In inter-religious dialogue, the different religions have a lot to learn from each other. Common concerns of peace and justice can be the springboards or rubicons for an inclusive model of church.

In the scientific approach, we have the contribution of *evolutionary*, and *process* postmodern theologies to a *cosmotheandric* Christology. The proponent of an evolutionary Christology is Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955). Protagonists of process theology include, John Cobb, Alfred North Whitehead, David Griffin and Norman Pittenger. These theologies give us the image of God *in, with* and *among* creation or the cosmic Christ. Monika Hellwig (1989:473-474) accentuates that a cosmotheandric theology is invaluable in establishing the relevance of the Gospel to all phases of human life and in attempting to show how at some deeper level everything is inextricably connected. O'Connor accentuates this view by saying that process thought highlights the unity (connection, interrelation and interdependence) of all things. O'Connor explains that the Christology that emerges is that, for example, of John Cobb. Cobb postulates that God is *Creative-Responsive Love*. Thus here God is understood as part of a process, not apart from the process.

In his postulate of Christ as the *Omega*-point, Teilhard de Chardin sees Christ as the *Eschaton* (climactic end-point) in a vastly ordered process of creation moving towards its goal (Macquarrie 1991:313-314; cf. Teilhard de Chardin's *The Phenomenon of Man* – 1959). Thus, for Teilhard de Chardin, the Incarnation is coeval with creation. He says that *the prodigious expanses of time which preceded the first Christmas were not empty of Christ, for they were imbued with the influx of his power* (Macquarrie 1991:314; cf. Teilhard de Chardin's *Hymn of the Universe* – 1970). The Roman Catholic priest, Diarmuid O'Murchu concurs with this view in saying this of God: *On the day you made us, you created yourself.*⁴⁹ Thus for evolutionary and process theologies, the Incarnation is not an afterthought of God, but is part of the divine salvific will in creation.

The scientific approach to Christology is important in challenging the God-human-relationship in an age raising an alarm against the pollution of the environment. The theological foundation of the sacramental value of creation, according to the American theologian, Wendell Berry (2000:95), is God's delight on the goodness of creation prolific in the Bible. Indeed, the Bible

⁴⁹ Diarmuid O'Murchu, in *a New Cosmology – Evolutionary Postmodern Theologies*- theme of a workshop I attended in Pretoria (12-13 June, 1999).

opens on this cheerful note and the climactic point of this divine acknowledgement of the integrity of creation is, *and God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good* (Gen 1:31). Elsewhere in the Bible we read, for example, about the Psalmist rejoicing that *the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof* (Ps 24 [23]: 1ff).

In the context of the integrity of creation and the interconnectedness of creation and humanity, we can say that all life is both sacred and social. It is as Chittister (1998:7) aptly asserts that all things remember, reveal and reflect the creative presence of God. In the divine *oikonomia* (household), it is as St Paul says, the whole of creation labours, groans, or agonizes in the process of giving birth to divine siblingship (Rm 8:18-21). In other words, everything (is holy) has sacramental value. St Francis of Assisi⁵⁰ (cf. Omer Englebert 1950:289) acknowledges the siblingship of creation in the *Canticle of the Sun* when he alludes to *brother Sun, Wind and Fire, sister Moon and Water and mother Earth*. The Jesuit priest and poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-89), for example, celebrates sacramental life in the poem *God's Grandeur* (Cf. W. H. Gardner 1953:27). Manley shows that the world is charged with the grandeur of God.

In a Christology that takes the experience of women as a starting point, it is important to note that today, in the concepts of *eco-justice* and *eco-feminism*, a connection is put between the pollution of the environment and the dehumanization of women. The anthropocentric term, *the wounded earth* that denotes environmental degradation, harmonizes with the concept of the interdependence of humanity and the cosmos. It can be said that *homocentrism* as a trajectory of a hierarchical world-view and patriarchy (elements of both Shona culture and Christianity) are the major problems emphasised in *eco-justice or eco-feminism*. This is accentuated in the patriarchal trajectory of dominated nature - dominated woman (Ruether 1983,1993:72,75-79). Joan Chittister's (1998:6) claims that, *those who have the resources to dominate, dominate the resource, and those who lack the power to dominate become a resource* highlights the fact that eco-feminism and eco-justice are mutually influencing. This can be seen as a misunderstanding of humanity's role of stewardship over creation. In the context of the rampant pollution of the environment, it is apparent that humanity has exceeded its role of stewardship by playing a god over other creatures. According to Madges (1995:370), human lordship over the rest of creation provides a justification of the technological manipulation and exploitation of nature to serve human needs. Consequently, we are urged to revise the concept of *stewardship*.

Madges (1995:371) explains that Christian theology (Christology in our case) can make a significant contribution to the restoration of the environment by providing a new conception

⁵⁰ Francis of Assisi (1182-1226) is the founder of the Franciscan religious order.

between humanity and the cosmos. Underlying this view is the fostering of mutual dependence between God, humanity and the natural world. Ernst Conradie (2000:153-174) succinctly goes through paradigm shifts in the understanding of our role as *stewards of Grace in the household of God*. The paradigm shifts important to this discourse are, from understanding of *stewardship as domination to dominion* cf. Gen 1:27; 2:15), from understanding *stewards as managers to stewards as servants* (cf. Phil 2:5-7), and from *servants to sojourners in God's household*.

The etymology of eco-justice is from the Greek term, **oikonomia** whose root words are *oikos* (*household of life*) and **nomos** (*justice*). The *ecumenical* (Greek: **oikoumene**) is used in Christian circles to denote the household of God as inclusive of the whole of creation, the *whole inhabited world*. The creation stories of Genesis (1:27-30; 2:15-20) and Psalm 8 in which humanity is depicted as the crown of creation are often used to justify humanity's dominion over creation. Conradie (2000:153-159) is right in asserting that *oikonomia* requires responsibility and accountability for planning and administrating God's household. Stewardship here presupposes a harmonious relationship between humanity and nature. But the understanding of dominion as domination is implied in the phenomenon of the degradation of the environment. This in turn reflects *Humanocentrism or humanism*.

Conradie (2000:157) rightly notes that stewardship of the believer can be understood in terms of the baptismal vocation. Believers are thus stewards of God's grace. Biblical motifs of *responsible stewardship* (Gen 1; Lk 12:42-48) and caring for *the poor of Yahweh* are emphasized - elements that punctuate faithfulness, accountability, and responsible use of things, or, the adage that the *haves* are responsible for the *have-nots*. In Luke 12:42-48, Jesus Christ punctuates the quality of faithfulness for stewards:

Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master when he comes will find so doing... Everyone to whom much is given, of him will much be required.

In 1 Corinthians 4:1-2, we read:

This is how one should regard us, as servants of God, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.

In church tradition, Francis Mannion (2000:503-527) shows how monastic **conversatio morum** (*appropriating the symbol of the way of life* - three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience and the practice of stability) provides a heuristic paradigm of stewardship. The spotlight is on creating sacred space and appreciating the sacredness or sacramentality of every creature. Mannion (2000:518) accentuates this point when he says that the monastic model may be described as a kind of divinely ordered economic life - that the monastic economy is transfused

with a sense of sacramentality, so that work and things are regarded as holy. For example, in the practice of frugality, the individual is allowed only what is necessary, the sick and the old are well cared for, and the Rule (e.g. of St Benedict) also allows monastic economy to be hospitable so that all who come to the monastery must be welcomed as Christ.

Concerning the conscious creation of sacred space, the unity of spirituality to the body or creation is highlighted, for example, in St Benedict's maxim: **laborare est orare** (*to work is to pray*). Even today when one visits a monastery, one is struck by the sense of harmony and connectedness between humanity and creation.⁵¹ Here everything is planned and organized to capture the mystical imagination. There is a sense of interdependence between humanity and creation and this helps to create space for the drama of life. The monks or nuns concentrate on community building and making the monastery a permanent and hospitable *home*. Mannion is emphatic that *place* is an intrinsic part of the life-world as seen in the clichés *actions take place* or *do not take place* and in the fact that human realities exist within patterns of placement and displacement. Actions generate place and place generates action (2000:510-511). Mannion adds that contrary to the monastic paradigm of *stability* modern mobility is characterized by disconnectedness superficiality and disengagement - the evasion of local commitment and the scattering of space and dwelling. Gertrude Stein accentuates this state of restlessness characteristic of the modern culture's *life on the move* (Mannion 2000:511) saying: *When you get there, there isn't any 'there' there.*

The servant model of *stewardship* is a trajectory of Kenotic Christology. Here, Jesus – the Servant Messiah not only thus exemplifies our stewardship, but also presents the notion of *God as the Economist*. In the believer's stewardship, Conradie (2000:159) notes that God is often portrayed as an absent landlord, but in actual fact, God is the *oikonomos*. In the Incarnational proposal of the *Emmanuel*, God in Christ is a dynamic presence that in the divine economy of salvation leads creation to its *plērōma* (fullness, cf. Eph 1:1-14; Col 1:19-20). Herein we have the connection of the understanding of believers as *sojourners* (Greek: **parokoi**) in God's household – as journeying in faith to their eschatological end or destiny. But this idea raises a tension between our understanding of the earth as our home and home as an eschatological concept – the *already* and the *not-yet* aspects of God's presence and act of salvation.

2.3 THE FUNCTIONAL- HORIZONTAL (*FROM THE SIDE*) VIEW

The basic tenet of functional Christology is God's basic act of forgiveness or salvation (soteriology) for humanity. Melancthon's famous saying (McGrath 1994,1997:320): *Who Jesus*

⁵¹ I felt this sense of connectedness when I visited the Carmelite Monastery in Benoni, Johannesburg (2000).

10

Christ is, becomes known in his saving action, highlights the mutual influencing of ontology and function, person and work, and Christology and soteriology. Functional Christology is stressed in anthropocentric Christology given above, particularly in Kasper's Christology of reciprocity, Robinson's postulate of *Christ for us*, and Liberation theology in its various streams. Functional Christology has its roots in the *moral exemplarist* and *encounter* approaches to Christology. Peter Abelard (McGrath 1994,1997:407) is a good representative of the moral example stream of thought. For Abelard, the purpose of the Incarnation was that Christ might illuminate the world by his wisdom and excite it to love of himself. But Abelard's approach is not reductionist since he accepts the *two natures* person of Christ.

The main proponent of an exclusively functional Christology is the German New Testament scholar, Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976). In his *demythologising* programme, Bultmann proposes the Kerygmatic Christ. According to McGrath (1994,1997:373), Bultmann reduced the whole historical aspect of Jesus to a single word *that*. Macquarrie (1991:297) hits the same note in saying Bultmann is not interested in the *what*, but in the '*that*' of Christ. Thus for Bultmann, it is only necessary to believe *that* Christ is the driving force underlying the gospel proclamation. In an experiential *event-encounter Christology*, God is understood, as the *event of God's acting* and Christ's Lordship or deity is always an event at any given time. In the proclamation the believer thus encounters God as *Christ for me* (Latin: **Christus pro me**). According to Macquarrie, Bultmann's Christology has come under criticism for its emphasis on individualism – on *Christus pro me* rather than **Christus pro nobis** (*Christ for us*).

The positive contribution of functional Christology is that it offsets the one-sided emphasis of theocentric Christology. In a balanced approach, the person of Christ is not severed from Christology since it is true, as Melancthon notes that God/Christ can be known in the Christ-event. But it is true that the proponents of functional Christology are influenced by presuppositions. As Erickson (1991:238-239) aptly notes, such theologians do a great service to Christology by acknowledging their presuppositions (e.g. Bultmann's demythologising programme, liberation theologians' preferential option for the poor, and feminist theologians' concern for affirming full humanity for women as well as men) from the outset.

2.4 THEANTHROPOCOSMIC CHRISTOLOGY

This is a pragmatic and heuristic approach to an Incarnational Christology. Theanthropocosmic Christology highlights the embodiment of God/Christ in humanity and in the world. The Christology engages insights from theocentric (sacramental) and anthropocentric (symbolic) views of the Incarnation, *vis-à-vis* the Shona world-view, in general, and the faith experiences of Shona women, in particular. The Shona holistic world-view and the gains from the

theocentric, anthropocentric and functional approaches to the Incarnation and Christology underlie an integration of the co-ordinates God-human-cosmos. Basic presuppositions in taking this approach are, the understanding of culture as text or a source of theology and historical consciousness. The latter element undergirds our understanding of cultural relativism and the historical development of revelation. Consciousness of Jesus Christ as the recipient and bearer of this revelation is important to this approach. Crucial questions concerning the relationship of Christ and culture and centring on our quest for an Incarnational Christology include, *Can Christ be found in Shona religious beliefs? Can Christology and mission today afford to ignore the cultural and religious traditions of a people and still hope to be meaningful and relevant to the people? Does Christ reveal himself to people in their concrete daily experiences? How does/did Christ reveal himself in the Shona Women's religious orientation?* In examining the intersections (interfaces) of *race, gender, class, creed and ethnicity*, I concur with Elaine Graham (1999:111-113) in asserting that embodied subjectivity has proved problematic and controversial in church and society today in that there are diverse experiences characterised by inequality of representation, access to resources and self-determination.

2.4.1 INCULTURATION APPROACH

Concerning the particularity of the Incarnation, the Christology takes the perspective, situation or context (culture) of Shona women as its point of departure. Implicit in this is the fact that the terms *inculturation, contextualization* and *Incarnation or evangelization* are interchangeable. The dynamics of inculturation includes two sub-processes of *acculturation* and *enculturation*. *Inculturation* is a dynamic process in which we can distinguish five important moments that are mutually influencing. These are *enculturation, acculturation or interculturalization, Incarnation, Paschal Mystery* (or creative dialogue), and *evangelization* (Aylward Shorter 1988:77-85). According to the Roman Catholic theologian of Kumasi, Ghana, Joseph Osei-Bonsu (1991:347-348), in the concept of the Incarnation (the Word became flesh and dwelt among us – cf. Jn 1:14), the Greek word **eskenosen** (*dwelt*) literally means *pitched a tent*.

Enculturation denotes a process of learning from one's culture. Eric O. Ayisi (1972:1-2) explains that culture is the sum total of knowledge - beliefs, art, law, morals, customs and all other capabilities and habits acquired by persons in society. Paddington (cf. Ayisi 1972) accentuates this view by asserting that the culture of a people may be defined as the conglomeration of the material and intellectual equipment whereby the people satisfy their biological and social (one can add spiritual) needs and adapt themselves to their environment. John S. Pobee (1992:34-35) distinguishes the following characteristics of enculturation, (a) growth into one's own culture, (b) an on-going process of learning and adapting to new situations, (c) growth into maturity, through cultural transformation as a process of confronting

new norms and forms of life. He distinguishes three moments in this process of enculturation - (a) translation, (b) assimilation and (c) transformation. It is noteworthy that these notions underscore the fluidity of some cultural elements.

Acculturation is much closer to inculturation in that it takes account of the multicultural dimension of modern Africa. In other words, there is consciousness to the pluriform of cultures or intra-societal life (Louis J. Luzbetak 1988:65-66; Pobe 1992:34). Consequently, there are many levels of reciprocal influencing of cultures in such a confluence of cultures. In the dialectic between culture and the Gospel, the latter as containing the unique revelation of God in the Incarnate Jesus of Nazareth, has privileged status in that it judges culture. In this context, according to Pope Paul VI (*Evangelii Nuntiandi* No. 63), in order not to imperil or compromise the truths of faith, it is important to realize the contingent or relative elements of revelation as distinguished from the truth of the Gospel or special revelation. Osei-Bonsu (1991:348) sees a practical example of this in the pristine church's Council of Jerusalem deliberations (Acts 15:5). In this context, it is important to note that theological language by its very analogical (symbolic) nature is contingent. It can be understood from the outset that in an African Christology we use correspondences to the unique person and work of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Paul Tillich (1986-1965, 1968:I.59-65), in his correlation method explains that symbols point to Ultimate Reality (truth of faith) but are not exact copies or templates of it.

Acknowledging the pluriform of cultures and mutual cultural influencing, Shona women can agree with William Dryness (1997:82-83) who asserts that:

Christians come to realize that they have no cultural space since their own proper territory has always been inhabited by others ... that what they share as Christians and cultural beings with their neighbours – language, workspace, friendship, sin, being loved and sought by God, is in some ways more important than what separates them.

Dryness (1997:69, citing Miroslav Volf) emphasizes that Christians are called to live with an *internal difference* within their culture. He explains that they should neither abandon nor dominate their cultural environments. Rather, they should live differently *in* them, and that difference should be *internal*, not simply to a given cultural space, but to cultural forms. He adds that in this context, Christian practices can be seen to reflect the cultural realities of the day and in some cases even to subvert them.

In the *Paschal Mystery analogy* that involves the *death-resurrection* motif, Shorter (1988:83) distinguishes two aspects important to inculturation. These are the salvation wrought through the (Cross) death and resurrection of Jesus and the death and resurrection motif as life-giving. He explains that the cultures are challenged to undergo *metanoia* (conversion) at their

profoundest level – are challenged to *die* to all that is not worthy of humanity in their traditions, all that is a consequence of accumulated guilt and social sin. On the other hand, when we recognize the dual nature of culture described by Jeremy Punt (1999:313) as *dynamic and accommodating, liberating and oppressing, socialising and alienating, useful and irrelevant*, we advocate that positive elements should be purified and completed in order to submit to the test of the Cross. Cardinal John Henry Newman, in advocating the latter aspect, explains that the cross places new value on every action, every event, every word or thought (Shorter 1988:84, cf. Newman - 1868 vol. 6, pp 84-85).⁵² It is as Shorter asserts that in the Paschal Mystery paradigm, cultures are called upon to die in order to rise to a greater splendour.

2.4.2 THE THEOCENTRIC (*FROM ABOVE*) DIMENSION OF (AFRICAN) SHONA CHRISTOLOGICAL EMPHASES

In a theocentric approach to an African Christology, we can take the example of the Shona *Mwari* cult to be in creative dialogue with the *Logos (Word)* Christology as found in John's prologue that focuses on the *Word became flesh* (1:14). According to Charles Nyamiti (1973:12), in a theocentric (view *from above*) Christological epistemology, we are here dealing with mythical time. Theologically, we are concerned with the concepts of the Essential or Immanent Trinity. Christian doctrines of the *Eternal* or *Immanent Trinity* and the *Economic Trinity* are set in dialogue with the Shona understanding of God (*Mwari*). Essential elements for a theocentric Christology are the Incarnation as coeval with creation set against the understanding of original myth as existential response (Abraham Gyekye 1992:41-45), the meaning of life and hence, of the Incarnation, the human being as unequivocally posited by God as both subjective and objective knower, androgynous images of God and divine self-agency or revelation (an immanent God who acts in human history). The picture of Christ who is both Creator and Provider (in terms of *continual creation - creatio continuata* or *divine providence*), takes account of salvation as encompassing the whole human history and of the understanding that the Incarnation was not only the result of the human condition of sin or the *Fall* as orthodox Christology seems to emphasize.

Karl Rahner (McGrath 1994, 1997:300,309) explained the relation of the *economic* and *essential* or *immanent* Trinity as two different ways of approaching the same Godhead. Consequently, Rahner postulated that *the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity, and vice versa*. On one hand, the *essential Trinity* is regarded as an attempt to formulate the Godhead outside the limiting conditions of time and space. On the other hand, the *economic Trinity* (the Trinity is made known within the *economy of salvation*) is understood as the manner in which we

⁵² Cardinal John Henry Newman in *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 8 Volumes, 1868, Vol.6, pp 84-85

experience the diversity and unity of God's self-disclosure in history.⁵³ The doctrine of *perichoresis* (*mutual interpenetration, appropriation*; Latin: *circuminscessio*) is an attempt to explain this diversity and unity of the Godhead in the economy of salvation (McGrath 1944,1997:298; W. Waite Willis 1987:45). Karl Barth (1959: I.2, pp; see also McGrath 1994,1997; Willis 1987; Adrio König 1991:25) develops the concept of *perichoresis* in his doctrine of divine self-revelation. Thus for Barth we have in the economic Trinity, the *Revealer, the Revelation and the Revealedness* (German: **der offenbarer, die Offenbarung, und das Offenbarsein**). Thus in dialogue with the *Logos* Christology, the pre-existent Christ as *Second Person* of the essential Trinity is understood to participate in creation. This is the implication of John 1:1- 4.

In the Shona Mwari religion (as existential response), we can identify elements with a theocentric epistemological resonance. In the naming of the deity, Mwari is understood as Creator, *par excellence*. Thus Mwari is the *Eternal Being (Chidza chapo)*, the *Source of all things (Muvamba pasi)*, the *Creator (Musiki)* and specifically, *the Creator of Human beings (Musikavanhu)*, *God of the Skies (Nyadenga)*, *Highest Being (Wokumusorosoro – The One Above)* and *Dzivaguru (the Greatest Pool and, hence, Rain-Maker)*. All these names specify how the Shona traditionally experienced God's active agency in their lives. According to M. L. Daneel (1970:16), in Shona myth, Mwari is given androgynous images. The female attributes are (**Dzivaguru, Zendere, Mbuya - Grandmother**). *Dzivaguru* denotes a pool that does not dry out even in severe drought. *Dzivaguru* stresses the Shona understanding that God/Christ as *Rainmaker* is concerned with the fertility of both land and human beings. The Swiss medical doctor Herbert Aschwanden (1982:284,292) concurs with Daneel in asserting that *Dzivaguru* denotes, the *Womb – water (amniotic fluid)*. Daneel explains that *Zendere* is understood as *the young woman who is Mwari's emanation*. Male designations of Mwari include **Sororezhou (Elephant's Head)**, *Nyadenga*, and *Wokumusoro* and put emphasis on headship.

In a comparative approach, the Shona *mbuya* can traditionally be portrayed as a teacher of morals in the centre of a circle of grandchildren in a round kitchen with a central fire. As such, it is an open circle that opens outwards to include the *other*. The *other* in the broader and inclusive connotation of the term grandmother and grandchild denotes every child in the extended family, clan, village, etc. The Shona say every woman is everyone's mother, every old woman is everyone's grandmother and every child is everyone's child. The same applies to fathers and grandfathers or old men. This idea concurs with the Christian concept of neighbour as *everyone in need* (cf. Lk 10:27ff). In a gender inclusive *koinonia*, Christ can be imaged as

⁵³ Karl Barth, *The Trinity* (London: Burns & Oats, 1970).

the Shona *Mbuya* (Grandmother) – *Lady Wisdom* (see Fig.3&4). This is compatible with the Old Testament *Wisdom-Sophia motif*.

The Shona kitchen (hut) in the shape of a circle is the acme of fellowship. Christ can thus be portrayed in a round hut (kitchen) also in a circle of grandchildren with a central fire. This view is accentuated by the fact that the traditional storyteller is *mbuya*. As such, the kitchen belongs to the woman and it is ritually given to her in the *kubikisa* (*giving the junior wife a separate cooking place or space independent of the mother-in-law*) ritual. By the same token, the *family altar* is the kitchen *huva* (*in-built cupboard for storing cooking utensils*) that specifically belongs to the woman. The family sits in a circle round a central *moto* (*fire*). They cook, eat and recreate in a circle of togetherness. In the situation of death, the kitchen is also the place in which the body lies in state especially for the night vigil. Members of the family who are not married or have broken marriages are accommodated in the mother's kitchen.

Emmanuel W. Abraham of Ghana (1992:39) points out that myths explain the *existential predicament*. This is the understanding of the divine-human-cosmos interconnectedness as a force or power that may become a welding power if tapped, and if untapped, a disruptive force and a breeder of anarchy. According to Abraham (1992:41-43) this aspect underlies cultic rituals in their dual purpose of acknowledging or appreciating the creative forces or restoring the aberrant powers to their original beneficence. Concurring with Abraham, we observe that the Shona anticipate the first rains in the ritual of **mukwerera** (*prayer for rain*) and they have the ritual of **nhendo** (*harvest-thanksgiving*). In this way, the Shona concur with Kabasele's postulate of Christ as *First Rain*. Shona people attribute phenomena like drought, pestilence, and war as punishments for sins of omission or commission.

Shona female attributes of God are compatible with feminist theologians' postulate of Goddess or appropriation of feminine qualities of God. For example, Rosemary Radford Ruether (1983,1994:47-52) explores the womb qualities of God. Ruether's (1983,1994:48) postulate of the root image of God (Hebraic-Ancient-Near-East Goddess) as *the Primal Matrix*⁵⁴, *the great womb within which all things, gods and humans, sky and earth, human and nonhuman beings, are generated*, aptly concurs with the Shona *Dzivaguru* attribute of God. It is also important to note that in appreciation of fertility qualities of the womb or tempering the *dangerous womb*, the Shona engage in a number of rituals (Chimhanda 2000:76-84). Another important observation for a gender inclusive Christology is the vital participation of women in rain-making cultic rituals. For example, it is the woman spirit medium that provides the oracular

⁵⁴ Rosemary Radford Ruether of *The Ancient Near East Mother Goddess Cult*.

voice of Mwari. Gabriel Setiloane (1988:13) accentuates the same point concerning the Rainmaking Mudjadji queen dynasty of South Africa (see also Thorpe 1996:84).

In the Shona culture-Christianity dialectic, it is interesting to note that Mwari is Creator, *par excellence*, who is a universal God, and worship, the giving or taking of life, forgiveness of sins and giving of just judgments or punishment are prerogatives of the divine. Mwari also as seen in the Jewish idea of YHWH, is enigmatic in character and is understood by the Shona as *neither male nor female* (Chimhanda 2000:50). Concurring with a *pluralistic Christology*, Mwari the God of the Shona is a universal God who makes the sun shine and provides rain for all people. In this context *stewardship* demands that things like wild fruit, honey, mushrooms, game are to be made available to all people (Shirley A. Thorpe 1991:53) and must be used sparingly.

Concerning the theocentric approach to Christological epistemology, the question of whether Jesus Christ could be known to pre-Christian Shona people is problematic. For an answer in the affirmative, we appeal to *general revelation*⁵⁵. This idea is compatible with Rahner's *transcendental Christology* and Justin Martyr's postulate of the *Logos Spermatikos* mentioned above. It is an admission that indigenous people are not a *tabula rasa* (blank slate). We can infer from the Shona religious orientation the image of Christ as the **Alpha** (*Beginning*) and **Omega** (*End* or *Eschaton*). Here it can be said that the Shona people experienced Mwari their God as a dynamic life-giving force as they grappled with problems of daily life, especially with questions of belief. Shona people experienced God as present and acting in all spheres of their lives and their articulation of this experience had Christological resonance. They experienced Mwari as the Ultimate Source of Being, Creator God, Giver of Rain, etc., and when they turned to him in times of crises (drought, pestilence, war, etc.), they experienced him as saviour or liberator. In this way they knew Christ without the precise naming of the deity (cf. Acts 17:23). In a real sense they experienced God as a life-giving force who gave meaning to their lives. In the context of general revelation, it can also be said that Christ is not a stranger among Shona people of all ages and places. This view is substantiated by Judith Bahemuka's (1989:1-16) postulate of the *Hidden Christ*, and Rahner's suggestion that humanity's *transcendental experience* leads to a *searching Christology*, (1996:295). In this context, Bahemuka (1989:xiv) aptly asserts that pre-Christian Africa experienced Jesus Christ as liberating for humanity and their response and orientation to this God was and is seen in various manifestations of culture – in its myths, rituals, beliefs, symbols, art and language. Rahner (1996:147) explains that God's

⁵⁵ An element of *natural theology* which has its protagonist in the Roman Catholic medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas – 1224/5-1272.

salvific will in the sense of the universal history of salvation happens even outside the explicit history of the Old and New Testaments.

In the Shona conception of Mwari the Supreme Being (hierarchy), God was implicitly distant – a conception bordering on *deism*. Nevertheless, on closer examination, Mwari was and is not understood by the Shona as a **deus ex machina** (*having created beings like automatic machines*) and therefore a **Deus remotis** or **Deus absconditus** (*remote and not involved in the daily affairs of people, and, similarly, in the individuals' needs*) (Thorpe 1991:54; Bourdillon 1976:322-323). As such, Mwari was or is accessible through ancestral mediation. Thorpe explains that for this reason, few rituals are dedicated to Mwari. These include, the *mukwerera* (petitioning for rain) ritual, or rituals performed in cases of severe drought, at the Mwari oracular cult at Matonjeni - Matopo Hills in Bulawayo (Daneel 1970:18; Bourdillon 1976:323; Chimhanda 2000:63-64). But some Shona people claim that the idea of God's immanence is not foreign to their belief in Mwari. They say that traditionally God talked to us in many ways - through thunder and various phenomena, including the mysterious mooing of cattle in the silence of the night, and, as associated with **njuzu** (*mermaid-like elements*) understood to inhabit the bottom of sacred pools. They point to places in some areas called **Mamu-u** (cf. *mooing of cattle*) as traditionally associated with *njuzu* happenings (Chimhanda 2000:54). Some Shona people claim that these things do not happen much today because people have desecrated these holy places, for example, in making gardens on riverbanks. Today this view is compatible with environmental degradation.

The Shona, in dialogue with Christianity, and particularly the doctrines of revelation and the Incarnation, now acknowledge the *immanence* of God. They attribute ultimate significance to and recognize God's active agency. This is highlighted in Shona names, which also emphasize Mwari as the ultimate authority and giver of everything. Thus Mwari is addressed as **Ishe** (*King or Chief*). Other attributes of Mwari include **Simbarashe** (*Strength or Power of God*), **Tinashe** (*God is with or among us*), **Kudakwashe** (*the will of God*), **Nyasha** or **Ngonidzashe** (*mercy of God*) and **Ruvarashe** (*flower of God*). It is outside the scope of this essay to investigate whether these attributes are also pre-Christian.

2.4.3 INCARNATION AS THE AFFIRMATION OF PEOPLE'S LIVES

According to Walter Kasper's (1976:35) postulate of a *Christology of reciprocity*, in anthropocentric Christology, the ontological and functional approaches are mutually inclusive. In this approach, Christ's full humanity and divinity are presupposed. The spotlight is on the Incarnation as the affirmation of people's lives and on liberation in terms of their lives. In other words, the main focus is on the *Christ-event* or soteriology. But as noted above, the person and

word of Christ are mutually inclusive. The pertinent question for a Christology that has the situation of Shona women as its point of departure is, *what does Christ mean in the Shona context?* The reciprocal existential question as addressed by Jesus is, *Shona woman, who do you say that I am?* The Christian's faith response focuses on discipleship and prophetic witness. The emphasis is on the Gospel as *Good News* for both women and men today. In emphasizing the historical character and relevance of a Christianity incarnated in the life experiences of Shona people, I examine both traditional and contemporary images of Christ.

The basic presupposition of a Christology *from below* is the understanding of the Incarnation as God's unity (encounter) with humanity. Here Jesus Christ is presented as God and human. In the Ancestor religion that underlies an anthropocentric Christology, the Shona say *ancestor* denotes **dzinza rangu** (*my origins or roots*) or **Mwari mudzimu wangu** (*God is my ancestor*). In a patriarchal society, they also say, **mai mudzimu wangu** (*my mother is my ancestor*) (Chimhanda 2000:50). Thus, Mercy Amba Oduyoye (Oduyoye & Kanyoro 1990:42) makes a legitimate claim that *God as male does not make the male God... male or female God is my kin*. It appears then, that the appellation *ancestor* is inclusive of all other familial images of Christ (Elder Brother- or Sister-Ancestor, Chief, Healer). Nyamiti (1984:15-16), the protagonist of an ancestor Christology, concurs with this view when he claims that Christ *as our Ancestor* can also be understood as our *Brother or Sister Ancestor* (1984:22). It appears right to say that the portrayal of God/Christ in exclusively male images is a post-Christian problem.

From the Shona religious orientation we can infer a *Christology of reciprocity* based on the Trinitarian **koinonia** (*fellowship*). It is important to note that the African Synod of Bishops (Rome 1994) chose *the family* as the model of the church in Africa. This was seen to complement the Vatican II model of the church as *the people of God (ecclesia Dei)*. The advantage of the former model is that it reinforces the *siblingship* relationships or Christian *koinonia* that has the Trinitarian *koinonia* as its basis. In the analogy of the Incarnation, Shona (African) Christological attributes are explored. The essential cultural symbols of **unhu** (*ubuntu*), **ushamwari** (*friendship*), **umwe** (*togetherness*) and *hospitality* are set in creative dialogue with the Christian *ethos* of love of God and neighbour, justice, holiness or perfection, prophetic witness, and discipleship as being *persons for others*.

2.4.3.1 CHRIST THE ANCESTOR

In attributing ancestor-ship to Christ, we explore how ancestral beliefs and practices dialogue with Christology. In the quest for a contemporary, relevant and vibrant Christology from the perspective of the Shona women of Zimbabwe today, we can pause to ask some questions. *Are we seeing the dermis of ancestral religion? Shall we jettison* (throw overboard or advocate a

wholesale rejection of) *ancestor religion*? *Can the category of ancestors be used as a key to open up the mystery of Christology? What images of Christ do Shona women see as giving meaning and dignity to their lives?* In his book, *Where are the Ancestors?* (1993), Bourdillon attempts to show how the conception of the ancestors including their nature and function, has changed significantly and continues to change over the course of time among the Shona in Zimbabwe. I agree with Charles Wanamaker (1997:285) that what seems to happen in a creative dialogue between culture and the Gospel is that the latter has reshaped some aspects of traditional ancestor beliefs and practices. In my earlier works Shona people show that ancestor religion is very much alive today.⁵⁶ In other words, ancestral beliefs and practices have proved versatile against the death-dealing impact of the interloping cultures of colonization, westernisation and globalization. Ancestors are invoked and experienced by their families through various ritual practices, through dreams, and through their role in everyday explanations of good fortune and misfortunes. Shona people admit to invoking the ancestors before going on a journey, on taking an important decision or step in life, in petitioning for rain, in harvest thanksgiving, and when they invoke *family spirits (vadzimu)* for protection. Furthermore, Shona people believe in *vengeance spirits* as shown in their chronic fear of **ngozi** (*spirit of the dead visiting the offender – extended family included seeking for appeasement*) **kutandabotso** (*spirit of a parent – usually mother visiting the offender to seek for appeasement*).

A case in point for changing perceptions due to the impact of Christianity and Westernization is that the killing of twins and also babies, whose first teeth come from the upper jaw as a bad omen, has stopped. The Shona now have a better understanding of the uniqueness and preciousness of the individual person and human life in general.

Wanamaker (1997:285-289) rightly asserts that if Christ is to be understood as an ancestor, it will require some correspondence between the function of the ancestors and his own function in the lives of the believers. It is noteworthy that in an ancestor Christology, on the one hand, the human nature tends to mask the divine nature of Jesus and on the other hand, there is a tendency to compromise the divine prerogatives of worship, forgiveness of sins and the giving and taking of life. In an African Christology, Jesus as the most senior Primogenitor of all ancestors and member of the human family can be seen as Ancestor *par excellence* at the apex of the ancestral mediation ladder. The enigmatic character of the primogenitor at the apex of the ladder points to the divinity of Christ.

⁵⁶ Chimhanda F. H. *Christology and Women in Zimbabwe* (1999:16,26 - unpublished Article); *Christ the Ancestor: Shona Christianity and the Roots for Feminist Liberative Praxis* (2000:50 - unpublished Dissertation)

Vincent Mulago (cf. Jacob Olupona 1991:119) explains that in the African worldview there are four essential elements:

- (a) *Belief in two worlds visible and invisible;*
- (b) *Belief that both worlds involve community and hierarchy;*
- (c) *Belief in the intersection of the two worlds, the transcendence of the invisible world in a way contradicting its immanence;*
- (d) *Belief in a Supreme Being, Creator, and Father of all that exists.*

Mulago (cf. Olupona 1991:120) aptly explains that these beliefs undergird four essential elements of African religion:

- (a) *Unity of life and participation;*
- (b) *Belief in the enhancement or diminution of beings and the interaction of beings;*
- (c) *Symbol as the principal means of contact and union;*
- (d) *An ethic that flows from ontology*

The vital unity between the *mundane* and the *extra-mundane* world is the link between the ancestors as the *living dead* and their living descendants. According to Charles Nyamiti (1984:15-16), in their death ancestors as close to God have acquired supernatural powers. And with this they can protect or punish their descendants. The South African theologian, Gabriel Setiloane (cf. Wanamaker 1997:288) accentuates this view in a poem:

*The dead are not dead, they are ever near us,
 Approving and disapproving all our actions,
 They chide us when we go wrong,
 Bless and sustain us for good deeds done,
 For kindness shown, and strangers made to feel at home.
 They increase our store, and punish our pride.*

Gordon Chavhunduka (1978:12) explains the above elements as concerning the Shona's understanding of Ancestral mediation as follows:

Many Shona people believe that the deceased kinsmen continue to take an interest in the affairs of their descendants...They believe that the ancestors have power to prevent evil and also help the living in solving their daily problems. They are interested in the behaviour of their descendants and may punish them in the case of bad behaviour. It is believed that the ancestors' spirits use different means to enforce correct behaviour. If, for example, a man commits incest, or fails to perform a necessary ritual for a dead kinsman, the ancestors may punish him with illness, and, in extreme cases, with death. The ancestors' spirits can do this by withdrawing their vital protection and so permitting evil influences, such as witchcraft to harm the individual - or, withdrawal of such blessings as good rainfall.

Charles Wanamaker (1997:267-291) points out the three main functions of African Bantu ancestors, which have Christological resonance. These are that ancestors are (a) guardians of

the social and moral order, (b) givers and sustainers of life, and (c) mediators. They are able to do this because they have died and acquired from God supernatural power. They also know the language of the invisible. This echoes Christian belief in the post-resurrection Christ who is exalted in heaven and through his spirit is a dynamic life giving and empowering force (Christian affirmation that the risen Christ is both Lord and Christ).

According to Raymond Maloney (1987:511-512), we can draw from the African essential cultural factor of communal solidarity, an African ecclesiology with Christ as its head. We can talk of the Shona (African) community as the **communio sanctorum** (*sacred community*)⁵⁷ alongside the Christian **congregatio fidelium** (*community of faith*). It can be said that the Bantu communal and ontological epistemology places the individual in the centre of community. Mulago (1991:120) accentuates this point when he says that in the Bantu essential element of *unity of life and participation*, the life of the individual is understood as participated life. In this context Nyamiti (1973:12) aptly notes that:

Grace is familial - implies not only that grace is communal and ecclesial, but also 'ancestral', and as such Christian (Christ is the Ancestor 'par excellence'), paradisiacal (suggested by mythical time) heroic (suggested by the idea of ancestral heroes), friendship, initiatic and therefore sacramental, paschal, pneumatic, eucharistic, living dynamism, fecundity, and eschatological.

The Ghanaian and Anglican theologian, John Pobee (1991:69) accentuates this view in asserting that **Homo africanus** (*African person*) experiences the **mysterium tremendum et fascinans** (*awesome and fascinating*) in community. Pobee adds that in this paradigm, the challenge for an African Christology is to transcend the consanguine ties – a shift from a local to a universal Christ. There is an echo of Paul Tillich's definition (given above) of a symbol as transcending itself. Here the Shona understanding of Mwari as a universal God in parallel to the understanding of the universal Christ is important. Shona essential cultural elements of *hospitality* and *friendship* are also important. Other essential Shona – Christian values include love and total self-giving to the will of God, the giving of good example, death and incorporation into the ancestral realm. Concerning the overlap of the mundane and extra-mundane worlds in Shona religion, it is noteworthy that the Shona religious orientation lacks eschatology. There is focus on the present life – the *here-and-now* in which the ancestors are seen as the living dead in vital communion with their descendants.

The concept of ancestors' vital participation in the *communio sanctorum* is epitomized in Shona greeting and friendship. Shona greeting is very ceremonial. The Shona take time with each other. The Shona highlight the concept of interconnectedness in that well-being is both

⁵⁷ According to H Kuckertz (1981:80), it was the Anglican priest E.K. Mosothoane who coined the term *communio sanctorum* as denoting the African ancestral community.

relational and conditional. The *Good morning, afternoon, evening* is always accompanied by a question of well-being. The response to the question of well-being is conditional in that the Shona say *I am well (had a good day or night) 'if' you are well (had a good day or night)*. It is noteworthy that this is an echo of the *Our Father or Lord's Prayer*. In the latter too forgiveness is conditional - on the understanding that we forgive our neighbour.

In Shona religion, we can distinguish two groups of ancestors. These are *vadzimu* (family spirits) and *tribal tutelary spirits*, whom Schoffeleers (1978) aptly calls *guardians of the land*. The latter are also called *lion spirits*, **mhondoro**. The *mhondoro* living hosts or *spirit mediums* are in turn called **masvikiro** (sing. **svikiro**), or, simply **mhondoro** (Schoffeleers, 1978:235-313; Bourdillon 1976:263,293-327; Gelfand 1959:2-23). Lion Spirits are also known as **makombwe** (sing. **Gombwe**, cf. Bourdillon 1976: 293-327; Gelfand 1959:22ff). Women and men are depicted as *mhondoro* (lion spirits) - highest principle or primogenitor at the apex of the ancestral ladder. Similarly, the Shona traditionally acknowledge both men and women *mhondoro masvikiro*. Bourdillon (1976:318), giving the long history of women *mhondoro masvikiro* (*lion spirit mediums*), shows that two of the most active mediums were *Kaguvi* and *Nehanda* - man and woman, respectively, now acknowledged in Zimbabwe as national heroes.

Wanamaker (1997:292), in a comparative approach, shows that Christ's genealogy tracing his ancestry from Adam (Luke3:21-22) or Abraham and David (Matthew 1:1-17), admits to the genealogical or ancestry paradigm. In place of the western type genealogy the Shona have totemism. Members of the same family or clan share the same totem and this is traced patrilineally to the primogenitor. In the Shona culture – Christianity dialogue, we focus both on the person and work of Christ. Jesus can be seen as the *Primogenitor* or *Proto-Ancestor* (Shona: **Mhondoro** - lion spirit, **Mudzimu Mukuru**, *Greatest Ancestor*) at the apex of the ancestral mediation ladder to Mwari. Ancestor can be seen as a gender-neutral term. Thus the familial titles with Christological titles alluded to above in the Shona world-view, take on androgynous images of **hazvanzi** (*brother or sister* as synonymous with the Greek **adelphoi**), **mukoma** (*elder brother or elder sister*) and **hama** (*relations or friends*).

Concerning the feminist agenda, it is important to note that women and men participate equally on the ancestral mediation ladder. Nevertheless, patriarchy is a problem in negation and devaluation of women and embodied life. Underlying the Shona **pater familias**, **patria potestas** (*father as head of the family and guardian of children*) society, is the understanding that God in Christ is male. The Shona reinforce this view by the understanding that children are a gift from God through patrilineal ancestors. Furthermore, in considering matrilineal ancestors as *alien* (Shona: **mutorwa**: plural - **vatorwa**), the Shona understand the *placenta* to be the bag

in which the ancestors wrap the baby (foetus). As such it is **mutorwa** wrapping which the Shona redeem in a series of rituals. These include the payment of **mombe yehumai** (*mother's cow*) as part of *roora* (Chimhanda 2000; 78-80; Aschwanden 1982:267; Michael Gelfand 1959:175-182). Generally matrilineal ancestors are seen as responsible for the fertility of the womb and are understood as custodians of children (Bourdillon 1976:47). This view is accentuated by the Shona adage, **mudzimu wamai wadambura mbereko** (*maternal ancestors have broken the back sling*) in cases of, for example, the death of an infant.

From the foregoing discussion, it can be said that there is cognitive dissonance in Shona designates of God and Christ only as male. In a patriarchal and post-colonial Christian influence, the Shona Christian admits to the literal application of biological fatherhood to God. Thus God is called **Mwari Baba** (*God the Father*) and Jesus as second *Persona* of the Trinity is designated **Mwari Mwanakomana** (*God the Son*), or **Mambo wedu Yesu Kristo** (*Our Lord or Chief Jesus Christ*). Language is power in that it can close or open doors in communication. We have seen above that Shona religion accommodates an androgynous God (with male and female attributes). Today Shona people admit that the highest principle - Mwari is either male or female (Chimhanda 2000:50). The use of male images of God only can be seen as intentional and oppressive as shown in the above. A feminist Theologian, Denise Ackerman (1989:56) is right in maintaining that language, symbols and metaphors used in liturgies give offence to women who want to see their humanity and worth affirmed in acts of worship. Thus in the Shona gender-neutral language, it is more correct to talk of Christ as **Mwana waMwari** (*Child of God*) as denoting Son or Daughter of God. In the creed the Shona affirm that in the Incarnation Jesus Christ **akava munhu sesu** (*became human like us*) as opposed to the English exclusive expression, *was made man like us*.

Pointing to the historical and cultural conditioning of Christology, I have argued (Chimhanda 2000) and still maintain that both Shona culture and Christianity have seeds for the liberation of women and that in both cases there has been a historical development of patriarchy. Bishop Harold De Jung (1995:4) accentuates this view in asserting that:

Social change has benefited men at the expense of women. This has contributed to the emergence of 'the apartheid of gender' in which the status of women has become inferior to that of men.

Trace memories (*anamnesis*) of the liberation potential of culture are found in Shona myths, ritual, proverbs, adages, and symbols of life. In an ancestor Christology and the elusive nature of the Shona primogenitor, Christ can be seen as *neither male nor female*. Thus Nyamiti (1984:22) is right in saying that in the African world view Christ can also be understood as *Brother- or Sister- Ancestor*. In this anamnesis, I postulate that Shona descent was originally

matriarchal or bilateral. This view is supported by the fact that some Bantu tribes bordering on Zimbabwe are matrilineal (e.g. some tribes in Malawi and the Lobedi of the Mudjadji Rain-Queen dynasty) or bilateral (see Wanamaker 1997:184). It is noteworthy that the Lobedi have close affinity to the Shona in that they trace descent to the Shona legend chief Monomotapa (Shirley Thorpe 1996:84 Chigwedere 1985:8-19,56-99; Chimhanda 2000:63).

2.4.3.2 CHRIST THE CHIEF

It is noteworthy that where other cultures have king or potentate as the highest authority, the Shona equivalent is chief (**ishe** or **mambo**). Francois Kabasele (1997:109-112) identifies the chief's characteristics as having *supernatural power*, *generosity* and *having the ability to reconcile*. Christological designates highlighted here are the Servant Messiah or Christ the Economist (Steward), who is above all, *a person for others*. The Shona cultural elements of hospitality and friendship are also emphasized here. It is noteworthy that in theory the Shona can have women chiefs since ascent to chieftainship is by primogeniture (elder brother or sister as chief) but in practice more often than not, the Shona chief is a man. The totem, in parallel with western genealogies links the chief to the primogenitor (proto-ancestor).

According to Marcelle Manley (1995:70), as different from the modern political functionaries, the Shona understand that the chief has spiritual powers communicated to him by the soil through the *mhondoro masvikiro*. Manley explains that the **vhu** (*soil*) is not just the material base of the subsistence economy of people since it represents the very power of chieftaincy. She adds that the soil is both the founding ancestors (Shona: **mhondoro** - *tribal tutelary spirits* or *guardians of the land*) who conquered it and the rules by which those who occupy the land today **vatorwa** (*aliens*) and living descendants have to obey. Manley (1995:74), emphasizes this point as follows:

Morals governing life are issued by the soil and breaches of these rules incur not only material penalties, but in extreme cases, also drought, disease, sterility and death. This is the very ground of chiefly authority even in these times of rapid change.

To mark the significance of *mhondoro* as **vhu** (*soil*), or *owners of the land*, a **chisi** (*rest day*) as synonymous with the Christian Sabbath day is observed. *Chisi* days differ from area to area. In my own area (Serima), Thursday is the *chisi* day. *Chisi* day is said to be the day the progenitor *mhondoro* died. A Shona Christian has thus two Sabbath days. Manley (1995:72,74) is right in asserting that the chief as an *amanuensis* (vice-regent) is a power to reckon with.

It is noteworthy that the present land-reclaiming crisis orchestrated by self-styled war veterans touches the very nerve of the Shona people. In this context Gertrude Geza (Moto Editorial 1998:15) as an old widow makes a legitimate claim to land ownership in saying, **ndiri mwana**

wevhu (*I am a child of the soil*)! The post-independent era weakened chiefly authority, especially as concerning land allocation. But today in land restitution moves, there is concern to reinstate it. The recent land crisis in Zimbabwe also calls for a theology of the land that incorporates the Shona religious world-view.

The importance of the Shona's designation of Christ as **ishe** (*chief*) is seen in naming. Shona names, e.g. **Kudakwashe** (*will of God*), **Simbarashe** (*strength of God*), **Ngonidzashe** (*mercy of God*) have Chief as a suffix. In a gender-conscious Christology, it is important to note that both men and women have names with **-ishe** suffix. Thus patriarchal reification of God as male (**Ishe, Tenzi, Mambo - King, Lord, Chief**) can be seen to be offensive in excluding women analogies of God. It is reification in advocating the male as the supreme image of God and not woman. It can also be said that exclusive images of God are at least inadequate in giving us half-truths, and, at worst, they are idolatrous. In lopsided patriarchal relationships, the Shona woman is sometimes heard to address her husband as, **She-we!** (*Lord or Master*; Hebrew: **rab**).

In Shona culture-Christianity dialectic, we can identify the *Servant King motif* of scripture (cf. Is53) and the Christ of the Gospel. In a new Christian understanding, God is understood as the ultimate giver of the chief's supernatural powers through the mediation of the primogenitor. The *ishe* is custodian of morals and in his or her judicial role, administers justice. There is emphasis on the concept of the ancestors as guardians of the social and moral order and the land⁵⁸. Reconciliation is a function of the chiefly **dare** (*jury*). The Shona *chief* (**Mambo** or **Ishe**) has religious, political and social roles. He or she is an intermediary between the ancestors (in particular the area *mhondoro*) and has to see to it that ceremonies such as the *petitioning for rain* (*mukwerera*) and *harvest thanksgiving* (**nhendo**) are performed. By the same note, he sees to it that the *lion spirits* (*mhondoro*) rest day (*chisi*) – the Shona equivalent of the Christian Sabbath day, is kept.

In a pedagogical approach, the attribute of Christ as Chief can be understood as *good news* to believers when we look at Christ's Lordship as *power over for*, as against *power over against* (cf. Rebecca Pentz, in Erickson 1991:591). Thus the chief's lordship can best be described as empowerment of subjects. Concerning the jurisdiction of the chief, it can be said that there is tension between customary law and Roman-Dutch law. For example, the offender does not solve crime like murder by serving a jail sentence. In the context of *extended patients*, the family has to make reparation for such a sin through the ritual of **kuripa ngozi** (*appeasement of*

⁵⁸ Schoffeleers, in his book, *Guardians of the Land* (1978) talks about ancestors as guardians of the land, but the Shona understand ancestors as **varidzi venyika** (*owners of the land*). It appears that in the Christian concept of humanity's *stewardship*, *guardian* is a more suitable term to use in the God-human-cosmos relation

vengeance spirits) or **kuroora guva** (*payment of roora over the grave or dead woman's body*). Reparation of *ngozi* is by **danga** (*a herd of cattle*) and a girl-child. The latter is, in turn, given away in marriage to a kinsman of the victim. When she has borne a replacement to the deceased, she is then free to go back to her family or to stay married. The *kuroora guva* is also demanded for women who die a natural death when *roora* is not paid. Concerning *kuroora guva*, the agnates of the deceased woman do not perform burial rites until payment is made by way of *danga*, usually as live cattle. In the mid 1990s, the Zimbabwe government had to intervene by proposing settlement of such disputes only after proper burial of the victim. The chief's judgment is by consensus and the above example shows that it borders on **lex talionis** (*tit-for-tat*). In the Sermon on the Mount, for example, Christ teaches against revenge and expands the view on sin and reconciliation by encouraging unconditional forgiveness and love of enemies (Mt 5:38 ff).

Hospitality to strangers and providing for the needs of the poor and widows are prerogative roles of the chief. To accommodate for this, the Shona practice what is called **zunde ramambo** (*take a turn in working in the chief's field from which the proceeds go towards meeting these charity acts*) (Chimhanda 2000:102-103; see also Claude Mararike 2001:53-65). There is a striking parallel with the O.T. concerning the leader of the community having to take overall responsibility for the *anawim* (*the poor of Yahweh* – cf. Ps72). The concept of the *poor of Yahweh* is inherent in Shona religious orientation. The Shona recognize the biblical trilogy of the *widow, orphan* and *stranger* (cf. Ex 22:21-24; 23:9; Lev 19:33-34; Deut 27:19; 24:17) as **vanhu vaMwari** (*people of God*). Traditionally there were crops considered **zvinhu zvinodiwa nevapfuuri** (*things to be eaten by hungry passers-by or travellers*) and there was the practice of **zunde raMambo** mentioned above. The latter is still in practice by some chieftains. These elements underlie essential cultural elements of friendship, hospitality and togetherness. Thus it can be said that the Shona have an inherent posture for the *anawim*. The *anawim* motif is seen in that the Shona talk of the crippled and mentally disabled as **vanhu vaMwari** (*people of God*) and consequently have a predilection for them and the widow, orphan and stranger. Christians today transpose *anawim* with the *preferential option for the poor and marginalized of society* as compatible with Christ's mission agenda (Lk 4:18-19, cf. Is 61:1-2).

For example, Ex 22:21-24 reads:

You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. You shall not afflict any widow or orphan...If you do afflict them, and they cry out to me, I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless.

There is also a striking parallel with the Old Testament concerning the leader of the community taking overall responsibility for the *anawim*. In Psalm 72 we read of what is required of the king:

*In his days may righteousness flourish,
and peace abound, till the moon be no more (72:7)!*

And again:

*For he delivers the needy when he calls,
the poor and him who has no helper.
He has pity on the weak and needy,
and saves the lives of the needy.
From oppression and violence he redeems their life;
and precious is their blood in his sight.*

In the New Testament, the sacramental value of the needy and marginalized is seen in the Incarnate Jesus' mission agenda or statement:

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he sent me to proclaim release to captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord (Lk 4:18-19 = Is 61:1-2).*

And again in Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus Christ identifies himself in the distressing disguise of the poor, prisoners and the sick. In this *anawim* motif, Christians are required not only to empathize with (know the heart of) the poor and marginalized, but are also required to know the heart of God. They are called, not only to see God in the poor and marginalized, but also to see the *anawim* as God sees them.

2.4.3.3 CHRIST THE ELDER BROTHER OR SISTER

In the Appellation of *Christ the Elder Brother/Sister*, the Shona perspective gives us a Christology of reciprocity. The main function of the elder brother or sister is that of being *exemplary* or *role model* in a reciprocal relationship of respect for elders. The Shona Elder Brother or Elder Sister has the essential role of giving good example and can be trusted with questions of justice within the family, clan and society. Elders in traditional Shona society were custodians and implementers of justice. It is noteworthy that although only the male first-born child can ascend to being head of the family, in many other aspects of Shona life both male and female first-born children are considered equal in status.

Through Shona naming the elder brother or sister is closer to the family ancestors. Parents get their identity from the eldest child (Shona: **dangwe**; Greek: **prōtōtokos**, for example, as **baba-** and **maiFarirai** (*father* and *mother of Farirai*) in the case of my parents - **Farirai** (*Rejoice*) being the name of my elder sister. In the traditional bifurcation into male and female camps especially at puberty, both young boys and girls learn life skills and facts of life from the elder brother and elder sister, respectively. In Shona rituals the elder brother or sister can mediate in prayers - petitions to the ancestors, and ultimately, to Mwari. He or she takes overall responsibility for old parents as well as younger sisters and brothers. The highest authority an elder brother or sister can ascend to is that of chief.

In a comparative and heuristic approach, Jesus is understood to have a unique role as mediator and role model. As believers our lives are patterned on Christ. Christian identity is unequivocally expressed in words, *I am the way and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me* (Jn 14:6). Thus Christ is called the *first born of all creation* (Col 1:15), the *first born from the dead* (Col 1:15-20) and the *first fruits* (**aparchē**) of those who have died (1 Cor 15:20). There is natural filiation of Jesus as Son of God. We in turn become adopted children of God (cf. Gal 4:5; Rom 8:29). The letter to the Romans reads as follows:

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son in order that he might be the 'first born' among many brethren.

It is noteworthy that it is the Christians as extended family that form *church*, or congregatio fidelium (community of faith) with Christ. Here it is important to note that the African Synod of Bishop's postulate of the model of the church in Africa, as *Family* is apt (Rome 1994). What is reinforced here is the siblingship relationship. This is underscored by the baptismal status in which we have all become equal, brothers and sisters of the same Father / Mother (cf. Galatians 3:28). It is interesting to note that in the Christian *indicative* and *imperative* (cf. J.C. Coetzee 1988:236-239), the role of *aparche* is transposed on the Holy Spirit. Thus Christians baptised in the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 2:13) are sealed with the Spirit (2 Cor 1:22; Eph 1:13; 4:30). In this context, the Spirit as the communication factor of the Trinity is understood as the **arrabōn** (*seal* or *guarantee*) and *aparche* of our salvation. The Christian imperative in parallel to our baptismal vocation compels us to *walk in the Spirit* (Gal 5:16), *be filled with the Spirit* (Eph 5:18) and to be *led by the Spirit* in putting on our new nature (Eph 4:22-24).

According to Chiromba (1995:7), the African Synod of Bishops opted for the model of the church in Africa as *family* for perhaps two reasons. These are the centrality of natural families in African society and the biblical basis of the model with its emphasis on communion. In a pedagogical perspective concerning the Shona culture-Christianity dialectic, one can add that the image of the church as *family* reinforces the Trinitarian basis of *koinonia*, and, as seen in the

family structure of *father, mother, and children*. We can also turn to the Trinity as a credible model of the family in our time. *Koinonia* relationships based on the Trinity are *filiation, fraternity and agape* or the *abbā-adelphoi (siblingship)* relationships noted above. In orthodox theology's concepts of *filiation, procession* or *generation*, the Father is the origin of the Son, the Son relates in self-giving to the Father and the Spirit is the love between the Father and the Son. Fellowship as transcending consanguine relationships is seen in the Shona cultural elements of *usahwira (friendship and hospitality)*.

2.4.3.4 CHRIST THE MASTER OR MISTRESS OF INITIATION

In the Shona culture-Christianity dialogue, Christ is *Son/Daughter* of God – the *Alpha* and *Omega* in touch with God's salvific will. The initiation project in the Shona worldview concentrates on the Bantu ethic of *unhu (personhood)*. The etymology of **Bantu (people)** is from **ntu**, and **muntu** whose Shona equivalents are **unhu** and **munhu** as denoting *personality* and *person*, respectively. In this anthropological and ontological ethic there is increase or diminution of being. In other words, actions that are good, such as respect for persons and other people's property, increase one's personhood and the reverse is true of bad actions, such as being quarrelsome and stealing. The Shona talk of a good person as **munhu ane unhu (being fully human)**. The reverse concept is, **munhu ane unhu (being fully human)**. **haana unhu (being sub-human)**. The latter, as a person who shows individualism and acts badly, is seen to be a liability to the health and general well-being of the family, clan, tribe and nation. Gordon Chavhunduka (Bourdillon 1977:2.138) captures this view in his postulate of *extended patients* as an element of the Shona belief in **ngozi (vengeful spirits)**. Such spirits are understood to visit the whole agnatic group of the culprit, and, if not *appeased (kuripwa)*, *ngozi* is understood to terminate the whole group ending with the offender him / herself. Shona names, **Marufu (death)**, **Tapera (we are extinct)**, **Nhamoinesu (we are immersed in trouble - death)**, etc. highlight the effect of *ngozi*. Today Shona belief in *ngozi* (together with Shona high value for life) is seen as a big deterrent to murder (Chimhandu 2000:56).

From the discussion on Shona culture, it can be said that in the designation of Master / Mistress of Initiation, Christ takes on the role of the Shona *sekuru, mbuya* and *vatete*. The erosion of the extended family through westernisation has concurrently left a lacuna concerning the involvement of traditional masters and mistresses of initiation of the young into cultural norms and values. In recognition of this fact, the church appropriates these traditional roles in youth guilds in the form of youth advisors.

Concerning the Christological designation of *Ancestor, Master of Initiation, par excellence*, we can say that the African (Shona Bantu) understanding of full humanity and the baptismal status

of the *imago Dei/Christi* are mutually inclusive. We have seen that in the Shona understanding of a person *for* and *with others*, a person is empowered to personhood by others. They do this in a series of *rite-de-passage* covering a continuum from before birth to life after death (Mbiti 1969:107-109). Pato (1997:54-59) explains that, implicit here, is the understanding that an individual is never born *whole* and *fully human* and that the family, clan, community or nation to which one belongs empowers the individual to attain maturity or full humanity. To a certain extent, this is true of every nation and culture as implied by the concepts of socialization, nurturing and education of the young. Initiation rites in Shona society circumscribe the whole of a person's life. But it seems to me that the unique individuality of persons is a divine prerogative from the moment of conception – points to the sacredness of human life. In other words, the essence of a human being cannot be compromised or is not open to negotiation. Pertinent issues here are the full humanity of children and celibates (Pato 1997:59; Chimhanda 2000:88-89), since, for example, only deceased parents are installed as ancestors in the *homing of the Spirits (kurova guva)* ceremony.

It is noteworthy that in the wealth of the initiatory rhythm, the Christological synthesis is seen, in turn, to enrich (enliven) the church's art, prayer, dance, and music, such as accentuated in the image of the church in Africa as the dancing church.

2.4.3.5 CHRIST THE HEALER –CHRISTUS VICTOR

Science and modern medicine proved my wife barren but God and the ancestors opened her womb... (Anonymous)

In the Shona world view, and as depicted in a poem by the Zimbabwean Shona man, Claude Mararike (1995:9), God as Healer *par excellence* is understood not to need the help of any **muti** or **mushonga** (*medicine*) - traditional or Western, since it is Mwari who made the herbs, shrubs trees, etc. used by people for *muti*. In the concept of *mediated immediacy*, the Shona claim supernatural powers for their ancestors in the adage **mudzimu haubati mushonga** (*ancestral spirits do not handle medicine*). They understand that the ancestors in their death acquire this power from Mwari. Thus the Shona talk of ancestor spirit mediums (*vadzimu* or *midzimu*) as healing by **kufurira** (*to blow the spirit or water on the sick person - member of the family*) (Chimhanda 2000:54-55).

In Shona religion Christ the Healer can be seen to take the roles of Mwari, the ancestors and the traditional healer (Shona: *n'anga* also known in the ambivalent status as the *witchdoctor*). Thus in the culture-Gospel dialogue, Christ as Healer and Creator, *par excellence* is Mwari who heals without herbs and provides all medicine (Mararike 1995:9). By the same note, Christ is

Christus Victor (*Victorious Christ*), who, by his death and resurrection has conquered evil - including the Shona's chronic fear of *ngozi*, witchcraft and sorcery. All this can be seen to be in line with Karl Barth's (1886-1968) postulate of **das Nichtige** (*'the total annihilation of evil'* through the victorious Christ's saying 'yes' to the good elements of culture and 'no' to life's destructive factors). This is compatible with Christ's mission agenda or jubilee mission (Lk.4:16:21) of bringing the Good News of Salvation.

The Shona understand that the gift of healing comes either from the *vadzimu* (ancestors) or from **mashavi** (*alien spirits*). Thus the Shona distinguish between good *shavi* (e.g. involved with healing or hunting) and bad *shavi* (e.g. those implicated in stealing, witchcraft) (Bourdillon 1976:189; Gelfand 1959:121-152). Communication between the *healing shavi* and the *svikiro* (medium) is understood to be through trance, dreams and / or divination. Healing ministry particularly as imparted by the ancestor is meant to be for the good of the family, clan and tribe. Thus the Shona believe that every Shona family has a *healing mudzimu* (Chimhanda 2000:108). The *healing shavi* seems to transcend consanguine boundaries to include all sick people.

In the culture-Christianity dialectic, the ambivalent status of the *n'anga* is problematic. This is implicated in the early missionaries and colonialists coinage of *witchdoctor*. According to Chavunduka (1977:2.131) a good *n'anga* can cause ill effects on the client because of the desire to become rich or in anger at not being paid for his services. The negative effects of the *n'anga* are seen in the practice of sorcery. In the present upsurge of the rape of minors (women and the girl-child), Shona people ask, is this a new phenomenon (Winston Siwela 1997:12-13)? They are shocked to find that this is a new form of what was traditionally understood as **divisi** (*a kind of sorcery in which in an agrarian economy fathers indulge in incest with the girl-child in order to get a bumper harvest*). Today the HIV/AIDS sufferers are ill advised by the *n'angas* to cleanse themselves of the disease by having sex with a virgin. Thus the media shocks us with reports of rape of children and even babies by close male relatives. Creeping materialism has also seen the raping, murder and mutilation of and from women. Business people are ill advised by *n'angas* to use human parts with *muti* for business acumen.

Chavunduka (1977:2.136-142) explains that there are three types of traditional healers. These are *herbalist*, *diviner therapist* and *diviner*. He adds that traditional medicine can be protective (e.g. the wearing of charms) or a cure for natural diseases since Shona holistic cosmology accounts for both natural and supernatural causes of illness. Whereas the herbalist is sufficient in dealing with the former ailments, the latter is a prerogative of the diviner or diviner-therapist. Alternatively, as pointed out above, the Shona understand that the *mudzimu* (ancestors) can intervene directly through its *svikiro* (spirit medium) (see also Thorpe 1991:58)

N'angas are consulted in cases of illness and death and prior to *kurova guva* (homing of the spirits). Thus it is the *n'anga* who informs of the need for appeasement of spirits. In the dialectic of western medicine and traditional medicine, the Shona believe that the *n'anga* is the specialist in dealing with diseases like *ngozi* and *kutandabotso*. Thus the *n'anga* is understood to heal the *whole person* - there is stress on psychosomatic therapy (Chavhunduka, 1977:142-143; Cécé Kolié, 1991,1997:139). The wholesale rejection of *n'anga* practices by Christian missionaries as *evil* and *pagan* is seen to pose unhealthy dualism of *Shona culture-Christianity, pagan-Christian, and profane-sacred* in the ambivalent status of the believer of being both Shona and Christian. Christian evangelization becomes superficial in that in situations of crisis, the Shona Christian backslides into culture as we have already noted above. The positive role of the *n'anga* in parallel to the healing ministry of Christ is highlighted in the African Indigenous Churches (AICs) (Daneel 1970:1ff). There is also a striking parallel in the methods employed in the healing process by both Christianity and traditional healing, such as, *spirit power, hierophanic contact with the invisible world by using objects* (e.g., *holy water, tsvimbo [ancestral staff], salt, oil and smuff* (Mulago 1991:124-125; Daneel 1970:33; K. Chivavaire & M. Kariaeti 1997:10-11, cf. Zimbabwean healer, Boniface Muponda) and *prophesying* and *divination*. An example of the overlap between healing in AICs and traditional healing is seen in that both claim to be able to help barren women to conceive in the ritual of **kuuchika** (*fertility treatment*).

It can be said that whatever method is used, ancestral spirits or God's spirits the Shona understand that Mwari is the ultimate healer. Good *n'angas* in saying, **Mwari nevadzimu vako ngavakurape** (*may God and your ancestors heal you*), acknowledge Mwari as the ultimate giver and sustainer of life. In this context we note a significant development that has occurred among Shona Christians. This is the understanding of the immediacy of God who can be addressed directly in prayers, dreams and prophecy unlike the traditional mediation of spiritual leaders like the *n'anga diviner*. Walls (1996:196-197) is right in asserting that in divination, help was sought from and people spoke to the ancestors and not to God.

It is noteworthy that the Shona stress holistic healing. The Shona's quest for holistic healing is seen in the phenomenon of the impact of the AICs' healing ministry. People move from one church to another in search of healing like changing from one dress to another, or from one *n'anga* to another, from one medical specialist to another. The Shona's essential cultural element of hierarchical mediation has the positive side concerning the diffusion of tension. This helps in mental health. In Chavhunduka's postulate of *extended patients*, the Shona also stress collective conscience and corporate identity as regards anti-social acts and the responsibility that goes with that.

In attributing to Christ the title of *Healer* or *Christus Victor* in dialogue with the African (Shona) quest for holistic healing in the face of chronic illnesses like cancer and HIV/AIDS today, according to Osei-Bonsu (1990:355-356), two important things must be emphasized. These are that God in Christ heals in unrestricted or unexpected ways and that illness or suffering is part of the human condition. In the Paschal Mystery analogy, Mother Teresa of Calcutta (in the 43rd Eucharistic Congress, 1985, Nairobi Kenya which I attended) concurs with this view when she says that suffering is not punishment, but is a sharing in the Cross of Christ. In other words, suffering is part of standing at the foot of the Cross – a *being there with Christ*.

It is noteworthy that the Shona Christian's designates of Christ with soteriological import are **Muponesi** (*Deliverer-Saviour-Redeemer-Liberator*) and **Mununuri** (*the go-between or mediator especially in disputes or fights*). The latter attribute has Christological overtones in that more often than not, the go-between has to bear the brand of the crossfire. Thus Christ the mediator bore the burden of our sins. The former attribute is seen to capture all that Christ is across all areas of experience. In a Christology that reflects the experiences of women, the title *Muponesi* is borrowed from the maternal experience of giving birth. The etymology of *muponesi* is from the verb **kupona** (*to give birth*) and denotes to survive a near to death situation. As a noun, *muponesi* denotes the *deliverer* (traditionally an elderly woman) or *midwife* in the modern sense. Paul (Rm 8:18-25) captures the analogy of birthing as synonymous with the Incarnation when he says that the whole of creation labours in a process of giving birth. In this labouring of creation it is true to say that every created reality reflects, reveals and celebrates God.

Concerning the title *Liberator*, or *Saviour*, the Shona conception differs from the Christian understanding, which places salvation as first and foremost liberation from sin. In a holistic and existential spirituality, for the Shona, it is not salvation from sin, but liberation from anything that oppresses them, such as disease, pestilence, war and the Shona's chronic fear of witchcraft, *ngozi* (*vengeful spirits in cases of murder*) and *kutanda botso* (*parental spirits seeking vengeance or appeasement*) that matter (Chimhanda 2000:25).

In a creative dialogue of culture and the Gospel and the church, it can be said that the church has a lot to learn from Shona culture. In this context, I pose a host of questions that point to a superficially inculturated church. It can be asked: *Since Mwari God of the Shona is understood as 'neither male nor female', from whence then come the Shona Christian's understanding of a male God? Traditionally men and women as ancestors (mhondoro and vadzimu) enjoy a high status on the ancestral mediation ladder to Mwari, from whence then come the exclusion of*

Christian women from participation in the centres of church life? Shona men and women co-exist as spiritual leaders (mhondoro masvikiro and n'angas), why is it that women are denied the priesthood? Shona language is gender-neutral, how come that the Shona Christian uses exclusive God-language? We have seen that there is no theological justification for the exclusion of women from ordained ministry. An authentically inculturated and liberating Christology has to include the experiences of women as well as men.

2.4.3.6 COSMOTHEANTHROPOCENTRIC CHRISTOLOGY

The point of departure is the Incarnation as the embodiment of God in creation. We have seen above that Efoé Julien Pénoukou (Schreier 1991,1997:41) says that the Incarnation in this context is *the supreme expression of the cosmotheandric relation*. Pénoukou here operates on an androcentric paradigm. He admits to sexism in that a *cosmotheandric Christology* is a trajectory of the male God/Christ. On a both/and post-feminist paradigm, I propose a *Cosmotheanthropocentric Christology* as a sub-division of the *theanthropocosmic Christology*.

The Shona concept that God resides or is manifested even in the smallest of creatures borders on *pantheism* (the idea that everything is god) or even *animism*. In the Shona holistic worldview, everything has sacramental value. There are overtones of the monastic sacramental economy (stewardship). Thus the forests **anoyera** (*are sacred*), especially the places where people gather things like mushrooms, wild fruit, honey, game, that is, things which are thought to be made available to all people (Shirley A. Thorpe 1991:55). People have to observe the rule of the forest, e.g. ritual clapping when collecting such benefits as medicinal herbs, mushrooms, wild fruit, honey, etc. Things common to all people must be revered and used sparingly. For example, *muti* must be collected in such a way as to allow continued propagation of the plants. Violation of such laws of the forest can result in punishment from Mwari through the ancestors. God punishes such misconduct as wastefulness, through mysterious disappearances, pestilence, drought, etc. People now and again report cases of people getting lost, or, mysterious disappearances of people in forests like Muteo (a forest in my home area - Karanga region), or the Nyangani mountain - Manyika region). People are also to remove their shoes on entering what is demarcated as holy ground. The soil is perceived as the uterus – home for the dead and the ancestors are referred to as those *below*, where the soul as *God's breath (femo raMwari)* is understood to reside *above (kumusoro)* (Herbert Aschwanden 1989:125-127). We have seen above that the soil is also referred to in anthropomorphic ways as the *ancestors* themselves.

Theological motifs in the Shona cosmology include, encountering the Holy or Creator in the creatures (consciousness of God's presence even in the least or smallest of creatures), the goodness of creation (cf. Gen 1), appreciating the Creator in the gift, stewardship (Gen 1) as

responsible and accountable use of things especially those with group or communal value (a move leading to conservation of the environment). Shona's divine attributes of Dzivaguru (*greatest pool*), Muvambapasi (*Creator of the earth*) and Nyadenga (*Lord of the Skies* or *One who resides in the skies*), totemism and symbols of life, such as, water, blood, soil and womb are highlighted here. The Shona anticipate rain in the mukwerera ritual (*ritual for rain*).

2.5 CONCLUSION

It has been shown that the quintessence of the Incarnation is God's coming into the world in the person and work of the historical Jesus of Nazareth. In the particularity of the Incarnation, God in Christ encounters people in their contemporary socio-cultural situation and gives redemptive value to life in general and to human existence in particular. In this sense, the terms inculturation and the Incarnation were used interchangeably. The historical development of revelation and the historical conditioning of cultural expressions underlie the various nuances and emphases of the Incarnation. Two main approaches (the traditional sacramental and the modern symbolic) to the understanding of the doctrine of the Incarnation were explored. The traditional sacramental view of the Incarnation operates within the *Logos theocentric* (*from above* or *descending*) Christology conceptual framework. The advantage of this is that Christ's deity and humanity are affirmed. But we found that the *vere Deus, vere homo anhypostasis/enhypostasis* framework of the hypostatic union is problematic mainly because Christ's humanity has no independent autonomy. The orthodox substantial Christology is also problematic in giving *static* quality to Christology in separating the person from the work of Christ. In a gender-conscious Christology, the sacramental view's main impasse is the male icon of Christ and the male face of the church, prohibition of the ordination of women and the consequent exclusion of women from the centre of church life and from quintessential doctrines. This was seen to be contrary to the original and true sense of *sacramentality* (in which it is true to say that every created reality is graced – reflects, reminds and reveals the Creator) and to the creation and baptismal status of the *imago Dei/Christi*.

The modern symbolic view is appropriate for a Christology in search for the contemporary Christ – a quest for the Christ who is the answer to the questions people ask today. It is an *ascending* Christology that at one and the same time reflects the modern impulse to put spirit and flesh to the reality in the world and is in continuity with the Jesus of Nazareth believed and worshipped by Christians through the ages as the incarnate Word of God. In other words, both the spiritual and the physical ways of being are important. God in Christ is portrayed as a dynamic presence acknowledged in various cultural symbols as Creative Love, Healing Presence, a Person for others, the *Alpha* and the *Omegā*, the Suffering Christ, the Steward or Servant Christ, the Ancestor, the Cosmic or Universal Christ and the First Rains. Nevertheless

the biggest danger of this approach is a *reductionism* that compromises the unique and universal revelation of God in Christ. Related problems here are *cultural imperialism* (*Afrocentrism* or *ethnocentrism*), *syncretism* and *sexism*. Emphasis was put on the understanding that Christ is above and beyond the ancestors, especially as Creator, Ancestor, Liberator or Healer, *par excellence*. In other words, all these designates of Christ as human analogies are the flipside of the true humanity and deity of Christ. Concerning cultural imperialism, caution was made not to produce Christologies that advocate *reversed* racism or sexism – the reverse sides of Eurocentrism and male chauvinism.

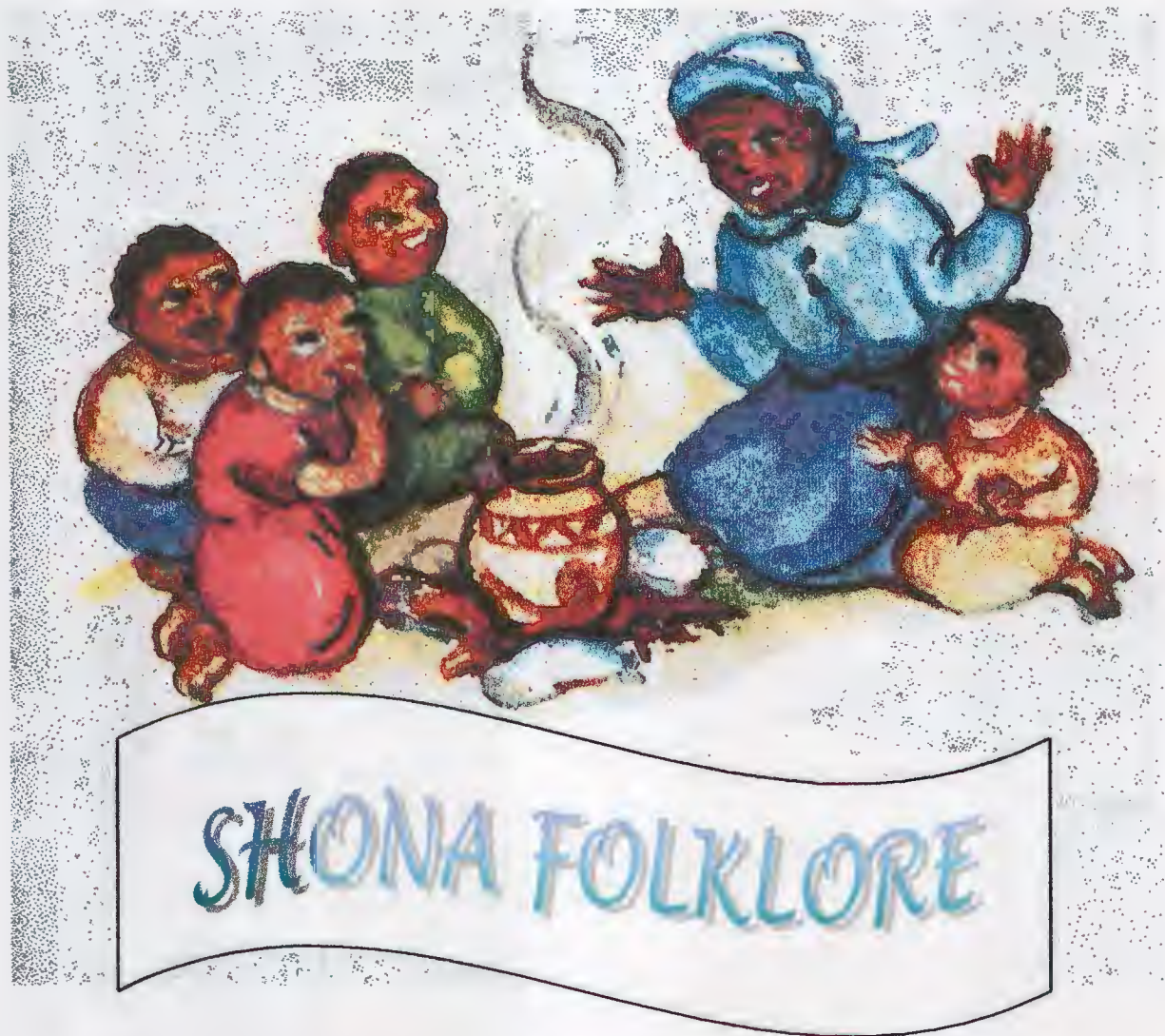
Conscious of the dual nature of the *sociology of knowledge* underlying each perspective, and operating on the interfaces of *gender*, *class*, *creed* and *ethnicity*, attempts were made to cross the sacred domains. Here, *internal* and *external* critiques of each perspective proved invaluable for an authentic and inclusive Christology. Internal criticism was possible in that in each type of theology, we have both *ideological* (exclusive) and *conjunctive* (inclusive) thinkers. External criticism proved valuable in pointing out the *blind spot* and/or *cognitive dissonance* between the 'is' and the 'ought' of each theological perspective. A *theanthropocosmic* Christology emerged in which emphases of the theocentric, anthropocentric, functional and cosmocentric views on the Incarnation were, in turn, seen as emphases of a complex whole.

The God-human-cosmos co-ordinates came into creative tension in the Shona holistic cosmology (in which every created reality is seen as holy and sacramental of the divine). Humanity's role of stewardship over creation cannot be over-emphasized here. In a gender-inclusive Christology, God in Christ is understood as *neither male nor female*. In the concept of *aggiornamento*, Shona culture was set in creative tension with the Gospel. It was seen that some cultural rituals are good news and others are not good news for women. In a Paschal mystery analogy, it was shown that some cultural elements have to undergo death in order to rise into new splendour. In this context, it cannot be over-emphasized that both culture and the Gospel have seeds for the liberation of women as well as men.

We have seen that there is mutual influencing of *general* and *special* revelation. In the context of the *Hidden Christ*, it is true to say that Christ was not a stranger among the Shona in pre-Christian times. The *conversatio morum* (how Shona women appropriate their cultural values as informed by faith in the Incarnate Jesus of Nazareth) involving the conscious becoming of Shona women – the appropriation of full humanity in Christ is the subject of *Narrative Christology* pursued in Chapters Three and Four.

Figure 3

THE STORYTELLER-MBUYA-LADY WISDOM



The traditional storyteller is the grandmother. As such, she is portrayed in a circle with 'grandchildren'. The basis of this circle is the round hut – a kitchen with a central fire. It is an open circle compatible with the plasticity of the terms 'grandchild' and 'grandmother'. While the former includes any child from the family, clan and village or even neighbouring villages, the latter denotes any old woman.

*Storyteller picture is adapted from a first day cover stamp, Zimbabwe, 24 July 2001.

Figure 4

STORYTELLING



*The traditional storyteller is Mbuya-Lady Wisdom instils morals and cultural values.
She creates a universe nostalgic of paradise,
In recreation with family, she draws in fun and laughter.
She elicits participation in rhythmic clap and word response.*

*Mbuya, Lady Wisdom creates a universe where creatures,
All converse in a common language,
But natural endowments do not go unnoticed.
In anthropomorphic terms she creates a paradox of meaning.*

*Astuteness, shrewdness are part of foresight,
When Squirrel stores nuts in its own habitat, it is intuitive foresight.
Humans are warned not to be selfish and greedy,
Not to be as cumulative as the squirrel.*

*Hare may exploit Baboon walking on fours,
By demanding clean hands for joining in a festal meal.
A day comes when the Baboon serves a festal meal on a treetop,
And the Hare goes home hungry, angry and coat smothered with dregs.*

*Baboon can with long hands delve for food in long-necked gourds.
Humans are cautioned not to have 'a long hand' – not to steal,
Baboon thrives on other people's toil,
A thief is also one who thrives on other people's toil.*

*And do you know why Rock-rabbit has no tail?
When Mwari distributed tails, Rock rabbit sent for a tail.
Do not be lazy, and ask others to do what you can do for yourself.
Or else you may live to pay a great price.*

CHAPTER THREE

NARRATIVE CHRISTOLOGY

In a contemporary Christology, the narratives of Shona women are used as a source and *narrative* is explored as a method of doing theology. In adopting this approach, I see narrative and propositional or discursive methods of doing theology to be mutually inclusive. Consequently, it is outside the scope of this work to indulge in the narrative versus propositional theology debate. What follows is an exploration of narrative theology – what it is, its historical origins – particularly the significance of the narrative approach for an incarnational theology, and the narrative form or quality of human experience. According to Herman Mertens (1988:27, cf. J.B. Metz & Herald Weinrich), narrative theology is a story *per se* and as such, Christology is an all-embracing *meta-story*. In other words, for the Christian, the biography of God in Christ is foundational in providing a norm to live by. Christ's story is the fundamental story by which all other stories including that of the believer are to be understood. In this context, the American theologian, Michael Cook is right in seeing *Christology as Narrative Quest* (1996). McGrath (1991:22-24), in his Article, *The Biography of God*, underscores this view when he depicts the Bible as the story of God's coming into the world and acting in human history. Important to the doctrine of the Incarnation, and in the Christ-events (birth, death and resurrection), the biography enacts the history of salvation for humankind accorded by God in Christ. A strong justification for narrative theology is that the Bible and the Gospels in particular have predominantly narrative genre.

In this work, the terms *story* and *narrative* are used interchangeably. This mutual interconnectedness of the terms is depicted in the term *history* or, in our case, *her-story*. According to the American theologian, Edward T. Oakes (1992:44-45), the term *history* poses an intriguing ambiguity, denoting both what really happens and the narrating of those events. He adds that *history* denotes a certain mutual belonging between the act of narrating or writing history and the fact of being in history. Oakes stresses that the etymological bond between story and history shows that the life to which narrative belongs is our historical condition itself. As such, it is as the American theologian, Gerard Loughlin (1996:18) asserts, that there is a reciprocal relation between *story* and *storyteller* in view of the fact that a person's story (the *I* of the story) is a product of many inter-related narratives. Loughlin aptly notes that when the believer is baptized, he or she enters the Scriptural and ecclesial Christological drama.

It is a legitimate claim that human experience is an incipient story since it is structured and marked by temporality. It was the American theologian, Stephen Crites (1971:191-311) who, in

noting on the *narrative quality of experience*, aptly described human experience as an *incipient story*. Crites highlights the inherent narrative form of human experience by alluding to its *temporal* or *tensed unity* of *past*, *present* and *future* (Mertens (1988:30; John Navone 1986:222). In claiming the Shona women's heritage (Responses to **Questionnaire II, Appendix II**), tradition (collective memory or data bank) will be explored as embodying narratives that were at one time (or are still to a greater or lesser extent) compelling and formative to the life and identity of Shona people (women). Story in this context refers not only to the narration of concrete daily experiences in the light of the Gospel, but also to any aspect of oral media, such as myths, proverbs, symbols of life, songs, and rituals. Stories seen in this way are an important source of discovering Shona women's conceptual and linguistic tools and values concerning their relationship to God, humankind and the world.

Shona women's biography (a collective life-story) is considered here as an authentic source of theology. It is contextual (situational) theology resulting in a personal view of revelation and a contextual Christology. This is compatible with the understanding of the historical progression of revelation. Informed by faith in the Christ of the Gospels, the women pattern their lives on Christ. There is a search for the authentic humanity or for full humanity in Christ Jesus – a quest for a Christology that is life affirming. It is a Christology *from*, *by* and *with* Shona and in this way, it is a vibrant Christology with a sense of urgency and relevance. The Jesus story thus constitutes the frame of reference by which the stories of women are illuminated and acquire the necessary cohesion. In other words, the person and work of Christ is the norm for what it means to be fully human. When theology is understood as a reflection, interpretation and a response in faith, the Jesus story can be seen to invite us to a new way of thinking and living (liberating or transformative praxis) or a revaluation of values. When we look at Shona women's religious beliefs and practices embedded in their faith stories, it can be said that the stories touch on the nerve of the doctrine of the Incarnation. As such, it is hoped that the theology that emerges stirs up our imagination and evokes new readings and new paradigms of the Incarnation.

Our quest for an Incarnational Christology, in turn, lays emphasis on the contemporaneity of Christ – the way Christ as the *Emmanuel* is imagined and experienced by Shona women in present day Zimbabwe. In the mutual link between narrative and history (tradition), it is important to ask whether the women's perspective is a legitimate stance. According to Cook (1996:7), in this context we can ask whether the women's images of Christ are in continuity with the human historical Jesus of Nazareth who proclaimed the *reign of God (basileia tou theou)* in his life, death and resurrection. In other words, it is legitimate to ask whether the

women's contemporary ways of speaking about Jesus remain in continuity with the ways Christians have imagined him and brought to expression throughout the centuries.

3.1 OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORICAL ORIGINS OF NARRATIVE THEOLOGY

According to McGrath (1991:22 – see also George Stroup 1991:424-432; Wentzel van Huyssteen 1989:767-769), as a method of doing theology, narrative theology has foundation in Erich Auerbach, the Swiss theologian Karl Barth (1886-1968), and the North American theologian H. Richard Niebuhr. In his book *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (1946), Auerbach in the backdrop of classic literature portrays Scripture as the story of God. McGrath explains that Auerbach exposed the distinctive quality of biblical narrative (by arguing that these had a far greater depth of history, time, and consciousness) and thus set the scene for its theological exploration. McGrath aptly notes that Karl Barth specifically gave theological roots to narrative theology. Thus in *Church Dogmatics*, Barth portrays scripture as the story of God's encounter with humanity (1975: 1.1) and in the doctrine of special revelation (1875:1.11), Barth presents God as self-positing or self-communicating in Christ. In Barth's theory of *Heilsgeschichte* (*Salvation History*), we have God's self-agency in the incarnate Jesus of Nazareth. Thus God makes the initiative in encountering sinful humanity in world history – enters and acts in human history in an unprecedented way and leads humanity to a definitive end. Wentzel van Huyssteen (1989:767-769) and others (McGrath 1991:22; Gary Comstock 1987:687) point out that Niebuhr is the father of narrative theology. They say that Niebuhr gave a major impetus to narrative theology in his book *The Meaning of Revelation* (1941) by showing that narratives had an important place in expressing the revelation of God in history. According to Garry L. Comstock, in his book *The Story of Our Lives* (1941), Niebuhr demonstrated the religious claims embedded in stories.

Since its proper inception about thirty years ago, narrative theology has protagonists in theologians who can be divided into two camps of *pure* and *impure* narrativists. According to Comstock (1987:688), pure narrativists include the biblical scholar Hans Frei (1922-1988), the systematic theologian George Lindbeck, and the moral theologian Stanley Hauerwas. Comstock (1989:768) explains that these can be described as anti-foundational, cultural-linguistic, Wittgensteinian-inspired descriptivists. The impure narrativists include the biblical scholar David Tracy, the biblical scholar and feminist theologian Sallie McFague, and the linguistic philosopher Paul Ricoeur. Comstock adds that these find their inspiration in the circle of revisionist, hermeneutical, Gadamerian-inspired correlationists. According to Mertens (1988:38), Wittgenstein maintained that *what cannot be said notionally and rationally must be said in stories*. For pure narrativists this implies that transcendent truths such as underlying the

Incarnation (in our case) can only be unravelled in stories. For Frei, narrative is indispensable for understanding God's self-agency in history. Following on Barth, Frei (1993:3-75) proposes a narrative theology that is diametrically opposed to the prevailing current of modern theology. Loughlin (1996:33-35, cf. Frei 1993:7-8) aptly shows that like Barth (1975:I,I. 132-307ff.), Frei is opposed to a theology that seeks to fit God into the story of the world rather than the world into the story of God. Loughlin explains that Frei's narrative theology proposal does not look to the world and its possibilities, but to the actuality of God's story as it is told in the Bible. It does not seek to show the possibility of revelation, but its actuality. It does not seek to demonstrate that God can and may speak, but that God has spoken. Loughlin adds that Frei himself describes Barth as a narrative theologian insofar as Barth came to see that who Jesus was and what he did and underwent were united in his person as a self-enacted agency or performance project. Frei attempts to reconstruct Christology (the identity of Jesus Christ) and the doctrine of God not in terms of classical categories of *nature*, *substance* and *person*, but in terms of *intention-action*. In other words, Frei constructs a *functional* rather than substantial *Christology*. Thus for Frei (1993:46), Jesus becomes *who he is* in the story by consenting to God's intention and by enacting that intention particularly in the *crucifixion-resurrection* sequence.

Concerning the *narrative understanding* of the Christ story, Hans-Georg Gadamer (1975,1989:265-307) postulated the historicity of understanding, and in particular, the *fusion of horizons* (i.e. that of the world of the interpreter and the world of the text) of the hermeneutic universe on arriving at meaning (302-307). The literary critic Paul Ricoeur claims that there is alongside the intra-textual meaning an extra-textual reference. Ricoeur thus suggested that all narratives have a referential claim. In exposing the epistemological bond between story and history, Ricoeur showed that there is inner fusion between reference, meaning, imagination and time (Oakes 1992:43-45; Mertens 1988:36). Thus Ricoeur echoes Gadamer's postulate of the fusion of horizons in the hermeneutic universe.

According to Navone (1996:214-215), Hauerwas who understands stories as the hermeneutic key to Christian ethics, focuses on the story of Jesus as the guiding story for believers or the Christian community. From this standpoint, Hauerwas explores the experiential roots of narrative and the relations of the human life story to lived convictions. Thus Hauerwas argues that narrative is a perennial category for understanding better the language of religious convictions and how the self is formed by those convictions. Navone adds that Hauerwas understands that stories bind events and agents together in an intelligible pattern and in so doing offer a description and explanation of why things are the way they are.

Sallie McFague addresses the moral dynamics of story by selecting *parable* as the basic revelatory medium for learning what it means to act as a disciple of Christ. She explains that the parables of Jesus jar us out of the familiar world into one with new and compelling possibilities. McFague goes on to postulate that the story of Jesus is an *extended parable* because it concretely embodies the tremendous or overwhelming love of God, placing our familiar compromises and mundane expectations in a new context, empowering us to move from compromise to commitment. Important to our task for an Incarnational Christology, McFague claims that parable is the literary expression most appropriate for a religion founded on the Incarnation - the embodiment of the infinite graciousness in a concrete life. She adds that the Gospel and parables are not history but are dramatic re-enactments of the Christ-event (Navone 1986:216). McFague goes to the extent of calling Jesus the Parable of God.

According to Edward Oakes (1992:37), narrativist theologians share at least one thing in common – they claim for narrative a privileged locus for doing theology. Huyssteen (1989:769) points out three common features of narrative theologians. These are *description*, *explanation* and *justification*. He says that narrative theologians describe, explain and justify the Christian story in different ways. Concerning the narrative method of doing theology, other important contributions are found in the hagiography of James McClendon (Erickson 1991:364-366,377; Navone 1986:226-227) and narrative is implicit in Walter Kasper's work (*Jesus the Christ* - 1976) and contextual and feminist Christologies. In his book *Biography as Theology: How life Stories Can Remake Today's Theology* (1974), McClendon notes that the lives of saints provide compelling dramatic images or symbols that shape the morals and convictions of a Christian community. I agree with McClendon in saying that in hagiography, there is the embodiment of aspects of the Incarnation, for example, St Francis of Assisi's ideal of being an Instrument of peace and Mother Teresa for Calcutta's preferential option for the poor and the dying. Kasper (1976:27-35; see also Erickson 1991:370-372) highlights the tensed nature of the Christian story in asserting that the identity of Jesus encompasses not only aspects of the historical Jesus (who Jesus was), but also the story of Jesus of faith (who he is). He adds that the starting point of Christology is the phenomenology of faith in Christ as he is actually believed, lived, proclaimed and practised in the Christian churches. Important for an Incarnational Christology, Kasper (1976:35-36) also introduced the concept of the *Christology of reciprocity* to show the mutual interplay between the historical Jesus of Nazareth and the crucified and risen Christ, between who Christ was and is and what Christ did and does (the Christ-event).

In African contextual theology we have, for example, Charles Nyamiti's view of *Christ as Our Ancestor* (1984). Feminists' contribution to narrative theology is found in the Kenyan Reformed theologian, Nyambura Nyoroge's *Woman, Why Are You Weeping?* (1997), R.A.

Musimbi Kanyoro and Wendy S. Robins' *The Power We Celebrate: Women's Stories of Faith and Power* (1992), the Ghanaian Methodist theologian, Mercy Amba Oduyoye and the Kenyan Lutheran theologian, Musimbi R. A. Kanyoro's *The Will To Rise: Women, Tradition and the Church*, and the Ursuline sister of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mbuy Beya's *Woman, Who Are You?* (1998). Kasper's teaching of a Christology of reciprocity is developed. Implicit here is that in the women's encounter with the Jesus of faith, the Christ who is the answer to the questions they ask, they come to know themselves – they are assured of full life and dignity. Indeed, it is when the experiences of women are illumined by the Christ of faith that they can feel affirmed, energized, and can have the *power or will to rise from the shackles of patriarchy*. From the approaches of the afore-mentioned narrativists, we see that narrative theology is an interdisciplinary approach – it enters into fruitful conversation with biblical hermeneutics, language and literature, philosophy, anthropology, sociology, phenomenology, history, and eschatology.

3.2 NARRATIVE–HISTORICAL APPROACH AND FAITH STORIES OF SHONA WOMEN

According to Navone (1986:213-214), the narrative historical method seeks to recapture an entire flow of experience in its retelling or artistic representation. Its fundamental language is that of stories and myths, which in turn, yield models of reality. As such, they present an overall interpretation of the reality as either good or bad with reference to ultimate reality and meaning. Protagonists for the narrative-historical approach in rooting the gospel in African culture include Joseph Healey and Donald Sybertz of Kenya (*Towards An African narrative Theology* – 1996) and Alex Chima of Malawi (*Story and African Theology* – 1984). Healey (1996:13-14), in appealing to the Ugandan proverb: *One who sees something good must narrate it*, maintains that in a predominantly oral-aural culture, stories, proverbs, sayings, riddles, myths, plays, songs, cultural symbols and real life experiences are guides to the journey of inculturation. He points to the heuristic and epistemological role of narratives by saying that as well as being a way of constructing a local participatory theology, the narrative approach is also a concrete way of communicating or sharing the wisdom (insights and praxis) of the African church with the world church or society. He says when we integrate the African story with the Christian faith, we listen to both the joyful and painful stories of Africa's long history of working, celebrating, suffering and persevering together. In this context, the Tanzanian Evangelical Lutheran theologian, Andrea Ng'weshemi (1999:164) aptly notes that a people's experience brings its own dynamism as it relies upon images, conventions and symbolism of language as means of communication and interpretation.

Shona women's stories as having pictorial power are seen to unravel or re-enact the Incarnation

metaphor and the latter is celebrated in prayer, song, poems, proverbs and ritual. The importance of the use of stories in theology is highlighted in that Shona people like other African people have predominantly an oral-aural culture (tradition) despite a few centuries of Westernization. Concerning the tensed nature of human experience, the story is thus a means of appropriating or capturing the rich social and spiritual heritage of Shona women. In this oral-aural culture, I explore myths, Shona system of naming, songs and proverbs (that either value or devalue women and those which reinforce important cultural elements of *togetherness*, *hospitality*, and *friendship*) as latent sources of Shona women's Christology through the help of a questionnaire (Appendix II). In other words, the story is seen as a chief means of inculcating communal identity and social and moral values.

3.2.1 MYTH, PROVERBS, SYMBOLS OF LIFE, RITUALS AS SOURCES OF SHONA WOMEN'S IDENTITY

The Ghanaian W. Emmanuel Abraham (1992:41-48) succinctly shows the biographical genre of myths in their role of existential response. Alex Chima (1984:54-56) concurs with this view by distinguishing three major functions of myths. Firstly, myths have *explanatory function* in trying to answer ultimate questions about the meaning of life and death, about the human condition of alienation from God and about the source of life. In this way, they are authentic sources of religious truths. Secondly, myths have *integrating, justifying or validating and teaching* functions. Finally, myths point towards the transcendence of human limitations as windows that open to the beyond and thus enable human beings to make sense of and share their deep inner experiences. In our task of exploring myth as a source for women's identity, Mbiti (1991:59) distinguishes myths from modern historiography in pointing out that:

In the area of mythology we are confronted with the picture of women in the early state of human existence. This is not history. The myth is broader than history in explaining some aspects of society. It is a language depicting truths of realities for which history does not provide a full explanation.

In my Master of Theology Dissertation, I concur with Mbiti in exploring the roots for the liberation of women in both culture and the Gospel. We have seen that the theocentric Christology underlying the Mwari myth given above uses androgynous images. Similarly, we saw that both men and women participate actively in cultic ritual and in particular, that women provide the oracular voice of Mwari.

The Shona have no coherent *Mwari* myth. The etymology of *Mwari*, the Supreme being, Creator God, is from *muhari*, *in the pot*, or, *Maari*, *in Him / Her*, or, *Muari*, as indicating the enigmatic character of *Mwari*, and, in parallel with the God of Israel *Yahweh - I am who I am* (cf. Ex. 3:14). *Mwari* as *muhari (in the pot)* is explained in connection with the pro-life sexual act - also as synonymous to cooking (cf. Aschwanden 1982:92). The *hari*, *cooking pot* here is

symbolic of the woman's uterus (cf. Mbiti 1991:61-62). According to Daneel (1970:15-16), the Shona *Mwari* cult shows affinity with the *Mwali* religion of Tanzania as seen in the lake region in the vicinity of Kilimanjaro. In terms of *Bantu migration movement*, it is claimed that the *Mbire* tribe (totem - *Shoko, monkey*) brought the *Mwari cult* to Zimbabwe. This underscores the correspondence between *Mwari* and *Mwali*. *Mwali* as the God of agriculture in this context, *Mwari* is first and foremost responsible for *fertility*, both for humans and crops.

I also agree with Mbiti (1991:59) in asserting that proverbs express the wisdom acquired through reflection, experience, observation and general knowledge. Chima (1984:57-58) explains the major functions of proverbs in an African context. Firstly, proverbs play a very significant role in African judiciary systems. He says a proverb can be used with great effectiveness as a means of achieving a paradox of plain speaking through indirect speech besides providing erudition and elegance in speech. Secondly, proverbs are seen to be an especially suitable form of communication in situations and relationships of conflict, potential or latent, given the essential African elements of safeguarding *harmony* and *community building*. Finally, as a means of maintaining communal solidarity, proverbs are used to admonish, or to warn, to reprove or to guide, to praise or to encourage. Bourdillon (1993:7-10) concurs with this view concerning the use of proverbs in the Shona context.

Concerning the use of proverbs in admonition, a case in point is that of my nephew when he was a university student. At the end of the academic year he found himself in the crisis of making a girl pregnant whom he did not want to marry and having failed some important course of the undergraduate studies. As his *vatete* (*father's sister*) and confidante, I tried to diffuse the tension in admonishing him by appealing to this proverb: *vakuru vakati munhu haatandi tsuro mbiri* (*It was said by them of old, a person cannot chase two rabbits at one time*). There is an echo of the English proverb: *you cannot kill two birds with one stone*. In direct confrontation, I could have said, *you were playful in chasing after girls. In this way you gave divided attention to your studies. If you had your priorities right you should have finished your studies before thinking of marrying.*

Another example is of a mother trying to win a case (in a village court) of the rape of her daughter in which the rapist tried to negotiate marriage of the victim. The mother of the girl showed she was uncompromising on the issue by alluding to ancient wisdom saying that the jury was failing to see the point that: *Mombe dzikadya mumunda wako haudzipi munda wose* (*If you find cattle cropping your field, you do not in anger leave them to devastate the whole field*). In plain speaking she could have said that *it is irresponsible of me to let my child marry a criminal. On the contrary, it is only proper to claim damages in settlement of the case.*

Shona women were able to trace memories of the valuation of women in proverbs in response to a questionnaire (**Appendix II**). Similarly, the women explored the proverbs that devalue women as a result of the historical development of patriarchy. Respondents (**Questionnaire II, Q3a**) give the following proverbs that show Shona people's traditional valuation of women: *'A child cannot claim roora for the mother even when he or she is in dire need or poverty'. The proverb emphasizes the worth of woman, particularly a mother - that she cannot be exchanged for anything whatever happens. 'Pregnancy is like a mature woman it does not reveal what it has eaten'. On the positive note, this means that women are able to keep secrets (to treasure things in their heart. Women are considered trustworthy and people in whom one can readily confide. The negative connotation is that women suffer under the culture of silence - for example, when assaulted by husbands they keep quiet to protect their marriage. 'Behind every successful home is a woman'. Women are the driving force of everything in the home. The strength and success of a family depends on the mother. The proverb expresses the inherent ability of women in caring. Women are always present and available for the children especially in times of joy and trouble. In practice women take a leading role in the home. 'It is better to marry an old woman than to remain a bachelor.' 'A woman is a good panacea'. She gives good ideas.*⁵⁹

'Maternal ancestors have broken the back-sling'. This is said in situations of child-death and emphasizes the protective role of maternal ancestors. The proverb urges respect for every woman. 'If a baby burns on the belly, the mother burns on the back'. Most of the time when a child is in difficulties, the mother sympathizes and empathizes - she has to look for a solution even if it means that she is caught in between. 'You only know the grandmother when you are told'. This emphasizes the teaching role of women, particularly grandmothers. 'It is the mother who has the bigger breast'. A mother knows the needs of the child even before it can ask. 'An orphan only eats to satiety on the day of the mother's death and funeral'.

'Women are born to be faithful'. Women are very proud of this proverb and they strive to work toward that ideal. In my Ndaou culture, women are well known for their perseverance. For example, when the husband brings another wife or when he dies, they do not see this as the end of the world. They remain attached to the marital group and look after their children as good daughters-in-law. Another practical example is that men bring AIDS to their wives but women look after their husbands when they are sick. Most women are widowed.

⁵⁹ For easy reading I will only give the English literal translation and the respective respondents' comments. But elsewhere, I will give the Shona original.

'Where the woman steps, it thunders'. Women have dignity and they are to be respected. The way they walk and talk shows dignity. Women should be respected because they control the traffic in the family. They carry the burdens of the family. 'Another man's wife is your mother-in-law'. 'Only cattle (material things) can be inherited automatically, women are autonomous beings who can chose to accept or reject levirate marriage'.

'Before the vahosi (first wife in a polygamous situation) dies she will have groomed a successor'. The first wife has considerable authority. Vahosi also denotes the first daughter-in-law who is accordingly highly honoured and respected. For example, the vahosi is consulted when the husband wants to marry another wife. When the husband dies she is entitled to levirate marriage. 'Home is where your mother is'.

Proverbs that devalue women (**Questionnaire II, Q.3b**) are as follows;

'If you court unfaithful women, have at least two of them'. 'New and beautiful gourds do not give tasty beer'. 'A beautifully red and ripe fig usually is full of ants'. 'A beautiful woman, if she is not a witch she steals'. The proverbs show that appearances are misleading, that beautiful women (light in complexion) are always problematic. The belief in my culture is that people should look at the heart of a person rather than external appearance. The Shona recognize that the so-called beautiful women are not beautiful in everything. In other words, more often than not, they lack inner beauty – they may be witches or prostitutes. Some men prefer to marry plain women because they know that more often than not these have tender hearts

'A witch should only practise outside the family or clan circles so that when accused of witchcraft the family will defend her'. 'It is likely that a person shows preference for a n'anga (diviner practitioner) who is likely to point out one's own mother as a witch'. It is women and not men who are implicated in witchcraft. 'Do not tell women what you have heard because they are like noise gourds'. Women are implicated in gossip but as I see it, there are also men who cannot keep secrets.

'A woman has no child'. The proverb emphasizes that although children are born of women, they belong to the father. Paradoxically women are usually accused of being ngomwa (barren). This gives the impression that women are primarily there to bear children and make sacrifices to make ends meet. 'If you give birth to a girl child you have given birth to a son (in-law)'. Sons are more valued than daughters to the extent that a girl child is only valued as an anticipation for the son-in-law. In other words, the girl child is a shadow of the male. A kid that eats Mufenje (a type of tree) leaves is like the mother ewe. In most cases when a child is

dull or makes mistakes he/she is said to be like the mother but when the child is intelligent and well behaved, he/she is said to be like the father. 'Only the mother can roast (green mealies) well, a child extinguishes the fire'. Most women love to criticise others but do not realize that they make the same mistakes.

Concerning Shona symbols of life, in my previous work (Chimhanda 2000:70-6) I explored the symbols *womb* and *blood* as affirming the indispensable role of women as life giving. I argued that there is a real sense in which the Shona were originally *matriarchal*. Practical examples are that when the Shona is hurt or surprised, he or she yells, **mai-we-e!** This is a spontaneous call for the mother's help or to share in the joy. Although the Shona have *patrilineal* descent, they talk of their siblings as *mwana wamai vangu* (*my mother's child*) *womodumbu rimwe* (*from the same womb*), *buda ndibudewo* (literally: *come out so that I may follow*). The womb qualities of God are emphasized in that women feel not only with the heart, but also with the womb (Hebrew: *rechem*: Shona: *chibereko*).

The importance of song in story theology is highlighted in that Africans are a singing people. Shona women sing at work. Traditionally, there are actions like pounding, grinding, and winnowing that are accompanied with song as women work in unison (see Fig. 6-9 below). The importance of song is accentuated in the understanding of the Church in Africa as a dancing church. Chima (1984:58-59, cf. Idowu) rightly explains that songs constitute a rich heritage of all Africa and that in their singing and poetry, Africans express from the heart their joys, sorrows, hopes, and fears find outlets. He adds that when songs are connected with rituals, they convey the faith of the worshippers from the heart.

3.2.2 SHONA WOMEN AND THE POWER OF NAMING

In general, the first born of the eldest male sibling gets the name of the paternal grandfather or grandmother. A paternal uncle or aunt may also give a child his/her name. Respondents (**Questionnaire II, Q1a**) show that Shona women have considerable power in naming their children. If they do not give the first name, they usually succeed in giving a second name and the latter normally reflects their experiences either of giving birth or usually of strained relationships with the husband in-laws or neighbours. In the confluence of cultures some respondents claim they got names that reflect a parent's (usually father) fascination with the language of the colonial master or the name of a foreign friend or colleague at work. Responses pertaining to the first example of naming are as follows: *"My grandmother gave me her name Aleta. As I am the only girl in the family, my grandmother showed love and joy in welcoming the new member to the family."* *"My father first named me Ndakapara (I have made a mistake) because he was admitting that he had violated the tradition that at least one child should me*

named after the paternal grandmother. Prior to my birth, my grandmother had shown offence at the fact that no one in the family had got her name. As a sign of reconciliation with his mother, my father then gave me (a second name) my grandmother's name Ndakaitei (What have I done?)." "My father gave me his mother's name **Kudzai** (Praise [God])." "My grandmother gave me her own name **Tarisai** (Admire)." "My father gave me his mother's name **Tsitsi** (Mercy). He was very happy to have a girl-child since he had only one sister."

Concerning conferring the paternal aunt's name, responses are as follows:

"My paternal aunt gave me her name Martha (Clara, Joyce). This is because she saw or felt that I looked so much like her. Other people tell me that I am like my aunt in facial appearance." "My aunt gave me the name Rebecca because she had always wanted her name to be given to her eldest brother's daughter." "My father gave me the name of his sister Elizabeth because she was very close to him, also as coming after him."

Respondents show that their parents or siblings betray the influence of other cultures in naming as follows:

"My father called me Beauty in appreciation of both my appearances and the gift of a new baby." "My parents called me Edith because my father admired the name of his English manager." "Zelma is the name my father gave me after an Indian friend's wife." "My eldest brother called me Magna because he was fascinated with the Latin he had learnt at school as well as being proud of having a third sister in the family." "The nurse who delivered my mother gave me her own name Ezma."

It can be said that the Shona system of naming or ascription of self-identity admits to what Hans Frei (1993:46-76) calls *intention-action*, *identity-in-difference* and *identity-in-alienation* descriptions. *Intention-action* description of self is best demonstrated in the meaning of Shona names. For example, children born in the year (1980), when Zimbabwe obtained its independence from Britain (colonial powers) and after a bitter war, were called, **Taonanyasha** (*we have 'seen' or experienced the mercy [of God]*), **Simbarashe** (*strength or power of God*) etc. A case in point concerning Shona people experiencing the liberation from war and colonial powers as an incarnational event concerns the naming of my nephew **Tasara** (*muhondo*) (*We have survived the war*). Coincidentally, his Christian name is Emmanuel and he was given that after his father and as the youngest of five boys in the family. But whether the parents knew it or not, the third of his elder brothers was already called **Tinashe** (*Emmanuel – God is with us*). Children born after a series of miscarriages are called **Marufu** (*death*), **Gwatipedza** - denoting *rufu* (*death*) *has annihilated us*, **Munyaradzi** (*Comforter*), **Nyaradzo** (*An event or process of comforting*), etc. Responses showing the *intention-action* motif include:

“My mother named me Miriam because she admired Miriam as a woman who could play the tumbrel as the Bible tells us (see Miriam and the paeon –Ex 15:1-21) and consequently saw her as a role model for me.” “My parents named me Vimbai (Hope) because they had longed for a baby boy and got a girl instead. They still expressed hope and trust in the Lord’s graciousness.” “My parents gave me the name Tafadwa (Joy and happiness have been given to us) because they were happy to have me as their firstborn.” “My grandmother explains that she gave me the name Tapiwa (We have been given) because she wanted to express her gratitude to God for the granddaughter. She said that the name Tapiwa will always remind my parents that God gave them a girl child who brought joy to the whole family after a long time of longing and expecting.” “Tsungirirai (Persevere) is the name my grandmother gave me. She explains that I was born when my parents had lost a baby boy and she was telling the family to persevere and trust that God will one day give them a baby boy.” “Tichafara (We shall be happy) is the name my mother gave me because she was anticipating roora when I marry.”

“My father called me Tavisio (Happiness) because I was born soon after the war. I am also the firstborn and so I brought happiness to my parents.” “My father called me Tendai (Believe in God). My mother had an abscess in the spine and as soon as I was born, my father took care of me while my mother underwent a back operation. The name depicts the close bonding between father and daughter that lasted throughout his life. For example, whenever he was very happy or serious, he would swear by Tendai mwana wangu uneguma (By Tendai my child with a large forehead – both physically and as denoting intelligence).” “My father called me Tevedzerai (One who comes after) for being the only girl and last born in a family of five boys.”

“My mother called me Ruwadzano (Church unity gathering) because she loved very much the gatherings in the Salvation Army Church at which women expressed love, caring, friendship, and sharing with one another.”

Concerning identity-in-alienation of Shona women, we recognize what a Korean feminist theologian, Chung Hyun Kyung (1996:53) calls *anthropological poverty*. We see the element of the *scandal of particularity* in the alienation of women through patriarchy. In this context negative elements of culture are projected on women, while similar acts are rationalized to boost *machismo*. Thus it is women and not men who are prostitutes, witches, barren, etc. It can be said that this paradoxical self-knowing is a situation in which woman is loved, respected, or held in great esteem and yet despised, mother of the nation, presidents, chiefs, civil servants, and geniuses and yet is a minor, indispensable and yet invisible especially in centres of decision-making, the heart of the family and yet marginalized, works day and night (is the

beast-of-burden) and yet most of her work is devalued as *no work* and is consequently not remunerated.

Identity-in-alienation is seen in names that depict the mother's experience of alienation. Examples from respondents are as follows:

"My mother gave me the name *Tambudzai* (You keep troubling me) because she had strained relationships with her in-laws." "Rongai (Make a plan) is the other name my mother gave me because she wanted my father to do family planning. The latter was proud of being a polygamist and yet he could not look after the family well." "My mother gave me the name *Dadirayi* (You look down on me) to depict her experience of being neglected and looked down upon by her brothers-in-law when they were working and had good positions in life, and yet prior to that my parents had looked after them." "Tomufadzangei (What shall we do to please you?) is the name my mother gave me because her mother-in-law was not pleased with the baby girl." "My mother called me *Yeukai* (Remember) to remind herself of the difficult labour pains." "Chisitume (One who can not send) is the name my mother gave me to express the painful experience of losing two children before I was born – she had no child to send on errands." "My mother called me *Hazvinei* (It does not matter) because she suffered a lot for her Christian conviction not to participate in traditional rituals." "Shupikai (Be troubled) is the name my mother gave me because at the time of my birth the family had no proper place to call a home."

Some respondents (**Questionnaire II, Q.1b**) reflect the early missionaries negation of Shona names as pagan in that at baptism they had to change to the so-called Christian and saints' names. Another form of *identity-in-difference* and as alienating through naming is seen in that Shona people show that they have succumbed to Westernization in identifying married women as *Mai...* where *mai* (*mother*) is synonymous with Mrs... (**Questionnaire II, Q.1c**). Thus the husband's identity subsumes that of the woman.

In *identity-in-difference* Shona woman knows herself through the *other* as mother, grandmother, aunt, etc. As a junior wife, a woman is identified by her totem praise-name, e.g. as *Masivanda* (for the *lion* totem (**Questionnaire II, Q.2b**) the *chivanda* being a rock-rabbit type of animal seen as a sub-species to the clan totem) or, *Magumbo* (for the *leg* totem – *gumbo* denoting *leg* of an animal), etc. Both husband and wife are identified by the name of their first child - boy of girl, for example, as *babaFarirai* (*father of Farirai*) and *maiFarirai* (*mother of Farirai*) in the case of my parents. As a senior woman, the Shona woman is identified, either by the name of her eldest grandchild (usually male), e.g., as *mbuya vaFarirai* (*grandmother of Farirai*) or by her praise name. In the latter case the prefix *va-* is used as

denoting seniority, e.g. **vaMasivanda** and **vaMagumbo**. It can be asked, how does this compare with their male counterparts? Men are normally addressed by the family name. The praise name denoting the masculine progenitor is, for example, **Sinauta** (*those who do not need hunting weapons*) or **Muvavarirwa** (*the targeted ones*) for the lion totem and **Madyirapanze** (*those who eat outside*) for the leg totem (cf. Chimhanda 2000:66-68). The male head of the family is greeted and thanked by this praise name. He assumes corporate personality or identity. Both men and women are thanked by their totem and praise names. Thus one acknowledges the presence and graciousness of the whole clan, living and dead. In this context, Shona women emphasize their role as primary agents of instilling cultural, social and Christian values into children. Thus the roles of *vatete* (father's sister) and *mbuya* (paternal grandmother) cannot be over-emphasized.

The Shona women's ethnic identity or vision of personhood can, as shown above, be grounded on a theological anthropology that is a trajectory of creation, the Incarnation, and the baptismal status and vocation. Thus Shona women's narrative focuses on communal ontology, solidarity and epistemology. There is emphasis on *corporate personality* or *identity*. It is noteworthy that the Shona woman carries her corporate identity into the marital group. We have seen that she is identified and thanked by the totem praise names in the marital group. It is important to note that whereas the woman's praise name in most cases is generic for the totem as the largest group, the praise names used to identify the head of the family are specific to the sub-totem. For example, all women of the lion clan can be addressed as *Masivanda*, but *Sinauta*, *Muvavarirwa*, *Sigaauke* are praise names specific to the lion sub-clan *crocodile* (Shona: **Shumba yevaGarwe**). Incest taboo is binding for all people sharing the totem in its specificity. One can travel to any part of the country and still find relatives. You may be complete strangers, but if you share the same totem, you cannot marry. In courtship it is always necessary to ask each other's totems. Thus totem and praise names are to the Shona what a genealogy is to a Westerner. Knowing the totem and the whole praise name is a prerequisite for correct burial for both men and women.

In appreciating the power of names (**Questionnaire II, Q.2b**), respondents claim:

"The totem is like Western genealogies because it identifies people's origins and affinity with a certain group of people – family, clan, and tribe." *"Every person regards his/her totem as important or meaningful in his/her life."* *"There are taboos attached to each totem, for example, food and incest taboos. It is the animal or part of the animal that is regarded as sacred. Consequently it is taboo to eat that and it is believed that one violates the taboo at the risk of tooth decay. The taboo is carried forward to incest taboo. In the Shona exogamic marriages it is taboo to marry anyone of the same totem and praise name even though you may*

*be complete strangers to one another.” “Among the Karanga blessings or curses are placed on the totem in parallel with the Old Testament blessings or curses through the God of Abraham.” “Shona people believe that knowing someone’s totem and praise name gives respect and the person feels greatly honoured when thanked or greeted by the totem. At the same time, there is a belief that witches and sorcerers can only harm someone whom they know by totem and praise name. The latter is esoteric knowledge accessible to the inner group of agnates. This belief is accentuated by the Shona proverb: **Munhu anourawa nehama dzake, haaurawi nemutorwa** (A person is killed by a relative, not by an alien). Knowledge of ancestry is important for **kupira** (prayers invoking ancestral mediation). Shona people believe that an agnate can bring harm to you through the ritual of **kuterera** (praying to the ancestors invoking them to withdraw their protection).”*

“Knowledge of the totem gives surety for correct burial.” In this context, we can understand a kind of xenophobia that exists among the Shona promoted by the Shona’s fear of **ngozi** (see also Herbert Aschwanden 1989:98). The Shona are afraid to take strangers into their families. They believe that in the event of death of a stranger they are unable to perform correct funeral rites since they do not know the deceased’s totem, praise name and in short, the deceased’s ancestry and if incorrectly buried, such people come back as vengeance spirits. But if a stranger has family, even small children, these are surety for correct burial. Among farm workers of mixed ethnic backgrounds and in which the Shona cohabit with foreign nationals - Mozambicans, Malawians and Zambians, the Shona’s fear of **ngozi** is a big set back in the rehabilitation of AIDS orphans into families in present day Zimbabwe.

In the Shona culture-Christianity dialogue, it is important to note that the Shona understanding that to know someone by name is to have power over him/her- to do good or to harm has striking parallels in the Bible. Psalm 91:14-15 reads:

Because he cleaves to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him because he knows my name. When he calls me, I will answer him.

The name of Jesus like the Shona totem carries power that brings good health. The Book of Acts is full of such healing miracles. Examples include the healing of the cripple at the gate Beautiful (Acts 3:1-10), healing of the people in Samaria from unclean Spirits (Acts 8:4-9), the healing of Aeneas the cripple at Lydda (Acts 9:32-35) and the raising of Dorcas (Tabitha) from death (Acts 9:36-41). The apostles are portrayed as having the healing mantle of the Lord. This is shown in that in Jesus’ own life, power to heal was seen to go from him on the mere touching of the fringe of his garment (Lk 8:43-48). This too was done in a reciprocal relationship of faith. It can be said that Shona people’s understanding of the enemy as a close relative can be an important point of departure to the understanding of sin and reconciliation.

This concept finds an interesting parallel in the Christian injunction to love your enemies (Mt 43:48) and more appropriately in the broad definition of neighbour as anyone in need (Lk 10:27).

3.3 THE VALIDATION AND VINDICATION OF THE IRREPLACEABLE SINGULARITY OF EACH HUMAN BEING WITH REGARD TO A PERSON'S HISTORY AND LIFE

The Incarnation portrays God as affirming our uniqueness or particularity as human beings in our finiteness and temporality. Orthodox Christology concentrated on the uniqueness of Christ as God and human. From this stance, James Moulder (1981:12) is right in asserting that Christology is parasitic upon anthropology. I understand an Incarnational Narrative Christology here as the validation of Shona women's experience of God-humanity-world – the human condition and human predicament as an integral part of their total *history* or *her/story*.

Narrative form of Christology implies Christ's affirmation of human life and the world in history. A contemporary Christology from the perspective of Shona women of Zimbabwe reflects on the significance of Christ as seen by the women at the present stage of their appropriation, understanding and appreciation of the Christ of faith. In this stance, it can be said that Jesus, as the answer to the human quest, and as God among us who meets Shona women where they are, affirms them and values them as Shona women. The Shona women, in turn, reflect on their experiences in the light of the Gospel and describe Christ as they experience him in their own cultural idiom. There is a deep yearning for a Christ who identifies with the women within their social and cultural milieu. The biography of Shona women portrays the Incarnation as coeval with creation. As Christians, the women take the biography of God in Christ as a meta-story (narrative). Thus Shona women tell the story of the Incarnation as giving them full humanity in Christ. In a predominantly *oral-aural* culture, they do this through structured storytelling (see Questionnaire Appendices I & II). The women claim their God-given dignity and role, theologically understood as the *imago Dei/Christi* (cf. Gen 1:26-27; 1 Cor 12:13) and the *baptismal vocation* (Leonard Doohan 1992:172), respectively. In other words, the women claim the creation and baptismal status. Within the broad biography of Shona women, we can still single out the unique experience of individual women as subjective knowers. In this context, we look at Shona women's biographies within the woman's biography, or *vice versa*.

I want to explore the uniqueness of the believer as reflecting the image and likeness of God/Christ and as historically situated and circumscribed. In other words, what is at stake is Shona women's identity as defined by Christian identity and Shona/African identity. In a creative dialectic between biblical faith and Shona culture the common denominator exists in

the appropriation of *theological anthropology*. Roman Catholic teaching on human life is that it is a *mystery, sacred and social* (cf. *Evangelium Vitae [EV] – Gospel of Life* – nos.25, 34, 35, 60, 61; Wendell Berry 2000:82-97). Theological basis for the unique singularity (sacredness) of the human person are specified as the creation category of the *imago Dei* (EV, no. 53, cf. Gen 1:26-28), humanity as mysteriously infused with the nature of the divine – a *sublime dignity* (EV, no. 34) from the moment of conception, and this dignity as having an eternal nature or destiny – eternal life with God (EV, no.38) and the preciousness of human life is rooted in that God saw it precious enough to shed the blood of the Son Jesus Christ on the Cross (EV, no.25, cf. 1 Pt 1:18. In this context, all of human life is sacred and inviolable (EV, nos. 60, 61) and the human person is a little less than a god (EV, no 35, cf. Ps 8:4-5). Human life is social in the sense that it is participated life in a siblingship fellowship in which everyone is his/her brother or sister's keeper (EV, nos. 19,77, cf. Gen 4:9). In other words, as stewards of grace, we are responsible and accountable to protect life especially at its most vulnerable stages of development. The giving and taking of life are the prerogatives of God.

Rufus Burrows (2000:a.324), in asserting that African traditional thought is spawned with personalism, describes the latter as follows:

Personalism is any philosophy which holds that reality is personal and that human beings are the highest - not the only – intrinsic values. Person is the ultimate or dominant reality and the ultimate value. In addition, personalism maintains that the universe is a society of interacting selves and persons with God at the centre. It also contends that reality and the universe hinge on a moral foundation, and thus it is believed that the universe is friendly to value. An important implication of this is that persons ought to live and behave in ways that exhibit respect for the humanity and dignity for self and others.

Burrows, then, highlights the subscription to *the sacredness of persons, the belief that God is personal and the sense that persons are free to make choices* (self-determination) as three *touchstones of personalism*. I concur with Burrows in the understanding that African *proverbs, songs, folktales, rituals and rites* ground views on *person* and *community* and that these cultural expressions are clear about the essential characteristics of personhood (2000:a.321-324).

Concerning the uniqueness of the individual, the concern is to see individuals as autonomous subjects. But as social subjects, individuals exist in and are constrained by the roles imposed on them by the community. Burrows (2000:b.30), in claiming suggesting the concept of *personal communitarianism* which he sees as closer to *personalism*, explains that the former ideology concedes that the community has claims for itself and at times against the individual but it also acknowledges that the individual has claims for self and at times against the community. Shona believers can be defined in what Walter G. Muelder (Burrows 2000:30-31) calls *persons-in-*

community because of Shona communal epistemology and ontology and the Body of Christ (organic) model of Christian identity. Burrows is right in claiming that primacy is put on both the person and the community, neither of which can be adequately understood apart from the other. I agree with Edgar S. Brightman (Burrows (2000:b.31) in asserting that the theological basis of being persons in community and with others is the understanding that *God is love, and love is a social category*. Burrows (2000:b.31-32) is cautious not to appropriate the type of personhood that borders on humanism. He explains that *this principle (love) stands at the centre of the cosmos*. He adds that:

The real Christian world is a world of mutually dependent beings. It is a social world, a world of interacting moral beings... In such a world, love is necessarily the basic moral law.

We can ask: *What does this conception of the irreplaceable singularity of human life say to the Shona (African) view of personhood or being fully human, the communal solidarity of the 'communio sanctorum' and in creative dialectic with the 'congregatio fidelium'?* As noted above, there is a creative tension between the Bantu Shona principle: *cognates ergo sum* (in which the individual tends to be subsumed in the group), the Cartesian principle, *cogito ergo sum* (which tends to promote individualism) and the Christians concept of *otherness*. We do not condone Narcissism – a selfish wallowing in self-adoration (egotism) or (group egotism) social and ethnical imperialism. An *organic Christology* is seen as a mediating view with a stress on unity in diversity. When we recognize group and individual differences, in an organic Christology we can see that it is a coordinated difference with a centre of unity. Pertinent issues for a Christology seen from the perspective of the experiences of Shona women that bear on personhood and community include the compromising of the rights of the individual and subsuming the individual in the group.

3.3.1 THE CHRISTIAN DISTINCTION OF OTHERNESS

We have seen that the uniqueness and autonomy of the individual person has its ground in God's (aseity) self-giving and self-emptying love and, consequently, in the uniqueness of Jesus Christ in the story of our salvation. Karl Barth (1975:I,1.306-307) who associates God's *aseity* (a freedom which is *ontic* and *noetic*) with Lordship, sees the climax of self-limitation and condescension to humanity in the Christ-event. In the concept of the *kenotic* Christ, Cardinal Walter Kasper (2001:69) accentuates this view when he maintains that God can wholly give himself in Jesus Christ without thereby diminishing or losing Godself. He adds that such self-emptying is true and genuine only if the divinity of Christ does not absorb and swallow up the humanity, but rather embraces it in its particularity and frees it in its uniqueness. Kasper captures all this in the idea that *Jesus Christ is unity in difference and difference in unity*. In the

Incarnation motif, the fullness of God's revelation in Christ, Kasper highlights the uniqueness and validity of Jesus Christ in the history of human salvation by asserting that:

If God has wholly, definitively, and unreservedly poured himself out into the concrete person and history of Jesus Christ, then Jesus Christ is 'id quo minus cogitari nequit, that than nothing greater can be thought (Anselm of Canterbury); for he is at the same time id quo Deus maius operari nequit, that than which God can do nothing greater.

Mbiti (1969:227) concurs with Barth and Kasper on the uniqueness of Christ, and hence, Christianity by asserting that Christ is:

A stumbling block of all ideologies and religious systems; and even if some of his teaching may overlap with what they teach and proclaim, His own Person is greater than can be contained in a religion or ideology. He is 'the Man for others' and yet beyond them. It is He, therefore and only He, Who deserves to be the goal and standard of individuals and mankind, and whether they attain the ultimate goal religiously or ideologically, is perhaps irrelevant.

Kasper explains that in this perspective we receive an understanding of the uniqueness and definitiveness that is at once Trinitarian and Christological, which is not totalitarian, but rather gives space to the other and sets him/her free.

According to James P. Kow (1999:605), in the concepts of the absolute singularity of Christianity and Christ in the matrix of the Trinity, we do already possess the sense of *otherness*. He goes on to pursue the ramifications of the Christian emphasis on *otherness*, *distinction* and *difference*. Kow (1999:604) aptly notes that the awareness of difference putatively carves open a space for human novelty, for new contingencies, and metaphysically for possibility over actuality, indeed for creative difference over numbing sameness, for the expansion of human freedom. In a theocentric approach, God is understood as the *Ultimate Other*. Kow (1999:611) rejects what he calls a tight sense of individuality which is in turn projected on the divine – is reinforced by the sense of God's exceeding self-sufficiency. He sees this in the view of the integrity of all individuals as rooted in their irreplaceability and incommunicability – the view that each individual is an independent, self-sufficient separate being that seems to exclude the possibility of creation.

Kow (1999:610-611) pursues the idea of the Incarnation as coeval with creation. In giving creation a positive content, he accentuates that creation is not due to a fall and exposes the weakness in the *kenosis* of the Incarnation by stressing that:

Not out of deficiency, but out of goodness did God create; not out of weakness, but out of compassion for his creatures did he become Incarnate.

Kow (1999:610-612) citing Rahner, points out that *plurality* and *otherness* in the Trinity is the basis of the *affirmative sense of plurality and otherness present in creation*. He explains that in the notion of creation as reflecting the *imago Dei* and the *imago Trinitatis*, we see human

fellowship and the uniqueness of the individual validated by the Trinitarian fellowship and the fact that each divine person communicates its person in a unique way. Thus Kow highlights that creatures are not merely nothing, but sites of openness, providing receptive spaces for the transcendence in loving and knowing. Concerning men and women reflecting, revealing and celebrating the *imago Dei*, Francis Martin (1993:240) is right in asserting that:

Neither sex is the image of God to the detriment of the other; it is humanity as male and female which embodies something of God in the world.

An organic Christology seems appropriate for an approach that simultaneously values both the individual and the faith community. This is a *gestaltic approach* (seeing the whole in terms of its parts) that, according to Kow (1999:606) has its roots in Greek philosophy. Kow says that in Greek cosmocentric whole, the divine is valued as part of the whole the latter of which is understood as eternal. In Christian usage, the model has its roots in the Body of Christ model of the community of faith (cf. 1Cor 12:12-13). The acme of the Body of Christ exists in the baptismal status of the equality of believers (cf. Gal 3:28). In the perspective of this Christian *Magna Carta*, difference is not seen as inferior, but is appreciated for its enrichment of the community. Kasper (2001:71) accentuates this view when he says that this Christian affirmation of difference that many people find offensive is *a call and a foundation for reciprocal toleration and respect, for sharing and communication, for gift and exchange, for understanding, reconciliation and peace*. It can be said that the preciousness of the individual person is emphasized by the image of the Christ of the Gospel who goes seeking for one unrepentant sinner and celebrates the conversion of the one sinner (Lk 15).

3.3.2 SHONA ANTHROPOLOGY

Underlying the Shona conception of personhood is the Bantu ethic that flows from ontology - *cognates ergo sum* (I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am). John Mbiti, as the proponent of this ethic (1969:108-109), explains:

What then is the individual and where is his place in the community? In traditional life, the individual does not and cannot exist alone except corporately. He owes his existence to other people, including those of past generations and his contemporaries. He is simply part of the whole. The community must therefore make, create or produce the individual; for the individual depends on the corporate group. Physical birth is not enough; the child must go through rites of incorporation so that it becomes fully integrated into the society... The Individual is a corporate and social being... This is a deeply religious transaction. Only in terms of other people does the individual become conscious of his own being, his own duties, his privileges and responsibilities towards himself and other people.

Thus the conception of personhood held in such a communitarian-socio-ethical philosophy needs to be closely examined. We can ask whether there are instances when the community puts more stress on the group than on the individual, on solidarity more than the activity and

needs of the individual and the communion of persons more than on the autonomy of an individual. According to Kwame Gyekye of Ghana (1996:102, cf. Leopold S. Senghor 1964:93-94), we can ask whether the *communio sanctorum* with its emphasis on communal values, collective good (altruism) and shared ends invariably conceives the person as *wholly* constituted by the social relationships and therefore tend to water down the moral autonomy of the individual person, or make the being and life of the individual person totally dependent on the activities, values, projects, practices and ends of the community. Consequently, does the *communio sanctorum* diminish the individual person's freedom and capacity to choose, question, or reevaluate the shared values of the community? Gyekye (1996:103) claims that Ifeanyi A. Menkiti (1984:171-178) gives a negative answer in accentuating the ontological primacy and independence of the African community as circumventing the reality of the individual life histories whatever they may be. In this totalising stance of the African community, Menkiti claims that it is implicit that it is the community that defines persons as *persons*, *personhood* is acquired and not intrinsic to the human person, and consequently that personhood is something at which the individual could fail. With this in mind, we examine Shona anthropology for its strengths and weaknesses. The spotlight is on Shona women having group-value, and hence, suffering in trying to fulfil patriarchal obligations. In marriage, this view is punctuated by the Shona adage that *mukadzi ndewedzinza* (the wife belongs to the extended family or clan).

The Shona holistic world-view is compatible with the Catholic view of life that circumscribes all of life as sacred. But a difference lies in that the attainment of personhood seems to be a process rather than something intrinsic to the human being from the moment of conception. While Shona people believe that children are a gift from God through the ancestors, nevertheless, full humanity is attained through a series of *rite-de-passage* that encompass stages of life from before birth to life after death. As mentioned above, in the Shona prescription that only parents are installed as ancestors in the rite of *the homing of the spirits*, the full personhood of children and celibates is questioned.

As mentioned above, the Shona ethic of *unhu* (Bantu: *ubuntu*, as denoting *personhood*), places the individual in the centre of community. Here one is a person *with* and *for others*. The Shona talk of *munhu chaiye* (*real person* or *genuinely good person*) as one who adopts a posture inclusive of other people. They talk of such a person as *possessing characteristics of true personhood* (Shona: *munhu ane unhu*). Shirley Thorpe (1991:53) describes the Shona ideal person as being:

humble, kind, ready to share, with others and never greedy for more than his or her due in life. He or she adheres to those time honoured ritual observances, which bind together all members of the group, both living and dead.

For example, the Shona *munhu chaiye* is responsible and accountable for her / his deeds. On the contrary, if one's behaviour deviates from this standard expectation, the Shona say to such a person, **hauzi munhu** (*you are not a person*), or, **hauna unhu** (*you have no personhood*) and more specific – **urimbwa yemunhu** (*you are a dog-like person*). We observe that the Shona perspective of personhood like that of the Bible borders on humanism and/or pantheism. The biblical view is that humanity's preciousness resides in the closer bond with the Creator. St Augustine (McGrath 1994,1997:) echoes this view when he describes the human being as the crown of creation. Although the Shona view personhood as something to live up to and seemingly denies personhood to the individual person on the grounds of actions dissonant with certain fundamental norms and ideals of personhood, nevertheless, it is correct to say that their view of personhood seems to imply an intrinsic element. In other words, the perspective admits to the moral autonomy of the individual. The individual can be held as a moral agent who is capable of making responsible or irresponsible moral judgements according to the norms, values, desired ends and practices of the community. In other words, as an autonomous moral agent, the individual can pick and choose from cultural values and practices and can evaluate, reject or develop certain morals. In this case, Abraham (1996:110) is right in asserting that virtue is not a static or fixed matter.

The mutual inter-dependence of people reinforced by Shona essential cultural elements of **umwe** (*togetherness, communal solidarity*), **ushamwari** (*friendship*) and *hospitality* is seen to transcend consanguine boundaries. Furthermore, ethnic tolerance is seen, for example, in marriages across ethnic boundaries. This in turn is reinforced by the Shona incest taboo (exogamic marriages). Shona corporate identity is emphasized by the Shona practice of **humwe** (root word is **umwe** and in this people show concerted effort over tasks like building a hut, cultivating, harvesting, threshing and winnowing. People enjoy togetherness by singing and working in unison. There are specific rhythms characteristic of actions like threshing and winnowing. The host entertains the people to home brewed beer and food. Thus taking the Shona's experience of *umwe* in building a traditional round hut, with the open circle, in turn, depicting unity and inclusiveness, the neighbours participate and contribute according to their specific talents. We find that some make bricks, others lay the foundation, some fetch water, others lay bricks, some cut grass and others clean it, some cut poles, others prune them, some carry grass, others carry poles to the building site, some make the roof structure, others thatch the roof. The participation of each member at each of these stages is vital for the completion of

a good hut. In the hut itself, people sit, chat, eat and recreate in an open (inclusive) circle to a central fire.

Respondents (**Questionnaire II, Q4a**) give the following proverbs as accentuating the Shona cultural element of togetherness:

'One thumb does not kill a louse'. 'One man cannot surround an anthill'. The proverbs stress that many hands make light work. People in a community must work together in carrying out some tasks. When people are united and work together, they can achieve great things. 'Men are the same, when one's beard is burning the other one extinguishes the fire'. The proverb stresses that in times of trouble people forget their differences and fight a common enemy. 'Good advice comes from fruitful discourse'. The individual who did not listen to others burnt his/her blanket'. These proverbs emphasize that it is not good to be egocentric. When we live in community we should listen to other people and share ideas. An egocentric is likely to get into trouble – situations which could have been prevented otherwise. 'Levirate marriage is a practice we have learnt from others'. 'A large family, clan is desirable for many except for witches'.

The Shona essential cultural element of hospitality cannot be over-emphasized in that they have a time of day called *ruvhunza vayeni* (dusk or just at sunset – a time when 'visitors' begin to arrive and 'ask to be put up for the night' or simply 'ask for directions to their proper destination'). Traditionally, it is the duty of the chief or headman to look after strangers, but overall, charitable acts are a community effort. Respondents give the proverbs that accentuate the Shona's inherent posture for strangers and the poor as follows:

'To give is to store'. 'A stranger does not deplete the granary'. 'Feet carry us far and wide and makes us get lost'. 'To give is to throw your baggage across the river'. 'Cattle entrusted to a person (during drought) do not deplete the grass'. 'The chief's son is a stranger outside the chieftom'. Hunger is a good omen for impending visitors'. The proverbs not only stress the reciprocal relationship of giving and receiving, but also of the conditional (reversal of fortune motif) relationship of stranger and host.

The friendship enjoyed by the Shona like good neighbourliness transcends consanguine ties. The Shona put a high stake on friendship. For the Zezuru, the *best friend* (Zezuru: *sahwira*) has a parallel in the Karanga *muzukuru mukuru* (eldest grandchild, nephew or niece) – *sekuru* (grandfather and uncle, mother's brother) relationship. The *sahwira* like the *muzukuru mukuru* is master of ceremonies at all important occasions especially funerals. It is proper to say that the *muzukuru mukuru* is the eyes, ears, and mouth of the *sekuru*. Thus the Karanga say, *muzukuru anokunda mwana wokubereka* (a grandchild or nephew/niece – sister's child is

greater than one's own child). Among the Zezuru, the *sahwira* too plays the role of the Karanga *varooru* (*sisters-in-law*) in defusing tension at the funeral through jokes especially in emulating humorous episodes in the life of the deceased. It is important to remember these ethnic peculiarities when it comes to the women's designations of the Christ of faith.

Respondents (**Questionnaire II, Q4c**) give other proverbs that underscore the Shona essential element of friendship as follows:

'The one who gives you a wild orange is your true friend'. 'Share your goods with a relative since an alien tends to forget'. 'Friendship is greater than consanguine relationship'. The proverbs stress that a friend is relative. 'If your friend says that he/she has not got what you are asking for, go home and settle down'. The proverb stresses that a friend says the truth since he/she is always ready to help.' 'Cattle which graze together know each other'. The proverb stresses that friends work together because they have a good knowledge and understanding of each other. 'The soot has blinded the rat'. In a kitchen, the soot gives camouflage to the rat but once in a while the soot does get into the eyes of the rat thereby causing discomfort. The proverb stresses that even best friends sometimes quarrel.

The negative aspect of Shona women having group value is *reductionism*— woman being subsumed or rendered invisible by the group. These include the stress on virginity, submissiveness to the man and competence in household chores. The negative side of corporate personality (identity) is that it has seen the alienation of Shona women as *vatorwa* (*aliens*) to the marital group. In the erosion of the extended family, women neither belong properly to the natal group nor to the marital group. Shona women as having group value are subsumed in the natal group and there is violation of human rights (self-autonomy and self-actualization) when women are reduced to objects of cultic ritual and as goods to be marketed. Pertinent issues in creative tension with Christian values are the Shona practices of payment of *roora* (*bride-price*), wife substitution, levirate marriages and appeasement of *ngozi* (*vengeance spirits*).

Women mistresses of initiation are seen to be their worst enemy in colluding with patriarchy. In Shona patriarchal binary logic as alienating and oppressing women, man is the head, where woman is a minor, men are *bulls* (impregnators), where women are prostitutes, men are manly (e.g. their illegitimate children are appreciated for promoting the growth of the clan), where women are barren, men engaging in sorcery are *varoyi vemasikati* (*open or daylight witches*), where women are esoteric witches (*active at night*). In this context, it is true to say that negative cultural elements are rationalized to boost *machismo* while being projected on women

Today there is concern that *roora* has lost its original *bona fides* intentionality. Among other things, *roora's* original purpose was to unite two families. What started as a mere exchange of

hoes (most common implement in an agrarian society) has escalated with inflation to an exorbitant amount. Thus the girl-child is reduced to a marketable commodity. Roora too gives husband and the marital group political rights over the woman. This view is accentuated by the Shona adage **mukadzi ndewe dzinza** (*the wife belongs to the extended family/clan*). There is cognitive dissonance in that although the woman is denied guardianship of children, nevertheless the woman is often accused of failing to raise children for the husband, and even, failing to raise a male heir. In this context Dora R.Mbuwayesango (1997:28) is right in saying that *roora* should be more appropriately called *child-price* than *bride-price*. In cases of barrenness or premature death there is wife-substitution by way of a niece (brother's child or sister). Today, failure to raise a male heir can result in divorce.

Violation of human rights is seen in the Shona practice of appeasement of *ngozi*. *Ngozi* is implicated in cases of murder and improper burial of a stranger. At death the Shona believe that the deceased joins the patrilineal ancestors. The senior man or woman carries out the burial rite. This involves the marking of the grave and **kupira** (*prayers to the ancestors*). For the latter, it is imperative to know the totem and praise name. In the concept of *extended patients* mentioned above, the Shona believe that if not appeased, *ngozi* can wipe out the whole family/clan. Thus the Shona understand that the misdemeanour of an individual can be a liability to the whole extended family. *Ngozi* is understood to visit the whole extended family in form of illness and/or death. Thus *ngozi* is understood to wipe out the whole extended family ending with the culprit him/herself who may in the meantime only suffer from psychosomatic illness. We can see that the belief in *ngozi* is for the Shona a big deterrence to murder. Furthermore, the Shona believe that **mushonga wengozu kuripa** (*the best panacea for ngozi is to appease it*). But it can be asked, how does the Shona appease *ngozi*? The answer to this is the Shona women's concern for the suffering of the innocent.

In the case of murder, which more often than not is committed by men, the culprit's family is asked to give a *head of cattle* (Shona: **danga**) and a girl-child to the victim's family. The latter is taken as wife to one of the deceased's kinsmen. She then has to bear a male child as a replacement to the deceased. After this she is free to return to her home. There is violation of the girl-child's unique individuality and normal development and autonomy. The chances for a good marriage later are ruined. A similar case is found in wife-substitution in the case of a deceased aunt (*vatete*) or sister (Shona: **chimutsa mapfihwa**) or in the case of barrenness of a sister or *vatete*.

The Shona believe that in the intermediate state (between death, burial and the homing of the spirits ceremony) the spirit of the dead roams in the forest (Bourdillon 1976:237; Zvarevashe

1970:45) and has no power to protect the living descendants from evil forces (witchcraft, sorcery, alien spirits, **mashave** - Gelfand 1959:121-169; Bourdillon 1976:1710172, 199-224). In this intermediate period, the Shona say, **Musha mutema** (*darkness has overcast the home*). The deceased and living spouse is understood as bachelor and spinster, and adultery by the living member is a punishable offence as described in the above. The living members are bound to empower the deceased in the ceremony of the homing of the spirits. Failure to do this for a dead parent is punishable by illness or death by the ancestors.

Shona women decry the oppression of widows in the practice of ritual cleansing, levirate marriage and the restrictions imposed (mourning periods) before the **kurova guva** (homing of the spirits) ceremony. Traditionally, the latter is held a year after death. It appears that the Shona patriarchal society empathizes more with the widower than the widow. The former have shorter mourning periods than the latter. The agnates of the deceased, in accusing the adulterer or adulteress of **kupisa guva** (*burning* or desecrating the *grave*), claim heavy damages in cash and kind. Moreover, in the ritual of **kudarika uta** (*jumping over the husband's knobkerrie*), it is the widow only who is asked to pass the test of faithfulness or else face public embarrassment and the wrath of the in-laws (Chimhanda 2000:87).

Shona tradition admits to levirate marriage. In the adage **nhaka ndeyemombe yemunhu inozvionera** (*only cattle are automatically inherited, not a person since the latter is an autonomous being*), the widow has always been given a choice to accept or reject levirate marriage. Traditionally levirate marriage was acceptable in a situation where polygamy was rife and group togetherness assured that the children of the deceased would be well looked after.

Today, because of the erosion of the extended family and the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS, levirate marriage, like polygamy is not acceptable. But in practice, the widow never refuses levirate marriage. A case in point is when the widow gives the levirate ritual water to the son. In this case she accepts that the son will take surety of her and the whole family while she stays specifically to look after her children. The irony is that the widow admits to be a minor even to her own son for a desired good. In the culture-Gospel dialectic, Christ seems to reject polygamy in encouraging faithfulness to one wife and husband.

These issues violate human rights. According to Eugene Heideman (1998:163-165), in the UDHR there is recognition of fundamental human rights that include the recognition of the inherent dignity and of equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family as the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world (cf. Preamble). The fundamental freedoms are specified as, freedom of speech, freedom from fear or want and freedom of assembly and worship. The declaration specifies that all human beings are born free and equal

in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of *brotherhood* (Article 1). We can also see in this the Kantian moral imperative not to treat human beings (as autonomous moral agents) as means to an end only. By the same note, we are warned of the superficial recognition of the role and dignity of women such as seen in relational or corporal identity. In other words, women should not be subsumed in relational categories as mothers, grandmothers and wives. This element was accentuated by the South African woman, Suzanna Williams in asserting that there is urgency in post-independent South Africa to see a shift from the understanding of women as *mothers of the nation* to *women in their own right*

3.3 NARRATIVE READING OF THE BIBLE FOR AN INCLUSIVE CHRISTOLOGY

In what follows I attempt narrative approach to Christology and/or biblical hermeneutics. Two Shona folk–stories are chosen, one that mainly depicts ancient wisdom and the other, some cultural moral values. This is intertextual reading of the creation story of Genesis 1-3 and the Pauline teaching of the equality of believers in Galatians 3:28 within the ambience of appropriating the *imago Dei/Christi* for an inclusive Christology.

3.4.1 GENDER INCLUSIVE NARRATIVE READING OF GENESIS 1-3

The Shona folk-story that in turn appeals to ancient wisdom (proverbial saying) is as follows:

Long, long ago a husband and wife set off on a journey to the latter's home. When they were in the middle of the jungle, the path forked and the couple debated (argued or quarrelled) on which path to follow. Finally, the wife won the argument on the pretext that she knew the way to her home better. Unfortunately, the path came to a dead-end plunging the couple in the midst of a congregation of fierce wild animals – lions, leopards, rhinos, cheetahs, hyenas, you name them. The couple thus feared for their lives. It was then that the husband instinctively burst into song and danced while the wife responded in chorus while drumming as follows:

Leader: *Dhumbu rinamanyere mukadzi wangu!* (The situation is like a multicoloured loincloth, my wife! Or, we are marooned like the body girded with a multicoloured loincloth).

Chorus: *Rave dhumbu rinamanyere* (Yes, it's like a multicoloured loincloth).

Leader: *Rave dhumbu rinamanyere 'nzira hadzirwirwi'!* ('It's like a multi-coloured loincloth – there is an adage that says, people must never fight over which road to take').

The animals were captured by the music and drumming and joined in the dance. In a short while the place was blurred with dust. This, coupled with the confusion from the stampede,

made it possible for the couple to run for their lives.

Why did the story have a happy ending? The story depicts the relationship between husband and wife as that of equality, accountability and responsibility for their predicament. Various threads can be drawn considering the application of the story to real life and in the backdrop of the creation story of Genesis 1-3 and the teaching of Christ in the Gospel. The story admits to the understanding that man and woman are equal although different since they are both made in the *image and likeness* of God (Gen 1:26-27). Both man and woman are endowed with intellectual and intuitive survival skills. Faced with the dangerous situation, the couple instinctively collaborate in negotiating an escape. They are interdependent in the whole escape mission. Instead of blaming the woman for the misfortune as seen in Genesis 3:12 in the case of the fall of Adam and Eve, the man looks into the situation of the severed relationship between him and the wife.

The proverbial saying emphasizes the disagreement between the couple as the main cause of their failing to make a good rational choice on what course to take. The key to the solution of the problem is that fighting it out or quarrelling is not the best way to make a choice of this nature. In other words, there are better and more rational ways of deciding which path to follow, such as, animal tracks – spoor and footprints – avoiding that and taking a less travelled path. He appeals to ancient superstition and wisdom that says that such misunderstandings – quarrels or fights on such an important task or journey can be a bad omen. Here there is another Shona adage that says, **natsa kwavabva nokuti mberi irima** (*you must do good in the present because the future is unknown*). It is important to note that although the woman's choice was the wrong one, there is no self-justification. In actual fact this is a waste of time in a (*fight or flight*) situation that demands alertness, and immediate and correct action. In the story the roles played by husband and wife are reversible, noting not only that *to err is human*, but also that both man and woman are equally endowed with intellectual and instinctive abilities. Sexist and patriarchal dualisms are thus rendered futile. What does this mean in a patriarchal society?

In applying the story to the patriarchal and lopsided relationships between men and women in church and society today, it can be said that there is (cognitive dissonance) a discrepancy between the '*is*' and the '*ought*'. Like in Genesis 3:12, negative images in male and female relationships are projected onto women. Shona society of Zimbabwe, like that of the Jews, admits to the *pater familias patria potestas* (father as head of the family, clan, tribe and guardian of children) system, in which women and children are treated as minors. This stance is often justified by the literal reading of Genesis 2:18-25 in which the woman is depicted as being created from man's rib. In this story too we learn that it is man who names woman (Gen 2:23).

There are contradictions in that although men have guardianship of children, in situations of barrenness it is women who are blamed for failing to produce children for husbands. In a similar manner, women are blamed for failing to produce an heir. Furthermore, in an adulterous situation it is women only who are stigmatized prostitutes. In situations of illness and death, woman is stigmatized as witch, or that it is her ancestors who have failed in their protective role of children. Today in the AIDS/HIV pandemic, woman, although mostly victimized through the husband's unfaithfulness in marriage, she is stigmatized as the carrier of the virus. Woman as a minor is often undermined in cultural practices of polygamy, levirate marriages, *roora* (bride-price), appeasement of vengeance spirits (*kuripa ngozi*) and arranged marriages.

The Gospel reinforces Genesis 1:26-27 by showing that Christ was concerned about restoring the image of women. In so doing he made both men and women responsible and accountable for such sins as adultery and fornication (Mt 5:27-32). Women are given access to the Torah and to the studying of theology. It can also be shown that justification of patriarchy in church and society is a result of a literal reading of mainly Genesis 2-3 and of using gender exclusive language. Other conclusions are that both culture and the Gospel contain seeds for the liberation of women. Otherwise both culture and the Gospel are historically conditioned. Both culture and the Bible can be used as a double-edged sword in the affirmation and dehumanization of women.

3.4.2 CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT BOUNDARIES: NARRATIVE READING OF GAL.3:26-28

The Shona folk-story with some social and/or cultural values is as follows:

*Long ago Baboon and Hare were great friends who maintained a relationship of the Shona **sekuru** (grandfather or uncle as mother's brother) and **muzukuru** (grandson or nephew as sister's daughter), respectively. One day Hare invited Baboon to a **hira** (festal meal offered to the family ancestors). A few days prior to the **hira**, Hare burnt the fields surrounding his home. On arrival, Hare welcomed Baboon and his family cordially. Before the baboons could sit down to the meal, Hare inspected their hands for cleanliness. Obviously the hands were found to be dirty and filthy especially from the carbon of the burnt vegetation. Hare then instructed the baboons to go back and wash their hands in a nearby stream. The ritual was done repeatedly since, walking back through the burnt fields, the baboons never passed the cleanliness test. In the meantime, Hare and his family and clan enjoyed the **hira** and devoured all the food. Baboon and his family thus returned home hungry and angry. Baboon was resolved to revenge himself on Hare.*

*An opportunity came when Baboon invited Hare to a **hira** also. Baboon made sure that the food*

was served in pots with necks long enough that only baboons with their long hands could delve down for the food. Hare and his family were thus starved being left to watch the baboons enjoy the food. Furthermore, Baboon made sure that the drink (local beer) was served in gourds with necks long enough for baboons to carry high up the tree. The baboons enjoyed the beer from up a tree so that whenever Hare and his family looked up desiring to quench their thirst, the dregs from the mouth of the baboons blinded them. Thus Hare also went home angry, hungry and resolved to revenge himself on Baboon. Such was the relationship between Baboon and Hare – a vicious circle of cunningness, each trying to outwit the other.

In the story a mutual relationship between Baboon (**Gudo**) and Hare (**Tsuro**) that parallels that of the Shona **sekuru** (*grandfather*) and **muzukuru** (*grandson/grand-daughter*), respectively, is claimed. This kind of relationship is seen to parallel the Christian ideal or baptismal vocation of Galatians 3:26-28):

For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

But in reality the Baboon-Hare relationship is superficial and exclusive as seen in the cunningness of both that undermines the *other*. The story, like Jesus' parable of the Astute Steward (Lk 16:1-9), does not condone revenge - a kind of **lex talionis** (*tit-for-tat*). On the contrary the emphasis is on cunningness (astuteness) and appreciation of (*otherness*) natural gifts. In an inclusive model of Christianity, such as is encouraged in inculturation, ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue, there is no conscious setting of borders. Inculturation and interreligious dialogue is a way of appreciating, respecting and celebrating difference. Thus the burnt fields, long-necked food pots etc. seen in the story are likened to cultural imperialism, ethnocentrism, elitism, sexism and patriarchy - the exclusivist models of church. In the story, Baboon and Hare could have cultivated a mutual friendship if they had been wise enough to recognize, respect and appreciate difference, that is, the strengths and weaknesses of each other. This is what underlies conversion – in a situation of cultural mix, many religions and gender-sensitivity we learn from, appreciate and respect each other.

For example, early missionary Christianity alienated people from their culture. Thus they castigated African culture as pagan and the religion as fetish and animism in failing to appreciate culture as a **praeambula fidei** (*an antecedent to faith*), or, *praeparatio evangelii*, (a preparation for evangelization). In other words, they failed to appreciate that Jesus Christ is not a stranger in Africa. Like the friendship between Baboon and Hare, African Christianity promoted by early missionaries (who in their historical situatedness were people of their time) was superficial in producing Christians by daylight who backslide into culture in situations that

impinge on life, e.g., death, illness, drought, war and pestilence.

3.5 CONCLUSION

From the foregoing discussion, it is logical that narrative theology and prepositional theology are mutually inclusive. The urgency of narrative theology exists in that the Bible and the Gospel have predominantly a narrative genre. As such they give us the biography of God/Christ. Concerning the Christian identity or story, the story of God/Christ becomes a meta-story. Thus Christ is the norm for the believer's self-understanding and actualization. In the particularity of the Incarnation as seen in situational or contextual Christology, the narrative quality of human experience is appreciated. We are presented with the picture of the God who is present in human history as the *Emmanuel* and acts in history in the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth. The narrative-historical approach presents a Christology informed by the past, relevant to the present and giving hope for the future. Thus the Bible, culture, church tradition are recognized as important sources for a contemporary Christology.

When we acknowledge the unique revelation and self-agency of God in history, the uniqueness of the revelation and salvation in Christ cannot be compromised. In this perspective, it is true to say that the Gospel has to judge culture and church tradition. In appropriating the creation and baptismal status of the *imago Dei/Christi*, although it is true to say that the human being experiences God in community, nevertheless, we are cautioned of the danger of compromising the unique individuality of the individual in all its life history.

The understanding of the unique individuality of persons in relation to their history and life affirms a *theanthropocosmic Christology* – the interrelatedness of God, humanity and the world.

It is a compelling Christian understanding that harmonizes with the Shona principle of *unhu* that the individual is a person *with* and for *others*. We see that the roots for personhood are found in Shona proverbs, songs, rituals, totemism and naming system. These also affirm that the interrelatedness of all life the social nature of persons – *that all persons are caught up in an inescapable network of mutuality and tied up in a single garment of destiny* (Burrows 2000:b.32, cf. Martin Luther King, Jr. – *I Have a Dream...*).⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Lotte Hoskins. (ed.). *'I Have a Dream': The Quotations of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (1968:71).

Figure 5

SHONA WOMAN, WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?



A picture of my mother taken while she was winnowing rapoko (finger-millet—Shona: **zviyo**) – the grain that is used for brewing traditional, or ritual beer and for a festal meal (Shona: **sadza rezviyo**) to the ancestors.

A time for everything...
A time to be born, a time to die;
A time to plant, a time to reap;
A time to weep, a time to love...
What gain has the worker for her work? (Eccles 3:1-9)

She goes out, she goes out, full of tears,
Carrying seed for the sowing.
She comes back, she comes back, full of song,
Carrying sheaves for the barns (cf. Ps.125 [126])
To give **sadza** (*staple diet*) for tomorrow.
Shona woman what do you give birth to?

For now your Creator is *Emmanuel, Muponesi*, born among us.
Took flesh from us and is one among us.
Says *I have plans for you,*
Plans for your welfare, not for evil,
To give you a future and a hope (Jr 29:1).

CHAPTER FOUR

THE NARRATIVES OF SHONA WOMEN

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This is a gestaltic (the whole understood in terms of its parts) or organic approach in which each Shona woman's historical situatedness – ethnic (**Karanga, Zezuru, Manyika, Korekore** and **Ndau**), gender, creed, and social class is taken seriously. In this way, we acknowledge the differences among Shona women themselves and women in Zimbabwe in general. Not all Shona women are marginalized or experience marginalization in the same way. For example, concerning the feminist project against dehumanization of women through patriarchy, it can be asked whether rural women, who have to struggle with material, health and economic survival issues, see patriarchy as an issue. On the other hand, traditional religion, in particular, ancestral beliefs and practices may have very little or no impact on some urban elite Shona women.

In this organic Christology, pertinent reciprocal questions are:

- *Who do Shona women say that Christ is?*
- *Shona woman, who are you?*

In other words, in the women's quest for the Christ they find as an answer to their questions, they are simultaneously empowered to name both Christ and themselves. In this gestaltic approach, the women are able to come up with an African Shona Christ. The crucial question is, *what contribution does this Shona women's Christological perspective make to the church's understanding of a contemporary Christology?* The same question can be asked of the individual Shona woman's contribution to an African Shona Christology.

Following the Aristotelian (cf. E. van Eck & A. G. van Aarde 1989:779) structure of a narrative (plot) or drama as having a *beginning, middle, and end*, the Shona women's drama of life is set in the backdrop of the Incarnation. The narrative thus highlights Shona women, *first*, as definers of their self-identity, then in the *main body* they proceed to define their Christian self-understanding, engage in naming Christ (i.e., who Christ is and what God in Christ is doing in their midst) through faith experience, and tell of their participation in the mission of Christ, and *finally*, celebrate their awareness of the Incarnate Jesus as the *Emmanuel* (*God among us* - cf. Mt 1:23) or *the Christ, Son of the living God* (cf. Mt 16:16). The climactic point depicts Shona women telling of the various ways of their dying (the cost of discipleship) and rising (joy of the resurrection) with Christ. As such, the story has a happy *denouement* in which we are given insight into Shona women's deep and holistic spirituality as they celebrate their

awareness to what God in Christ is doing in their midst. In Shona women's prayers, songs and liturgies, God in Christ is celebrated as the *One who is all in all* – the *Answer* to Shona women's deepest longings or concerns. The prevailing image of Christ is *Muponesi* (*Deliverer-Saviour- Redeemer-Liberator*).

The stories of women are structured through questionnaires. The collation of these stories is enhanced through the vantage point of participatory observation. My status as an *insider* is important for a predominantly *oral-aural* culture. I therefore hope to be able to make connections and fill in missing elements in weaving various strands of the narrative into a coherent and comprehensive whole. In what John Navone (1986:219-222) and Terrence Tilley (1985:23-26; cf. Stephen Crites) call the *narrative mediation* and *quality*, respectively, of human experience, the relation between story and personal identity is explored in asking questions, which elicit from participants a personal statement. Four access points of *family*, *ethnic group*, *social class* and *church* or *denomination* are used in this structured storytelling. It is noteworthy that *gender* relations (issues) filter through all these areas of experience. Furthermore, in the context of stories interpreting or illuminating stories, it can also be said that the women's various stories, in turn, illumine each other. This, in turn, undergirds the feminist tenet of promoting solidarity among women themselves.

As the women reflect critically on lived faith experience, the exercise becomes simultaneously consciousness-raising. This is particularly true in the sense that critical reflection resorts to critical memory in probing the biography of the self. This leads to authentic self-definition. Women are urged to become proactive agents of their own history. In this way, it is as Navone (1986:223) says that the potential of the now is discovered, explored, named and actualized within a conversation with the Jesus story and this leads to the construction of a vision for the future. It is a way of knowing that holds in tension past and present for the sake of reshaping the future. In pursuing the power of naming, the women appropriate the power by naming their faith experience in the background of the Incarnation. In this way Shona women give form to their Christian affirmation. It is history, or, more appropriately, *her-story* not as seen, but as lived out, or *herstory* born out of the faith experiences of Shona women.

4.2 SELF-IDENTITY OF SHONA WOMEN

Of the fifty- six respondents to the questionnaire (I, Q.1), there are twenty-three Karanga, twenty-one Zezuru, five Manyika, four Korekore, and three Ndau. It is noteworthy that there is no neat demarcation of boundaries as concerning ethnic grouping. For example, respondents in

the Buhera area had to make a difficult decision as to whether they are Manyika or Karanga, whereas those in Mutoko area were torn between being Zezuru or Korekore (see Fig 6 below).⁶¹

Figure 6



Concerning *marital status*, there are twelve single women, eleven religious women, ten single mothers (both unmarried and divorced mothers), twenty married mothers, and three widows. The *sampling* was mainly from the Chishawasha semi-urban area, Harare city, Kwekwe city (Midlands) and Serima (Masvingo Province-between Mvuma and Masvingo) rural area (my own home area). Consequently, *geographical location* gives eighteen urban, twenty-one rural-urban, and seventeen rural. The respondents have various *occupations* ranging from simple housewives, and rural farmers, domestic workers, students, and nurse-aids to teachers, social

⁶¹ Map adapted from Deanna Swaney's (1997:777 – see also Swaney 1992:46-47).

workers, seminary and university lecturers, nurses, directors of Aids awareness and prevention campaigns, religious sisters and pastoral workers, civil servant, counsellor, data analyst, and administrators in children's homes. Among social workers is the founder of the **Shungu Dzevana** (*Children's aspirations or desires*) Trust in Harare – a home for HIV/AIDS orphans, and another respondent pioneered the rehabilitation of street children in Kwekwe.

Concerning *denomination affiliation*, the majority of respondents (forty-six) belong to the Roman Catholic Church. Otherwise, there are six members of the Apostolic Faith Mission of Zimbabwe, three Anglicans, two members of the Reformed Church of Zimbabwe, and one Methodist. Nearly all the respondents belong to some church *support group* in which they may have leadership positions. These include, the following guilds, Mary Queen of Heaven and St Agnes' guilds (Harare Diocese), St Anne's and St Mary's guilds (Gweru Diocese) for women and girls, respectively. *Responsibilities* claimed include a religious sister as member of the General Council, and a mother acting as *vatete* (*aunt*) for St Agnes youth guild.

In self-evaluation of *social status*, Shona women were generally modest or unassuming in that thirty-eight, fifteen, and one rated themselves as middle-class, poor, and rich, respectively. It is noteworthy that of the women who rated themselves as being of middle-class income, most of them would by western standards be counted as poor. In other words, this is relative poverty. *Criteria* used in this assessment include: (a) children (understood as gifts from God and especially if they are gifted intellectually and have a good profession), (b) occupation (including personal skills and talents), and (c) property (for rural farmers this includes livestock and agricultural equipment like scotch-carts). Shona women were found to be honest and unassuming in this context. In the adage, **Ndingatuka Mwari** (*I would be cursing God*), they felt that not to acknowledge God's gratuitousness would be to curse God. Initially, rural women showed acquiescence to patriarchal stereotypes that undervalue women's work as *no work*. This was expressed in the Shona clichés, **Handina chandinaita** (*I am doing nothing*) and, **Ndakangogara pamba** (*I am seated at home*). When I asked them to reclaim their role and dignity in the home, they were able to see that they are actually overburdened in working twenty-four hours as rural farmers and in household chores and that most of woman's work that is undervalued as *no work* is subsequently not remunerated.

4.3 SHONA WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN SELF-UNDERSTANDING

The spotlight is on consciousness-raising for a better understanding and appropriation of the creation and baptismal status. The quintessential question in theological anthropology challenges Shona women to ask (cf. **Appendix II, Qs. 2,3,4,5**), *what does being created in God's image and likeness* (Gen 1:26-27) and the *Christian Magna Carta* (1984:75) that states

that there is 'neither Jew nor Greek (the cultural imperative); neither slave nor free (the social mandate); neither male nor female (the sexual mandate); for we are all one in Christ Jesus' (Richard Longenecker 1984) mean for them in present day Zimbabwe? In other words, Shona women claim their creation and baptismal dignity and role as they focus on the *family, ethnic-tribal group, social class and church-denomination* as areas of experience. That gender issues filter through all these dimensions, shows that the areas of experience are mutually influencing. Another important observation is that the areas of experience are a double-edged sword in being at once affirming and dehumanizing women. Women acknowledge a type of equality with men that celebrate both commonality and difference. In the cliché *equal but different*, women recognize that *difference* does not mean *inferior*. On the contrary, difference can be celebrated in the richness it brings to each of the communities in focus.

4.3.1 IN THE FAMILY

Women claim to be life affirming in being vessels of grace and in their role as primary agents of instilling cultural, social and Christian values in children. They tell stories and visions never just their own. In their role as care-givers in Zimbabwe today, Shona women are overburdened because of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and also because of the political turmoil connected with the land grab.

As noted above, Shona women are valued and respected as mothers, aunts, grandmothers, elder sister and in-laws. It is a reciprocal relationship in which respect (deference) for elders and exemplarity are underscored. Shona women claim their dignity as *procreators (co-creators with God), teachers, care givers, role models (exemplary), pride of their husbands - also as helper and advisor, fully human and proud to be women and as being a God-given gift to the family*. One respondent says, *I am the eldest girl and therefore I enjoy respect in the family*. The majority of respondents assert that they are respected as *vatete (aunt)* and confidante to their brothers' children. The advisory role was spotlighted in the assertion that *behind every successful man is a woman* (I suppose the reverse situation also obtains). Grandmothers acknowledged their senior position as matrons of the family. Some of these women spoke of a good *vamwene-muroora (the owner-the one obtained through 'roora')* relationship and others described it as strained at one time or other. It was expressed, however, that these familial or consanguine (Hebrew: *abbā-adelphoi - women and men being 'brothers and sisters'* [Shona: *hazvanzi nehazvnzi*], *children of the same Father*) relationships were lopsided in favour of patriarchy.

In this distortion of reciprocal, consanguine relationships, Shona women denounce patriarchy as diminishing the person of both man and woman. In an incarnational self-understanding, they

claim *equality of every member as brothers and sisters in Christ, children of the same Father.*

In this context the women express the following sentiments:

I expect my husband to respect me as I do him, that women must be given a chance to rule, and plan (make decisions) in the family, that I am equal to and as important as my brothers but in practice men are considered and treated as more superior to women.

Shona women claim horizontal consanguine relationships in which *no one is regarded as a slave or inferior*, and regret that *in practice men monopolize the status of headship – woman is servant and man is the head of the family and guardian of children.* One respondent is emphatic that *as a woman I am never viewed to be equal to man – unless a woman fights for her dignity, she has no respect from the family head.* Another equally important observation is that *the girl-child is not given her due respect.* Shona women deplore that younger brothers sometimes do not practice deference to their elder sisters and demand this of the latter in claiming the *father of the family, heir and guardian* (Latin: *pater familias patria potestas*) role.

Shona women see the imperative to treat all children equally as inherent in tradition. One respondent alluded to the proverb, *manhanga chenga ose* (*you should appreciate and keep all pumpkins*). The proverb echoes the English proverb, *do not look a gift horse in the mouth.* The proverb is very relevant in a context where children are considered as gifts from God through the ancestors. The women as mothers are resolved to redress the situation in which, more often than not the girl child suffers from both physical and psychological abuse by *treating all children the same in terms of education - participation in domestic chores and access to formal education.* Above all, Shona women appropriate the organic model of family – the body with many parts. In this model they expect dialogue of equal partners, in which equal participation, love and sharing of ideas prevail.

Women also admit to what Oduyoye (1990:46) calls a *martyr-complex* in which more often than not, Christian values of *self-sacrifice* and *martyrdom* have ambiguities in favour of men and there is little or no *reciprocity* in familial relationships. In this context, women stick through violent and abusive marriages for the sake of the well-being of their children. This view is accentuated by the Shona cliché, *ndinogarira vana vangu* (*I will stick it through for the sake of my children*). One respondent, delights in the fact that she stuck through thick and thin to her marriage for the sake of her children and saw them grow up to maturity and get places in life. In this context also, it is as Oduyoye says that motherhood –mothering is a double-edged tool. The negative side is that it is a biological niche from which the woman leaves at her own shame (1990:43). But educated women are challenging this mentality also because the new Zimbabwean law grants guardianship of children to the more responsible parent who is more

often than not a woman. One interviewee underscores this view by saying that she filed a divorce from her husband because he was beating her. She was pleased that she was granted guardianship of her two children. My immediate response to this was, *you are a liberated woman!* It is also important to note that she had full support from her family as an only girl among five brothers and with seemingly good Christian parents.

Shona women ask, *Why is it required that women only practise meticulous deference (respect) for men, e.g. in genuflecting when giving food to the husband?* In a new Christian and feminist consciousness, at the occasion of my sister's funeral (11 November, 2000), I made a conscious deviation from the norm concerning the Karanga practice of deference. In the Shona sexist bifurcation of men and women, not only are men served the meal first, but also women have to walk on knees when serving food. Serving my deceased sister's in-laws (men and women), my *vatete* went ahead of me walking on her knees with a dish of water and towel for hand washing. Before I could follow with the food, I explained that *I am a feminist interested in raising the dignity of Shona women* and apologized that I was not going to follow the tradition of kneeling while serving since that would be acting against my principles. I added that they had to understand that I was not doing that out of disrespect for them. The women empathized and nodded in condescension but the men replied jokingly and begrudgingly saying that although they understood my position, they still thought I should follow the time-honoured tradition like my *vatete* (father's sister).

Divorced and single mothers in general said they are negated as prostitutes and in turn, denigrated the roles of confidante and mistress of initiation for the brother's children. Challenging their circumscribed position as minors, Shona women ask whether they need a man to be recognized as fully human. One respondent, a divorced single mother, however, challenged the androcentric understanding that a husband gives a woman dignity. She added that Shona culture undermines the unique individuality of women in that women who are divorced or have children outside marriage are treated with suspicion for being loose or prostitutes. Consequently she said these women as *vatete* are denied acting as confidante to brother's children. She added ironically that they are nevertheless asked to make a contribution where money is concerned. She emphatically claimed, *I have come to realize that I do not need a man to be fully human.* It is noteworthy that in giving out questionnaires, I found some respondents docile in saying that *I will be helped by baba* ('father' as denoting husband) and this bordered on submission to sexist stereotypes that set women as intellectually inferior to men. Alternatively, it is cautiousness not to hurt male pride. The girl-child understood herself to be abused physically and psychologically in being circumscribed to domestic chores and being denied heir-ship and property rights. The married women felt they were alienated from

both the natal group and the marital group in being considered minors to men (and therefore denied guardianship of children) and in being treated as *vatorwa* (*aliens*) whose main task is according to the Shona adage, *Mukadzi ndewedzinza* (the wife belongs to the *family or clan*) to bear children, particularly an heir to the *family or clan* (*dzinza*) – woman reduced to a walking ovary or an egg-laying machine to be discarded (divorced) in situations of barrenness and failure to raise a male heir. There are sentiments that the Shona woman's role, as advisor to the husband is never acknowledged in public circles.

In the understanding that women are sometimes their own worst enemies (cf. Chimhanda 2000:27-32;134-136), the respondents point to subtle ways in which Shona women show complicity (collusion) with patriarchy and co-optation of their personhood, for example, in socializing young girls to patriarchal obligations. Some respondents show that they have internalized patriarchal circumscription of women by asserting that: *"I am expected to be motherly and submissive to my husband"* and, *"I am supposed to be supported by my brothers and husband, but I find myself being the one to give financial support and advice to the whole family."* One respondent claimed that *the worst enemy for woman is woman*. For example, some women show that they have internalized patriarchal circumscription of women by asserting that *women should allow the father of the family to lead and should take a lower role*. And again, *the female must respect the male whether father or brother*.

4.3.2 IN THE ETHNIC-TRIBAL GROUP

Shona women describe their Christian identity as set in the background of an increasingly multicultural society fostered by globalization, Westernization and improved communication technology. While claiming their cultural heritage as giving them full identity, nevertheless, Shona women show openness to cultural pluralism. Shona women lay emphasis on a type of equality that promotes openness to other ethnic groups (a confluence of cultures). Once again they adopt the organic model of *interculturalism* in which cultural differences are appreciated for the wealth they bring to inter-cultural living. As individuals, cultural pluralism is expressed in the following sentiments: *"I have to learn from the good things of other cultures"* and that *"although there are different ethnic groups with unique beliefs and practice, nevertheless, we are united in Christ."*

Concerning cultural sovereignty, paradoxically some respondents express a wholesale condemnation for ancestral beliefs and practices. But they also show contradiction in that in some sections of the story, they claim their ancestral heritage. This aversion can be explained in part by alluding to ingrained socialization by early missionaries who, in turn, made a blanket condemnation of local cultures as pagan or idolatry (fetish) and sinful. Nevertheless, in a

creative tension between culture and the Gospel, the latter is understood to judge culture. In this dialectic between culture and the Gospel, Shona women display a posture for *acculturation, enculturation and inculturation*.

One respondent acknowledges the confluence of cultures by asserting that, *due to cultural mix, it has become normal for me to live with people of difference cultures*. But Shona women denounce a kind of ethnocentrism that exists among the Shona. Comparatively, there are sentiments of ethnocentrism in claiming that that the Karanga charge exorbitant bride price where the Zezuru subscribe heavily to the Shona proverb, **mukuwasha muwonde hauperi kudyiwa** (*A son-in-law is like a fig tree which gives fruit in all seasons*) in that a son-in-law is required to give a big food hamper to the mother-in-law whenever he visits her. The Manyika, Korekore and Ndau are renowned (in fact feared) for the practice of sorcery. One respondent says, the various ethnic groups are *equal but the Karanga are better educated*. Although the Karanga are in the majority of the five Shona ethnic groups, nevertheless, this is an outcry for sensitivity to minority ethnic groups like the Korekore and the Ndau. The urgency for this sensitivity to minority groups is emphasized by another respondent who says, *I look forward to the time when the Ndau language may be used in the media and in school*.

Shona women acknowledge identity-in-difference in sentiments like, *“as a Karanga, I have the role and dignity of mother, vatete, vamwene and grandmother – matron of the family.”* The dual nature of culture is acknowledged in sentiments like, *“men and women are supposed to be equal but as a Zezuru woman I am expected to consult my father and or my brothers before I can make any decision, be it to become a nun or to marry. I have to follow important channels through the ‘paternal aunt’ (vatete).”* *“Females have no voice to whatever is happening in the clan or tribe.”* *“I view Christ as ‘male’ since males always preside as judges - among the Ndau leadership positions of chief and headman are reserved for males.”* *“If a married woman gets seriously ill, she is sent to her home to be cared for by her natal group, whereas when a husband gets ill, the wife is obliged to look after him.”* One respondent grieves at being a victim of the latter situation. She says, *when I was highly pregnant and mentally ill (maternal depression), my husband sent me back to my parents. My parents had to care for me and I delivered my baby under their care. I then went back to my husband when I was well.* Another respondent underscores this view by being disgruntled that *when women are sick, men send them to be cared for by the natal group, whereas when the husband is ill, not only do men demand to be cared for by their wives, but women themselves feel obliged to do so in fulfilment of their marriage vows – ‘for better or for worse’.*

Shona women experience this as a double-edged sword. On the positive side, and concerning identity-in-difference, the women appreciate and want to retain the role of *vatete* and *mbuya* in initiating the girl-child into cultural values and in particular, initiating the girl-child into marriage. *Vatete* (*father's sister*) also enjoys the role of confidante and mediation in marriage to brother's children. Shona women also appreciate that their dignity and role increases in the marital group from that of a junior wife to that of *mbuya*, *vamwene* (*mother-in-law*) and matron of the family. One respondent says that *the traditional practice of congratulating the parents of the new baby should be revived*.

Shona women experience culture as a double-edged tool – at once affirming and dehumanizing. As mentioned above, they experience both identity-in-difference and identity-in-alienation. As women root themselves in Christian tradition, they realize that in the *abba adelphoi* relationality there are other powers in which according to Joan Chittister (1998:6), *those who do not have power... become a resource*. They experience alienation in a sexist binary logic in which men are the *logi* (*superior mind*) where women are the *a-logoi* (*inferior mind*, cf. Ruether 1983,1993:125), man is the head where woman is a minor, men are *bulls* or *impregnators* where women are considered prostitutes, men are manly, and women are barren, and men engaging in sorcery are *varoyi vamasikati* (*open or daylight witches*) where women are witches - active mainly at night. Thus Shona women are grieved that negative cultural elements are projected on them while similar acts done by men are rationalized as good or tolerated for a desired good. For example, men begetting children outside marriage are tolerated as promoting the growth of the clan. It is also ironical that woman's fertility exalts man (promotes machismo or the masculine ego) where her own person diminishes. In summary, Shona women deplore the violation of the unique dignity and role of their personhood through the above practices that subsume the individual in the group.

Shona women question the reductionism of patriarchy in which woman is sometimes negated as useless and consequently a thing to be substituted by another better one, for example, wife substitution in cases of barrenness or failure to raise a male heir. By the same token, they raise questions of heir-ship, guardianship, and gender equity in general. In this context, Shona women deplore the dishonour of God's image in an androcentric dehumanization and reduction of women and the girl-child to objects for ritual cleansing or material gain. Women are grieved that in being treated as minors, they are denigrated from full participation in the *centres of decision-making* (Shona: *dare*) and access to the means of livelihood. Women are circumscribed as providers and producers for both the natal and the marital group. Alternatively, in the creeping and crippling western type of individualism, Shona women talk of alienation from both the natal and the marital group. They are left in the lurch in the sense of

belonging properly neither to the natal nor to the marital group. Shona women experience identity crisis (dehumanization or anthropological poverty) through patriarchal obligations of **roora** (*bride price*), **mavhunwa** (*payment of damages to the girl's father or woman's husband in cases of adultery or premarital sex*), **kuripa ngozi** (*appeasement of vengeance spirits*), **kuroora guva** (*payment of roora 'over the grave' or deceased woman's body – usually a condition for correct burial*), **kuzvarira** (*pledged marriages*) and **chimutsa mapfihwa** (*substitute wife for deceased relative*). Although *roora* is payable to both father and mother, the latter receives a token in the form of the **mombe yehumai** (*mother's cow*) where the former receives the lion's share.

Shona women tell of their suffering from *machismo*, especially in the payment of **roora** and *damages* (Shona: *mavhunwa*). The women note that in the *roora* abolition or retention debate, men are in the majority of those who are *pro-roora*. Shona women denounce the practice that allows the father to get the lion's share of *roora* in the form of **danga** (*herd of cattle - in cash or kind*) and other *roora* requirements, where the mother only gets a token in form of the **mombe yehumai** (*mother's cow*). They also expose that **roora** gives men (political) rights in **personam** and these they denounce as rights **persona non grata** (*dehumanizing women*, cf. Eric Ayisi 1972:42-44).

But cultural beliefs and practices are very tenacious and it takes consciousness-raising of the whole group to effect change. A case in point is of a Christian parent (my Grade One teacher) who decided to depart from the norm of accepting **roora** for one of his daughters. Unfortunately, this had a very negative impact on the daughter's marriage. The latter's husband viewed her with suspicion and abused her verbally and physically (wife-battering). He would say. *Your father knew of your inadequacies as a woman and therefore he did not ask for 'roora'*. It is also possible that this type of violence accounts for the woman's premature death.

One respondent pointed out that in the Shona mind-set, the word *damage* (has sexual nuances) is heavily sexually loaded. Shona women ask, *who is damaged or to whom should damages be payable?* They deplore the dilemma in which a girl is impregnated and the partner who refuses to marry her pays damages to the girl's father or brother. The latter is seen to squander this money or cattle as his due while the woman now a single mother struggles for survival. Of course when the father of the child is in paid employment, in the new Zimbabwe law the woman can claim maintenance, but the male guardian would claim a share in this too.

Shona women denounce the practice of **kuroora guva** (payment of damages or outstanding *roora* prior to burial) as a violation of the cultural value of giving last respects (correct burial) to

a deceased relative. The Shona believe that when a person dies, he or she joins her paternal ancestors. Thus the senior man or woman performs the **kutara guva** (*marking the grave*) or **kutara imba** (*demarcating the house*) ritual. It is important to note that the senior woman as *vatete* or father figure can perform this rite. A Karanga respondent also maintains that men perform prayers for men and women do the **kupira** (*intercessory prayers*) for women but there is no strict division of labour in this respect. Consequently, more often than not senior men override women in seeing this as their prerogative. In the *kuroora guva* practice, the agnates of the deceased woman refuse to perform the above-mentioned funeral rites if a woman dies because of being assaulted or before *roora* is paid. In the former case, the agnates demand *danga* (herd of cattle) as **mombe dzinotsika** (*cattle on fours*) - live animals. I have seen that happen in my extended family (cf. Chimhanda 2000:82). The practice is a caricature of Shona custom when people capitalize over a dead body and the deceased is buried as a thing to be despised. I remember that in the mid 1990s, the government had to intervene by making this practice illegal as a condition for burial. In other words, the relatives can pursue the case after the woman has been accorded a good funeral.

Shona women are concerned about the oppression of widows in the practices of ritual cleansing, levirate marriages and the restrictions imposed on the widow before the *kurova guva* (homing of the spirits) ceremony. Traditionally, the latter is performed a year after death. Before that the widow or widower is considered still married and has to be strictly faithful to the marriage. Violation of this law is at one's own peril. It appears that the Shona patriarchal society empathizes more with the widower than with the widow. The Shona usually perform the homing of the spirits ceremony of a deceased wife within a year after death, whereas that of a deceased husband can be prolonged indefinitely. The agnates of the deceased, in accusing the adulterer of **kupisa guva** (*burning the grave*), claim heavy *damages*. Moreover in the ritual of **kudarika uta** (*the widow being asked to 'jump over the deceased husband's knobkerrie*) it is the widow only who is asked in front of the public to pass the test of faithfulness or else face public embarrassment and wrath. As seen in the proverb, **nhaka ndeyemombe yemunhu inozvionera** (*only cattle or things can be inherited, a person has to make an autonomous choice in this respect*), it is tradition that the widow is not forced into levirate marriage. She is free to accept levirate marriage or to reject it. If she takes the latter course, she is then free to marry outside the clan. But what tends to happen is that widows accept limited levirate marriage in giving the levirate ritual water to their sons. By doing this they show that they want to stay in the marital group and look after their children. Two Karanga widows tell of giving the levirate water to their sons. It is also noteworthy that one of these sons, prior to having consulted his mother, in turn, passed on the levirate water to his *vatete*. The widow adds that the aunt was very happy and proud to be chosen among many *suitors*. In this case, the

widow's son being too young, it is a woman who has ultimate responsibility for her deceased brother's family (acts regent). But cases are known where the woman can misuse this trust by conferring the levirate on one of her male kinsmen. The widows were surprised by the subtle way in which they acquiesced to being minors to their own children. Nevertheless, they were happy to be self-demeaning for the sake of a greater good. Or, might this be another case of succumbing to a martyr-complex?

Among the Karanga, widow ritual cleansing demands that from the time the husband's body is lying in state until after burial, the wife cannot take a bath (cf. Chimhanda 1999:33). After the funeral she is given water to bath. This can cause serious physical discomfort for a person already emotionally stressed in mourning. A Manyika respondent claimed that on the first night after burial of the husband, ritual cleansing of the widow follows. In this the widow is forced to sleep with a male kinsman of the husband. Shona women denounce this as a traumatic experience and also a big risk of contracting HIV/AIDS in the present upsurge of the pandemic. There is also the risk of the widow falling pregnant. Whereas traditionally in a situation where polygyny was rife, and group solidarity was strong, levirate marriage was ideal in that the children were well cared for within the extended family, today because of economic restraints and the erosion of the extended family, the widow also suffers estrangement from her sisters-in-law – wives of the husband's brothers or kinsmen because the women fear a threatening polygamous co-habitation. In this case where the word *polygamy* is a misnomer, the respondents ask, *why polygyny is allowed and not polygamy?* They ask that not because they condone polygamy, but because they see this as another example in which culture is manipulated in the service of a machismo attitude.

Shona women point out that the widow also suffers from dispossession by the husband's agnates. In a traumatic chain of events the deceased's agnates can override the will. Although the Roman-Dutch law protects the widow, widow disinheritance is an area where Roman-Dutch law is in tension with customary law and the result is that more often than not, the latter prevails. But some women concede that widowers too suffer from callous dispossession of household goods (traditionally understood to be women's property) by the wife's agnates. In a personal note, my family suffered from this type of patriarchy when my mother died (Chimhanda 2000:86).

A case in point of women suffering as minors was when recently I witnessed the high patriarchal circumscription of Karanga women in an extended family *dare* (jury). The family was deliberating or mediating over the squabble between brother and sister (my *babamunini-uncle brother/cousin to my father and vatete*) over rights of use of their late mother's cattle.

Notice I say *use* because traditionally, a deceased woman's property belongs to her female agnates, but livestock is usually left under the surety of the deceased woman's children who, in turn, have to practice *good stewardship*. In the *dare*, the elders (all men) cornered my aunt back to front for not showing respect to the brother in his capacity as *father*. My aunt stood her ground and claimed that the brother should show deference to her since she was older than he was. When I was asked to deliberate on the issue, I found I was silenced too, for, who was I to give judgment on two contestants in their capacity as *father* to me? It was a shocking realization that women in such a *dare have ears but 'no mouth'* (cf. Flora Veit-Wild 1997:3-5). Concurring with Veit-Wild, this is an example where women have to listen and be submissive to men and yet they are denied a voice.

But an opportunity came when, outside the *dare*, two of the elders asked me what my Master in Theology dissertation was about. I explained that I explored the liberation potential of both Shona culture and the Gospel. As they listened eagerly, I seized the opportunity to point out that Shona women are not free and tactically noted on how they themselves had treated my poor aunt unjustly in the *dare* although they knew that she had a greater claim to using the cattle than her brother since she was the more responsible of the two looking after an aged and feeble father. I also stopped short at pointing out that the *dare* itself was illegal since traditionally it is women who should have been deliberating over a deceased woman's property.

A very important observation concerning the historical development of patriarchy, Shona women failed to mention is the erosion of the extended family through Westernization and globalization and the consequent economic restraints. There has emerged a new culture of violence against children and the old. This is seen in the dumping of children and the old or putting them in homes for care. As a Karanga woman I pause to ask, *what has happened to the Shona's love of children and value for the old?* A case in point is that about sixteen years ago when we (Mary Ward Sisters) deliberated about starting a children's home in a high-density area of Kwekwe, the indigenous sisters (including myself) objected on the pretext that no Shona child could be abandoned as an orphan. We also claimed that even a poor or bad home is better than keeping children in an institution. We maintained that, on the contrary, orphaned children would be absorbed into the extended family. Nevertheless, we went ahead with starting a children's home and at present our children's home and all other orphanages in the country are over-subscribed.

Another important observation in this context is that baby dumping impinges more on the girl-child than the boy-child. A practical example concerns the occupants in our children's home. The first occupants were a family of three girls and one boy. It took long for the latter to find

another male companion. I remember the joy he expressed when in a similar case of new arrivals he did find a male companion. Whereas there are cases of the dumping of girl-babies, hardly any boy-baby is dumped – one can always trace the latter back to a next of kin. Thus it can be said that even in adverse conditions of economic constraints and upsurge of orphans due to the AIDS pandemic, the boy –child is still protected by the Shona’s love for a male heir.

4.3.3 IN SOCIAL CLASS

Shona women claim for themselves a kind of equality in which there is no exploitation. In the God-humanity-creation connectedness, emphasis is put on *good stewardship*. Material goods are given sacramental value and are thus considered holy. In Shona holistic cosmology, children, food and other property are seen as gifts given *gratis* by God. Rural women tell of how they have to observe the *rule of the forest* (ritual clapping, not sharing one’s likes, dislikes, tastes and distastes, not being wasteful, etc.) in picking mushrooms, wild oranges, caterpillars, etc. – things that are considered to be made available to all people and of how the violation of the rule is punishable by the *owners of the forest* (God and the ancestors) through getting lost, mysterious disappearance or even death. There is emphasis on appreciating the Giver and responsible use of creation.

Shona women as an important part of God’s memory deplore being denied access to means of livelihood and being dehumanized to the level of marketable commodities.

Shona women say, “*although we are supposed to treat all members of society equally, in practice some people are poor and dependent on the rich.*” “*The rich exploit the poor in a situation where the rich grow richer and the poor poorer.*” “*Women are exploited in the sense that most of their work is not recognized as ‘work’ and is therefore not remunerated. Women in paid employment are not given due respect by their husbands. Very often it is what one contributes materially that matters.*” One respondent claims, *when I am working, I am expected either to show my pay slip or bring the money to my father or husband and he is the one to allocate me a share of it as he pleases.*

One respondent remarked that in economic crises women are used as a resource. A case in point is that of my aunt who tells of being exploited by the husband into a polygamous cohabitation. She regaled the family by telling of how in the epoch-making 1947 drought and famine, her husband (my uncle, brother to my mother) doubly abused her by marrying two more wives in exchange with two bags of *rapoko* or finger-millet (the sweat of her labour).⁶² By the same note, in the present political and socio-economic crisis engineered by self-styled

⁶² *Rapoko* or finger millet (see Fig.5 above).

war veterans, there was an ironic remark that paraffin is becoming part of *roora*. Indeed in the synonym of *roora* as **pfuma** (*wealth*), women tend to be reduced to property (*pfuma* – indeed the girl-child is sometimes identified as *pfuma* by the father) to be marketed. Thus the spotlight of women's outcry for access to and control of the means of livelihood is on overcharging of *roora*, denigration of women's heirship and property rights.

Shona women appreciate that since independence from colonial rule (1980), there is no lack of laws that protect them – that significant laws have been introduced to enforce gender equity (see also Mavis Gibbs, in Judith Myrick 1995:16). One respondent appreciates the effectiveness of the employment equity laws by saying: *I feel that God is 'neither male nor female'. My role and dignity is fully realized in my work as a teacher because we have equal opportunities and a balanced workload for both male and female.* Similar sentiments are that “*educated women now hold high positions*” and that today there are no taboos encouraging the bifurcation into male and female camps especially in that “*women and men can mingle and eat together on special occasions,*” that “*women are contributing significantly to the economy,*” and that “*these days women can own land or buy houses as long as they can afford to do so.*” Shona women rejoice that *they are beginning to know and reclaim their rights.* For example, one respondent says, *I require the same employment opportunities as my male counterparts.* In recognizing the rural farmer as a woman, and *that there are women who are competent farmers,* Shona women claim that *women must also be allocated fields.* In a situation where men monopolize public function and circumscribe women to domestic chores, women make an outcry on what the German theologian, Ursula Pfafflin (1993:59-78) calls *the abortion of fathers*, that is, men absconding fatherhood in form of nurturing for their young and say that *both father and mother must work hard to fend for their family.* By the same token, women denounce being denigrated public function. Divorced and single mothers claim their role as *breadwinners.* One respondent says, *I am adviser to my husband but in public he does not acknowledge this* (the element of women as anonymous authors).

Unfortunately, sometimes there is a discrepancy between (Roman-Dutch law and Customary law) the practical enforcement of these laws and ingrained customary law, the latter of which is a trajectory of patriarchy. My sister explained that in the case of her contesting for guardianship of children of our deceased brother, she was granted it against our younger brother (but elder brother to the deceased), not only because of the traditional understanding that *vatete ndibaba* (*aunt as father's sister is 'father'*), but also because she was proved to be the one more responsible or caring than her brother. It is noteworthy that the problem of maintaining the *status quo* is not so much sanctioned by ignorance about the laws that protect women, but by the fear of breaking family loyalties – taking a close relative to court. Two respondents tell of

squabbles about family land claims with younger brothers in which the latter are adamant at dispossessing them of their means of livelihood, and yet these two women consider approaching the courts as a last resort.

In paid professions, Shona women acknowledge the effectiveness of employment equity laws. These women, in turn, tell of considerable economic independence and of having access to leadership positions. Divorced or single mothers in particular are able to climb quite high on the socio-economic ladder. One respondent notes that this is particularly true of renowned musicians (e.g. Stella Chiweshe) and politicians (e.g. Shuvai Mahofa) and that it is as if husbands inhibit the full realization of women's potential.

In the upsurge of the rape of minors (women and the girl-child), Shona women ask, *is this a new phenomenon?* They are shocked to find that this is a new form of what was traditionally understood as *divisi* (a kind of sorcery in which in an agrarian economy fathers indulged in incest with the girl-child with the hope of getting a bumper harvest). Today, in the HIV/AIDS crisis, male sufferers are advised by witch doctors to cleanse themselves of the disease by having sex with a virgin. The media shocks us today with reports of children and even babies being raped by close relatives. Materialism among the Shona has also seen the raping, murder and mutilation of parts of and from women to be used with *muti* (traditional medicine) in sorcery for business acumen. Among the Korekore agrarian community (with cotton as the cash crop), women tell of the prevalence of suicide among women. These act out of despair when the husband (usually with girl friends) squanders all the proceeds from the season's sale.

It can be said that the culture of violence in the home is exacerbated by the Shona's culture of silence. The adage that undergirds this practice is *kusafumura hapwa* (literally *not to show what is under the armpit*) – denoting a conspiracy of silence concerning family matters. Today Shona women welcome media publicity of violence in the home and elsewhere in society. In particular, Shona women appreciate the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC 2) programme *Chakafukidza dzimba matenga* (roofs conceal a lot of family life). Through this, people have become aware, not only of the reality of violence against women, but also, through networking and solidarity with other women, victims have become empowered in finding a way forward (see Chimhanda 2000:210-211).

As caregivers, Shona women are overburdened today in the upsurge of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The disease has affected almost every family in Zimbabwe. Women die prematurely as victims of AIDS. One of the respondents says she is HIV positive as a victim of rape. She says the rapist was apparently on a revenge spree. Shona women claim that more often than not

it is the husband who is unfaithful in marriage. Concerning the care of HIV/AIDS orphans, the burden is greater on the girl-child and grandmothers. For the girl-child, it is as Patricia Walsh, Irish and a member of the Dominican Missionary Sisters (Representing the Health Desk at the Zimbabwe Conference for Religious Superiors – February 1998) says, *the girl-child becomes an adult overnight* on suddenly being faced with the situation of having to care for other siblings. She adds that the girl-child stands at risk of contracting HIV/AIDS because she finds that sex work is the only means of earning a living. In other words, the girl-child in such a situation falls an easy pray to *sugar daddies*. Shona women grieve that grandmothers who traditionally enjoy being cared for by their own children and grandchildren, are now overwhelmed by having to care for orphaned grandchildren. A case in point is that of my **maiguru** (*elder sister of my mother*). The AIDS pandemic claimed the lives of her son and two daughters with the result that she has a house full of orphaned grandchildren. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that she suffers from a hip-replacement operation and yet peasant farming is her only means of livelihood.

Shona women, in appropriating their public role, are making an impact in society. In this respect they feature as *mothers of the nation*. We have seen how Shona women, in response to the plight of HIV/AIDS orphans and the threat of the pandemic to the nation, have started rehabilitation and awareness and prevention schemes. Here it is important to note that both religious men and women make a significant contribution to this. Among religious men, the Jesuits deserve a mention for starting programmes for peer group empowerment in HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention and for the rehabilitation of street children in Harare. Jesuits too work in collaboration with the Little Company of Mary (L.C.M.) sisters in nursing HIV/AIDS terminal patients in the **Mashambazhou** (*[time] when elephants bathe*) Rehabilitation Centre. The prefix **Ma-** denotes *dawn* as the time of day when elephants bathe and *dawn*. This, in turn, puts emphasis on THE fact that the Centre gives the victims the hope of at least dying as human beings. A Jesuit priest is the patron of the *Shungu Dzevana* Trust started by one of the respondents. He tries to rehabilitate AIDS orphans in families as well as give them food, clothing, decent schooling and canvassing for employment opportunities. One of the respondents, as a teacher, took a further course in guidance and counselling. She finds this a boon in dealing with children who come mostly from overcrowded conditions of migrant farm-workers. She says it is alarming how many of these children are victims of sexual abuse. She is overburdened in this task since other teachers in the school refer difficult children to her and yet she has also to cope with her teaching load. It is noteworthy that the HIV positive respondent has since changed profession from teaching to a programmer for HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention campaigns. In this work, she finds personal testimony is a spin off.

4.3.4 IN THE CHURCH OR DENOMINATION

Shona women claim an all-inclusive identity that appreciates consanguine and ethnic, social and creedal differences as enriching. They understand that through the incarnation and baptism in Christ, we have all become *hama nehama* (related to one another). This relationship is grounded on love (cf. Lk 10)– primarily because God is love (cf. 1 Jn 4:16). In their posture towards the *other* especially in their church guilds, there is a real sense in which God is seen as the *Ultimate Other*. In this relationship too, the women put priority on discipleship, active participation of every member, showing good example, and practising good stewardship. Shona women claim a type of equality with men that fosters familial relationships based on the *Trinitarian koinonia* (fellowship). They see themselves as members of a *community of equal disciples* (cf. Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza 1984:75) in which they claim the equality of believers (Gal 3:28) and *baptismal vocation* (Leonard Doohan 1992: 171-174) of the *common priesthood* (1Pt 2:9 = Ex 19:5-6).

In a new Christian consciousness, Shona women strive for equality with men and for power. Shona women claim for themselves an equality in which there is no exploitation. Women strive for the full gift of life against oppressive patriarchal structures. They thus tell stories of hope and resistance. Above all, women claim a unique and irreplaceable identity. One respondent elaborated this view by claiming that this is inherent in the *imago Dei* creation ordinance. She explains that *since God is whole, there is no way in which he could have created halves*. By the same token, Shona women would agree with Joan Chittister's claim that if we elevate one sex at the expense of another, humanity's wholeness dies and if we suppress one sex, humanity dies (1998:14).

Shona women are a force to be reckoned with in the church but they participate in the margins. This view was acknowledged by the then Bishop of Gokwe, Zimbabwe (now Bishop of Masvingo) in the African Synod of Bishops (Rome 1994) when he claimed that *rural women are the backbone of their parishes and communities. Without them the church would surely fail in its evangelising mission*. Bishop L Agboka of Benin hit the same note when he said that *the church is worth what a woman is* (cf. Njue 1995:4)! Shona women, especially in their church guilds do the bulk of the church's pastoral ministry especially to the sick and dying. One respondent pointed out that men pride themselves on being more brave than women, but at funeral vigils, it is the women who do the brave act of praying in the hut with the body lying in state while men sit outside round the fire drinking beer and chatting.

In a new Christian consciousness, Shona women call the Church to account for disparities that account for the exclusion and alienation of women. They question the maleness of the church

that inhibits the full realization of their Christian identity. They are grieved that the church that should lead in championing human rights is at its worst especially when seen in dialogue with Shona culture. Shona women call the church to account for the dilemma and impasse concerning their full involvement and incorporation in the community of equal disciples. A level of Christian self-consciousness reached as a result of participation in this structured storytelling was shown in that one of the respondents dared to challenge accepted norms when she participated in the traditional *Stations of the Cross* on Good Friday. It was only the men who carried the heavy wooden cross in the procession up the local Cross-Kopje. At the end of the stations, one of these women then questioned the priest on why the women did not take their turn, noting that Christ had both men and women disciples. She demanded that next time women as well as men take their turn in carrying and the priest conceded to this.

Shona women name what Bishop Harold De Jong of Ndola, Zambia (cf. Njue 1995:4) called the *apartheid of gender* in the church for what it really is as follows: “*There is no equality in the church*” or rather, “*the equality of women is not fully recognized, and for example, women are denied some positions of authority.*” “*There is no equality of believers in my church. I feel God is MALE due to the unequal treatment of male and female parishioners.*” “*In the Roman Catholic Church in particular, it is (the Papal Magisterium) priests, bishops and the Pope who make decisions.*” In this context, the majority of respondents being of the Roman Catholic communion, deplore being denigrated the ordained priesthood and with that, the ordained ministries. One respondent is right to ask, *if God has no gender, why are women not given equal treatment?*

Shona women are not content to be permanent dwellers on the margins. They reject a situation in which, as Erasmus van Niekerk (1996:37) succinctly puts it, men are definers of codes and women are neurotic consumers of patriarchal goods. Concerning the exclusion of women from the centres of decision-making, as a Karanga woman I am alarmed to see the church replicate the *dare* as shown above. In the Papal Magisterium or Episcopal Synods, it is as Marie-Henry Keane of the Dominican Sisters (1988:10) says that, men speak for, about and without women. If present in the Synods, they are mere observers or *auditors*. The latter concept punctuates the fact that women *have ears and no mouth*. According to Bishop John Njue of Embu, Kenya (1995:3), the 1994 Synod of Bishops *Lineamenta* specified that women as *auditores* participate in the *circuli minores* so that their contributions *may* (Emphasis is mine) be taken into account in the final document of the Synod. Unfortunately, it is proper to say that through male censorship, in the final document some voices of women *will not be heard*.

While acknowledging significant changes in the church's move to include women, Shona women regret that the changes (do not go deep enough) border on *tokenism*. Some respondents name tokenism for what it really is in saying that there is male leadership in most denominations. They thus recognize a discrepancy between theory and practice, especially in those churches (Anglican, Methodist and African Independent Churches) that accept women priests. Shona women know and rejoice about this development in the church as happening *next door* – in neighbouring countries like South Africa. One Anglican respondent claims, *I am a mere church member who cannot be a priestess and therefore cannot take on some duties as men do*. Concurring with Anne Thurston (cf. Regina Bechtle 1998: 33), it can be said that women in the Roman Catholic church facing the impasse concerning the ordination of women to the priesthood are like *the women looking on from afar* (Mk 15:40) or as Patricia O'Connell Killen (cf. Regina Bechtle 1998:33) rightly claims, they experience the anger and dissonance of alienation as a *standing by the river and thirsting*.

Shona women demand the full realization of their baptismal vocation specified in 1 Peter 2:9 as:

You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

Thus they rejoice that in some dioceses, particularly Masvingo and Gweru (Karanga regions) women take part in a limited sense in preaching the Word. In the Sunday liturgy, women as well as laymen are allowed to read and expound the first and second readings but the Gospel and homily are a prerogative of the ordained deacon (male), priest and bishop. When one listens to the women preach, for example, at a wedding ceremony, one is convinced about the mediation quality of experience. Both men and women (old couples) put talent and life into the much-needed exhortation given to the new couple. Sometimes women are seen to excel men in preaching. Shona women appreciate that the church has *appropriated the traditional roles of vatete and sekuru* in the children and youths guilds so that adults can provide guidance and counselling to the young. They grieve for the church's under-utilization of what Pope John Paul II (1995) calls the *feminine genius* in saying, *the church should accept women leadership and in so doing, appreciate what the women can give*. In practice, Shona women, especially religious sisters are seeking a place at the table of theological discourse. It is noteworthy that one of the respondents lectures in Missiology at the country's one Major Seminary and is doing a doctoral thesis on *The Post Conciliar Contribution of Pastoral Training Centres to Evangelization in Zimbabwe*.

Some women betrayed a kind of *Biblicism* and *fatalism* in acquiescing to male headship and their subjection and submissiveness to man which accounts for lopsided or hierarchical

relationships between husband and wife and male and female members of the family, church and society. They see this as a *creation ordinance* - that woman created from man's rib is inferior (cf. Gen 3: 18-25). But as a participant in the story, I pointed out to them that the Bible has a patriarchal stamp in that men, who, at best highlighted their own experiences and at worst, were amnesiac of women's experiences, wrote most of it. Together we explored a Shona woman's *re-visioning*, or *re-membrance* (cf. Greek: **anamnēsia**) of the story of the Israel matriarchy, Rachael, in Genesis 35:18 which reads:

And as her soul was departing (for she died), she called his name Benoni (Hebrew: son of my sorrow); but his father called his name Benjamin (Hebrew: son of my right hand or son of the South). So Rachael died...

Shona women conceded that in the Shona context (described above), Benjamin would appropriately be called **Marufu** (*the one who 'brought death'*) since Rachael actually died in labour.

4.4 SHONA WOMAN, 'WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?'

Through the awareness of the immanence and self-agency of God in the incarnate Jesus of Nazareth, and consciousness to what God is doing in their lives, Shona women answer the question Christ can be seen to be putting across to them, *Shona woman, who do you say that I am* (cf. Mt 16:13-16= Mk 8:27-28 =Lk12:)? Shona women lay claim to knowledge of Christ through lived experience. In the context of the Incarnation, it is a reciprocal kind of knowing. In other words, Shona women come to know and claim their dignity in Jesus as they confess him as the Christ *son of the living God*. By the same note, and according to Edward Schillebeeckx (1980:128, cf. Dermot Lane 1992:10-11), there is also a dual movement of God becoming human and humanity ascending into the life of God. He explains that the Incarnation enlightens our understanding not only of God, but also of humanity.

As shown in Peter's response, *The Christ, Son of the living God* (Mt 16:16), there is *intention-action* and *identity-in-difference* (through the use of analogical images) epistemological approaches to the person and work of God in Jesus Christ. As shown above, it is noteworthy that Shona names have meaning and this often reflects an experiential orientation to God. Questionnaire respondents give a summary word or name for Jesus as they experience him in their lives. By sharing their lived experiences of the designations they give to God in Christ, Shona women give content to the Incarnation. In this dialogical reflection on the women's lived faith experiences, Jesus can be seen to ask engaging questions, such as, *Shona woman, why are you weeping?* (Jn 20:13), *Woman what are you seeking? Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?* (Jn 8:10-11). Deep and unresolved questions emerge concerning the

contemporary Shona situation and the meaning of salvation in Jesus Christ. Overall, Shona women show that they are alive to what God is doing in their midst.

Shona women give content to some images of Christ from lived faith experience. In this we are struck by what Edith Stein (Prudence Allen 1993:399) calls the *feminine ethos*. In other words, women as biophilic (pro-life) name experiences of Christ affirming not only their lives, but also that of their significant *others*. Shona women acknowledge God's gratuitousness seen especially in their children, the latter of whom are seen primarily as gifts. Shona women testify to Jesus as *the Christ, the Son of the Living God* (Mt 16:16) who as a living dynamic presence is concerned about their general welfare (holistic healing). As we go through the focal areas of experience (family, ethnic-tribal group, social class and church-denomination), we see that there is a significant overlap in the faith images Shona women attribute to God in Christ. We will therefore give emphases peculiar to each area of experience. Thus we can group the Christological designations into familial, foundational or ethnical, social, cosmic and creedal.

4.4.1 JESUS IN THE FAMILY

Familial Christological attributes include, *Father, Elder Brother, Elder Sister, husband, Guardian, Advisor, Breadwinner, Provider, Protector, Head of the family, Ancestor and Role Model – Exemplar*. There is an emphasis on ontology (creation *ex nihilo* and continual creation) – on Christ as Creator, Provider (*creatio continua*), especially in the understanding of Christ as *Giver of life*. But where Christ is understood as *Creator par excellence*, humanity's role is understood strictly as that of *procreator*. In other words, humanity is not God, but a mere instrument or steward of God's grace. This aspect of instrumentality or stewardship is underscored by the Shona proverb, **Kunzi pakata hakuzi kuti ridza** (*If a musician asks you to hold his/her instrument, this does not mean you should play it*). As breadwinner, guardian or head of the family, Christ is seen to transcend the traditional gender divide. Today, in the upsurge of single mothers, guardianship is a contested issue between male and female members of the family or between divorced parents. You often hear that the girl-child is more caring especially for frail parents than the boy-child. But ingrained patriarchy is shown in the emphasis on headship and the understanding of God as only male. We have seen above that all these designations have biblical and extra-biblical foundations. Shona women elaborate their lived faith experience of some of these designations below.

The following are Shona women's lived familial faith experiences of Jesus Christ. "*Jesus is my Brother. There was a time when everything in the family seemed to be going wrong. Jesus as one of my brothers (sacramental presence) did not bring things to the family. But through*

prayer we seemed to have changed the wrongs into rights. There I found Jesus was in the family like one of us."

"Jesus has been providing for all that we need in my family. At times we are very desperate for necessities of life, but we always find a way through or are provided for in unexpected ways and it becomes obvious to us that Jesus is the Ultimate Provider."

"Jesus is my Father because he cares for me like my own father. I am my father's image. From the time I was born, my father takes care of me." "My father gave me all I needed as a child. Similarly, Christ looks after me all the time. He guides and protects me from all dangers. He provides me with everything I need and he is there for me in times of sickness or sorrow." A Ndau respondent specifies that as *Father Jesus is a MAN who takes care of his children including myself. As such, Jesus is Father or Husband because shelter, food and clothing come from them just like Christ Jesus who is my Provider.* It is noteworthy that the respondent shows inconsistency since prior to this, she has been very vocal against patriarchy. This can be seen as a reflection of the Shona patrilineal and patriarchal family system. As such the respondents show there is an internalised collusion with patriarchy.

The height of self-consciousness as a woman is seen in the designation of Jesus as Mother. A Karanga respondent says that *Jesus is Mother because it was She who was there from the beginning (Jn 1:1) of my life, who looked after me in the past, and who is my support up to the end. It is to her that I turn to in times of trouble as my refuge. She accepts me as I am and her love is unconditional.* There is an echo of Isaiah 49: 15-16:

Can a mother forget her suckling child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even if these may forget, yet I will not forget you. Behold, I have graven you on the palms of my hands

To give a personal example of the close affinity between mother and child, there is a real sense in which my mother and I enjoyed a *telepathic* relationship. Whenever I turned up at home unexpectedly, my mother would say *I saw you in a dream!* I am surprised that this is not the case with my father. Another example is when a mother was awaiting the arrival of the body of her daughter from the mortuary. She said, she felt the body was in the vicinity from the topsyturvy in her *womb* - what in modern science may be termed the *fight or flight* parasympathetic reaction. I have noticed that mothers empathize with their children in a way that reflects the kind of *martyr-complex* seen in David's reaction on receiving the news of the death of his son, who, not until then had been his arch enemy:

O my son Absalom, my son, Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom my son, my son!

I have seen this in my mother and in many Shona mothers especially when a child is ill.

Another Karanga respondent is more down to earth in giving androgynous images of God in Jesus Christ. She says, *Jesus is Mother, Father and Provider because my children see and experience me in both roles of mother and father in my capacity as a divorcee and mother of two children. In this, I have come to realize that I do not need to rely on a man. Because of this, for me it does not matter whether Jesus is considered as a he or a she. Jesus is provider of everything.*

A Manyika respondent also ascribes to gender neutrality when she says that *Jesus is a Family Leader, who, on request makes everything possible.* It is noteworthy that in the upsurge of single mothers in Zimbabwe today, the *family leader* can be either male or female. She explains that *I used to request for a source of income other than the teaching profession. I got an answer to this after ten years when I had completely forgotten all about it. Now I have an Institute for Private Studies. I never planned it but the opportunity arose as an answer to the country's pressing need for education.* There is also self-contradiction in that earlier on, the respondent assessed herself as poor. Another interesting observation is that contrary to the Christological motif of unconditional love also shown above as existing among Shona women, the respondent seems to unconsciously portray Jesus' love as conditional to asking.

4.4.2 JESUS IN THE ETHNIC-TRIBAL GROUP

Foundational or ethnical Christological images also lay emphasis on communal ontology and solidarity and headship. These include, *Mwari the Supreme and Eternal Being, Ancestor, Ancestor of the Ancestors or Proto-Ancestor* (Shona: *Dzinza rangu*), *Creator, Giver of life, Mediator, Sustainer* (Shona: **Muraramisi**), *Exemplar, My Relative, Ancestral Spirit, Intermediary, Chief, King of Kings, Healer, Advisor, Best Friend, Wisdom and Muponesi (Deliverer-Saviour-Redeemer-Liberator) or Mununuri (Deliverer-Liberator-Mediator).* It is important that Shona women call Jesus a *Member* of their specific *clan* and *ethnic group* (*Karanga, Zezuru, Manyika, Korekore, Ndau*). It is also noteworthy that at least two respondents give personal anthropological designations such as *'Myself' - Human Figure because God made me in his image and I believe that in whatever I am and do, I would be representing God in Christ.* It can be said that the identification of God with the *self* (cf. Gen 1:26-27; Jn 1:14) captures the true sense of the incarnation – God in Christ becoming human like us.

The respondents go on to elaborate an experiential Christology:

“Jesus is Provider or Giver of Gifts. I used to wonder and ask why God gave me such a life and especially that he never answers my prayer for a good husband who, in turn, will not let me lose my faith. I had some abortive attempts at marriage and came to the point of despair. But because I was God-fearing, I called on Mwari’s name and God has strengthened me. I have come to realize the unrestricted nature of God’s gratuitousness. From my abortive marriages, I got a gift of two children – great gifts as such. My children are a great delight to me in that they love Mwari. I praise Mwari also for the gift of a job. I am convinced that the Lord gives and provides. In most cases when I do anything without invoking the Lord in prayer, I do not get it. But, if I pray, I always get it especially in the form of a better alternative.”

“Jesus is the Giver of Children. As Creator, Jesus is my Ancestor. God gave me children when the doctors had proved me barren. Through faith healing, I was able to bear children. I love Christ for the love and mercy he has given me. Above all, he died that I should become an heir in the Kingdom of God. I am convinced that I have maximum security in Christ and that I find full happiness in him. Another respondent hits the same nail on the head saying, after five years of marriage, the Lord saved me from the dishonour of barrenness. I now have three healthy, loving and intelligent boys. From the eldest to the youngest they are in Upper Sixth, Form Three and Grade Seven. Jesus is Helper because whenever we are in need of something, God assists us. To those who are looked down on, God vindicates.” It is important to note that there is an echo of the *Magnificat* (Lk 1:46-56) in this last sentence.

“I am convinced that Christ is my Guardian or Protector. Whenever I have problems and pray to God, my prayers are answered. In our lives and, in particular, in families we meet many problems. Each time of my life I experience Jesus as my Saviour and so I trust in him.” *“Jesus is Guide and Role Model. One can only be a better person if one tries to follow in Christ’s footsteps – to do what he tells you to do in the Bible.”*

“Jesus is the Best Friend. Jesus is my Friend – the only one who will never let me down and the perfect Father. When all hope was lost and when I felt friends and family had abandoned me, the only person I felt could understand me was Jesus. And he did not let me down at all. He saw me through it all.” *“Jesus is Almighty, Helper and Friend. In my faith I have discovered that there is God who is the Helper, Friend and Mighty One. But sometimes problems of life come to the extremes and I tend to look for other means of help, especially in times of illness and sorrow.”* *“Jesus is my Helper, Leader Facilitator - the one who empowers to Victory.”*

I have noted above that the *Zezuru* Shona ethnic group best epitomizes Jesus as *Best Friend – Sahwira*. I have also noted that the Shona operate on the chiefly rather than kingly dynasty. The area proto-ancestors on the chiefly dynasty are considered the *owners of the land*. In a new Christian understanding, especially of stewardship, the progenitor and consequently the chief's role is better portrayed as that of guardian. Here I concur with Schoffeleers' designation of area progenitors as *Guardians of the Land* (1978). In other words, Christ as Progenitor or Chief, is over and above the Shona ancestors.

4.4.3 JESUS AND SOCIAL CLASS

Social Christological designations underscore providence – governance or concursus. Thus Christ is understood as Provider, Liberator, Deliverer, Mediator, Chief, Guardian, Guide, Caring Leader, Advisor, Friend, Well-Wisher, Ally in problems, Enabler, Bountiful God, Counsellor, Comforter, National Hero, Mouthpiece, and Helper. One respondent claims that Christ helps us in time of trouble. Other sentiments are that *God is my Inheritance since Mwari preserves my life* and that *Christ is my Leader at work*. There are different Christological and soteriological emphases according to the difference of class and economic status among Shona women themselves. For example, rural women whose main income is from subsistence farming, have to struggle with survival issues. Thus rural women tend to portray Christ as Provider, Liberator, Deliverer, Helper, and comforter, *par excellence*. Women in good income professions who live in urban and semi-urban areas see Christ as influencing their work ethos and ethics. Emphasis is on Christ as providing good leadership and team spirit. It is important to note that Jesus is seen to transcend sexism in that the women as well as men function as leaders, advisors, enablers, and counsellors at work.

Respondents explain Christological and soteriological designations as follows:

“Jesus Christ is a Loving Provider. It happens several times that church celebrations are held in different places so that I am troubled on how to get to church on time. Before I can look for directions or before I can reach the place, I am always offered a lift and end up not using my money.” “When I am penniless, a friend happens to give me money without my ever asking for it. I receive many presents from people around me – so Mwari is Love.”

“Christ is my Protector. He protects me in every aspect, especially against evil spirits, witches, and enemies.” “In Christ we are most secure and we have life in abundance. We receive (holistic) healing, physically, mentally, socially and spiritually.” “Jesus Christ is the Comforter who has been lifting me above my friends or colleagues in education and promotion at work. He has saved me. He has comforted me by giving me solutions to my problems.” “I

believe that Jesus is the Comforter because every time I experience hardships Jesus consoles me. I had a very painful and traumatic situation on the death of my elder sister and my mother within the same year. I believe that it was through my faith in Jesus that I was comforted and strengthened through it all."

"God in Christ is Giver of Life and everything good. God gave me life from the beginning of time and continues to do so until today." "Mwari provided for who and what I am today. I grew up as an orphan and I never knew that God could change my life as he has done. Mwari gave me a good loving and understanding husband who also loves my relatives. God gave me very gifted children (show intellectual excellence and consequently have good jobs), good daughters-in-law. I have a good job, a car and a good home. Furthermore, God gave me talents – I am very skilful with my hands and this gives me additional income. For all this I give praise to Mwari."

"Jesus is the Children. Christ came like a poor child and as a simple very ordinary person dressing in the most casual dress. Jesus is the Answer to all my problems. I did not have a job after graduating at college and my husband was always shouting at me just because I was unemployed. I prayed to Jesus asking for a job in order to save my marriage that was on the rocks. He gave me a good job. Right now I am enjoying the best relationship with my husband. I also have managed to obtain higher qualifications as a means for job promotion." This is true in the sense that husbands who have women who are not in paid professions have often been heard saying *I married a wardrobe or an egg-laying machine.*

It is in the social class that the differences among the women themselves are most pronounced. Whereas Shona women are aware that the *haves* have to share with the *have-nots*, they need to be aware how poor women are marginalized or exploited not only by men, but also by other women. I concur with Larry S. Temkin (1998:17-18) in maintaining that equality is a relational thing and that a comparative concern for equality reflects concern for how people fare relative to others. In other words, the women need to be aware that there is an intimate connection between the concern for equality and the concern for fairness or justice. The need to acknowledge that, not only are some women poor through *no fault or choice* on their part, but also because of the encroaching Western- type materialism and individualism that account for the unequal distribution of wealth and because other people including rich women exploit them as cheap labour. The pertinent issue is how do women employers treat their employees in terms of remuneration and human dignity? Failure to realize this results in a Christology of the poor people that admits to masochism or a martyr-complex and fatalism. Here, Mary Aquin O'Neill of Mount Saint Agnes Theological Seminary (1995:731) explains that the poor are

inspired to heroic sanctity or even martyrdom in *imitation of Christ*. For example, one of the respondents said I am poor because people are gifted differently. I had to lead her to understand that, more often than not, the poor stay poor because they are not given just wages.

4.4.4. JESUS IN CREATION

Cosmic Christological images include, *Pillar to hide or rest on, Unifying force, Light, and Life-giving Water* (See also Chimhanda 2000: 70-73 on *water* as a Shona symbol of life). The respondents explain: “*Everything on earth cannot survive without water - there is no life and no production. “Jesus is Spirit because He lives forever,” “the Rock or cave in which to seek refuge,” “my Fortress, and the Cave in which I take refuge.” “God is power, Spirit, Body, Soul and Unique and gives us the same.” “I recognize in Jesus the Symbol of a burning candle that shines and gives light. God in Christ is Spiritual Light or Vision.” “I understand Jesus as the Way, the Truth and the Life (Jn 14:6) because when I was in Grade 2 (7 years old), I had a problem with my legs so that I could not walk or stand. Through faith (healing) in Jesus Christ I got well after six months of suffering - He shows me the way. I take God as Water in my life.”*”

4.4.5 JESUS IN THE CHURCH-DENOMINATION

Creedal Christological attributes include *the Mighty One, Mwari – God we worship, Second Person of the Trinity, Reconciler, the Alpha and Omega* (cf. Rev 1:8; 21:6), *Personal Saviour, Creator and Giver of life, Sole Provider of Graces, No other God Besides Him, Good Shepherd, Victor, Deliverer-Saviour-Redeemer-Liberator (Shona: Muponesi or Mumunuri), Answer to all problems (Problem solver), Father and Creator of all people and things, Love, All Goodness, Giver of life, Son of God who is always there for us (the Emmanuel), Role Model, Pillar to hide or rest on, the Holy Eucharist (Sacrament), Mediator, Intercessor, the Way, the Truth, and the Life (cf. Jn 14:6) the Most High, Lord (Chief of everything on earth), Ever living God, Master, my Work (since it is the Provider of food, clothes and shelter), Head (my husband)*. As such, Christ is Teacher, Healer, Mediator, Leader, Provider, Protector, and Refuge – ‘*par excellence*’.

Christ is seen in terms of ontology and teleology (destiny). It has been shown above that the Shona designation, *Muponesi*, captures all that Christ is (Deliverer, Saviour, Liberator, Redeemer, Healer) across all areas of experience. It highlights maternal attributes of God in terms of giving birth and mediating, and these have biblical foundations.

In the following lived faith experiences, the respondents contextualize salvation in Christ. “*Jesus is my ‘Mumunuri’ (Saviour – Deliverer – Redeemer – Liberator) in all that befalls me.*” “*Jesus overcomes all my troubles. He gives me strength. There is no other Helper-Saviour besides Jesus.*” “*God is behind everything I do. I am also convinced that there is no other*

leader and advisor greater than him.” “Jesus is Muponesi because he helped me in so many life problems. In the event of the death of my brothers within the same year, and on top of this, I had back trouble, but through help from other people, I was able to cope with the situation. I consider Christ healed me judging by what happened in my life and what I am able to do now that my back is healed – that I am now able to support my body and move around freely is Mwari’s power. I was helped by other people to settle the estate of my deceased brother – Mwari thus liberated the family.”

“Christ is the same today, and always, therefore it is up to us to believe that he supports us women in the struggle to liberate ourselves and reclaim our role and dignity. I was convinced that Mwari is ‘Muponesi’ when I had conflicts in religious life – big misunderstandings with the Superior General and the Bishop. I prayed to Christ for help and my prayer was answered. Jesus is Saviour and ever-loving Father.” “In life I have gone through many difficulties or hardships and I learned from the Bible that as a Christian you must always be patient in perseverance. Our life’s journey is never straight forward, but rather, it has ups and downs. So we have to learn to endure in all hardships we come across. I am convinced that Jesus as our Saviour is always with us.”

“Jesus is the Redeemer who taught us how to talk to God our Father. I always pray in the name of Jesus for he is the only healer and comforter of my life. Through his love he heals my body, soul and mind. I am convinced that through worshipping God in the name of Jesus, I am really relieved from miseries, sickness and all that harms my life, especially evil spirits.” True inculturation has to take note of popular religiosity. It is noteworthy that the last element touches the core of Shona holistic healing.

*“Jesus is the Church. Christ started the church and in everything I do, I believe that he is always the centre – the one who directs and controls my life and everything. I have tried so many things in my life in order to serve the Lord through established religious orders and everything seems to have collapsed. Through the grace of God, I have come to realize the work of the Holy Spirit. I believe in the Wisdom saying, ‘A time for everything’ (Ecclesiastes 3:1-9). In the present upsurge of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Zimbabwe, I started a charitable organization (the **Shungudzavana Trust** – see above) that caters for children who have lost their beloved parents prematurely. Today, it is recognized by, and receives some funding from, the government. I feel fulfilled helping the under-privileged. The inspiration, initial funding, and shelter came from my beloved and late sister, who, herself is an HIV/AIDS victim. My earlier work at the Mary Ward Children’s Home prepared me well for this challenge.”*

“Jesus is the Giver of Life and Everything Good. Mwari loved me (into existence) before I was born. He loved me through all the stages of my growth - schooling, marriage, and motherhood and gave me a job as a means of livelihood. I believe that this is all God’s will and that is why I pray saying: ‘The Lord is my Shepherd, my guardian’ who gave me grandchildren and a home, and gives me enough to eat everyday of my life.”

“God in Christ is my Creator, Saviour and Everything I ever dream of because he made me who and what I am. He is completely in control of my life. I contracted HIV/AIDS through rape. As a divorcee and mother of two children, my first reaction on knowing my HIV status was, Please God, why did you allow this to happen to me? Please God let me live for my children. In the denial stage, I struggled through anger and frustration saying, why me? I realize I went through various stages of acceptance of my situation. The first stage was when I wanted to live for my children. The second stage, at which I believe this is where I am now, is when I want to live for myself. Of course my children are still my priority in the sense of planning for their future – making a plan of life. I am urged to find myself where I am – preparation for eventual and inevitable death. In this, I find Jesus has made me to be fearless. I believe I am no more threatened by death than any other person – HIV positive or negative. After all people die prematurely from, say, road accidents. I believe that we are uniquely created to be winners in ourselves. The competition of life begins before birth. For example, many sperms compete for one egg or ovum. It is for myself that I can run this race. I also believe that God created us as individuals and whole. We are not created for someone else. We are made whole in God and it is initially God’s intention that we must be whole. God is whole and there is no way in which he could have created halves in his image. I also believe that children are gifts given abundantly by God. We (parents) are only instruments to God in creation. In other words, we are not creators.”

“Jesus is Protector and Victor. I grew up as an orphan bereft of my father. But I went to school and was brought up as a Christian. At forty years and as a married woman, one day as I was in the forest collecting firewood, I met a man who assaulted me and tried to rape me. As I struggled with him, I prayed in my heart and although the man was bigger and more powerful, I got the upper hand and ran for my life. From that day on I believe in God’s power to conquer.”

“Mwari is my Healer and my Shepherd. Jesus is my Healer when I am sick and my Shepherd wherever I go. He looks after my home and family. Jesus is Healer of all my diseases. Whenever I fall ill, I pray to Jesus that he may heal me. My faith in him helps me to get healed. I get healed as soon as I ask for it.” “I experienced Jesus as Healer when my niece Olivia (my namesake) was healed from a critical illness. I had been praying for her healing. I believe

that her healing was a miracle since she had been at the point of death. And again, when my mother was ill in the following year, the doctor and X-rays showed that she was all right and yet she was seriously ill. As I lost hope, I prayed the prayer of desperation saying, Christ should do his will – to heal her or to let her die. I also prayed for light to get to the bottom of the problem. Finally, the illness was diagnosed as stomach ulcers. I consider that her healing was a miracle and I am convinced that Christ heard the cry of my pleading.”

“God is Love.” “Jesus is my Friend – the only one who will never let me down and the perfect Father.” “God loves me. Jesus is a suffering, loving and caring Christ who gave me unconditional love.” “Jesus is the living Christ who has tremendous love - the love that made him to lose his life for me that I may obtain eternal life.”

“God in Christ is Victor, Great and Almighty. Jesus Christ is our Helper who brings victory. As such, Jesus is a victorious Healer.” “I believe that through prayer and fasting, God always answers in time of illness or trouble.” “Christ delivered me from death when I was critically ill. I believe that for me to be alive today is because of Jesus’ life-giving power.” “Jesus is the victor who helps me in my family. He protects me and is victorious over evil spirits and my enemies.” “Jesus Christ is Victor since He is the one who created everything on earth.”

“Jesus is Lord and He affirms me as his princess. Even when people rejoice over my troubles, I feel God is really for me.” “I am affirmed by being delivered from trouble in unexpected ways.” “I am convinced that Jesus guides, protects and showers me with many blessings.” “God in Christ is Lord and Guide.” “Sometimes I act in ignorance or blindness and it is then that Jesus actually sheds the greatest light on me. God is Lord.”

“Jesus is the Word (Bible) - Guide and Advisor. Whenever I face a problem in my family or at work that I find difficult to deal with, I read the Bible in order to find out what Christ would do, or, what he expects me to do.”

4.5 SHONA WOMEN ALIVE TO WHAT GOD IS DOING IN THEIR MIDST

In acknowledging being overwhelmed by the burdens of life, Shona women question accepted norms in society and church. They ask engaging questions by identifying the problems that concern the Incarnate Christ most with regards the full humanity of women as well as men in present day Zimbabwe. In *aggiornamento*, Shona women depict Jesus as actively involved in a creative dialectic between culture and the Gospel. As shown above, *aggiornamento* is used here to denote making the Incarnation Good News for Shona people in present day Zimbabwe. Historical development of revelation and of world views punctuates the need of

aggiornamento. The Gospel is treated with scepticism in that it is dressed in a multicultural garb. Culture itself is not sacrosanct since it is constantly evolving. By the same token, there is no pure Shona culture in the present multicultural society of Zimbabwe.

4.5.1 CHRIST AS THE ANSWER TO THE QUESTIONS SHONA WOMEN ASK IN THE FAMILY

In the Incarnate Jesus born into a human family, Shona women see the Christ who has a heart for the family. They see Jesus as the Christ who encourages a siblingship dialogue in which love and mutual interdependence, reign supreme. In other words, the women see the Iconoclastic Christ of the Gospel concerned about the restoration of *abba- adelphoi* relationships. Thus they claim that Jesus Christ rejects the relegation of women and particularly mothers (wives) to the status of minors and the consequent denigration of women guardianship, heirship and property rights. Shona women see Jesus as the Christ who treats all children and men and women the same in maintaining reciprocal relationships. In the circumscription of women to domestic chores, Jesus rejects a situation in which heavy workloads are imposed on women, and the undervaluing of women's work and consequently not remunerating it. Shona women claim that Jesus sees the nurturing of children as a duty for both husband and wife and thus alleviates women's burden by promoting the division of labour in which men and women take full responsibility for nurturance of their young. In other words, Jesus rejects a situation in which there is little or no reciprocity. Shona women maintain that Jesus denounces the denigration of women the *imago Dei* in a situation where negative elements are projected on women. They see in Jesus the Kenotic Teacher of the Gospels who holds both men and women as autonomous moral agents - responsible and accountable for misdemeanours like unfaithfulness in marriage (cf. Mt 5:27-28,31=19:9). They see in Jesus the Redeemer who asks, humane, engaging and soul-searching questions – *Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you? Neither do I condemn you; go and do not sin again* (Jn 5:7,10-11).

Shona women seek an understanding of death, especially of loved ones. My niece, in trying to come to terms with the tragic death of her father through drowning, poses the problem of *theodicy* (how a loving and all-powerful God can allow such a thing to happen). Shona women see in Jesus the compassionate, omnipotent Christ, who as Healer *par excellence*, leads to victory over diseases and evil powers. They understand Jesus' healing powers to transcend that of *traditional healers* and modern medicine. In other words, they see Jesus as the Healer who does not need any *muti* (medicinal herbs, roots, barks or shrubs). Overwhelmed by the premature death of their children and the upsurge of HIV/AIDS orphans, and overburdened as care-givers, Shona women seek healing, especially of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and of terminal illnesses like cancer.

4.5.2 CHRIST AS THE ANSWER TO THE QUESTIONS SHONA WOMEN ASK OF THE ETHNIC GROUP

Concerning *ethnicity*, Shona women understand that the biological, ethnical and historical provenance of Christ are contingent and want Christ to address the problem of *ethnocentrism*. For example, some women ask, *why some tribes seem to be more superior to others?* One respondent desires that *the Korekore people one day may be seen as human beings*. The kenotic Christ would put a stop to, or revise, cultural practices described above that demean women. In the inculturation agenda, Shona women seek for more knowledge about the ancestors in relation to God, the living descendants and the Incarnation – *the Reign of God* (Greek: *basileia tou theou*).

Shona women see in Jesus the Ancestor, *par excellence*, who is neither male nor female. They claim that Jesus rejects denigration of women the *imago Dei/Christi* in the undermining of women's rights and concurrently human rights through a number of cultural practices mentioned above in which women are reduced to the status of marketable commodities or cultic objects. By the same token, they say that Jesus rejects western type individualism, materialism and globalizing tendencies that have eroded both group solidarity and the extended family to such an extent that the Shona woman neither fully belongs to the natal group nor to the marital group. In seeing Christ as affirming both group identity and the unique individuality of a person, Shona women understand Christ to denounce the fact that sometimes the individual is dehumanized when subsumed in the group. They deplore that women are not appointed as chiefs. Like in the family, Shona women understand that Christ rejects the projecting of negative images on women as prostitutes, witches, barren - images equally tarnishing men. They see the realization of co-equal responsibility and accountability for men and women in a Shona lyric, **Dzoka, dzoka mukadzi wangu, ndazozviona kuti zviri pandiri** (*Come back, come back my wife, I have seen that the problem is inherent in me*).⁶³

Shona women see Jesus to be concerned about the vital participation of every individual in the life of the community. They see him reject the denigration of women Chieftainship. A Ndaun respondent was very vocal about having women leaders of the community as chiefs and herdmen. In other Shona ethnic groups, they see Jesus regretting the discrepancy between theory and practice in that women can ascend to chieftainship. Shona women claim that Jesus wants to see the use of affirmative action in the inclusion of women in decision-making bodies, for example, in having women officials in the chief's *dare*. Thus Jesus regrets the silencing of women in the family *dare*.

⁶³ Lyric composed by the late musician, Marshall Munhumumwe.

Shona women claim that the Kenotic Christ purifies the practices of *roora* and *ngozi* in restoring their dignity. In this, Christ wants *roora* to retain its original purpose of uniting two families and therefore wants it to be standardized. By the same note, Jesus is concerned that women should also get an equal share of *roora* with men. They see the Kenotic Christ denouncing using human beings in appeasement of spirits, otherwise Jesus acknowledges the idea as good because it punctuates reparation of sin (in parallel to Christian values), deterrence of murder and value for human life. Shona women say that Jesus promotes their full humanity in championing their full citizenship in both the natal and marital groups. By the same token, Jesus advocates that women be treated as *vanhu* (persons or as fully human) and not as property.

Shona women claim that while Christ appreciates the belief in *ngozi* to be a deterrent to murder, and to underscore the Shona's value for life, and sets them as responsible moral agents, and as compatible with the Christian value of penance or reparation of sin, nevertheless, Jesus denounces the use of human beings in the propitiation of vengeance spirits. By the same token, Christ denounces the capitalization over a dead woman's body as grotesque.

Shona Women identify essential cultural elements of unhu (personhood) ethic, *umwe* (togetherness) or communal ontology and solidarity, *ushamamwari* (friendship – Zezuru: *usahwira*) and hospitality as elements that Christ promotes as Good News for women as well as men. By the same note, Christ advocates that the roles of *vatete* and *mbuya* in socializing children to cultural and Christian values be retained. The women say Christ appreciates the solidarity that exists concerning *other-directed-services* - in illness, attending funerals and weddings, particularly through women's guilds. The women claim that Christ appreciates the mothering of children across the family, extended family and clan divide and congratulating each other especially on the occasion of a new baby.

In the Shona Mwari religious orientation, Shona women claim that Jesus the Christ who takes sacramental presence in the poor and marginalized of society (Mt 25: 31-46) and gives them pride of place in his missionary agenda (Lk4:18-19), rejoices to see that the Shona have an inherent posture for the *anawim* (Shona: *vanhu vaMwari*) as described above. By the same token, the Jesus of Nazareth who enjoyed hospitality among friends like Lazarus, Martha and Mary (Lk 10:38-42) rejoices at Shona hospitality. By the same note, Jesus appreciates that the Shona anticipate the visitor in the proverb, *zhara shura mweni* (a feeling of hunger is a good omen for a surprise visitor) and that they upset the budget in providing a festal meal for the visitor. The Shona too have a time of day called *ruvhunzavaeni* (dusk as the time visitors begin to arrive and ask for the proper destination or, strangers ask to be put up for the night).

4.5.3 CHRIST AS THE ANSWER TO THE QUESTIONS SHONA WOMEN ASK IN SOCIETY TODAY

Shona women see in Jesus the contemporary Christ sensitive to the signs of the times. In the current political and socio-economic crisis in Zimbabwe, Shona women know and have experienced the fact of the proverb that says *where elephants fight it is the grass that suffers*. Caught in the crossfire between the political and economic giants, Shona women see in Jesus the Good Shepherd, who not only knows everyone of his sheep, but who is also mindful of the least and most forgotten. In other words, they see the Christ concerned with the current level of unemployment especially of their children whom they see as the future of the nation. They see in Jesus the Kenotic Christ of the Gospels concerned with the levelling of unjust structures. In other words, they see an Iconoclastic Christ who speaks truth in the face of corrupt political leaders in the present socio-politico- economic crisis in Zimbabwe stirred up by self-styled war veterans.

Shona women demand justice from both church and society through Christian prophetic witness against oppressive structures. They see Christ as the greatest of all teachers and leaders who is concerned with gender equity as the fostering of mutual interdependence, complementary and reciprocal relationships among men, women and children. Shona women ask Christ to lighten their burden. They specifically want Christ to address issues of guardianship, heirship and property rights for women as well as men. As proactive agents of their own history, Shona women call for self-autonomy. They see Christ as giving them space and a right to ask their own questions especially through inclusion in the decision-making bodies of the family, church and society.

Shona women see the egalitarian Christ to be concerned with the question of elitism. Some respondents ask why there are social classes at all, in particular, why some people are rich and others poor in a situation where the rich become richer and the poor poorer. Shona women claim that Jesus Christ rejoices over the empowerment of women through employment equity laws that are followed by positive enactment. In a situation where women have been marginalized for a long time, Shona women claim that Jesus advocates the use of affirmative action for the economic empowerment of women. By the same token, Christ appreciates that women are taking leadership positions and consequently, that they are making a positive contribution in society. Christ also recognizes the fact that women in paid professions, and particularly single mothers have access to the means of livelihood – land and property rights is a significant step in the emancipation of women from patriarchy. By the same token, Jesus appreciates the laws ensuring employment equity. Above all, Shona women claim that Jesus

Christ as Creator appreciates the Shona's sacramental value of people – seeing Christ through other people that, in turn, is a trajectory of the Shona's emphasis on good stewardship.

4.5.4 CHRIST AS THE ANSWER TO THE QUESTIONS SHONA WOMEN ASK IN THE CHURCH

In the *church* or *denomination*, and in appropriating their *baptismal vocation* as a community of co-equal discipleship, Shona women acknowledge the risen Christ who entrusted Mary Magdalene with spreading the *good news* of the resurrection to be concerned about women moving from the margins to the centre of church life. By the same token, they see the Christ who deplores the exclusion of women from the priesthood, and hence, from the centres of decision-making and defining of quintessential theological constructs of the church. Shona women see Jesus the Rabbi who had men and women sitting at his feet to learn about the secrets of the Kingdom or *reign of God* (Greek: *basileia tou theou*) rejoicing to see women taking their long vacant and rightful place at the table of theological discourse. Nevertheless, they see the gender-inclusive Christ concerned about the tokenism in the church that fails to take full account of the enrichment of the church by the *feminine genius* (cf. Pope John Paul II) and *feminine ethos* (cf. Edith Stein) or *écriture feminine writing* or *economy* (Hélène Cixous in Graham Ward 1996:225, 229ff). In Jesus who became human like us, Shona women see the Christ concerned about the reification of God as male and the reductionism in which woman is subsumed in exclusive God-language that uses man as a generic term. In advocating the equality of believers, Jesus rejects a form of paternalism in which priests address women as children and priests fulfil the label of *father*.

In Jesus the Way, the Truth and the Life, Shona women see the Christ that speaks truth in the face of corrupt leaders. They see the Head of the church who would not show complicity with the *conspiracy of silence* in the abuse of women by priests. Concerning the corruption of church leaders, religious women tell of the sexual abuse of nuns by priests, who, apparently in the dispute are protected by their bishops when the abused nuns are expelled doubly burdened with pregnancy and the raising of illegitimate children as single parents. Above all, Shona women see in the Incarnate Jesus who suffered death on the cross and was raised from death, a Christ concerned about overcoming temptation and sin.

4.6 SHONA WOMEN TELL OF HOW FAITH IN JESUS HAS CHANGED THEIR LIVES

Shona women experience Christ as empowering, compassionate, healing and as a living dynamic all encompassing presence. Thus they speak, dialogue and struggle with Christ. They lay emphasis on holistic healing or the experience of general well-being. In this, Shona women

are informed (consciously or unconsciously) by the Word of God and by the spirituality of their forebears. The latter include, St Paul, St Peter, St Francis of Assisi, St Ignatius of Loyola, Mary Ward and Mother Teresa of Calcutta (now Kolkata).

4.6.1 JESUS IN THE FAMILY

Shona women express individual sentiments as follows: *“My faith in Jesus has given me a better understanding of sin and reconciliation. I used to think that only other people do wrong to me. Now I understand the reciprocal nature of sin – that I wrong other people much the same as they do wrong to me.”* *“I value my faith as giving me an important orientation towards respect, true happiness, mutual understanding of one another. It has given me dignity and respect and promoted unity and togetherness, e.g. in attending church together as a family.”* *“As a Christian, I have acquired a better understanding of people and our connectedness. As a mother, I have learnt that everybody in the family irrespective of age makes an important contribution to the growth and general well-being of the family. I used to frustrate my children by silencing them with deference for elders. Now I enjoy giving quality time for listening and learning from my children. I have learnt so many things from them since they are up-to-date with current affairs and I understand that God speaks to children in the same way as He/She does to me. What I find very important is that my faith has enriched the mother-child relationship, especially in that my children can correct me much the same as I can correct them.”*

In general, Shona women feel empowered by their faith as one respondent asserts that *God has given us direction and has remained a pillar of this home*. Another respondent says, *I learnt that I should love my husband and be a role model to my family*. I found subtle acquiescence with patriarchy in the saying *I deeply appreciate my faith because it has enabled me to respect my husband and to be submissive*. There is a contradiction here as coming from a Ndau woman who has so far been vociferous against patriarchy.

An echo of Ignatian spirituality, that is, *to find God in all things* (David Fleming 1978:140, n235), or the Ignatian motto, *to do all things to the greater glory of God* (Latin: *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam* [AMDG], cf. George Ganss 1970:157-158 [259], 229 [508]) is seen in the following sentiments: *“Because of my Christian faith, I can now refer all to God, especially things that trouble me and I fear God in all I do. I have learnt to be thankful for everything.”*⁶⁴

⁶⁴ St Ignatius of Loyola (1491/5-1556 – Founder of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) Religious Order.

“As a Christian, I have come to a greater awareness of the cross I am sharing with Christ right now on account of the jealousy of some members of the family and persecution by members of a religious order I formerly joined.” It is noteworthy that this respondent also suffers from terminal blood cancer - leukaemia. There is an echo of what Mother Teresa of Calcutta said at the 23rd International Eucharistic Conference in 1985, Nairobi, Kenya (which I attended). She said *the Christian must not understand suffering as punishment from God. On the contrary, suffering is sharing in the cross of Christ. It is being at the foot of the cross and a kiss of Christ’s love.* She added that when she told this to people suffering from cancer, one of them retorted, *‘Please tell God to stop kissing me!’* Other similar sentiments are, *“I am strengthened in Christ and I am better able to cope with illness.”* *“I am now able to overcome despair and to persevere when illness is not diagnosed.”* It can be said that Mother Teresa and in our case, Shona women, concur with St Paul when he says:

Through Christ Jesus we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (Rm 5:1-5).

We have seen the motif of the cross as a necessary part of Christian life in Bonhoeffer’s postulate of the *cost of discipleship*. Thus Shona women have come to realize that the cross gives them worth and a destiny. This is succinctly put in the understanding of *resurrection experiences*. In other words, the Christian comes to understand that behind the cross there is the joy of the resurrection.

In perseverance in suffering, Shona women echo the desiderata prayer (cf. an anonymous writer) that invokes God to grant me the serenity and courage to accept the things I cannot change and wisdom to know the difference between good and bad. Shona women talk about how they experience Christ as empowering as follows: *“In illness, death and trouble of any kind, God is with us to comfort and strengthen us.”* *“Christ works through other people and we experience him as Saviour-Redeemer- Deliverer-Liberator.”* *“Christ has made me fearless among my enemies and in convincing me that whatever they do, they can kill the body but not the soul. I have been empowered to speak boldly about God in spreading the Word and when I speak I am taken seriously.”* *“Christ has given me courage to move on even when one’s loved one has died (death in the family).”* *“My faith in Jesus has empowered me in bringing up my family.”* *“It has helped me overcome trying times in marriage. I was empowered to endure and to persevere in marriage while being verbally abused by my husband and I could see my children grow to adulthood.”* As shown above, the last respondent is a victim of a martyr-complex - the Shona *ndinogarira vana vangu* (I will stick it through for the sake of my children) motif.

There is an echo of Mary Ward in the saying that *Christ has shown me that women can do great things*, (cited by a Mary Ward Sister) *if given an opportunity*. In her own time, and, responding to a disparaging chauvinistic comment, *they are but women*, Mary Ward (cf. Catherine Elizabeth Chambers 1882:I.407-408) herself, as a woman ahead of her time said, *women in time to come will do great things*. One respondent reinforces this sentiment saying, *I am a multitude in one. All the chores need my attention*. Other sentiments showing empowerment concerning gender consciousness and equity are as follows: *“I feel liberated in that we can discuss issues freely as husband and wife and I can challenge my husband with no fear of being beaten, abused or divorced.”* *“My faith has helped me to understand and see to it that my children, including young men, are socialized into domestic chores.”* *“God gave my husband a considerate mind to treat me as an equal partner in marriage.”* *“God has shown pity on me by giving me courage to file a divorce against my husband. The latter used to beat me. I believe that God wants me to live a useful life.”* *“God has given me the chance to lead and guide the family. My faith has empowered me to realize that I need to rely on Christ for support. The family does not lean only on father as a source of support. We survive through the grace of God even as God works through frail human beings.”* There is an echo of St Paul’s teaching saying:

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us (2 Cor 4:7).

Mary Ward also emphasized that God’s grace is given gratis, across the gender barrier:

Fervour is a will to do good that is, a preventing grace of God, and a gift given gratis by God, which we could not merit. It is true fervour doth many times grow cold, but what is the cause? Is it because we are women? No, but because we are imperfect women. There is no difference between men and women (in Walter Principe 1985:20-21).

There is acknowledgement of growth in family togetherness as follows: *“I always speak to Mwari thanking him for the gifts – talents, especially children who are my companions. God has thus delivered me from loneliness.”* *“When my mother became very sick, my father and all of us in the family believed that Christ is always alive in our prayer.”* *“Some members of the family are very supportive in the work I do for the poor.”* *“We all believe in Christ and are able to assist other members of the extended family.”* *“We believe that Mwari is Protector and facilitates victory in all problems. I went through a very difficult patch in life – death in the family, illness and other misfortunes. I believe that God gave me comfort, will power and perseverance in hardships or temptations and this has made the bond between parents and us (children) to grow strong.”*

Some respondents talk of faith healing as resurrection experiences. In this, there is an echo of Paul's assertion that they have been proven and tested like gold in the furnace (1Pt 1:6-9) and have come out victorious:

We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed,; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken,; struck down; but not destroyed (2 Cor 4:8).

Individual sentiments are: *"If anyone in the family gets ill, my first reaction is to ask God for healing."* *"That we are all surviving despite starvation in the country is God's providence."* *"I feel God healed me of the wound or pain inflicted on me when my father died from drowning."* *"When our son was to be operated on, we prayed that he would not need to have the operation. Our prayer was answered. Now he is well."* *"When and where it really matters, Mwari sympathizes and empathizes. God consoled me when my father died and made me walk tall when my husband divorced me."* *"God raised me up from my sick bed when I was at the point of death. I called on Mwari and God answered me. Now it does not matter whether I live or die. Again, when I had no money for my children's fees, I got help in unexpected ways. God gave me a full ear as I have been resurrected several times."* *"One of my sons was unexpectedly healed from an eye problem."* Since they have been near death, the respondents show a mature understanding of life and death to such an extent that, like Paul they show indifference to death:

I have eager hope and expectation that Christ will be honoured in my body, whether by life or by death. For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If it is to be alive in the flesh, that means fruitful labour for me. But which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better (Phi 2:20-23).

4.6.2 JESUS IN THE ETHNIC GROUP

Shona women are aware of the historical relativism of culture – the fact that culture is not sacrosanct but is constantly evolving due to new needs and new insights. Important to the inculturation agenda, the women tell of important influences of Christianity on Shona beliefs and practices. These include the fact that *"people feel free to openly disagree with some cultural practices, and that some things are now being accepted as normal. For example, physical abnormalities and sudden illnesses that used to be linked with witchcraft can now be proved to have natural causes."* *"A better understanding of the unique dignity of human life contributes to the consequent and significant end to some superstitions and cultural taboos that threaten life, e.g., the killing of twins and of children whose first teeth come from the upper jaw."* *"Shona people have gained a greater understanding that every human being is special and unique."* *"My Christian faith has made me realize the power of prayer – I feel the power of the Lord Jesus. I am convinced that evil spirits can be exorcised and conquered, and that diseases can be healed in the name of Jesus."* *"God healed me when evil spirits (tortured)*

tormented me.” “Christianity has made a positive impact on Shona culture in that evil spirits that used to haunt the society seem to have vanished.”

It is noteworthy that the respondents admit to popular religiosity. This is an important aspect of inculturation since any theology of inculturation or the incarnation that omits or ignores this can be said to be merely scratching the ears of the hippopotamus in the river or *the tip of the iceberg*. For example, one should not underestimate the Shona chronic fear of witches. It can be asked, *how do we explain the fact that this year (Easter, 2001) in my neighbouring village (Serima, Gutu, Karanga area), there was a witch-hunting spree – the second one within three years and that this time in the same area there were sporadic witch hunting sprees? Or, how do we explain the fact that in July-August, 2001, and, in a seemingly Christian stronghold, Chishawasha area, there were also witch-hunting sprees?*⁶⁵ Other important sentiments to inculturation are that Shona Christians *have come to understand that damages are not reparable by using people*. A Korekore respondent recounts that *some of the initiation rituals that denied the girl-child formal schooling are no longer practiced today*. Shona women note that Christianity is one of the factors that have caused a decline in the practice of polygamy. They admit that *polygamy, which was accepted long ago, is no longer acceptable also because of economic restraints, the weakening of the extended family and because it is a life threatening practice in the present upsurge of the HIV/AIDS pandemic*.

Important to contextualization, some respondents acknowledge that there has been a creative dialogue between culture and the Gospel. Respondents tell of cultural elements that have been reinforced by Christianity. These include the understanding of Mwari as the Supreme Being accessible through ancestral mediation, that Mwari is Creator, *par excellence*, and giver of life and all things. There has also been an important shift from the understanding of Mwari as a *Deus otiosus* or *absconditus* or *remotis* to an immanent God who can be addressed directly by individuals and/or the community. Sentiments expressed to this effect include the following: *“In my faith, I have become convinced that God acts through ancestral spirits. For example, we pray through the ancestors asking for food and shelter.” “Christianity has brought greater understanding and respect between people and their leaders.” “I feel happy and proud of my roots – God and the ancestors.” “I am urged to continue trusting in the Lord and the ancestors.” “I have a strong belief and conviction that Christ is the greatest authority.” “When a chief gives an impartial judgment, I feel Christ’s presence.” “I am encouraged to respect and pray for our leaders as they are God-given.” “Christianity promotes a creative openness to cultural mix or diversity.” “I speak directly to Mwari – struggle with him about*

⁶⁵ Chishawasha - Harare is one of the first mission stations in the history of Christianity in Zimbabwe.

many problems in my life, convinced that he is the giver and Sustainer of life and each time the situation changes for the better.”

“Christ made me fruitful when I had been proved barren.” “Most people believe that God is the Maker of everything and that Mwari is mysterious and good.” “In daily life, God gives us power to survive.” “God heals the nation from hunger and disease.” “Mwari gives us rain, especially in times of drought.” “There are situations I could not have overcome without God’s help.” “I believe that Christ is with me always since I am alive.” “God is always there. I always feel his power.” “God has continually saved us from situations in which we were totally weak and helpless.” “God never gives up even when I know I am a sinner. Problems are solved even in cases when we have lost hope.”

*“Christianity has strengthened our communal solidarity. I feel God’s compassion in times of sorrow and bereavement, when the group takes care of the less fortunate.” “People unite and help each other out (Shona: *humwe*). God is always with us.” “I feel that God answers our prayers through other people. God protects and guides us in everything – God provides. We console each other in times of sorrow and congratulate each other in times of joy.” “There is a renewed sense of maintaining peace and order in the group.” “Christianity has orientated me to be available for my friends to help them to overcome problems and to advise them in trying times.” “I am convinced that God is always with us. I feel that God answers our prayers through other people. God protects and guides us in everything.” “Christianity has reinforced some essential cultural elements, such as the emphasis on giving good example.” We have seen that one of the essential qualities of ancestors and elders in the family and community is the giving of good example. Shona women cannot overemphasize that their faith in Jesus has evoked in them the desire to be exemplary in influencing other people to turn to God. There is an echo of the Sermon on the Mount imperative to *be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect* (Mt 5:48). One respondent echoes another Sermon on the Mount mandate in saying that *“my faith has enabled me to tolerate and love my enemies”* (cf. Mt 5:44-47):*

But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father in Heaven; who makes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust .

“Christianity has helped us to develop the spirit of forgiveness and perseverance in the challenges of life.”

Concerning tolerance of ethnic minorities, respondents note on some positive changes due to the impact of Christianity saying: *Other tribes used to level a lot of derogatory or pejorative onslaught on the Ndau* (e.g. famous for witchcraft and sorcery as seen in the threatening cliché

– **Ndinokuendera Chipinge** [*will sort you out in Chipinge*], where Chipinge is the main town in Ndau area) *but this has changed for the better. God continues to conscientize my people to be cognizant of their rights as equal human beings with anybody else. My faith has made me aware that my ethnic group as a minority feels that there is urgency to have our language taught in school and used in the media as a big move towards uplifting the Ndau people including women.*

In the area of gender consciousness Shona women claim that Christianity has made an important contribution to the liberation of women from patriarchy. Shona women rejoice in newly found freedom saying: *“Christianity has brought about a renewed awareness of the autonomy of an individual irrespective of gender.”* *“My faith has helped me to know who I am as a woman and to make a change in community. As a single mother and divorcee, I do not rely on a man to make decisions.”* *“Women are now given a voice at meetings and when uniting with other ethnic groups.”* *“Shona women in general, take pride in consulting **haha** (father as denoting husband). I do what I want, when and if I want. Women that are single can decide autonomously. This idea is underscored by the fact that women divorcees excel in life (e.g. women singers). Thus it looks like their husbands formerly inhibited these women.”* *“In the area of formal education, Ndau women are liberated in that they are now taking part in a legacy that was formerly reserved for males.”* *“It is healing and consoling to find women in high or influential positions in some communities across the ethnic groups.”* *“Formerly, women could not share meals at the same table with men, but that has currently changed.”*

4.6.3 JESUS AND SOCIAL CLASS

Shona women show that Christianity has enriched their understanding of neighbour to transcend the consanguine and tribal and national divide. One respondent acknowledges the global aspect of neighbour in saying *I feel God’s compassion as a member of a social club to help the needy.*

The Rotary and Lions clubs embrace the international community. In responding to the double love ethic - the great commandment, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself (Lk 10:27-28=Mt 22:37-40=Mk 12:29-31) they concur with Gutierrez (1983:44) in seeing the neighbour as any one in need and in whose path one treads. Acknowledging the mutual interdependence of created reality, Shona women claim the role of stewardship especially in reaching out to the needy. They emphasize that things are gifts from God to be used sparingly, accountably and responsibly. They also want to be thankful for God’s gratuitousness. The women claim a kind of equality in which there is no elitism or male anthropocentrism. In dialogue with eco-feminism, Shona women see themselves as a social symbol of what culture uses, needs, depends on and devalues – nature itself (cf. Chittister

1998:7). The warped or lopsided gender relations as regards access to and control of the means of livelihood in favour of men admit to Chittister's claim that those who have no power become a resource (1998:6). Chittister adds that as a sign of humanity's desecration of nature, today there are no sacred groves.

The women rejoice in their posture for the anawim in the following sentiments: *"As a Christian I am moved to sharing and caring for the needy even extending outside the clan."* *"My faith has enabled me to see wealth as a gift to be appreciated in practising good stewardship."* *"I have the conviction that God gives gifts to be used in good works."* *"I am moved to tolerate those who are not as privileged as I am and not to look down on them."* *"I am poor but I experience God's providence and I am strengthened."* *"As a nurse I believe that God is present in the patients (sacramental presence) I deal with and this gives me renewed love and patience in caring for them."* *"I am convinced that Christ is the Leader and that I have to follow in his footsteps especially in working for equality and social justice."* *"Christianity has brought about a renewed sense of solidarity so that in illness, death, loneliness and sorrow, people are always there to support. People always help when and where they can."* A founder of the Shungu Dzavana Trust for the care of HIV/AIDS orphans says, *"I am moved to be more in the community of the needy, especially the poor people who I believe are actually rich in Christ's image through their poverty."*

Shona women rejoice in a renewed sense of freedom as follows: *"I feel at home with what I believe and I have the freedom to express it."* *"I am always where I feel it is good for me to be."* *"I can contain difficulties without holding grudges."* They rejoice that women's power is acknowledged in society. One respondent acknowledges the reciprocal nature of human relationships and especially as demonstrated in the act of giving and receiving saying, *I have experienced that the poor themselves are very compassionate and loving. I feel this as coming directly from God and I also become compassionate to them.* The women also acknowledge the *feminine ethos* in saying that women are very generous and caring for the needy.

Shona women acknowledge their role of being what Glory E. Dharmarcy (1998:55-65) calls *border-crossing agents* in sentiments like, *"my work cuts across social status, denominations and religions."* *My faith encourages a predilection for the poor and marginalized - works of mercy especially in the understanding of loving everyone we meet who is in need, irrespective of race, gender or creed"* (cf. Lk 10:29-37). Shona women show this orientation in the following sentiments: *"I believe that God wants us all to be rich. But how we become rich is a matter of our response to God in life (our own initiative). I feel a call to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor in overcoming poverty. In this orientation, changing people's*

mind-set is important especially in overcoming defeatism (fatalism). I am convinced that if God created all the wealth on earth, then, in no way could he have done that for some people to live in poverty.” “*I have gained a better understanding of socio-economic differences, however, poverty persists.*” “*Christianity has enabled people of different occupations and social class to unite to help each other.*” “*I am convinced that my faith encourages the team spirit that prevails at my workplace. I experience harmonious relationships with my workmates – they show respect for one another. Christian values of love, peace and forgiveness contribute to amicable conflict resolution among colleagues.*” “*I experience God as empowering in the people who support the work I am doing in which the poor are liberated by God through me. In this, I feel I am God’s hands or instrument on earth.*” “*God has empowered me by giving me the ability to earn enough for a decent life style.*” “*God in Christ has given me courage and wisdom to look after my family and children. Within the community, people are always ready to assist me when I have problems.*” It is noteworthy that a rural woman claims, *God strengthened me in that I could buy a scotch cart and as a widow I am able to send my children to school.* A scotch cart is a necessary tool for a rural farmer.

Shona women rejoice in the Zimbabwe post-independent employment equity measures. They recognize God as empowering in that women are making a mark in society. They claim: “*I see God’s empowering presence in the moves in gender equity in society.*” “*Many women are rising to high positions.*” But another respondent appreciates God’s providence in saying *Christ has strengthened me in my poverty. I am content with the little I have while I nevertheless depend on other people through Christ.* She alludes to the Shona proverb: **Murombo haarovi chinenguwo** (synonymous to ‘do not look a gift horse in the mouth’) in appreciating any help whether great or small. In this attitude we see the Pauline indifference to situations of poverty or plenty:

I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content. I know how to abound; in any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and want. I can do all things in him who strengthens me (Phil 4:13).

Women express a strong belief that prayer is a solution to many problems. God’s providential care is expressed as follows: “*My faith has made me aware of the gratuitousness of God.*” “*I live in God’s providence. During the current problem with self-styled war veterans and the consequent economic hardships in Zimbabwe, we are strengthened with the conviction that God is always with us to protect and facilitate victory.*” “*I always get material help in unexpected ways especially as concerning school fees for my children. I experience God’s providence when I get a good harvest.*” “*I feel God’s power is great. God is always there and gives me the ability to make ends meet.*” “*To be who I am is a sign of God’s compassion.*” “*I felt God’s*

providence in the care of my late brother's children. When my brother got ill and could not look after the children, their performance in school dropped. I prayed that my eldest nephew would get a good wife. My prayers were answered in that he married not only a beautiful wife, but also a very caring and kind wife who can now look well after the children and their epileptic mother.” “*When I deal with the sick as a nurse and do not contract their diseases, I believe this is due to Christ's liberating power.*” “*When new friends are made, I see God as my provider and life giver and I am convinced that I shall never be in want.*” There is an echo of Psalm 22 [23] – *The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want...* This is also the favourite Psalm for most Shona women, as we shall see later.

Some respondents show that they are buying into men's codes in claiming: “*My faith has enabled me to recognize my own potential. I am able to work like a man in my society.*” “*I feel empowered in my faith in that as a woman I can do men's jobs and I am capable of achieving anything as long as I have faith.*” We can ask, what is a man's job? The respondents betray patriarchal stereotyping of work. There is also a kind of fatalism in the assertion *I am poor because God gives different gifts to people.*

4.6.4 JESUS AND THE CHURCH-DENOMINATION

Shona women acknowledge Christian *koinonia* (*fellowship*) that finds its foundation in the Trinitarian *koinonia* (God as a community of three persons living in mutual fellowship). The church is seen as one big family that transcends consanguine, tribal, class, denominational, and religious boundaries. This view is expressed in the following sentiments: “*My faith has enabled me to see all people as brothers and sisters in Christ.*” “*The church has become for me the family of God.*” “*I have come to know that Mwari is a universal God who has no favourites.*” “*God's love is with me always and I am strengthened in faith.*” “*I feel God's presence, love and power in church unity, as we believe that the one Lord saves us all.*” “*God's presence is empowering, compassionate and healing when we share even from the little we have.*” “*God shows healing and compassion when there is a spirit of forgiveness and when there are good social relationships irrespective of social status.*” “*I am energised by experiencing solidarity with others especially through support groups. For example, when I am worried or am in despair and go to pray with others, through sharing and prayer, I feel strengthened and healed. I am empowered by learning many good things from others.*”

Shona women enjoy solidarity especially in the guilds in situations of illness, death and many other hardships and also in joyful events, e.g. weddings and celebrating the birth of a new baby.

Respondents see the urgency of solidarity in prayer when they say: “*I always try to have small prayer groups so as to pray for our families.*” “*The church encourages solidarity with the poor*

and marginalized.” “*Help is rendered through various charities in church communities and guilds.*” “*God said where there are two or three gathered in my name, I am there also (cf. Mt 18:19-20). I experience Christ as empowering, compassionate when people feel with and help each other (empathize and sympathize). This is particularly true when believers talk to each other with words that seem to come from Christ.*” It is noteworthy that these guilds embrace all people in need so that Bishop Bhasera (1995:4) is right in acknowledging that women are the mainstay of families and the backbone of the church and of society.

Some respondents find renewed strength in experiencing the growth of the church. This is expressed as follows: “*The church is growing as people meet in prayer, especially at vigils.*” “*The unity or togetherness saves the church as long as one person remains righteous (cf. Gen 18:22-33).*” “*I saw the church grow in Christ.*” “*I feel strengthened or nourished by the preaching of the Word and I am also urged to convert other people to God.*” “*I experience church growth in the active participation or involvement of the laity in the liturgy.*” “*I feel the obligation to share my faith especially with the youth.*” “*It is encouraging that more and more people are being converted to Christianity and especially that new Christians join my church or denomination.*” “*When the youth participate in church matters they bring life into the church.*” “*In our community there are new developments in that more people are going to church.*” “*After twenty-two years of marriage, I had my marriage solemnized in the church.*” “*I see church growth in moves on Church unity, especially Ecumenical gatherings.*” “*I rejoice to experience church unity especially on the World Day of Prayer.*”

Shona women rejoice in the empowerment of women in the following assertions: “*I notice that the church is still changing from the false perception that men are better leaders than women. Women are now able to take up responsibilities, especially leadership positions in the church.*” “*I experience God as empowering when women are given chances to present papers at congresses.*” “*Women give great support to the church.*” “*I experience God’s mercy and healing when women are given ministries which have to do with charity*” (the margins). “*It is energizing that God, in the church guilds and the church, continues to conscientize and inspire women of their dignity and role.*” “*In the church we learn to exercise our gifts without fear. I experience prophetic witness in that I can now stand for justice and peace.*” “*In the church I get the incentive to make a positive contribution wherever I am, especially in advising younger women on life.*”

Shona women appreciate faith healing. It is noteworthy that women have appropriated the healing ministry, particularly in the African Independent Churches (AICs). In the Roman Catholic Church, the women rejoice in God’s healing presence attached to the sacraments of the

Eucharist, Penance and the Anointing of the Sick as follows: *“I am empowered by the conviction that God is the answer to all problems and that Mwari never fails to fulfil his word”* (God’s faithfulness, cf. Jer 31:3). *“I believe that Mwari is in my life and that God works through other people.”* *“When I surrender all my illnesses to God, I find myself healed.”* *“I feel relieved from social problems after receiving Holy Communion and attending Mass.”* *“I find healing in the forgiveness of sin through the sacrament of confession.”* *“I experience healing through the prayers of other people, especially through the Sacrament of the sick”* (Holy Anointing). One interviewee asks, *why believers are not given Holy oils for this purpose* (administration of the sacrament is reserved to ordained priests)? Another respondent affirms God as healing us on condition – *God heals us as long as we call on him.*

“When I was diagnosed for breast cancer I got advice from other women especially in my support group - some of these were encouraging and others were discouraging. I had a mastectomy and I now have a clean bill of health. The experience made me indifferent to life and to surrender my life totally to God with the conviction that if I die it is in God’s good time (cf. Eccles 3:1-9; Phil 2:20-24). *In sickness and death people always seek help from God.”*

“I feel renewed by participating in God’s healing ministry. I experience holistic healing in the church. Concerning spiritual healing, I now have a better understanding and acceptance of death. I have been healed of things that hurt me in life – internal wounds of the burdens of life. God has healed me from mental illness. I feel that I am really liberated in my condition of suffering from two types of cancer. The Lord strengthens me always since I am God’s hands and instrument on earth. Christ wants me to continue with the work he has called me to do.”

“When I was suffering from a strong headache, I prayed touching the Bible (hierophany – use of object as seen in sorcery) and soon I felt better. Whenever I fall ill God heals me. I got inner healing when my chronic spinal problem was diagnosed. Prior to that I had been very worried and close to despair. Now I enjoy a sense of calmness – also in surrendering my life to God.”

“I feel God’s compassion in my work with the poor and especially the disadvantaged children – AIDS orphans and street children.”

“In my HIV status, I experience God’s healing presence in all areas of life (emotional, physical and financial). It is holistic healing in the sense of empowerment to cope with my HIV stigma. I believe that healing is relative. My life is in God’s hands and for me, it does not matter whether I live or die. If I die it is in God’s time and intention. I am convinced that I am healed because I have accepted and can manage my situation vis-à-vis fighting and not dealing with the matter at hand. Furthermore, I am convinced that God has power over my life. I am empowered by moral, psychological and physical support especially from medical experts,

some of whom are also HIV positive. I got a very good job through affirmative action. In my work of promoting AIDS awareness and prevention, I enjoy a reciprocal relationship of empowerment in that I can give powerful testimony to the reality of the disease. As a single mother and divorcee, I see myself as liberated from many social constraints. Society can dictate, but I do not have to conform."

4.7 CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP – BEING WOMEN FOR OTHERS

We are faced with the important question, *after retrieving the women's faith story, then what?* Theology as faith-seeking understanding involves interpretation and response. In this sense, Christology and mission are mutually inclusive. The Shona women's self-understanding and experiential knowledge of God in Christ invokes transformative, liberating praxis. In the women's posture for the *anawim*, they find that they are heeding Christ's jubilee mission as given in Luke 4:18-19 (cf. Is 61:1-2):

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor. He sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

In other words, the women are sharing in the mission of Christ of spreading the Good News of the reign of God or the Kingdom of God (*basileia tou theou*). This call to mission or discipleship is accentuated by the understanding of what Hugo Assmann (cf. Brown 1978:61) calls the *epistemological privilege of the poor*, or, in the saying that *to know or love God is to do justice* (Jer 22:13-16; 31:31-34; cf. The French Liberation Theologian, Dominique M. Chenu, in Gutierrez 1983:51; Brown 1978:90-92). In accepting the call to Christian discipleship, Shona women know that God uses human beings in transforming the world. They also acknowledge that the challenge of Christian discipleship, in a situation fraught with injustices of all types, requires prophetic witness. They understand that in their cry for love, justice, peace, healing and salvation, they are called to be *women for others*. Shona women highlight what it means to be women for others within the parameters of *family, ethnic group, social class and church or denomination*.

4.7.1 CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP AND THE FAMILY

We have seen that in families, *the other*, as mother, grandmother and wife, identifies Shona women and that in that position, the women's activities border on a *martyr-complex*. It is noteworthy that Shona women as *other Christs*, mirror the attributes they have given to God in Christ. In this we observe a God-human reciprocal relationship as a process of what Hans Urs von Balthasar (cf. John Martis 1996:237) calls *expropriation and appropriation*. Von Balthasar describes expropriation as God's giving or *handing over* personified in that the Father gives himself to the Son to the point of becoming human and being lost. He says that humanity

receives this gift only if they, in turn, hand themselves over through and in imitation of Jesus himself. In this way humanity *appropriates* God's *expropriation*. Thus in this capacity, the women emulate Christ in their desires, efforts and activities given below: *"I want to be a good advisor (Shona: mupiwemazano) who is not only a good listener, but also a balanced person with whom all members of the family can confide."* *"In the family I want to be a mother to everyone by teaching my children unity with others and to share what they have with others."* *"I desire to be an exemplary or role model of a mother. Consequently, the way I raise my children should make others want to do the same."* *"I should be a mother who loves, shares, teaches and cares for others."* *"As a woman for others, I want to be a trouble receiver –as concerning my own problems and in facing all the troubles of the family (including the extended family)."* *"I am responsible for preaching about the goodness of Jesus (the faith) in my family."* *"I desire to be a fruitful mother in providing for the needs of the family and also a woman who shares with other women in the care of our families."* *"I dedicate myself to work tirelessly for the sake of uplifting other women from the dustbins of society."* *"I desire to work for Jesus with all the powers (capabilities) of a woman in empowering, educating, consoling, and comforting others."* As Shona women put priority on giving good example in the family, they subscribe to Jesus' teaching that:

You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles? So, every sound tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears evil fruit (Mt 7:16-20).

The women distinguish the following qualities in ministering to the family: *"I will endeavour to see that each member follows Christ more closely in instilling true love, trust, honesty, peace, harmony and a spirit of prayer in uniting as a family."* *"In trying to know, follow or do God's will, I rely on the power of prayer for through this we are nourished. I do Christ's work without fear (echo of prophetic witness) and want to be faithful."* *"I value each child as precious and unique. Consequently, I try to treat children as equals – especially in teaching of and carrying out household chores – I show no differentiation between male and female roles."* *"I want to be an honest, hard-working and caring wife and mother."* It is noteworthy that the women echo the 43rd Eucharistic Congress, (Nairobi, Kenya, 1985) motto – *a family that prays together, stays together.*

3.7.2 CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP AND THE ETHNIC GROUP

In sharing Christ's mission, Shona women encourage a creative dialogue between Christianity and Shona culture that preserves the ethic of *unhu* (Shona for *ubuntu*), *umwe* (togetherness), *ushamwari* (friendship) and hospitality and impart these to our children. Shona culture has privileged status in that the women say they *want to respect our traditions through the respect of elders and our families*. The women understand that the Gospel judges culture in asserting

that they *desire to be a group that roots its values in Christ*. In this stance, the women express the desire *to try to reject anything that alienates them from God, for example, polygamy*. The women appreciate that *every human being is unique and precious and therefore must not be marginalized or excluded*. Shona women subscribe to the organic model of unity by saying that they want *to become members of Christ's body or the people of God*. They claim a unity nourished by biblical faith in calling for *group work in reading the Bible*.

Shona women claim to be *'other Christs'* in reclaiming traditional roles of *'vatete'*, *'mbuya'*, and *'mukoma'* (*elder sister*) in training our children. The women want to promote good neighbourliness in showing concern, loving care, and respect for other people. They propose the type of motherhood that transcends the extended family and tribe in saying: *"I want to be a mother of every child," "assist my neighbours when they need my motherly services" and "to be a woman who can work for others especially the needy."* Above all, Shona women want to *encourage other women to do the same*. In the last posture, the women particularly want to feel with other women in need and to help these women to question the *status quo* in standing for their rights.

Some women show that they have internalised the early missionaries' aversion for local culture in saying: *"I want to liberate our people from worshipping out of fear or superstition."* *"I want to assist my neighbours when they need my motherly services and to believe in God directly and not through dead people (ancestors)."* A Ndaun respondent shows that she has internalized patriarchy by asserting: *I want to be a (submissive) non-radical or non-violent subject to my chief*. She shows inconsistency in answering the questionnaire because earlier on, she is very vocal against patriarchy. She either is not aware of the subtle ways in which she acquiesces to patriarchy, or she is showing questionnaire fatigue.

4.7.3 CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP AND SOCIAL CLASS

In society and church, Shona women ascribe to the preferential option for the poor and marginalized and they emphasize cultural and Christian ethos of *togetherness, stewardship, friendship*, etc. In this situation, the women emphasize that as Christians they must make a positive contribution to change in society and church. As agents of change in society, the women profess that they are instruments of Christ on earth and in all areas of influence. Women want to work especially for *social change* rather than *social aid*. Social change is seen in the classic adage *teach a man to fish and you have given him bread for his whole life*. Social aid has been seen in the kind of work promoted by mother Teresa of Calcutta, that is, giving relief to the sick and dying. In other words, where social aid can be seen as retrieving drowning bodies, social change is like building bridges. In their work with marginalized people, Shona

women act as *border-crossing agents*. Dharmaraj (1998:59) explains that *border-crossing* can be seen as both an act of women empowering themselves and a means of empowering others. The women find that necessity knows no borders. Shona women admit to crossing the *gender, ethnic, creed* and *class* artificial boundaries in their work with HIV/AIDS victims and orphans and street children and in their role as educators. The women negotiate with the centre when they work in collaboration with men as church leaders or directors of NGOs.

Shona women lay claim to an inclusive humanity that takes note of differences of family, clan, tribe, creed and race as enriching the community. They see this posture as punctuated by the Shona adage **Munhu wese ihama yangu** (*everyone is my relative*). In the proverb **Chawawana idya nehaama mutorwa une hangamwa** (*Share what you have with your relative since the stranger can be forgetful*), **hama** takes a universal and inclusive outlook (see also responses to **Appendix II, Q4c**). The respondents claim that they are urged to *help everyone in need as you would do to your child*. Other sentiments that show concern for the common good include: “*I want to care for everyone even those who are not of my tribe.*” “*I desire to be able to mix with all and not to consider myself superior to others (elite) – being simple in order to accommodate others.*” “*Seeing God as the ultimate provider, I want to be a woman concerned for the welfare of others or to work for all people.*”

Shona women share in Christ’s predilection for the *anawim* opting for the poor and marginalized of society. As *other Christs*, they appropriate the roles of *good advisor, leader, counsellor, role model, and helper*. As advisors, the women want to be engaged in finding solutions to problems, and to give good counsel to one another for the betterment of society. In accepting leadership positions, the women put emphasis on giving good example or being Christ-like, especially in promoting togetherness (fellowship) in Christ. Shona women want to help those in difficulty. In promoting the common good, they want to share generously in the joys and sorrows of others. One respondent says, *I want to work willingly and effectively without equating my labour to my salary* (being too calculating). The importance of showing good example, is underscored by the saying *a woman of good deeds will produce children who are good and who, in turn, will do the same to others*. This element is inherent in a positive way in the Shona proverb: **Mbudzi kudya Mufenje hufana nyina** (*a kid imitates the mother-goat in eating the leaves of a Mufenje tree* – cf. responses to **Appendix II, Q3b**).

In their involvement in *other-directed-service*, Shona women claim a generosity we see described in Luke’s Gospel. They feel urged to *give a good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over* (Lk 6:38). They want to give even from the little they have. Shona women subscribe to Jesus’ teaching – *give and it will be given to you for the measure you give*

will be the measure you get back (Lk 6:37-38), by alluding to the Shona adage, **Kupa kuturika** (*to give is to store*). This element is also echoed in other Shona proverbs (cf. **Appendix II, Q4b**): **Kupa kukanda tsapo mhiri kwewizi** (*to give is to throw your baggage across the river* – apparently, not only to enable easy crossing, but also when you get to the other side you are well provided for). **Rutsoka ndimarase** (*feet can take you far and wide* – ‘make you get lost’). The proverb puts emphasis on the *reversal of fortune* so that if you give to a stranger, you will one day find yourself at the receiving end as a stranger yourself. The women’s sensitivity to the reciprocal relationship of giving and receiving also echoes Christ’s teaching:

Lay for yourself treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be (Mt 6:19-21).

St Paul’s saying that *it is more blessed to give than to receive* (Acts 20:35) also finds meaning in Shona women’s generosity to the *other*. It is also appropriate that religious sisters of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (IBVM) cite their foundress’ maxim – *God loves a cheerful giver* (Mary Ward) in this context. They want to *share with, and care for, the needy in practising good stewardship and/or the preferential option for the poor and marginalized*.

As proactive agents of change, Shona women show a certain level of self-consciousness in which gender consciousness receives consideration. The women advocate efforts to respect others, irrespective of gender, class, ethnicity and creed. In recognizing that women have (inherent) power to promote God’s ways in their workplace than they or their male counterparts care to admit, Shona women put priority on empowering other women. This posture is reflected in the following sentiments: “*Ndau women can be geared and encouraged to work for the liberation of their women folk from patriarchy.*” “*I want to support other women – show pity to other women so that together we can progress.*” “*As a woman for others, I want to empower other women for economic power through education e.g. in banking (wife and husband to have their own separate bank books and one in common) and to have a funeral policy, and starting income generating projects especially for rural women.*” “*I want to show that women have the right to our resources and to stop violence against women by educating women about the laws that protect them.*”

Shona women claim that they want to share in the priestly ministry of mixing well with others and in promoting a good community. They feel called to the unity proposed by Christ in praying, *Holy Father, keep them in my name... that they may be one, even as we are one* (Jn 17:11). The women want to exercise prophetic witness in working for justice and peace. In raising those whom the society puts into the margins, Shona women advocate **metanoia** (*repentance or forgiveness of one another*). The women are aware that both men and women are

guilty in the distortion of human relationality. In this stance, Shona women echo Ruether's (1983,1993:159-192) assertion that *metanoia* is both a male and female journey.

3.7.4 CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP AND CHURCH OR DENOMINATION

Shona women, as disciples of Christ, subscribe to an inclusive church *in which we may all feel at home*. Thus the women advocate true faith, love for, and worship of God (that God may be served in truth and that God may be our final destination), love and respect for one another, and Christian unity or fellowship. In sharing the mission of Christ, Shona women appropriate their baptism vocation, especially as seen in the common priesthood of believers. They show an eagerness to engage in prophetic witness in addressing inequalities in both church and society. Thus Shona women express the following sentiments: *"We resolve to reject all things which hinder us from being close to God, and to believe in God's providence – that nothing is impossible with God and that with God on our side, we can succeed."* *"As women for others, we want to treat every member with the motherly love as Christ did."* *"In opting for the poor and marginalized of society, we want to serve without counting the cost."* *"In caring for the needy, we want to show concern, love and respect for them."*

Concerning gender equity, Shona women want to redress the imbalances in doing away with lopsided relationships between men and women. In other words, they call for a horizontal model of church leadership. They thus challenge the *status quo* in showing that *women as well as men can lead* with the conviction that *"the church is to treat women as people who are able to run it,"* and that *"because women constitute the majority of church congregations, they may have a say in the church."* As members of a community of equal discipleship, women urge that they *may be accorded full participation in the leadership of the church and encourage others to do the same*. Shona women appropriate their role as border-crossing agents by asserting that *women are to take important roles in the church in order to improve it*. They do not doubt their leadership ability when they claim that *women excel in all church activities including leadership – women must make a contribution to a dynamic church that improves society*.

As *other Christs*, Shona women claim the roles of counsellor, teacher, theologian, catechist, evangelist, mother, and sister. In subscribing to the model of the church as the family of God, Shona women rejoice that the church has appropriated the traditional roles of *vatete* and *sekuru* in guiding the youth to societal and Christian values. Because of the erosion of the extended family and consequently group value through Westernization and globalization, Shona women see the urgency of *women's involvement in guidance and counselling, especially of other women and the girl-child*. They want to appreciate other people's gifts and to learn from others. The women appropriate all these roles in the following sentiments: *"As a woman for others, I*

want to promote fellowship – the brotherhood and sisterhood of believers.” “I am urged to be alert to the needs of others.” “In preaching and catechising, the church should grow and not collapse through me.” “As a disciple of Christ, I have the responsibility to proclaim the Good News of salvation.” “I am convinced that Christ has no other hands, mouth and ears but mine and so it is my duty as a believer to help others to be good followers of Christ mostly by using my talents to develop their talents as well.” “As a believer, I have to listen to the Word of God and put it into practice.” “I want to be able to do as Mary did – to be everyone’s mother. Thus I am urged to give the motherly love that is taught in the church.” “As a member of the wider family of God, I want to be dedicated and to be prayerful – to be a woman who likes to pray with others by joining prayer groups and support groups in praying with and for the sick and comforting the afflicted and the bereaved.” It is noteworthy that, as for social class above, Shona women recognize that the distortion of human relationships tarnishes both men and women and therefore advocate the need for repentance on both sides.

4.8 CELEBRATING AWARENESS

Shona women affirm God as Creator, Giver of life, and in general, Mwari’s gratuitous love and providence. I have heard it said, *a gift is not a gift until it is received*. In the Shona woman’s prayer from the heart and most favourite song (**Appendix II, Q.14**), there is a real sense in which Shona women receive God’s gifts generously. It also becomes true that *gift* is the making *presence* of God. In other words, God’s presence and agency as *Emmanuel* is affirmed in the grandeur of creation. Immersed in meditation, the women are lost in wonder at the grandeur of God. This, in turn, invokes in them prayers of thanksgiving, praise, and hope for the future and petitions for God’s continual protection and guidance. It cannot be over-emphasized that for Shona women, the climax of God’s gratuitousness is children.

It is important to note that some respondents gave the *Our Father* as their most common prayer.

Here, there is a discrepancy between gender-conscious and habitual naming of God – between Shona women’s understanding of God in Christ as championing the cause of women (gender-conscious designations of Christ) and spontaneous calling on God. The latter betrays ingrained patriarchal designations of God – as Father, and Lord (Ishe) since Shona is gender neutral. In this, there is no difference in, Karanga, Zezuru, Manyika, Korekore and Ndau ethnic loyalties. Popular religious beliefs are also betrayed in that the women see God as victor over evil spirits and witches.

I got inspiration about the richness and relevance of the Shona woman’s prayer from my late mother. My mother’s grace appreciates the gratuitousness of God as follows: *Lord you are all goodness. You give us our daily food, strength, power, glory and everlasting life – Amen.*

Again, in my mother's night prayer one could pick up the moods and impulses of the family. My mother's prayer for protection fascinates me. It goes like this: *Lord, protect us from minzwa nemasoso (thorns from trees and thistles we trample under foot)* as denoting *enemies* or the *evil* or *life threatening forces that surround us*. There is an echo of the Lord's Prayer - *And deliver us from all evil* (Mt 6:13).

4.8.1 SHONA WOMEN PRAISING AND THANKING GOD

What follows is a collation of the respondents' prayers of praise and thanksgiving in which I try to bring unity and also to avoid repetition: *"Mwari, I call on you at this time of the day. You have made it possible for me to be here to dialogue about your greatness. Without your strength there is no discussion and our plans for the day fall to pieces."* *"Father, I worship you in the name of Jesus."* *"Mwari, you are all powerful, good, and the giver of all things. You are my fortress and my provider who guides me day and night. You hear the cry of my pleading. You know my joys and my sorrows. You are wonderful and you are the Messiah."* *"My God, you are Father and you are Mother. And so God, I praise you. May your name be held high!"*

"I love you Mwari because you hear the cry (voice) of my pleading. Strengthen me Mwari, Father strengthen me so that I may have deep strong faith." *"When the snares of death surrounded me, I was troubled and cried to you for help. And you my God answered me."* *"I want to thank you Father for the gift of life that you give me all the time of my life and for the gift of my family."* *"I thank you for your glory manifested in my family."* *"Lord God, I thank you for your love for me, for the gift of health, the new day and the gift of people around me."* *"I thank you for my parents, brothers and sisters."* *"Thank you for the people who have helped me to be what I am."* *"Mwari, Creator God, I thank you Lord, for who and what I am - for my uniqueness."* *"Thank you Lord for giving me life, a family and employment. May all people praise and know you forever."*

"I prostrate before you for I know that I am not worthy of your wonderful love. Be my guide always." *"Lord, I thank you for dying for me. Because of your great love you sacrificed your life for my salvation."* *"I am weak and easily tempted. I am worried and anxious for tomorrow. I am afraid because I do not know what is coming or going to happen. I am afraid I will not be good enough. I am nervous Lord. I am overwhelmed that you Lord forgive my sins."* *"I praise and thank God for what I have gone through. I feel proven, tested and purified like gold in the furnace. The image of abused women denied rights and HIV victims makes me think that there is so much to go through before I can be proven like gold, particularly in overcoming the stigma that single or divorced women cannot do this or that."*

And so Shona women continue to praise and thank God in song and poetry. The most common song is *The Lord is my Shepherd* (Ps 23 [22]). One respondent says the song appeals to her most *because through it we praise God in every circumstance*. What follows is a collation of the respondents' favourite songs of praise put into one song:

"What a friend we have in Jesus..." "I will always pray in the name of Jesus for he is my Redeemer and Healer. He is my triumphant Deliverer." "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. Because I believe that there is nothing that I have or own that is not God-given. Some of the things I did not even ask for, but God just gratuitously gave them to me." "I love Mwari my helper." "Lord, I thank you for dying for me. Because of your great love you sacrificed your life for my salvation."

"When you question the meaning of life, be silent and remember the great deeds of God. Praise him in thanksgiving for everything he has done for you, then life will once again become a song." "In you Lord I find power and love. In you Lord I find all that I ever can need to carry on in this world."

"My favourite song is about God and nature. There is wonder about the (grandeur) greatness of God - how God created the heavens and earth and all the creatures in the world. God's will and reverence is to be found and experienced in the ordinary concrete things and situations of our everyday life. God created human beings in God's own image and likeness."

"Mwari, your works bring great wonder to me. They all give witness to your greatness. They all praise you." "We praise and thank you Lord for Zimbabwe our country of milk and honey. Let this prevail forever and ever." "The Lord loves me. His love will never end!" "I love you Lord Jesus - my strength and ornament. Nothing can separate me from the love of God..." "O Lord, you search me and you know me. You know when I am seated and when I am sad. You search me as I walk or when I am lying down. O Lord, my ways are open to you" (cf. Ps 139 [138]).

4.8.2 SHONA WOMEN'S PRAYER OF PETITION

"Mwari, my Father, I thank you for this time you have given me to talk to you. Strengthen me wherever I am and go so that I may meet you." "Heavenly Father, please remove the thorn deep in my heart. Drive away evil spirits especially vengeance spirits to dry places (without water). I ask this through the name of Jesus" (power of Jesus' name - cf. Acts 4). "Mwari, Creator God, May you be honoured, worshipped and praised through me. Use me as your household instrument." "I pray for mature faith - that the seed of faith that was planted in me on the day of baptism may grow each day." "Empower me to pray to you in spirit and in truth.

Dear Father, help me as I struggle to come towards you. Be my food for the journey of faith, my wine for rejoicing, my light in the darkness and my welcome at the end of the journey.”
“You are my ‘Muponesi’ (Saviour – Redeemer – Liberator – Deliverer), the bearer of my burden. May you guide and protect my children and me. Heal us from all sickness and deliver us from all evil and problems. Give me my proper place and let me be fearless.” “O Lord our God, save us this day from all the sins which we so easily and so continually commit. Deliver us from demanding standards from others that we never ever try to fulfil ourselves” (cf. Mt 23:4).

“Divine Father, grant me vivid awareness of the miracles that continually cross my path.” “In the darkest hour, I will trust you to lead me into the light of your victorious love.” “Lord, help me to look at you my Shepherd and Saviour with wonderment and respect, with tears of gratitude, with the sobbing of one who knows that so much grace and fervour cannot be earned. Have mercy on me for the times I have failed to recognize you.”

“Through Jesus’ name I pray for our nation, country and society that God may intervene in our socio-economic crisis.” “We come to you asking for mercy and kindness to rescue us from the present political and socio-economic hardships.” “Come to the rescue of a lot of our unemployed relatives and friends affected by the present political environment (climate) that has led to the closure of many business firms.” “Dear Lord, let peace prevail in our country and let Zimbabwe once again give a good image of economic prosperity.” “Lord, there is political unrest in our country. So we need you to come down upon every Zimbabwean and unite us as one people. If you give us faith and understanding so that people will do your will, earth will be like heaven.” “I plead with God that Christ’s blood may cast away the spirit of poverty and the spirit of the devil that hinders development in our society and country.” “I pray positively in faith, telling God my desired ends and giving thanks to God for granting what I ask for even before I receive it.”

“Overwhelmed with the AIDS pandemic, we thank God for the healthy life we still enjoy. I pray that the suffering of innocent women especially from HIV/AIDS pandemic may come to an end.” “We need to keep to one partner so as to be saved by God, especially in knowing the meaning of the life we protect.” “I ask God to keep us away from enemies and that God be our Saviour every moment.” “I pray that man should know that woman needs to be loved, taken care of, provided with decent shelter, enough clothing and food and not to take woman as a slave to work for man and be his housemaid.” “I ask God to help the society to accept any role played by any women in promoting Christian life.”

“Lord, make me an instrument of your peace (cf. St Francis of Assisi). The world is not at rest in that it has not experienced God’s peace. People do not know the difference between joy and sorrow. Most people confuse happiness with joy. Happiness is conditional or circumstantial. Inner joy is experienced even in illness or poverty. I pray that people may experience inner joy as different from happiness.” “I do believe that women can be quite instrumental in the spreading of the Good News when not hindered. The mothers’ union always does a lot of things for the church.” “Lord Jesus, make us women of action, women who are caring, and women of vision so that we can be able to take our rightful place in society and church.” “Lord Jesus, may you liberate us women from the unwarranted domination in the different facets of life.”

4.8.3 THE OUR FATHER

“I wouldn’t say common but my favourite prayer and/or maybe I should say a prayer I like saying is the Lord’s Prayer, because if I say it from the heart, i.e. as if it were my own words, I experience joy and peace.” “This prayer embraces all that a Christian should do - praising God, inviting God to do his will, requesting for bodily needs and asking for protection.” “The Our Father is the prayer Jesus taught his disciples and is the one we should pray when we have no words of our own or when we cannot express ourselves clearly.”

“Father, I ask you to be with me everywhere. In what I do and wherever I go, do not leave me alone because the world has many temptations. Help me to love, share with, and care for those who need my help.” “I pray for help in the problems of my family, for the sick and for those I have promised to pray and for those who need my prayers. That Christ may help me to be a better mother, wife, friend and woman. In this way I can do the best I can in everything I represent.” “I pray that every time I make a mistake I should learn from it and not repeat my mistakes. This will help me to be a better person.” Father, help me to assist others to grow spiritually.” “In the Name of Jesus Christ I pray God to lead all people in this world, to teach them to tell the truth, to guide everyone to follow in your footsteps. Father, may Jesus guide us to be your sons and daughters.”

“God my Father, I place before you my husband, my home and my children so that you may give them your Holy Spirit to enable them to know you.” “I place my mother into your hands so that you may guide and protect her. I thank you for the care we got from my mother when we were growing up, especially after our father’s death.” “Heavenly Father, please give me a heart full of love. May the words from my mouth and my thoughts from the heart, be received by you Lord, my strength, my Saviour-Redeemer-Liberator-Deliverer.” “I always pray Mwari to make me a person who can forgive those who have sinned against me, for generosity towards

the needy out of the little I have.” “I ask God that I may never desert him so that I may always walk in his holy ways.”

“I talk with God trustfully – not just when I am in need.” “I pray directly to Christ and sometimes through Mary. I pray to Christ for grace for a good death – that I may die in union with Christ and that I may die fully aware that I am going to Christ or God.” “I thank you for the gift of life you give me from day to day. I thank you for the children you have given me. Make me able to look after them by giving me a good home. Mwari, may I be able to serve you always. I ask this through Christ our Lord.”

4.8.4 SHONA WOMAN’S PRAYER, SONG AND POEM OF HOPE

“My favourite song is that of John Lennon that gives maximum value to women: ‘Woman, I can hardly express my mixed emotions at my thoughtlessness. After all I’m forever in your debt. And woman, I will try to express my inner feelings of thankfulness for showing me the meaning of success.’ The song echoes the adage: ‘Behind every successful man is a woman.’” But there are cases in which the reverse is also true. Thus I would go further to say that behind every successful woman there is a man.

“Master, you have invited me to abide in you and as I accept your gracious invitation, I come to a new understanding of myself.” “The Christian must not give up. Listen to your guardian angel. See enemies surround you. You must pray then. Take your weapons (spears) to protect you always. Satan can make you fall. Pray and be watchful. The believer is urged to fear God when facing temptations. If you offer yourself to do God’s will and service, then be assured that you will be tempted. But the fear of God empowers your heart so that you may not fall into temptation. My child, be God-fearing when facing temptations.”

Since my respondents had problems with composing poems, as a participant observer I attempt to give a poem that captures the highlights of Shona women’s Christology (see fig.7).

The spontaneous prayers and favourites songs have given us a deep insight into Shona women’s rich and holistic spirituality. The women show that they experience God as immanent and involved in their lives. Thus for Shona women, God in Christ is truly *Emmanuel*. It is important to note that as women for others, Shona women are concerned about the affirmation of the full humanity of all people. Thus they rejoice that the incarnate Jesus of Nazareth whom they experience as *Muponesi* is *All in All*.

JESUS THE CHRIST, GOD AMONG US

*You are Ancestor, Creator of all things,
Living Water, from whom all life springs.
You are my Roots, the source of my life,
My Totem, you name and surname me.*

*You are Father, your girdle encompasses all the earth.
My Provider, giving food and drink for good health.
You are my guide, you taught me to walk and to talk.
My Security, you guide and protect me from all danger.*

*You are Mother, the great womb, giving birth to all.
The Deliverer, you labour in giving birth.
The Midwife, you come face to face with pain and joy,
Loving mother, you welcome me into the world.
With joy and a smile, pondering the mystery of life.*

*Living presence, you were there from the beginning of my life,
The big breast, all suckle to satiety.
Compassionate Mother, you are there in sickness and in health, in
sorrows and in joy.
Unconditional Love, you looked after me, in the past,
You care for me in the present, you are with me to the end.*

*Healing presence, you heal without medicine.
Flowing water, you wash away our sins.
Pregnant Mother, your heart bleeds with compassion.
Bleeding heart, you give birth to a new humanity.*

*The Elder Brother/Sister, first born of all creation.
The First Fruit, full of earth's richness.
The First Rain, renewing all creation.
The Role Model, full of all goodness.*

*The Mediator, you unite people in all kinship relations.
Faithful friend, you join all in an unbreakable bond of love.
Good Advisor, you bring wisdom, respect, peace and justice,
To all who bear the burden of indifference and oppression.*

*You are Grandmother, full of wisdom and insight.
Eternal Wisdom, acquainted with God's ways.
Liberating presence, you bring us together,
In fellowship of renewed creation, transcending class, gender,
creed and culture,
Journeying together to a future that respects the oneness of
creation,
Dancing together in celebrating the Word become flesh.*

4.8 CONCLUSION

Important insights have been gained from an Incarnational Christology whose point of departure is the faith narrative of Shona women in present-day-Zimbabwe. The narrative genre enjoys the privileged status of mediating Shona women's experiences of the Incarnation. The narrative quality of experience was appreciated in that Shona women's biography is structured on the *meta-story* – the *biography of God in Christ*. From this standpoint, it cannot be overemphasized that human experience is an incipient story. The women were given space to be proactive subjects of theology. In exploring and answering the Christological question, *Shona woman, who do you say that I am*, Shona women found that they were engaged in a reciprocal process of theological anthropology and epistemology. In other words, they were engaged in a dual process of *expropriation* and *appropriation*, in naming Jesus as the *Christ* (Shona: *Muponesi*). Shona women came to authentic self-consciousness and self-identity. Thus Shona women's response to the Christological question is stark with soteriological import. By the same token, it can be said that in claiming human dignity as a creation and baptismal category, the fullness of human dignity can be seen to be the flipside of divine dignity and reverence. This aspect was appreciated too in the Shona women's ascribing sacramental presence of God in creation and consequently in their reverence of creation and accepting the responsibility of stewardship.

In this Incarnational Christology *by, with and for* Shona women, searchlights were *gender, ethnicity, class, and creed*. The process of reclaiming full humanity in Christ was in many ways subversive, *vis-à-vis* the Christian *Magna Charta* of Galatians 3:28. It was found that the areas of experience listed above were mutually inclusive. This element was underscored by the fact that gender issues filtered into all other areas of experience. In the concepts of *aggiornamento, contextualization, inculturation, incarnation*, a creative dialogue between Shona culture and Christianity was maintained. It was found that many quintessential Christian values are inherent in Shona culture, especially in the concepts of *unhu, umwe, ushamwari*, and Shona hospitality. Patriarchy was understood to be a historical process and as such in a new Christian consciousness, it can be rejected as dehumanising women. By the same token, culture was seen to be historically conditioned and therefore, not sacrosanct. Shona women were empowered to question the way things are – status quo ideologies which are the trajectory of patriarchy.

In Shona women's Christian self-awareness, there was *intention-action* identity, *identity-in-difference* and *identity-in-alienation* descriptions. It cannot be overemphasized that Shona women know themselves primarily through the *other*. In this context, and according to the Great Commandment, God is the *Ultimate Other* and the *other* as *neighbour* takes on a universal meaning as *anyone in need*. This is punctuated by the fact that in works of charity,

Shona women serve on the margins. As inhabitants on the margins, their role as *border-crossing* agents was appreciated. In this role, and as agents of history, Shona women want to become active agents of social change. In a new form of Christian self-consciousness, it is important to note that Shona women are not content to be permanent inhabitants on the margins or occupants of pews. In claiming their baptismal status and vocation, they want to participate actively in the centre – as places of decision-making, theological discourse and priestly ministry.

Shona women's *identity-in-alienation* descriptions of self exposed their *anthropological poverty*. In the family they are negated and marginalized as minors. In both church and society Shona women are overburdened and yet they serve on the margins. Shona women are sometimes dehumanized to the extent of being treated as objects for cultic ritual or marketable goods. In a new Christian consciousness, Shona women were able to challenge the *status quo*. But Shona women also betrayed a certain degree of *self-alienation* in subtle ways of colluding or acquiescing with patriarchy.

The Incarnational narrative of Shona women has a happy *denouement* in that we are immersed in contemplation, meditation, prayer, song, and poetry in which the women *receive* God's *gifts* generously. We are invited to participate into the rich and holistic spirituality of Shona women. Conscious of the fact that the Shona women's Christology is an aspect of a complex whole – the universal Christ, and also of the fact that every theology is ideologically loaded, the next chapter on the *Approximation of a Radical and Differential Theology for Today*, sets Shona women's Christology in dialogue with other Christologies. The spotlight is on the Contribution of Shona women's perspective to a universal Christology.



THE STORY OF GROUNDNUT

I am called a woman's crop. Women plant me into the ground. I then die to give birth to a new plant. From woman's loving care and dressing, and in due season, my new plant yields a new crop, abundant fruit, scores and hundreds.

Woman then, can use me as she pleases. I am the main source of cash for woman. Humans can eat me raw or dried. They can unshell me particularly during recreation, amid fun and laughter. Or, in quiet and serenity this is the main job of grandmother, matron of the family.

I can be roasted, salted and be eaten at recreation. Or, I can be roasted, skinned, split in half and pound to rough butter. Thereafter, I am ground smooth and stored in bottles ready for many uses—as spread on bread, and as source for vegetables and meat, particularly dried types.

Figures 8 & 9



I am used in many traditional dishes to enhance taste and appetite and ward off malnutrition. I am therefore responsible for the good health, especially of children. I am used in the dish mutakura ('food for carrying') traditionally as food for travel.

Most interesting of all my uses, traditionally, when my oil has oozed to greatness, woman collected it and stored it in a 'chinu' (her cosmetic bottle) to enhance the beauty of many a woman and to protect the skin of humans.

Traditionally too, brides used me to smear the foreheads of members of the marital group as a sign of belonging. At a woman's funeral Chinu and I are the most sought after of woman's property, for we must always be where woman belongs. The Shona believe that at death the woman joins her paternal ancestors. The marital group are to give us back to woman's natal group. Failure to locate us, can incur heavy damages on the marital group!

Figures 10 & 11

CHAPTER FIVE

THE APPROXIMATION OF A RADICAL AND DIFFERENTIAL THEOLOGY FOR TODAY

In this Chapter, I present the approximation of a Christology *with, by and for* Shona women. Here I pick up salient features of an Incarnational, contemporary Christology born out of *faith, ethnic and class* experiences of Shona women (*gender*). Thus I describe Shona women's Christological experiences outlined above as *incarnational* in the narrative, relational, dialectical, differential, inclusive, heuristic, pragmatic and radical sense of the word. I take stock and weave out various strands of these Christological experiences arriving at a theanthropocosmic Christological synthesis. I use a harvesting metaphor of mapping out contours, in a dialogical process analogous to winnowing, selecting, grinding and the oozing and gathering to greatness (see Fig.8-11).⁶⁶ The emerging Christology is incarnational because it unravels the conscious becoming of women as well as the embodiment of Christ in the world today. The women's emerging approach offers a holistic God-life and world-view in which there is little or no split into sacred and secular, the natural and supernatural, masculine and feminine, Christology and soteriology, creation and incarnation, and grace and ordinary life. Creation is seen as co-extensive with the Incarnation in that God's grace encapsulates all of life. God's grace is directed to every sphere and every time of human life and the world. Thus all life reveals, reminds and reflects the Creator. God is experienced as the *Emmanuel* - immanent and a living dynamic presence *in* and *with* creation, made known in all areas and manifestations in people's lives and the world through the person and work of the historical Jesus of Nazareth who has been crucified and resurrected and through the renewing, empowering and affirming of human life and the world by the Holy Spirit.

Any approximation that one arrives at in a Christological synthesis is implied by the problem of theological language. This is precisely because of its analogical character. In other words, we use human language, metaphors and images in theological epistemology (describing the infinite, the supra-rational or the incomprehensible) – the mystery of God, humanity and the world. Thus theological language is characterised by *apophatic* language – language or knowledge of God, humanity and the world obtained by negation (*via negativa* approach). Elizabeth Johnson (1992) accentuates this point in explaining that in theology we *talk towards God*. I want to add that simultaneously, language about human life and the world as created reality is also obtained *via negativa* (through negation). Theology as a theory of faith is an approach in which one talks simultaneously about God, human life and the world.

⁶⁶ During storage, groundnut oil separates itself from the solids and forms an oil layer on top. This is precisely

201

Such a Christology is radical and subversive in that it challenges exclusivist Christologies and hegemonic structures in order to give space for both sons and daughters of God to dream dreams (cf. Acts 2: 17-21 = Joel 2:28-32) for a new inclusive humanity in Christ Jesus. In a patriarchal church and society, the presented women's vision shakes the foundations by advocating the use of feminine as well as masculine analogies of God. It advocates the imaging of God as *Mother, Sister Ancestor, Grandmother – Mbuya – Lady Wisdom, Muponesi - Deliverer* and/or *Midwife* as the missing element in orthodox Incarnational Christological discourse. In affirming God as *All In All*, Shona women portray the Christian God, who, as Philip Sheldrake (2001:163-181) puts it, in the contingency of particularity, provides *catholic space* to all humanity. They urge, as Roland Martinson (1985:370-371) succinctly surmises, going *behind* and *beyond* androgynous images of God/Christ. In the *kenosis* or *acculturation* of the Godhead (Ruether 1983,1993:1-11; Shorter 1988:104-108), Shona women's emerging Christology provides impulses for going *beyond God the Father* (cf. Mary Daly 1985), or as Judy Tobler (2000:35-34) suggests, *beyond* the image of *a patriarchal God*. Thus in the *scandal of particularity*, the women's vision portrays the Christian God as a *shocking presence* (Sheldrake 2001:164-167). They portray the incarnate Christ as announcing the *jubilee mission* (Lk2:18-21= Is 61:1-2=Lev 25) that, as Paul Hertig (1998:165-179) correctly proposes, fulfils all messianic hopes and dreams in a way inclusive of all Humana life and the world. Notwithstanding affirming the full humanity for all people, God in Christ shows a *preferential option for the poor and marginalized* of (both church and society) through the *basileia*. The incarnate Christ announces the levelling of hegemonic and oppressive structures. God in Christ is seen as leading the whole *oikoumene* (established world) into the divine *plērōma* (*fullness*). In the letter to the Colossians we read:

For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by his blood on the cross (Col.1:19-20).

Thus, in affirming the mutual interconnectedness of creation, Shona women's emerging Christology also shows concern for eco-justice. Both men and women believers are challenged to be visionaries for the new humanity in Christ. They are moved to appropriate their baptismal *status* and *vocation* in a way that makes both men and women the embodiment of reconciliation or *liberating memory - architects* or *authors* of a vision that affirms the dignity and equality of all people (Gal.3:28). In Christian self-consciousness, Shona women's experiences dare to question the *way things are* in a patriarchal church and society. Thus the Shona women portray the image of the Kenotic Christ as the *radical interrupting* and *subversive presence* (Sheldrake 2001:166) that breaks artificial barriers of *sexism, ethnocentrism, elitism* and

denominationalism, among other *archisms*, *schisms* or '*isms*' (racism, ageism, paternalism, imperialism).

With the eruption of Shona women from the margins or the underside of history, new voices are heard which pose various challenges to contemporary Christologies, namely, Classical or Orthodox, Liberation, African, Black and Feminist. When women become proactive agents of their own historical circumstances, their questions concerning the attainment of full humanity in Christ call for attitudinal and structural changes of oppressive, hegemonic and pyramidal churches and societies. The pertinent question here is, *Must I be apologetic about the use of feminine as well as masculine images of God?* A negative answer demonstrates that an emerging Shona women's Christology is authentic. In other words, there is nothing to be apologetic about - there is nothing new in the sense that androgynous images of God are part of latent Biblical, ecclesial and cultural traditions. I have laboured this point in my Master of Theology dissertation entitled: *Christ the Ancestor: Shona Christianity and the Roots for Feminist liberative Praxis*.

It is a radical and differential Christology because of the true historical situatedness of Shona women. This thesis is an attempt to deliver experiential pointers of the true historical, denominational and societal situatedness of Shona women. The women continually change the normative spectrum and in this way they dare to break boundaries or trespass on the sacred domains of *culture*, *creed*, *social class* and *gender* in postulating an inclusive universal Christology. As a theology in mutual dialogue with other current theologies, the Shona women's perspective serves several functions. Firstly, it gives us a legitimate Christological inclusive epistemic access. Secondly, it offers a relevant Christology leading to transformative praxis. Thirdly, it serves as a corrective for other Christologies. Finally, such a theology is self-critical. This is necessary because every creative theology is suspect of heresy and a hermeneutic of suspicion helps to maintain a living tradition. W. Van Huyssteen (1989:775) accentuates the last element when he claims that:

All forms of theological communication contain interpretative elements, take sides, reveal particular perspectives and therefore need critical assessment.

In this context, I propose a dialogical and interconnected Christology that appropriates the symbols of a *circle* and a *matrix* (womb). The circle whose origin is from a round hut captures the Shona way of life. We have seen that when the Shona eat or recreate, Shona hospitality demands that the circle expand to welcome the stranger, visitor or *other*. In a hermeneutic of suspicion that is inward looking (self-critical), I concur with Oduyoye (2001:97) in suggesting that it is necessary at times for the circle to shrink as characterised by the winnowing of chaff. The same picture of interconnectedness is given in the matrix symbol.

The original meaning of matrix is *womb*. The womb stretches in the process of allowing growth of a foetus – it stretches and contracts in (labour pains) the process of giving birth. The Shona acknowledge womb functions and qualities in the rituals of payment of *mombe yehumai* (mother's cow), *masungiro* (ritual performed at first pregnancy), *chimanda* (ritual performed for the virgin wife) and *mbwazukuru* (ritual performed to acknowledge the maternal grandmother – ancestors as responsible for the fertility of the womb and protectors of children) (Chimhanda 2000:73-80). The Shona understand that failure to perform such ritual is accountable for the *dangerous womb* (infertility, miscarriages and the death of children).

Such a theology is *orthopraxis* in that there is unity between *theory* and *praxis*. There is interplay between theory and practice in that the women offer a Christology informed by the Gospel and tested by practical experience. Thus, a Christology that is mutually bound to soteriology necessarily culminates in liberative praxis. Here I pursue the Christological and soteriological designation, *Muponesi* (Deliverer-Midwife-Redeemer-Mediator) as capturing Shona women's *passion for justice*. In other words, the women's naming of God/Christ relates to their cultural, denominational, class, and gender conceptual tools and they relate their liturgy and faith to everyday life.

As an experiential Christology, Shona women's Christological proposal is pragmatic. There is pragmatism in proceeding from the *known to the unknown*. In a relational and reciprocal Christology, Christ is the answer to the questions Shona women ask. The Shona women's perspective poses a Christology that is at the service of the community. It is a relevant and vibrant Christology in that it is sensitive to the signs of the times. In a heuristic approach, it is important to note what the Shona women's perspective offers to our understanding of a contemporary Christology. As such, it is an aperture of the whole spectrum of an Incarnational Christology. There is concern to unravel the whole story of the Christ-event.

The narrative nature of the Christology, makes the Shona women offer a subjective Christology, or what Richard Niebuhr (cf. Van Huyssteen 1989:769) as the father of narrative theology, calls *internal history*. In this context we have history as lived and not as seen. Niebuhr, in turn, calls the latter *external* or *objective history*. Thus the Shona women's Christology poses epistemological problems of validity, credibility, and truthfulness or openness to scientific investigation (justification). By the same note, Van Huyssteen aptly notes that the interplay or creative tension between these two types of history is maintained by this openness to criticism and correction.

On reading the Shona women's Narrative Incarnational Christology this far, one is led to the realization that Shona women are very religious in the holistic sense of the word, and therefore, to the awareness of the urgency in filling the lacuna concerning the participation of all authentic subjects of theological discourse. The task of a Shona women's Christology has proved to be simultaneously a consciousness-raising process, both for Shona women and prospective readers.

Here I also see the need for the respondents to read this work as a collated and integrated story of different types of experiences with an emphasis on their story of faith.

In this dialogical and interconnected Christology, I endeavour to tie up various strands, insights and emphases of the Shona women's perspectival Christology. In a Christology that engenders conscious becoming, I appropriate Christine C. Gaylor and Annelle Fitzpatrick's stages in consciousness-raising (cf. Janet Malone 1996:367-372).⁶⁷ They propose the *no big deal, eye-opening, on the fence, coming home, passion, and acceptance/ appropriation/incorporation* stages. I agree with Malone (1996:367) that these stages are not linear, but overlap in a helical fashion. In this analysis, I go on to merge the second with the third stage (*eye-opening* and *on the fence*) and last the three stages (*coming home, passion* and *appropriation*). I intend to pursue insights concerning the dual nature of culture, and the Bible (Gospel) in being at once affirming and dehumanizing women, historical consciousness and the historical development of revelation, perspectivism and the contingency of particularity (historical relativism of knowledge or the openness of revelation to new insights and new questions and answers), and the fact that a Christology of the Incarnation is necessarily a Christology of Liberation – that an Incarnational Christology must culminate in liberative praxis or passion for justice.

5.1 THE 'NO BIG DEAL' STAGE

In this stage we look at the *trivialization* of the problem of the exclusion, oppression and consequently, dehumanization of women in Christological discourse and in a patriarchal church and society. According to Malone (1996:367), this takes the form of denial that there is a problem and both men and women, the holders of power and the marginalized, and the oppressors and the oppressed, are caught up in this dilemma. In internalising the dominant culture as *the way things are*, the oppressed are often unaware or minimally aware of the marginalization. For example, culture is seen as sacrosanct and is therefore not questioned. We have also seen how the church justifies the exclusion of women from the ordained ministry by appealing to authorization by Christ and Apostolic succession tradition – an example of maintaining the *status quo*.

⁶⁷ Christine C. Gaylor and Annelle Fitzpatrick, in *The Stages of Consciousness Raising*, cf. *Human*

In the *no big deal* stage I give practical examples to highlight the problem of the use of exclusive language in theology and exclusive models of church. The Franciscan brother, Finian McGinn (OFM – Order of Friars Minor) of Oakland, California (1996:380-381) affirms that language has many paradoxical uses in that it can open or close doors in communication. Fiona Bowie (1998:59), in recognition of the *semeiotic domain*, concurs with this view by asserting that:

Words carry enormous power and can entrap and control those who become entangled in them... Words are used within a cultural system to legitimize and normalize relations of inequality as well as the extent to which a specially Christian explication of 'the Word' shares with other cultures an understanding of sacred and powerful words.

In theological language, trivialization of the problem can be intentional or unintentional. I have heard some women themselves say that they have no problem with using *man* as a generic term. In other words, *man, he, his* and *sons of God* are used as terms inclusive of both man and woman. When one talks about the need for inclusive God-language, one is often asked the question, *Do you want to become a priest?*

But today, because of feminist consciousness, there is urgency in the use of inclusive language – inclusive images of God and models of church. When one moves from parish to parish, one can almost tell how progressive or conservative the priest and the parishioners are concerning an inclusive model of the church by listening to the liturgy. For example, you get people reciting the Creed and they are unperturbed by such sayings as, *He became man like us*. In one parish it took a woman who had masculine physique to read, *When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways*, for some of the parishioners to raise their eyebrows and see the absurdity of the reading. But even among these people, it stopped there at the fun and laughter (the oddities as applicable to this particular woman) without much consideration of the ramifications of such language for the majority of the congregation who are women. Today, when sexual realities are malleable in a technologically changing society such a reading can have serious implications (Martinson 1985:372). Alternatively, you get a priest saying Mass to a congregation of women religious and he addresses them, *Pray brethren...* People sing with gusto (loud and clear), *Sons of God... Come my brothers praise the Lord... Whatsoever you do to the least of my brothers...* without realizing that there is the exclusion of women – and in fact, women themselves collude in their own marginalization.

With regard to the Offertory collection, now and again there is the Seminary Appeal Fund in which people are urged to contribute to the education of priests, or the Priest Fund concerned

with the Medical Insurance for priests, but the parish is silent about the education and Medical Aid for nuns.

Another example concerning the *no big deal* stage in consciousness-raising concerns a statement by a local bishop in the homily he gave on the Day of Prayer for Religious Men and Women. He said, *The media alarms us today with news about the abuse of nuns by priests. Some of us (priests) are responsible for the radical forms of feminism we see in the church today.* The point I want to stress is that, while the bishop drove home the point that distorted forms of friendships between priests and nuns underpin women as victims of sexual abuse and took courage to break the conspiracy of silence in the church on this issue, I would have wanted the bishop to elaborate on what he thought were radical expressions of feminism in his diocese.

While this may be true as concerning the church universal, I see in this statement subtle ways of trivializing women’s concerns in the church. But in all these examples, I concur with Malone (1996:368) that there is no intention to exclude or marginalize women, but all the same, that there is no consciousness or only minimal awareness of injustices or oppression, subtle or otherwise.

In this *no big deal stage*, women unwittingly show complicity with patriarchy. Women collude with patriarchy in subtle ways. For example, women, especially old women (*mbuya*) are custodians of culture, which in turn, is viewed as sacrosanct. It is women who initiate young girls into patriarchal obligations in marriage. In the Shona women’s story, it was asserted that women are the driving force of the family, especially, by the adage that *behind every successful man there is a woman*. The respondents were also right in pointing out that more often than not *the worst enemy for woman is woman herself*. Watching the present political upheaval in the country leading to the presidential elections, I was led to understand also that *behind every dictator there is an extravagant woman*. I also was led to understand that women are victims of *mob-psychology*. In other words, there is a real sense in which women act out of emotion without really understanding the full implications of an issue. For, we can ask, who were the people who were rallying or dancing behind the president? With today’s high technology, the whole world could see with misgivings that it was the women of course! The media showed that women make the majority of rioting mobs in the land grab. Nevertheless, the women do this for altruistic purposes. They want land not for themselves, but especially for their sons whom they uphold as leaders of their families into the future. Thus it is ironical that when all is said and done, the women are denied access to and control of land except through sons and husbands. In this context, I could also concur with Oduyoye (Oduyoye & Kanyoro 1990:43) that *mothering the body politic is an expensive vision*. What was also alarmingly clear on the media was the *apartheid of gender* (bifurcation into male and female camps) in the queues for

voting. It is clear that women in Zimbabwe are still not free. Some respondents admitted that in Shona culture today, women are not equal to men. They said that husband and wife can have the same education, profession and workload, but at the end of the day, back in the home, the woman assumes a subordinate and subservient role. The women said that they experience this in their families and in the extended family and clan.

From personal experience, I can say that we all go through the various stages of consciousness-raising. Before I took up theological studies, I did not see the need for feminist musings and fussing about the use of inclusive language, especially in liturgy and in the Divine Office (Prayer of the Church). But now I see the urgency for revising the Bible, Lectionaries and Office Books because I find that I stammer – cannot read fluently because I stumble over or I am silenced by the use of exclusive language. I thus agree with what Pobe (1989:161-179) advocates as the need for *the Passover of Language* - an issue to be considered later.

5.2 THE 'EYE-OPENING' STAGE

Malone (1996:368) explains that in this stage people begin to see and feel uncomfortable about the injustices. I see this as a *kairos* moment (*an opportune time*) to seize the opportunities and claim responsibility in making change. Paul Knitter (1985:18) explains the concept of *kairos* well when he says, a '*kairos*' is not just a situation; it is also an opportunity, and that in fact, a burden of responsibility is laid into the recognition of this '*kairos*'. But Malone explains that in this stage people are still operating in an ambivalent way. She says that the hesitance or lack of courage to speak out or stand for the truth, or subtle ways that are protective of the *status quo* is what characterises the *on-the-fence* stage in conscious becoming. In other words, there is a discrepancy between theory and practice. What does this mean for the Shona women's Christology?

Concurring with Knitter, I see characteristics of the *on the fence* stage in that there are missed opportunities, or else tokenism is the order of the day. Practical examples are in order here. I see Holy Thursday (the Chrism Mass that celebrates the institution of the male priesthood and in which the oils used in the sacraments of Ordination, Baptism and Anointing of the Sick are blessed, and in the Mass celebrating the institution of the sacrament of the Eucharist and especially in the ritual of the *washing of feet*) as a day when women feel most excluded in the church. On Holy Thursday, last year, 2001, in my community of religious women, the sister organising the liturgy was at pains looking for boys and men for the ritual of the *washing of feet*. She also paid a deaf ear to my offer to line up with the men to have my feet washed. Underlying this is the understanding that Jesus had men disciples. We have seen above that Shona women are awakening to the fact that Jesus had both men and women disciples and that

such consciousness should transform both our lives and liturgies. Concerning the ritual of the *washing of feet* as symbolising the *service* to the other as an important element of Christian discipleship, Shona women affirmed that *Christ has no other hands but theirs*. In a gender conscious community and as concerning the equality of believers, was this not a lost opportunity? Wouldn't the washing of feet for both men and women have been a liberating experience for both the priests and the nuns?

A case in point was the ritual of the washing of feet on Maundy Thursday of 1994, when I attended a spiritual renewal course at St Buenos in North Wales. The spiritual directors – priests and nuns each washed the feet of their directees. And this was a very moving experience for most participants. What was highlighted here was the original concept of *service*. In other words, what is at stake here is the Christian ideal that the leader must be a servant. Such a liturgy could have been more meaningful, engaging and practical if the superior of the community had washed the feet of the nuns. Shona women also named the tension between the ordained priesthood and the common priesthood in asking, *Why are the 'holy oils' not given to believers (lay people) for use in ministering to the sick?*

It appears to me that the root problem for the lack of action or hesitation to instil such changes is that men enjoy the monopoly of the privilege of power accorded by patriarchal structures in the church and society and so they are not willing to forfeit power. Bob Shantz (1995:7) concurs with this view when he says that there are vested interests in maintaining patriarchal structures in church and society.

5.2.1 THE DUAL NATURE OF CULTURAL, BIBLICAL AND CHURCH TRADITIONS

The spotlight is on culture, the Bible and Church tradition being used simultaneously to affirm life or to dehumanize women as well as men. In recognition of the patriarchal bias of all these three important sources of theology, and in a feminist reading of *deconstruction, re-visioning, remembering and proclamation* (Schüssler-Fiorenza 1984:115-128), I (Chimhanda 2000) have shown that Shona culture and the Bible have roots for the liberation of women. I explore this element in terms of an inclusive Christology. I expose insights about the use of androgynous images of God and suggest new accents such as posed by the Shona women's Christology, namely, to go behind and beyond androgynous images of God as an imperative for a Christology based on the Trinitarian *koinonia*. Consequently, I propose the acculturation of the Godhead, and the appropriation of the biblical prophetic tradition, which as Ruether (1990:42-33) shows, holds promise and betrayal in the liberation of women as well as men. In other words, I concur with the feminist vision of *deconstructing* the biblical prophetic tradition in

order to recover the prophetic ministry, or Christian discipleship as inclusive of men as well as women.

The Korean feminist theologian, Chung Hyun Kyung (1996:51-56) recognizes the dual nature of culture and religion by saying that in them we receive blessings and curses. Kyung (1996:55) is emphatic that culture is *a thick description* and that we are all products of culture. In pointing to the mutual influencing of culture and religion Kyung is right in asserting that *the thickest cultural expression of all is religion* and that religion is at the *core of culture*. Thus both culture and religion are power and Kyung (1996:56) underscores the fact that *if we are not in touch with our culture we lose our power*. Fiona Bowie (1998:52-53; cf. Yanagisako & Delaney) exposes the dual nature of culture in noting that:

'Culture is what makes the boundaries of domains seem natural, what gives ideologies power and what makes hegemonies appear seamless. At the same time, it is what enables us to make compelling claims for connections for supposedly distinct discourses... It is what makes possible reading across domains in prohibited ways.' Although cultural domains are culturally specific, they usually come with claims to universality that are seemingly nature-given and/or God-given and are made real through institutional arrangements and the discourses of everyday life. *'The discreteness of domains is encountered directly by people whose lives are organized along institutional fault lines that are themselves the products of hegemonic cultural distinctions. As a consequence, religion seems to be about God rather than about gender; the family seems to be about reproduction and childbearing rather than about gender and religion.'*⁶⁸

What Bowie seems to point out is that a differential approach to Christology brings together discourses that are normally kept distinct (promotes an interdisciplinary approach) and enables the breaking of barriers or dissolves boundaries that are seemingly artificial. Consequently, in recognition of the dual nature of culture in being used to simultaneously affirm and dehumanize women, I reject a wholesale condemnation of culture as oppressive of women by some feminists. This element is seen in Renate Cochrane's (1995:22) assertion that, *an increasing number of African women describe African tradition as an oppressive patriarchal system that legitimizes the domination of women by men*. Clearly, this can be seen as an example of throwing out the baby with the bath water. Recognition of the dual character of culture makes a creative dialogue between culture and the Gospel imperative. Because of the dual nature of culture, the Zimbabwean, Ezra Chitando (1998:82) is right in maintaining that while inculturation is in vogue among African theologians, it is not without its problems. We have seen that Shona women sigh under the burden of cultural demands – the patriarchal objectification of women as marketable commodities and objects of cultic rituals. On a positive note, we have seen how Shona culture has the *seed of the Word* – for example, how Shona

⁶⁸ Sylvia Yanagisako & Carol Delaney, in *Naturalizing Power – cf. Naturalizing Power: Essays in Feminist*

cultural values of *unhu* (personhood), *ushamwari* (friendship), hospitality, and *umwe* (togetherness) can be brought into creative dialogue with Christian values of *love, justice, fellowship, togetherness, forgiveness and reconciliation*. Furthermore, the historical conditioning of culture is what accounts for the historical development of patriarchy. And with new insights, especially from feminist consciousness and the confluence of cultures, and in particular, the influence of Christianity, in time to come patriarchy can be overcome. It cannot be over-emphasized that culture is not *sacrosanct* but is continually evolving.

My inspiration for recognizing the liberation potential of culture is from the doyen of African theologians, John Mbiti (1991:59-71). In his article, *Flowers in the Garden: the Role of Women in African Religion*, Mbiti cites a Ghanaian proverb, *a woman is a flower in the garden; her husband is the fence around it*, and thus gives an honest assessment of the African man-woman relationship. He says that although African men value their women, nevertheless, the latter are highly circumscribed. Here Mbiti (1991:59) makes an important proposal that in myths and proverbs we have the picture of women in the early state of human existence. The myths value women usually as involved in one way or another with the Highest Being, Creator God in the creation of the first humans or important discoveries like fire (Mbiti 1991:60-63). This idea harmonizes with the Shona designation of God as *Zendere* (the first emanation of Mwari). Furthermore, there are proverbs that both value and devalue women (Mbiti 1991:63-68). In my Master of Theology Dissertation, I have taken this idea further to show that in the proverbs that value women, we have vestiges of the original valuation of women – that culture has roots for the liberation of women. Now, from the perspective of Shona women's Christological affirmations, and, in the *contingency of particularity*, I go further to suggest the use of androgynous images of God and, even to go beyond the androgynous vision as a move compatible with the agendas of Black, Liberation and African theologies, and more important still, as an imperative of the Incarnation as synonymous with the inculturation impulse in the church today.

The dual nature of the Bible is implied by the fact that in it we have God's Word in human words. As written largely by men, it has a patriarchal stamp. There are uncomfortable questions about the use of the Bible to prove that male and female differences are divinely mandated (Martinson 1985:372). Thus, God and the rulers have the same identity and names, God is imaged as male and the male represents God on earth (Ruether 1990:25). And yet the Bible informs us that humanity as male and female was created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26-27). In this context, Francis Martin (1993:240) is right in asserting that *neither*

sex is the image of God to the detriment of the other. It is humanity as male and female which embodies something of God in the world. In the Christian dispensation, the guiding principle for affirming the full humanity for women as well as men is Galatians 3:28. In appropriating the creation and baptismal status and vocation, it is now understood that both women and men have equal worth and status as reflecting the *imago Dei/Christi*. As stewards of grace, they both hold the treasure in earthen vessels (2 Cor 4:7). Consequently, women as well as men reflect, reveal and articulate God. Thus the patriarchal church fails to realize that holistic truths of faith consist of the reflections and articulations of both men and women. In the long history of the church's monolithic definitions of doctrines, we have, in turn, theological monologues so that the women's voices are missing. In this context there is the problem of producing at best *half truths* and at worst, distorted truths of faith by way of patriarchal definitions of women. At best we have partial and half-truths and we are faced with the task of recovering muted voices of women – our foremothers or ancestors (Sarah, Rebecca, Leah and Rachael) alongside the voices of the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob).

Feminists, who advocate the retrieval of androgynous (both masculine and feminine) images of God, in turn, show an awareness of the fact that the Bible has ample references of both the feminine and masculine character of God. Thus God is portrayed as a protective mother bird (Is 31:5), a midwife Ps 22:9, a mother conceiving (Num 11:12), mother giving birth (Is 42:14-16), the suckling mother (Is 49:15), and the mother comforting her child (Is 66:13).

According to Hans-George Link (1988:26), the Father-Son image of God is used in the Old Testament to describe the covenantal relationship of God to Israel. We read that the Lord is Israel's Father, because he created and established her as a nation (Deut 32:6). In relation to creation and deliverance from Egypt, God says that *when Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt, I called my son... I led them with cords of compassion, with the bands of love* (Hos 11:1,4). God's fatherhood is described in terms of nurturance. We read:

Have you not just now called to me, 'My Father, thou art the friend of my youth...?' (Jer 3:4). With weeping they shall come, and with consolations I will lead them back, I will make them walk by brooks of water, in a straight path in which they shall not stumble, and Ephraim is my first-born son (Jer 31:9).

Concerning the designation Father in reference to Redeemer, we read:

Thou art our Father...our Redeemer from of old is thy name (Is 63:16). Thou art our Father we are clay, and thou art our potter; we are the work of your hand (Is 64:8).

But it is in the New Testament where God is identified specifically as the Father of Jesus Christ. Jesus addresses God as Father and teaches his disciples to pray the *Our Father* (Mt 6:9f; Lk 11:2-4). Link (1988:27) is right in saying that Jesus' relationship as Son to God the Father

echoes throughout the Gospel stories. Above all, in the passion in Gethsemane Jesus cries, *Abba, Father, all things are possible with thee; remove this cup from me; yet not what I will but what thou wilt* (Mk 14:36). Also of the followers of Jesus, to *know* and *see* Jesus is to *know* and *see* the *Father* (Jn 14:6-13). According to the South African Anglican priest, McGlory Speckman (2001:167), Jesus comes close to speaking of himself in feminine analogy of the mother hen that gathers her brood under her wings in referring to the deep compassion he had for Jerusalem, and hence, Israel (Lk 13:34). Speckman (2001:167) also notes that Jesus' motherhood is implicated in the first letter of Peter that reads:

Like new born babes, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation, for you tasted the kindness of the Lord.

He goes on to explain that the passage beckons Christians to look up to Jesus, as the one who gave birth to believers, in the way infants would look up to their mother.

When we describe God in familial categories that have the Trinity of Persons (Father-Son-Holy Spirit) at their basis, then, the use of both masculine and feminine categories is imperative. Some feminist theologians, who see the Trinity as offering a critique for all *archisms*, suggest the *kenosis* or *acculturation* of the Godhead. According to David T. Williams (2000:51), the presupposition is that a Trinitarian Christology will directly address the soteriological requirements of an Incarnational Christology by providing a model of God that centres in *mutuality, equality* and *freedom*. The doctrine of *perichoresis* (the unity of the three persons of the Godhead both in their internal relationship – *opera ad intra* and in the economy of salvation – *opera ad extra*) underlines the equality of persons in the Trinitarian *koinonia* (Waite Willis 1987:45). This unity of persons concerning father-mother-children ought to be reflected in the Church in Africa – a Church that has adopted the model of the church as *Family* (cf. African of Synod Bishops – Rome 1994). Consequently, the Christological dialogue, like any other meaningful dialogue, must begin at home. Feminist theologians concur with this view when they retrieve the *Wisdom/Sophia/Logos* tradition for the Trinity and the way of being church.

In Christian tradition, we can learn from patristic, mystical traditions and proto-feminists about androgynous images of God (Link 1988:51). For example, St Clement of Alexandria prays:

*God is love
And for love of us has become a woman
The ineffable being of the Father has out of
compassion with us become a Mother.
By loving the Father has become a woman.*

The medieval mystic Julian of Norwich echoes St Clement by asserting that:

As truly as God is our Father, so just as truly is he our Mother. In our Father, God Almighty, we have our being; In our merciful Mother we are remade and restored.

It is interesting to note that God is given womb (matrix) qualities of love, mercy and compassion. Throughout the Christian history, the tradition of the feminine as well as the masculine face of God is there but latent. For example, in the Reformation period Mary Ward (in Immolata Wetter 1974:6) addressed God as a parent. She prayed: *O Parent of parents and Friend of friends...* Thus God as parent, *par excellence* is both *Mother* and *Father*. Today, in the model of the church in Africa as *Family* (cf. The Synod of Bishops, Rome 1994), we can unambiguously name God as Father and Mother. The parenthood of God, as a familiar image modelled on the Trinitarian *koinonia* (a trinity of persons in fellowship), legitimizes the further portrayal of God in the trilogy of Father, Mother, and Children. The Shona women's Christology concurs with this biblical androgynous view in that God as Father is portrayed as Protector and Provider, where as Mother, God is Love - immanent and shows unconditional love.

Some feminists would go further to propose the following juxtapositions in theology of *Christology/Christalogy, theology/thealogy/ God/dess-Talk*. The etymology of *androgynous* is from the Greek *andro-* (male) and *-gynos* (female). As a vision for individual and societal wholeness, according to Valerie C. Saiving (cf. Martinson 1985:373), there is recognition that:

*Out of the whole range of human possibilities, certain traits have been differentially assigned to men and women, and that all such systems of arbitrary distinctions between the sexes are crippling to women and ultimately to every one. Androgyny is a form of life in which every person will be enabled to become a whole human being.*⁶⁹

While there is much to commend the androgynous vision in God-talk, implicit here is that the use of androgynous images of God is still problematic. It can be asked, *are androgynous images of God in harmony or in opposition with our conception of God today as gendered persons? What is the correct way to image God if we are to include both the experiences and reflections of men and women, and to portray God as affirming the full humanity of women as well as men?* The different strains of feminism respond differently to these questions. On the one hand, revolutionary feminists apparently operating on an *either/or* scheme apparently risk the danger of reversed sexism. Reformist feminists, on the other hand, propose the following juxtapositions, *theology/thealogy, Christology/Christalogy* and *God/dess* as a corrective for orthodox theology and Christology's omission of the feminine character of God. The suggestion here is to go beyond God the Father (Mary Daly) in our images of the divine, or even better, to go behind and beyond androgynous images of God.

⁶⁹ Valerie C. Saiving, in *Androgynous Life: A Feminist Appropriation of Process Thought, cf. Feminism and Process Thought*, Sheila Greeve Davaney (ed.) (New York: The Edwin Mellon Press, 1981).

According to Martinson (1987:374-376), on a positive note, the androgynous vision underscores society (culture) church, sexuality, justice, equality and mutuality as foundations for harmony, cooperation, security, human dignity and interdependence. It sees women as well as men as proactive agents of history. It encourages the tapping of the full range of human potentialities in the building of a better world. Above all, bringing out the feminine character of God is also a way of placing women's contemporary Christology in dialectical relation with authoritative biblical tradition. In this way scripture interprets and provides a critique scripture.

In an experiential and contextual stance, woman's just as man's experience is not the ultimate norm in talking towards God. But the church has a bad and long history of grappling with the problem of *sameness*. Intolerance of difference is the trajectory of the church's Inquisition that was quick to label divergent ideas as heresies, religious intolerance and the Christian Crusades against the Muslims, and the reification of God as male and the systematic exclusion of women from the centre of church life (Magesa 1996:76).

Martinson (1985:374) shows that the androgynous vision of God has several weaknesses. First, androgynous images of God mirror the patriarchal dualisms we intend to eliminate. This is because the *masculine* and *feminine* labels are in most cases arbitrary. Arbitrary usage of androgynous images fosters false images of men and women infected by the assumptions the androgyny is meant to overcome. Second, the androgyny is susceptible to the danger of stereotyping the ideal person or society, an element that can be more oppressive than what it replaces. Finally, the androgynous vision raises the question of who will participate in the shaping of the new vision and by what criteria? The pertinent question for an Incarnational Christology here is, *who decides what gives life?* In the new mood of self-criticism, discrimination and construction, the need and opportunity for dialogue involving all concerned partners are posed very pointedly. A new vision of gender might legitimize a broader range of constructive human possibilities.

On close examination, we find that some differences between men and women are inevitable and/or desirable. For example, it is clear that *fatherhood* is not *motherhood* and that men do not give birth and women do not produce sperm. And yet, it is true, as Martinson (1985:377) asserts that *motherhood* and *fatherhood* both share *parenthood*. Thus, the French say *viva la difference* where the English say *variety is the spice of life*. Consequently, we need both female and male images of God. There has to be a way of welcoming difference for the richness it brings in our imaging of God as a living dynamic and liberating presence among us. By the same token, there has to be a way of sharing both the privileges and the burdens of power (Bob Shantz 1995:7). Martinson (1985:378) is right in suggesting that we need a new vision of gender and sexuality that can provide symbols and models that open men and women to their uniqueness

without creating a superhuman stereotype, and that is grounded in an interdependent view of reality.

Feminist theologians find the doctrine of the Trinity defined by a patriarchal church offensive to women. They question whether the analogy is the most appropriate. Feminist theologians challenge orthodox Christology's portrayal of God in exclusively male categories (Father-Son-Holy Spirit) and attempt to redress a sexual balance in the analogies used of the Trinity. Carolyn Osiek (1997:8) gives the following syllogism about using inclusive images of God:

If we were created in God's image, male and female, and if God is Trinitarian, then all three persons must be capable of being portrayed in feminine images as well as masculine ones.

Osiek (1997:9) finds an example of this in Julian of Norwich's Trinitarian formula as, *God our Father, Christ our Mother and the Holy Spirit our Lord.*

There are those who say that the Holy Spirit as *proceeding* from the Father *and the Son* (Western controversial *filioque* doctrine that caused a split between East and West in the church) should be considered female because of the parallel element of the female receiving from the male. Here, David Williams (2000:54-55) shows that this position is flawed in that it seems to be very chauvinistic, precisely because it neglects the fact that the female gives and, arguably even more than the male, towards the offspring. Williams goes on to explain that a sexual identification of the Spirit demands *personality*. Thus there is a tendency to identify the Spirit as *Mother* of the *Son*.

Alternatively, the New Testament suggests that the Holy Spirit is *Parakletos* (Paraclete or Advocate) and in this context, the Spirit is understood as male. In the economy of salvation the Holy Spirit is understood as the communicating factor, *par excellence*. We have seen also that the New Testament is clear about the Father-Son (maleness) relationship of the First and Second Persons of the Godhead. Williams points out that if we should accept the Holy Spirit as a feminine principle, it still amounts to *tokenism* to put one feminine in the Trinity where there is still a masculine majority. However, another way of approaching the problem is to recognize the fact that the Fatherhood of the first person of the Trinity who is not incarnate is not biological. In other words, the gender of the First Person of the Trinity is not biologically determinative. By the same token, *gender is not determinative of the Second Person of the Trinity as the Eternal Word* of the *Essential* or *Immanent Trinity* through whom God created the world. A popular solution to the problem is to avoid assigning gender identity to the Trinity while at the same time recognizing that the biological, historical and ethnical provenance of the Historical Jesus of Nazareth is contingent. This gives room for use of both masculine and feminine analogies for God/Christ. And again, this allows us to talk of God/Christ in relational,

functional and soteriological terms of *Creator, Redeemer* and *Sustainer*. The heuristic key here is the *affirmation of life*. In other words, this allows us to go behind and beyond the use of androgynous images of God as we see in the various strains of Feminist theologians.

In assigning feminine identity to the Holy Spirit, Feminist theologians retrieve the Wisdom tradition. In this context, the Second Person of the Trinity is understood as *Sophia/Wisdom/ Logos/ Hokmah*. According to Elizabeth Johnson (cf. Harold G. Wells 1995:32), Yahweh's *Hokmah/Spirit/ Ruach* imaged as female is a way of bringing God's nearness – a way of highlighting the womb qualities of compassion and empathy.⁷⁰ In short, *womb* (Hebrew: **rechem**) qualities lay emphasis on God's *unconditional love* (Hebrew: **raham**). Thus St Clement of Alexandria assigns God womb qualities of *love*, and *compassion* as characteristic of *woman* and *mother*. This element comes out strongly in Shona women's Christology above. The respondents assign God paternal attributes of *Protector, Provider and Leader* of the family where they give maternal attributes of *Unconditional love*, and *Compassion*. One respondent sums these maternal attributes of God by saying: *Jesus is Mother because it was She who was there from the beginning (Jn 1:1) of my life, who looked after me in the past, and who is my support up to the end. It is to her that I turn to in times of trouble as my refuge. She accepts me as I am and her love is unconditional*. I recognized this as the height of self-consciousness as a woman.

There is awareness today that the woman contributes positively to the offspring, rather than just being a passive receptor as patriarchal anthropology asserts. Modern science has thrown some light on the active participation of both parents, male and female as co-creators with God. For example, it needs the male-female XY-XX chromosomes for the sex determination of an individual as male and female, respectively. We are no longer disillusioned by the kind of Aristotelian biology that underplays the role of women as parents. The Shona proverb, **baba ndimupa kamwe** (*father only gives once*, **mai ndipupa kaviri** (*mother gives twice*), bears testimony to woman's active role in nurturance of the young. This includes the nine months of gestation, followed by birthing, lactation, and teaching of moral, social and cultural values. This appears very true to life. Whereas a father is susceptible to *abort* parenthood or neglect his own children in practicing *serial parenting* (Ursula Pfafflin 1993:66), Shona women recognize the gift of children for what it is worth. Pfafflin explains that *serial parenting* is a new pattern of fatherhood, where men live with, support and play an active role with children of the woman they are currently married to or living with, while they abscond from living with and offering financial support to their biological children. She adds that men who impregnate women are

⁷⁰ Harold G. Wells of Immanuel College of the Toronto School of Theology, cf. Elizabeth Johnson's *Jesus the*

missing in parenting and in the current debate on abortion. Thus they have aborted fatherhood in the sense of this self-displacement and therefore denying themselves growth into the maturity that comes with the blessing of fatherhood. Fatherhood here means an on-going process of parenting or nurturing for one's children. It means having a heart for and knowing the heart of one's children. In the Shona and Christian perspective, fatherhood or motherhood means *everyone's child is one's child*. In other words, those who have absconded fatherhood fail to experience the burdens and joys of nurturing their young. On the contrary, the respondents that had abortive marriages, in spite of having prayed for good husbands, testify to the fact that God works in unrestricted ways. In recognizing their children as gifts, they are able to shoulder the burden of being single parents.

It appears that this kind of distinction into masculine and feminine attributes of God is inherent in Shona *apophthegm* names. Thus the names *Simbarashe* (Strength of God), *Kudakwashe* (Will of God), *Tinashe* (God is among us), and *Ngonidzashe* (Mercy of God) that have the suffix *-she* on the one hand, are assigned to males, and on the other hand, *Rudo* (Love), *Chipo* (Gift), *Tsitsi* (Mercy), *Kudzai* (Praise or Honour), *Tendai* (Thank, or Have Faith) and *Rumbidzai* (Praise) are normally given to females. It appears that God as portrayed in feminine theophoric names comes out more as an intransitive verb than the masculine designations that bring out more of God's Lordship and transcendence. Feminine designations portray God as infinitely personal in eliciting a reciprocal way of knowing. This concurs with Mary Daly's definition of God as the *Verb of Verbs* (1985:33).

Concerning the appeal to Wisdom tradition in assigning the feminine to the Trinity, Ruether (1983,1993:55-61), in dialogue with the *Logos* Christology, sees *Sophia* as Incarnate in Jesus. Thus we read that *we preach Christ crucified, ... the power... and the wisdom of God* (cf. 1 Cor.1:23-24). Elizabeth Johnson (Wells 1995:33-34) concurs with this when she asserts that *Sophia/Wisdom* spoken of in the Hebrew tradition as Yahweh (acronym *YHWH*) is elusive in nature. Thus the Exodus (3:14) *I Am Who I Am*, translated in the Christian patriarchal tradition as *HE WHO IS*, can today also be described as *SHE WHO IS*. Portrayed in feminine categories we can access God as Creative power that pervades all things (God who is *All in All*) and shows unconditional love. Johnson demonstrates that the Bible describes *She WHO IS* as *the giver of life* (Prov 4:13)– *Whoever finds me, finds life* (Prov 8:35), as the Lord who by wisdom founded the earth (Pro 3:19) - Wisdom declares that *alone I have made the circuit of the vault of heaven and have walked in the depth of the abyss* (Sirach 24:5), *She pervades and penetrates all things for She is a breath of the power of God* (Wis 7:24-25) and although Wisdom herself is

unchanging, *She* makes all things new (Johnson 1992:267). I concur with this view by suggesting that Shona wisdom encapsulated in myths, proverbs, riddles and songs gives us insight into the beginnings of Shona society, a society that was most probably matriarchal.

There is an echo of the enigmatic character of God in the Shona concept of Mwari. We have seen that Mwari is understood as neither male nor female. In other words, knowledge of Mwari can be accessed through female as well as male analogies. Thus Mwari is *Musikavanhu* (Creator of human beings) and in Shona creation myths, God is understood as *Zendere* (the first female emanation of God) and in the Shona agrarian life, Mwari is described as *Dzivaguru* (the Greatest pool). On resorting to the beginnings of the tribe, God is designated *Proto-Ancestor* (Shona: *Tateguru, Mudzimu mukuru, Mhondoro* and *Mbuya*). *Dziva* as symbolic of the uterus or womb with its amniotic fluid is a concept compatible with some feminists' postulate of the Hebraic-Eastern Agricultural Goddess cults, ascribe God womb qualities (Ruether 1983,1993:48-61).

Other moves in going behind and beyond the androgynous vision in talking towards God include the contribution of feminists like Sallie McFague (cf. McGrath 1994,1997:241) who advocate the use of relational attributes for God like *friendship*.⁷¹ We have seen that this element is inherent in Shona essential elements of *ushamwari* (friendship), *hospitality and umwe* (togetherness). But there is yet another group of feminist theologians (Ruether 1990:109-122; Schüssler-Fiorenza 1984:65-115), that sees the concept of Christian discipleship or prophetic witnessing as inclusive of both male and female believers. Ruether (1990:25-33) postulates the patriarchalization of the church and Christology and highlights the appropriation of prophetic tradition in the liberation of women as a *promise* and a *betrayal*. Thus prophetic tradition is a promise because in it we have the picture of women as prophets and leaders of the people of God. It is a betrayal because we have to read between the lines (*merographic reading*) to recover the prophetic office as given to men as well as women within the patriarchal biblical and church traditions.

I understand prophetic witness and the call to Christian discipleship as two sides of the same coin. To be a prophet is to speak truth in the face of opposition. This is compatible with the tenet of Liberation theology (Marie-Dominique Chenu, in Gutierrez 1983:52) that *to know, love God is to do justice*. Prophetic witness has its roots in biblical tradition. Ruether (1990:25) explains that in biblical tradition a prophet was a figure who generally stood outside the institutional power elite but within the covenant community. The prophet spoke the judgment

⁷¹ Sallie McFague, in *Models of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press), 1987, pp 122-123

Word of God against institutional sins and called the community back to faithfulness to the radical foundations of the faith of the covenant, contextualized in the contemporary situation. The prophetic stance thus presupposes a relationship between faith and society that is in tension with established religion. But religion itself as sacred ideology is used as the *handmaid* of the ruling class. The prophetic stance thus sets God in tension with the ruling class. God through the prophets denounces the unjust practices of the rich and powerful, all of which grind the faces of the poor and oppress the widow and the orphan. God is portrayed as active in history, to overturn the unjust social structures and to transform the world into a new social order. Thus to be a prophet is to be prepared to shed one's blood for truth and justice. In Christian tradition, the etymology of *witness* is from the word *martyr*. Christian martyrs shed their blood in standing for the truth of the Gospel.

In reading the Bible with woman's eyes, feminists have recovered the memory of our forebears as well as the feminine character of God that is prolific in the Bible. I see this train of thought in feminist theologians, for example, Christine Landman, *et al*, in *Digging Up Our Foremothers* (1996), and Schüssler-Fiorenza, in *Jesus; Miriam's Child, Sophia Prophet: Critical Issues in Feminist Christology* (1994) and *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (1983,1994). Ruether (1990:25-30) is right in claiming that women are betrayed again and again in male-led liberation movements. She goes on to cite ample biblical texts to this effect. First, women begin the rebellion against Pharaoh to disobey the order to kill the first-born Jewish male children. In so doing, a subversive relationship is established between the midwives and the mother and sister of Moses and the daughter of Pharaoh. In the Exodus Miriam and Aaron are named as leaders (cf. Micah 6:4), but a second tradition (Numbers 12:12-16) seeks to discredit Miriam's co-leadership. In a situation where both Aaron and Miriam rebel against their brother Moses' marriage of a Cushite woman, only Miriam bears the burden of responsibility for the sin. She is struck with leprosy. And again, at the giving of the Law at Sinai (Ex 19:14-15), women are marginalized as a source of sin - men are told to purify themselves for three days by not going near a woman. Concerning the validation of apostolic witnessing for both men and women, Ruether sees the height of betrayal by men in Paul's definition of apostle. She sees cognitive dissonance in that although Jesus had both men and women disciples and in the *passio magna* (crucifixion death and resurrection of Jesus) it was women who remained close to the foot of the cross when the male disciples, led by Peter, rejected and deserted him. In making a close connection between witnessing to the resurrection and apostleship, Paul (1 Cor. 15:5-10) identifies only male apostles and disciples beginning with Peter and counting himself as the last of such witnesses. Thus Paul is amnesiac of the women's role, led by Mary Magdalene in apostolic leadership. He omits the tradition of the

women at the tomb as the first to witness to the resurrection of Jesus. A good example of betrayal by men in a patriarchal church is applicable here.

In the important Easter Vigil liturgy of the Word I participated in (2002), the Jerusalem Bible version of the crossing of Red Sea (Ex 14: 15-15: 1-21) and the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt made constant reference to the *sons of Israel* making a miraculous crossing - dry shod through God's mediation when the ensuing Egyptians were drowned. Today when we realize that man and woman are two distinct individuals, that *man* is not representative of woman, the questions that would come to the mind of an outsider modern reader are; *What happened to the women? Did the Israelites leave their women at the mercy of their Egyptian enemies?* And then there is the crossing and rejoicing at the deliverance - *who leads the paean?* One tradition of the same story says, *then...Moses and the sons of Israel sang the paean in honour of Yahweh.* Another tradition says, *Miriam, the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took the timbrel, and all the women followed her with timbrels and dancing. And Miriam led them in the refrain or the paean.* In other words, it is Miriam who led the paean. There is betrayal in that the women were subsumed in man being referred to as *sons of God*. On close examination, it turned out that the RSV uses inclusive language by transposing *people of God* for *sons of God*. One wonders why in a gender conscious church the RSV was not taken instead of the Jerusalem version. The situation was made worse in that it was a woman who took this reading. If she had been sensitive to the exclusion of women in the reading, she would have been free to use the Revised Standard Version rather than the Jerusalem Bible version.

I would also want to point out that the story of the crossing of the Red Sea has another disturbing aspect concerning the history of Christian Salvation. The image of an arbitrary War Lord taking the side of Israel while drowning the Egyptians, distorts that of **Pantokrator** (Greek for *the One who holds and governs all things*) as a universal God who is concerned about and provides for all people (Link 1988:29). Today the story is offensive in the light of an inclusive Christology, and in particular, to Egyptians.

It is important to note that in *intention-action ascriptive identity*, Shona women show some appropriation of the prophetic tradition. A number of respondents are named after the women models of prophetic leadership (Miriam, Judith, Esther). I add that Miriam is the baptism name of my own sister (last born and fifth girl in the family). More important still, Shona women expressed the need for expert help in reading the Bible with women's eyes in redressing their marginalization and oppression by a patriarchal church and society. They saw the need to read the Bible with a radical and differential eye.

Looking at the present Shona patriarchal society, I go further to suggest the historical development of patriarchy as the concurrent overthrow of matriarchy. Implicit to a both/and approach, is that the androgynous vision of God is flawed in as far as it legitimizes patriarchy or matriarchy. Having postulated the historical overthrow of matriarchy by the *pater familias*, *patria potestas* system, I pause to ask, *in the upsurge of single mothers making rightful claims to access to the means of livelihood and to guardianship, are we seeing a return to matriarchy? Is not matriarchy a case of reversed sexism? Is there a possibility of bilateral lineage in Shona society?* It is an important observation that the Shona matron cannot buy into reversed sexism since the *enemy* or *oppressor* is identified as a close relative – *father, son, and husband* in the rape of minors, reducing of women into marketable goods and the marginalization and oppression of women as minors. We have seen this in the Shona adage: *Munhu anourawa nehama dzake, haaurawi nemutorwa* (A person is killed by close relatives, not by a stranger). On closer examination, it is correct to say that the concept of bilateral lineage is not foreign to some Bantu cultures (Wanamaker 1997:287). Wanamaker says that bilateral lineage is observed among many of the Sotho-Tswana groups. It is also important to note that the Shona funeral rite acknowledges bilateral lineage in that both paternal and maternal ancestors are invoked in intercessory prayers for the deceased. Male or female representatives of the maternal and paternal families are asked to give a funeral oration at the graveside.

In appropriating the prophetic tradition and Christian discipleship for women as well as men, I conclude that any Christology that does not recognize men and women as radical and differential equal partners in all areas of Church life ascribes to tokenism and engages in power games.

5.2.2 THE CONTINGENCY OF PARTICULARITY

From the standpoint of the contingency of particularity, I propose relational attributes of *Ancestor, Brother/Sister* (Shona: *Hazvanzi*), *Friend*, and *Parent* and functional designates (*Healer, Provider, 'Muponesi', Mumunuri', etc.*) as the contribution of Shona women to an ongoing quest for an inclusive Christology. Shona women pose these Christological attributes in as much as Black theology, Liberation theology and African theology of inculturation identify Christ as the *Black Messiah*, and *the Black Christ*, the *Liberator*, and *Ancestor, Proto-Ancestor, Chief, Elder Brother*, and *Healer*, respectively. While I give credit to the Shona Christian tradition for consciously or unconsciously using the Christological attribute of *Muponesi* and the gender neutral titles of *Mambo* (Lord) and *Mumunuri* (The Go-between), I chide the use of the masculine attributes of *Mwanakomana waMwari* (Son of God) and *Mwari Baba* (God the Father) as the Shona Christian's internalisation of Western androcentric God-language. Shona language is gender-neutral and so there is an elaboration of gender-neutral

concepts of *mwana* (child) to *mwanakomana* (boy-child) and *Mwari* to Mwari Baba. Thus God/Jesus can only be understood as *male*. In the Shona women's Christology we can harmonize with feminist theologians' proposal to go *beyond the concept of God the Father*.

In consciousness-raising (eye-opening stage), I endeavour to set the use of these attributes in a historical context (the biblical church, tradition and Shona traditions) and review some voices in the current Christological dialogue (of Feminist, Liberation and Black and African theologians) that point to some trends and unresolved issues. In the on-going dialogue to address these unresolved issues, I finally advance the discussion to some new direction. This is the impulse to go behind and beyond androgyny as a post-feminist and post-patriarchal stance. For example, Shona women's emerging Christology poses new challenges and new questions by giving a voice to women who have been systematically excluded from orthodox Christological discourse through the history of Christendom. A radical and differential Christology also elicits the awareness of other voices (the poor, ethnic minorities) in the articulation of the Christian faith. In a Christology that is dialogical and inclusive (in terms of the open circle and the matrix) - both inward and outward looking, I attempt to differentiate the various voices in the dialogue and to discern which voices are helpful in the task of construction and which voices seem to be speaking out of agendas far removed from the on-going movement toward a life-affirming Christology. The task is fraught with ambiguities and blind alleys and blind spots. The dangers of absolutism or of making hasty and definitive judgements are to be avoided (Lilburne 1984:8-9).

The doctrine of the Incarnation implies God's self-limiting and commitment in Jesus in entering the world of particularities – of space and time or situatedness. In this context, Philip F. Sheldrake (2001:163-165) succinctly notes that *the Incarnation implies that God is to be discerned within each particularity*. Here, it is clear that God as the transcended principle and in self-limitation and self-condescension is the one who transcends or breaks the boundaries of particularity. Sheldrake explains that God as the one who acts in *the within of all things* is able simultaneously to ground everything in its own particular reality and to expand the within of all things. The latter act is intimate and inclusive in that God *makes space* in the heart of each particular reality for what is *other and more than itself*.

It is ironical that patriarchal Christology that stresses the *maleness* of Jesus is a stumbling block for the attainment of full humanity for women. In patriarchal dogmatic pronouncements, Jesus is uncompromisingly male. According to the Australian, Geoffrey Lilburne (1984:7), there is irony in orthodox Christology in the fact that whereas the historical Jesus is incorrigibly male, the Christ of faith is open to a richer articulation in terms of the inclusiveness of the divine

character. Ruether is emphatic that in the contingency of particularity, we have to be clear of the fact that in the Incarnation, Jesus represents *humanity* not *maleness* (1996:346).

In a Christology of inculturation, acculturation of the Godhead is an imperative. But when reading theologies of inculturation, one is struck by the silence of male theologians about the use of inclusive images of God. For example, Aylward Shorter (1988:114), the harbinger of the theology of inculturation, demonstrates the acculturation of God as a move from the conception of God as the monopoly of Israel as a covenanted people, to a universal God inclusive of all the nations of the world. The nearest Shorter comes to the acculturation of God in terms of *gender* concerns the Wisdom economy. In this context, he harmonizes with Feminist theologians, who, in the *kenosis* of the Godhead, make a move to go *beyond God the Father* (Mary Daly 1985). Shorter explains that the Wisdom economy is a biblical motif that accentuates that God speaks to all of humanity irrespective of cultural particularity. He elaborates that the sapiential economy denotes the action of God. Shorter goes on to extrapolate from the biblical wisdom literature that:

Wisdom is with God and proceeds from him. It is present throughout the whole of creation and rejoices to dwell among people of every culture. Wisdom is given to every human being as an internal illumination. Wisdom is the source of right conduct and of salvation, teaching the fear of God and justice towards others... Wisdom is life and gives assurance of immortality, being incarnated in a special way in the Torah of Israel. Wisdom is ultimately God's own self-revelation, and as such is personified as a kind of female companion of God. One gets the impression that Wisdom is a personified divine attribute with an independent personal existence.

In the above citation, Shorter echoes Justin Martyr's postulate of the *Logos Spermatikos* (seed of the Word) present in every culture. Alternatively, there is an echo of the Christian baptismal *indicative* and *imperative* – the conviction that the Holy Spirit as the communication factor of the Trinity is the *arrabon* (seal or guarantee) and the *aparache* (first fruits) of Christian believers. But Shorter (1988:114) apparently operating in the patriarchal hierarchical model of church, waters down the feminist claim to the *Sophia/Logos* Christology by asserting that;

However, Wisdom is clearly a creature of God, created with the world itself, but it is no mere principle of rationality in the cosmos.

As one reads through the book, the blind spot on the patriarchal lens is shown in that whereas Shorter argues passionately about the weakness of *collegiality* as regards the relationship of the Papal Magisterium with the Episcopal Magisterium (comprised of bishops of local churches) in which the former does not sufficiently involve the latter, he is silent about the issue of women's participation in all aspects of church life. Shorter explains:

The papal Magisterium can hardly be expected to reflect the cultural diversity of the whole church, even though the Synod of Bishops supports it. So far, the Second Vatican Council's

concept of collegiality has only been realized in a one-sided manner. Much more is said about the particular churches being receptive to the papal 'magisterium', than about the Holy See supporting the 'magisterium of local bishops and their efforts to inculturate the Gospel (1988:234).

Shorter is silent about the absence of women in both the Papal Magisterium and Episcopal Magisterium. It is also important that Shorter is silent about the presence of women (although in the minority) and the laity, in general, in the Council of Culture – including the voices of women and all concerned partners in the dialogue of culture and the Gospel (1988:288).⁷²

It is true that the patriarchal monopoly of the Symbol of God means monopoly of power. In the objective view of the Incarnation undergirded by the historical Jesus of Nazareth, the maleness of God/Christ is a stumbling block for an inclusive, radical and differential Christology, or precisely, to the attainment of full humanity for women. In the reification of God as male, (the use of *man, son of God, etc.*, as generic terms and of generic pronouns – *he, his, him*) there is the monopoly of the God symbol by the clergy and *man* becomes the norm for full humanity. The symbol of God as power undergirds the hierarchical male church in which men control the codes, and women are neurotic consumers. What is at stake here is the contingency of particularity as purported by the Incarnation in the sense of acculturation, inculturation, and contextualization. According to Anne Carr (1996:132) and Carolyn Osiek (1997:8), we can appeal to the patristic adage that, *what was not assumed was not saved*. Thus, we see in a patriarchal church that denies women sacramental representation, not only the reification of God as male, but also the failure to recognize that in the Incarnation God in Christ took on human nature as both male and female. We can conclude that if Christ took on the full humanity of women as well as men, then the historical, biological, and ethnical provenance of Jesus of Nazareth is thus contingent. In other words, we cannot absolutize the maleness of Jesus in as much as we cannot absolutize his racial and historical affinities. In this context, Ruether (1983,1993:116-138) poses the feminist challenge to orthodox Christology in an incisive question - *Can a male Saviour save women?*

Feminist theologians (Ruether 1990:24-33; 1983,1993:62-63) expose inconsistencies of male-led liberation and contextual theologies in their failure to champion the liberation of women. They recognize the common denominator of these theologies as the *blind spot* in the patriarchal lens or prophetic advocacy. Oduyoye challenges African theologians' failure to acknowledge women as equal partners in theology by saying that *African theology is a smoke screen that dissipates on closer examination*. In other words, African and liberation theologies as theologies largely done by men are grant narratives that purport to speak for all when in fact

they are marginalizing and/ or oppressing the majority of people. Oduyoye points to the failure of African theologians to address patriarchy as oppressive. Tinyiko Maluleke (1997:39-41) takes up the challenge in providing an insider critique for African theology. He says that a close examination by African women and Feminist theologies reveals a systematic failure of African theologies to acknowledge and get to grips with the women who are *groaning* in the African churches and church organizations. On the contrary, Black and African theologies have woken up to all manner of challenges, but they have not responded adequately to the issue of African women who are *groaning in faith*.⁷³ Maluleke brings home the fact that this challenge of African women cannot be ignored today since a study of the African women theological developments shows that sooner or later the women will either demand recognition or walk out. He (1997:40-41) poses an incisive question that while *African women are groaning in the African churches and church organizations: Have Black and African theologies heard them? Will Black and African theologies hear them?* Maluleke is right in asserting that African theologians who have agitated for more constructive paradigm shifts in Black and African theologies have accorded little if any space to women's issues. He is sharp to point out that this silence of men theologians on women's issues, in turn, casts doubt on the ability of these presumably new and prospective theologies to take us forward meaningfully. Maluleke adds that *it seems that male African theology continues to 'march on' in oblivion and disregard of African Feminist theology.* Kasongole, in a different context concurs with this view by castigating African and Black theologies alongside initiatives in the political arena, such as the *African Renaissance as Meta-narratives.*

In a seminar held at the University of South Africa (10 October 2000) which I attended, and as a response to Jessie Mugambi's proposal of the *Theology of Reconstruction* as a contemporary paradigm shift from *The Theology of Liberation*, Musa Dube of Botswana expressed disappointment at the fact that Mugambi, as co/publisher of *Groaning in Faith*, had not given space for women models of leadership. Mugambi too is a staunch member of the Ecumenical Association of Third-World Theologians (EATWOT). On the contrary, Mugambi showed he was still operating on a patriarchal model of leadership by suggesting a concurrent shift from the *Exodus Moses* type of leadership to the *Return from Exile Nehemiah* type of leadership. Dube posed a host of incisive questions, *Does Mugambi's vision include men and women? What about the Miriams – mothers and sisters of Moses who began the defence against Pharaoh? What about the Israel women (Judith, Esther etc.) who mediated the liberation against foreign enemies? How many times does Mugambi (big brother) interact with women?*

⁷² Pope John Paul instituted the Council of Culture on 20 May 1982 .

⁷³ Maluleke, cf. Kanyoro R.A. & Njoroge, Nyambura – *Groaning in Faith: African Women in the Household of God* (Nairobi: Acton 1996)

*Why exclude the work of his sisters in a vision of holistic liberation? The silence about women's work is part of the tragedy of women. African women's struggle addresses the disappointment of African women voting for men who hardly represent them. They fight years of bleeding when their work is regarded as cheap labour. Does Mugambi need to rethink the relationship with colleagues?*⁷⁴

Dube concurs with Oduyoye and Ruether above by explaining that there is a mutual influencing between liberation and reconstruction. Because of African men's failure to get in touch with the sin of patriarchy, for African women in the post-independent era from colonialism, she suggests, *aluta continua* (Portuguese for *the struggle continues*) towards liberation from patriarchy. She says that in the struggle for liberation from colonialism (racism), African men, not only failed to recognize that in the relationship of *gender discrimination* with other forms of oppression, patriarchy was at the root of oppression. Furthermore, even for those who were able to claim this, the cliché was *first things first*. The assumption was in the post-colonial era, women would enjoy equal rights with men. Unfortunately this did not happen. Patriarchy is still a problem.

Shona women struggling to get access to land and other means of livelihood testify to the fact that women are still not free in Zimbabwe. Chitando (1998:81) concurs with this view when he says that in the Zimbabwe liberation struggle, the role of women as *mothers of the revolution* is acknowledged in the recognition of the national heroine, *Nehanda*. Similarly, women participated actively in the struggle against racism. The values of equality between the sexes were a salient feature of the political struggle for liberation. In post-independent Zimbabwe, Chitando regrets that gender sensitivity is far from being realized. We can surmise that in the new vision of liberation, women must liberate themselves – African women must speak for themselves. Rosemary Radford Ruether (1990:29-30) agrees with this view in drawing several conclusions from the history of promise and betrayal in male-led liberation movements. Ruether cautions that one should not make a sweeping conclusion that prophetic faith is irrelevant to women or that women have no stake in their joint liberation with men. Rather, women should be wary in entrusting their liberation completely to male liberators. Thus women should be suspicious of any liberation movement that does not include in its vision the liberation of women from patriarchy. Concerning gender discrimination as a trajectory of other forms of discrimination (racism, denominationalism, ethnocentrism, classism), Ruether adds that *women are right to suspect that any liberation movement that fails to see in its plan the*

⁷⁴ Seminar on Paradigm Shifts in Theology, University of South Africa, 10 October 2000. Guest Speakers included J.N.K. Mugambi, and Musa Dube. Musa Dube talked on Storytelling and Divination as Methods of Interpreting the Bible. An Internal Speaker, Professor Christina Landman talked about *Two theologies to Take*

liberation from patriarchy will also fail to liberate the poorest sectors of society. Such liberation agendas are fraught with tokenism and at their worst, they replace one form of oppression with another when male revolutionaries become a new ruling class and patriarchy is once again declared the natural order sanctified by God and/or by science. Ruether (1990:30) concurs with my earlier observation when she says that in the final analysis:

Women will be thanked very much for their help in bringing about the revolution, and then told to resign from their leadership positions and go back to their homes and workplaces to do the unpaid and low paid labour that supports the male hierarchy of the new society.

It has been shown above that the appellation *Ancestor* in the Shona context is gender-inclusive. But very few protagonists of the contemporary theologies discussed above have taken great pains to give God the feminine face in as much as they have done for the masculine face of God. Nyamiti (1984:22) the protagonist of an ancestor Christology only slightly touches on the concept of ancestor as inclusive of both male and female expressions. He juxtaposes Brother/Sister Ancestor. We can ask, *What does the title Elder Sister mean today in the present HIV/AIDS scourge – the upsurge of orphans, when as Patricia Walsh notes, that the girl child becomes an adult overnight faced with the crisis of having to look after younger brothers and sisters? Is the girl-child not embodying the contemporary Christ? Are African old women reclaiming their traditional role in their new role as caregivers of AIDS/HIV orphans?* Alternatively, We can pause and ask, *is the so-called shortage of priests in the Church today a blessing or a curse?*

I see a recent Article (Larry Stammer 2002:7 – *Pretoria News Weekend*), - *Celibacy Issue Arouses New Debate among US Catholics: Question of a married priesthood back on the agenda despite Pope's opposition*, as begging the question of the ordination of women and even the question of married women priests– not a closed issue. The Archbishop of Los Angeles, Cardinal Roger Mahoney suggests that the question is not a closed issue. But I see the argument as flawed. To suggest that the urgency for married clergy is made clear by the present sexual scandals by priests (the abuse of office through the rape of minors) is a weak argument. In as much as consecrated priests fail to keep their vows, the media has alarmed us with cases of respectable married clergy (outside the Roman Catholic church) being involved in sodomy and homosexuality! I also pose the question, *would consecrated women make better priests or leaders than these sexually corrupt priests whom the church tries to save face through ordination?* To support this view, in a parish in Kwekwe in Zimbabwe (1991-1994), I have seen lay people prefer a nun for being Minister of Eucharist to the male married deacon. On

closer examination, the parishioners claimed knowledge of the deacon's private life that did not quite fit with their idea of someone mediating the sacramental presence of Jesus.

5.2.3 SITUATING THE SUBJECT

Story theology gives women dramatic visibility. In the particularity of their situatedness, Shona women as *locutors* and *interlocutors* operate at the interface of *gender, class, creed and ethnicity*. There is a need for critical appropriation of culture. Fiona Bowie (1998:55) notes that people think and act at the intersections of discourse. She makes important observations about the gendered, social, cultural, creedal, racial positioning when she says that reading across domains dissolves the category of the *sacred* as a fixed and eternal entity, it is an inevitable way both *subversive* and *threatening* to the *status quo* – systems that are hierarchically structured and in which power is in the hands of ritual experts. Bowie (1998:54) is careful to explain that this is in no way a denial of the *sacred*. On the contrary, there is acceptance of the important tenet of faith that, while God is unchanging, interpretations of God are not. This is a highly problematic statement seen in the history of Christianity or the Church. Let us negotiate what the best formulation would be. Radical and differential positioning is a way of distancing the subject - of introducing the element of indifference, such as found in external critique. It is creating space for women in introducing different ways of seeing.

In as much as Shona women's stories are illumined by the story of God/Jesus, the stories of individual women illumine each other. As they listen to each other's stories, Shona women gain courage and respect. They tell stories of the struggles and experiences of their faith and they begin to see their stories as a collective or corporate story of God's people or community of faith. As they learn from first hand experience, Shona women are able to break the culture of silence that masks the patriarchal culture of violence against women. Shona women from the major ethnic groups (Karanga, Zezuru, Manyika) come to realize how in fact they show complicity with the marginalization of minority groups (Korekore and Ndaou), for example, by calling people of minority groups backward or by imposing their language and values as normative for the Shona people.

From within a radical and differential perspective, it is inevitable that sometimes Shona women need to stand outside the family circle in order to identify internal enemies, namely, sons and husbands in a patriarchal set up and women themselves through subtle colluding with patriarchy. Oduyoye (in *Daughters of Anowa* - 1995) is a good example of the *insider/outsider* stance. She claims to be Ghanaian by birth and Nigerian by choice. As she stands at a fork of the two cultures, she is able to bring matriarchy and patriarchy into creative tension. To a certain extent, Oduyoye (1995:12-13) simultaneously offers an internal critique and would

seemingly water down the Shona women's image of God as *Mbuya – Lady Wisdom* when she says that while not disputing the fact that the African matron is a power to reckon with, let us not forget that she achieves that role only when her energy is waning - that it is African women's common experience that by the time a woman has spent her energy struggling to be heard, she has barely any energy to say what she wanted to say. Oduyoye refers to the crippling patriarchal circumscription of African women. It is also a Shona woman's experience that they are forbidden to brew beer for cultic ritual during the child-bearing age because they are considered a source of impurity through menstruation (Chimhanda 2000:76). The negation of a menstruating or pregnant woman is one of the factors underlying the exclusion of woman from the altar (Chimhanda 2000:140, 171-172, cf. Lev.12:2-5; 15:19-27). In this context, we can ask, *how did Shona society and the church ever develop the idea that the one who gives birth to life is evil* (Shantz 1995:6)?

The Malawian theologian, Isabel Apawo Phiri (1997:73) notes well that it is paradoxical that the same blood that makes the African woman a vessel of life is the same that makes her dangerous and impure. And yet there is a sense in which the Shona pose a reverse situation in projecting the negation of human sexuality on man. They refer to semen in a woman's body as *svina* (*dirt*) most dangerous to the *neonate*. Thus Shona women testify that mother's milk and blood in the post-natal period before resuming sex with the husband can be used in the prevention and cure of diseases characteristic of children (Chimhanda 2000:70-73; Aschwanden 1982:223). For example, puerperal blood is used in symbolic circumcision (Chimhanda 2000:72-73; Aschwanden 1982:35, 37-38).

Internalizing of patriarchy was shown in women having to seek approval of husbands – saying that *we must consult 'baba'*. Women are able to see that the negation of single women as prostitutes is in fact a projection of the masculine desire to own them since the fact that they are free, means that they are available for all men (Oduyoye 1995:4). Acknowledging the differences between Shona women themselves, married women were able to see the autonomy that single women have in making a mark or a difference in the public sphere. This was underscored by the comment that it appears that husbands inhibit wives from developing their potential to the full.

The Shona woman, Dora R. Mbuwayesango (1997:27-36) gives an insightful reading of the biblical Sarah and Hagar (cf. Gen. 16:1-16; 21:8-21) situation from a patriarchal societal Shona woman's perspective. Mbuwayesango shows how women suffer at the hands of each other in trying to fulfil patriarchal obligations – to raise children and, in particular a male-heir for the husband. Here it is true to say that only Shona women know what it means to be childless or to

have girl-children and no male heir. Before the couple can come to terms with the problem of barrenness, it is mainly the women *madzimwene* (in-laws) who start to oppress the *muroora* (sister or daughter-in-law) and begin to come up with solutions (wife-substitution or in the case of the husband being proved sterile, the male kin having to intervene sexually in raising children for him) that compromise the unique personhood of the woman. For this reason, Mbuwayesango (1997:27-29) is right in suggesting that *roora* (endowment) should properly be understood as *child-price* rather than *bride-price*. The Shona woman's story recounts this kind of alienation. Does this not echo an earlier observation that Shona women lead political revolutions such as the present land redistribution not for their own gains, but for their sons (not daughters)? And when the daughters wake up to their self-affirmation, does it not come as an equally shocking surprise that they have not got their mothers' support in the struggle for guardianship and heirship – that their mothers show subtle complicity with patriarchy in daughters being made homeless in their father/motherland. Concerning this type of the patriarchal alienation of women as social objects, Veit-Wild (1997:3) explains that woman's body can be seen as *metaphoric* as well as *metonymic* for the position of woman in society, for her self-definition and her subjectivity and her power. In this context, Veit-Wild's searching questions is, *does she have a mouth to speak, a hand to write, or only a womb to procreate?*

In the family women suffer under a type of *machismo* that seems to stand in tension with *ageism*. In this intricate web of being, Shona women are able to see how gender issues are at the root of all types of marginalization – how *machismo* is the root metaphor of all kinds of oppression. They realize as Oduyoye (1995:10-11) asserts that they are terrorized by home grown patriarchs to whom they are supposed to be supportive and to hide from outsiders their festering wounds. They are supposed to be custodians of all the ancient healing arts and keepers of the secrets that numb pains inflicted by internal aggressors. Shona women suffer quietly in upholding a culture of silence concerning domestic violence against women and children. But Oduyoye is right in adding that the ancient remedies can no longer cope with our modern wounds since the causes of the injuries are more complicated. In other words, new problems such as caused by the erosion of the extended family require new remedies or solutions. I noted some alarming issues above concerning the Shona Modern life. New institutions have emerged to cope with the problems of dumping of old parents and babies in the streets and I asked: What has happened to the traditional Shona love for children and old people?

How do the problems of *male-egoism* and *ageism* express themselves in the story? Some respondents struggle with younger brothers over *heirship* and access to means of livelihood. Other respondents as single mothers clamour for land, property rights and guardianship. In the

first example I recognize tension between two Shona values, the reciprocal relationship of respect for elders and male heirship and leadership. The elder sister has to be respected, for example, in ritual greetings, the younger brother has to initiate the **kubvunza mufaro** (*asking for the other's well-being*) and she is also part of the decision-making body in important family matters. The younger brother, claiming to be *baba* (father of the family), sometimes does not only violate this rule, but also demands that the elder sister show deference to him. In the squabble, the older sister is sometimes heard to express her bitterness avowing that she will never bow to her minor - as someone *wandakasiyira zamu* (*I left the mother's breast to*), *wandakabereka kumusana* (*I carried on my back*), and *changed the nappies, and after all, I was the first kuona zuva* (*to see the sun*). The women object mainly to the fact that the assertion of masculine supremacy here is not reciprocated with responsible leadership and stewardship. What seems to happen is that women, as minors, are also disinherited and treated as marketable goods. Alternatively, the relationship of an elder brother with sisters and brothers does not betray such tension. This is most probably because there is mutual reciprocation of respect for elders and responsible stewardship for the young.

It is legitimate to ask that if the younger brother can assert authority over older sister as a father figure, why cannot the relationship be evened out with the sister taking on the mother role? In any case elder sisters play this role from early on in life, whether the mother is alive or dead. Here I tell an incident pointing to this effect. A few years ago when I called on my brother's family, there was my brother and his wife and the two youngest members of a family of six. I handed over a packet of grapes to my nephew as the older of the two children and said that he should share these between the two of them. My niece, taking on a mother's role, surprised us when she snatched the packet from her brother saying, **ndini mai** (*I am the mother*), *I should do the sharing!* As an only girl in the family, she had learned to establish her place.

Concerning *ageism*, the accepted unwritten rule is that the husband must be older than the wife. If the wife is older even by a day, she is denigrated especially by the **madzimwene** (*mother-and sisters-in-law*) as **chembere** (*an old woman*). The same is not said when a young girl marries a man fit to be her own father or grandfather as in the case of substitute marriage.

Women seem to hurt or transgress the masculine ego in a number of ways and this seems to be the underlying cause for domestic violence. First of all there are women who have better education or have better paid jobs than their husbands. The men do not want this because it hurts their pride. Second, women in high-income jobs are able to have men and women employees. This reverses the employer-employee patriarchal hierarchy. Third, men employed as domestic workers may be doing the lowliest of jobs and competent at those jobs but when

they get back home there is the reversal of roles. These men throw it all back on the wife. They demand to be waited upon and may resort to wife battering in asserting themselves as *the master of this house!* Bob Shantz (1995:7-8) concurs with this view when he says that men have vested interests in a patriarchal church and society – they do not want to lose social power. He highlights the problem of *transformed jobs* today with women authorizing their lives on the market by asking: *How can a man be a man in a job that a woman can do equally well?*

Today machismo is implicated in the link between *eco-feminism* and feminist theology, *eco-justice* and concern for the liberation of women from patriarchy. In the patriarchal circumscription of women as *close to nature*, there is the exploitation of women's labour and nature. This, in turn, highlights the analogy of *dominated nature and dominated women*. Thus in the symbol of *mother earth*, nature is imaged as female. Uncultivated or unspoiled land is said to be *virgin*. In the upsurge of domestic violence, and in particular, the rape of minors, there is an echo of the rampant environmental degradation, also referred to as *rape* (Ruether 1990:31; 1983,1993:74-80). In what Joan Chittister (1998:6) and Euan McPhee (1996:45) recognize as *resourcism*, both women and land are treated as property to be used and/ or misused.

The element of women as being sometimes their own worst enemies – middle class women as oppressors of their workers (men as well as women) and women matrons of the family, custodians of moral and social values showing complicity with patriarchy, becomes clear at the intersection of *gender, class, creed and ethnicity*. The Shona women's story shows marked differences among women themselves, especially in access to education and economic power. While the rural women have to content with survival skills, educated and urban middle class women are making a mark in public places. They are becoming authors in the fields of education and social work. For example one respondent, a university lecturer, mentions that she has established a centre of learning. Informed by the Gospel, the women claim responsible stewardship in which the *haves* help the *have-nots* or, the *believer*, like Christ shows a preferential option for the poor and marginalized. But in the context of both Shona and Christian values - of fostering reciprocal mutual relationships we need to go deeper into the roots of social differences.

It struck me that the poor have internalized their poverty as God-given or natural. One of the respondents expressed this when she said *I am poor because people are gifted differently*. While this is true in a limited scope, it is true and disturbing to say that there is no reciprocity or fair deal in the relationship of the rich and the poor. The woman failed to see subtle ways in which the poor are exploited and marginalized by the rich. One needs to stand radically and

differentially within the system to see the flaws of an apparently viable system. When I stayed in England as a student (1977-1982), it became very clear to me that having a servant or maid in the house is a luxury very few people can afford if they paid a just wage. In England itself very few families could do this and had consequently resorted to the *do-it-yourself* kits – the hoovers, and quick meals prolific on the markets today. What does this mean concerning the relation between rich and the poor Shona women? I see this as impinging negatively on economic justice. Domestic servants for example in Shona people's homes work twenty-four hours and they are supposed to be jack-of all trades. There are Shona lyrics that show how wives have alienated themselves from their husbands by leaving all housework to the maid. The lyrics go further to portray how by the end of the day the domestic worker by her labours has won the mistress's husband to herself. Other disturbing examples show that as a distortion of the employer-employee, labour and remuneration relationships, rich and poor women cannot send children to the same school, there is also discrimination in access to health-care and food and sanitation. For example, at the interface of the high density and former white suburbs such as found in the Chishawasha semi-urban area, one cannot help noticing the dilemma of children of the rich being driven to school when the children of domestic servants have to run for many kilometres to a rural school. For the latter this is a recipe for poor performance at school.

Women are not marginalized in the same way in the different churches they belong to. Awareness of women founders of churches, for example *Mai Chaza* who founded the **Guta raJehova** (*Kingdom of God*) Church in Zimbabwe, women priests and deacons (e.g. in the Anglican and Methodist churches) and women faith healers in the African Instituted Churches (AICs), gives hope and courage to women in, for example, the Roman Catholic church who as it were are still *looking on from afar* and *thirsting* for full participating in church sacramental ministry.⁷⁵ Oduyoye (1995:11) poses incisive questions here:

Does her modern role as church founder give her an entry into political power? What is the effect of her exclusion from certain types of religious enclaves? What is the relation between religion and psychology for African women?

Even in churches where the ordination of women is allowed internationally, in Zimbabwe, we see an element of *sitting on the fence*. This is only becoming a concrete reality *next door*, for example, in South Africa. Even in the last example, we need to see more women in top ministerial positions, for example, more women as bishops. In AICs too, women have

⁷⁵ *Mai Chaza* literally means *mother of Chaza*. She founded the church *Guta raMambo* whose chief charism is faith healing. Originally from Buhera area near Chivhu, *Mai Chaza* founded this church (1958-1968) first in Seke, a rural area near the Satellite city, Chitunguza. Later, in 1962, she moved to Zimunya, another rural area outside Mutare. Finally, she moved to Murombedzi in Zvimba, outside Chinhoyi town. From 1962-1968 there was public talk of her *dying and rising* as part of the process of receiving the healing charism. Both men and women followers, in particular, men are recognized by their unique uniform – khaki shirt and shorts and a leather belt hanging from waist and over one shoulder (Information confirmed in an informal interview with Paul Gundani of

appropriated the healing ministry well but there are no women in top leadership positions, for example as bishops. It is correct to say that such changes to incorporate women to the centre of church life still border on tokenism.

Today, the church, no matter what denomination, is uncomfortable with persistent inequalities that account for the marginalization of women. But different denominations have responded differently to the issue of reclaiming women's dignity and status, with the Roman Catholic Church standing in the negative extreme by reserving the priesthood (and consequently important church offices) *only* to men. In other words, there is cognitive dissonance between the 'is' and the 'ought'. All the same, it is a *kairos* moment when the so-called Fathers (members of the Papal Magisterium) begin to talk and get agitated about the *apartheid of gender* in the church. The important thing here is to seize the moment and to remember the burden of responsibility that goes with this awareness. In this context, Shantz (1995:7) is right in saying that we need courage to challenge compassionately our male-dominated culture and church. He concurs with Maluleke and Ruether (I have quoted above) in adding that men need thoughtful, honest conversation with other men and with women to gain personal insight and prophetic clarity. Passionate and honest conversation is concerned with asserting the full humanity of women as well as men and with the seeking a way of sharing both the privileges and burdens of power.

5.3 THE PASSION OR APPROPRIATION STAGE

This stage highlights the mutual influencing of *orthodox* and *orthopraxis* – a stage in which *theory* is accompanied by *action*. According to Janet Malone (1996:369), this is an integrated stage involving both head and *heart*. I see the Shona Christian designation of Jesus as *Muponesi* as the acme of the Christology of Shona women. Here it is more appropriate to talk about the integration of the dialogical *gut* and *head* dimension and the interconnected matrix of *heart* and *womb* dimension *in experiences of Shona women*. The spotlight is on *receiving* God's gifts generously as we see Shona women do in their faith praxis. It is true to say that grace freely and generously received is transformative. Shona women are aware that it is more blessed to give than to receive in reaching out to others, where the *other* is the person in need. This is what underlies a hermeneutic of engagement. Malone explains that individuals and groups are challenged to lace up their dispassionate discourses with some emotion, such as anger at instances of oppression and injustice. Malone concurs with the Christian understanding of *orgē theoû* (*the wrath of God*) as an element of divine justice. We see here the mutual link between love and justice. It is a Christology that integrates the ontological and functional

(soteriological) aspects of theological epistemology. In other words, the relation between love and justice comes out pointedly. We read in the Bible that *God is love* (1 Jn 4:8) and we who live in love experience God. In the *I-Thou* relationship God is the *Ultimate Thou*. According to the Jewish philosopher-theologian Martin Buber (19..), in creative love for the *other*, *God is the Ultimate Other*. Love is the ultimate and justice is the penultimate truth. In love then we have the roots of justice. St Irenaeus (130-165) captures God's affirmation of humanity in Christ by saying – *The glory of God is man fully alive* (Hendrikus Berkhof 1979:425, cf. *Adversus omnes Hereses* 20.7). Put differently, the attainment of full humanity and justice is the flipside of divine love and justice.

The focus is on a contemporary Christology that culminates in liberation praxis. Here, I intend to accentuate the emerging Shona woman's Christology as characterised by reciprocal or dialogical relationships that lay emphasis on an interconnected matrix, the cost of discipleship, sacramentality (God as gift to be received generously) and the Suffering Servant model of church. I emphasize a Christology of interdependence, interconnectedness or mutual partnership between men and women mainly by appropriating the Shona Christian feminine designation of God/Christ as *Muponesi* and the *open circle* symbol undergirded by the Shona woman's *round hut*, the *matrix* (womb) and the *heart*. In the context of Shona hospitality, the circle stretches out to include the *other* as a dialogical partner. The heart beat diastolic and systolic (expansion and contraction) action accentuates the desire to give life. In Christian liberative praxis, this is zeal or passion for truth and justice. It is desire to know the heart of God through the other. Both women's dreams and visions for promoting full humanity are taken seriously dialogically. In the matrix dimension *metanoia* (conversion) is understood as of a male and female journey of mutual partners. But I concur with Ruether (1983,1993:159-164) that both men and women need to grapple with sins characteristic of male and female I specified above. Contextually, my view of a Shona experience is that our grappling with male and female characteristics has to be negotiated (interpreted) within the dimensions of dialogical and mutual interconnected partnership.

Of the two soteriological designations of Christ, *Muponesi* and *Mumumuri*, I see the former and the latter as giving feminine and masculine attributes of God, respectively. Traditionally, *Muponesi* in the context of midwife is *mbuya nyamukuta* (an elderly woman of the village as the traditional *midwife*). *Mumumuri* as *Mediator* can be identified with the Shona **Munyayi** (*the male go-between* in the process of payment or *roora* and other marriage arrangements). *Muponesi* as characteristic of the Shona women's Christology highlights the soteriological motif of *dying in order to give life*. This is what underlies the Christ-event (life, death and resurrection). We see this in humans as well as in nature. In the Shona God, life and world-

view, this element is ascribed to the *njuzi type* of *n'anga*. It is understood that these undergo apprenticeship from mermaids supposed to reside at the bottom of some pools. Consequently in a period of about a year when they disappear, the relatives give them up as dead (Chimhanda 2000:108). It is interesting to note that the element of *dying and rising to life* was claimed of Mai Chaza (woman Church founder alluded to above) on receiving the healing charism characteristic of her church.

In advocating the Paschal Mystery analogy for a participatory Christology, I concur with Hans Frei's proposal that the cross-resurrection process is the climactic point of Christ's intention-action-ascriptive identity (1993:46). He stresses that in the cross-resurrection sequence, Jesus Christ is most of all himself in his unique and specific identity as the Saviour Jesus of Nazareth in Galilee. McGlory Speckman (2001:175) claims that for a participatory Christology the cross no longer plays a pivotal role because the cross is fundamentally exclusivist. I contest this view. While it is true that the entire life of Jesus is salvific as undergirded by the concept of the *Christ-event*, nevertheless, it is characteristic of any story to have a *beginning*, middle and *end*. The drama of life is characterised by the paradox of sorrow and joy. The cross-resurrection and Pentecost event gives meaning to the believer's existential predicament. It is healing to know as Mother Theresa of Calcutta (now Kolkata) asserts, that more often than not, suffering is not punishment, but that suffering is a sharing in the cross of Christ. It is gratifying to know that beyond the cross there is resurrection. But it is even more gratifying to know that the cross-resurrection event is continually affirmed, sustained and renewed by the Spirit of God who is called the Holy.

Traditionally, Shona people celebrated only *one* birthday. In the event of the birth of a child, the extended family, friends and neighbours come with gifts to the mother. They do this to celebrate not only new life, but also the (*kupona*) mother's *survival* of a *close to death situation*. It is in this context that one understands some of the respondents' concern that the traditional celebration of *birthing* be recovered. We see an echo of the church's celebration of the joy of the resurrection of Christ. The Tanzanian Roman Catholic priest, Magesa (1996:74) is right in maintaining that *in the dying and rising of Jesus we find the whole meaning and culmination of the Incarnation*. In Shona women's narrative Christology, it is true to say that the beauty of the African woman in her positive attitude to service and zeal for life is certainly borne out.

A practical example concerning the attribute, *Muponesi* as capturing the quintessence of Shona women's experience of the Christ of faith is applicable here. I have a vivid memory from my childhood of my mother giving birth - an experience in which the paradox of life and death came out pointedly, as in the case of the suffering death and resurrection of Christ. I was about

six years old in my first year of school. One afternoon I returned from school to find my mother in travail of birth pangs and a further disappointment was that my lunch was not ready. Although I did not know what was really going on, in compassion I forgot all about hunger and was ready to carry out my mother's commands to make a fire and boil some water so that my father would prepare a meal as soon as he got back from an urgent errand – fetching the midwife. No sooner had I started sweeping out the ashes than I was alarmed by something jutting out of my mother's body. As I saw my mother squatting over a lump of flesh, I yelled out, *my mother is dead!* But the mood quickly changed at the baby's cry – the first breath of life. Furthermore, my mother, who had now changed position away from me, and in her double role as *deliverer*, in the sense of being at once the one who gives birth and the midwife, called joyfully to me, *It's a boy! Come see your brother!* I rejoiced with her at the thought of having a baby brother. But little did I know then of my mother's added joy on giving birth to the first male heir coming fifth in the family.

In the theological co-ordinates of God-humanity and cosmos the Paschal motif is implied in the story of the groundnut above. It is a biblical theme that, the seed has to die in order to give new life:

What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body which is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body (1Cor 15:37-39).

In the groundnut story, we see that the groundnut can keep for years in its shells and in dry cool conditions. But in order to be useful in many ways, the nut has to be shelled out of its hard and protective coat, even skinned, split in half, crushed and ground smooth – beyond resemblance to get peanut butter and groundnut oil – products so common and useful in the kitchen. The same applies to many food crops. The finger-millet (*zviyo*) so important in Shona religion and rituals, unlike other grain crops like maize, shows great resistance to pests. Shona rural people never worry about the use of pesticides in growing and storing finger-millet. And so we read in the Scriptures of the *Suffering Servant* that:

His appearance was so marred beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the sons of men... He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he bore our grief and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken smitten by God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed (Is 52:14; 53:3-5f).

Bonhoeffer (1959:82) concurs with this paschal mystery analogy when he says:

... For God is the God who bears. The Son of God bore our flesh, he bore the cross; he bore our sins, thus making atonement for us.

Grace generously received is efficacious. Shona women delight in all life as gift. The question of women's right to abortion championed by western *pro-choice* feminists is not an issue here. It is the Spirit that transforms people's lives. The Spirit of God/Christ is the driving force for believers' prophetic witness or other-directed services. The women practise responsible stewardship especially in their orientation towards the poor and needy. Shona women profess to be *other Christs*, Christ-like, Christians, and to embody Christ in the world. It is in this way that they embody the Incarnation or, they enflesh the Gospel message in time.

As a trajectory of Shona women's Christology, I see prophetic witness in the appropriation of the *Suffering Servant motif* as an important shift from a Christology of power to a reciprocal Christology of service. According to Laurenti Magesa (1996:71-87), a Christology modelled on the Isaiah Suffering Servant integrates ontological and functional aspects of faith as seen in the attributes of King, Priest and Prophet and the subsequent and mutual roles of (the Way the Truth and the Life - cf. Jn 14:6) *truth*, *service* and *kenosis* as total self-giving in love. It is noteworthy that all this is enacted in the lives of Shona women illumined by the Spirit of God. Magesa shows that Christ demonstrated that his kingship was an antithesis of political or earthly kingship in that it was characterised by truth (Jn 18:33-37) and not by hegemonic powers. We read about the Kenotic Christ who emptied himself to take the form of a slave (Phil 2:5-11) and who, in turn, advocated service for the *other* as a hallmark of Christian love and discipleship (Jn 13:14-15). Shona women are clear that a chief is a steward for God's gifts when they emphasize the traditional roles of providing hospitality to the stranger and seeing to the needs of the widow the marginalized and the disabled – *vanhu vaMwari* (the people of God). Over and above all this the chief was to work tirelessly for peace and justice. Shona women echo these Christian values.

We can pursue the *Suffering Servant* motif further in the Shona women's Christology. Here we can concur with John M. Waliggo (cf. Schreiter 1994, 1997:164-180) in recognizing the pervasive element of *rejection*. The Shona women's narrative reveals that the root of their suffering is *alienation* as synonymous with rejection. We saw this in the *mutorwa* (alien) motif.

The Shona woman remains an *alien* in the marital group. In patriarchal circumscription as *minors*, they are denied land, property rights and guardianship of their children. Here Shona rural women are frustrated by a sense of *homelessness*. This is an echo of Christ's own experience of having *no place to call a home*. Thus, in Luke we read Jesus' saying that, *foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to call a home* (Lk 9:57-58). Thus this is part of the *Nachfolge* that the German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer continually spoke about. But lest Shona women succumb to the *martyr-complex*, or lest the element of Christian *self-sacrifice* be used to legitimize patriarchal oppression and

marginalization of women, Jesus makes it clear that both discipleship and *self-giving love* are part of a freely chosen cause (Lk 11:27-28). With the erosion of the extended family, the Shona woman belongs properly neither to the natal group nor to the marital group. In rituals in which the males define the codes, the Shona woman has been further alienated to the status of an object. They are reduced to *objects* or marketable commodities and some are denied proper burial because of relatives trying to capitalize over the dead body. And yet, Shona people know that women are the *backbone* of communities – the mainstay of their families, that they are the *mothers of the nation and that if you reject the mother you have killed the nation*. In this context, the story of Shona women clearly echoes the experience of Jesus' earthly life, ministry, suffering and death and resurrection as the *Stone which was rejected by you builders, but which has become the head of the corner* (Acts 4:10-12; cf. Ps. 118:22; see Waliggo 1994, 1997:177; Magesa 1996:85).

In a dialogical and interconnected Christology, we see in Shona women what Frei calls *intention-action-ascriptive description* modelled on the *Christ-event*. I concur with Magesa (1996:73-74) that in the economy of salvation, *passionate compassion, mercy, understanding, forgiveness, unaffected love* are all characteristics of a Christology faithful to the kernel of the message of Christ. The women are moved to be women *for* and *with others*, especially in their church guilds. In a Paschal Mystery analogy, the *cross* is a necessary part of what Bonhoeffer calls *Nachfolge (discipleship)*. Shona women become *other Christs, Christ-like* or *truly Christian* by following in the *footsteps* of Christ – the crucified and risen Christ. They are aware that Christ has no other hands except theirs. Shona women are aware that following in the footsteps of Christ at times demands being at the foot of the cross twenty-four hours. They narrate how they have experienced Christ as empowering and as healing presence, especially in cases of chronic or terminal illnesses like cancer. Here we see also what Søren Kierkegaard (cf. R. M. Adams 1987:42-46) has called a *leap of faith*, especially as an underlying factor of faith healings. The respondents are convinced of God's healing presence. Faith healing here encompasses *holistic healing*. For example, Shona women's faith has given them grace to accept the things they cannot change (terminal breast cancer and HIV/AIDS, to name only a few) and in this way they have a holistic understanding of the gift of life or get the will to live.

What does sacramental representation mean in patriarchal churches that deny women ordained ministry? I agree with Magesa in stating that:

It needs to be recognized that the meaning of 'the body' in the life of Jesus and in relation to the ministry of women in the church, has not been fully explored and exploited. We need to remember that in the final analysis, the real Gospel of Jesus is never, primarily, a written text. By reducing it to such a text in our theology and ministry, we have robbed it of its impact in

Christian pedagogy and on values determining Christian living. Before being a text, the Gospel is the broken, crucified Body of Jesus Himself. The Gospel ... is Good Friday; it is the Cross; it is Easter. If this is the case, the Gospel text is written on the bodies of African women, which like Christ's body, have been brutalized and crucified in every way 'so that they may have life, and have it to the full' (Jn 10:10).

Mulago's conclusion hits the nail on the head concerning the challenge on the church to go all the way in recognizing women as authentic disciples of Jesus – co-heirs with Christ. He touches on the bone of contention concerning the full recovery of the baptismal vocation of women:

Thus if representation of Christ ('in persona Christi') is a determinative qualification of ordained ministry, perhaps it might best be sought by the Church among these broken bodies of African women which witness unmistakably to the identity and mission of Christ.

Mulago captures my assessment of the Shona women's sacramental representation of Christ. He adds:

An exclusively male ministerial structure can hardly be said to constitute the fullness of the Church. An approach to ministry that takes account of African women's faithfulness to life and to God, as these are expressed by their lives, as qualities of redemptive work of Christ truly reflects the Christian meaning of a sacrament of salvation through service and love.

In the model of the church as the *Body of Christ*, I concur with Magesa in suggesting a new vision of church that takes account of the sacramental character and ministry of women as well as men – a vision that affirms embodied life in its variety and richness.

5.3.1 PROPHEPIC ADVOCACY - A MALE AND FEMALE JOURNEY

Prophetic witness urges believers to passion for justice. We begin to see the mutual integration of theory and praxis in moving towards a radical, inclusive and differential Christology that affirms the full humanity and dignity of all people, women as well as men. In recognition of the fact that women and men have for the new humanity in Christ, we are drawn to participate in the Christological dialogue in mutual partnership. The Christological dialogue takes us further to mutual interdependence and partnership with other religions as having seeds for the Word and in a Christology that accounts for the integrity of creation. Men and women can dream dreams for the new humanity in Christ and we can begin to see this translated into the Christian's daily life. Elsa Tamez (2001:57) has this to say about the prophetic vision and the impulse for *metanoia*, that *a vision or a dream is a response to a state of affairs with which we are deeply dissatisfied, and with which we want to change*. She adds that *a vision encapsulates the life we desire, not the life we live*. Concurring with Tamez, the prophetic vision from the perspective of Shona women of Zimbabwe today entails what it means to be fully human, a Christian and the church. As such, it is a vision informed by the past and the present and a vision that looks into the future.

It is correct to note that neither in prophetic tradition nor in Christian discipleship is there a hint of prejudice, sexual exclusion or discrimination. In this context, Magesa (1996:74) is emphatic that:

Any Christology that in one way or the other condones any form of discrimination on the grounds of gender, race or class needs to go to school at the feet of the Jesus of the Gospel. He is the Messenger of the all-loving, all-inclusive God, who is capable even from stone (in the sense of the poor, marginalized, downtrodden, kicked-around of humanity, the 'other' in the most radical sense of the word) to raise up children to Abraham (I would add and Sarah) (Mt 3:9).

It is noteworthy that the biblical, church, and Shona traditions set both men and women as graced with prophetic vision – Miriam and Esther, Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) and the Yorkshire woman, Mary Ward and Nehanda. They can be juxtaposed with Moses and Aaron, St Francis of Assisi and St Ignatius of Loyola and Chaminuka and Kaguvi, respectively, to name only a few. It is a correct observation to say that both men and women have been/are border-crossing agents, namely, dialogical and interconnected agents. They have embodied the peace, love, service and stewardship of God. In this context it is a true observation that men are not silent anymore about patriarchal alienation of women (Bob Shantz 1995:7-8). I want to highlight some insights of prophetic witness from some of the above models in church tradition.

Hildegard of Bingen (my namesake), a Carmelite nun and mystic, as a woman of her time compromised to male leadership in the church but she valued transparent leadership and did not hesitate to correct bishops and priests. According to the German theologian Sue Zuckerer (2000:9-10), Hildegard's 300 extant letters document her close connection to international leading figures to whom she prophetically spoke out on moral issues. Thus she was spiritual counsellor to leading religious leaders of her time – kings, abbots, abbesses, monks, nuns and lay people (Fiona Bowie 1997:6-7). Her theology as given in her book *Seivias (To Know God's Ways)* shows a remarkable interconnectedness between the limiting factors, God-human life-cosmos. Zuckerer adds that at a time when women had little or no access to medical schools, Hildegard engaged in scientific medical works between 1151-1158. In her book, *Causae et Curare (Cause and Cure)*, Hildegard describes no less than 50 illnesses and treatments.

I had a chance to visit the exhibition of Hildegard of Bingen's works (art, theology, herbal medicine, healthy food recipes) in April 1999, in the aftermath of the 900th jubilee year of 1998.

The striking parallel between Hildegard's medical approach and the Shona holistic approach to healing impressed me. This was particularly true of her ways of extracting curatives from trees, plants, precious stones, animals, birds and fish as described in her Book *Physica (Medication)*

and as seen in the herb garden. It was also fascinating to know that Hildegard's holistic approach to healing is gaining momentum, particularly in Europe in the plethora of *Alternative Medicine* (see also Chimhanda 2000:181).

St Francis of Assisi is a model for ministering to the poor, besides demonstrating the interconnectedness of God, humanity and cosmos as shown above. St Francis's dream was to be an instrument of peace as shown in his song:

*Make me a channel of your peace...
O Master, grant that I may never seek,
So much to be consoled as to console,
To be understood as to understand,
To be loved as to love with all my soul...
For it is in giving that we receive,
And in dying that we are born to eternal life.*

St Francis emphasises the Paschal mystery motif and harmonizes with the Shona women's Christological attribute of *Muponesi*. Angelyn Dries, a Franciscan nun (1998:3-13) portrays St Francis and St Clare of Assisi as espousing an incarnational perspective by providing direction for the transformation of marginalization. They both lived and advocated life in solidarity with the poor and marginalized. Dries (1998:5) gives a vignette that captures Francis's understanding of sacramental Christology. This was what Francis said in chiding a Friar Brother for his treatment of a poor man:

When you see a poor man, you must consider the one in whose name he comes, namely, Christ, who took upon himself our poverty and weakness. The poverty and sickness of this man is therefore, a mirror in which we ought to contemplate lovingly the poverty and weakness which our Lord Jesus Christ suffered in his body to save the human race

Mary Ward (Foundress of my religious order) was an innovator for active religious life for women. In her day the limited options for women were to be helpmeet to the man in the home or to be a nun behind the closed walls of the cloister. As a woman ahead of her time, Mary Ward saw this not as divine ordinance for women to be so defined by men. She thus envisioned a different vocation for women more in line with St Ignatius of Loyola's vision of **in actione contemplativus** (*contemplatives in action*) for religious men (The Society of Jesus). According to the German sister, Immolata Wetter of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (founded by Mary Ward), in her manuscript *Rationes de Subordinatione*, Mary Ward, while adopting Ignatian spirituality, nevertheless, was clear and emphatic that *women should govern women*. We also read that when she was discouraged by the chauvinistic comment of a priest concerning her new initiative that, when all is said and done, *they are but women*, Mary Ward retorted, *but women in time to come will do great things* Catherine Chambers 1882:2.289-290). It is important to note that some of the respondents (Mary Ward's followers today) cited Mary

Ward's maxims, such as *God loves a cheerful giver* and *be generous to the poor and you must never call them beggars*.

St Ignatius of Loyola (David L. Fleming 1978:138-143, Nos. 230-237), in the famous *Spiritual Exercises* gives the climactic point as the **Contemplatio** (*Contemplation for attaining love*). God in Trinity is portrayed as *labouring* with the retreatant through an exercise of *seeing God in all things*. God creates sacred space for the retreatant to savour God's unconditional love and to surrender totally to self-giving love as demonstrated in the life of Christ.

As we learn from hagiography, we must not forget that Africa has many uncanonized saints. Kanyoro (1999:53-70) brings this aspect out in her Article, *My Grandmother Would Approve: Engendering Gospel and Culture*. I join in this chorus saying, *my mother would approve of affirming the full humanity of women as well as men in the new humanity in Christ*. My late mother lived up to her name, **Mukai/vatendi** ('Arise' or *wake up oh you 'faithful'*). It was her wish that the reading from Ecclesiastes 3:1-9 with the theme of *A time for everything* (Shona: **Chimwe nechimwe chine nguva yacho**) be read at her funeral with the emphasis on *a time to be born and a time to die*. She believed that the Christ-event confirms that death is not the end - beyond death there is the joy and hope of the resurrection. Before going further, I want to narrate an incident of which I was caught up at the height of patriarchy. This happened when my father and uncle (mother's brother) asked me to make an inscription on my mother's grave when the cement slab was still wet. After writing *Mukai*, I was caught in the dispute between the two patriarchs over what name should follow – natal or marital name. As my father won the argument, a compromise was reached when we decided to write her motto - *Chimwe nechimwe chine nguva yacho* (a time for everything). This turned to be a play on words centring on her maiden name, **Chimwe** (literally *one*).

As a child of her time, my mother operated within the patriarchal mould. Nevertheless, as a Christian, she was open to *the signs of the times* particularly in two areas. Firstly, she showed zeal for *ecumenism* (unity of churches) starting in our family that was a confluence of churches. My mother and father belonged to the Methodist and Anglican communions, respectively. The first four girls, and the last three children belonged to the Roman Catholic and Methodist churches, respectively. At a time when there was a separatist tension among denominations, my mother always insisted that we should pray and sing together as a family and also share some aspects of our faith. Secondly, she was aware of the empowering nature of the biblical prophetic tradition for both men and women. She named the first boy-child after the prophet Obadiah and her youngest daughter and last-born after the prophetess Miriam. In other words, she saw these biblical characters as role models for her children.

It is important to note that Vatican II's theology of the *signs of the times* gave impetus to religious orders to *go back to the founding charism* (the roots). In new situations, new questions and new solutions emerge and this charism has to be reviewed and reinterpreted. As I write this chapter, my Institute is planning for the General Chapter to be held in Slovakia in August 2002. The planning committee have asked me to contribute two articles (which I have already done) on *Women, Culture and Christ* and *African Religion in Dialogue with Religious Pluralism*. Other contributors on an international level concentrate on other issues like the *Global mission, Ministry to the Poor and Marginalized* and *Justice and Peace*, including *Eco-justice*. As a participant in the General Chapter, I look forward both to my contribution of a Shona woman's perspective and to the enrichment of the global Institute to our witnessing to Christ today. For religious men and women, all this should be captured in their way of life.

Religious men and women as border crossing agents have responded to new needs in pastoral ministry. For example, men and women religious orders have established orphanages for HIV/AIDS orphans, rehabilitation centres for street children, shelters to rehabilitate abused women, peer-group education programmes in HIV/AIDS awareness and a centre for care for terminal HIV/AIDS victims. The Jesuits initiated the rehabilitation of street children in Harare – a programme championed by the German priest Wolfgang Schmidt. The Jesuits again started a *peer group* education project in Harare, directed by the priest, Ted Rogers (1998:6-9). Mary Ward sisters (Mercy Shumbamhini 1998:10) too in conjunction with the Rotary Club started a Children's Home for children affected or infected by HIV/ADS and they have also begun rehabilitating street children. The German sister, Ortrudis Meier and the Zimbabwe Zeruru sister, Maria Mercy Shumbamhini, respectively, direct these projects. The Little Company of Mary (LCM) sisters started the Mashambanzou drop-in Centre for HIV/AIDS terminal patients in Waterfalls, Harare (Catholic Church News Editorial 1997:10-11). There is collaboration between male and female orders in these works. For example, a Jesuit Brother, Kizito Mukora worked in the Mashambanzou drop-in centre in its founding stage.

It is in this context that Magesa (1996:66-88) argues for a contemporary Christology and church ministry that takes seriously the empirical faith experiences of women and their full participation in ministry and at all levels of the church. Magesa is uncompromising when he asserts that women as embodying the Gospel message in their lives can stand *in persona Christi* (1996:87).

Prophetic advocacy is implied in the mediation of a Shona women's Christology. Pope John Paul II (in Shorter 1988:228) notes on the significance of the (partnership) involvement of all believers in the *fides quaerens intellectum* by saying:

Too much emphasis should not be placed on the 'magisterium'. Believers, and especially theologians have a vital role to play in the development of the church's understanding of Revelation, as 'Dei Verbum' reminds us. 'The contemplation and study of believers (understanding of Revelation) develops not only by the preaching of those who have received, along with their right of succession in the episcopate, the sure charism of the truth, but also by the 'contemplation and study of believers' and 'the intimate sense of spiritual realities which they experience' (Dei Verbum No.8).

The Pope goes on to explain:

*For their part, theologians have had their important place in the church recognized. They are the official 'co-adjutors of the Magisterium, above all in approaches to new questions and in the scholarly deepening of the study of the sources of faith ...It is to you bishops, united with the Successor of Peter, that it belongs to make the final decisions about the Christian authenticity of such ideas and experiments. The charism of ordination is at stake here, for we are Teachers and Fathers in the faith.'*⁷⁶

One should not under-estimate the need for women's advocacy and agency in attaining freedom in church and society. Implicit here is the empowerment of women and the provision of space in a process of Christian self-affirmation. For African women theologians, the greatest challenge exists in advocacy for the liberation of women. I see my position as that of mediating a Shona women's Christology. This is compatible with the strong understanding that the oppressed must liberate themselves. Alternatively, it is understood that the oppressed must be proactive agents of their history. This is the understanding behind writing *her/story* as different from the conventional *history*. I concur with Musimbi Kanyoro (1996:16-17) here in the understanding that *ours* is not so much an *armchair* theology as a theology born from experience. In the eruption of women from the shackles of patriarchy, Oduyoye and Musimbi (Oduyoye and Kanyoro 1992:1) highlight the urgency of African women theologians mediating African women's theology or Christology in our case by saying:

As long as men and foreign researchers remain the authorities on culture, rituals and religion, African women will continue to be spoken of as if they are dead... Women have no need for male soliloquies and monologues on subjects such as polygamy, culture, and the authority of the church. Until their views are listened to, and their participation allowed and ensured, the truth will remain hidden and the call to live values of the Reign of God will be unheeded.

There is a Shona adage that **musayera nyoka negavi iyo iripo** (*Do not measure the snake with a string – 'sisal from the tree bark' when it is present*). In Shona everyday parlance, this expression is used, for example, when people are deciding on the size of the coffin. The fear element from the snake analogy is seen in that people normally distance themselves from the corpse. By way of analogy, I pose a couple of questions. *Why are men afraid to engage women fully as equal partners in the centre of church life and society? Why do men in their definitions*

⁷⁶ Pope John Paul II addressing a group of Zairian (present DRC) bishops on the subject of African Theology (1983)

about God, humanity and the world need to make assumptions about women when women are there to speak for themselves? Indeed, women can tell compelling stories about the Incarnation of God in their lives and that of their significant others. A strong presupposition is that women too dream dreams. The Shona women's Christology shows that women have visions and aspirations for the new humanity in Christ. I concur with Kanyoro (cf. Kanyoro & Wendy S. Robins 1992:24) that in their newly found self-consciousness, women do not want to jump into an already moving patriarchal vehicle. On the contrary, as proactive agents of history, they want to be part of the machinery that sets the agenda – part of a team that discerns new impulses, maps out contours and blind alleys or impasses in journeying in faith.

Christine Landman (2002) in a seminar cited above sees the mutual influencing of what she calls *Participatory* and *Vernacular theologies*. Thus Shona women become both *interlocutors* and *locutors* in conscious intention-action self-definitions. New voices emerge that have been systematically secluded from the table of theological discourse. Oduyoye and Kanyoro (1992:5) add that as the church is forced to listen to a people who for centuries have been denied a voice, it is consequently, enriched by the talents and gifts that have remained untapped until today. Chitando (1998:84) emphasises that feminist theology needs to include all women - women of all classes, races and cultures. I see Chitando as highlighting my present stance in mediating the Christology of Shona women in saying that he hails the efforts of African women theologians to include as many perspectives as possible in their theologizing.

Concurring with Rahner (1996:9), in identifying the locutors in theology as the *rudes* (the *uneducated* - the simple or lay-people) and professionals (theologians), the patriarchal church has for many years misled us into thinking that the latter group is made up of males only (the Fathers – the Pope and the Magisterium). The Shona women's Christology has made me concur with Rahner in saying that all of us, even the professional theologians ought to approach theology with humility in the realization that we are and remain unavoidably *rudes* in a certain sense. Thus, I find that one must qualify the term *uneducated* as concerning God-Talk. Perhaps one can talk about the *schooled* and *unschooled* here where, for example, Christina Landman would talk about the theology of simple women as *vernacular* theology. I would contest the terms *uneducated* and *unschooled* still because I found that it was the simple elderly women, with little or no formal schooling who were (very alive to God's presence and agency) most articulate about who Christ is and what God in Christ is doing in their midst. In other words, these women showed that they are thoroughly schooled in the school of everyday experience. In this context, Kanyoro (1996:16) hits the nail on the head by saying that these women are our lost treasure and we must go out to find them since their reflections challenge us (women theologians) to do theology in a different way.

Tinyiko Maluleke (1996:42) sees *passion* for Black and African male theologians as the need to *agonize* over the inherent contradiction between a strong presence of women in the church with no effective leadership or meaningful responsibility and the minority extremely powerful men with all the hegemonic trappings. He emphasizes that Black men have yet to consciously *problematize, reflect* and *agonize* over their role and status both as perpetrators and beneficiaries of patriarchy. This type of *conversion* or *rebirth*, he adds, is a prerequisite to any meaningful engagement with women theologians. Men must come to terms with the stark reality – the blind spot on the patriarchal lens, dissonances and impasses – of women groaning in faith in patriarchal churches. They must take up the challenge of feminist theology that their theologies are (*meta-narratives*) grand and totalising narratives purporting to speak for all when in fact they legitimize oppressive and hegemonic structures. At best patriarchal narratives give us half-truths, and at worst, they give us distorted truths of faith.

In the Shona women's Christological discourse, we have seen that there is a need to read the Bible with women's eyes – a need for educating women in radical and differential reading of the Bible. John Pobee (1989:164-165) suggests a *Passover of Language* in pursuing an Incarnational Christology that speaks the language and idiom relevant to the context (Shona women).⁷⁷ Here Pobee brings to our attention that the so-called rudes say in simple language what scholars will express in exalted language. Jean-Marc Ela, in turn, called the latter theological discourse *parodying religious language* in its political and alienating effect (Pobee 1989:162). Pobee (1989:165-166) criticizes the assumptions associated with scholarship that people everywhere perceive reality in the same way. As a Paschal Mystery analogy, the Passover of language highlights three important elements of a people-centred Christology. First, the Passover as a spring festival should foster a Christology that brings renewal and deliverance. Second, following a late Judaism eschatological practice (cf. Malachi 4:5-6) that a Passover cup was set apart for Elijah, the prophet of the End-time, a Passover is about opening doors for divine intervention. Third, the Passover, alongside the Feasts of Weeks and Tabernacles introduces the occasion when the *people of God* were meant to appear before God as well as for feasting and engagement. The corollary is that Christology should bring about a situation in which the poor and marginalized are invited to participate. What is at stake here is the urgency of *metanoia* (conversion), participatory Christology and celebrating with God in the Messianic banquet.

⁷⁷ *A Passover of Language* is a phrase Pobee acknowledges borrowing from Jean-Marc Ela, a French-speaking Roman Catholic Cameroonian priest (in *Mv Faith as an African* 1988, p 44)

5.3.2 CIRCLE, MATRIX AND HEART SYMBOLISM AND THE PASSION FOR AN INCLUSIVE CHRISTOLOGY

For an inclusive Christology that demands the mutual dialoguing of equal partners, I have chosen the circle (round hut, womb, heart) symbolism as characteristic of the Shona worldview. We have seen that the circle symbolism takes origin from the round hut kitchen that, in turn is woman's space. Shona people cook, recreate in this hut with a central fire. They eat in a circle. When a visitor comes in when the meal is in progress, the circle stretches to welcome the other. The woman's storage place for utensils the *chikuva* (*built-in cupboard store whose main storage equipment are clay pots*) is the family altar when invoking ancestral mediation. The kitchen is the place where the body lies in state and in this context, the mother's kitchen, even when she is dead accommodates the black sheep of the family. Taking further the circle analogy for a dialogical Christology, Oduyoye (2001:97) suggests that at times the circle must shrink inward pointing to the need for an internal critique.

The matrix (womb) as a symbolism of interconnectedness stretches outward, pointing to the need for external critique. The circle symbol challenges men and women through mutual dialogue to practise *catholic* (universal) *place* for God (Sheldrake 2001:163). The symbol of the matrix of interconnectedness challenges men and women through partnership to practise *apostolic partnership* for God. The heart symbolizes the Christian challenge to reach out to others in love. As Christians, we are urged to know the heart of God. Our desire to know and love God must always start from the place of the heart. God is love and the Ultimate Other. As given in the Great Commandment, creative love is to *love God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself* (Lk 10:27). We practise this place of the heart by zeal for love and justice. This is the Good News of God in Christ. This is the Incarnation. Men and women are challenged to embrace this resurrection *Missio Ad Gentes* (*Mission to all people*). Vatican II Dogmatic Constitutions on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 8: *Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity Ad Gentes* elaborates on the Great Commission (Mk 16:15). From the place of the heart, believers are challenged not only to be contemplatives at the foot of the cross, but also, to be prophetic witnesses. St Ignatius of Loyola (Gutierrez 1988:6,175; George E. Ganss 1970:96, No.65) captures this two-fold mission in the phrase *in actione contemplativus* (contemplatives in action).⁷⁸

All created reality demands a particular placement on earth, hence Jesus says, foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests as homes. Events in life take place as underscored by the

⁷⁸ St Ignatius of Loyola on spirituality and mission – P. Hieronymi Nadal coined the phrase *in actione contemplativus*

Wisdom poem – *there is a season for everything under the sun* (Wis 3:1-9; see also Fig.7). The healing of memories and wounds take time. Here I place the Shona women in dialogue with Wendell Berry's suggestion of creating *A Place on Earth* (cf. John E. McEntyre 1995:374-381) as a move towards life affirmation.⁷⁹ McEntyre of St Mary's College in Moraga, California sees this as *Practising Resurrection* space. Berry (cf. McEntyre 1995:376) shows that *solacing movements* of the earth the rising sun, the *flowing* stream *cutting* its way into a hill the *branching* of tree trunks, etc. of a particular, perhaps familiar place, can elicit inner peace and healing for someone, for example mourning the loss of a loved one. McEntyre stresses that in this way, land shares in the sacramental quality of life – mysterious, holy, forgiving and sustaining. Thus we see the significance of God's commitment in Jesus to our world of place and time. In this context, Shona women's guilds offer space for creative love.

Shona women show that they are open to an inclusive Christology that breaks the barriers of ageism, sexism, ethnocentrism, elitism and denominationalism. This is expressed in sentiments like, we want to be role models to our children, where everyone's child is *our child*; *I have learnt a lot from my children, much as they learn from me*; *I want to be a good advisor* (Shona: *mupiwemazano*), and the desire for ecumenical gatherings, especially in praying for peace. Shona women expressed a desire for their ideas and abilities to be realised and fostered in the market place – the church and society. They do not want to remain anonymous authors. Shona women address a whole range of social services. They offer a range of their potentialities to build a better world, and this is compatible with the understanding that the gospel should address the whole person.

Prophetic advocacy is also seen in efforts to harness *woman (gyn) energy* that is so often misdirected and misused by men in positions of power. This is what underlies the feminist impulse to form *sisterhoods*. A case in point is the formation of the *Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians* in Accra Ghana (1989). The respondents acknowledge the element of solidarity in their church guilds. In this context, Ezra Chitando (1998:73-88) picks up the theme of the New Testament Tabitha Dorcas (Acts 9:36-43) as a model for women discipleship among an Evangelical Rural Assembly in Masvingo, Zimbabwe. At first sight, it appears Chitando embarks on a task for the redomestication of women. But he makes it clear that in the Evangelical church, primacy is given to spreading the Good News of the Word. The Dorcas guild gives primacy to proclamation in mission among other works of promoting solidarity among the women themselves and charity. Concerning solidarity among the women of the Dorcas guild, it is a special liberating move that the women have retrieved the traditional

⁷⁹ Wendell Berry. *Place On Earth* (San Francisco: North Point, 1983).

role of women leading prayers for women especially at funerals. Chitando has brought up an important aspect we notice today in Shona women's conscious becoming in living their faith. Women in their guilds are not only doing the bulk of pastoral work today, but they are also appropriating the healing ministry and creating space for women power. On Sabbath days (Sunday and the traditional *chisi* day), one cannot help noticing the women in blue and white (Mary's guild) and beige and brown (St Anne's guild) on the roads as they connect to centres of health care. In hospitals they minister not only to their sick relatives, but also pray for and with other sick people. At funerals and memorial services these women claim a significant role in witnessing to the life especially of their own members. I had a taste of this at my own mother's funeral and memorial services. At her tenth death anniversary, I was impressed by the comment made by a Methodist minister (of my mother's church) that *this is how a Christian ought to be remembered!* Not seeking to undermine the preceding and traditional *homing of the spirit*, the minister was remarking on a marked participation of Christian community in a ritual that would otherwise be secret (comprising mostly consanguine senior members) and on the fact that whereas the traditional ritual was only done once, the latter could be repeated for as long as people wanted to remember their deceased.

He argues passionately against the continued subordination of women in the church and he is unambiguous that this element negates the basic Christian tenets of mutuality, co-dependence and fraternity (1998:73). African theologians are increasingly becoming aware that it needed both a Mary and a Joseph (and a donkey) for the successful *flight into Egypt*. They question pyramidal ways of being church and monologues in theological discourses of the patriarchal church. They thus call for a theology that *flies with two wings*. Similarly, a bird needs two wings to fly. Uncomfortable with Christologies of power and domination (Magesa 1996:71), they call for Christologies that have the *Suffering Servant of Deutero-Isaiah* as a structuring prototype.

5.4 CONCLUSION

The Shona woman's Christology has provided an insightful way of talking about and experiencing God, human life and the world. Shona women show that they are alive to what God is doing in their midst. As one listened to the various ways in which Shona women re-enact the Incarnation in the sense of the circle symbolism of the round hut, the womb and the heart, the *lacuna* in centuries of patriarchal theological discourse became increasingly obvious. Illumined by the Bible as *God's* story, and in particular, the Gospel as *the Story of Christ*, culture and church tradition as the way God transcends human particularities in creating *catholic space* and *apostolic action*, Shona women engage in conscious Christian becoming. Here the appellation *Muponesi* captures Shona women's vision of the new humanity in Christ.

The women appropriate the Paschal Mystery analogy of *dying in order to give life* in the sense of practising catholic space and apostolic action. As such, it is a radical vision that urges the women forward towards liberative praxis. It challenges the women to practise resurrection space and resurrection mission or action. The women concurrently appropriate Christian discipleship that lays emphasis on prophetic witness.

Shona women's Christology is radical and differential because it questions centuries of theological monologues, the subsequent exclusion of women from quintessential doctrines, such as, the Trinity, the Incarnation and Christology, and the exclusion of women from the centre of church life in the patriarchal hegemonic church and society, while creating catholic space and urging for apostolic action. Such a Christology is differential in advocating the *revelation of God* in the particularities of *temporality* and radical in advocating the revelation of God in the particularities of deeds and actions in responding to the *signs of the time*. The Incarnation can be seen as God's entering into the particularities of *space* and *time*, the entering of the infinite into the finite. Here it has become clear that it is God who transcends all human boundedness since God in Christ is *All In All*. In dialogue and interconnectedness with Black, African, Liberation and Feminist theologies, Shona women urge towards the use of inclusive God-language - a language that takes note of the fact that if both male and female bear the image and likeness of God, then, both women and men remind, reflect and reveal the Creator. By the same note, if God is a Trinity of persons, then, all three persons ought to be portrayed in feminine and masculine categories. Thus in the contingency of particularity, we can juxtapose the images of God as Father/Mother, Brother/Sister Ancestor, and Master/Mistress of Initiation. Above all, in line with the Shona gender-neutral language, the appellations of Ancestor and Son/Daughter of God are found to be desirable. In a radical and differential Christology, it is inclusive and friendly to transpose *people of God* for traditional generic term *sons of God* for the Christian community. In short, Shona women's Christological perspective urges towards going behind and beyond the androgynous vision in analogical Christological language. Such a Christology advocates the Passover of God-language, language about human beings and the physical world in the most radical and differential sense of the word *Passover*.

The *theanthropocosmic Christology* that emerges from Shona women's conscious appropriation of the *imago Dei/Christi* sets both men and women as *locutors* and *interlocutors* of theology in mutual partnership, interdependence and interconnectedness. It affirms all creation from the smallest atom, molecule, and speck of dust to the personification of that in humanity and in the Incarnate Jesus of Nazareth as awesomely infused with the Holy. Both the phrases *sons and daughters of God* and *prophets and apostles of God* within the ambience of a radical and differential Christology, take on a new inclusive biblical, ecclesiastical and societal meaning.

And both within the Shona women's Christological perspective have to be aligned with the liberating praxis of the circle symbolism of the Shona hut, the matrix and the heart in providing space for on-going dialogue. The womb in the Shona context urges interconnectedness in words and deeds of partners in time. It is most probable that my thesis-like story contributes to a *theanthropocosmic Christology* that opens up realisable dreams that may become true for a church and society in which gender, ethnicity, race, class and faith are treated radically and differentially in an on-going development of an all-embracing Christology.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX (1): QUESTIONNAIRE I

1. Shona woman, who are you as concerning:

(a) Family (specify whether married, single, single mother and size of the family)?

.....
.....
.....

(b) Ethnic-tribal group (**Karanga, Zezuru, Manyika, Korekore, Ndau**)?

.....
.....
.....

(c) Social class (specify geographical location - whether rural, urban, rural-urban, whether you understand yourself as rich or poor, type of work, etc.)?

.....
.....
.....

(d) Church (denomination)

.....
.....
.....

2. As Christians we believe that God in Christ gives us full life and dignity. Shona woman, who are you in your:

(a) Family?

.....
.....

(b) Ethnic-tribal group?

.....
.....

Socio-economic situation (social class)?

.....
.....

Church (denomination)?

.....
.....

2. Shona woman, from the position of your lived faith in Christ, who do you say that you are? Or, who does God in Christ say that you are in your:

(a) Family?

.....
.....

(b) Ethnic-tribal group?

.....
.....
.....

(c) Social class?

.....
.....
.....

(d) Church (denomination)?

.....
.....
.....

3. If Christ is the answer to the questions that you ask today, who do you say that he is as concerning your:

(a) Family?

.....
.....
.....

(b) Ethnic tribal group?

.....
.....
.....

(c) Social class?

.....
.....
.....

(d) Church?

.....
.....
.....

4. What do you say that God in Christ is doing in your life (midst)? In other words, what elements in your: would Christ (ii) and (iii)

(a) Family -

(i) Would Christ reject as lowering your God-given dignity?

.....
.....
.....

(ii) Would Christ need to change or purify?

.....
.....
.....

(iii) Would Christ promote as Good News for you and other women?

.....
.....
.....

(b) Ethnic-tribal group -

(i) Would Christ reject as lowering your God-given dignity?

.....
.....
.....

Would Christ need to change or purify?

.....
.....
.....

(ii) Would Christ promote as Good News to you and other women?

.....
.....
.....

(c) Socio-economic situation -

(i) Would Christ reject as lowering your God-given dignity?

.....
.....
.....

(ii) Would Christ need to change or purify?

.....
.....
.....

(iv) Would Christ promote as Good News to you and other women?

.....
.....
.....
(d) Church -

(i) Would Christ reject as lowering your God-given dignity?

.....
.....
.....
(ii) Would Christ need to change or purify?

.....
.....
.....
(v) Would Christ promote as Good News to you and other women?

.....
6. What names or faith-images do you give to Jesus Christ according to you think God is doing in your midst – in your:

(a) Family?

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.....
(b) Ethnic tribal group?

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.....
(c) Social class?

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.....
(d) Church?

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7. Select one or two of these names that best described your lived faith experience and describe your experience(s) in brief.

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8. How has your faith in Jesus Christ changed your life?

(a) Family?

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.....

(b) Ethnic tribal group?

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.....
.....

(c) Social class?

.....
.....
.....

(d) Church?

.....
.....

9. In what ways have you felt Christ's presence as in your:

(a) family –

(i) as empowering?

.....
.....
.....

(b) Ethnic-tribal group as –

(i) empowering?

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.....
.....
(ii) Compassionate?

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.....
.....
(iii) Liberating or healing?

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.....
.....
(iv) God's continuing saving action?

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.....
.....
(c) Social class as –

.....
.....
.....
(I) Compassionate?

.....
.....
.....
(ii) liberating or healing?

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.....
.....
(iii) God's continuing saving action?

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.....
.....
(d) Church –

10. As followers of Christ, we are called to respond in faith or to witness to the Christ of our faith. What do you see as Christ's most deepest concerns in your :

(c) family?

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(d) Culture?

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(e) Society?

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(f) Church?

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11. Christ has no hands, language, gender, etc. but yours. As followers of Christ we are called to be women for others. What does this mean to be a woman for others in your culture, society and church today?

(g) What is happening – the questions that concern us most?

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(h) What needs to be done?

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(i) What must you do?

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12. Celebrating the awareness of Christ as God among us. Speaking to Jesus from the heart, what is:

(j) your most common prayer?

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.....

(k) Your most common song, poem, proverb?

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.....

(l) Your most common image of Christ (God)?

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.....
.....

ETHNIC GROUP:

NO.

DENOMINATION:

HOME AREA:

(State whether rural, urban, semi- urban or whether you have both rural and town homes).

APPENDIX (2): QUESTIONNAIRE II

SECTION (A):THE POWER OF NAMING

1. Explain what names you got, who gave the name and why on each of the following occasions:

(a) Name(s) given to you at birth? (Ethnic-Tribal Group.....)

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(b) Name(s) given at baptism? (Denomination

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(c) Other names?

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2. What beliefs do you know concerning knowing someone's:

(a) Name?

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.....

(b) Totem and/or praise name (Shona: *mutupo* and *chidavo*)?

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(c) Other names?

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SECTION (B): ON PROVERBS AND CLAIMING OUR HERITAGE

3. Proverbs and the dignity and role of Women – in each case give a short explanation of the proverb.

(a) Give proverbs that give dignity and value to women.

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(b) Give proverbs that devalue women.

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SECTION (C): PROVERBS AND TOGETHERNESS (SHONA: *UMWE*)

4. Give proverbs that put emphasis on:

(a) Unity or togetherness in community. In each case give a short explanation.

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(b) Hospitality or welcome of strangers.

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(c) Friendship.

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GLOSSARY

Abbreviations: Sh - Shona, H - Hebrew, L - Latin, Gk - Greek, Ger - German, It - Italian, Fr - French.

- **Abbā (H):**- *Father*; **abbā-adelphoi** (*siblingship*) – brother and sister, children of the same father.
- **ādām (H):**- (cf. Genesis 1 & 2) *original 'human' / person who was not gendered*; **ādāmah** (*earth*).
- **adelphoi (H):**- brother / sister
- **Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam (L):**- Ignatian *motto* (AMDG) denoting *To Do All to the Greater Glory of God*.
- **aggiornamento (It):**- *Bringing up-to-date / renewal*; e.g. Pope John XXIII's *aggiornamento* was directed at renewal of the Roman Catholic Church structures and functions according to the Gospel, and, in relation to the *signs of the times*.
- **agnatus (L):**- *agnate being a paternal affine*.
- **akava munhu sesu (Sh):**- (Jesus) *became human like us*
- **Alpha (Gk):**- *The Beginning*
- **alogoi (Gk):**- *mindless*
- **amnesia (Gk):**- *forced forgetfulness*
- **Anamnesia (Gk):**- *re -embrance / reclaiming lost memory or history / her - story*
- **anawim (H):**- *poor of Yahweh*, cf. (H) *ani* (*to stoop over / bend down*)
- **aparchē (H):**- *first fruits*
- **arrabōn (H):**- *seal, guarantee, pledge*
- **auditores: (L)** *listeners / audience*
- **baba (Sh):**- *father*; **babamukuru** / **babamunini** (*elder and younger brother of father, respectively*). *Woman's address to husband as baba can be for children to imitate or a possible reference to patriarchy*; **Baba ndimupa kamwe** (*father only gives once*), **mai ndipupa kaviri** (*mother gives twice*)
- **Bantu:**- *people*; Shona - **munhu** (*pl. vanhu*), referring to many ethnic groups tracing descent from Central Africa; **ntu, unhu** (*personhood*); **munhu ane unhu** (*being fully human*); **haana unhu** (*being sub-human*); **hauzi munhu** (*you are not a person*); **urimbwa yemunhu** (*you are a dog-like person*).
- **basileia tou theou (Gk):**- *reign / kingdom of God*.
- **birā (Sh):**- *beast-offering ritual to family spirits*.
- **bona fides: (L)** *honest intention; good will; sincerity*.
- **Buda ndibudewo (Sh):**- *come out so that I may follow* - denoting sibling relationship.
- **buka (Sh):**- *measles and other children's diseases which in pre-scientific times the Shona could not make a fine distinction..*
- **Chakafukidza Dzimba Matenga (Sh):**- *Roofs conceal family life* - denoting the secrecy of family life; title of a ZBC programme conscientizing people about Family problems and

appropriating the traditional roles of **vatete**, **mbuya**, **sekuru** as mistresses and masters of initiation, respectively.

- **Chembere (Sh)**:- *an old woman*. **Chembere mukadzi** *even an old woman is good enough for a wife; it is better to marry an old woman than to remain a tsvimborume (bachelor)*.
- **Chekaukama (Sh)**:- to sever blood relationship for the purpose of allowing endogamic marriage; *kucheka ukama rweropa (to sever blood / consanguine relationship)*; *chekaukama imombe chena (the ritual to sever blood relationships, e.g. concerning endogamic marriages requires a spotlessly white cow / ox)*..
- **Contemplatio (L)**:- *Ignatian climax of the Spiritual Exercises – ‘contemplation for attaining love’*
- **Bantu** can refer to *humanness* as distinct from animal-like or sub-human behaviour; concerning the **Bantu ethic** of *unhu*, the Shona *munhu chaiye*, i.e. *ane unhu (with good personality / fully human)* is kind, generous, exemplary, etc.; *unhu hwavo (their personality / character)*.
- **chibereko (Sh)**:- *uterus / womb*; *mbereko (backsling)*; *kubereka (to carry; to give birth)*; *havana mbereko (they have no backsling - denoting that the couple is barren)*.
- **chibhorani (Sh)**:- *borehole*; **chibhorani Talk** - *Moto column article reminiscent of the village well scene giving women space to talk about their problems*.
- **chidavo (Sh)**:- *totem praise names*
- **ChiKristo neTsika (Sh)**:- *Christianity / Christ and Culture* a ZCB 2 programme.
- **chikuva (Sh)**:- *place in the traditional kitchen where pots and other cooking utensils are kept*.
The chikuva is the traditional family altar.
- **chimanda (Sh)**:- *cow killed for virgin wife and as part of roora ritual*.
- **chimurenga (Sh)**:- *liberation struggle; uprising*
- **chimutsa mapfiwa (Sh)**:- cf. *kumuka (to wake up; to rise)* and *mapfiwa (the three stones making a traditional cooking / fire-place)* - denoting *substitute wife*, i.e. niece or sister of deceased wife, as one *reinstating the deceased's cooking-place*, where the process of cooking is heavily sexually loaded.
- **chimwe (Sh)**:- *one*; **Chimwe nechimwe chine nguva yacho** (*A time for everything*)
- **chinu (Sh)**:- *the traditional Shona woman's bottle of ointment produced as bride*.
- **chisi (Sh)**:- The traditional Shona *mhondoro rest day* parallel to the Jewish or Christian Sabbath with agricultural overtones and sanctioned by ancestral spirits.
- **chitsinga (Sh)**:- (pl. *zvitsinga*), *sorcery involving the doctoring of clothes or any object the victim may come in contact with*.
- **chizhuzhu / muvigavafi** (cf. *kuviga - to bury* and *vafi - the dead*) (Sh):- a type of resurrection plant / shrub that grows vegetatively which is put on top of the grave. The shrub has medicinal properties.
- **choto (Sh)**:- *traditional fire-place*.
- **Christifideles Laici (L)**:- Pope John Paul II's encyclical *On the Christian Laity*.
- **Christus pro me (L)**:- *Christ for me*; **Christus pro nobis** (*Christ for us*).
- **cogito ergo sum (L)**:- the Cartesian (cf. Rene Descartes), *I can think, therefore, I am*.

- **cognatus ergo sum (L)**:- the Bantu principle, *I am related / belong, therefore, I am.*
- **communio sanctorum (L)**:- *sacred community.*
- **congregatio fidelium (L)**:- *congregation of faith.*
- **conversatio morum (L)**:- *appropriating the symbol of the monastic way of life - three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience and the practice of stability provides a heuristic paradigm of stewardship.*
- **creatio ex nihilo (L)**:- *creation from nothing.*
- **creatio continuata (L)**:- *continual creation as understood of divine providence.*
- **Cur Deus Homo? (L)**:- *Why God Became Man?*
- **Causae et Curare (L)**:- *Cause and Cure*
- **danga (Sh)** :- *Second part of the roora, 'herd of cattle' giving the husband rights to guardianship of children.*
- **Dangwe (Sh); prōtōtokos (Gk)**:- *first born*
- **dare (Sh)**: *local court, jury; padare (place of the jury).*
- **das Nichtige (Ge)**:- *total annihilation of evil.*
- **De Imitatione Christi (L)**:- *The Imitation of Christ (cf. Thomas a Kempis).*
- **De Trinitate (L)**:- *On the Trinity.*
- **Dei loquentis persona (L)**:- *God's personal speech*
- **Der Offenbarer, die Offenbarung, und das Offenbarsein (Ge)**:- *The Revealer, the Revelation and the Revealedness.*
- **descensus (L)**: (Christ's) *descent to hell in the intermediate state from death to the resurrection.*
- **Desiderium (L)**:- *orientation*
- **Deus ex machina (L)**:- *A withdrawn God having created beings like automatic machines; Deus remotis or Deus absconditus or Deus otiosus - remote and not involved in the daily affairs of people, and, similarly, in the individuals' needs.*
- **diakonía (Gk)**:- *service.*
- **Didascalion Apostolorum (L)**:- *The teaching of the Apostles; document from the early Christian church - also general term for tradition.*
- **divisi (Sh)**: *Case in which a father practices incest with daughter(s) in order to get a rich harvest.*
- **donhodzo (Sh)**: *a coolant, esp. water.*
- **doro remvura (Sh)**:- *literally beer for water denoting donhodzo (comfort) on the occasion of nyaradzo (see below).*
- **dziva (Sh)**:- *pool; Dzivaguru (greatest pool - a designate of Mwari / God).*
- **dzinza (Sh)**:- *ancestry / clan; dzinza rangu (my origins or roots).*
- **dura (Sh)**:- *granary*
- **dzoka (Sh)**:- *come back; Dzoka, dzoka mukadzi wangu, ndazozviona kuti zviriri pandiri (Come back, come back my wife, I have seen that the problem is inherent in me).*

- **écriture feminine (Fr):** *feminine writing or economy*
- **ecce ancilla Domini (L):**- *Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord* (cf. Lk 1:38).
- **eisēgēsis (L):**- *reading (one's presuppositions) into the biblical text.*
- **ekklēsia (Gk); ecclesia Dei (L):**- *Church / people of God.*
- **elongetur Christi (Gk):**- *the elongation of Christ*
- **Emmanuel (Gk):**- *God among us.*
- **eph hapax (Gk):**- *once-for-all.*
- **exēgēsis (L):**- *reading out of the biblical text.*
- **ezer (H):**- *helper*
- **Farirai (Sh):**- *Rejoice / be happy; kubvunza mufaro (to ask for someone's well being)*
- **femo raMwari (Sh):**- *God's breath / spirit*
- **fiat mihi (L):**- *Refers to Mary's Yes to the Incarnation*
- **fides quaerens intellectum (L):**- *faith-seeking understanding*
- **filioque (L):**- *and the Son controversial article in the Nicene Creed*
- **gara (Sh):**- *to sit; Ndakangogara pamba (I am seated at home); condition in which a baby gets into fits of fright.*
- **garwe (Sh):**- *crocodile; Shumba yevaGarwe (Lion- sub-totem crocodile); praise name Muvavarirwa (those who are pestered) or Sinauta (those who hunt without weapons);praise name for young woman – Masivanda and for an elderly woman – Vamasivanda.*
- **Gaudium et Spes (L):**- *Joy and Hope.*
- **Gefühl (Ger):**- *feeling of absolute dependence.*
- **genetricem (L):** *rights of woman as wife and mother.*
- **gombwe (pl. maKombwe) (Sh):**- *Tribal mhondoro (tutelary spirits).*
- **gudo (Sh):**- *baboon; Gudo guru peta muswe kuti vaduku vakutye (Sh):*- *literally, the elder baboon curl your tail (as a sign of humility) so that the younger ones will hold you in awe / respect / deference.*
- **gumbo (Sh):**- *leg; totem Gumbo; praise name – Mazhirapanze (those who eat outside); praise name for a young woman- Magumbo and for an elderly woman - Vamagumbo.*
- **Guta (Sh):**- *city or kingdom; Guta raJehova (Kingdom of God)*
- **guva (Sh):**- *grave; kupisa guva (burning or desecrating the grave): kuroora guva (to pay 'roora' or heavy damages before the burial of the wife)*
- **Guruuswa (Sh):**- *cf. guru (large) and uswa (grass) - denotes to the original place or foundation of the Shona - a place where the grass was very thick and large.*
- **hama (Sh) relative; hama nehama (related to one another); Munhu wese ihama yangu (everyone is my relative). Chawawana idya nehaama mutorwa une hangamwa (Share what you have with your relative since the stranger can be forgetful).**
- **hazvanzi (Sh):**- *brother / sister*

- **Heilsgechichte (Ge)**:- *Salvation History*, denoting to the *Christ-event*, i.e, Incarnation, life, work, death and resurrection of Christ.
- **Hokmah (H) Sophia (Gk); Pneûma (Gk)**:- *Wisdom, Spirit, and Third Person of the Trinity*.
- **Homo Africanus (L)**:- *African person; mysterium tremendum et fascinatum – the tremendous and awesome mystery*.
- **Hosi yedenga, Queen of Heaven; hosi (first); vahosi (first wife in a polygamous setting)**.
- **humwe (Sh)**:- *an occasion in which neighbours are invited to a task, e.g. weeding, harvesting, over pots of beer and food; cf. umwe, togetherness*.
- **Handina chandinoita (Sh)**:- *I am doing nothing*;
- **huper (Gk); pro nobis (L)**:- *for us*.
- **hwatsvira (Sh)**:- *brown substances at the bottom of the pan, e.g. of a peanut butter sauce*.
- **Imago Dei / Christi (L)**:- *image of God / Christ*.
- **imba (Sh)**:- *house, grave*
- **in actione contemplativus (L)**:- *contemplatives in action*
- **In persona Christi / ecclesia (L)**:- *in the person of / representing Christ / the church; political rights in personam; rights persona non grata (dehumanizing women)*.
- **inter alia (L)**:- *among other things*.
- **Instrumentum Laboris / Lineamenta (L)**:- *plan of work*.
- **Ishe (or simply She) / Mambo / Mambokadzi (woman chief) / Tenzi (Sh)**:- king, chief; We have a whole range of Shona names with divine attributes, e.g., **Simbarashe (strength of God), Kudakwashe (will of God), Tinashe (the Lord is with us), Ngonidzashe (mercy of God)**.
- **kairos (Gk)**:- *appropriate / appointed time or moment*.
- **kenōsis (Gk)**:- *self-emptying; skenōsis, cf. skenoō, a tent, dwelling (cf. eskenosen - dwelt) abode, lodging - denoting the tabernacling of the soul of the eternal and non-negotiable Gospel of Christ*.
- **kērugma (Gk)**:- *proclamation of the Word*
- **koinonia (Gk)**:- *fellowship; togetherness*
- **Kubika (Sh)**:- *to cook; kubikisa (the ritual which gives the wife a cooking place independent from the vamwene [mother-in-law])*.
- **kudaizira (Sh)**:- *to announce the whereabouts of the woman to her parents after elopement*.
- **kudarika uta (Sh)**:- *part of the kuchenura / kurova guva (homing of the spirits ritual in which the widow is asked to jump over the deceased's working tool, esp. the tsvimbo [knobkerrie])*.
- **kufurira (Sh)**:- *midzimu (ancestral spirit mediums) are understood to heal through (blowing of the spirit or water on the sick family member)*.
- **kugadzira / kuchenura / kurova guva (Sh)**:- *the homing of the spirits ceremony which takes place about a year after death, and, in which the deceased is incorporated into the ancestral realm as a mudzimu with power to protect the descendants*.
- **kugeza (Sh)**:- *to wash, to menstruate*.

- **kuisa mwana pakati (Sh):-** literally, *to put the child in the middle*, denoting to the couple resuming coitus about three months or more after giving birth.
- **kukanda fodya pasi (Sh):-** *to throw snuff onto the ground*, denoting to the prayer said before the **chikuva** (*family altar*) using snuff to invoke the ancestors.
- **kukanda mari (Sh):-** *to throw money* in a ritual of appeasement of the father's spirit.
- **kumabvazuva (Sh):-** *direction of sunrise, to the east.*
- **kumadokero (Sh):-** *direction of sunset; to the west.*
- **kumutsa (Sh):-** *to waken*, denoting the ritual taking place the first morning after the funeral at the grave before sunrise.
- **kunonga (Sh):-** *to pick*, denoting the first stage of **roora** in which the bride's parents and agnates take their *pick of money* from a central plate in hierarchical order.
- **Kunzi pakata hakuzi kuti ridza (Sh):-** *If you are asked to hold a musical instrument, this does not mean that you should play it.* In our context, stewardship status is different from and inferior to that of the Creator.
- **kupa (Sh):-** *to give*; **Kupa kuturika** (*to give is to store*); **Kupa kukanda tsapo mhiri kwerwizi** (*to give is to throw your baggage across the river*).
- **kupereka (Sh):-** *to present the bride to the husband and his family,*
- **kupfuka (Sh):-** *spirit coming back to seek appeasement*; the Shona say, *mai vanopfuka, baba havapfuki*, that is, it is the mother who is implicated in **kupfuka** and **kutanda botso** (see below) not the father.
- **kupururudza (Sh):-** *to ululate*; **madzimai mhururu uko!** *Call on women to ululate.*
- **kurapira (Sh):-** *to heal*; *doctoring of plants to prevent withering if say women menstruating trespass someone's field.*
- **kuripa; kuripwa (Sh):-** *to pay fine; to receive damage fine.*
- **kururura (Sh):-** *giving of prophylaxis to the baby 'mouth to mouth'.*
- **kushopera (Sh):-** *divination.* The Shona talk of the ritual of **kutsvaka musoro wemunhu**, *to search for the deceased's head*, **kutaura nemari**, *to speak through payment of money*, **kupopotera mari**, *to invoke the spirits through payment of money*, denoting the **kushopera**, *ritual taking place soon after the funeral to know the cause of death.*
- **kusvika (Sh):-** *to arrive.* The Shona say, **Tisvikewo!** (*May we trespass! on entering somebody's residence!*)
- **kutanda botso (Sh):** *appeasement of parent's (usually the mother) spirit in which culprit is psychologically ill and reduced to a beggar going about wearing sackcloth.*
- **kutara guva (Sh) :-** *to marking the grave*
- **kuteya mai (Sh):-** *to set a trap on the mother.* This is a ritual done to *redeem* the mother from suffering back-ache when the daughter has engaged in premarital sex and is also done in the **masungiro** (see below) ritual.
- **kutora mudzimu (Sh):-** *to take the spirit*, denoting the ritual of incorporation of the spirit into the ancestral realm in the **kuchenura** ritual.

- **kutuka (Sh)**:- *to curse*: **Ndingatuka Mwari** (*I would be cursing God*)
- **kuuchika (Sh)**:- *medication for fertility*.
- **kuwana (Sh)**:- *to marry*; **wananai vamatongo** (*marriage between neighbours is ideal*).
- **kuyera (Sh)**:- *to be holy* e.g. for the Shona, forests, wild fruits, honey, game, etc. *are holy*, **zvinoyera** or **anyera** and there are a number of conservation taboos; **totem taboos**; **Unoyerei?** (*What is your totem?*) *To measure the size of a thing. – hence kuyera nyoka negavi* (*to measure the snake with a string*).
- **kuzvara (Sh)**:- *to give birth*; **Kuzvara hadzi kuzvara nzombe** (*to give birth to a girl-child is to give birth to a son - i.e. son-in-law*); **kuzvarira** (*pledged marriage*).
- **laborare est orare (L)**:- *to work is to pray*
- **legal persona (L)**:- *political rights / identity*
- **lex talionis (L)**:- *tit-for-tat*
- **locus theologicus (pl. loci theologici) (L)**:- *theological locus or areas of attention..*
- **Logós (Gk)**: *Word / knowledge*; **logoi**; **ã logoi** (*the mindless*).
- **Logos spermatikos (Gk)**:- *seed bearing word*
- **Lumen Gentium (L)**:- *Light to all people*.
- **mbereko (Sh)**:- *backsliding*; **Mudzimu wamai wadambura mbereko**, *the maternal spirits have broken the backsliding - denoting that they withdrew their protection resulting in death*.
- **machismo (L)**:- *cf. macho, male; need to demonstrate one's virility or courage by daring action - seen in negative elements of callousness, aggressiveness, authoritarianism, absolutism*.
- **Magisterium (L)**:- *the Papal body of cardinals which has the authority of being both the witness to and the teachers of God's revelation in Jesus Christ*.
- **Magna Carta (L)**:- *great charter* (cf. King John in 1215).
- **Magnificat (L)**:- *The song of Mary* (cf. Lk 1:46-55).
- **mai (Sh)**:- *mother*; **maiguru, mainini** - *elder and younger sister to the mother, respectively*. **Mai Farirai**, *mother of Farirai*. **Mai-we!** *Exclamation invoking the mother for help or when surprised or frightened*. **Mai ndimupa kaviri** (*mother gives twice*) - *denoting that the mother besides giving birth has the primary role in child-nurturing*; **mai mudzimu wangu** (*my mother is my ancestor*). **Ndini mai** (*I am the mother*).
- **mamu-u (Sh)**:- *sacred places inhabited by mermaids whose presence is made known by the cattle-like 'mooing' heard at night*.
- **marufu (Sh)**:- *of death*
- **kushamba (Sh)**:- *to wash*; **Mashambazhou** (*time when elephants bathe*)
- **mashuku, mazhanje (Sh)**:- *a type of wild fruits*.
- **masungiro (Sh)**:- *ritual offering on the occasion of first pregnancy*.
- **Mater Ecclesia (L)**:- *Mother Church*

- **mavhunwa (Sh)**:- *ritual for damages in cases of pre-marital sex and / or impregnation, asked from the man responsible and payable to the girl's parents who are claimed to 'suffer back-ache' as a result of this.*
- **mbonga (Sh)**:- *virgin; woman of marriageable age not having menses; mbonga yaMambo, virgin the chief / king; mbonga yaMabwe, virgin of the rocks / the Mwari shrine.*
- **mbudzi (Sh)**:- *goat; mbudzi yeshungu (goat for appeasement of an angry spirit). Mbudzi kudy a Mufenje hufana nyina (a kid imitates the mother-goat in eating the leaves of a Mufenje tree).*
- **mbuya (Sh)**:- *grandmother and her female agnates and nieces (brother's children); mbuya nyamukuta (elderly woman – the traditional midwife).*
- **mbwa (Sh)**:- *dog; mbwazukuru (goat offered in a ritual to the maternal grandmother understood as 'watch-dog' over her grand-daughter's progeny); urimbwa yemunhu – you are a dog-like person – you behave like an animal.*
- **metanoia (Gk)**:- *conversion (cf. meta- afterward and noia – thought)*
- **mheni (Sh)**: *lightning.*
- **mhodzi (Sh)**:- *seed as symbolic of children.*
- **mhondoro (Sh)**:- *lion also known as shumba; lion spirits also known as makombwe (see above); mondoro masvikiro (lion spirits mediums).*
- **Missio Dei (L)**:- *Mission of God: missio ad gentes (mission to all people).*
- **mombe / n'ombe (Sh)**:- *cattle; mombe yehumai ('mother's cow' as part or roora and payable as imwe inotsika [pl. dzinotsika] 'one on fours').*
- **moto (Sh)**:- *fire; Fire is heavily sexually loaded, e.g. moto wadzima mumba medu (the husband has lost his sexual potency).*
- **moyo (Sh)**:- *heart*
- **mudzimu (pl. vadzimu / midzimu) (Sh)**:- *family spirit(s); mudzimu mukuru (greatest ancestor); Mudzimu 'haubati mushonga' (does not handle medicine) - but heals through kufurira (see above).*
- **mukadzi (Sh)** :- *wife; Mukadzi ndewe dzinza (the wife belongs to the family / clan); Musha mukadzi (woman has a primary role in the home).*
- **mukai (Sh)** :- *wake up; Mukai vatendi (arise all you Christians).*
- **mukaka (Sh)**:- *milk*
- **mukararwe, mukarabgwe / tezvara (Sh)**:- *father-in-law.*
- **mukoma (Sh)**:- *elder brother / sister.*
- **mukomana (Sh)**:- *boy;*
- **mukombe (Sh)**:- *calabash ladle.*
- **mukuwasha (Sh)**:- *son-in-law and his agnates; Mukuwasha muwonde hauperi kudyiwa, a son-in-law is like a fig tree which gives fruit in all seasons.*
- **mukwerera (Sh)** :- *ritual in request for rain.*

- **Mulieris Dignitatem (L)**:- Pope John Paul II's encyclical *On the Dignity of Women*.
- **Mununuri (Sh)**:- *Saviour-Mediator* (see **munyayi**)
- **munyayi (Sh)**:- *the mediator in marriage*.
- **munyoro (Sh)**: *wet; of people who are kind and polite; of women who die pregnant and children who die before teething*;
- **mupfuwira (Sh)**:- *love portion*.
- **Mupiwemazano (Sh)**:- *Advisor*
- **Muponesi**:-(*Deliverer-Midwife-Saviour*); **kupona** (*to give birth; to survive a close to death situation*).
- **Muraramisi (Sh)**:- *Sustainer*
- **Murombo haarovi chinenguwo (Sh)**:- 'beggars are not choosers', or 'do not look a gift horse in the mouth'
- **muroyi (Sh)**:- *witch* (pl. **varoyi**); **varoyi vemasikati** (*open or daylight witches*)
- **musha (Sh)**:- *home; village*; **Musha mutema** (*darkness has overcast the home*).
- **mushonga / muti (Sh)**:- *medicine*. **muti**, *tree*.
- **musikana (Sh)**:- *girl*
- **mustērion (Gk)**:- *mystery*
- **mutorwa (Sh)**:- (pl. **vatorwa**) *alien; stranger; foreigner*.
- **mutupo** (pl. **mitupo**) (Sh):- *totem*.
- **muzukuru (Sh)**:- *grandchild*, **Muzukuru anokunda mwana wokubereka**, *a grandchild has primacy over one's own child*. **Muzukuru 'mukuru'** 'eldest'. The Karanga say, **muzukuru anokunda mwana wokubereka** (*a grandchild or nephew/niece – sister's child is greater than one's own child*).
- **mvura (Sh)**:- *water*
- **mwana (Sh)**:- *child*; **Mwanakoman waMwari** (*Son of God*); **mwana wevhu** (*child of the soil*); **mwana wamai vangu (Sh)** (*my mother's child / sibling*);
- **Mwari (Sh)**:- *God*; other designates include, **Mwari Baba** (*God the Father*); designated **Mwari Mwanakomana** (*God the Son*), or **Mambo wedu Yesu Kristo** (*Our Lord or Chief Jesus Christ*). **Muvambapasi** (*Creator*), **Chidzachapo** (*Eternal Being*); **Mutangakugara** (*Eternal / Pre-existent Being*), **Nyadenga** (*God of the Sky*), **Dzivaguru** (see above). **Zendere** (*young woman first emanation of Mwari*), **Sororezhou** (*elephant's head / Highest Being*). **Mwari nevadzimu vako ngavakurape** (*may God and your ancestors heal you*); **Mwari mudzimu wangu** (*God is my ancestor*).
- **mysterium tremendum (L)**:- *great mystery*.
- **Mystici Corporis (L)**:- *Mystical Body of Christ*.
- **nachfolge (Ger)**:- *come follow me*
- **n'anga (Sh)**:- *witchdoctor*.

- **natsa kwavabva nokuti mberi irima (Sh):**- The adage that *you must do good in the present because the future is unknown.*
- **Ndinokuendera Chipinge (Sh):**- *I will sort you out in Chipinge.*
- **Ngozi (Sh):**- *vengeance spirits; kuripa ngozi (appeasement of vengeance spirits); Mushonga wengozi kuripa (the best panacea for ngozi is to appease it).*
- **Nhaka (Sh) :**- *will, inheritance; kugara nhaka (levirate marriage); nhaka ndeyemombe yemunhu inozvionera (only cattle are automatically inherited, not a person since the latter is an autonomous being)*
- **Nhamoinesu (Sh):**- *We are immersed in troubles - can be a name of a child or place*
- **nhendo (Sh):**- *thanksgiving ritual.*
- **nherera (Sh):**- *orphan; Nherera inoguta musu wafa mai (An orphan only eats to satiety on the day of the mother's death / funeral).*
- **nhungamira (Sh):**- *spirit-leading goat at funeral.*
- **njuzi (Sh):**- *river spirit.*
- **Nyaradzo (Sh):**- *consolation ceremony (see **doro remvura** above).*
- **nyika (Sh):**- *land; country; varidzi venyika (owners of the land).*
- **nyoka (Sh) snake; kuyera nyoka negavi iripo (to measure a snake with a string of the tree back when the it is present)**
- **Omēga (Gk):**- *The End.*
- **Opera trinitatis ad extra indivisa (L):**- *expresses the concrete unity in operation of the Persons of the Trinity e.g. in revelation and in the understanding of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as 'Revealer', 'Revelation' and 'Revealedness' 'par excellence' (see **Perichoresis** below).*
- **orgē theoû (Gk):**-*wrath of God.*
- **oikonomia (Gk):** *economy, organization; oikonomia - root words are oikos (household of life) and nomos (justice). The ecumenical (Greek: oikoumene) is used in Christian circles to denote the household of God as inclusive of the whole of creation, the whole inhabited world.*
- **Pacem in Terris (L):**-*Peace on Earth - Pope John XXIII's encyclical.*
- **Pantokrator (Gk):**- *the One who holds and governs all things; ruler of the universe*
- **par excellence (Fr):**- *being of the supreme example; of its own kind.*
- **parokoi (G):**- *sojourners*
- **parousia (Gk):**- *Second coming of Christ.*
- **passio magna (L):**- *great passion (of Christ).*
- **pater familias, patria potestas (L):**- *father as head of the family / clan and guardian of children.*
- **pathós (Gk):**- *that which excites feelings of tenderness, pity or sympathy.*
- **perichoresis (Gk):**- *doctrine which guarantees the concrete unity of the three Persons of the Trinity in their relationship to each other.*
- **per se (L):**- *in itself.*
- **persona grata (L):**- *person acceptable to certain others.*

- **persona non grata** :- *person not acceptable* (esp. of political suppression of human dignity).
- **pfuma (Sh)**:- *wealth; bride wealth; daughter as source of father's wealth.*
- **Physica (L)**:- *Medication*
- **plērōma (Gk)**:- *fullness of the divine plan*
- **Pneûma (Gk)**:- *wind, spirit.*
- **potestas ecclesiastica (L)**:- *the authority of the Church.*
- **praeambula fidei (L)**:- *preamble of / antecedent to faith; praeparatio evangelica, preparation for / antecedent to the preaching of the Gospel.*
- **prima facie (L)**:- *at first sight.*
- **prosōpon (Gk)**:- *substance*
- **prōtōtokos (Gk)**:- *first born*
- **rab (H)**:- *master, lord; rabbī (Jewish teacher).*
- **raham (H)**: *God's unconditional love*
- **rechem (H)**:- *womb*
- **rite-de-passage (L)**:- *right of passage.*
- **roora (Sh)**:- *bride-price* (see also *pfuma*); *muroora, the one obtained through roora; vamwene (the owner) - of mother-in-law and vatete (sister of husband) as having group ownership to wife obtained through roora; kuroora guva (payment of roora over the grave or dead woman's body).*
- **ropa (Sh)**:- *blood; ropa ravanhu rinopana makotsi (of couple's blood being incompatible as one of the causes of sterility).*
- **runyoka (Sh)**:- *wife fencing in order to trap the accomplice in adultery, e.g. the adulterers can be interrupted by the sudden appearance of a nyoka (snake).*
- **rutsambo / rugaba (Sh)**:- *first part of roora meant to give the husband sexual rights.*
- **Rutsoka (Sh)**:- *foot or feet; Rutsoka ndimarase (feet can take you far and wide – 'make you get lost'.*
- **ruvhunza vayeni (Sh)**:- *time of day, i.e. dusk / sunset when 'visitors' are expected to arrive and 'check' for their destination or strangers 'ask' to be put up for the night.*
- **ruwadzano (Sh)**:- *unity gathering, e.g. an ecumenical gathering .*
- **ruzoka (Sh)**:- *prophylaxis for the proper functioning of the neonate's gut.*
- **sacra potestas (L)**:- *sacred power.*
- **sacrosanct (L)**:- *(person, law, place, etc.) secured by religious sanction against outrage violation.*
- **Sacerdotalis (L)**:- *relating to priests.*
- **sadza (Sh)**:- *the staple cereal diet; sadza 'rezviyo', of 'finger-millet'.*
- **sarapavana (Sh)**:- *maternal affine 'left' to take surety of the deceased's 'children' in the period from burial to the homing of the spirits ceremony.*
- **sekuru (Sh)** :- *grandfather and his male agnates; uncle - mother's brother and male agnates.*

- **semina verbi (L)**:- *seeds of the Word of God.*
- **Seivias (L)** :-*To Know God's Ways*
- **shamwari / sahwira (Sh)**:- *friend; ushamwari / usahwira (friendship); ushamwari hunokunda ukama (friendship is greater / stronger than consanguine relationship).*
- **shavi (Sh)**:- (pl. **mashavi**) - *alien spirits with good or bad effects.*
- **shoko (Sh)**:- *monkey; word or message.*
- **shungu (Sh)**:- *desire, aspiration; Shungu Dzevana (Children's aspirations or desires)*
- **shupa (Sh)**:- *the after-birth.*
- **svina (Sh)**:- *dirt*
- **status quo (L)**:- *unchanged position.*
- **svikiro (pl. masvikiro)(Sh)**:- *spirit medium.*
- **tabula rasa (L)**:- *blank sheet / mind.*
- **Tapera (Sh)**:- *we are extinct / annihilated.*
- **Taonanyasha (Sh)**:- *we have 'seen' or experienced the mercy (of God)*
- **tateguru (Sh)**:- *great grandfather.*
- **tertium quid (L)**:- *third position*
- **theologoi (L)**:- *theologians*
- **Theotokos (Gk)**:- *God-bearer.*
- **tsika (Sh)**:- *to step; customs; tsikamutanda (step onto the stick).*
- **tsvimbo (Sh)**:- *knobkerrie; tsvimborume (bachelor).*
- **ukama (Sh)**:- *kinship / consanguine relationship; hama (kin / relation).*
- **uraya (Sh)**:- *to kill; munhu anourayiwa nehama dzake (a person can be harmed / killed only by one's relation[s]).*
- **uxorem (L)**:- *of marriage; uxoricide (killing of the wife e.g. through phallocracy).*
- **vana (sing. mwana) (Sh)**:- *children.*
- **vanhu vaMwari (Sh)**:- *of cripples and mentally disabled people referred to as the people of God.*
- **varidzi venyika (Sh)**:- *owners of the land*
- **vatete (Sh)**:- *aunt - father's sister; sister-in-law (see also vamwene).*
- **vere Deus, vere homo (L)**:- *true God and true man (human).*
- **veritas Domini (L)**:- *the truth of the Lord; veritas hominum (the truth of men).*
- **via negativa (L)**:- *apophatic or negative way*
- **vice Christi (L)**:- *in the place of Christ*
- **vis-à-vis (L)**:- *over and against.*
- **vhu (also ivhu) (Sh)**:- *soil; ndiri mwana wevhu (I am a child of the soil); kukanda vhu (to throw soil) - burial rite; kunanzva vhu (to lick the soil) - ritual performed when trespassing foreign soil; kutora vhu (to take the soil) - ritual done for people buried on foreign soil to incorporate them at home / in ancestral soil; kupindura vhu (to turn the soil) - ritual done by a mother on child's grave.*

- **vorgriff (Ger):** - *pre-apprehension*
- **zhara (Sh):** - *hunger; zhara shura mweni (a feeling of hunger is a good omen for a surprise visitor)*
- **zvinhu zvinodyiwa nevapfuuri** (*things - crops and fruits to be eaten by hungry passers-by or travellers*)
- **Zunde raMambo (Sh):** - *A chief's field worked by his subjects, the proceeds of which are directed to the poor.*

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