Old Ways of Being to New Ways of Seeing

Edited by
Mary Crewe

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Introduction

Discrimination is a worldwide phenomenon that cuts across communities, cultures, religions and societies. Throughout the centuries, people in almost every context have faced discrimination based on gender, religion, ethnicity, sexuality, race and other factors. Religion, which ought to propagate and promote peace, unity and reconciliation, has unfortunately contributed to conflict, intolerance, religious violence and discrimination globally. Taking cognizance of its own checkered history of exclusion over the years, in 2017 the Faculty of Theology and Religion adopted as its centenary theme "*Gateway to __*". The idea was to reflect on 'open gates' which speak to the deliberate desire to promote equity, inclusiveness and diversity. With regard to this endeavour, the Faculty has travelled far in working for justice, inclusivity and transformation.

The University of Pretoria has adopted a comprehensive anti-discrimination policy. One aspect of the initiative to publicise the policy was that the Faculty of Theology and Religion spearhead a drive to examine anti-discrimination from a faith perspective. Thus, in September 2021 the Faculty hosted a webinar that addressed various themes of anti-discrimination. This publication is an outcome of that initiative, in which some Faculty staff members contributed to conversations about anti-discrimination from different angles. This introduction provides a summary of what is covered in the publication.

Focusing on discrimination, Dr Hlulani Mdingi draws our attention to a 'refocus on race' as a critical factor in the South African context. We know that racism is still prevalent in South Africa and other parts of the world. He reminds us of the contributions of Steve Biko and the focus on black power which brought about changes in the fields of psychology, economics, beauty, intellect, culture and faith – all leading to black empowerment, and appreciation of black identity and the black person. Hlulani points us to the significant role of black liberation theology in affirming the rights, dignity and humanity of black people in South Africa, whilst simultaneously resisting white oppression and racism. He observes that black theology today "must be engaged in all facets of life, including to say its piece on policy, definition and acts of racism".

Prof Ernest van Eck argues that ethnicity, not 'race', is the critical issue. He argues that 'race' is a relatively modern concept and that from a certain perspective it is the root of racism itself. He proposes a focus instead on ethnicity. He elucidates his argument by exploring how the Apostle Paul addressed ethnic differences

in early Christianity. As a New Testament scholar, Ernest then offers suggestions regarding how Paul's encounters might be used to overcome racial categories and create a new social and cultural identity at the University of Pretoria.

Prof Zoro Dube poses the question: "Why do you see my ethnicity, gender and class, instead of my need?" Drawing on the biblical story of the Syro-Phoenician woman, he believes that we tend to focus on race, culture or gender, which then become determining factors in how we respond to people's needs. Zoro asserts that when we focus on an individual's needs, rather than on their background or their sense of identity, we are better equipped to address issues of discrimination in society and across the world.

Taking the conversation about gender discrimination in a different direction, Prof Tanya van Wyk advocates a nonbinary approach to women, the womb and gender. She asks: "What is a nonbinary approach that will proactively focus on preventing discrimination?" Tanya questions whether we are sufficiently critical of forms of power that maintain the status quo. She relates her argument to the ways in which the Faculty of Theology and Religion needs to critically address issues of equality, exclusion of women and culture. Tanya calls for an ecofeminist theology in the Faculty that engages with UN Sustainable Development Goal 5.

One of the rising forms of discrimination in the world today relates to human sexuality. This causes extensive friction, factionalism and fragmentation in Christian churches in particular. Prof Jaco Beyers tackles the issue of religious fundamentalism and violence in society with regard to LGBT+ people, focusing on violence against LGBT+ people in Uganda. Using this case study, Jaco considers the role that the Faculty and the University of Pretoria might play in preparing students to respond appropriately when discrimination occurs.

Holy Scriptures can certainly be a basis for discrimination; this has been seen throughout the ages. Prof Sias Meyers raises the question of whether the Bible should be seen as part of the problem or as part of the solution. Given his expertise as an Old Testament scholar, he refers to Old Testament texts to make his point. Sias argues that historical knowledge of texts and their context can contribute to more responsible interpretations of biblical texts. He uses this idea to explore ancient understandings of morality, in comparison with modern perspectives, pointing out that we need biblical texts to help us understand issues of discrimination today.

Another Old Testament scholar, Prof Ananda Geyser-Fouche, discusses how language is used to discriminate against people. She examines why exclusive

language is used and links her discussion to certain Old Testament texts. Ananda asks what we can learn from the Old Testament to address discrimination through power games in language. Language can be an oppressive and discriminatory tool when not used sensitively and mindfully.

Finally, Prof Christo Lombaard addresses faith diversity at the University of Pretoria from what he describes as the perspective of 'non-theological' arguments. He calls into question what non-religious, a-religious or atheist positions mean in relation to matters of faith. He maintains that a neutral position on faith is still a position. Christo argues that there is no position outside of the economy, sexuality, power and religion: the human condition is such that we are inescapably implicated in such matters. Therefore, positioning oneself outside these considerations is either naïve or self-deceptive. He concludes that values derived from religion are just as important as religion-free values; neither should be considered exclusive.

This publication cannot be exhaustive. Many other forms of discrimination also need to be considered. However, contributors to the publication have examined discrimination from a faith perspective. They have focused on some of the major forms of discrimination, including discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, culture and language. We encounter much of this on a daily basis.

The objective of this publication is to initiate a conversation on anti-discrimination at UP, to help focus on and popularise the UP anti-discrimination policy. I sincerely hope that this publication will stimulate discussion and steer further conversations on this most significant subject at UP, in South Africa and across the globe. Discrimination in a variety of forms persists. We need to get to the roots of discrimination, confronting it with courage and hope as we seek to build a better world for all people and all creation, based on love, unity, peace and reconciliation.

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Violence against LGBT+ communities in Uganda[1]

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Introduction

The last decade has witnessed a rise in legislated homophobia across Africa. In 2013 the Pew Research Centre reported that an overwhelmingly large proportion of people in Africa disapproved of homosexuality. The Pew Research Centre poll found that 98% of people surveyed in Nigeria, 90% of people surveyed in Kenya, and 96% of those surveyed in Uganda, Senegal and Ghana disapproved of homosexuality (Baker 2015: 28). The past six years have seen an increase of anti-lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT+) sentiment in Uganda. The rise of homophobia has been linked to religious groups. Religious leaders in Uganda have launched a campaign, supported by politicians, to rid Uganda of homosexuals (Baker 2015: 28).

Between October and December 2010, two prominent popular magazines in Uganda (*Rolling Stone* and *Red Pepper*) published lists divulging the identities of prominent homosexuals in Uganda, and calling on readers to kill homosexuals. Headlines such as "Hang them; they are after our kids" (*Rolling Stone*, Oct 2010) enticed members of society into acts of violence against LGBT+ communities. This led to increased harassment of, and assault on, members of LGBT+ communities in Uganda between 2010 and 2014. In 2009, 12 cases of assault of LGBT+ individuals were reported in Uganda, but by 2014 the number of reported cases had risen to 300 in Kampala alone (Baker 2015: 28). Public shaming of LGBT+ individuals included social discrimination, physical assault, verbal abuse, threats, eviction from homes, work dismissals and even being disowned by families.

The new violent forms of discrimination are motivated by religion. Since 2009 conservative church leaders in Uganda have expressed concern about the "increasing influence of liberal Western values" on Uganda. In 2009, church

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leaders invited evangelical preachers from the US to speak at a seminar in Kampala entitled "Exposing the homosexuals' agenda" (Baker 2015: 30). The evangelical pastors were drawn from conservative Christian ministries considered hostile to homosexuality. Their campaign focused on exposing and combating alleged gay efforts to break down the traditional family and destroy civilisation (Baker 2015: 30). US preachers claimed that there was a gay conspiracy to take over the world. Local communities were encouraged to prevent gays from introducing their value system of "sexual promiscuity" and inculcating a new generation with foreign values, and posing a threat to children, traditional marriage, and society at large. These messages were widely accepted by Ugandans already afraid of losing their cultural identity to modernisation and globalisation (Baker 2015: 30) and having to accommodate European Christians' apparent acceptance of homosexuality (Baker 2015: 31).

Six weeks after the US pastors left Uganda, the Ugandan finance minister introduced a parliamentary bill which sought to impose the death penalty on gay people. Colonial laws still in force in Uganda, already banned homosexual sex (Baker 2015: 31). The proposed bill was debated over several years and finally approved and promulgated in 2013. Criticism regarding the passing of the legislation referred to it as a form of political opportunism. Politicians deliberately sided with the majority against a misunderstood minority,[2] to gain political support in the 2016 elections (Baker 2015: 31).

In February 2014 President Museveni of Uganda signed the Anti-Homosexuality Act into law, enabling courts to sentence gay people to life in prison. The motivation for promulgating the discriminatory legislation was explained by President Museveni as being that homosexuality was clearly an example of the West's "social imperialism" (Baker 2015: 31). However, in August 2014 a Ugandan court overturned the Act on the basis that a quorum had not been present the day that the bill was passed in Parliament. Many observers saw this as a form of reparation, as the contentious Act had attracted international disapproval, expressed via cancelled economic contracts and sanctions imposed on Uganda (Baker 2015: 28). In November 2014, the Minister of Ethics

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2   In addition to Uganda, homosexuality is outlawed in the following African countries: Algeria, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Egypt, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Libya, Malawi, Mauritania, Morocco, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Somaliland, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Zambia and Zimbabwe. This is due to both religious beliefs and anti-Western sentiment.

and Integrity submitted a revised version of the bill, entitled the Prohibition of Promotion of Unnatural Sexual Practices Act, making it a criminal offence to publish any form of "propaganda" supporting LGBT+ communities in Uganda (Baker 2015: 31).

On 5 May 2021, Takambou reported on the news site of DW.com regarding responses in Uganda to the newly promulgated law. With effect from May 2021 same-sex relationships were prohibited, which reminded many members of the LGBT+ community of the similar bill of 2013. The 2021 law did, however, have a broader application as it also sought to address the issue of sexual violence. The law proscribing "unnatural offences" created anxiety, as it was understood to refer to homosexuality as "contrary to the order of nature" and, therefore, as illegal. Many churches and church leaders supported this legislation as they felt that homosexuality should be banned.

There is an increasing number of popular narratives that link homosexuality to violence, particularly violence directed at young people. Much of the resistance to transgender or gender-neutral bathrooms is that people might use this space to commit "criminal acts".

The discriminatory and oppressive legislation in Uganda is influenced by a fundamentalist reading of the Bible. By arguing that homosexuality is against the natural order, advocates of legislation criminalising homosexuality superimpose their interpretation of biblical understanding of sexuality on an African context in the most uncritical way. What exacerbates the situation is that it fuels an increase in violence directed at homosexuals. This suggests not only discrimination in terms of limiting the freedom of expression of homosexuals, but also legitimisation of violence against them.

Religions should act as lightning rods to prevent discrimination that culminates in violence.

When Joas and Knöbl (2009) discuss occurrences of violence and conflict within society, they emphasise the theory of Lewis Coser, who draws attention to the positive effects of conflict. Conflict in society is a sign of a stable community (Joas et al. 2009: 177). A community has an opportunity to release tension via conflict. This corresponds to Burkert's suggestion of violence as relief of anxiety (Segal 2008: 31). When conflict is suppressed, tension increases. A healthy society is permitted to vent anger or "clear the air" (Joas 2009: 177). Furthermore, conflict may lead to opportunities to learn and change existing social norms and institutions (Joas 2009: 177). If conflict is not permitted, societies cannot gain

insight from others and they cannot learn and adjust to new situations.

Conflict here should be understood to refer to confrontation that does not lead to violence, but resolves tension through debate and discussion. However, violent conflict cannot be justified.

This perspective provides material for reflection when applied to LGBT+ communities in Uganda. Will conflict truly bring about (positive) change? Will those "venting their anger" truly gain new insight and adjust to a new environment, in which LGBT+ communities are tolerated? Or will the opposite apply: will LGBT+ communities understand their "wrongful" deviation from traditional ways and return to the norms set by society? Of course occurrences of violence can never be accepted, but if they restore equilibrium to a community[3], there might be some meaning to the violence. Both parties (anti LGBT+ and the LGBT+ communities) should be able to express their discomfort. In a tolerant community, people feel free to express their opinions without fear of being shut down or oppressed.

A type of "lightning rod" that may help defuse such forms of violence would be the creation of discussion forums in society. Such forums might present opportunities for learning and venting anger. Learning about the other is just as important as learning about oneself (Achterhuis 2010: 23). In a discussion forum one is not only confronted by the other, but also confronted by one's own convictions. In discussion with others, one has to be critical with oneself. Stephan (2009: 55) suggests, as a countermeasure, how to deal with immanent threats in order to engage in dialogue. Forums supporting dialogue between opposing parties create opportunities to learn from oneself and the other, as well as to vent anger. Churches and religious communities may serve as agents creating safe spaces where healthy debate about these matters can take place on the basis of equality.

By creating opportunities to discuss sensitive issues, a stable community is created. This might not prevent violence but it could defuse aggression, alleviate anxiety, and create reciprocal understanding. The situation in Uganda proves the point: brewing violence directed at LGBT+ communities in Uganda was the result of bringing the issue of homosexuality into the public domain and compelling

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3   This is what Achterhuis identified as goal-orientated violence: violence in order to achieve a bigger goal.

society to think about it. A Ugandan lawyer who defends many LGBT+ individuals formulates this clearly: "When something is in the public domain, it is no longer a taboo" (Baker 2015: 32).

Conclusion

Violence in society should not come as a surprise to anyone. Just as lightning is an extraordinary, natural phenomenon to be expected from time to time, so violence seems to be an extraordinary but natural phenomenon that should be anticipated. However, humanity can never be complacent about violent discrimination; hence, the description of violence as extraordinary. In this article an attempt was made to view the occurrence of violence from different perspectives. The recent violent discrimination against LGBT+ communities in Uganda served as a case study.

What is evident is that violent discrimination should always be contextualised. Violence manifests differently in an African context than in a European or Asian context. Understanding and explaining violence needs to take the local context into account. Magic and dynamism for example, still function to some extend in an African context and influence how violence is perceived. Violence does not have one or two just causes and just as few solutions. Violence is a complex matter. Philosophical perspectives identified by Achterhuis (2010) provide some perspective for general and universal truths about violence: goal-oriented violence, struggles for recognition, the polarity of us versus. them, mimetic desire, tension between morality and politics, and barbaric human nature. Being able to explain the phenomenon of violent discrimination does not provide a solution to it.

The solution to violent discrimination seems to involve being pro-active. By installing "lightning rods", growing aggression and anger can be vented in responsible ways to prevent uncontrolled outbursts of violence. Open and unbiased dialogue seems to be one such lightning rod. The effectiveness of dialogue does, however, still need to be proven. There should never be a feeling of helplessness that prevents humanity from seeking ways to stem violence. The suggestion Achterhuis makes in this regard encapsulates the appropriate human attitude to violence: it is better to spend energy preventing violence than spending energy understanding it (Achterhuis 2010: 53).

Universities can lead society in this regard rather than mirroring society. If universities generate widespread discussion and debate regarding sexualities and diversity, tolerance and acceptance, then they contribute to graduates being "ready for work" in the sense that they have the skills to be leaders in their places of work, to challenge intolerance, to debate religious ideas and to provide safe places for discussion in their professional and private lives.

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Why do you see my ethnicity, gender and class, instead of my need?

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Imagine going to a place where your intonation, language and style of dress speak louder than your being. The famous story of the Syrophoenician woman found in Mark 7:24-30, reveals discriminatory tendencies seen in the overlap of attitudes to gender, sex and ethnicity. One's first question is: how does the practice of discrimination play out in this story? To discriminate is to create a social discourse through which bodies are accepted or removed, accommodated or rejected, and loved or hated. Back then and even today, this process is played out through the cultural beliefs and practices, which provide the ideological husk that enables certain privileges and practices to be maintained. What makes the story of the Syrophoenician woman more interesting is that it involves Jesus in the role of the discriminator. In examining this story, it is interesting to tease out cultural and ethnic discriminatory practices and the liberating strands underlying this story.

Seeing the woman from afar, one imagines that Jesus ruminated on two important questions: why is she alone and where is she going? Like most ancient patriarchies, the Jews understood that the private space belonged to women while the public space belonged to men. One of the reasons given for such conception of space was the belief that it "protected" women. Protected women from whom? The idea that public space belonged to men while private space belonged to women derived from a cultural practice that regarded women as weak and defenseless. Implicitly, anything regarded as weak has less social value. Such cultural beliefs that regard women as the "weaker sex" who require men's collective protection survive even today. Gender-based violence in South Africa and across the globe is sustained by the devilish belief that women are weak and their bodies available for men's exploitation. One can imagine that as the Syrophoenician woman walked towards the house where Jesus was, she endured the male gaze and the cultural stigma associated with her body being in the public space.

After entering the house and observing cultural practices of greeting, she proceeded with her noble request concerning her daughter's health. "Sir, I heard

that you are a famous folk healer and I kindly request that you heal my daughter who is lying sick at home", she pleaded. In many social settings, a woman's request ends up as a barter with a man's request for sexual favours. However, in this case the woman's body as a sex object is not part of the narrative. Instead, what becomes a thorny issue is her ethnicity – she is Greek. Besides skin morphology, ethnicity is mediated through language, intonation, name and clothing, which become visible identity markers and the basis for discrimination against certain people.

For example, within the academic setting, one's intonation, style of dress and name may be the bias determining whether or not one is hired. In a similar way to racism, ethnicity conceals a cruel practice wherein a particular group is privileged as the inner circle based on subjective categories, while other groups are excluded. Another example is the extended debate about language policy at most South African universities. While overtly the debate is about the preservation of certain languages as a medium of instruction, the discussion actually relates to racial realities in South Africa, in terms of which Afrikaans is predominately spoken by white students, while English is used mostly by black students. Ideologically, those who benefit from strong identity markers based on language, intonation, or clothing fight to keep cultural markers intact.

An important lesson to be drawn from the Syrophoenician woman's story is that ethnicity can be used as the basis for others being given or denied resources, and being accepted or rejected. In this case, the woman requested Jesus, the famous folk healer, to restore the health of her child. Jesus' rejection of her request was most unfortunate. In the story, ethnicity is used as a discursive and subjective reason for denying life and wellbeing. Ethnic categories create the divide of us-versus-them. This goes as far as labelling outsiders in pejorative terms. Because outsiders are different to insiders, they are viewed as enemies or labeled in denigrating ways such as evil, dirty, or less human. Such social categorisation has been practised for a long time; when unrestrained, it can be the justification for outbreaks of ethnic violence. In the case of the Syrophoenician woman, on the basis of her ethnicity she is denied equal treatment.

Comparable practices can be seen in our health-care system, in which income is the factor that determines access to health care. Even when close to dying, private hospitals will not treat a sick person without visible income, and hence be altruistic. The unfortunate part is that owing to historical factors, most of the sick people who do not obtain access to medical aid are black and from an

under-privileged background. Thus in South Africa, in the context of health-care, the issue of income conceals several overlapping discriminatory factors: race, ethnicity and class.

However, rather than ending on a tragic note, the Syrophoenician woman's story concludes in a prophetic liberating fashion. After having been discriminated against on the basis of her gender and ethnicity, the woman claims an identity based on common being. She refutes Jesus' negative labels, asking "Why do you see my ethnicity, gender and class, instead of my need?" It is her prophetic protest that reverses the engrained negative labels. Discriminatory labels will not fall away until we identify their discursive pejorative origins and uproot them. For the most part, we are conditioned to see people based on race, culture and gender, and to overlook their needs. Consequently, instead of asking what we can do to help, our treatment of people is based solely on our understanding of their identity. The prophetic and liberating message of this story is that cultural bias should not cloud our judgement and thereby cause us to miss the Great Commission.

Embrace the rich mosaic of diversity

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Language can be used to empower or disempower, it can be used to exclude or include. Language is a tool to communicate, but there is always a strategy to motivate how one speaks, writes and communicates. Discrimination through language happens, especially with exclusive language. Exclusive language has been used in some Old Testament texts to create identity, but in the process, it has also excluded.

To understand the meaning of the term "exclusive language", it is necessary to look at the development of thinking about language as an instrument. I will briefly discuss this development, especially in the postmodern paradigm and particularly concerning power. Although certain philosophers such as Foucault never used the term "postmodern", and in fact Foucault insisted that he should not be understood within any kind of paradigm, his thoughts were part of a paradigm shift that took place following modernity and post-structuralism.

According to Foucault (1977, 1979, 1984), everything that we attempt to understand continuously and systematically configures connections with power and suppresses them into something else. In the process of understanding, we are misled by these configurations and the masking of power. All forms of knowledge create and interpret, whilst participating in reality from a certain context and tradition. Therefore, no form of knowledge can be seen as strictly exploratory and documentary. Power has never arrived and is never completed, but continues indefinitely. In essence, Foucault sees power as the relations between persons, where one person affects the other's conduct.

Bourdieu (1991) sees language as not just a system for communicating but also as an instrument of power. A person's relational position in a field or social space determines his or her language. For example, a particular accent can reveal an individual's origins. This means that the relevant social paradigm determines whose opinion is accepted as reliable, who can be listened to, who may ask questions and who may not. Through forms of rational depiction, with signs and symbols, language acts as an instrument of power. Bourdieu (1995: 343) also refers to the effect that the abuse of power has on language: "The same intention

of autonomy can in effect be expressed in opposite position-takings (secular in one case, religious in another) according to the structure and the history of the powers against which it must assert itself."

The problem of legitimacy is of special interest to Lyotard. Keane explains it as the process "by which every particular language game seeks to authorize its 'truth', 'rightness' and (potential) efficacy – and therewith its superiority over others" (Keane 1992: 85). Every utterance in a language game should be understood as a move with or against other players, and these language games are always rooted in matters of power: "power here understood as the capacity of actors willfully to block or to effect changes in speech activities of others". Keane classifies these language games as "definite social practices", in the sense that they aim to produce, reproduce or transform forms of social life.

Dews (1984: 40), referring to Foucault, says that "normative thought can only operate in the interest of power". Perdue (2005: 239) quotes Foucault, saying: "There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations." According to Foucault, reason will always exclude and will only selectively include. Reasoning will be authentic when it succeeds in not excluding, but where the other (the historically minimised) segments of truth are realised, recognised and included.

Exclusive language will thus be the discourse used in certain circumstances to strengthen a certain group's identity and to empower it; to legitimise the group's conduct, behaviour and claims, and in the process to exclude other groups. It is imperative to note that exclusive language is not always uttered speech or language of an emphatic nature, but can also involve what has not been said. Exclusive language can often be seen in what is underplayed or what is clearly left out of narration.

Several Old Testament studies have looked at identity-finding in Israel. Jonker (2010: 600) says, inter alia, that "texts are not mere reflections of well-defined identities, but are rather part of ongoing identity negotiation processes. This applies pertinently to texts originating in contexts of transition, such as the post-exilic period under Persian rule in Yehud." Israel needed to find an identity after the Babylonian exile. To this end, the people had to rely on their collective memory. Before the exile, their identity was unproblematic because Judah had its own kingdom.

Most of the studies concerning Judah's identity-finding in the Second Temple era reveal that the nation was confused and in disarray after the exile; by distancing themselves from the "other" (whether the "other" referred to other nations or to other ideologies (sects) within Judaism), the people attempted to create an identity for themselves. This particular period was a time when a nation with diverse ideologies was seeking identity. Most sought it by using exclusive language; very few attempted it by using inclusive language. Old Testament books such as 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah are examples of books with exclusive language.

Israel's universal exclusivity was mostly concerned with the preservation of Israelite identity. There are also inclusive texts in the Old Testament, which act as contra-texts against the master-narrative. Inclusive Old Testament texts protest against the universal exclusivity of Israelite identity. Most scholars agree, for example, on the inclusiveness of the book of Ruth. Cohn (2014: 163) says that Ruth is: "... a quiet, domestic tale in which tolerance and openness flourish, and no one says a mean word ... a Moabite widow is transformed into a proper Israelite matron ... Ruth offered a counterview to the more chauvinistic perspectives in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah ... Ruth made a claim for a shift in the national memory to undergird a wider Israelite identity."

Deutero- and Trito-Isaiah, as well as Malachi, are books that can also be seen as inclusive. The "Other" in the book of Jonah is the city of Nineveh; this book has an inclusive tone where power was exclusively left to YHWH. Inclusive texts were not only in the minority, but also appear to be contra-texts, polemically directed against the major texts, that were interspersed with exclusive language.

Every community uses exclusive language in certain circumstances to strengthen the group's identity and to empower its members, to legitimise the group's conduct, behaviour and claims, and to exclude other groups in the process. A question that might be asked is whether it is wrong for a confused nation to create an identity for itself. The answer will be negative in most contexts. The problem arises when the nation excludes others from God's "salvation" and love by believing that only its members possess the truth and that they are the only ones worthy of His grace.

The concept of "exclusive language", or "power discourses", that was named by post-modern philosophers has been used spontaneously through the ages; we could say that it is part of being human. History also shows that whenever people find themselves in a position of power they tend to abuse that power. South

Africa is no exception. What needs to be done to be truly democratic without discriminating, and what language should be used? How can a truly democratic identity be created in a country with such diversity? An inclusive discourse might be the only way to contradict exclusive language and discrimination.

Inclusive language is filled with respect. An inclusive discourse says that everyone is accepted with his or her own background through mutual respect and with no harm to the other. This respect is empowering without being overpowering; it grants equal opportunities and respect without attempting to equalise. Everyone's identity must be cherished in a mosaic of diversity, without trying to force a certain culture or behaviour onto another. The basic requisite for mutual respect is to respect and to value the fact that everyone has an opinion, which creates a rich mosaic of differences. It goes beyond mere acknowledgement of difference; it means treating difference with respect, not trying to level away all difference. Van Den Hoogen (2011: 145) says that these are actions of religious people, derived from a living relationship with the living God, and that these people "live differently, and therefore speak differently". "A new life", he says, "entails a new language game".

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Faith diversity at UP: Non-theological arguments

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A good question to test the intentions with "managing" diversity, is to ask: *Is the objective to have one way of "handling" diversity, or will there be a diversity of ways of being and living?*

Another question exposes an often-unacknowledged assumption of our time: *Why is it that "tolerance" is not applied both to the left and to the right?* Uncomfortable as the *left* and *right* (or the *liberal* and *conservative*) labels are (but employing them, and *tolerance*, as shorthand here, just for the moment), this question touches on sensibilities that have shifted within societies. When *conservatives* control societies, the *liberal* plea is always for greater accommodation of *non-conservative ideas and persons*. However, when *liberals* control societies, that same accommodation is often not afforded to *non-liberal ideas and persons*. The strong sense, in societies controlled by *liberals*, is that we have arrived (or that a pinnacle of history has now been reached), and therefore any dissent has to be silenced, be that by means of social pressure (on social media, in corporate policies, etc.) or through laws.

This reflex is distinctly *illiberal*. It shows only superficial commitment to the core ideals of liberalism: the open contestation of all ideas (including *especially* those held to be abhorrent) and of all persons (*ditto*).

To put my proverbial cards on the table: I lean towards the liberal (for metaphysical, philosophical and political reasons), in the classic sense of strongly favouring the maximum freedoms (of thought, speech, movement, etc.) of everyone. The latter includes those who do not afford others such freedoms – traditionally the *right*, but these days, as I say, also the *left* (to employ one last time these uncomfortable labels).

Therefore, the illiberal, that is: oppressive tendencies inherent to any group in power, must by such classical liberalism be identified – as I try to do here – and opposed.

This is even more true within a university, because openness within universities is a barometer of, and influences what happens in this regard within, broader society. The university is an institution that thrives in a truly (rather than

feigned) liberal (again, in the classic sense, i.e. open) environment, but withers in any other type of environment.

As an instance within the University of Pretoria: the circulated material which invited participation in this project, employs some assumptions of the past decades on religion. These suppositions about a secular university, which are now dated, includes (i) that *secular* implies *a-religious* (which is historically inaccurate), (ii) that an a-religious position implies a faith-free position (which is false, akin to claims to objectivity, or more simply, comparable to the claim that one speaks without an accent; in reality, *religionlessness* is as much a position of faith on faith as any other), and (iii) that a secular or a-religious position is a neutral stance taken within democratic societies (which it clearly is not; a secular or a-religious standpoint is by definition an actively taken position on religion, at times even enforced by the armed apparatus of the state, e.g. currently in France, which is one of the democracies on which many others have historically been modelled).

As the next point, the circulated material that invited participation in this project, somehow sets religious tolerance as a positive goal. Whereas religious *in*tolerance is inherently impious (and often self-defeatingly anti-religious), defining the goal as *religious tolerance* automatically casts religion within the category of the problematic (which attracts the forbearance of, perhaps, "Ag, nou tóé dan nou ôk maar"), which religion is not.

Further to explain the latter: rather than a uniquely challenging phenomenon, religion is (i) as fully natural as eating, painting, sex, sport, buying and selling are; (ii) as much an evolutionary necessity as language, technology, social bonds and more are; and (iii) as much a part of everyday life as reading, clothing oneself, watching the news or calling a family member are.

Seeing religion as a special case, distinct to the extent that it has to be subject to special measures, is hence unmerited. The mere fact that religion constitutes virtues and acts related more explicitly to the metaphysical than others, cannot, therefore, render it suspect. On a mundane level, all human acts are implicitly filled with the metaphysical, alternatively with the metaphysical-like, which are commonly learnt beliefs as accepted expectations that require no proof. The latter is by no means a confessional point, but is a phenomenological characteristic of daily living.

It is therefore more natural to describe religion as an ordinary expression of humanity.

The term "spirituality" is often used in journalism, for instance, to indicate something akin to religion. This however (probably unintendedly) creates the impression that religion is by definition esoteric, ephemeral, individualist and superficial. A less loaded term is therefore required – one which would reflexively *also* include atheist, agnostic and anti-religious orientations of faith on faith, along with other religiosities found within society. (To be sure, the atheist, agnostic and anti-religious orientations must be afforded continued status of normality, although not in the contrived senses mentioned in (i) to (iii) six paragraphs above, as the world in our time becomes demographically speaking more religious and more conservatively religious. The robust religiosity associated with the latter trends is seldom appreciative of atheist, agnostic and anti-religious orientations of faith on faith.

Possible terms to consider in the place of "religious tolerance" include "religiously open" and "diversely-religiously affirming".

On a related matter of searching for satisfactory terminology: unreflectively using the terminology of equality or non-discrimination in religious expressions can lead to a false idea of consensus. Do we at UP, in our operative distinctions, defer to political correctness *or* to substantive fairness; to exclusive liberalism *or* to inclusive liberalism; to sameness *or* to equality; to values *or* to virtues? (Values are habitually approximated by the language of feelings, *versus* the language of virtues, which relate to groundedness – with this being a central contestation within the currently dawning post-secularity in various parts of the world. Values as used in popular debate often constitute immanently changeable identity markers, which easily function as instruments of rhetorical power. Virtues are deeply held and critically constituted ideals of service within humanity. The latter should therefore be preferred in academic circles.) Do we aim at easy public relations *or* at being true to human relations? (The circulated material which invited participation in this project shows a preference for the latter.) Do we accede to setting religion aside from other matters of life, or do we acknowledge the interrelatedness of these matters? (The circulated material shows a preference for the latter.)

In closing, to clarify two aspects of the distinctions drawn above:

Exclusive liberalism is the *faux liberalism* that tends reflexively to exclude religion from public life, which public life would then comprise public universities too. Inclusive liberalism, on its part, accepts that religion is as much a part of human life as is any other, and therefore affords matters of faith no special

status or position (be that – to trace historically the possibilities – of privilege or exclusion or marginalisation).

In popular, populist or faux liberalism, *sameness* and *equality* are often conflated. However, when *equality* becomes *sameness*, diversity is suppressed.

Centralisation and forbidden sex[1]

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The article concerns two issues: the debate about the democratisation of holiness in the Holiness Legislation (H) and the interpretation of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13.

Until recently, a substantial number of scholars working on Leviticus 17-26 have presented the call to holiness (Lev. 19: 2; 20: 7 and 26) in the parenetic frame of H in a very positive light. Scholars such as Kugler (1997 n.50), Bibb (2009: 2), Artus (2013: 172), Hieke (2014b: 613) and Kamionskowki (2018: iv) refer to the "democratisation" of holiness. They all understand the call to holiness in a very positive light, as a process of empowerment. The ordinary addressee could strive for something that previously only priests were able to attain.

A recent PhD dissertation by Rhyder (2018, published in FAT in 2019) questioned these positive portrayals of holiness. She interprets the call to holiness as hegemonic by reading it through the lens of cult centralisation. This article draws on Chapter 5 of her dissertation, entitled "Holiness as hegemony", in which a number of essential arguments are made, which can be summarised as follows. First, some scholars (e.g. Wenham 1979: 265, Hieke 2014b: 703) argue that the way that addressees can strive for holiness is by embracing specific ethical prescriptions in everyday life, including the Ten Commandments, caring for vulnerable people and respecting certain sexual taboos. Rhyder understands this concern for regulating daily life as a form of "conventionalism", a concept she takes from Adorno and which is for her "a trait of authoritarianism" (Rhyder 2018: 302). Rhyder does not believe that such aspirations to become holy mean that ordinary people could become equal to priests. A text such as Leviticus 22: 8-9 clearly shows that a higher standard is expected of priests, who may not eat animals that have died of natural causes, something ordinary Israelites were permitted to do.

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1   This summary is the English abstract of an Afrikaans article published in *Litnet Akademies (Godsdienswetenskappe)* 18(1). The title of the original Afrikaans article is: 'Sentralisering en verbode seks'. The article and bibliography can be found here: https://www.litnet.co.za/sentralisering-en-verbode-seks/

Secondly, Rhyder engages with H's parenetic frame and identifies two rhetorical strategies: *othering* and *standardisation*. Othering is especially clear in texts such as Leviticus 18:24-30, where the previous inhabitants of the land are portrayed as sexual perverts who transgressed all the sexual taboos listed in Leviticus 18. For this reason, the land spat them out. These others are not to be allowed to influence Israel. Furthermore, regarding the rules for right eating in verse 25, Rhyder identifies the strategy of *standardisation*, in terms of which the Israelites' diet is standardised "in accordance with a shared central authority" (Rhyder 2018: 316).

A third rhetorical strategy identified by Rhyder (2018: 317-320) is what she calls "collective loyalty". She identifies this strategy in Leviticus 19, which is about "their ability to show loyalty to one another" (Rhyder 2018: 320). The identified strategies all focus attention on the central sanctuary, because it "consolidates the authority of the central authority of law and sanctuary, along with the interests of those whose place is at the apex of hierarchy" (Rhyder 2018: 324). Addressees are solicited or co-opted to centralise power in the cult through their ethical conduct.

Another question to ask is: who was likely to profit from such a centralisation project? The most obvious answer is the priests, but who else was likely to benefit from the centralisation strategy when the text is read in the context of the Persian Empire? If the temple was completed in Darius's time, the critical question is then what role it played in Yehud in service of the Empire. Scholars such as Schaper (1995: 536-537) and Balentine (1999: 54-57) understand the temple as a place where taxes were collected on behalf of the Empire. Any rhetorical strategy for centralisation might then be understood as a strategy in support of the Empire. Rhyder (2018: 350) follows scholars such as Bedford (2015: 341) and Altmann (2016: 182) who reject this idea and argue that Ramat Rahel was actually the seat of the Persian governor, which would have been the site for tax collection, and not the temple.

One might also ask whether the strategies identified by Rhyder could be understood as resisting the Empire or functioning in its service? Could the strategy of othering, in terms of which Egypt is portrayed in an unfavourable light, be understood as currying favour with the Persians by mocking their enemies, as Yee (2010: 218), for instance, interprets references to Egypt in Exodus 2-12? Is the prohibition of male-on-male sex a critique of the Greeks, another enemy of the Persian Empire (Römer 2018a: 217)? However, Hieke (2014b: 679-687) sees the

banning of giving one's children רלמל[2] (to Molech) in Leviticus 18 and 20 as a warning that parents should not allow their children to work for the Persian king, and thus as a form of pushback against the empire. The question is thus: what was the purpose of H? Was the text about resisting the Empire or being loyal to it?

This article therefore focuses on Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13. A number of Old Testament scholars have engaged with these texts, Joosten (2020) and Leuenberger (2020) being the most recent. Most of these scholars (i.e. Römer 2018a: 213; 2018b: 48-49; Leuenberger 2020: 207) agree that we should not apply the modern-day concept of "homosexuality" – since the term was only coined in 1869 – to these texts. The ancient authors had no concept of sexual orientation. Scholars agree that the texts prohibit sex between two men, although there is a broader debate about whether the text is aimed at the active or the passive partner (see Hollenbeck 2017, or Olyan 1994, and Walsh 2001). Many scholars agree that one clear issue in the text is a man playing the role of a woman (e.g. Leuenberger 2020: 227-228). Some scholars (Joosten 2020: 4; Römer 2018b: 53) point out that references to male-male sexual intercourse are fairly scarce in the Ancient Near East, with the exception of Assyrian, Egyptian and Persian texts. The article also engages with and rejects Joosten's (2020) recent attempt to translate Leviticus 18: 22 differently, to mean that a man is forbidden from sleeping with a married man.

The argument then moves on to the possible impact of Persian texts on the Holiness Legislation. In the Avesta in Vendidad 8: 32, sex between two men is forbidden. The problem with reading H as if it was a response to the Avesta is that the Avesta is dated to a much later period than the Achaemenid period, but some scholars argue that the ideas go back to the first millennium (Kazen 2015; Kiel 2017; Dershowitz 2017). The text of the Avesta also encourages incest, the principal prohibition in Leviticus 18 and 20. If the authors of H thus knew of such Persian ideas, they followed the Persians by prohibiting anal sex, yet simultaneously showing resistance to Persian ideas by outlawing incest. Scholars such as Kazen (2015) and Jonker (2019 and 2016) have used insights drawn from postcolonial criticism to explain the possible interaction between H and specific Persian texts. Kazen shows how H and later texts took corpse pollution very seriously, first applying it only to the priests, but subsequently applying such

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2 The word occurs inter alia in Lev 18:21 and can be translated "to Molech" (also spelled "to Moloch"). It is the name of a god to whom children were sacrificed.

pollution to ordinary Israelites (Num. 19). At the same time they rejected Persian ideas about demons. Jonker (2019) compares H with Darius's grave inscriptions (DNa and DNb) and interprets H as a response. Both use terms such as hybridity and mimicry to explain the complex picture of colonised people responding to their conquerors' texts and ideas. The trickiest aspect of Leviticus 18: 22 and 20: 13 is how to interpret them within the context of the Persian Empire.

The article concludes by stressing certain complex aspects of interpreting these two verses. First, Rhyder reminds us that texts are not innocent. If she is correct, then the agenda of Leviticus 17-26 was to support the larger project of centralisation, which would have profited the priests. Second, Rhyder's identification of the rhetorical strategy of othering that is so pervasive in these texts should remind any church that would like to apply these texts to contemporary debates that they are permeated by an obsession with boundaries and a certain "us-versus-them" view of the world. However, the article offers some critique of Rhyder because, despite showing the prevalence of "community solidarity" in Leviticus 19, she ignores a text such as 19: 33-36, where the addressees are asked to love strangers, who are usually understood to be outside the community. Thus, at times the text undermines the intention of othering. The article concludes by saying that although we might wish to interpret texts from H, including 18: 22 and 20: 13, as part of a larger strategy to maintain Israelite identity in the Persian Period by resisting Persian ideas, it is difficult to support such an argument convincingly.

The role of black liberation theology: A refocus on race

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Black liberation theology emerged in the 1960s behind the backdrop of the Black Power movement and various formations of black power and black consciousness movements. Prior to the emergence of black consciousness, African life took a new orientation through Pan-Africanism, the formation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), the civil rights struggle in the United States, the independence of many countries, and the prospect of decolonising Africa in solidarity with the Third World. The change that Black Power brought involved aspects of psychology, economics, notions of beauty (aesthetics), intellect, culture and faith in relation to the challenge of oppression on both national and international stages. Although Black Power met with a backlash from white society and has even been wrongly labelled "reverse racism" and "black supremacy", Black Power was an articulation of self-determination, self-worth and confrontation. Cone (1985: 768) argues:

> The rise of Black Power created a decisive turning point in black religious thought. Black Power forced black clergy to raise the theological question about the relation between black faith and white religion. Although blacks have always recognised the ethical heresy of white Christians, they have not always extended it to Euro-American theology. With its accent on the cultural heritage of Africa and political liberation "by any means necessary," black power shook black clergy out of their theological complacency.

It is this climate that made theology and the liberation paradigm critical in thinking about God and the existential condition. In South Africa the conception of blackness was not based just on skin pigmentation (although that was an integral and critical factor). What was at work was an inclusive definition of blackness in relation to understanding white privilege and group power politics. At the core of black consciousness BC philosophy was a grasp of how white privilege, ethnic categorisation and serious superficial divisions operated to

disempower the oppressed. BC's position was the understanding that power lies in the hands of privilege givers who choose and categorise who belongs, and which class they belong to (this was done based on the interests they (privilege givers) can obtain from any group). Biko (1978: 52) argues: "We have in our policy manifesto defined blacks as those who are by law or tradition are politically, economically and socially discriminated against as a group in South African society who identify themselves as a unit in the struggle towards the realisation of their aspirations." It is against this backdrop that black liberation theology in South Africa emerged; black theology would not be merely a hermeneutical tool but also an epistemological and methodological tool to re-orientate in theory and praxis faith and hope that is participatory in real concrete life. Maimela (2005: 29) argues:

> Black theology, like all other theologies of liberation, is a phenom-enon that should be understood against the social context of pain, humiliation, degradation, and oppression to which people of colour (especially of African descent) were subjected in North America and South Africa.

The pain and humiliation of blacks found solidarity in both despair and hope on the cross. Thus, the cross is not merely a soteriological symbol for the Christian faith, but also a persistent symbol enacted and visible in those who have suffered and continue to be the crucified of the world. Cone (2011: 2) asserts about the cross: "There was no place for the proud and the mighty, for people who think that God called them to rule over others. The cross was God's critique of power – white power – with powerless love, snatching victory out of defeat." Therefore, black theology became an existential reading of the text and a belief in God as the God of the oppressed. Boesak (2004: 56) noted that black theology brought a message of the gospel to our people and in light of their situation. The existential dimension of this form of theology does not evade questions of race and suffering, which is critical in current conditions to ensure that we are engaged in critical and constructive dialogue and in mapping out routes to transformation and justice and understanding the root causes of our struggle.

Cone (2004: 142) asserts: "White theologians and philosophers write numerous articles and books on theodicy, asking why God permits massive suffering, but they hardly ever mention the horrendous crimes whites have

committed against people of color in the modern world." Cone's analysis also makes clear the foundational and complementary values that black liberation theology and decoloniality share, inasmuch as both involve developing one's own epistemology, hermeneutic, praxis and focus. Black theology accepts that colonialism, imperialism, capitalism and institutional racism are critical aspects of the project of modernity and embody the values of individualism. This individualism is an egoism often typified by the "I" that is indifferent to the constant death for those who are on the underside of modernity and history (see Vellem 2017: 8). The aim of attempting to civilise the "heathen", "savage" and "subhuman" who is the pigmented native has resulted in a shattering of the communal African worldview. Western "civilisation" and its exploitative and individualistic drive has resulted to a psychological shift that results in the current, cold and materialistic worldview (see Biko 1978: 106) that necessitates a direct and radical confrontation.

Black theology in the United States and South Africa ventures into the symbiotic relationship between race and class, at least in seeing the historical development of capitalism. Cone has noted that black theology found a friend in Marx for economic reasons. Cone (1975: 39) argues: "The importance of Marx for our purpose is his insistence that thought has no independence from social existence." He asserts (1975: 39): "A serious encounter with Marx will make theologians confess their limitations, their inability to say anything about God which is not at the same time a statement about the social context of their own existence." For liberation theology and black liberation theology, social context is inseparable from thinking about one's existence, faith and current institutions; it measures how far we have come in dealing with race and its continual presence in the world. West (1999: 86) argues:

> The idea of white supremacy is a major bowel unleashed by the structure of modern discourse, a significant secretion generated from the creative fusion of scientific investigation. Cartesian philosophy and classical aesthetic and cultural norms. Needless to say, the odour of this bowel and the fumes of this secretion continue to pollute the air of our postmodern times.

The role of race in South Africa is not new, given that the history of the country has borne witness to intrinsic networks of race and racism in almost all aspects

of the social formation of our current societies and our persistent struggles. However, the battle for a more equitable, inclusive and equal society requires constant interrogation and analysis of our condition to curb malpractice and discrimination based on race, class or gender. Cornel West (1999: 70), writing from the North, correctly argues:

> The idea of black equality in beauty, culture and intellectual capacity remains problematic and controversial within prestigious halls of learning and sophisticated circles. The Afro-American encounter with the modern world has been shaped first and foremost by the doctrine of white supremacy, which is embodied in institutional practices and enacted in everyday folkways under varying circumstances and evolving conditions.

Biko (1978: 96) asserts:

> There is no doubt that the colour question in South Africa politics was originally introduced for economic reasons. The leaders of white community had to create some kind of barrier between black and whites so that the whites could enjoy privileges at the expense of blacks and still feel free to give a moral justification for the obvious exploitation that pricked even the hardest of white consciences.

Both Biko and West are correct in pointing out the vast intellectual and economic impact of race on society, specifically for previously disadvantaged people. However, BC and black liberation theology in South Africa involved a new paradigm: a paradigm that enabled understanding psychological bondage, what it meant to be treated as sub-human, and the pathology of subservience, and specifically its economic implications. Through the promotion of BC and black liberation theology in Christian faith communities, the church and its theology were challenged to be constantly engaged with society. Black liberation theology today requires ongoing engagement with the past and present. Furthermore, black liberation theology and, by extension, decoloniality and decolonialisation grasps that racism is about power, and not just about racial slurs and unpleasant incidents. Cone (1997: 15) argues, "Our theology must begin with the socio-religious experience of the oppressed." This insight doesn't ignore incidents of

racism and discrimination, but understands that such incidents occur because of untransformed structures and because of the system. Today black theology needs to be engaged in all facets of life, including commenting on policy, definitions and acts of racism.

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Rape as an expressive form of sexism, sexual harassment, and gender-based violence[1]

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A major expression of sexism, sexual harassment and gender-based violence is rape. Rape is a clear illustration of ways in which men exert control over women.[2] Different religious-cultural and social-economic norms contribute to sexism, sexual harassment and gender-based violence, which in many instances lead to the culture which manifests itself in rape. The address below is based on research conducted in Epworth and specifically confined to Shona religious and cultural practices in Zimbabwe, but it is certainly just a single manifestation of a global phenomenon.

Socio-cultural context

Within the scope of the research, respondents revealed some harmful Shona cultural practices which perpetuate the idea of rape but is seen as acceptable because of cultural norms. Some of these cultural practices, which are an acceptable norm, are described below; they perpetuate sexism, sexual harassment and gender-based violence.

1. *Kuzvarira* (girl-child pledging): During drought and in exchange for food, the poor family offers their innocent daughter to become the wife of a rich man or a member of his family in exchange for food, money or cattle.
2. *Chimutsamapfihwa* (sororate or sister marriages): When a wife is either deceased or unable to bear children, then the sister of the wife is forced to take her place. This practice is to atone for the humiliation of the wife who cannot bear children.
3. *Sexual intercourse with fathers-in-law*: A newly married daughter-in-law

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1   Adapted from, and expanding on the unfinished thesis of my PhD student, Victor Chakanya.
2   Although this is the predominant view, the opposite argument should not be discounted, in terms of which women exert control over men!

has to have sexual intercourse with her father-in-law before she has sexual relations with her husband. This practice is mainly among Kalanga-speaking people, Kalanga being a dialect of the Shona tribe. This practice is to verify that the daughter-in-law is indeed a virgin.

4. *Muzukuru mukadzi* (female grandchildren playfully regarded as wives): This practice involves female grandchildren being playfully regarded as wives. Female grandchildren regularly sit on the lap of the grandfather, and this practice can result in sexual abuse, and even rape.

None of these practices take into account the emotions, psyche or views of the females involved.

Socio-religious context

Within the Shona religious context people strongly believe in various spirits, such as *midzimu* (ancestral spirits), *mashavi* (alien spirits), *ngozi* (avenging spirits), *and huroyi* (witchcraft), among others. From a religious perspective, one example is *kuripa ngozi* (appeasing the avenging spirit). The *ngozi* are understood to be the angriest and the most feared spirits. They are the spirits of people who were killed or who suffered an injustice during their lives, and who return to seek revenge. In so doing, they wreak havoc in the murderer's family through mysterious deaths and untold misfortunes. Appeasement, which is achieved through compensation, has been seen as the sole remedy in the case of such spirits. If the deceased was a man who was unmarried, the murderer's family must hand over an innocent young virgin daughter to the offended or deceased person's family as compensation. The innocent girl child becomes *mukadzi wengozi* (the wife of the avenging spirit). This practice does not take into consideration the informed consent of the girl. The girl is a hapless pawn in this socio-religious context.

Kurapwa (traditional healing) is exploited by traditional healers to take advantage of unsuspecting women. Some women who turn to traditional healers to help them with issues related to evil spirits that trouble them, are given certain types of herbs and the healers then engage in sexual intercourse with the women, convincing them that healing will only be complete if the sexual act is kept secret.

Other means of perpetrating sexual abuse of women are *huroyi* (witchcraft) and *mushonga*, where medicines are associated with magical powers (Baronov

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2010: 141-145). According to Aschwanden (1989: 474) and Bourdillon (1990: 189), Shona society accepts the notion that rape is inextricably linked to immoral practices such as fertility rituals and witchcraft, in terms of which witches and sorcerers are believed to possess strong magical powers which they can use to mysteriously exploit other women sexually, even in broad daylight. The women are unaware that they are being sexually abused.

Last, but not least, are *kurotswa* (prophetic dreams). *Kurotswa* involves "prophets" who declare that through the medium of dreams, God's spirit has instructed them to take young girls to be their wives. In many instances the young girls in question are members of their churches. According to Muridzo and Malianga (2015: 50), "this is related to the practice of *kutambidzwa* or *kupihwa pamweya* (receiving from the Holy Spirit)". The "prophets" inform the church elders, who then formalise marriages with the young girls.

Language, as a construct of socio-cultural settings, can have a devastating impact when used advertently or inadvertently to entrench male dominance (although using words or phrases inadvertently certainly does not excuse the culprit). Mungwini and Matereke (2010) interrogate the language used when males recount sexual encounters with females. Words used reveal how constructions of masculinity in Shona culture render the female body the object of male dominance. Phrases used to recount sexual encounters include: (1) *Ndachirikita* (I severely thrashed her), (2) *Ndachidhonora* (I gave her a bitter thrashing), and (3) *Ndachibvumburudza* (I wrestled with her mercilessly and tore her to pieces). Such phrases exemplify males as predators who pounce on their prey and in so doing exacerbate expressions of sexism, sexual harassment and gender-based violence.

Socio-economic context

Sex with virgin girls is seen as a cure for HIV (Leclerd-Madlala 2002: 92), or as a means of enabling accumulation of wealth[3], which has increased the incidence of rape. Some men who are HIV positive, and who seek the counsel of witchdoctors, soothsayers and herbalists, are advised by unscrupulous "consultants" that, "... raping minors will increase male virility, cure HIV/AIDS,

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3   Lillian Chikara, a Gender Justice Officer, presented a paper to the Methodist Church Bishop's Workshop in Zimbabwe on 19 October 2019, which cited this trend.

boost business and increase financial stability and even ward off evil spirits" (*The Chronicle* 23 December 2019[4]).

Some traditional healers advise fathers to become intimate with virgin biological daughters in order to receive blessings which will ensure a good harvest. Innocent young girls in some communities in Zimbabwe, including Epworth and probably elsewhere, are married to wealthy men to avert starvation. This is a serious form of sexual violence which has a life-long negative impact on girl-children (Resick 2016). A breadwinner in the home is at times the perpetrator of violence (be it physical, mental and sexual), and this goes unreported for fear of losing the breadwinner.

Conclusion

If sexism is understood as an ideology expressed in men's domination of women and girls, then what has been described aggravates sexism and gender-based violence. While these findings are specific to Epworth in Zimbabwe, they are just one example of what we know is a global problem. The practices may not be

rife in Epworth, but one is reminded of other forms of sexual abuse and gender-based violence such as female genital mutilation, female infanticide and female genocide. Some of these practices are still carried out in countries such as China (Lee 1981) and India (Tandom and Sharma 2006).

Finally, several types of rape entrench gender-based violence, including forcible rape, incapacitated rape, drug- and alcohol-facilitated rape, statutory rape, acquaintance rape, date rape, marital rape, incestuous rape, gang rape, corrective rape, prison rape, rape by deception, revenge rape, war rape (or politically-motivated rape), genocidal rape, payback rape, custodial rape, stranger rape or blitz rape, college campus rape and bottle rape. Each of these forms needs to be addressed and obliterated from society.

Society needs to come together and take an active stand, and hold governments, religious leaders and civil society accountable for not doing enough to eradicate such practices and behaviours.

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4 *The Chronicle* is a daily newspaper published in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

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Ethnicity, not 'race'[1]

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In studies of differences between groups, some anthropologists use the term "race" to indicate difference. This way of differentiating between groups is modern in the sense that the term "race" has only been in use since the eighteenth century. During the Middle Ages there was a notion of three distinct races descended from the sons of Noah: Shem (from whom the Semites, or Asians, descended), Ham (from whom the Hamites, or Africans, descended) and Japeth (from whom the Japhethites, or Europeans, descended). During the sixteenth century the term "race" came to include factors such as physical characteristics, culture and even nationality. The eighteenth century saw the development of the theory of biological evolution, based on the assumption that different species of *homo sapiens* could be distinguished by paying attention to differences in people's physical appearance (e.g. the shape of their skulls, their skin colour and their hair texture), and that such species developed in different geographic regions. The outcome of this theory was a three-fold racial typology, viz. Mongoloids, Negroids and Caucasians. In the Euro-American and Euro-African contexts these distinctions implied the superiority of Caucasians, and in many instances was the origin of racism. Based on their physical appearance, people experience discrimination, as is the case with discrimination based on sexual orientation.

This theory of race was relatively recently rejected by biologists and anthropologists as pseudoscience, due to its lack of scientific credibility. In cities, for example, immigrants often comprise groups defined in terms of language, land of birth, customs, religion and diet, and not based purely on differences in physical appearance, as has happened in certain areas. Moreover, this was the way that group differentiation took place in ancient times. In antiquity, group identity was based on cultural ethnicity. Groups used ethnicity to define and delineate themselves as unique. Ethnicity was determined by characteristics

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1   Reworked version of an article published as follows: Van Eck, E., 2014, Inclusivity as the essential nature of the Gospel. In J. Kok & J.A. Dunne (eds.), *Insiders versus Outsiders: Exploring the Dynamic Relationship between Mission and Ethos in the New Testament*, pp. 57-88, Piscataway, Gorgias Press. (*Perspectives on Philosophy and Religious Thought 14.*)

such as family (kinship), name, language, land of birth, shared myths regarding ancestry, customs, shared historical memories, phenotypical features and religion.

Comparing the different theories of ethnicity with the concept of ethnicity reflected in available ancient texts, the following nine features (supported by examples from the Old and New Testament) can be used as a template in terms of which cultural identity in the ancient times can be understood:

- Family (kinship): in the Mediterranean world the family to which one belonged was probably the most important factor determining cultural identity. The New Testament therefore often refers to a person with the expression "A, son of B (son of C)".
- The name for an ethnic group: in Matthew 15: 22 Jesus meets a woman who is described as a Canaanite; the title of Jesus written on the cross read "the king of the Jews" (Mt 27: 37, NIV); and the Sanhedrin is described in Mark 15: 1 as "the Council of the Jews".

- Native country (homeland or land of birth): the Greeks, Romans and Israelites often identified groups in terms of their country of origin; Simon is said to be from Cyrene (Mk 15: 21), and the woman whom Jesus meets at the well is from Samaria (Jn 4: 7).
- Shared ancestry (and/or myths about it): genealogies in Matthew 1: 1-17 and Luke 3: 23-38 are examples of this ethnic marker, as well as the expression "children of Abraham" (e.g. Jn 8: 39).
- Cultural customs or traditions: the Jews, for example, had particular customs and traditions which distinguished them from other ethnic groups, including endogamy, beards, the tradition of the elders (e.g. Mk 7: 5) and clothing (Mk 12: 38).
- Language: Acts 2: 6-11 refers to several native languages (those of the Persians, Medes, Cretans, Arabians and Elamites) which point to different ethnic groups. The Jews spoke Aramaic and their Scriptures (the Tanakh) were mainly written in Hebrew. Paul, for example, points in Philippians 3: 5 to the fact that he is a Hebrew (he was thus competent in the Hebrew language) from the tribe of Benjamin, and is, therefore, also an Israelite (Jew).
- A shared history (shared memories): the Jews often reminded themselves

- of their liberation from slavery and of the exodus from Egypt (Ex 13: 3; 16; 20: 2), the covenant God made with them, the land promised to them (Gn 12: 1-3), and God's providence during their wanderings in the desert (e.g. Jn 6: 49). These memories served to strengthen and uphold their ethnic identity.
- Phenotypical features: perceivable physical differences served as just one of the markers of ethnicity in the ancient world. The apparently noticeably darker skin colour and darker hair of the Ethiopian who went to Jerusalem to worship (Ac 8: 27) made Philip realise that the man had a different ethnicity.
- Religion: in the ancient world religion was imbedded in familial and political institutions. Religion as a sphere apart, separate from other cultural, social, and ethnic discourses, was inconceivable in antiquity. The Jews had several religious practices which distinguished them from other ethnic groups, such as circumcision (e.g. Lk 2: 21; Ex 13: 1); clean (kosher) foods and purity laws (e.g. Mk 7: 1, 15); Sabbath laws (e.g. Mk 2: 24; Jn 5: 10; 9: 16) and the law of Moses (Jos 8: 32; Mt 1: 19; Lk 2: 22); fasting (e.g. Mk 2: 18); feasts (e.g. the Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles) and religious dress (phylacteries around the head and tassels on their garments, e.g. Mt 23: 5).

Since differences between groups in the ancient world were differentiated in this way, most conflict between groups was driven by ethnic markers. Paul's letters to the Philippians and Galatians, for example, contain references to conflict between two groups. The conflict in Philippians is about the demand of the law-abiding Jewish believers ("those men who do evil"; Phlp 3: 2) that the non-Jews (proselytes) should be circumcised (Phlp 3: 2). The law-abiding Jewish believers argued that people (believers) could only be children of God if they were circumcised ("put ... confidence in the flesh", Phlp 3: 3). In short, one had to become a "Jew" before one could be a child of God. The conflict in Galatians was first and foremost about circumcision and purity laws pertaining to consumption of food. Some of the Jews did not want to eat with non-Jews (Gl 2: 12-13).

How does Paul react to these conflicts? In Philippians, Paul makes use of his own ethnicity (things of the flesh) to resolve the conflict by first stating: "Though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the

people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless" (Phlp 3: 4-6). Paul follows this by stating that these external things, this life in the flesh – things which he previously regarded as advantageous – he now regards as a "loss" (Phlp 3: 7) and "rejectable" (Phlp 3: 8). These things should not create conflict between people, or make one group discriminate against another because one group thinks it is superior.

Today, this kind of discrimination is still rife. Albeit with one difference. Of the many features that indicate cultural identity, one has become pronounced: phenotypical differences, defined as "race", and more specifically, defined in terms of the colour of one's skin. This focus has not only led to unwanted discrimination, but also resulted in undervaluation of the richness of ethnic difference. Discrimination has taken the place of celebration and embracing of ethnic and cultural differences because of a modern and reductionist understanding of identity in terms of race and race alone.

Let us celebrate our differences, rather than discriminate on the basis of our differences – differences that Paul argued are things of the flesh, and utterly unimportant.

To not discriminate: Advocating a nonbinary approach to women, the womb and gender [1]

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Religion has a dual character: a history of being a perpetrator and the potential to be a liberator when it comes to the life and work of women globally. The interpretation of scriptures by religious communities and their traditions has impacted the lives of women for centuries, including their access to education and training, their participation in the economy, and their agency in relation to their bodies and relationship choices. The "three H's" – heteronormativity, hierarchy and hegemony – are the toxic combination that perpetuates gender-based violence. South Africa is unfortunately renowned for having one of the highest rates of gender-based violence worldwide.

However, religion has not been the sole perpetrator in this regard. In combination with binary cultural and social frameworks, it has perpetuated discrimination against women both overtly and covertly. Women's theology, which includes feminist theology and ethics, has demonstrated that binary frameworks regarding gender and sexuality, lack of recognition of epistemological diversity (different ways of "knowing") and exclusive language patterns contribute significantly to stereotyping, and result in discrimination and oppression. Fortunately, counteractive measures are possible that reveal the potential of religion to be liberating.

En route to 2030, when an evaluation of progress regarding the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is scheduled to take place, feminist theology is particularly well-situated to evaluate progress thus far, if indeed there has been any progress with SDG 5, which focusses on gender equality and equity. This takes place alongside growing awareness of the ways in which religious communities can be agents for sustainable development, as shown in the Programme for Religious Communities and Sustainable Development at Humboldt University (Berlin), which is a partner of the Faculty of Theology and Religion at UP.

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1   This contribution is a summary of previously published work (see bibliography).

As described below, rooting out discrimination, and recognition and achievement of gender equality and equity are dependent on critiquing and dismantling the binary framework of gender roles, particularly women's so-called ability to nurture, which is often over-emphasised in religion and culture. This is of course a form of benevolent sexism.

A vast body of research in feminist studies and feminist theology has highlighted challenges regarding women's reproductive health and social inequities, difficulties accessing contraception, women's poorer health, women's limited access to health care, women's low levels of education, women's limited access to education, and finally the economic, religious and cultural factors that impede women's health (cf. Rakoczy 2004; Shepard 2015; Bowers Du Toit 2018, to name a few). The underlying paradigm, which (over)emphasises the place, role and function of women as mothers (or nurturers), is a determining factor. Professional women are still interrogated about how they intend to juggle family life and career (Ainge Roy 2017), and single women still get asked when they will "grow up", get married and start a family. The assumed relationship between women and nature – because of women's biological capacity to bear children – is described by the political scientist Emma Foster (2015) as the "women-nature nexus". This nexus has been instrumental in the development and enforcement of the idea that women have "natural" gendered roles and need to occupy gendered spaces, and that their contribution to the public, economic and political spheres should be limited (Ortner 1974). The automatic linking of women and nature has other inherent dangers. It is a rationale for the determination of femininity, and it reinforces the notion that women have essentialist characteristics. The "unquestioned link" between women and nature leads, therefore, to generalisations about women's experiences and identities, and does not allow for other types of identity intersection, such as culture, class and geographic location. In general, the nexus maintains gender binaries and dichotomies.

Apart from these impacts, the women-nature nexus has had a significant influence on our understanding of humanity's sustainable relationship with nature, and how the relationship is conceptualised and articulated. This is particularly evident in the ways that environmental policies, strategies and action plans have been informed by gendered assumptions based on the nexus.

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Documents such as the United Nation's *Agenda 21*[2] and *Agenda 2030 of 2015*[3] describe contradictory paradigms in terms of women's role in the environment. More often than not in these documents, caring for the environment becomes the primary task of women, because of their so-called special ability to nurture and to care for nature. On the one hand, documents and policies acknowledge that gender relations affect women's involvement in decision-making, but they also make assumptions that maintain gender binaries (cf. Van Wyk 2019). In this regard, any notion of the 'empowerment' of women is linked to the idea that women are closer to nature, because they are farmers, mothers and carers. The problem is that women's empowerment, including the religious perspectives of women, is solely based on their so-called natural ability to nurture, and this has been exposed by ecofeminist theologians as highly problematic (Rakoczy 2004; Pui-Lan 2005).

Another unfortunate and contradictory consequence is 'pronatalism', where women are encouraged to have children, due to their ability to nurture. Pronatalism is an ideology based on the inference that childbearing and parenthood are necessary for human continuity, and elevates reproduction and "the family" in society. Religious pronatalism is expressed through injunctions against abortion and birth control, encouragement of large families, the conviction that heterosexual marriage is the only (or the ideal) context in which to raise children, emphasis on the sole purpose of marriage being procreation, and designation of gender-ascribed roles to males and females (cf. Hadebe 2016; Salzman & Lawler 2012; Cleminshaw 1994). However, the 2018 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report (IPCC 2018) has demonstrated that high population growth has contributed to the climate crisis. In this regard, deconstruction of a binary gender framework is an urgent matter, because it has problematic environmental consequences.

Feminist and gender studies, feminist theology and ecofeminist theology have significantly highlighted and problematised the three effects of binary gender construction in relation to a patriarchal framework: hierarchy,

2 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), 1992, Agenda 21, viewed 29 November 2018, from http://sustainabledevelopment. un.org/content/documents/Agenda21.pdf
3 United Nations Division for Sustainable Development (UNDSD), 2015, Sustainability goals, viewed 30 November 2018, from https://sustainabledevelopment. un.org/sdgs

heteronormativity and hegemony, which together lead to discrimination and ultimately gender-based violence, because exclusion is normalised (cf. Van Wyk 2018). In this regard, the work of feminist theology is incomplete; one might speak of an "unfinished reformation". Although Valentine Moghadam (2015, cf. Van Wyk 2020) has argued that there is considerable evidence of transnational activism – that is, cross-border collective action in the form of advocacy – it is still questionable whether women are truly united in protest against the way binary gender constructions (and hence patriarchy) are maintained. Despite intersectionality – that is, acknowledgement of the ways in which different identity markers such as ethnicity, culture, gender, and sexuality intersect to create varying epistemologies and paradigms – I wonder whether women are able to reconcile their diversity and work as a collective to combat patriarchy. Could acknowledgement of such differences be a critical step to facilitate joining across borders, in families, in cultures, in the church and in the workplace?

It is the role and responsibility of a Faculty of Theology and Religion to participate in breaking down the binary, and to reclaim the liberative role of religion in this regard.

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Old Ways of Being to New Ways of Seeing

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