

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The subject of the ‘rewriting’ of the Bible has become topical, recently due to the numerous challenges that have arisen upon the current Bible. Theologians have exposed the current Bible to a lot of criticism that has resulted in several loopholes, inconsistencies and discrepancies coming to the fore. Given these negative aspects brought about by theologians, there have been numerous calls from some theologians to have the Bible ‘rewritten’. This research aims at establishing the feasibility of such an undertaking in the Anglican Church in the City of Harare.

1.1 Area of Investigation

This study falls within the precincts of Christian History and Thought. Christian History and Thought takes cognisance of the chronology and sequence of events in Christianity. Since these events have to be connected and the sequence bound systematically, the dimension of thought comes into play. Any discussion involving the ‘rewriting’ of the Bible takes into account events and personalities. These personalities who create these events have to be analysed. The dimension of thought helps us explain the ways in which the events which led to the compilation of the Bible, which we currently have, unfolded.

Different personalities such as Marcion had their own canon of scripture which comprised eleven books. Several books which some considered as scripture were not necessarily taken as scripture by others. Different church centers such as the one at Carthage, and another at Alexandria had to decide on which books they were to use. All this confusion led the church into considering the idea of formulating a canon of

scripture, a process which took many years. The focus of this investigation was to ascertain the feasibility and practicality of ‘rewriting’ the Bible, taking cognisance of all that happened prior to the compilation of the Bible which is currently in circulation.

Margaret Nutting Ralph argues that the Bible is not an ordinary book. She goes on to suggest that “it is a library”¹. This means that the Bible is a collection of many books of diverse forms from forty authors. This called the thought dimension into consideration as I investigated the feasibility of ‘rewriting’ the Bible. This also required a well-constituted and well-connected thought pattern in order for one to grasp its meaning. The fact that this book is a product of some forty authors, who wrote at different periods, means that one has to develop well-connected thought forms in order to connect the impact of a “rewritten” Bible on the canon.

The final collection of the various books which constitute the volume which is now called the Bible was also a process which has some historical implications which this investigation sought to expose. The fact that the Old Testament covers a large ground giving details of the history of the Israelites also reinforces the fact that this study could be dealt with better within the domain of Christian History and Thought.

1.2 Justification

Some theologians such as Delores Williams, S. Wesley Ariarajah and Osofo-Okomfo Kwabena Damua have suggested or intimated that the Bible should be read with care and caution. Canaan Sodindo Banana and Osofo-Okomfo Kwabena Damua have come out explicitly with the suggestion that the Bible should be ‘rewritten’. Pikirayi Deketeke quotes Onismus Ngundu as suggesting that Osofo-Okomfo Kwabena Damua

‘campaigned vigorously in his home country, for the “rewriting” of the Bible’². He wanted a Bible with an African flavour. On the other hand C. S. Banana, in Isabel Mukonyora and James L. Cox (eds.), suggests that there is need to liberate God from captivity of culture, and to liberate the Bible from being an instrument of oppression and liberate Christ from the Bible.

C. S. Banana’s proposal caused some furore amongst both theologians and lay people in and outside Zimbabwe. According to J. L. Cox, in I. Mukonyora and J. L. Cox (eds.), Banana should talk of a new hermeneutic and not a new Bible.³ Theo Naledi, former Anglican Bishop of Matabeleland, is quoted by the Herald Correspondent as saying that people need to accept the Canon which is there already⁴. He goes on to say that ‘rewriting the Bible means that another canon has to be formed’.⁵ In the same article Major Stuart Munemo of the Salvation Army said that it was not necessary to rewrite the Bible because the purpose for which it was written was not to please a particular culture.⁶ Another theologian and church leader who reacted negatively to Banana’s suggestion is Bp Peter Ralph Hatendi, the former Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Harare. Pikirayi Deketeke quotes him as saying;

The Bible is a collection of books from the Old Testament which form scripture for the Jewish church and also the New Testament which were written by the Christian Church. Both collections are sacred books of the Christian church. They are written by divine inspiration—the Holy Spirit, both prompting the authors to write and directing their mind to write as they did. It is this divine–human authorship and divine authority that makes the Bible supreme and unique. ‘Rewriting’ the Bible is an act of questioning both authorship and authority and revelation contained therein. The ‘rewritten’ product will

¹ Margaret Nutting Ralph, And God Said What? (New York: Paulist Press, 1986) p.11.

² Pikirayi Deketeke, “Rewriting the Bible: now what theologians, academics, clerics and the Laity say”, The Sunday Mail, 16 June 1991, p.12.

³ James L. Cox, in I. Mukonyora and J. L. Cox and Frans J. Vestraelen (eds.), “Rewriting” the Bible: the Real Issues. (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1993) p.103.

⁴ Theo Naledi in The Herald Correspondent, The Herald. 30 September 1991, p.13.

⁵ Ibid. p.13.

⁶ Stuart Minemo, The Herald Correspondent, The Herald. 30 September 1991, p.13.

*not be a Bible but an ordinary book – the product of human ingenuity and imagination. A human author can not give the word the promise of the Kingdom of God.*⁷

Such reactions were characteristic of the majority of the people who responded to Banana's proposal.

However C. S. Banana in I. Mukonyora and J. L. Cox (eds.) challenges Christian scholars to 'seriously consider "rewriting" the Bible so that God can be liberated from dogmas that make God the property of ethnic syndicates'.⁸ The focus of this study is to find out whether such a process is practical. Some Christian leaders, such as Rev Lovemore M. Mtsemi, appreciate the fact that the Bible has some irregularities that make it liable to questioning.⁹ There have been accusations that the Bible is sexist, tribalist and oppressive, especially from feminist theologians such as Mary Daly, which make the current canon questionable. Rosemary Radford Ruether quotes her as a radical feminist who upholds the view that women can not be liberated through the use of the Bible.¹⁰ This investigation therefore sought to weigh some of these accusations as I studied the practicality of 'rewriting' the Bible and its impact on the canon.

The other reason for investigating this area was that, when C. S. Banana raised this topic, a number of people, theologians, clerics and lay, reacted differently. Some reacted emotionally in such a way that they failed to evaluate his proposal from a critical perspective. An example of emotional reaction is that which came from Richard K. Nyashadzashe, who sees C. S. Banana's proposal as a sin that can lead God to punish this nation. He says 'let the proposer and advocates of this satanic project be warned and

⁷ Pikirayi Deketeke, "Rewriting" the Bible: now what theologians, academics, clerics and the laity say", The Sunday Mail, 16 June 1991, p.12.

⁸ C. S. Banana in I. Mukonyora, J. L. Cox and F. J. Vestraelen (Eds), "Rewriting" the Bible: The Real Issues, (Gweru: Mambo Press) p.17.

⁹ Rev. Lovemore M. Mtsemi, "Bible not Immune", The Sunday Mail, 14 September 1991, p.10.

repent before us Christians'.¹¹ For him Banana's proposal is sinful and only pardonable through repentance.

Some Christians showed the unquestioning attitude as obtaining prior to the critical era. For them the Bible should not be questioned. Edward Tagwirei Mafuva asks for the reason why C. S. Banana wants to be God's faultfinder. He quotes Rom 9: 20-22, where Paul cautions the Roman people 'but who are you, a man to answer back to God'.¹² For E. T. Mafuva, this is reason enough to stop people from this questioning attitude. He views Banana as a person who misunderstands the Bible.

For some devoted Christians, Banana's proposal is a curse against the sovereignty of God. Pikirayi Deketeke quotes Paul Ngwerume of Mabvuku as saying C. S. Banana's proposal can be equated to 'the Satanic Verses' written by Salman Rushdie and condemned by the Muslim community as blasphemy.¹³ Jan Jonker also exhorts C. S. Banana to repent. He says 'it is never too late to change, but some day it may be too late to be sorry'.¹⁴ This shows the level at which most Christians saw Banana's proposal as a sin against God. Most of these people are not theologians; hence issues to do with the compilation of the Bible are not important to them. They simply take the Bible as it is and according to the interpretation which they get from their leaders.

Considering such sentiments and mixed feelings amongst several Christian believers, it became worthwhile to investigate what the Christian believers in the City of Harare think

¹⁰ Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God –Talk*, (London: SCM Press, 1983) p.228.

¹¹ Richard K. Nyashadzashe, "Why Not Remain Silent?" *The Sunday Mail*, 20 July 1991, p.11.

¹² Edward Tagwirei Mafuva, "Accept Defeat and Be a Hero", *The Sunday Mail*, 28 July 1991, p.13.

¹³ Paul Ngwerume, in Pikirayi Deketeke, "Rewriting the Bible: now what theologians, academics, clerics and the laity say", *The Sunday Mail*, 16 June 1991, p.12.

about this subject. The secondary focus of this study was to investigate the attitude of the people under study towards this proposal as well as to find out the impact of such a 'rewritten' Bible on the canon of scripture.

1.3 Objectives

Given the background of this study which has been characterised by several debates on whether to 'rewrite' or not to 'rewrite' the Bible, it follows that this investigation had the broader aim of establishing the practicality and feasibility of the process as well as the methodology to adopt in 'rewriting' the Bible. With this established this study aimed at investigating the:

- (a) formation of the existing canon of scripture and its closure;
- (b) possibility and relevance of coming up with a new canon which:
 - (i) remains true to the Christian teaching
 - (ii) takes cognisance of God's interaction with people in different cultures;
- (e) possibility of creating a universal Bible and its impact on the canon.

It was also my aim that once these areas were thoroughly investigated the results would make a contribution towards this on-going debate on the subject of 'rewriting' the Bible. This study will, therefore, proffer the opinions of the people under study towards C. S. Banana's proposal. This is important since the same exercise has not been done previously. Only isolated people have reacted as individuals without a comprehensive investigation being carried out in a particular denomination.

1.4 Research Methodology

¹⁴ Jan Jonker, "The Bible Needs No Rewriting", The Herald, 23 August 1991, p.4.

This study was carried out through the use of a variety of different ways of gathering and analysing information. I used the secondary as well as the primary methods of gathering information, as discussed below.

1.4.i Secondary Sources

One way through which I gathered information in this study was to make use of available literature in local libraries. This helped in finding out the contribution of other theologians in this area. Libraries also helped in providing the background information to this study as well as the background, which facilitated the production of the Bible as we have it today. The growth and formulation of the current canon can also be researched from available literature in libraries.

1.4.ii Interviews and Questionnaires

The other method that I used in collecting information was through conducting interviews as well as giving out questionnaires which people completed. The questions in the questionnaires and the interview sheets were the same so that even those people who were illiterate were able to react to the same questions which the literate were reacting to through writing. Questionnaires were useful only to those people who could read and write; hence it was only such people who used them.

In the event of coming across some people who could not read and write, in the random sampling, I interviewed them using a language that they understand which was either English or Shona. I also used the same questions as those on the questionnaire. I recorded such interviews on audiotape. The questionnaire and the interview sheets were in both English and Shona, languages that are used in the city of Harare parishes. This meant that

no one was segregated on the basis of illiteracy or because of a language barrier except in the event that they spoke any other language other than the two given above.

In places where I could visit, I administered questionnaires and had interviews in those cases where the person involved could not write or when they were illiterate. In some cases some people felt bad about responding in a way that could make them appear to be unchristian. In this case they would end up saying what was not on their heart, whereas when they wrote their reactions down they felt free to express themselves in the most truthful and authentic way. It was my aim to encourage the people in this research to be as open as they could without fearing that they would be labeled unchristian. I made it clear that this was a purely academic exercise which was not meant to establish who was a true believer and who was an unbeliever, but to establish their feelings towards 'rewriting' the Bible as well as its impact on the canon.

Given the surface area of the city of Harare, I visited every parish to administer the questionnaires as well as to carry out the interviews. The City of Harare is comprised of high, middle and low-density churches. Considering this situation the composition of these churches is also different, which made it imperative for me to visit all the Anglican churches in the City of Harare, so that I could get a true reflection of these Christians with regard to the subject that was under research.

I used random sampling in choosing the people who were to respond to the questionnaires as well as the interviews. I also considered equitable gender, race and age distribution. In all the places, I managed to select one person from each ecclesiastical division. This person had to be a mature man or woman or a young adult aged from eighteen or beyond who fell within the bracket of young adults in the Anglican Church in

Harare. I also administered some questionnaires and carried out some interviews with members of the clergy. Some of these clergy are in charge of huge parishes. Some of them are retired Bishops as well as sitting Bishops. However, whatever their position, their input into this research was vital.

In carrying out this project I used the theological as well as the historical approach. The theological approach is relevant, considering the fact that the Bible is a record of God's interaction with humanity. Anything pertaining to the Bible has theological ramifications. According to J. Macquarie, theology can be defined 'as the study, which through participation in and reflection upon a religious faith, seeks to express the content of this faith in the clearest and most coherent language available'.¹⁵ In this case, the Bible as we have it today deals with people's faith. It is the canon of scripture available; therefore changing it may raise some theological issues, which makes it proper to use this approach in this research.

On the other hand the historical approach is also important in as far as the issue of canon is concerned. Its formation and development are historical issues which can be analysed looking at what happened during the time of its production as well as the people who were involved in this process.

1.5 Thematic Approach

Although all these approaches are important in this study, I also adopted a thematic approach in presenting my findings in this study. There are important themes which needed an in-depth coverage such as 'The Canon and Feminists', 'The Canon and Inspiration', 'The Canon and Homosexuality' as well as 'The Canon and Slavery'. An

understanding of such themes is necessary for one to be able to accept or reject the need for a new canon.

1.6 Literature Review

The Bible has become a source of several controversial discussions depending on whom the people involved in the discussion are. Biblical criticism has also raised a number of questions, which are yet to find solutions. All sorts of good and bad things have been said with regards to this book. This research concentrated on the criticism raised by Feminists and homosexuals against the current Bible. To a large extent this research was also influenced by C.S. Banana's proposal to rewrite the Bible. This proposal is found in a book edited by I. Mukonyora, J .L Cox and F. J. Vestraelen entitled, "Rewriting" the Bible: the real issues.

In this work C. S. Banana's proposal entitled, *The Case for a New Bible* is given coverage and some responses from members of the Department of Religious Studies and Philosophy of the University of Zimbabwe. This proposal came as result of the presentation of a paper on the 6th April 1991 at Hatfield, Harare on the task of African (third world) theologians as regards the Middle East question of war and violence, between Israel and Palestine¹⁶. In this proposal Banana, is trying to provide an answer to the complex problem obtaining in the Middle East. His suggestion is that the problem is the Bible which according to him needs some certain degree of liberation. He therefore makes strong suggestions regarding the areas which he wished should be changed so as to provide for peace in this turbulent part of the world. Banana talks about "liberating the Bible from captivity of culture"¹⁷. The assumption here is that the Bible having been

¹⁵ J. Macquarie. Principles of Christian Theology. (London: SCM Press, 1966) p.1.

¹⁶ I. Mukonyora, J.L Cox & F. J. Vestraelen (Eds), "Rewriting" the Bible: the real issues, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1993, px

¹⁷ Ibid p17

produced in Israel carries with it the cultural baggage of that place. His arguments cover the following specific areas;

- *the need to liberate the Bible from culture specific world views;*
- *how the Bible has been and continues to be used as an oppressive instrument;*
- *a short review of the origin and development of the Christian Bible;*
- *What a de-mythologised , liberated Bible might mean for humanity today; and*
- *Is Christ the product of the Bible or the Bible the product of Christ?*¹⁸

In raising these areas, Banana's conviction is that the current Bible is faulty and therefore needs some kind of correction, in order to make it universal. However Banana goes out of his way raising questions related to the issues referred to above, challenging the whole idea of calling certain places 'Holy' and others 'profane', as well as calling other people 'chosen' . Banana seeks to prove that, that is the answer to the problems in the Middle East, because the 'Chosen' people will always want to conquer pieces of land which is 'promised land' to them.

Banana also contends that the Bible as it is has been used to oppress and subjugate women for many centuries. He points out that "the Bible has been and continues to be used to relegate women to a second class status in society, overlooking the liberating themes in the gospels in favour of the neo-legalism of Paul"¹⁹. Given this scenario Banana finds the answer to the perennial denial by some mainline churches to ordain women to the Holy Orders. Certain scriptures which are oppressive in Banana's eyes have been referred to and continues to be referred to in order to keep women out of this ministry which they form the majority of the followers.

Given Banana's proposal, the Department of Religious Studies Classics and Philosophy (RSCP) of the University of Zimbabwe, decided to open discussion on this proposal from

¹⁸ Ibid p17

C. Banana and various Lecturers in this Department, wrote some articles responding to Banana's proposal as they saw fit. Some of these responses help to shed light in the direction in which this research took. One good response came from Martin Lehmann-Habek in his article entitled "*New Light on the Bible for today's Readers*". His point of departure is that Banana's proposal is not a new thing. It has been happening since the Bible has been in existence. He proffers the example of Bultmann's program of demythologization, as a classic precedent for a new Bible. This suggestion seems to carry some weight to a large extent. Even though Bultmann did not call for the Bible to be rewritten anew, he in actual fact re-formulated the Biblical stories completely when it came to convey the content of the kerygma²⁰. One can view the whole program and approach as a prototype of rewriting the Bible. Lemann-Habek goes on to give some more examples of situations in Church history which could rightly be viewed as pointing to the rewriting of the Bible. Studies in the development of the canon of scripture as we have it today refer to Marcion of Sinope as having played a significant part in being the first person to come up with a list of books to be used in contexts of worship in the New Testament times. However for him, the Old Testament God is not a Jewish God who incarnated himself in Christ but rather a morally inferior God who created this ugly world with all its evil, injustice and the primitive principle of "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth". Marcion therefore embarked on a process of 'rewriting' the Bible when he chose to create a canon of scripture which left out the whole of the Hebrew scriptures and only considered the Gospel of Luke, which he expurgated, removing any reference to God as related to the Jews, and the twelve letters of Paul. His canon of scripture therefore had only thirteen books.

¹⁹ Ibid p21

²⁰ Ibid p36

Lemann-Habeck also suggests that there are good examples in the New Testament itself of cases of rewriting the Bible. He gives the author of the gospel of Luke as a classic example of rewriting the Bible. He says “the author of Luke’s Gospel expresses it in a foreword that there were predecessors to him who had made efforts to put down a coherent account of the events and the traditions about them”²¹. If Luke was going to write what others had written, it is clear that his was going to be an amalgamation or abridgment of the texts, so as to bring out what was left out by Mark, and remove what Mark may have included, which amounts to what C. Banana proposed in the process of rewriting the Bible.

In the Old Testament, Lemann-Habeck picks up a very poignant example of a case of rewriting within the Bible itself. He suggests that in the two books of Chronicles what the author did was to rewrite the history of the kings of Israel as contained in the books of 2Samuel to 2Kings from a Judean – Jewish perspective. This is quite true because there is a clear similarity in the stories that are reported in the two books of Chronicles and those in 2 Samuel and 2 Kings. The interesting thing however is the inconsistencies that are evident between the same story reported in the original books and in the revised text of Chronicles. The important thing however is to see that rewriting has been going on and there are examples of it in the Bible itself.

Other examples of rewriting of the text suggested by Lemann-Habeck include the two letters to the Thessalonians. It is clear that 2Thessalonians was a revision of Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians, at a later point in time, when the expected immediate Parousia of Christ was delayed. Paul had to write a revised version of his first letter correcting some of the miscommunication that had taken place in his first letter. The other example

²¹ Ibid p43

is that of the Pentateuch. Lemann-Habeck, upholds the view that to divide this collection into five different books hardly does any justice to the complexity of the literary reality. This division ...reflects a long process of writing, rewriting, editing and re-arranging literary books²². This is a true observation of how the Pentateuch came into being. There was a lot of rewriting, re-arranging and editing over a period of time as shown in the chapter of *'The Canonisation of Scripture'* contained in this thesis.

On the other hand J. L Cox comes up with a rebuttal to C. Banana's proposal. In his article entitled "*Not a New Bible but a new Hermeneutic: An approach from within the science of religion*", he rejects Banana's quest for a universal Bible. For him "Banana's call to produce a new Bible which is inclusive of many religious traditions, however, will not achieve the purposes he envisages. Meaningful understanding of the world's religions depends not on rewriting the Bible, but on achieving an adequate method for interpreting the many ways people express their faith in an ultimate reality"²³. A Bible which claims universal applicability will certainly be difficult to produce given the plethora of races and tribes of people that are on this planet. Such a book will obviously run a risk, as J. L. Cox observes, of unduly amplifying the universal beyond the local and hence rendering the sacred unintelligible²⁴. This is certainly the reason why there has to be found a new way of handling the Bible in such a way that the rewriting, if it happens at all, will be at the level of interpretation and not the actual physical rewriting. In order for the Bible to be useful to people of this world, and of other faiths, Cox says the adequate interpretative method which we need to follow is that suggested by Raimundo Panikar, "a dialogical hermeneutics"²⁵. This way of interpreting scriptures calls one to move out of the

²² Ibid p47

²³ Ibid p104

²⁴ Ibid p109

²⁵ Ibid p110

boundaries of their own religion in order to understand the other. If this is done people of different religions are therefore able to relate and understand each other without having to look at each other with suspicion. For Cox, this method of interpreting scriptures will replace the need to rewrite the Bible physically, but interpret it in such a way which is friendly to other religions. Cox therefore concludes his rebuttal by saying that there is no need to physically rewrite the Bible.

Jean. C. Lambert, in her article *"Theologians uses of the Bible"*, also tries to reject Banana's proposal of having the Bible rewritten. He acknowledges the fact that the Bible has been misread, and continues to be misread today, a thing which leads into all sorts of problems which people have raised about the Bible, including the issues raised in Banana's proposal for rewriting the Bible. It is true that the Bible has been used, wrongly to support the enslavement of Africans in the Trans-Atlantic slave trade that led to the exportation of human beings from Africa into some plantations in the American Islands. The Bible has also been used to sustain the Apartheid system in South Africa. The same text has been wrongly used to support the oppression of women, particularly their ordination to priesthood. Given this gloomy scenario, Lambert suggests that what is needed is not the rewriting of the Bible; instead there is need for 'corrective lens'. He says there is need for 'race corrective lens, sex corrective lens, economic lens and culture lens'²⁶. The effect of these lenses just like the lens used in correcting eyesight is that they correct the way we view things. For example the 'sex corrective lens' seeks to correct the misreading of the Bible, which has led to the oppression of women and the wrong thinking that human life should be at all times be ruled by men. This is the lens which the feminist theologians have embraced as they challenge the apparent patriarchy in the Bible and call for a new way of reading the Bible.

Considering all these contributions which have been made by these theologians in the department of Religious Studies Classics and Philosophy of the University of Zimbabwe, the conclusion by F. J. Vestraelen is that the Bible is a book that was produced in a time and context different from us and as such there is need to employ some scientific methods of handling it in order to make it meaningful in this day and age. He suggests that there is need to invoke the tools of exegesis and hermeneutics, which Banana seems to be unaware of when he makes his arguments²⁷. Exegesis will enable one to know the meaning of the texts as intended by the writer or collectors of the Bible and hermeneutics helps to bridge the gap between Biblical times and contexts and the contemporary time. These two tools help to make the texts' message meaningful for people today.

1. 6.i Canon and Feminists

Building on to the list of scholars who have dealt with this issue of critiquing the Bible and suggesting a new way of reading and interpreting it, are feminists. Feminism is a movement that seeks to challenge the position of women as dictated through the patriarchal system which forms the background of the Bible as we have it today. This is a movement which has raised its displeasure on the way the current Bible seems to keep women as second class citizens, and because of that, several cultures have adopted that way of perceiving reality and women are only seen and not heard. There are different categories of these feminists namely moderate liberal and radical feminists. The moderate feminists believe if the Bible is taken literally it creates problems as such it should be interpreted symbolically or mystically. Liberal feminists uphold the view that the Bible should just be ignored, whereas the radical feminists uphold the view that the Bible

²⁶ Ibid p187

²⁷ Ibid p287

should actually be destroyed. Below are examples of feminists who have made tremendous contributions on the theological arena through their writings.

A good example of a moderate feminist who stood out clearly against what she perceived to be male dominance and the subordination of women was Elizabeth Cady Stanton. This lady flourished in the 19th century in United States of America. She experienced all the segregation and oppression as a woman until she realized that the root cause of that was the Bible, which clearly elevates males and denigrates females. Ruth Page in her article entitled “*Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s The Woman Bible*”, suggests that this lady was not very educated but she spent a great deal of her life fighting for the emancipation of women. Stanton’s main reason to desire to interpret the Bible, afresh, came after the realization that the Bible was being used as the ultimate sanction against any change in conditions of women. Ruth Page postulates that “whatever advances women tried to make, in education, or employment, or political rights – were held to contradict the will and word of God as revealed in the scriptures and interpreted by ministers”²⁸. Stanton became convinced that women of her era were viewed as an afterthought in creation, the origin of sin, cursed by God and marriage was for women a condition of servitude and maternity was viewed as a degradation hence women were seen as unfit to minister at the altar and in some churches even to sing in the choir. For Stanton all this was a result of the Bible which was written by males for males.

She therefore advocated for the production of The Women’s Bible, a proposal which was met with mixed reactions but mostly stiff resistance. Some people saw her as a lunatic, suggesting something totally impossible. On the other hand the majority of publishers

²⁸ Ruth Page, “*Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s The Women’s Bible*” in Ann Loades (ed), Feminist Theology :A Reader, London: SPCK, 1990, p18

could not accept her work. The Women's Bible was basically a work of intellectual and rationalist criticism. In her words Stanton says "the object is to revise only those texts and chapters directly referring to women, and those also in which women are made prominent by exclusion"²⁹. In essence what she was doing was rewriting the Bible, in C. Banana's understanding. The end result of Stanton's efforts was to come up with a 'Bible' which had new perceptions and values. Women who are usually degraded receive kindly comments in this work. There is also fresh vision on what is not said in the current Bible. On the other hand Stanton and her group also deal with the New Testament and they see Galatians 3:28, as a prototype of a freedom charter. In short, one can say that Elisabeth Stanton and company opened a path that had not been trodden by many in raising such radical views on the current Bible and going out of their way to revise the current Bible coming up with The Woman's Bible which is clearly a 'rewritten' Bible.

Another woman who also raised challenges to the current Bible is Mary Daly. Mary Daly like many a feminist icon started out a perfectly normal, good little girl, who wanted to study philosophy and religion. However she was frustrated by the fact that at that time, in the 1950's there were no American universities that allowed women to enter their graduate programs in theology. This disappointed her since she was determined to follow her path and fulfill her desires. Given this stumbling block she moved to Switzerland where she resorted to intensive study. She became the first woman to receive the highest degree in Sacred Theology, possible, and with highest honours. Her experience of segregation in the Catholic Church, and her struggle to get higher education in Theology, spurred her to become a feminist theologian of the radical type. Mary Daly has produced numerous books on Feminism, and given many papers, in several universities, in the same area. Her first work is entitled The Church and the Second Sex. In this work, Daly

²⁹ Ibid p18

clearly points out that the Bible manifests the unfortunate and often miserable condition of women in ancient times. For her “it is therefore a most dubious process to construct an idea of feminine nature or of God’s plan for women from Biblical texts”³⁰. For Daly the Bible and the religions that use it are thoroughly patriarchal to the extent that one can not use this book to liberate women. She suggests that the situation of the women in the Old Testament is so miserable in that a woman was considered as an object that belonged to men. In this book Mary Daly also tries proffer a new interpretation of some Biblical readings which have been used to oppress women such as the stories of creation which seem to portray women as the source of evil, and the protagonist of the fall. This is what the church has been preaching having been informed by the creation stories. However for Mary Daly the later creation story gives no indication that the woman was brought into being as an afterthought. She suggests that “on the contrary, it stresses an original sexual duality and describes God’s act of giving dominion to both. The plural is used, indicating their common authority to rule”³¹. This new way of interpreting scriptures is certainly informed by a process of rereading texts, with new eyes. This is what C. Banana, advocates when he raises the issues of rewriting the Bible. Daly also raises the point in this book that the New Testament does not show Jesus as having expressed any antifeminist statements. Striking about Jesus to Mary Daly is his behavior to women. In all the passages where Jesus comes into contact with women, they emerge as persons, often in contrast with the prevailing custom to the surprise of many people including his disciples.

Mary Daly also wrote another master piece entitled, Beyond God the Father: Towards a Philosophy of Women’s Liberation. In this work, she becomes more radical, to the point

³⁰ Mary Daly, The Church and the Second Sex, London: Harper and Row, 1975, p74

³¹ Ibid p76

of mentioning that she moves from the level of being Christian to being a post-Christian. It is in this book that she suggests that women who desire to be liberated have to refuse to accept anything dictated to them by the patriarchal ordered society. She continues with her onslaught on patriarchy, which she says has seriously affected humanity, to the point that humanity's understanding of God is also influenced badly by patriarchy.

For her to call God 'Father' is a clear sign of patriarchy. It is in this work that Daly points out that "patriarchal religion has served to perpetuate all of these dynamics of delusion, naming the 'natural' and bestowing its supernatural blessings upon them. The system has been advertised as 'according to the divine plan'"³². Daly notes that patriarchy led to the infamous passages of the Old Testament and the New Testament which seeks to denigrate women. Such passages which suggest that women are an afterthought have been taken over by the church Fathers resulting in some scathing attacks on women. The church Fathers were trying to interpret the Bible and by so doing further promoted the oppression, segregation and ill-treatment of women. Tertullian informed women in general by stating categorically "you are the devil's gateway". Even Augustine was quick to point out that women are not made in the image of God. Thomas Aquinas and others, using Aristotelian biology concluded that 'women are misbegotten males'³³. This way of seeing women has certainly been inherited by the church down the ages, and helped in rendering women participants in a religion where they are not allowed to lead although they form the majority of the followers.

Mary Daly suggests in this book that women should begin to name things in their own way. She says that previously the naming process was done by males, since patriarchy

³² Mary Daly, Beyond God the Father: Towards a Philosophy of Women's Liberation, London: The Women's Press Ltd, 1986, pxxxiii

dictated that. For her “the old naming was not a product of dialogue – a fact inadvertently admitted in the Genesis story of Adam’s naming animals and women. Women are now realizing that the universal imposing of names by men has been false and partial. That is inadequate words have been taken as adequate”³⁴. This forces Daly to revise the names given to God, and the nouns that we use in addressing God. She therefore suggests that the language that we use for God should be castrated and images about God need to be renamed. The image of God as a great Patriarch in heaven rewarding and punishing according to his mysterious and seemingly arbitrary will, has to be changed. For her to view God as being male, has caused problems. God should be seen as Mother also. She postulates that “if God is male then male is God. The divine patriarch castrates women as long as he is allowed to live on in the humans’ imagination”³⁵. Given this thinking, Mary suggests that the language in the Bible should be changed. She also feels that the anthropomorphic symbols for God need to be changed because that has caused the oppression of women. She asks a question “why indeed must God be a noun? Why not a verb – the most active and dynamic of all? Hasn’t the meaning of God as a noun been an act of murdering that dynamic verb?”³⁶ To these questions Daly is trying to move people away from making references to God which are exclusive. She therefore feels comfortable if any references to God would be such as creator, redeemer, and sanctifier. Daly concludes this aspect by saying that “anthropomorphic symbols for God may be intended to convey personality, but they fail to convey God as Be-ing”³⁷. By so doing Daly is suggesting a new way of reading scripture which is inclusive. Such views fit in very well in C. Banana’s proposal to have the Bible rewritten.

³³ Ibid pxxxiii

³⁴ Ibid p8

³⁵ Ibid p19

³⁶ Ibid p33

Phyllis Trible is a good example of a liberal feminist who has also registered her concern on the current Bible and suggested that there is need to read this text with new eyes. As a Professor at Union Theological Seminary in New York, Phyllis Trible became a noted authority on feminist interpretation and literary analysis of biblical stories of the Old Testament. From the beginning of her career she has addressed the topic of how gender and gender/sex relationships are presented in the Bible. She looks for Biblical themes that have a depatriarchalizing principle, which she admits is a relatively minor theme in the Biblical texts. More than writing books she has also contributed articles in several feminist books. In her book entitled Texts of Terror: Literary – Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives, Phyllis Treble undertakes to reclaim stories of women and give them a new perspective. In this book she reclaims what she feels missing from the stories of four particular women, namely Hagar, Sarah’s maid and mother of Ishmael, David’s daughter Tamar, the daughter of Jephthah, sacrificed for her father’s promise, and an unnamed concubine from Judges 19, who was brutalized in an astonishing violent episode in the Bible. Phyllis says “these stories are offered in a way of a memoriam”³⁸ In these stories Phyllis reads between the lines and highlights the silent voices. She shows another way of rewriting the Bible which happens at the interpretation level again, where she reclaims the lost details and builds up authentic stories giving credit where it is worth to those women whose lives were overlooked as if they did not exist.

In an article entitled “*Feminist Hermeneutics and Biblical Studies*” in a book edited by Ann Loades, Feminist Theology: A Reader, Trible also maintains that the environment wherein the current Bible came from was abound in male imagery and language, which coloured the way in which the Bible has been interpreted over centuries. Interpreters of

³⁷ Ibid p33

the Bible have taken advantage of the male imagery and language which characterize the Bible as we have it today. In her words, she says “interpreters have explored and exploited this male language to articulate theology; to shape the contours and content of the church, synagogue and academy; and instruct human beings – female and male – in who they are, what roles they should play and how they should behave”³⁹. Tribble therefore sees the need to examine what seems to be the status quo, and judge for ourselves whether it is good. In her understanding the task of feminist theologians is to spend time discovering and recovering traditions that challenge the existing culture. This task calls for the need to highlight neglected texts and reinterpreting familiar ones. Her tool of reclaiming the history and contribution of women in the scriptures is a clear way in which she puts into practice the process of rewriting which Banana calls for. When she does that it will certainly result in a Bible, or the interpretation of a Bible, which is not oppressive to women as Banana desires.

Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza is another liberal feminist, who has also written greatly and whose ideas on the subject of feminism and the Bible are very incisive. As a Professor of Divinity she has done pioneering work in Biblical interpretation and feminist theology. Fiorenza has also written widely in this area of feminist theology. One of her works, In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins, is a classic work in which, she also gives a serious challenge to the current Bible. She also maintains that there is need to read the Bible with new insight. Since it is a silent book, with an overt patriarchy, Fiorenza, suggests the criteria of “hermeneutics of suspicion”⁴⁰ to be used whenever one reads the Bible and interprets it. Hermeneutics of suspicion is a way

³⁸ Phillis Tribble, Text of Terror: Literary – Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives, London: The Women’s Press Ltd, 1984, p7

³⁹ Phillis Tribble, “*Feminist Hermeneutics and Biblical Studies*”, in Ann Loades, (ed) Feminist Theology: A Reader, London: SPCK, 1990, p23

of reading and interpreting the Bible that recognizes that it's writers had prejudices and culturally determined viewpoints and therefore takes nothing in the Bible 'at face value'. This means that the reader must always suspect the possibility that the author distorted her of his message to accommodate some prejudices. When scripture is read this way it means that the traditional ways of interpretation will be a thing of the past. Banana's fear of the Bible being used to oppress women will definitely be taken care of since those silent voices will be given space to be heard.

Another example of a radical feminist of renown is Rosemary Radford Ruether. She is considered one of the pioneers of feminist theology for over three decades and is also amongst the most widely read theologians in the world. Her teaching interest is women and social justice in theological history. As a Roman Catholic, Radford-Ruether has expressly shown her disapproval of some of the positions which the Catholic Church upholds such as its negative stance on abortion, and its position against the ordination of women. Radford-Ruether has also written a number of books, one of which is her celebrated Sexism and God Talk: Towards a Feminist Theology. In that book Radford-Ruether, grapples with issues of patriarchy as forming the social context of both the Old and New Testament and how that context has been incorporated on many levels in the life of the Church. For Radford-Ruether patriarchy is like a virus which needs to be destroyed once and for all, if humanity is to live in love peace and tranquility. She maintains that "patriarchy itself must fall under the Biblical denunciations of idolatry and Blasphemy, the idolizing of the male as representative of divinity. It is idolatrous to make males more 'like God' than females. It is blasphemous to use the image and name of the

⁴⁰ Ibid pxxiii

Holy to justify patriarchal domination and law”⁴¹. This is the root of all the oppression that originates from the Bible. For Rosemary, there is need to adopt some critical prophetic-liberating traditions of Biblical faith and use them as one reads scripture. These four motifs are;

- *God’s defends and vindication of the oppressed;*
- *The critique of the dominant systems of power and their power holders;*
- *The vision of a new age to come in which the present system of injustice is installed in history.*
- *The critique of ideology, or of religion, since ideology in this context is primarily religious*⁴².

It is clear that when one uses such traditions, the position of women will certainly change, from being the underdogs, to being people recognized and considered as human beings in society. Women will also begin to participate in the leadership of the church through ordination. The injustice which women have suffered since time immemorial will be a thing of the past and a new dispensation will be ushered in which everybody will feel at home. This process amounts to Banana’s quest for a rewriting of the Bible although at the interpretive level.

Radford-Ruether also raises the issue of language which is used in referring to God. She struggles to come to grips with the names and images of God which gives men some privilege over women. Like other feminists, she advocates for the use of inclusive terms such as “Mother-Father God” when referring to the ultimate reality. She also suggests the use of names such as “redeemer, liberator, creator, source of life⁴³” whenever one talks about God. This is similar to Mary Daly who calls for verbs when talking about God as opposed to nouns.

⁴¹ Rosemary Radford-Ruether, Sexism and God Talk: Towards a Feminist Theology, London, SCM Press, 1983, p22

⁴² Ibid p24

⁴³ Ibid 70

Radford-Ruether shares Mary Daly's opinion that women can not be saved from their current position of oppression using the current Bible. Although she still considers herself a Roman Catholic adherent, she says;

Feminist theology can not be done from the existing base of the Christian Bible. The Old Testament and the New Testament have been shaped in their formation, their transmission and finally their canonization, to sacralise patriarchy. In these texts the norm for women is absence and silence... women remain in the text the other...they appear if at all at the margin. Mostly they do not appear at all. Their absence and silence are not noted at all, since for women in patriarchy, absence and silence are normative⁴⁴.

Given this situation a new reading of the Bible has to be employed. Texts have to be read in a new light. To use the Feminist's approach, texts have to be read with a woman's eyes. Women's eyes are able to take notice of those who are cast aside because of their sex. When this is done, it means that the Bible will not be taken as it used to be, there will be a new Interpretation and women will be on the way to liberation as Banana desires.

There are also several other women who have put their names on the map, in the advocacy for women such as Mercy Amba Oduyoye. As she writes in her book, Hearing and Knowing: Theological Reflections on Christianity in Africa, the feminist group is made up of people who seek to emphasise the wholeness of society as made of both male and female beings.⁴⁵ This category of people calls for the incorporation of women into the community of interpretation of what it means to be human. Mercy Amba Oduyoye goes further to suggest that 'feminism stands for openness, creativity, and dynamic human relationships'.⁴⁶ Mercy Amba Oduyoye suggests that the language of the Bible

⁴⁴ Rosemary Radford-Ruether, Women Guides: Readings towards a Feminist Theology, Boston: Beacon Press, 1996, p xv

⁴⁵ Mercy Amba Oduyoye, Hearing and Knowing: Theological Reflections on Christianity in Africa, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991) p.121.

⁴⁶ Ibid. p.121.

which is chauvinistic needs to be changed.⁴⁷ That process will certainly involve what C. Banana advocates in his proposal to have the Bible rewritten. It means those texts which seem to portray women in a negative way will be removed.

Teresa Okure also attacks the way women were treated in the Jewish culture, a culture against which the Bible was written and canonised. She says ‘the Jewish patriarchal society was one, in which a woman had no legal status, except insofar as she was an object of marriage and divorce’.⁴⁸ Modern views on the Jewish attitude towards women suggest that they were denigrated to the extent that they were believed to be on the same level with animals. With this in mind, Teresa Okure goes on to say that women were generally considered as ‘gluttonous, eavesdroppers, lazy and jealous, devoid of intellectual capacity and living only for ornamentation’.⁴⁹ Such attitudes have trickled into the Bible as the writers were writing and as the canon took shape. These feminists have also accused the current Bible for being patriarchal, and sexist, especially in its imagery, which seems to favour men.

Included in the Jewish attitudes to women, is also the fact that being male was considered the norm. It was counted a daily blessing by Jewish males that God had not made them women. Such attitudes also found their way into the current Bible as shown by the way this Bible is so full of the encounter of God with males although there are some few isolated incidents where God had encounters with women. This has led some theologians, highlighted above, to refer to the Bible as being misogynist in character. With this in mind, theologians such as Teresa Okure have called for an urgent need to correct the

⁴⁷ Ibid. p.122.

⁴⁸ Teresa Okure, “Feminism”, in Virginia Fabella and Mercy Amba Oduyoye (eds.), With Passion and Compassion: Third World Women Doing Theology. (New York: Orbis Books 1988) p.49.

⁴⁹ Ibid. p.49.

imbalances and impoverishment of scripture. One way which she suggests, is to use inclusive language and edit those areas, which are culture specific so that the Bible can be universal.⁵⁰ This is one area that this thesis tried to tackle.

The Church Fathers came later as interpreters of this Bible, which was written from a Jewish perspective encapsulating the Jewish tradition. They adopted the negative attitude which the Bible showed towards women. Rosemary Radford Ruether notes that ‘Augustine and the Church Fathers never denied that women had a redeemable soul. But nevertheless they believed that the female in her specific femaleness, psychic and bodily, was the opposite of the divine. So they concluded that the woman was not theomorphic, in other words she could not image God’.⁵¹ Such a misogynist attitude as obtaining from the Church Fathers as they tried to interpret the Bible shows that the Bible needs to be ‘rewritten’. That which led the Church Fathers to interpret the Bible in such a way should be revisited because any other generation can do the same.

Despite the fact that there are several examples of women featuring in the life and ministry of Jesus and Paul, women have continued to be subjugated even in the New Testament. William Oddie suggests that women were constantly in Jesus’ company, on one occasion even privately to the surprise of his returning disciples Jn.4: 27. Jesus also healed women ignoring the ritual purity laws Mk.5:25-34, as well as the inhibition against touching women Matt.18: 14-15. It was also to women that Jesus first appeared after his resurrection Matt.28: 9-10. Later on after the life and ministry of Jesus, women continued to be active in the Church as revealed in the work and worship of the Pauline Church. St Paul’s first convert in Europe (Acts 16), was a woman and a professional

⁵⁰ Ibid. p.56.

⁵¹ Rosemary Radford Ruether, Op. Cit., p.138.

businesswoman at that time – Lydia. Further examples of women responding to Paul’s teaching can also be found in Acts 17: 4, 12, 34. Women were not only Paul’s converts, but some of them also became his colleagues in the work of the Gospel. A good example is Phoebe (Rom.16:1-5).⁵²

In Paul’s letters there are some passages which undermine the dignity of women while others affirm it. Examples of those passages which undermine the dignity of women include 1Cor. 14:24-35 and 1Tim.2: 11-12. These passages encourage women to remain silent and to be docile in public. On the other hand, passages like Gal.13:27-29, advocate for equality of all people. Considering these two perspectives, progressive theologians suggest that the Gospel of God who is all-loving should be characterised by participation and equality. Most feminist theologians therefore advocate that such scriptures be read and interpreted by implementing the tool of hermeneutic of suspicion. That will certainly give them a new meaning, thereby addressing Banana’s worry about the Bible being used to oppress women.

One of the results of the Feminist movement has been that some denominations have reconsidered their position regarding the admission of women to the holy orders; as such they now have both male and female as ordained clergy. However in some denominations such as the Roman Catholic Church and some parts of the Anglican Communion they are yet to see the sense in this move. In this regard Ward Powers, in his book, The Ministry of Women in the Church: Which Way Forward? , tries to address these issues once and for all. He looks at the place of women in Jesus’ ministry and builds a case against those who suggest that because Jesus did not call women among the twelve therefore no woman should be ordained priest. He begins by acknowledging that Jesus took a genuine

⁵² William Oddie, What Will Happen to God? (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988) p.76.

interest in women, as shown by the way he protected the woman caught in adultery, the way he defended the sinful woman who anointed his feet against the criticism of the Pharisees. He also healed women equally as he did men, to the extent of even allowing the woman with hemorrhage to touch him. In other situations Jesus also treated women as people, as men's equals. To cap it all, women followed and supported Jesus' ministry up to his crucifixion, ascension and resurrection. Women were the first to experience the resurrection appearances of Jesus, as they went to the tomb early in the morning to anoint his body.

It is also highlighted by Ward Powers that Jesus demonstrated an attitude to women which was very different from that of the Jews of his day, he taught about women in a warm and positive way that was completely different from that of the rabbis, He admitted women to his company as disciples along with men, and accepted their support and ministrations⁵³. On the other hand even though some people have used Pauline writings to deny women ordination, Ward Powers, insists that Paul asserts the equality of women as human beings. He recognized them as fellow workers in the giant enterprise of taking the transforming gospel of Christ to a sin sick world. In short Ward Powers, advocates for a re-reading of those passages which people use to deny women ordination. His conclusion is that the ministry of Holy Orders is meant for everyone who is called to such a ministry. This view also helps to understand C. Banana's quest for a rewritten Bible, particularly as one considers the issue of ordination of women which has torn some denominations apart as they differ in their interpretation of scriptures regarding this issue.

1.6. ii The Canon and Homosexuals

⁵³ Ward Powers, The Ministry of Women in The Church: Which way Forward, Adelaide: SPCKA, 1996, p24.

On the other hand people who have a different sexual orientation from the majority, homosexuals and lesbians have also suggested that the current Canon should be rewritten since it treats them unfavorably. They say that the current scripture has been used by Christians to attack them when in actual fact they should not be attacked. Passages such as Gen. 1 and 2 have been cited to silently promote heterosexuality. This area is a new area in which Biblical Theologians are beginning to find the exact meaning of those texts that talk about homosexuality. Because of that reason there are not many scholars who have published in this area. The few theologians who have spent their time searching the Bible to find its meaning regarding this issue include Letha Scanzoni & Virginia R. Mollenkott in their book, Is the Homosexual my Neighbour: Another Christian Vision. In this book they try to search the scriptures which have been used to vilify those who are inclined towards members of their sex. They take each Biblical reading and critique it in order to get to the bottom of its true meaning. The following are the popular passages which have been used against homosexuality; Gen19, Lev18.23, 20 13, Rom1. 26-27, 1Cor6.9-10, and 1Tim1.9-10. These authors consider each of these references on its own and disqualify all of them as being improper basis for attacking homosexuality.

As far as the story of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen19), is concerned they uphold the view that the sin of Sodom, was not necessarily homosexuality. Instead they say that “the story seems to be focused on two specific evils; violent gang rape, and inhospitality”⁵⁴. This points to the issue of interpretation which needs to be changed. As opposed to the physical rewriting of the Bible it will be proper to talk about shifting interpretation from the traditional way to the new way.

⁵⁴ Letha Scanzoni and Virginia R. Mollenkotte, Is the Homosexual My Neighbour: Another Christian Vision, San Francisco: Harper and Row Publishers, 1980, p57

As for the two passages from Leviticus (18.23, 20.13), they suggest that these verses must be looked at as part of Israel's Holiness Code, which includes the commandments not to eat meat with blood in it, not to wear garments made of two kinds of yarn, not to plant fields with two kinds of seed, and not to be tattooed, as well as specific instructions on sexual matters⁵⁵. This is to say that such instructions were given to serve a certain purpose within a particular context, which means that to apply such commands in contexts where there is no Holiness Code similar to that of Israel is misusing the Bible. This also points to the question of shifting the old ways of interpreting scriptures to adopt new ways which are informed through exegesis, and hermeneutics.

The passage from Rom.1:26-7, is also discounted as forming a strong ground to disapprove homosexuality. Letha and Mollenkott suggest that the issue at stake here is 'lust'⁵⁶. They also uphold a view that this passage does not say anything about homosexual 'love', the emphasis is entirely on sexual activity in a context of lust and idolatry. On the other hand the remaining two readings from Paul should also be understood in the context of Paul's time in Greece where it was common for a man to have a wife and a young male lover also on his side. In other words it is a fact that male prostitution was flourishing business on the Streets of Athens and in brothels, where slave boys serviced clients to the disappointment of the city's female prostitutes, who complained that the boys were taking away their prospective clients rendering them redundant. In this kind of environment, therefore, it is understandable to hear Paul speak with such harsh judgment on this issue.

⁵⁵ Letha Scanzoni and Virginia R. Mollenkott, Op Cit, p60

⁵⁶ Ibid p62

On the whole, Scanzoni and Mollenkott would like to suggest that “the Bible does not mention the possibility of a permanent, committed relationship of love between homosexuals analogous to heterosexual marriage”⁵⁷. It’s true that the Bible has no idea of the newly discovered fact that some people are born, with a homosexual orientation. For such people loving their same sex would be natural, which means that those texts which talk of “unnatural acts” may not be used for such people. In view of the ‘Quest for rewriting the Bible’, such people would like to suggest that such reading be revised, so that the difference between homosexual orientation, which one has no control over, is differentiated from homosexual practice which one has control over.

Gerald Coleman, S.S, Homosexuality: Catholic Teaching and Pastoral Practice, also mentions that “while scripture does not speak about homosexuality, it does recognize homosexuality as a sexual orientation as such, since the Biblical writers took it for granted that all people were created with a natural attraction to members of the opposite sex and their genital activity would and should reflect this fact”⁵⁸. In other words one can say that homosexual orientation was not the kind of knowledge which was readily available during the time of the Biblical writings. Gerald also gives a rebuttal to all the texts that are used to attack homosexuals just like Lethan Scanzoni and Virginia Mollenkott. He concludes by saying that “The concepts of “homosexual” and “homosexuality” as a sexual orientation were unknown in Paul’s day. Ancient writers did not know for example, of “our concept of sexual orientation”⁵⁹. If that is the case then there is need for those scriptures which talk about homosexuality to be re-written, in view of the new discoveries.

⁵⁷ Ibid p71

⁵⁸ Gerald Colemann, S.S. Homosexuality: Catholic Teaching and Pastoral Practice, New York: Paulist Press, 1995

⁵⁹ Ibid p63.

Walter Wink, in his article entitled “*Homosexuality and the Bible*”, in The Christian Century, discusses the issue of homosexuality thoroughly and takes the side of the homosexuals by defending their rights. He also disregards all the passages that have been discussed above as being irrelevant to the discussion about the illegality homosexual practice. His point of departure is that the topic of homosexuality should be considered in the context of the Hebrew sexual mores. He agrees that “the bible quite clearly takes a negative view of homosexual activity, in those few instances where it is mentioned at all. But this problem does not solve the problem of how we are to interpret scripture today. For there are other sexual attitudes, practices and restrictions which are normative in scripture but which we no longer accept as normative”⁶⁰. In view of this he gives a list of taboos from the Bible which are no longer considered as such and so ask a pertinent question on why the issue of homosexuality should be singled out when the other issues have been silently put aside.

Walter Wink concludes by saying that “the crux of the matter is simply that the Bible has no sexual ethic. There is no Biblical sex ethic. Instead, it exhibits a variety of sexual mores some of which changed over the thousand year span of Biblical history”⁶¹. With such insights on the current Bible, it becomes clear that people can no longer proceed with business as usual. What has been suggested in the way of re-reading, revising and using a new hermeneutic to interrogate scriptures seems to be the way forward, the context in which is where Banana’s quest should be considered.

1.7 Conclusion

⁶⁰ Walter Wink, “Homosexuality and the Bible” in The Christian Century, (June 5-12, 2002) pp1 – 9).

Given the above exposition, this research constitutes seven chapters, each of them dealing with a particular subject. Chapter Two discusses ‘Inspiration and the Bible’. The next Chapter Three deals with ‘Canonisation and the Bible’. Whilst Chapter Four presents ‘New Challenges on the Bible’. Chapter Five examines ‘Rewriting the Bible: Research Findings’. Chapter Six deals with ‘Evaluations of Research Findings’ and Chapter Seven is the ‘Observations, Analysis and Conclusion’. All these chapters do have a bearing on the subject of ‘rewriting’ the Bible that was under investigation.

⁶¹ Ibid pp1-9

CHAPTER 2

INSPIRATION AND THE BIBLE

2.1 Introduction

The authority of the Bible has become a subject of debate over the past few years mainly because of the way theologians have revisited that which makes the Bible an authority in several sectors of human life. It is no secret that the Bible permeates almost every aspect of life in the twenty first century Western and even African world. Laws are coined using this book. Literature, art, music architecture, morals as well as religion, are all much influenced by the Bible. In the juridical courts the Bible is also used so that the witnesses speak under oath. In other words, the Bible is taken as the final port of call in matters affecting human beings. This book is taken as such mainly due to the fact that it is believed that it was breathed by God. This brings up the subject of inspiration, which is the concern of this chapter.

It is important, before delving into the subject of inspiration, to define terms. The term 'Bible' needs definition since there are different perceptions and understandings of this term. According to John H. Hayes the word "Bible is derived from the Greek *biblia*, which means simply 'books'.⁶² In a general sense, it refers to a collection of writings regarded as possessing special religious sanctity and authority. It is, however, important to note that the term is not always applied to exactly the same collection of writings. For example, when Jews speak of the 'Bible', they mean only those ancient Hebrew and Aramaic writings which Christians refer to as the 'Old Testament'.

Christians, on the other hand, use the same term 'Bible', to refer to a much more extensive collection. They include not only the twenty-four books of the Hebrew Bible,

which they arrange so as to form thirty-nine books and call the ‘Old Testament’, but also twenty-seven early Christian writings known as the “New Testament”. Even if this is the scenario, Christians do not agree on the number of books to be included in this book. Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox Catholics, and some Protestants include in the Old Testament additional six or seven books as well as certain supplements to the books of Esther and Daniel and they refer to this material as “deutrocanonical”. This means that they are books, which are accepted as authoritative later than the other books, after the matter had been debated by the early Church Fathers. Most Protestants want to relegate this “deutrocanonical” material to what is commonly known as the “Apocrypha”. Apocrypha refers to books that are not a part of the Hebrew Bible and whose authority many Christians reject. Some say that these books are good for moral teaching and not for salvation.

Given this scenario the word “Bible” in this thesis I shall refer to the twenty-four books of the Jewish Scriptures as well as the sixty-six books accepted by Protestants. I will also use apocryphal books where necessary. The Christian practice of referring to the ancient Hebrew and Aramaic writings in the Bible as the “Old Testament” and the early Christian documents as the “New Testament” will be followed in this thesis.

2.2 Inspiration of the Bible

Looking at the Bible as we have it today, one will accept that the Bible has gone under a lot of criticism. A revolution has taken place in the reading of the Bible today, which is accompanied by different attitudes ranging from uneasiness, suspicion, doubt and confusion. A number of modern Biblical authors have raised a number of reasons as to why they doubt the possibility of the inspiration of the Bible. In his article entitled

⁶² John H. Hayes. Introduction to the Bible. (Philadelphia : The Westminster Press, 1966) p.3.

“Inspiration of the Bible”, Robert Green Ingersoll puts across fifty five reasons which make some theologians doubt the inspiration of the Bible.

The very fact that Christians are not in agreement over which books are inspired, with Catholics claiming as inspired the books of Maccabees, Tobit and Esdras and Protestants refusing to accept them as inspired makes the issue more complicated in terms of what exactly is inspired.⁶³

Another concern according to Robert Green Ingersoll is that when one looks at the Old Testament one can find several contradictory laws about the same thing and contradictory accounts of the same occurrences.⁶⁴ For example, in the twentieth Chapter of Exodus one finds the first rendition the Ten Commandments. In the thirty fourth chapter another account is given. The issue at stake is that the same person could not have written these two accounts. On reading these two accounts one would be forced to admit that one of them is not true. This also applies to the two histories of creation, which we see in Genesis 1 and 2.

According to Paul J. Achtemeier, several theologians doubt the authority of the Bible because of the numerous contradictions which are found therein. For example, in (Deut. 10.1-5), we see Moses following God’s command to build the Ark of the Covenant, while in (Exodus 37.1-9), we here that its artificer was Bezalel. Another example is that found in Acts 9:7, Paul’s companions heard the voice but saw nothing, while in Acts 22.9, they saw the light but heard nothing. The two accounts of the manner of Judas’ death and the naming of the “Field of Blood”, in Acts 1:16-19, and Matt. 27.3-10 are found to be in

⁶³ Robert Ingersoll, “Inspiration of Bible”, (Internet: http://www.infidels.org/library/historical/robert_ingersoll/inspiration_of_bible.html) p.1-9.

sharp contradiction and many attempts to work out an accurate account of the sequence of events following Jesus' resurrection finds contradictions in one or more of the Gospel accounts.⁶⁵

There are also contradictions of some known truths such as the effect of visual stimuli on reproducing animals. In Genesis 30.35-43 there is a story, which says that Jacob increased both the quantity and quality of his flocks by letting the breeding animals view striped sticks. There is also the scientifically impossible story, which seeks to express the possibility of stopping the sun in its path as it moved around the earth (Josh.10.12-15). Such an act would not be possible scientifically.

The Bible is also inundated with several discrepancies. Some of these discrepancies are historical or statistical. There are inaccurate quotations from the Old Testament by some New Testament personalities. Examples of statistical discrepancies can be discerned in 2 Sam.10: 18, David is said to have killed 700 Aramean chariot warriors; in 1 Chron.19.18, he is said to have killed 7000 in the same battle. In 2 Sam. 24: 4, scripture says David bought a threshing floor for 50 shekels of silver, whereas in 1 Chron. 21: 25 the price is said to be 600 shekels of gold. In Num. 25: 9, it is said 24 000 died in a plague, whereas in 1 Cor. 10: 8 the number is set at 23 000. Another example is found in Gen.15: 13, where God predicts that Abraham's descendants will be enslaved in Egypt for 400 years; however in Exd.12: 41, the report puts the time span at 430 years. Such discrepancies are common in any literature, ancient or modern, but for the book that seeks to be authoritative, this may cause people to doubt it.

⁶⁴ Ibid. p.1-9.

Some historical discrepancies are also found in the Bible. In 2 Sam.24.1-2, God is the one who provokes a census of Israel, on the contrary in 1 Chron.21.1-2, it is Satan. If one follows this story, one will also see that the numbers reported for this census differ. Another discrepancy is found in Gen.1: 26, God is said to have created man as the last thing; however, in Gen.2: 7, the opposite is true. It is the man who was created first. In addition to these, historical discrepancies can be found in the accounts of Abraham's father's death (Acts 7: 4 and Gen.11: 32; 12: 4), and the account of where Jacob was buried and from whom Abraham had bought the burial site (Acts 7: 15-16 and Gen.50: 13; 23: 16-18).

Discrepancies can also be found in the manner through which quotations from the Old Testament in the New Testament constitute a crucial problem. Often the quotation is quite free, and one must raise the problem, if the whole scripture is equally inspired, which text, the one in the Old Testament or the differing form in the New Testament, is the one to be believed and followed? An even greater problem for P. J. Achtemeier rises when a New Testament author quotes not from the Hebrew Old Testament but from the Greek translation of it, which is popularly known as the Septuagint.⁶⁶ This would mean that the Septuagint is also inspired.

In addition if one observes the Gospels, it is clear that there are some discrepancies between reports of what Jesus said and did. This leaves one to doubt as to which Gospel is inspired and which is not. For example, in Mark 6.8-9, in giving instructions to his disciples relating to their journey as missionaries, Jesus tells them, among other things, to take a staff and wear sandals. However, in Matthew 10.9-10 he says they should not take

⁶⁵ Paul J. Achtemeier, Inspiration of Scripture: Problems and Proposals. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1980) p.42.

a staff or sandals. There are also discrepancies in the timing of events which confuse Biblical scholars. For example in Mark, followed by Matthew and Luke, the cleansing of the temple by Jesus occurs during the final days in Jerusalem prior to his crucifixion. However, in John, it occurs among the first events of his public ministry. Even the crucifixion narratives are not without discrepancies.

Of concern to most theologians are the various theological discrepancies found in the Bible. Several theological questions are raised which put the Bible in a situation where its inspiration is questioned. For example, can a God who caused inspired authors to write the sayings of Jesus in Matthew 5: 44 and Luke 6: 27-28, with its gracious attitude even toward enemies, also have inspired the vindictive and almost malicious words of Ps.109? Can the God who forbids the murder of the individual (Exd.20:13), really also have ordered the total slaughter of whole Canaanite settlements, including men, women and children and cattle (Josh.10.28-32)? Can the God whose sympathy is particularly upon widows, aliens and the fatherless children (Exd. 22.21-22) not only have permitted slavery (Exd21.1-11), but also even denied female slaves the seventh year release granted to male slaves? All these questions are crucial in theological study and will further raise doubts with regard to the inspiration of the Bible.

There are several areas and events which theologians have doubted in the Bible. John P. Kealy notes that stories such as that of Adam and Eve are no longer taken by critics as historical.⁶⁷ It is also now doubted whether a person such as Methuselah could live to the age of 969 years. The majority of scholars also agree that Moses is not the author of the

⁶⁶ Paul J. Achtemeier, *Op Cit*, p.64.

⁶⁷ John P. Kealy, C.S.Sp, The Changing Bible. (Denville New Jersey: Dimension Books, 1977) p.5.

Pentateuch. Everything in the Bible is now being questioned and debated in pursuit of truth.

Some of the stories which are doubted include that from Exodus.12: 37-39. It is very hard to believe that three million of people left a country and marched twenty or thirty miles all in one day. To notify so many people would require a long time, and then the sick, the halt and the old would be apt to impede the march. It seems impossible that such a vast number such as six hundred thousand men, besides women and children could have been cared for, fed and clothed and the sick nursed, especially when we take into consideration that 'they were thrust out of Egypt and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any victual'.⁶⁸

On the other hand, it is not surprising to doubt that twelve wells of water were sufficient for three million people, together with their flocks and herds (Exd. 15: 27). Is it possible to believe that God sanctioned and commanded all the cruelties and horrors described in the Old Testament, and also that He waged the most relentless wars, that he declared mercy a crime, that to spare life was to excite his wrath, that he smiled when maidens were violated, laughed when mothers were ripped open with a sword, and shouted with joy when babes were butchered in there mother's arms. Reading the book of Joshua and worshipping God who inspired it may not be that easy given the cruelty obtaining from that book.

Robert. G. Ingersoll also further challenges the authenticity of inspiration of the Bible by posing a question. He says if a revelation from God was actually necessary to the happiness of people here and to their salvation hereafter, it is not easy to see why such

revelation was not given to all the nations of the earth⁶⁹. The question that boggles many theologians is, why were the millions of people in Asia, Africa, and Europe even America left to the insufficient light of nature? Why not a written or what was is still better, printed revelation given to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden? Why were the Jews themselves without a Bible until the days of Ezra the scribe? All these questions point to the nature of the Bible as we have it today and its authority.

It can also be asked that if the Bible is the foundation of all civilisation, of all ideas of right and wrong, of our duties to God and each other, why did God not give to each nation at least one copy to start with? God must have known that no nation could get along successfully without a Bible, and he also knew that people could not make one for themselves.

The other issue that has led people to doubt the inspiration of the Bible has to do with the attitude of the Old Testament to certain practices which in our present day and age would be considered as antithetical to good morals. The Old Testament seems to be in support of things such as slavery, divorce, and intoxicants. Because of all these things, present day critics would like to question the divine origin of the Bible.

There is also the area of science and history, in which the Bible seems to be wrong in several instances. Certain scientific details as well as historical or botanical details are not treated with accuracy. True science deals with established facts. Organic evolution rules out the supernatural and contradicts the Bible. The Bible would say that the sun moves around the earth, on the contrary science has proven that the earth moves around the sun.

⁶⁸ Ibid. p.6.

Indeed Jesus has been caught in the wrong when he said the smallest seed is the mustard seed. Botany has shown that this is not the smallest seed.

Given all these problems associated with the Bible and its divine origin, it is crucial to investigate the necessary presuppositions and matters of fact that must be admitted before the possibility of its inspiration or the inspiration of any book can be affirmed.

Since inspiration has to do with God breathing his spirit and intentions into the written word, it follows that the first presupposition has to be the acknowledgement of a personal God. This God has to possess the attributes of power, intelligence, and moral excellence in their absolute perfection. The other presupposition linked to those above has to do with this God's relationship to the universe. He has to be at once immanent and transcendent, above all, and freely acting upon all from without, within all, and acting through the whole and every part from within in the exercise of all his perfection.

Another presupposition has to do with this God's moral government over humankind and other intelligent creatures, whereby he governs them by truth and motives addressed to their reason and will, rewards and punishes them according to their moral characters and actions, and benevolently educates them for their high destiny in his communion and service. The fact that humankind, instead of advancing along a line of natural development from a lower to a higher moral condition, have fallen from their original state and relation, and are now lost in a condition involving corruption and guilt, and incapable of recovery without supernatural intervention is another presupposition worth considering. The historical integrity of the Christian Scriptures, their veracity as history,

⁶⁹ Robert Ingersoll, (Internet: http://www.infidels.org/library/historical/robert_ingersoll/inspiration_of_bible.html) p.1-9.

and the genuiness and authenticity of the several books should also be considered. The truth of Christianity should also be upheld before one can tackle the subject of the inspiration of the Bible.

Despite the need to agree on these presuppositions, the inspiration of the Bible has been a bone of contention in the theological arena. The big question has been to establish how this process ensued. Some have even asked as to who or what is inspired? Is it the Bible, the authors and translators of the Bible or the readers of the Bible? None of such questions have yet found convincing answers. According to Paul J. Achtemeier,

*to say that the Bible is “inspired” means at least that in some special way the literature in that book owes its origin to God himself, and to the events behind which he has stood, which are reported in its pages, and that therefore the Bible occupies a central and irreplaceable position within the Christian Faith.*⁷⁰

This gives the Bible a prominent and important place in the life of Christians. This also means that this book is authoritative for Christians. However, to say any piece of scripture is inspired means that God continues to address his people through its pages in the present. This means that for the Christian, the inspired Bible means that God spoke not only to their ancestors in the history of Israel, and to the apostles in the founding generation of the Christian church, But also hat He continues to address his through its pages as they read it in public worship and their private devotions. The reason as to why many Christians would like to acknowledge the inspiration of the Bible is that the lives of countless believers of Christ in their public and private lives, in the secular and in worship contexts, bear witness to the continuing power of the scriptures to mediate the will of God in their contemporary lives.

⁷⁰ Paul J. Achtemeier, Op. Cit, p.21.

Although people's lives have been changed by the Bible, the way in which the inspiration of the Bible is understood has wide ranging implications for the way many other concepts in the Christian faith are to be understood. The most natural way for many people has been to turn to the Bible itself and see what it has to say about its own inspiration. Several theologians such as Raymond F. Collins, in The New Jerome Biblical Commentary, point to two Biblical references as the internal evidence of inspiration. In 2 Tim.3: 16, Paul says "All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work"⁷¹. The other scripture that is considered to be the basis of the inspiration of scripture is found in 2 Peter.1: 19-21 which says:

*And we have the word of the prophets made certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*⁷²

Looking at these two passages, one can see that there are problems that go with them. These two readings are talking of the inspiration of two things, which are scripture and prophecy respectively. The question that one may ask is whether the word scripture was used in the same way that it is used in this day and age. Even before one can answer the above question, there is the other fact that even if Timothy says scripture is inspired, he does not tell us how this process ensued. According to Paul J. Achtemeier, 'while the claim is 2 Tim.3:16, that "all Scripture" is "God breathed" and hence is useful for religious purposes, how that "inspiration" occurred is not made clear'.⁷³ This has led many theologians to come up with models and theories of inspiration that we shall look at below. This problem of how the inspiration occurred concerns the locus of that process.

⁷¹ Raymond. F. Collins and Raymond Brown, 'Canonicity' in Brown Raymond, (et al) (eds.), The New Jerome Biblical Commentary. (London : Prentice Hall Inc. 1990) p.1041.

⁷² K. Barker (ed), The NIV Study Bible. (USA: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995) p.1847.

Is it the authors of the scripture that we are to refer to as inspired, or is it the words that those authors wrote down that we are to see as bearing the major share of inspiration? In order to deal with the topic of inspiration, this area needs investigation.

When we look at 2 Tim.3: 16-17, it can be argued that Paul was not referring to the canon of scripture as we have it today when he used the word “scripture” since this canon was not yet closed. Raymond J. Collins is of the opinion that Paul was referring to the Jewish Scriptures although a definitive Jewish canon had not yet been established when 2 Timothy was written. One can therefore argue that since a collection of Scriptures was not yet in existence at the time when 2 Timothy was written, the expression “all scripture” makes reference to only Jewish Scriptures.⁷⁴

On the other hand, Robert Gnuse suggests that the definite article in 2 Tim.3:16-17 should be translated “every” and not “all” which implies a collection of sacred writings, not a canon or official collection.⁷⁵ This means that God could still have breathed his life into those books that were not included in the canon of scripture as we have it today. On the same note, the passage from 2 Peter 1.20-21 talks about the origin of prophecy, not the resultant writings. It also shows the presence of the human factor especially when one considers the word “impelled”. According to P. Benoit there should be a distinction between prophetic inspiration and Scriptural inspiration. Failure to perceive this has resulted in misunderstanding the statements of some ancient writers and this has led to several difficulties.⁷⁶

⁷³ Paul J. Achtemeier, Op. Cit., p.22.

⁷⁴ Raymond J. Brown (et al) (eds.) Op Cit, p.1040.

⁷⁵ Robert Gnuse, The Authority of the Bible: Theories of Inspiration , Revelation and Canon of Scripture. (New York: Paulist Press, 1985) p.16.

⁷⁶ P Benoit, “Inspiration”, in A Robert and A. Tricot (eds.), Guide to the Bible: An Introduction to the Holy Scripture. (Belgium: Desclee Company, 1960), p.12.

Given the complications which are there in terms of establishing how the Bible is inspired as well as what is inspired, the words or the authors of the scripture, one has to look at the several models of inspiration which have been put forward by some theologians. These models of inspiration have been developed as a result of the vague and limited nature of the Bible's own self-testimony about inspiration.

2.2 Types of Inspiration of the Bible

There are basically four models of inspiration which various authors espouse. The first group, according to Robert Gnuse, is the group that talks of strict verbal inspiration. This group upholds the view that the very words of the text are inspired by direct divine communication from God.⁷⁷ This means that every word, every phrase proceeds from God.

The second group believes in limited verbal inspiration. This is to say that they believe that the words are communicated by God but are historically conditioned or accommodated to suit a particular environment. The third category is that which believes that inspiration does not really apply to the Biblical text as we have it today. In other words, they espouse non-textual inspiration. These are the people who uphold the view that only the ideas or message is inspired. On the other side of the coin, some of these people limit the experience of inspiration to the authors who gave us the texts and not the text itself.

The fourth category is that which upholds the view that inspiration is a charism, which affected the community of believers as a whole rather than an individual author. Such

people believe in the societal inspiration as opposed to individual inspiration. A quick survey of these four categories will show that each of these has its strengths and weaknesses. It is important to mention that scholars are not in agreement as to which category is the true one.

2.2.i Full or Plenary Inspiration

Looking at the first category of those who believe in Strict Verbal Inspiration, one can see that this is the stance taken by most Protestants. This is the position that strongly declares that the Bible has authority for theology and the lifestyle of all Christians because it is inspired by God. According to A. A. Hodge such people believe that the divine influence accompanied the sacred writers in what they wrote, and extended to the expression of their thoughts in language, as well as to their thoughts.⁷⁸ For them, the effect has been that in the original autograph copies, the language expresses the thought God intended to convey with infallible accuracy, so that the words as well as the thoughts are God's revelation to us.

When one speaks of the text as being inspired completely and equally in all its parts as such, it is also referred to as 'full or plenary inspiration'. Talking of plenary inspiration, Raymond. J. Collins quotes Melchior Cano, the 16th century systematic theologian as saying, 'everything great or small has been edited by the sacred authors at the dictation of the Holy Spirit'.⁷⁹ This would imply that the authors of scripture were possessed by the Holy Spirit, and therefore wrote only that which God wanted written. Advocates of this model would naturally take the Bible as infallible, a truthful and unerring guide in

⁷⁷ Robert Gnuse, Op. Cit., p.21.

⁷⁸ A. A. Hodge, "The Inspiration of the Bible", (Internet: <http://markers.com/ink/aahimsp.htm>) p.1-11.

⁷⁹ Raymond J. Collins and Raymond E. Brown, Op Cit. p.1042.

matters of faith and doctrine, and inerrant, which means that the Bible does not err in incidental matters of history or science. To say the Bible does not err has engendered the greatest debate among conservative Protestants to the point that most of them have now shifted their attention to a position of limited verbal inspiration. Luther and Calvin are known to be the reformation proponents of the position of strict verbal inspiration.

On closer analysis it can be established that proponents of this position can not deal with scriptural problems such as doublets, mythical elements, and textual inconsistencies as well as discrepancies which are found in scripture. They choose to ignore them, or they take these as specks in the fine marble as A. A. Hodge suggests.⁸⁰ According to Robert Gnuse, some of them also want to dismiss inconsistencies in scripture with weak allegorisation or mere avoidance⁸¹. The other problem that the proponents of this view face is that they lose the human side of scripture with their emphasis upon the divine. This in turn affects Christology and the loss of the human side of Jesus runs the risk of the heresy of Docetism, with its lack of concern for human need and social concerns.

Given this situation, several conservative Protestants have ended up confusing inspiration with authority. It should be noted that even if the text is dictated by God, the reason for its continued relevance today must depend upon another reason. Inspiration indicates only that the scriptures were spoken to a people long ago with the highest degree of divine origin. Even the ancient Church felt that not all inspired books belonged in the canon, so they believed that inspiration was not the important reason for the continued use of writing. Inspiration became significant only after the authority of the text was established and received by the Christian Church.

⁸⁰ A. A. Hodge, Op Cit. P.1-11.

⁸¹ Ibid. p.1-11.

2.2.ii Limited Verbal Inspiration

The second model of inspiration is that referred to as 'Limited Verbal Inspiration'. In this model scripture is viewed as inspired and therefore infallible in regard to theology, but it is not inerrant in regard to historical and scientific data, which are historically and culturally conditioned according to the Biblical author's context. Robert Gnuse suggests that God communicates by accommodation, that is, the scriptures are expressed through limited human knowledge.⁸² In this sense accommodation implies that God uses the limitations of the human being. God is the author through the authorship of fallible people. According to this model, the human author is not a stenographer, but a living instrument whose personal style and knowledge are used to express divine truth. This means that scripture may have some technical inaccuracies, but it is free from willful deception by the internal witness of the Spirit. In this case, it is the Bible but not individual writers of the Bible which is inspired, for it is religious message of the book as a whole which is infallible.

This view appears to be reasonable in the sense that it agrees that scripture proceeds equally from God and from human authors. It also accepts that God used human authors in their freedom, so that the message came to us without error, but it is in the conditioned language of that time and place. With free human authors, it is also possible to account for the inconsistencies and discrepancies which are found in the Bible.

2.2. iii Non-Textual Inspiration

⁸² Robert Gnuse. Op Cit. p.22.

The third model of inspiration is that referred to as 'Non-Textual Inspiration'. This model seeks to move away from the idea that the authors and their products are inspired. The proponents of this idea uphold the view that it is only the ideas expressed in scripture that are inspired. They also want to limit inspiration to the individuals who first spoke the word of God. Advocates of both positions no longer needed to concern themselves with difficulties that arise in the text, nor do they worry about such terms as inerrancy or infallibility. The first of these two positions, according to Robert Gnuse, declares that only the ideas or content is inspired, while the words are totally the product of humans conditioned by their cultural and historical circumstances.⁸³ This means that the formal part of scripture, the content, is inspired, while the material part of scripture, the verbal expressions of the author, is not. In simple terms, this means that inspiration is found in the ideas, matters of faith and morals, doctrinal matters, important themes, quasi-technical concepts, or the essential message.

The advantage of this model is that it makes it possible for one to accept that the Word of God though mixed with erring words of men and women still speaks authoritatively, because it speaks from the depth of authentic human experience. This model therefore avoids the controversy associated with word inspiration, whether it be ideas of plenary and verbal inspiration or accommodation. It avoids the effects of strict inspiration views such as dogmatism, legalism, new doctrinal formulations and violent controversies with different church groups, and modern world views can be accepted.

However its weakness is that it does not distinguish clearly between unimportant details and the core message. The question that arises is, what is an idea and what is merely a

⁸³ Robert Gnuse, *Op. Cit.* p.24.

way of expressing it? This distinction is left to the subjective opinion of each interpreter, which is a weakness. On the other hand, inspiration will not be extended to the totality of the Bible. In addition this model does not really remove the possibility of error which always threatens theological discourse. The question that arises is, if the ideas alone are inspired, how can we be sure that an inspired idea may be erroneously presented by the purely human and fallible words? What one can say about this model is that it works without having to worry about infallibility or inerrancy.

2.2.iv Social Inspiration

The fourth model of inspiration, according to Robert Gnuse, is the one that he calls Social Inspiration. This theory comes about through the greater sensitivity which has been paid to Biblical text and its complex process of development.⁸⁴ Proponents of this model suggest that the text is often produced by more than one individual. Prophets, poets, preachers, bards, and epic historians proclaim the word in oral form, while redactors and scribes edit the written word with the addition of their theological insights and commentary. This idea is well expressed by James Barr who is quoted by Robert Gnuse as saying;

*If there is inspiration at all, then it must extend over the entire process of production that has led to the final text. Inspiration therefore must attach not to a small number of anonymous persons ... it must be considered to belong more to the community.*⁸⁵

What this means, therefore, is that inspiration is like a charism, that is a divinely conferred gift or power which visited the whole community as opposed to specific individuals. According to this model, individuals merely articulated the faith of the believing community hence inspiration resided in that community primarily. Roman Catholic scholars such as P. Benoit and K. Rahner advocate this theory. P. Benoit is

⁸⁴ Robert Gnuse, Op. Cit. p.50.

quoted by Robert Gnuse defining inspiration as an impulse to do something, i.e., act, speak, or write rather than an illumination.⁸⁵ In this context, one could say that the Biblical authors experienced an impulse in the community which prompted them to write what they wrote on behalf of the community. The proponents of this view believe that to limit inspiration to individuals is to impoverish to a dangerous degree the extreme riches of the encounter that God offers people in the Bible.

This view is sustainable especially if one considers the view that inspiration can be social and communal in the sense that the sacred authors cannot be separated from their community. The author can have the experience of the divine, which arises in the communal worship life; it need not be necessarily the message from God which leads the author to create Scripture. The author can also draw from traditions of the community in creating their work.

The strength of this model is that it tells us that grace is mediated through people, a view that is more tenable than the view that it is mediated through books or through the written word. It is communicated directly to the people for whom salvation is intended. This eliminates the idea of the scriptural mediation of grace and the risk of bibliolatry. This theory also appeals to the modern intellectual heritage that seeks to speak in sociological categories. Individuals are not viewed only as distinct entities but as members of their societies and products of their environments. This model also put to rest the old debate over degrees of inspiration where certain parts of the Bible were seen as more inspired than others. The pitfalls of the mantic model of prophecy are also avoided through this model. No longer is the author seen as a person seized by the deity, or as a mouthpiece of

⁸⁵ Ibid. p.50.

⁸⁶ Robert Gnuse. Op. Cit. p.51.

the deity. Rather the author of scripture is seen as a theologian speaking on behalf of the community and to the community. Such model of inspiration accommodates some of the errors and incorrect details that are highlighted above.

2.3 Conclusion

Whatever forms of inspiration which may have taken place for the Bible to be written, its authority heavily depends on its inspiration. Any suggestion that the Bible is not inspired by God, who is the source of all divinity and all wisdom, will affect the authority of the Bible seriously. Those people who do not take the Bible as being authoritative do not believe that it was inspired by God. They quickly turn to what they refer to as inconsistencies, which are so apparent in the Bible. However, it is important to note that the Bible is one book which contains sixty-six individual books. Within each of these there is often a variety of writings such as poetry, prose, biography, letters, family trees, official records, songs and prayers. It is important to recognise the type of writing when one is reading it so that one reads the Bible on its own terms. To read poetry as if it were an excerpt from an official record would make it very difficult to understand.

CHAPTER 3

CANONISATION AND THE BIBLE

3.1 Introduction

The thrust of the previous chapter has been to establish the issues that are involved in the manner in which the Bible is considered to be inspired and how it is therefore used in many parts of the world as authoritative. This chapter seeks to establish the way through which this Bible was compiled and how it was put together. The way in which the Bible came to be what it is currently took many years. Several factors were at play in considering what was to be included in the Bible and what was to be eliminated. In this chapter, I shall start by defining the word ‘canon’ and then investigate the reasons that instigated the compilation of scriptures in the Jewish society. I shall move on to establish the stages involved. With regard to the New Testament canon I shall start by investigating the reasons for writing scripture before I discuss the reasons for coming up with a list of inspired scripture. I shall investigate the different stages through which people worked when developing a list of books that they considered inspired. I will do all the above by dividing this presentation into smaller sub-headings that deal with a particular subject, related to Canonisation of scripture.

3.2 The Old Testament Canon

Several scholars seem to agree on the fact that the word ‘canon’ is a transliteration of the Greek “*kanon*” and a derivation of a Semitic word for ‘reed’. According to Raymond Brown and Raymond Collins ‘the word “canon”, is a transliteration of Greek “*kanon*”, “canon” derived from a Semitic word for “reed”’.⁸⁷ However this word has been used to

⁸⁷ Raymond Brown and Raymond Collins, “Canonicity” in Raymond Brown, (et al), (eds.), The New Jerome Biblical Commentary, (London: Prentice Hall Inc, 1968) p.1035.

refer to a straight rod or bar, a tool used for measuring, a mason's or carpenter's measuring stick. Metaphorically this would mean a rule, norm, or standard.

On the other hand, Ernest Cadman Colwell, suggests that 'the word "canon" is used with a bewildering variety of meanings. It may refer to a support for bells, a bone in a horse's foreleg, a cathedral official, or an ecclesiastical law'.⁸⁸ All these meanings are correct but for our purposes, this word means something slightly different. This word indicates the books accepted as authoritative by the Church inspired by God and having a regulating value for faith and morals. This is to say that it is used as a loose synonym for Bible. It also refers to a list of sacred books. It can also mean a group of books within the Bible such as 'prophetic canon' or 'the Gospel canon'.

Considering the above explanation, 'Canonisation' implies a process through which books were collected and put together into the current Bible. This process took a long time and involved several factors. One should be aware of the fact that most of the Bible was not written as Bible, nor did its readers read it as Bible. For example, when Paul wrote to his churches, he was also far from expecting that his letters would be accepted as equal in authority to the Jewish scriptures that were already circulating. Given this scenario, it means that the process of putting authority in a book and bringing such literature together involved communities of people. The sanctity of a book and the usefulness of a piece of literature had to be accepted by some people before it was accorded a particular status. In order to understand the various forces at play, we have to go back and start by considering the Jewish scriptures and establish how they were compiled as well as their authors.

⁸⁸ Ernest Cadman Colwell, The Study of the Bible. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964) p.2.

3.2.i The Compilation of the Jewish Scriptures

The composition of the Jewish scriptures took a long time. According to Raymond Brown and Raymond Collins, ‘the first poetic compositions such as the Song of Miriam (Exd.15.1-18), and the Song of Deborah (Judges 5), probably go back to the 12th century before Christ (BC)’.⁸⁹ The latest books in the Jewish canon such as Daniel and Esther are thought to have been composed during the second century before Christ. Considering these two pointers, one can see that it took a long time to compile the Jewish scriptures. During this long period, it is probable that there was a gradual accumulation of material into books that found their way into acceptance. During this period of composition, it is also probable that a lot of literature was produced. Some of these writings were lost whereas others were preserved. Still others did not receive acceptance. It is also probable that there were all sorts of authors during this time who wrote in different areas.

According to R. H. Pfeiffer, before these writings were collated into scripture, they were just circulating with no authority ascribed to them. He suggests that, ‘every sentence in the Old Testament was profane literature before it became canonical and sacred scripture’.⁹⁰ This means that not all the Old Testament literature that we have in the current Bible was upheld as sacred scripture in the same way believers do currently. Although it was linked to God, it was not yet accorded the same sacred nature that it later attained. It is only when Canonisation had taken place that it became sacred and inspired.

3.2.ii The Canonisation of Jewish Scriptures

⁸⁹ Raymond Brown and Raymond Collins, Op. cit p.1037.

⁹⁰ R. H. Pfeiffer, “Canon of the Old Testament” in G. A. Buttrick, Herbert. G. May and Samuel Terrien (eds.), The Interpreters’ Dictionary of the Bible. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), p.499.

The available written scriptures circulated freely with no fixed list of books to be read in places of worship. For us to understand the way the Old Testament was canonised we have to distinguish three stages in the process through which the Jewish writings have come down to us. The first stage is the one referred to above that entails the labours of the original authors in writing documents. The Bible quotes Jeremiah as having instructed Baruch to write upon his dictation, all the words that the Lord had spoken to him (Jer.36: 4).⁹¹ Once the books were written, they also went through some editing and arranging as well as collection. It is crucial to note that the process of canonisation involved particular considerations on the part of the writings that were at hand.

R. H. Pfeiffer maintains that out of a vast body of national Hebrew literature some books of the Old Testament were selected because of their literary beauty or their nationalistic appeal. They were also chosen on the basis of their contribution to keeping the nation and worship of Jehovah alive.⁹² These three things were important in the process of determining the books that were going to be used by the Jews in their religious activities.

This process of canonising Jewish literature seems to have started well before there was any possibility of coming up with a collated list of Jewish literature. According to W. D. Stacey, the story of Josiah's reforms shows how a book, probably Deuteronomy, was honoured in Israel before the Babylonian exile. This is recorded in 2 Kings22.3-23.30. On the other hand, Ezra is said to have brought with him a book of Law that was duly obeyed when he returned from Babylon (Neh. 8).⁹³ These are two indications that the process of canonisation was preceding slowly for many years before a definite list appeared.

⁹¹ Kenneth Barker (ed), The NIV Study Bible. (USA: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995) p.1178.

⁹² R. H. Pfeiffer, Op. Cit. p.500.

3.2.iii. Stages in the Canonisation of the Old Testament

Initially the Hebrew Bible only had three sections that were given canonical authority at different times and to different degrees. The majority of scholars are in agreement that the first section of Jewish Scripture to receive canonical status was the Law or *Torah*, as the Jews prefer to call it. This part consists of the first five books, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. This list is also referred to as the Pentateuch. W. D. Stacey suggests that, 'the Torah reached its final form in about 400BC and thereafter became the cornerstone of Judaism'⁹⁴ From that time, it seems this section of Jewish literature has gone through little change. According to P.H. Pfeiffer, the publication of Deuteronomy in 621 BC marks substantially the end of the old religion of Israel and the beginning of Judaism, the death of national religion and the birth of an ethical religion of salvation for all men.⁹⁵ This book found in the temple in 621 BC, therefore, had a lasting influence. Most scholars are in agreement that it marked the beginning of the Canonisation of the Bible. They concur that nowhere before had a book been officially recognised as God's word.

This book of the Law revealed to Moses is said to have been canonised in 621BC, but it marks the beginning, rather than the end, of the process of Canonisation. It needs to be stressed that although the first edition of Deuteronomy was regarded as sacred scripture it did not preclude future revelations of God in written form, nor did it diminish in the least the popularity of existing historical and prophetic writings on which it is based. Gradually the book of Deuteronomy is said to have grown to the size of the Pentateuch.

⁹³ W. D. Stacey, Groundwork of Biblical Studies. (London: Epworth Press, 1979) p.162.

⁹⁴ Ibid. p.163.

It should be noted that the book of Deuteronomy contains some chapters that were not written by Moses as they purport to have been. Chapters such as Deuteronomy 5: 26-28 seem to have been written by someone else. P. H. Pfeiffer maintains that a priest from Jerusalem wrote this section of Deuteronomy more than five centuries after the death of Moses. It would seem that this priest was a forger. However, P. H. Pfeiffer dismisses that conclusion by suggesting that such a conclusion shows a lack of historical sense – by accusing the author of violating literary conventions unknown to his time, and a lack of understanding of human nature - by ascribing to the author disreputable motives rather than the highest ideals.⁹⁶

Given the above it makes sense to suggest that it was Josiah and his contemporaries, during the canonisation process, who ascribed these chapters to Moses basing their decisions upon the explicit statements that the book of Deuteronomy makes with regard to Moses being its author (Deut.4: 44-5). The most likely possibility is that the authority of such a great founder of the religion and nation of Israel was needed to induce the king and his people to undertake reforms in their faith and practice.

3.2.iii.a. The Pentateuch

The first section constituted the first five books in the current Bible. Their composition seems to have taken place in a chronological order. The greater part seems to have been written by Moses. However, the canonisation date for the Pentateuch, according to P. H. Pfeiffer, was probably close to 400BC⁹⁷. This means that its publication should have been later than 621 BC the year that marked the end of the old religion of Israel and the beginning of Judaism, the death of national religion and the birth of an ethical religion of

⁹⁵ P. H. Pfeiffer, *Op. Cit.* p.503.

⁹⁶ P. H. Pfeiffer, *Op. Cit.* p.502.

salvation. This means that the fixation of the five books of the Pentateuch as the sacred canon of the Torah marks the second stage of the process, which began in 621BC with the recognition that the book of Moses had been divinely inspired.

3.2.iii.b. The Prophets

The second section of the Hebrew Bible is the one that is known as the prophets (*nebi'im*). It is considered by some scholars that in 400 BC, the Jews had other ancient books, which enjoyed considerable popularity but were not yet considered divinely revealed. This group is subdivided into former and latter prophets. Former prophets include books such as Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings). They record the doings of early prophets like Gad, Nathan, Elijah and Elisha, but more importantly they narrate history in a prophetic way. On the other hand, later prophets include books such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve Minor Prophets such as Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obediah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. It seems that the growing public interest in these books and their value in enhancing national pride and the hope for a better future resulted in their canonisation.

The canonisation of former prophets, either by regarding their authors as prophets (1 Chr. 29: 29), or because they contained stories about prophets such as Gad, Nathan, Ahijah, Jehu, Elisha, Elijah and Isaiah seem to have strongly favoured their canonisation. However, other reasons such as their growing popularity, their patriotic and religious significance, and their supposed prophetic authorship also influenced their canonisation. Just as the historical books were revised and annotated to magnify past glories of Israel, so it seems were the prophetic books that magnified Israel's future glories. This is evidenced by some annotations in some prophetic books such as Isaiah, that express the

⁹⁷ P. H. Pfeiffer, *Op. Cit.* p.506.

two conspicuous trends of time – hostility towards foreign nations and assurance of a future triumph of Israel led by Jehovah or by his Messiah. Such things enhanced the popularity of the prophetic books.

3.2.iii.c The Writings

The third section is the one referred to as the ‘writings’, *ketubhim* in Hebrew or in Greek *hagiographa* which simply means ‘sacred writings’. No more precise title was possible since this portion of scripture consists of a miscellaneous collection of widely different works. According to Raymond Brown and Raymond Collins, this is the most miscellaneous of the collections and the one that caused the most disputes.⁹⁸ This section comprises books such as Psalms, Job, Proverbs, the five scrolls such as Ruth, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations and Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah and 1 and 2 Chronicles. While the canonisation of the Law and the Prophets consisted of the final, complete editions of certain types of literature, the writings were a collection of separate works, each of which circulated independently until it was attracted like a satellite into the orbit of scripture.

According to P. H. Pfeiffer, two conditions had to be fulfilled before each of these books was canonised separately. Survival was one of these two conditions. When a book had to be copied laboriously and expensively on papyrus or parchment, no work could survive for few centuries unless it attracted readers.⁹⁹ This means that a book had to possess a strong appeal of some kind to survive; it must have attracted readers for its religious, nationalistic, or literary value.

⁹⁸ Raymond Brown and Raymond Collins, *Op. cit.* p.1039.

⁹⁹ P. H. Pfeiffer, *Op. cit.* p.509.

Secondly P. H. Pfeiffer suggests the condition of anonymous authorship¹⁰⁰ as another condition that determined whether a book was canonised or not with regard to the ‘writings’. He suggests that it is only Nehemiah and perhaps Ezra who wrote their own memoirs, and the prophets whose public addresses were collected, by them or by a disciple, has the genuine author’s name attached to it. He says that it would be absurd to hide the name of the writer of an autobiography or of a public speaker, well known to the audience. This simply means that all writings were attributed to an imaginary author such as David and Esther, or they are anonymous such as Job and Lamentations. According to the introductions of these books, they do not have known authors. The only books that seem to have known authors are Nehemiah and Ezra.

Most scholars believe that this collection of books was probably post-exilic in composition, with books such as Daniel and Esther being the last to be written as late as the second century before the birth of Christ. Raymond Brown and Raymond Collins maintain that ‘by the end of the second century as the foreword to Sirach testifies, Jews spoke not only of the Law and the prophets but also of ‘the rest of the books of our ancestors’.¹⁰¹ As to what constituted ‘the rest of the books’ in Sirach’s reference, we do not know precisely. This complicates things since Sirach does not cite Ezra, Esther or Daniel. However, in Luke we seem to find a little specification of what other books might have been, for Luke attests to this combination ‘the law and the prophets and the psalms’ (Luke 24: 44). This leaves this part of scripture with many questions unanswered.

¹⁰⁰ P. H. Pfeiffer, *Op. cit.* p.509.

¹⁰¹ Raymond Brown and Raymond Collins, *Op. cit.* p.1039.

Although there are these three distinct sections of the Hebrew Bible, it must be noted that the people responsible for collecting and canonising these sections were convinced that God divinely inspired every word in them. According to Jewish doctrine, God revealed himself to an unbroken series of inspired men going from Moses to Ezra. P. H. Pfeiffer suggests that there may have been inspired prophets before Moses but they wrote no inspired books, and no prophets arose in Israel after Ezra and Nehemiah, so that no Jewish apocalypse was attributed to an author later than Ezra.¹⁰² This means that the canon of the prophets was already in existence although it was not closed until 200BC.

The closure of the canon in Palestinian Judaism has to be viewed, therefore within the context of a plethora of literature in circulation. This means that there had to be a particular criterion that had to be followed in those situations where some books had to be considered more important than others. If one considers these three sections, one can recognise certain motifs that were at play in determining what had to be considered inspired and that which had to be discarded.

Scholars such as Raymond Brown and Raymond Collins believe that some books were received because of their legal character or their relation to the law, for the law is the canon by which all is judged.¹⁰³ This seems to be true since the first five books of the Bible seem to be more prescriptive and more legalistic in tone. There are all sorts of prohibitions and permissions recorded for the children of Israel.

Another factor that is believed to have played a role in the process of canonisation is that certain books in the Old Testament were believed to contain the word of God and were,

¹⁰² P. H. Pfeiffer, *Op. cit.*, p.501.

¹⁰³ Raymond Brown and Raymond Collins, *Op. cit.*, p.1039.

therefore, considered inspired by him. This factor was not easily verifiable. It is one of those factors, which is subjective. This is difficult to accept.

On the other hand, Raymond Brown and Raymond Collins quote G. Ostborn, as proposing that a book was held to be canonical because of its specific motif that is if in some way celebrated or reported Yahweh's activity.¹⁰⁴ This argument however fails to carry total conviction because the endeavour to find a fundamental motif that runs through all the books of the Old Testament can be forced by anyone.

Another factor that seems to have determined the canonisation of a piece of literature was the cultic use of a book. It is suggested that certain books were used in certain cultic centers more than others. This means that they appealed to the local people more than they appealed to those who did not use them. An example is the book of Psalms that was used greatly in Temple worship by the Jews. This may have led to the acceptance of the Psalms in the Old Testament canon.

3.2.iv Theories of the Closure of the Old Testament Canon

It should be noted that the recognition of the three sections of the Hebrew Bible was not a formal act. Most scholars concur that it was a gradual process of acceptance, and save for the Torah, which was universally honoured, there was no unanimity in Judaism in New Testament times. Another consideration that needs to be made when one investigates the canonisation of the Old Testament is the time as to when this canon became closed. Most scholars have suggested three possibilities, although there is no unanimity.

3.2.iv.a The Influence of Ezra

The first theory made by Raymond Brown and Raymond Collins is that of Ezra's influence. These two scholars uphold the view that, it was believed at one time that Ezra accomplished the collection of the Old Testament books decisively in about 400 BC¹⁰⁵. This idea can be traced back to Ezra 4. This legend, however, seems to have little historical value because many of the canonical books that found their way into the canon that we have currently in the Old Testament were written after Ezra's time. What could be more plausible is to say that Ezra completed the collection of the Law, and not the whole Old Testament as we have it today.

3.2.iv.b The Great Synagogue Institution

The second theory from Raymond Brown and Raymond Collins is linked to the Great Synagogue institution. This suggestion says that men of the Great Synagogue working under Ezra determined the Old Testament canon. Some Protestants supported this view until the nineteenth century when they repudiated it as spurious.¹⁰⁶ This was shaken by questions about the very existence of this Great Synagogue as a historical institution. Other views point to the fact that even if it existed, the thought of it playing a decisive role in the canonisation process is considered most implausible. This conclusion has been arrived at by investigating some of the great early Jewish historians such as Josephus and Philo. These two early Church historians, the Old Testament and Apocrypha, seem to report nothing of such a body and its canonising activity. If this is the case, it becomes doubtful that such an institution existed and did any work towards canonising Old Testament literature. The earliest reference to it can only be found in the

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. p.1040.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. p.1040.

¹⁰⁶ Raymond Brown and Raymond Collins, *Op. cit.* p.1040.

Mishnah (one of the most authoritative documents of rabbinic Judaism) of the second century after the death of Christ.

3.2.iv.c The Jamnia Convocation

The third theory from Raymond Brown and Raymond Collins has to do with a convocation at a place called Jamnia (*Jabneh or Jabneel*) a town near the Mediterranean west of Jerusalem c.100AD.¹⁰⁷ H. E. Ryle put this theory forward. However, most critical scholars of the Old Testament believe that the canon of the Old Testament was not closed until the Christian era. Many scholars attribute the rivalry offered by the Christian books as a spur for the closing of the Jewish canon. With this in mind, it has been suggested that the canon of the Old Testament was closed at Jamnia. It has been suggested that c.90-100 AD, this council of rabbis at Jamnia settled once and for all time the definitive list of inspired books, namely the Palestinian canon, consisting of books now called the protocanon.

This theory has also met some opposition from other scholars. There is need to analyse the criticism put forward by these critics. Caution has been called for when considering Jamnia as a formal council. Scholars such as Raymond Brown and Raymond Collins suggest that there was no council of Jamnia. They maintain that at Jamnia there was a school for studying law and Jamnia rabbis exercised legal functions in the Jewish community. If this is true then one needs to view the Jamnia theory with caution.

Indeed there seem to be no evidence that any list of books was drawn up at Jamnia. What seems most probable is that these rabbis at Jamnia recognised that certain books were uniquely sacred but it need not concern a definite canon.

The absence of a report of such a meeting as having taken place in the Bible itself, even the absence of its historicity in the book of Ecclesiastes makes it implausible to uphold it as a historical event with unmistakable influence on canonicity. More so, it is a known fact that arguments persisted in Judaism decades after the Jamnia council regarding the issue of canon. This points to the fact that the canon was not conclusively closed at Jamnia.

Another consideration is that we seem to know no books that were excluded at this council of Jamnia. A book like Sirach, which did not eventually become part of the standard Hebrew Bible was read and copied by Jews after the Jamnia period. This points to the fact that the conclusion of the canon may not have taken place at Jamnia. The above considerations show that the conclusion and closure of the Old Testament canon was not a formal thing that could be traced and referred to easily.

Given this situation, the safest statement about the closing of the Jewish canon is one which recognises that although in the first century there was acceptance of twenty-two or twenty-four books as sacred; there was no rigidly fixed exclusive Hebrew canon until probably the end of the second century after the death of Christ. During this period, various Jewish groups continued to read works that were not included in the canon comprising twenty-two or twenty-four books. Each community had its own set of books that it held as inspired and useful in its religious activity. With this in mind, different canons of the Old Testament came into being. Communities such as that of the Jews at Alexandria, Qumran and even the Greeks had their own lists of Old Testament books that they used.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. p.1040.

3.2.v The Alexandrian Canon

Most scholars are in agreement that several circumstances contributed to the making of this canon, which was more hospitable to Jewish writings than the Palestinian official Bible. In Alexandria, Jews tended to accept as scripture any writing in Hebrew or Aramaic which came from Palestine. These Jews did not believe, as did the Palestinian Jews that prophecy had ceased with Ezra and Nehemiah and that the canon had been closed by the Great Synagogue. For them God still communicated to his people and no one had the right to limit him.

Given this nature of the Alexandrian canon, B. J. Roberts concludes that, ‘the Alexandrian canon has always been amorphous...’¹⁰⁸ However, Raymond Brown and Raymond Collins uphold the view that there were two canons in ancient Judaism, the shorter Palestinian canon, that is presumed to have been fixed at Jamnia, and the larger one, which is the Alexandrian canon.¹⁰⁹ The shorter canon is confined to the books of the Jewish Bible whereas the larger Palestinian canon comprised those books from before the time of Christ, which were generally read in the church including the Apocrypha.

3.2.vi The Greek Old Testament Canon

This canon has some history behind its formation. It is believed that with the conquests of Alexander the Great, in 336 BC, Greek came to the Holy Land. This language could not be ignored since it became the language of commerce and government. It became the universal language of the day. On the other hand, Jews who were in Diaspora struggled to keep up their Hebrew, so that they could read the sacred scriptures, but their everyday

¹⁰⁸ B. J. Roberts, “Canon and Text of the Old Testament” in H. H. Rowley (ed), Peake’s Commentary on The Bible. (London: Routledge, 1990) p.75.

language had to be the language of the local population. In most cases, this had to be Greek since it had become the language of the Empire.

Given this scenario, there was need for a Greek version of the Jewish scriptures. The way to coming up with this version had to involve translation. According to W. D. Stacey, it all began with informal, oral translation in the synagogue, but it is clear that written versions of parts of the Old Testament in Greek began to appear from the third century before Christ, onwards¹¹⁰.

It is important to note that this Greek Old Testament is also referred to as the Septuagint or the LXX. This canon differs from the Hebrew Canon both in the order of Biblical books and in the fact that it includes more books. The threefold division of the 'law' the 'prophets' and the 'writings' is abandoned and several other books which are not found in the Hebrew canon, are added. These books include Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Judith, Tobit, and Baruch. This means that the Greek canon is longer than the Hebrew one.

F. L. Cross suggests that this Greek version of the Old Testament, the LXX, differs from the Hebrew Bible both in the order of the Biblical books and in the fact that it includes more books.¹¹¹ There are also other areas in which there is considerable difference between the LXX and the Hebrew Bible. An example is that found in the original LXX of Job, which is about one sixth shorter than the Hebrew. It is important to note that this is the canon that the early Christian Church inherited and some New Testament writers also

¹⁰⁹ Raymond Brown and Raymond Collins, *Op. cit.* p.1041.

¹¹⁰ W. D. Stacey, *Op. cit.* p.164.

¹¹¹ F. L. Cross, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) p.1483.

quoted the Old Testament books from it. An example is found in Matthew.1: 23, where the Emmanuel prophecy of Isaiah.7: 14 is cited in the LXX form.

With the dawning of the Christian era, the issue of the canon of scripture continued to be a subject of deep-rooted controversy and disappointment amongst those who claimed to be Christians. As noted above, when Jesus Christ was born there was more than one canon in circulation. This was to continue even after Jesus' earthly ministry. Such a situation makes it difficult to accept one canon as inspired and another as being a product of human ingenuity.

It is important to note that the canon of Jesus Christ and his disciples was the Hebrew canon. As for Paul and his converts, P. H. Pfeiffer asserts that their canon was the Greek LXX, which included the Apocrypha.¹¹² This is probably due to the fact that the great numbers of the Christians of the first century were Greek speaking gentile proselytes. This means that the LXX became, through Paul, an official canon in the early centuries. This shows the differences in terms of choice of canon even in the early Christian centuries. Later when the Church experienced a rift between the Roman Catholics and the Protestants, the issue of canon also came to the fore.

In summary, the process of canonisation became a necessary undertaking following the proliferation of writings that were circulating. The process took many years with a gradual recognition of the three different sections of the Old Testament section of the Bible. The criteria followed in canonising the Jewish scriptures differed from one section to the other. The Pentateuch was canonised mainly on legal grounds. Prophets were canonised mainly for their hostility towards foreign nations and their assurance of a

future triumph of Israel which would be led by Jehovah or his Messiah. On the other hand, the writings were canonised mainly because of their religious, nationalistic, and literary value. It is also established from the above discussion that the event that marked the closure of the Jewish canon has been a subject of dispute. The lack of consensus on a single list of Jewish scriptures led to the use of different canons in different places. Such canons include the Alexandrian Canon and the Greek Old Testament Canon.

3.4 The New Testament Canon

The era of Jesus Christ was characterised by the use of the Hebrew canon as noted above. However, the canon of the early church and all the New Testament writers was the LXX. Before one considers the Canon of the New Testament, it is important to note the fact that Jesus himself left nothing in writing and the Gospels which preserve for us the record of his teachings were not composed until the second Christian generation or later.

The earliest Christian documents, the only documents of the apostolic age that have survived, are the letters of Paul. These were in the first instance occasional writings, addressed by the apostle to particular churches to deal with specific local problems and needs. F. W. Beare notes that, with the exception of Romans, Paul's letters were not intended for general circulation in the church.¹¹³ It could never have occurred to Paul that a letter which he wrote for the Christians of Thessalonica or for the Phillipian Christians would ever be read in Antioch, Jerusalem or in Zimbabwe, let alone being treasured by the whole church and given a place alongside the Law and the prophets in worship and in study.

¹¹² P. H. Pfeiffer, *Op. cit.* p.511.

¹¹³ F. W. Beare, "Canon of the New Testament", in G. A. Butterick, Herbert. G. May and Samuel Terrien (eds.), *The Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible.* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962) p.522.

3.4.i Causes for Writing Christian Works

When one considers the fact that Jesus did not write anything, it becomes necessary to investigate the reasons that prompted people such as Paul and the other New Testament writers to record or write what later became scripture. According to Raymond Brown and Raymond Collins there seem to have been three significant reasons that pushed the Christian writers such as the Gospel writers, as well as people like Paul, to write what later became scripture.

The first reason has to do with geographical distance.¹¹⁴ Following the Jerusalem Council's decision in AD 49, to permit Gentiles into Christianity without circumcision (Acts 15), the far-flung gentile world already invaded by Paul, became a wide-open missionary field. According to F. L. Cross, this council was "first Christian council"¹¹⁵ in the history of Christianity. Coupled to this factor was the founding of Christian communities at great distances from one another and the continual travelling of the apostles to these places as well as new ones. A good example is the different Christian communities that were founded by Paul. Places such as Corinth, Thessalonica, and Philippi lay far away from Jerusalem, the center of Christianity. This made written communication a necessity.

In addition, chronological distance was another factor that led to the writing of Christian Works.¹¹⁶ The existence of those who had been with Jesus, marked the first years of Christianity, but as the apostles dispersed, and after their death, the preservation of the

¹¹⁴ Raymond Brown and Raymond Collins, Op. cit. p.1043.

¹¹⁵ F. L. Cross, The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) p.869.

¹¹⁶ Raymond Brown and Raymond Collins, Op. cit. p.1043.

memory of Jesus' deeds and words became a problem. The death and dispersion of these disciples who had been with Jesus meant that all that had happened during Jesus' time was going to be lost. Some of these disciples were killed through persecution. Although some historians refuse to accept the martyrdom of Peter, John.21: 18ff suggests that he was crucified with his head downwards. According to J. Comby, quoting from Eusebius of Caesarea, Peter and Paul died during Nero's persecution in 30 AD.¹¹⁷ With the apostles disappearing from the scene, there was need to preserve this treasure through writing it down.

There were also other exigencies such as the threat of heresy, persecutions, and the need to reaffirm faith.¹¹⁸ During this era, the Church was confronted by some teachings divergent from that which Jesus and his apostle had been teaching. These teachings could only be curtailed by writing down the orthodox faith so that everyone could read for himself or herself. Given these above reasons for writing, there arose a period of writing Christian works. Several works by imposters were in circulation, such as the Acts of Peter, and the Apocalypse of Peter. The Church, therefore, was faced with another problem of deciding on which works to take and which ones to leave out.

3.4.ii Reasons for the Canonisation of the New Testament

Considering the numerous writings that were in circulation, some with the names of the apostles, the Church was forced to analyse them and come up with a New Testament canon. A number of factors made it necessary for the Church to establish a canon of authority for the written word of Jesus. J. N. Sanders maintains that the words of Jesus

¹¹⁷ J. Comby, *How to Read Church History* (Vol. 1), (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1985) p.12.

¹¹⁸ Raymond Brown and Raymond Collins *Op cit.* p.1043.

became the most powerful consideration for canonising the New Testament.¹¹⁹ The words of Jesus Christ had to be preserved. This is supported by Arthur G. Patzia, who maintains that the gradual spread of the Gospel throughout the Churches was one factor that spurred the Church to think of a canon of scripture¹²⁰. Gospels were initially written to meet the liturgical, didactic, apologetic, and pastoral needs of a specific community. This expansion of the Gospel forced the Church to decide whether it would acknowledge all four Gospels instead of just one.

On the other hand, there was the proliferation of other gospels circulating throughout the churches. Documents such as the ‘Gospel of Thomas’, the ‘Gospel of Phillip’, the ‘Gospel of Peter’, the ‘Gospel of the Egyptians’ and the ‘Gospel of Truth’ also claimed authority from Jesus Christ. Most of these gospels tended to concentrate on the infancy of Jesus Christ. There were also a number of works such as the ‘Acts of Peter’, and the ‘Apocalypse of Peter’, that were in circulation. In other words, people were going to be confused as to which book to use as scripture.

According to J. N. Sanders, the most important reason for canonising the New Testament scriptures was the threat posed by the great heresiarch, Marcion.¹²¹ According to F. L. Cross, he was a native of Sinope in Pontus and a wealthy ship owner. He was the son of a bishop who excommunicated him on the grounds of immorality.¹²² Marcion came to Rome sometime before AD150. Notable about Marcion is the fact that he denied that the God of the Old Testament was the father of Jesus Christ and he also repudiated the Old Testament entirely. Henry Bettenson quotes Irenaeus, (Adv. Haer.I. xxvii. 2-3), as saying

¹¹⁹ J. N. Sanders, “The Literature and Canon of the New Testament” in Matthew Black (ed), Peake’s Commentary on the Bible, (London: Routledge, 1990) p.680.

¹²⁰ Arthur G. Patzia, The Making of the New Testament (Leicester: Apolos, 1995) p.61.

¹²¹ J. N. Sanders, Op. cit. p.680.

that ‘Marcion of Pontus took his place and amplified his teaching, impudently blaspheming him who is declared to be God by the Law and the Prophets; calling him worker of evils, delighting in wars, inconsistent in judgement and self-contradictory’.¹²³ This was a real threat to the Gospel that had been preached by Jesus Christ and Paul as well as other apostles.

In the place of the Old Testament, Marcion put his Gospel of Luke that was expurgated and the ten letters of Paul. In the words of Irenaeus, (Adv. Haer.I.xxvii.2-3), ‘he mutilated the Gospel according to Luke, removing all narratives of the Lord’s birth, and also removing much of the teaching of his discourses of the Lord wherein he is most manifestly described as acknowledging the maker of this universe to be his father’.¹²⁴ He also went on to tell his disciples that he was more trustworthy than the apostles of Jesus Christ were. As for the letters of Paul, Irenaeus says ‘he mutilated the epistles of the Apostle Paul in the same manner, removing whatever is manifestly spoken by the apostle concerning the God who made the world, where he says that he is the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and setting aside all the Apostle’s teaching drawn from the prophetic writings which predict the advent of the Lord’.¹²⁵ Therefore, Marcion’s list included the Gospel of Luke (expurgated) and the ten letters of Paul (mutilated).

Marcion seems to have posed a real threat to the early church. Some scholars actually suggest that if it were not for him the current New Testament Canon would not have come into being. J. N. Sanders quotes Harnack and J. Know as saying that Marcion was

¹²² F. L. Cross, Op. cit. p.1033.

¹²³ Henry Bettenson, Documents of the Christian Church. (New York & London: Oxford University Press, 1947) p.53.

¹²⁴ Ibid. p.53.

¹²⁵ Ibid. p.53.

responsible for the creation of the catholic canon of the New Testament.¹²⁶ J. Barton suggests that Harnack's most celebrated thesis upholds that we owe our New Testament to the conflict with Marcion.¹²⁷ For him, if it were not for Marcion, the New Testament canon would not have been closed.

Other scholars such as Gamble and Bruce think that Marcion's role in the formation of the New Testament canon has been exaggerated.¹²⁸ However, it must be noted that Marcion's list is a definite and unique attempt to define the Christian canon. He deserves the honour of making the first canon of the New Testament known to us. Limited as it is by doctrinal predilections, it presents that combination of the Gospel with the apostle, which forms the heart of all subsequent canons. W. F. Beare upholds the view that although Marcion was excommunicated by the church Fathers, repudiated by his father and denounced by Polycarp as the 'first born of Satan' he achieved an extraordinary success, in organisation as in the propagation of his teachings.¹²⁹

From the above discussion, one can argue that Marcion forced the church to make up its mind on the question of what to include in the canon of the New Testament. He did not believe that the God of Moses and Israel was the same as the God of Jesus. In refuting this stance, the church then sought to entrench the view that the Old Testament and the New Testament were not two separate collections, but parts of a single one.

3.3.iii The Influence of Montanism

¹²⁶ J. N. Sanders, *Op. cit.* p.680.

¹²⁷ J. Barton, *The Spirit and the Letter: Studies in Biblical Canon*. (London: SPCK, 1997) p.6.

¹²⁸ Arthur G. Patzia, *Op. cit.* p.6.

¹²⁹ F. W. Beare, *Op. cit.* p.526.

Another threat to the message of Jesus Christ was the heresy called Montanism. This movement began as a protest against the tendency of the church in the second century to regard the decisive epoch of revelation as lying in the past and so to disallow the possibility of fresh truth being revealed through prophecy. This means that the Montanists claimed as authoritative that which was being claimed by their prophets as higher than that of the apostles of Jesus Christ. Faced with this challenge, J. N. Sanders concludes that 'the church was compelled to face a challenge and to define more precisely the limits of the revealed truth'.¹³⁰ In other words, the church had no choice but to come up with a canon that would protect it from heretical thoughts. This is one of C. Banana's points of departure in his quest to have the Bible rewritten. He believes that God's revelation after the closure of the New Testament canon should also be considered and included in the current canon of scripture.¹³¹

Although the factors that facilitated the formation of the New Testament canon, discussed above, seem to be clear enough for anyone to accept, most scholars tend to agree that the actual stages of its accomplishment are, in the earliest period, quite obscure. There seem to have been several factors at play. It is important however to mention the fact that the collection of the four Gospels and of the Pauline letters, each into a single book, was an important stage in the process. The real date of putting the Gospels into the current canon is unknown. They were Gospels of distinct churches originally and local patriotism and conservatism may well have tended to limit their public use to the areas in which they originated. Scholars such as J. N. Sanders want to suggest that it is quite possible that the

¹³⁰ J. N. Sanders, *Op. cit.* p.680.

¹³¹ I. Mukonyora J. L. Cox, F. J. Vestraelen, *Rewriting the Bible: the Real Issue*, (Gweru: Mambo Press) p.18.

fourfold Gospel was a Catholic counter-blast to Marcion's single Gospel¹³². Although this suggestion lacks historical support, it seems tenable.

3.3.iv. Criteria for the Canonisation of the New Testament

Having seen the urgency of making a hedge around those works that were to be used as scripture by the church, the church was faced with the task of agreeing on what considerations were to be made before a book was accepted for use in the church.

A particular set of criteria had to be used in the process of gathering the New Testament writings that were to be used as scripture. Several scholars are in agreement on these criteria although others tend to put more emphasis on one criterion over the other. According to Raymond Brown and Raymond Collins, one of the criteria for canonicity of New Testament works was the 'apostolic origin' of the work.¹³³ This was to be either real or putative. A work had to be accepted as having been written by an apostle of Jesus Christ or a person linked to an apostle of Jesus Christ. By stricter standards current today, it may be legitimately questioned whether a single New Testament work comes directly from any one of the twelve. However, considering this point the canonicity of Revelation and Hebrews was debated precisely because it was doubted whether John and Paul wrote them, respectively. According to Arthur G. Patzia, apostolic origin for the early church implied much more than just apostolic authorship.¹³⁴ This was so because certain documents that claimed to have been by apostles were not canonised. These include the Gospels of Thomas, the Gospel of Peter, and the epistle of Barnabas.

¹³² J. N. Sanders, *Op. cit.* p.680.

¹³³ Raymond Brown and Raymond Collins, *Op. cit.* p.1044.

¹³⁴ Arthur G. Patzia, *Op. cit.* p.103.

Some documents were included in the canon because they were indirectly connected with an apostle. These include the Gospels of Mark and Luke who were not apostles but whose writings were given apostolic authority because of their association with Peter and Paul respectively. This also explains why Hebrews, James, and Jude have been included in the canon.

The second criterion used for canonicity of New Testament works was usage in an established and known church community. According to Raymond Brown and Raymond Collins, most of the New Testament works were addressed to particular Christian communities and the history and importance of the community involved had much to do with preservation and even with the ultimate acceptance of these works¹³⁵. It appears that the books that were finally canonised are those that enjoyed a special status and were utilised both frequently and universally by the Church. This criterion appears to be more significant in canonising a writing than that of apostolicity. However, certain communities were important because of their association with an apostle. An example is Jerusalem, which was the home of most apostles such as Peter, James, and John. If a book were accepted in such a community, it would have fewer problems in finding its way into the New Testament canon.

The other criterion used was conformity with the rule of faith. According to F. L. Cross, rule of faith referred to the names used to outline statements of Christian belief which circulated in the second century Church and were designed to make clear the essential contents of the Christian faith¹³⁶. F. L. Cross also adds that this rule of faith was held to have descended unchanged from apostolic times, in contrast to the spurious traditions of

¹³⁵ Raymond Brown and Raymond Collins, Op. cit. p.1044.

¹³⁶ F. L. Cross, Op. cit. p.1424.

the heretics, which were taken to be later developments and mutually incompatible.¹³⁷ This rule of faith served as a guide in the exegesis of Scripture, and it also helped to distinguish the orthodox tradition from some traditions to which heretics appealed. This can be referred to as catholicity or orthodoxy as well. The Church existed under the threat of false teachings and found it necessary to protect the truth of the Gospel from such heresies as Gnosticism, Docetism and other heterodox movements of the late first and early second century after the death of Christ. According to Raymond Brown and Raymond Collins, doubts about millenarianism caused suspicion of Revelation and the apocryphal Gospel of Peter.¹³⁸ Such works were felt to constitute a doctrinal danger.

According to Arthur G. Patzia, inspiration also played a role in deciding which work was to be canonised. He notes that initially the concept of inspiration was not crucial to the canonicity of the New Testament. This was so because the early Christians believed that the Holy Spirit was in possession of every believer and thus inspired the entire community and not only the writers of the sacred literature.¹³⁹ However, with the exception of the prophetic and apocalyptic documents, inspiration seems to have been attributed by the church to a book only after it was recognised as canonised. This means that it was a corollary of canonicity rather than a criterion for canonicity.

Chance also played a role in the canonisation of certain Christian works. This is linked to the human factor that seeks to show that human beings are frail. Arthur G. Patzia asks an interesting question and says; ‘who knows what went on behind the scenes with bellicose Bishops, stubborn scholars and coercive councils’¹⁴⁰ This seeks to prove that some books

¹³⁷ Ibid. p.1424.

¹³⁸ Raymond Brown and Raymond Collins, Op. cit. p.1044.

¹³⁹ Arthur G. Patzia, Op. cit. p.105.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. p.105.

may have found their way into the canon by hook and by crook. This is difficult to refuse given the way in which there appeared many pseudopigraphal works once it was realised that apostolicity was an important criterion for canonicity.

3.4.v. Collection of the New Testament Scriptures

With the above criteria for the canonicity of the New Testament, different communities collected some Christian writings and considered them sacred and thereby valuable to be used in worship. In order for one to understand the issues involved in the collection of New Testament writings, one has to know that most of the Pauline letters were written as instruction and encouragement to Churches that Paul had evangelised. The letter to the Romans is a notable exception in this case. In these writings, Paul used an amanuensis to write some and in other cases, he wrote them himself. Some of the Pauline corpus is including Colossians and Ephesians, as well as the Pastoral letters such as 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus are under dispute. Most of these arguments are centered on whether or not Paul wrote them.

However, in terms of the collection of these letters, Raymond Brown and Raymond Collins quote K. Lake as suggesting that a community took its letter from Paul and added it to its letters addressed to neighbouring churches.¹⁴¹ On the other hand, E. G. Goodspeed suggests that there was a lack of interest in Pauline letters at first. It was only after AD 90, after the publication of Acts, that the importance of Paul's contribution to Christianity was realised.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Raymond Brown and Raymond Collins, *Op. cit.* p.1045.

¹⁴² Ibid. p.1045.

There are two schools of thought regarding the date of the writing of the book of Acts. The first school suggests that it was written in AD 63 and the second school suggests that it was written in AD 70 or even later. The first date is suggested because of the book's silence about events after AD 63. For example, there is no allusion to events that happened after the close of Paul's two-year imprisonment in Rome, the burning of Rome, the persecution of Christians (AD 64), the martyrdom of Peter and Paul (possibly AD.67), and the destruction of Jerusalem (AD 70).

The second school of thought, which supports the later date, upholds the view that Acts 1.8 reveals one of the purposes Luke had in writing history, and that this purpose influenced the way the book ended. This school suggests that Luke wanted to show how the church penetrated the world of his day in ever-widening circles (Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the ends of the earth) until it reached Rome, the world's political and cultural center.¹⁴³ On this understanding, mention of the martyrdom of Paul (AD67) and the destruction of Jerusalem (AD 70) may not have been pertinent.

The argument that people took an interest in Paul's letters after the publication of the book of Acts sounds plausible especially when one considers those communities that had not seen Paul in person. It is probable that when they read his activities in Acts, they realised that he was really used by God in mighty ways and what he wrote was worth taking as Scripture.

3.4.vi Other Collections of the New Testament Writings

¹⁴³ Kenneth Barker (ed), The NIV Study Bible. (USA: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995) p.1643.

It is important to note that the collection of New Testament writings did not come out easily. Different communities upheld certain books as canonical, which were not considered as such by the other community even though most books were commonly accepted as being canonical. An example is that of the Epistle of Barnabas that was treated by Clement at Alexandria as Scripture. On the other hand, Eusebius at Caesarea treated the same book as disputed. He also disputed the authenticity of The Apocalypse of Peter, The Teaching of the Apostles, and the Gospel according to the Hebrews.

3.4.vi.a The Muratorian Canon

This is a list of books of the New Testament with brief remarks about their origin and authenticity, found in a manuscript written at Bobbio in the eighth century but preserved in the Ambrosian Library at Milan and published by Ludovico Antonio Muratori in 1740. Henry Bettenson quotes Wescott, as saying this document was ‘written in barbarous Latin, by a careless and ignorant scribe, probably in the eighth century. The Greek original probably dated from the end of the second century’¹⁴⁴. This means that this is a translation into Latin that was corrupted from Greek. The beginning of this document is lost but scholars believe that it dealt with the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. It also mentions Acts and the thirteen letters of Paul as well as the three pastorals together with Philemon.

This fragment with its authoritative ring is quite revealing of the twenty-seven books included in our own canon. It recognises no fewer than twenty-two books, which are the four Gospels, Acts and thirteen letters of Paul, three Catholic letters, and Revelation, as well as two other works that were ultimately considered apocryphal such as the Wisdom

¹⁴⁴ Henry Bettenson, *Op. cit.* p.40.

of Solomon and the Apocalypse of Peter. Although this canon accepts the Shepherd of Hermas, it does not encourage it to be read in public.

3.4.vii. The Closing of the New Testament Canon

With the collection of the Scriptures having been done, there was need to close the canon. This meant sealing it such that there would be no more additions or subtractions. In the Greek and Latin Churches the closure of the New Testament canon can be investigated by looking at the contribution of Church Fathers such as Origen (c.185 - c.254).

At the beginning of the third century, the canon of the New Testament had unquestionably come into being and there is wide agreement about its constituent parts. There are minor areas of disagreement that remained. However, these did not affect the four Gospels, the thirteen letters of Paul or the book of Acts. These were beyond dispute. According to F. W. Beare, the fixing of the precise limits was to be the work of the third and fourth centuries in the Greek and Latin churches, in the Syrian church it had to await the reforming Bishops of the fifth and sixth centuries.¹⁴⁵

Origen, a well-traveled church Father, came from Egypt and he had been to places such as Rome, Greece, Palestine, and Asia Minor. In all these travels, he had observed both the agreements and the differences among churches of different regions in their attitude toward the several New Testament writings. He was aware that his own views were not identical with those of other churches everywhere. Therefore, without wanting to lay down a judgement of his own, F. W. Beare notes that he makes note of the practice of the

¹⁴⁵ F.W. Beare, Op. cit. p.529.

Church classifying the books as ‘acknowledged’ or ‘disputed’ and beside these are a number, which are simply ‘false’.¹⁴⁶

P. H. Pfeiffer suggests that Origen’s list of ‘acknowledged’ books include the four Gospels, the Pauline letters (fourteen including Hebrews, even though he knew that it was not by Paul and was not accepted anywhere), Acts, 1 John, 1 Peter, and Revelation. Among the ‘disputed’ books, he includes James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John and apparently the Shepherd of Hermas, which he himself treats as apostolic and authoritative.¹⁴⁷ Even though the book of Hebrews does not contain the name of its author or its recipients, Origen accepted it because of its substance. For Origen, this book gives finality to the Christian dispensation and superiority to the Old Covenant.

P. H. Pfeiffer also maintains that Origen justifies the inclusion of Hebrews in the Pauline collection on the ground that the thoughts are the apostle’s though the style and diction show that the actual composition was done by one of his associates. The Didache and the Epistle of Barnabas are not specifically classified, but were used by Origen as documents of high authority, even they were not canonical.¹⁴⁸ The books, which he most rigorously excluded, are the numerous uncanonical gospels, such as The Gospel of Peter and The Gospel of Thomas which he adjudges heretical. In this area, he finds no disagreement among church communities.

In the Syrian churches, the history of the growth of the canon remains obscure until the beginning of the fifth century. Until that time, F. W. Beare suggests that they were using Tatian’s Diatessaron almost exclusively in place of the four Gospels, which had become

¹⁴⁶ F.W.Beare, Op. cit. p.529.

¹⁴⁷P. Pfeiffer. Op. cit. p.529.

dormant in Greek and Latin churches.¹⁴⁹ The Diatessaron was an attempt to harmonise the four Gospels of Matthew, Luke, Mark, and John. The Syrian Canon of the New Testament, therefore, consisted of the Diatessaron, Acts, and the Pauline collection that was enlarged to fifteen letters by the inclusion of the spurious 3 Corinthians, that was extant only in Armenian and Coptic Latin versions. However, some scholars suggest that the Syriac list of c.400 AD puts the four Gospels in place of the Diatessaron and omits 3 Corinthians.

This shows that the Syrian Church was moving towards conformity with their Greek neighbours. However, the discrepancy in the number of books to use in the Church and those not to use was also a difficult thing to agree upon. The growth of the New Testament in both the Greek and the Syrian Churches is an indication that some inspired books could have been left out and some uninspired books could have been included in the New Testament canon that is in current use.

3.5 Canonisation and Council of Churches

With the growth of New Testament writings, there were a number of councils of Churches that also played a part in deciding what was to be used by the Church in a particular place. It must be noted that these councils did not prescribe what was to be used by the whole Church. The decisions made had local rather than a universal effect.

According to Raymond Brown and Raymond Collins, there seem to have been a Church Council held in Laodicea, a Hellenistic city of the Roman province of Asia, in c.AD360. At this meeting the idea of a list of books for use in the Church was mooted and the sixth

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. p.529.

¹⁴⁹ F. W. Beare, *Op.cit.* p.531.

canon of the Synod of Laodicea (c.AD367) provided a list of all the present twenty-seven books of the New Testament except the Apocalypse.¹⁵⁰ However according to F. L. Cross, there is nothing definite known of the Council of Laodicea.¹⁵¹ The historicity of this Council is shrouded in lack of facts with some historians such as F.L.Cross doubting its reality. However, the list of books that was put together at this Council and finally made into a canon in (c.AD367) was also adopted at other councils such as Hippo (AD393), and Carthage (AD397/ 419).

According to F. L. Cross, the Council of Hippo was held by non-Donatist Catholic Church in Latin Africa on 8 October AD393.¹⁵² Another Council at Carthage followed this in AD397, at which the church in Roman North Africa held a Synod which accepted the twenty-seven books of the New Testament and in AD419 this decision was ratified. According to David. G. Dunbar, these two Councils at Carthage prescribed as canonical the current New Testament corpus¹⁵³. At these two councils, Augustine of Hippo was present and it is likely that his views were probably decisive for the definition of the canon after these two councils.

After the third century with a canon of between twenty-two and thirty New Testament books, one can say that the canon was in a state of flux. It was only during the fourth century that major changes occurred. The council of Nicaea (AD325) did not deal with the canon. It left it open to speculation by different religious centers. People such as Eusebius made fresh contributions to the New Testament canon. However, this did not change much since twenty-two books remained significant to the Church with the rest

¹⁵⁰ Raymond Brown and Raymond Collins, Op.cit, p.1036.

¹⁵¹ F. L. Cross, Op.cit, p.950.

¹⁵² Ibid. p.950.

being doubted. However, during the same century, Jerome, a Biblical scholar and monk who lived in Bethlehem, made a significant mark on the canon of scripture. It was Jerome who moved away from the categories of Clement, Origen, and Eusebius and accepted the twenty-seven books which form the current New Testament canon. History has it that in AD382, Eusebius influenced the Synod of Rome to accept the twenty-seven books that are in the current New Testament section of the Bible. The bishops of Rome who attended this synod were convinced by Eusebius' position and they decided to take it. However there was need to lobby other churches and regions to accept this decision.

The council at Ephesus did not resolve the issue of the canon of Scripture. However, the Council of Chalcedon (AD451) did so. This council was held in the city of Chalcedon in Asia Minor. According to F. L. Cross, it was convoked by the Emperor Marcian to deal with the Eutychian heresy. This meeting was attended by between 500 and 600 bishops, all of them Easterns except two Bishops from the Province of Africa.¹⁵⁴ This council drew up a statement of faith, which turned up to be called the Chalcedonian Definition. This council also agreed to accept the canon of twenty-seven books that Rome and Carthage had adopted earlier on. This means that the debate was finally closed with both the Eastern and the Western church using the same twenty-seven books of the New Testament canon. Even the later councils such as Florence (1442) accepted the twenty-seven books as Scripture. This debate was reopened during the Reformation when Luther questioned the letter of James. For him this letter was worth throwing in the fire. He also questioned Revelation.

¹⁵³ David G. Dunbar, 'The Biblical Canon' in D.A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (eds.), Hermeneutics, Authority & Canon. (Michigan: Baker Books, 1995) p.317.

¹⁵⁴ F. L. Cross, Op. cit. p.315.

At the Council of Florence, the tradition of forty-six Old Testament Books and twenty-seven New Testament books was entrenched in the Bull *Contante Domino*. This was promulgated as a document of union between Rome and the Coptic Christians.¹⁵⁵ The same list of twenty-seven books is still in circulation today. In this case, councils only made official that which communities had accepted as inspired.

The council of Trent (1545-63) is another Council that helps one to understand the contribution of Councils of Churches in the canonisation of the New Testament. Trent was held under the backdrop of the Protestant threat that came with the questioning of certain books such as those referred to as Apocryphal books as well as some New Testament books such as James and Revelation. At its fourth session, it promulgated a bull that had to do with scripture *De Canonicis Scripturis*. This bull was promulgated to curb any doubt, as to which books should be recognised as scriptural. According to Raymond Brown and Raymond Collins, Trent listed as sacred and canonical ‘with all their parts’ and as inspired by the holy Spirit seventy-three books, including the Old Testament that were not accepted by many Jews and Protestants.¹⁵⁶ This council entrenched the Catholic canon of scripture.

There was also the Vatican I Council (1870) that spoke of ‘sacred and canonical books... written by inspiration of the Holy Spirit’¹⁵⁷ but left the identity of those books to the enumeration of Trent (1545-63). In this way, one can see that canonicity involved the Church’s acknowledging the inspired quality of the books. If the Church did not acknowledge the book as inspired, it would automatically be left out.

¹⁵⁵ Raymond Brown and Raymond Collins *Op.cit.* p.1036.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.* p.1036.

Vatican II (1965) followed the first one. In its pronouncements (72:13-16), it stated that 'by means of the same (apostolic) tradition the full canon of the sacred books is known to the church' Also, 'Holy Mother Church relying on the faith of the apostolic age accepts as sacred and canonical the books of the Old Testament and the New Testament, whole and entire, with all their parts on the ground that, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit ... they have God as their author and have been handed on to the Church itself'.¹⁵⁸ This stance has characterised the Roman Catholic Church up to this day. Their Bible is therefore bigger than the Protestant Bible since it includes the seven books that are referred to as deuterocanonical by the Protestants. These books include Tobit, Judith, 1 and 2 Maccabees, the Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, 1 and 2 Maccabees and parts of Esther and Daniel. The Protestant Bible finds its roots in M. Luther who broke with the church tradition that believed that the doctrine of purgatory was scriptural. The Church's scripture was 2 Maccabees 12: 46. This led Luther to reject not only Maccabees, as scripture but also Jude, Wisdom, Tobit, Sirach, Baruch and portions of Esther and Daniel as apocrypha. This means books which are not held equal to the sacred scriptures and yet are useful and good for reading. Such books continued to be grouped separately and this has brought a difference in the number of books found in the Catholic Bible and those found in the Protestant Bible.

Despite the work of all the above Councils and synods, the subject of canon of Scripture has continued to be a source of disunity amongst Christians up to this day. This can be seen in the manner Roman Catholics and Protestants continue to use different canons of Scripture. Raymond Brown and Raymond Collins maintain that the early reformers were not eager to reject the Apocrypha altogether. As a compromise they relegated these books

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. p.1036.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. p.1036.

to a secondary status as an Old Testament appendix in Zwingli's Zurich Bible (1529), the Calvinist Olivetan Bible (1534-1535), and the English Bibles such as Coverdale (1536), Matthew (1537), and the second edition of the Great Bible, (1540), Bishops (1568) and the King James Version (1611).¹⁵⁹ This shows that they still valued these books although they did not want to accord them the same status with those that they considered to be inspired.

However, hard line Reformers excluded the Apocrypha totally from their Bibles. According to Raymond Brown and Raymond Collins, examples of such a stance can be found in the Gallican Confession (1559), Belgian Confession (1561), the Anglican Confession (1563) and the second Helvetic Confession (1566). The Puritan Confession also declared the Apocrypha to be of a merely secular nature. Indeed, the Westminster Confession (1648) stated that 'the books commonly called apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are not part of the canon of scripture; hence no authority to the church of God'.¹⁶⁰ This means that they were not to be approved or used in worship or in religious instruction in these Protestant areas. However, the Roman Catholic Church through its councils of Trent (1545-63) and Vatican I (1869-70) and Vatican II (1962-65), endorsed the apocrypha and maintained that it should be used just like any other Scripture. To this end the Catholic canon contains seventy-three books whereas the Protestant Bible contains sixty-six books.

3.6 Church Fathers Views on the Canon of Scripture

The Church Fathers are those great leaders of the Church who lived in the early days of Christianity who championed the cause of Christianity in its early days. They were

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. p.1036.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. p.1036.

instrumental in the formation of doctrine and the charting of the way that the church was to take in its growth and belief system. A few examples can help us understand their contribution in the growth of the Canon of scripture.

An example of the earliest Church Fathers is Papias (c. AD70 –AD140/160). He was Bishop of Hierapolis. In one of the letters of Ignatius, he is described as ‘well known as Bishop of Hierapolis, a man well skilled in all manner of learning and well acquainted with scriptures’.¹⁶¹ His words concerning the canon of Scripture are quoted by Eusebius in Ecclesiastical History. Papias is quoted saying that,

*if I met with anyone who had been a follower of the elders anywhere, I made it a point to inquire what were the declarations of the elders. What did Andrew, Peter, or Philip say. What was said by Thomas, James, John, Matthew, or any other of the disciples of our Lord ... for I do not think I derived so much benefit from books as from the living voice of those that are still surviving.*¹⁶²

Papias shows that he was close to the disciples of Jesus. He gives authority to the sayings of the apostles. He also acknowledges the Gospel writers as authentic. His contribution, therefore, is crucial since he was closer to the authors of scripture.

Concerning the four Gospel writers, Papias says different things that point to the fact that the Gospel writers were much closer to him, with some being his contemporaries. Concerning John Eusebius suggests that Papias professed to have received the declarations of the apostle from those who were in company with them and said also that he was the first hearer of Aristion and the presbyter John. Papias is also quoted by Eusebius as saying that Papias wrote that,

¹⁶¹ Eusebius’, Ecclesiastical History . Translated by C. F. Cruse,(New updated Edition), (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998) p.100.

¹⁶² Ibid. p.104.

*Mark being the interpreter of Peter whatsoever he recorded, he did so with great accuracy but not in the order in which it was spoken or done by our Lord, for he neither heard nor followed our Lord, but as before said, he was not to give a history of our Lord's discourses; wherefore Mark has not erred in any thing, by writing some things as he has recorded them; for he was carefully attentive to one thing, not to pass by any thing that he heard, or to state any thing falsely in these accounts*¹⁶³.

This shows that Papias had a high respect for Mark. About Matthew he writes little. According to Eusebius, Papias believes that 'Matthew composed his history in the Hebrew dialect, and everyone translated it as he was able'¹⁶⁴. However, Papias is silent on Luke.

Another of the Church Fathers, Justin Martyr (c.100 – 163) was one of the early Christian apologists who was born of pagan parents. He was then converted from pagan philosophy to Christianity in c.130 AD. F.L. Cross suggests that at Ephesus he engaged in his first disputation with Trypho the Jew.¹⁶⁵ In addition, later he opened a Christian school and one of his students was Tatian. Justin is outstanding due to the 'Apologies that he produced. In one of his apologies that he wrote defending Christians, he writes that 'on a day called Sunday, those who live in the cities or in the Country hold a meeting at which the memoirs of the apostles or writings of the prophets are read.'¹⁶⁶ These memoirs are the Gospel writings that eventually became authoritative for the Church. Again, Justin provides information on how the Gospel writings were used in the early Church.

The other Church Father to acknowledge the four-fold Gospel was Clement of Alexandria (c.AD150-AD215). He was a contemporary of Tatian and was an esteemed

¹⁶³ Ibid. p.105.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. p.105.

¹⁶⁵ F. L. Cross, Op.cit. p 915

¹⁶⁶ Henry Bettenson, Op. cit. p.94.

director of the great Catechetical School in Alexandria founded by Pantaenus. Arthur G. Patzia maintains that Clement cites four canonical gospels as Scripture although he acknowledges the existence of the other Gospels such as the Gospel of the Hebrews and the Gospel of the Egyptians¹⁶⁷. According to J. N. Sanders, Clement also accepts Hebrews as Pauline in addition to the 13 epistles which are 1 Peter, 1&2 John, Jude, Barnabas, Acts, Revelation and also the apocalypse of Peter, 1 Clement, Didache, and Hermas. He may also have known James, 3 John and 2 Peter. This means that his list of New Testament books comprised thirty-two books.

As for Eusebius, (c.AD260-AD340), the Bishop of Caesarea and ‘the father of Church history’¹⁶⁸, there are books that fall in the category of ‘acknowledged’ books. According to J. N. Sanders, these books include the four Gospels, Acts, Paul’s epistles, 1 John, 1 Peter, and (somewhat hesitantly) Revelations.¹⁶⁹ It is important to note that Eusebius regarded Hebrews as Pauline. For him there are books that were ‘disputed’ but known to the majority such as James, Jude, 2 Peter and 2 and 3 John. Amongst the books that he rejected outrightly were the Apocalypse of Peter, the Apocalypse of Barnabas, the so-called Teaching of the Apostles, and the Gospel according to the Hebrews. He also wanted to include Revelation to this list but tradition turned out to be too strong for him.

All these Church Fathers reveal the fact that the Canon of scripture took a lot of discussion and consideration both at local as well as at regional level. Individual church leaders, with the support of their followers, could decide on which books to use and use only those books. Tradition also seems to have played a significant role down the

¹⁶⁷ Arthur. G. Patzia, Op. cit p66

¹⁶⁸ F.L.Cross, Op. cit. p574

¹⁶⁹ J. N. Sanders, Op. cit. p681

centuries. This is seen in the present day with people just using a particular canon of scripture on the basis that it is the one that was used by their historical church.

3.7 Canon within the Canon

Given this obscure picture of the growth of the canon of scripture, some scholars such as Raymond Brown and Raymond Collins have suggested that even the current canon of Scripture should not be seen as closed and exhaustive. Rather there has to be a ‘canon within a canon’. The Reformation period came with this acute question of degrees of canonicity. Even in situations where it is agreed which books of Scripture are inspired and canonical, there have been indications that some are more authoritative than others.

Some books have been given more value than others have. On the other hand, other books claim to be more directly from God than others. An example is found from the prophets who claim to convey the word of God, as given to them directly by God, whereas the wisdom writers, although inspired, seem to be giving us the fruit of their own human experience. A good example of the way prophets speak as people who receive revelation and convey it with no amendments is found in Hosea. 1: 1, ‘The word of the Lord that came to Hosea son of Beerī during the reigns of Uzziah...’ Such an introduction would put more value of a piece of Scripture as compared to Ecclesiastes 1: 1), which opens by saying ‘The words of the Teacher, son of David King in Jerusalem’.

On the other hand if one considers the liturgy of the church, it is noticeable to realise that some books are used extensively and others are seldom used. This is an indication of forming an ‘actual canon’ that is good for a particular denomination within a ‘formal canon’. Raymond Brown and Raymond Collins suggest that when such differences occur

between the two testaments one can solve them in terms of new revelation.¹⁷⁰ They give an example of Job's formal and explicit denial of an afterlife (14.7-22), and contrast it with Jesus' clear affirmation of it in Mark 12: 26-27.

There are also divergent theologies in the New Testament works of roughly the same period, which leads one into coming up with the idea of a 'canon within a canon'. An example is that of the outlook on the Law in Romans 10: 4. 'For Christ is the end of Law so that there may be righteousness for everyone'.¹⁷¹ In Matthew 5: 18, it is recorded, 'for truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished'.¹⁷² These two quotations show clearly that there is divergence in theological slants between these two positions. At face value, the above reference from Romans would seem to suggest that Christ is the fulfillment of the law. Christians would no longer need to be under the Law. On the other hand, the reference from Matthew seems to indicate that Jesus is saying every law has to be observed. Given this scenario, one needs to understand the situation in which Jesus said this quotation. He was not speaking against observing the requirements of the Law, but against hypocritical legalism. To this end, the two would be complementary references to the law.

However, the question that rises is that if there are two divergent views in the New Testament, which one is to be considered as authoritative? Scholars such as Raymond Brown and Raymond Collins suggest that, just as Paul distinguished between the letter and the spirit (2 Cor.3), so the Christian can not make an infallible authority out of the canonical New Testament but must distinguish the real spirit within the New Testament.

¹⁷⁰ Raymond Brown and Raymond Collins, *Op. cit.* p.1052.

¹⁷¹ Kenneth Barker (ed), *Op. cit.* p.1723.

According to H. Kung, this theory of a canon within the canon means an implicit rejection of some books from the current canon of scripture.¹⁷³ History has it that it was church usage that led Trent (1546) to determine which books should be accepted as canonical. In the same way, it should also be church usage that determines the degree of normative authority or canonicity, to be attributed to a New Testament practice or doctrine. This will entail a canon within a canon.

On the other hand, the recognition that in practice the church does not accept the whole New Testament as equally normative is related to the problem of distinguishing between the temporal limitations of Biblical writers and the divine revelation they were conveying. These writers spoke as people of their times, and not all their religious statements should have enduring value for all times. A good example is found in the apocalyptic statements. It is encouraged that the reader of these statements must exercise discretion and restraint.

3.8 Recent Reactions to the Problem of the Canon

Within the last quarter of the twentieth century, there has been much scholarly discussion of the canon of Scripture. In some of these discussions, scholars such as G. Theissen, W. Kelber and L. Schoffroft, challenge the current canon of scripture. Below we analyse some of them briefly.

According to Raymond Brown and Raymond Collins, there seems to be a serious challenge to the validity of the New Testament canon in particular. They suggest that this

¹⁷² Ibid. p.1445.

¹⁷³ Raymond Brown and Raymond Collins, Op. cit. p.1053.

is so considering the way other scholars have gone on to use the canonical writings to reconstruct an earlier style of Christianity which is judged preferable to that reflected in the canonical writings themselves. Such a practice is a distortion of earlier Christianity.¹⁷⁴ The reason is that the canonical books do not provide a complete and comprehensive picture of early Christianity. What we have are isolated events that were remembered by those who wrote the books.

G. Theissen gives an example of the above fact in his celebrated work, The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity. He argues that since the ethical radicalism of Jesus Christ did not serve the organised Pauline congregations, Paul suppressed that radicalism by not quoting Jesus' words.¹⁷⁵ This sounds plausible in view of the fact that Paul does not quote Jesus in his writings. Jesus also sounded quite radical in his words. However, Paul also sounded quite radical, a fact that saw him being persecuted in the mission field.

On the other hand W. Kelber, The Oral and Written Gospel, proposes that Mark's written Gospel narrowed the much wider range of oral presentation about Jesus and indeed discredited the most plausible trends of the Gospel's oral tradition that is from the disciples, and from the family of Jesus including Jesus' mother.¹⁷⁶ This is understandable given the fact that Mark is the shortest of all the four Gospels and its possible that Mark left out a lot of detail that was available orally. Moreover Mark only wrote what Peter told him about the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. p.1054.

¹⁷⁵ G. Theissen, The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984) p.86.

¹⁷⁶ W. Kelber, The Oral and Written Gospel. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983) p.103.

The other scholar who poses a challenge to the validity of the New Testament canon is L. Schoffroft, who says the pre-Lukan magnificat and the Beatitudes represent a theology in which the rich were truly cast down and Jesus functioned as a would be destroyer of the existing social order radically reversing the inequities of wealth and power.¹⁷⁷ This suggestion implies that Luke spiritualised all these statements that attacked the rich and those in power, for his own good.

Another challenge to the canon came from an appeal to the apocryphal gospels as a witness to a Christianity that antedated in time or spirit what is found in Canonical writings. Scholars such as H. Koester and J. D. Crossan suggest that works like Secret Mark and the Gospel of Thomas belong to so early a stage in the development of Gospel literature that in whole or in part they antedated the canonical Gospels.¹⁷⁸ What this means is that such writings have been used adventurously to support themes of proto-Christian egalitarianism, socialism and other current themes such as feminism.

3.9 Conclusion

The above discussion has shown that it took a considerably long time stretching as far back as the era before the coming of Jesus Christ for the current canon of scripture to be put together. The first list to be put together was the Jewish canon, which came together in stages starting with the Pentateuch, followed by the Prophets and the Writings. Different communities would hold certain books in high esteem and others would be less popular in some places. However, this led to the use of different lists of books in different areas as shown by the use of the Alexandrian Canon in Alexandria and the Greek Old Testament canon in the Diaspora where Jews had learned Greek, which was the language

¹⁷⁷Raymond Brown and Raymond Collins, Op. cit. p.1054.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. p.1054.

of commerce. The New Testament also took a long time to put together. This process started when the church leaders realised that those who had been with Jesus were dying. Those who remained were encouraged to write what they knew concerning the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. With numerous books, moving around the church leaders undertook to put a hedge around those books that they considered to be inspired. This also took a longtime and different Church communities tended to use certain books which others were not using. The process of canonisation also found some Church Councils and synods having to agree on what was to be followed. It is through these councils and synods that we came to have the current canon of Scripture that is in circulation. It is also important to note that the subject of canon of Scripture continues to give problems today and it contributes significantly to the reasons for the disunity among Christian organisations and denominations.

CHAPTER 4

NEW CHALLENGES ON THE BIBLE

4.1 Introduction

The Age of the Enlightenment, which occurred in the eighteenth century, ushered in a new era in which reason became the major source of authority. Its adherents distrusted all authority and tradition in matters of intellectual inquiry, and believed that truth could be attained only through reason, observation and experiment. Several institutions such as the church, which used to command a lot of authority and influence in society, suddenly lost that influence. There was a paradigm shift in the centre of power as it moved from the Church to the civic society. In actual fact, the thinkers of the enlightenment often came into conflict with the Church. Most of them were atheists and people such as D. Hume; D. Diderot rejected religion less vehemently. The Bible was also exposed to some critical evaluation. This age of reason meant that the Bible was treated like any other human work that was liable to error. This led to several theological positions being taken by various sectors of people, which ultimately had a bearing on the Bible, itself. In this chapter I will discuss two challenges that came from feminist theologians and homosexual advocates. In one way or the other, these challenges seem to render certain sectors of the Bible worthy of being removed from the Bible or rephrased. It is, therefore, important to discuss these challenges separately, starting with the Feminist challenge.

4.2 The Challenge of Feminist Theology

Feminism is one of the greatest challenges that have brought the Bible into some radical criticism over the past few centuries. This is a challenge from women and men, most of whom have studied theology. These women have studied the Bible and established what they refer to as weak areas that have been written from a perspective that seeks to denigrate women and make the males the norm for humanity. According to Ferdinand

Deist, 'feminism is the doctrine and advocacy of equal rights for the sexes, on all levels and in all walks of life'.¹⁷⁹ However Michael Harper says 'feminism is a movement that supports women's claims to be given rights equal to those of men'.¹⁸⁰ This means feminism is an advocacy for women to be seen and heard in society including the Church.

The early feminists viewed the Bible to be undermining the position of women rendering them into oblivion. Feminists claim that the way women have been treated both in the world and in the church is a result of the Bible that has presented them in such a way that makes them unimportant. One of the reasons put forward for the oppression of women is the fact that through Eve women sinned. The role assigned to women in both the Old Testament and the New Testament is also suspect. The position of women has mainly been influenced by the patriarchal background, upon which the Scriptures have been written. According to Michael Harper, 'patriarchy is a family or society in which authority is vested in males'.¹⁸¹ This means that it is a society in which the father exercises authority over all his descendants for as long as he lives. Even when he dies, it is the male child who exercises authority over the family even though there may well be older women.

In such a society it is the male human being who is in charge. The majority of the feminist theologians agree that patriarchalism is clearly the orientation of the Old Testament. Rosemary Radford Ruether upholds the view that 'patriarchy is the social context for both the Old Testament and the New Testament, and that this social context

¹⁷⁹ Ferdinand Deist, A Concise Dictionary of Theological and Related Terms (Pretoria: J.L. van Schaik Ltd, 1984) p.94.

¹⁸⁰ Michael Harper, Equal and Different. (London : Hidder & Stoughton Ltd, 1994), p.10.

¹⁸¹ Ibid p.13.

has been incorporated into religious ideology on many levels'.¹⁸² This is evidenced by the preponderance of Biblical images for the father-God that are masculine, and the slant of the cultic legislation which is male oriented as well. Cain Hope Felder suggests that the Old Testament reflects a decidedly patriarchal hierarchy, despite the mention of some exceptional women such as Miriam, the prophetess, and sister of Moses (Exd 15: 20), chosen women like Hannah (1 Sam.1: 5ff), Sarah (Gen.17:16-19), Rebecca (Gen.25: 21-26), Rachel (Gen.29: 31), Hagar (Gen.16: 15-16) and Salome Alexandra, who held major political power for brief periods in Jewish history.¹⁸³ Feminists, therefore, maintain the position that the majority of women mentioned will have been involved in a scandal; hence they are mentioned to further reduce the position of women.

The treatment of females in the Bible suggests that men and women were treated separately due to this patriarchal system. The Old Testament is full of examples that show the discrepancy that obtained in the manner women were exposed to bad treatment as compared to their male counterparts. A good example is found in Lev.12:1-5 where the Bible says the period of uncleanness after giving birth to a baby son was seven days but fourteen days for a baby girl. This differentiation from early childhood would continue until death. According to the majority of feminists this is unfair. On the one hand, a man was allowed to divorce his wife if he found anything indecent about his wife; however, the same is not said to women who found something reprehensible in their husbands (Deut.24:1-4). This would seem to imply that men would not do anything wrong. However, experience has shown that men are equally fallen and capable of evil.

¹⁸² Rosemary Radford Ruether, Sexism and God Talk: Towards a Feminist Theology. (London: SCM Press, 1983) p.23.

¹⁸³ Cain Hope Felder, Troubling Biblical Waters. (New York : Orbis Books, 1989) p.140.

On the other hand one can say that patriarchalism was also transcended in the Old Testament legislation. This is so particularly when one considers that both the father and mother deserved honour (Exd.20:12). In addition to this the woman and the man were also to share in the Sabbath rest (Exd.20: 8). With regard to adultery, both the adulterer and the adulteress are to be put to death (Lev.20:10). Food taboos were also made mandatory for both sexes (Lev.11). This shows the other side that puts men and women on the same level but feminists theologians do not want to refer to these passages.

Despite these similarities, patriarchalism has meant that men continue to dominate women. Feminists are, therefore, advocating that such scripture that put men and women at the same level, which have been avoided by men, in their efforts to oppress women, should be read as a way of putting men and women at the same level. Talking about patriarchy in the church, Mercy Amba Oduyoye says ‘the church offers up too many women on the altar of patriarchy. But there are women who consciously and deliberately stay with the church struggling to live out the future in the oppressive present. There is a living and a life - enhancing sacrifice’¹⁸⁴ This observation is made of the countless women who have remained in the church although they still suffer at the hands of patriarchy.

As the women responded to the Bible three different views can be seen which are quite distinct. These are the Moderate view, the Liberal view and the Radical view. These three views show the wide range of feminist thinking. Like any other group of advocates, feminists do not share the same views in their criticism of the Bible.

¹⁸⁴ Letty. M. Russell (et al) (eds.), Inheriting Our Mother’s Gardens: Feminist Theology in Third World Perspective. (Louisville: Westminster Press, 1988), p.51.

4.2.i The Moderate View

This group of feminists do not really consider the Bible to be a problem in itself but rather the acceptance of some perverted and sexist interpretations of the Bible. This group of feminists uphold the view that once the Bible is properly interpreted, it can be seen as not being hostile to women and there will not be any need to call for it to be rewritten. This category of feminists believes that the Bible must be interpreted symbolically or mystically. They agree that the Bible is harmful to women if it is taken literally, but when understood according to its inner or mystical meaning it affirms the equality of women with men. Claudia V. Camp calls this view a 'loyalist mode'. For her, this group of women does not simply accept the traditionally understood Biblical mandate of female inferiority and submission. Instead these feminists affirm the reality of the Bible as divine revelation, the word of God, and the validity of the notion that will allow women and men to live together in true happiness and mutual respect.¹⁸⁵ She gives us examples of such theologians as Mary Baker who still feel that if the Bible is interpreted well there is no need to rewrite it.

4.2.ii The Liberal View

This group of feminists accept the theory of evolution to be the answer of culture and religion. This category of feminists, therefore, view the Bible as a purely human book which records the history of one of the world's religious traditions, and which has no special divine authority and no more relevance for today than scores of other such books. For them the Bible should just be ignored. According to Rosemary Radford Ruether, this liberal feminism has its roots in a feminist's appropriation of the liberal traditions of

¹⁸⁵ Claudia V. Camp, "Feminist Theological Hermeneutics: Canon and Christian Identity" in Stephen E. Fowl, The Theological Interpretation of Scripture. (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Inc, 1997), p.56.

equal rights, rooted in the doctrine of a common human nature of all persons.¹⁸⁶ Liberal feminists do not only seek to change the Bible but they also challenge marriage laws as well as other traditions that tend to make men control women's bodies. Claudia V. Camp calls this a 'liberationist mode'. For her this group of feminists defines salvation as a struggle of women against oppression as its hermeneutical key.¹⁸⁷ Such a move, for the feminists will ensure that they will thrive towards a transformation of the social order. Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza is one example of a liberal feminist who also takes the Bible seriously.

4.2.iii The Radical View

This view agrees with the Liberal understanding of the nature of the Bible as a purely human book with no divine authority, but it does not agree that it could be simply ignored. They maintain that so long as the Bible is being distributed in mass quantities, and large numbers of people still believe that it is God's inspired word, they will believe that it provides a divinely given mandate to keep women in subjection. For them this means that some positive action has to be taken. Whether it is just a matter of wrong interpretation or a false view of its nature, either way the influence of the Bible must be neutralised. This was Elizabeth Stanton's view. Stanton believed that the Bible must be destroyed if women are to be free.¹⁸⁸ In order to neutralise the influence of the Bible, Elizabeth Stanton and other women wrote The Women's Bible to show the world what the Bible should be like. One can say that such an effort was rewriting the Bible par excellence.

¹⁸⁶ Rosemary Radford Ruether, Op. Cit. p.216.

¹⁸⁷ Claudia V. Camp, "Feminist Theological Hermeneutics: Canon and Christian Identity", in Stephen E. Fowl, The Theological Interpretation of Scripture. (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Inc, 1997) p.56.

¹⁸⁸ Allan Turner, "Feminism and the Bible", (Internet, <http://www.pyleofbooks.com/books/bible-feminists-and-sexual-harassment.htm>) p.1-3.

This view is also what is referred to by Claudia. V. Camp, as the ‘the rejectionist mode’. For her it is not only the Bible itself that should be thrown away but the whole of both Judaism and Christianity is so corrupted by patriarchalism as to be irredeemable.¹⁸⁹ Feminists in this category suggest that the Bible and Christianity can no longer speak to or for women. They also believe that it has been one of the major forces in history for exploiting women. To this end they conclude that it is irredeemably patriarchal and therefore anti-women. Mary Daly is one example of such women in this category. According to Regina A. Coll, she was among the first and best known feminist theologians and philosophers. She says Mary Daly now denounces the customs, rites doctrines and dogmas of Christianity as irredeemably sexist and therefore not salvific for women. She now regards herself as post-Christian.¹⁹⁰

Responding to the radical feminists, Allan Turner maintains that ‘radical feminism is anti-Bible, anti-God and anti-Christ. It does not liberate, rather it enslaves those who embrace it to the bondage of sin. It is the Bible, and the Bible alone that contains the real hope for the liberation of women. Knowing the truth makes one free indeed’ (Jn.8: 32).¹⁹¹ The reason as to why Allan Turner would call Radical Feminists anti-Christ can be perceived in the return of some of them to the ancient mythologies since the ancient pantheon of gods included female deities. This is also the reason why such feminists have embraced those heretical traditions which the church had condemned. Movements such as Marcionism, Gnosticism and Montanism eventually ordained women, a thing that was not acceptable to the church.

¹⁸⁹ Claudia V. Camp. Op Cit, p.56.

¹⁹⁰ Regina A. Coll, Christianity and Feminism in Conversation. (Mystic, Connecticut: Twenty-Third Publications, 1994) p.13.

4.3 Anti-Women Texts

The major reason for the call by feminists to have the Bible rewritten has been some texts that seem to insinuate the oppression of women as well as the language that obtains from the Bible which is chauvinistic. The imagery used is also masculine and this has led some feminists to question whether a male God is able to save a woman, or should wait for their own saviour. One area that feminists struggle with is some texts that suggest the subordination of women. According to Michael Harper, 'subordination refers to something of lesser importance or working under the control of another person'.¹⁹² Texts such as (1 Tim.2: 11-14) , in which a woman is charged to be silent and only ask their husbands if they have any questions when they are at home, is one such text which feminists say promotes the subordination of women to men.

Barbara J. MacHaffie maintains that the fact that Scripture explicitly prohibits women from exercising authority in the church and in the home and commands that they keep silent in the public Assembly of God shows that the Bible promotes the subordination of women.¹⁹³ Feminist theologians agree that the Bible contains a great deal of material that treats women as subordinate and inferior to men. At the same time these feminists share the view that there is also a built-in judgement or critique of the degradation of women running through the Old Testament and the New Testament which challenges the commands of silence and subordination. To this effect these feminist theologians suggest that the demands of God must be distinguished from the demands of a particular culture.

¹⁹¹ Allan Turner "Feminism and the Bible" (Internet , [http. www.bibleinst.com/BibleSchool/feminism.htm](http://www.bibleinst.com/BibleSchool/feminism.htm)) p.1-3.

¹⁹² Michael Harper, Op. Cit. p.11.

¹⁹³ Barbara J. MacHaffie, Her Story: Woman in the Christian Tradition. (Philadelphia : Fortress Press, 1986) p.5.

This calls for the re-reading of the texts, that is not culturally bound. Thus they discount the need to rewrite the Bible.

The subordination of women was further entrenched by the church leaders, who made pronouncements based on the Biblical texts with which feminists are struggling. Rosemary Radford Ruether gives a list of church leaders whose perception of women further entrenched the subordination of women. She maintains that although Augustine concedes women's redeemability and her participation in the image of God, Augustine goes on to say this is overbalanced by her bodily representation of inferior, sin-prone self, hence she possesses the image of God only secondarily.¹⁹⁴ Such a presentation and understanding of women tended to subordinate and alienate them further from their male counterparts.

4.4 Thomas Aquinas on women

Thomas Aquinas continues the Augustinian tradition. But he makes women's symbolism of the inferior side of the self-literal by accepting a biological theory of women's inferiority. Aquinas adopted the Aristotelian definition of a woman as 'a misbegotten male'. According to Aristotelian biology, the male seed provides the form of the human body. Normatively every male insemination would produce another male in the image of its father. But by some accident, this male form is sometimes subverted by the female matter and produces an inferior or defective human species of female. He believed that this inferiority touched the entire nature of the woman. He, therefore, concluded that the woman is inferior in body (weaker), in mind (less capable of reason) and morally (less capable of will and moral control). T. Aquinas believes that the inferiority of the woman has been deepened by sin. He concludes that the woman in her defection and misbegotten

nature belongs to the overall perfection of nature because of her role in procreation.¹⁹⁵ For him the domination and subjugation in human relations are two-fold. Males naturally excel at the higher faculty of reason; females have less rational capacity and are less capable of moral self-control. For Aquinas good order requires that the naturally superior should rule the naturally inferior. T. Aquinas therefore concludes by saying that the subordination of women by men is part of the natural order of creation by God.¹⁹⁶ However the situation in most countries both developed and developing has proved this biological understanding to be wrong. There are women who are more capable than men and are occupying higher offices in civil society.

4.5 Martin Luther on Women

Biblical opinions and the interpretations of the Reformation era can best be established through analysing Martin Luther. His views on the position of women in the Bible are drawn from the monastic and mystical traditions which he experienced during his earlier years when he was a monk. Luther believed that, in the original creation, Eve may have been equal to Adam. However, according to Rosemary Radford Ruether, Luther believed that the original Eve could not be known by reference to the present woman.¹⁹⁷ This was impossible for Luther because the fall cancelled the original equality that obtained between men and women. This then meant that the present woman became inferior in mind and body. For Luther, the present woman has become part of a fallen history, which have meant her subjugation to men as her superior. The reason that is given by Luther for this subjugation is not because of sin against her, but that it is a punishment for her sin.

¹⁹⁴ Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Op. Cit.* p.95.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. p.96.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. p.96.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. p.97.

For him this is the best expression of divine justice.¹⁹⁸ This is the bone of contention for feminist theologians today. The concept of the original sin for them should not isolate women as the guilty part, instead both male and female should shoulder the blame.

4.6 Calvinism on women

This tradition upheld the view that women are not only equal to men, in the image of God, but in their essential nature, they have much capacity for conscience and spiritual things as is true to men. Rosemary Radford Ruether maintains that for the Calvinists the subordination of women to men is not an expression of inferiority, either in nature or in fallen history. Rather it reflects the divinely created social order by which God has ordained the rule of some and the subjugation of others.¹⁹⁹ What this means for the Calvinists is that the hierarchical order that is found between men and women is not a reflection of differences of appointed social offices. This implies that the Bible has nothing to do with the subordination of women. It is a divine plan that is given by God and no one is to be blamed for it. Considering this understanding the Calvinists, therefore, maintain that the man rules not because he is superior but because God has commanded him to do so. On the other hand women should obey not because she is inferior but because that is the role that God has assigned to her.

Contemporary reasoning would agree to the notion that social offices cannot be done away with. Even amongst women themselves there are some who occupy higher offices than others. Considering this fact one can see that the Calvinist tradition tries to turn male domination and female subordination into a positivist legal order of creation, and it endeavours to dissociate it from notions of women's innate inferiority or some kind of a

¹⁹⁸ Ibid. p.97.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. p.98.

great proneness to sin on their part. Despite this approach to human relations in society, radical feminist theologians have refused to accept any ordering of creation that seems to favour men at the expense of women.

Considering all these views which were arrived at by a variety of interpretations of the Bible, women continued to be treated as second class citizens particularly in those societies that were Christian. Feminist theologians challenge the manner in which the Bible seems to exclude women from the history of salvation. Those who advocate for women's rights suggest that the Bible presents women as people who should only stay at home and look after babies. The greatest challenge from the feminist theologians came in the cry for the ordination of women.

4.7 Ordination of Women and the Bible

The ordination of women rocked the church in many ways. Although this issue touches a number of areas such as theology and tradition as well as sociology, it is also heavily dependent on Scripture. Those who support the ordination of women use Scripture on one hand and those who oppose it also use Scripture to do so. The Bible therefore was found to be in support or against the ordination of women. According to Michael Harper, the issue of ordination of women is primarily theological, not sociological, and people must resist every effort to move the issue from the discipline of theology to the other sciences.²⁰⁰ This means that any discussion on this topic should stem from one source for if reasons for or against the ordination of women are mixed then there may not be any agreement. To say that this issue should be theological entails that the Bible should be the primary source. It is therefore important to investigate the Scripture that has been used to

²⁰⁰ Michael Harper, Op. Cit. p.5.

suppress the ordination of women and then move on to investigate the Scripture that is used to promote the ordination of women.

There are basically two crucial pieces of scripture that have been used to oppose the ordination of women. These texts are from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor.14: 34-35). In this scripture, Paul says:

*Women should remain silent in the churches. Thy are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. If they want to enquire about something they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.*²⁰¹

The other piece of scripture that has been used to oppose the ordination of women is also from Paul's first letter to Timothy (1 Tim.2:11-15). In this Scripture Paul says:

*A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over man; she must be silent. For Adam was created first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be saved through childbearing - if they continue in faith, love and holiness.*²⁰²

In order to understand the arguments raised on these two basic texts that have been used to oppose the ordination of women one needs to understand their interpretation. There seem to be two interpretations of (1 Cor.14: 34-35) that need to be dismissed as inappropriate. The first one is to deduce that Paul totally prohibits women from contributing anything vocally in a church service. It seems Paul did not have this in mind because if one turns back, they see that he expects women to have the priestly ministry of prayer in church which is done vocally, and that of prophecy (1 Cor.11: 5). Both were vital ministries for women in the Old Testament as well as the New Testament. Secondly,

it is not correct to interpret this text in the way that suggests that Paul is here preventing women from talking in church, or as one would say fellowshiping. Paul would not have pulled out all the stops, invoking the law and the authority of Christ himself for such a mundane matter as women conversing during a church service. The truth is that men are as bad if not worse than women in this matter, and one does not suppose that churches have changed much in this respect since the first century. The proper way of interpreting this passage is to see it as a question of trying to address the issue of good order in the church. Paul had just been addressing the issue of good order with regards to tongues and prophecy (1 Cor.14: 22-32). Therefore, to say Paul was discussing whether women can preach or teach seem not to fit this context. It seems clear, therefore, to say that Paul was discussing the problem of disorder and lack of peace in the worship that had resulted from the behaviour of women's talking.

Although some have insisted on these interpretations which seem to be skewed, those who opposed the ordination of women maintain that this is a clear teaching from Paul that women should not be ordained. According to Ward Powers, ‘there is no other passage in all the New Testament which gives any basis for believing that women are forbidden to preach or teach such as is seen to rest only on two passages of scripture’²⁰³, (1 Cor.14: 34-35 and 1 Tim.2: 11-15).

However, with regard to 1 Tim.2: 11-15, one needs to pause for a moment and reflect on the situation that faced Timothy in Ephesus at this time. There is a record in Acts 19ff, that the Ephesian society was dominated by the temple of the goddess Artemis, one of the

²⁰¹ Kenneth Baker (Ed), The NIV Study Bible. (USA: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995) p.1756.

²⁰² Ibid. p.1837.

wonders of the world. Michael Harper also maintains that Ephesus was the economic, political, and religious centre of Asia Minor.²⁰⁴ This means that the position of women in such a society was well developed. As such women had a stronger and more accepted position in this city than any other in the Roman Empire. As such women had professional positions such as medical doctors as well as politicians.²⁰⁵ It is also clear that Paul bases what he wants to say about the ministry of women on the Old Testament scriptures, particularly from Gen.2: 7 which says, ‘the lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and the man became a living being.’²⁰⁶

On the other hand one needs to be cognisant of the fact that Ephesus was full of priestesses, but the church was only to have men in the places of authority, and leadership of the services. Ephesus seems to have had several women in teaching positions, but in the church women were not allowed to teach. Therefore, when Paul wrote in this way, he was being consistent with the teaching and practices of the Old Testament, where women could neither be religious teachers nor priests and with that of Jesus Christ who appointed only male apostles. This thread was to continue in the church, through the teaching of the church fathers, the schoolmen of the Middle Ages, the Reformers and on until the last few years.

The tradition of the church as obtaining from the book of Acts also seem to present a church in which women did not occupy certain offices such as that of elder. Arguing against the ordination of women, V. R. Mollenkott, postulates that ‘there is no single

²⁰³ Ward Powers, The Ministry of Women in the Church: Which Way Forward. (Summer Hill: SPCK, 1996) p.69.

²⁰⁴ Michael Harper, Op. Cit. p.65.

²⁰⁵ Ibid. p.65.

instance of an elder in the Old Testament or the New Testament who was a woman'.²⁰⁷ If this is the case, then the ordination of women which elevates them to the eldership office would not be proper. However, this has been challenged by some writers who insist that there was at least one female apostle named Junia, and that in the New Testament there is evidence for female elders in the early church. However, one needs to understand that the status of Junia is not easily resolved. This word which appears in (Rom.16: 7), could either be used as 'Junias' a male's name or 'Junia' a woman's name. The Greek Bible says 'Greet Andronicus and Junius the kinsmen of me and fellow captives of me, who are notable among the apostles, who indeed before me have been in Christ'.²⁰⁸ However, general consideration would favour the view that Junia was a male since they shared a prison cell with Paul and Andronicus, both of whom were males.

However, feminist theologians such as Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza maintain that 'an unbiased reading of Rom.16: 7 provides us with one instance in the New Testament where a woman is called apostle'.²⁰⁹ She goes on to suggest that there is no valid reason to understand the name 'Junia' as a short form of the male name 'Junianus', since Junia was a well known name for woman at the time. To this effect she says Andronicus and Junia were a missionary couple like Aquila and Prisca.²¹⁰ In addition, Michael Harper maintains that considering the fact that Pentecost was a great day for women as well as men due to the fact that all were filled with the Holy Spirit, women were affirmed in the early church, and given scope for their ministries especially that of prophecy. They

²⁰⁶ Ibid. p.66.

²⁰⁷ V. R. Mollenkotte, Women, Men and the Bible. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1977) p.138.

²⁰⁸ Rev. Alfred Marshall, (translator), The New International Version Interlinear Greek-English New Testament. (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976) p.653.

²⁰⁹ Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, "Women in the early Christian Movement", in Carol P. Christ & Judith Plaskow (eds.), Woman Spirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion. (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1979) p.90.

²¹⁰ Ibid. p.90.

served alongside men in many different ways , but were never appointed as elders.²¹¹ It is this stance and historic factor that forces some theologians to object the ordination of women.

Commenting on the ordination of women, C. S. Lewis, a one time pagan who was converted, is quoted by Michael Harper as saying ‘to ordain women, we should have embarked on a different religion. Goddesses have, of course been worshipped; many religions have had priestesses, but they are religions quite different in character from Christianity’.²¹² For him the ordination of women can not be possible in Christianity. It is only possible in those religions that have goddesses as their objects of worship. In addition K. Barth is also quoted by Michael Harper as saying ‘the supremacy of man is not a question of value, dignity or honour, but of order’.²¹³ All these great personalities held this negative stance to the ordination of women as a result of the way they interpreted scripture.

This negative stance on the ordination of women was also deduced from the thirty-nine Articles of Faith of the Church of England. Article seven stipulates categorically the importance of the Scriptures in determining matters of doctrine and morals. This article declares that the Old Testament is not contrary to the New Testament. New Testament writers affirm the Old Testament with its patriarchal nature. Jesus and Paul also quote from it showing that they accepted its authority. In Article Twenty, it is plainly stated ‘that the church may not ordain anything that is contrary to God's written word, neither may it expound one place of scripture that it be repugnant to another’.²¹⁴ In other words,

²¹¹ Michael Harper, Op. Cit, p92

²¹² Ibid. p67

²¹³ Ibid. p92

²¹⁴ Ibid. p92

those in the Anglican tradition who opposed the ordination of women were saying that the ordination of women must not be contrary to God's word that is written in the Bible.

With regard to the Roman Catholic Church, Rosemary Radford Ruether suggests that it is the male alone who is the normative or generic sex of the human species. It is only the male who represents the fullness of human nature. The Roman Catholic Church maintains that Christ as head and bridegroom of the church must necessarily be male and hence his representative, the priest must also be male. The Vatican declaration of 1976, against's women ordination sums up this with a statement that "there must be a physical resemblance between the priest and Christ".²¹⁵ This means that the possession of male genitalia becomes the essential prerequisite for representing Christ who is the disclosure of the male God. The Roman Catholic Church has maintained this position regardless of several calls from within and outside to allow women ordination.

The other reason put forward against the ordination of women was that Jesus himself did not choose any woman to be part of his inner circle of followers such as the twelve apostles. Those who oppose the ordination of women therefore uphold the view that what Jesus did, should set the pattern that has to be followed in Christ's Church. Those who support the ordination of women then turned around and said Jesus selected men only simply because he was accommodating himself to the prejudices of the society of his time, hence this should not bind anybody in the different circumstances in which we exist today. Some supporters of the ordination of women say this was necessary so as to avoid scandals of sexual immorality.

²¹⁵ Rosemary Radford Ruether, Op. Cit., p.126.

Considering the fact that Jesus moved around with women as in the following texts (Lk.23: 49, Lk.8: 1-3, Lk.24: 10, Jn.19: 25, Matt.27: 55-56, and Mk.15: 40-41, suggesting that Jesus did not appoint women disciples fearing sexual scandals is not sustainable. The truth is that Jesus had women disciples as distinct from apostles, and they did accompany him on several occasions. On the other hand, to suggest that Jesus selected male apostles as a way of accommodating himself to the prejudices of his time seems to be quite dangerous. It is true that the testimony of a woman was worthless and that it would have been absurd on the part of Jesus to choose people who were excluded, on principle, as reliable witnesses. But could he do so? Here we are given the picture of a teacher who only taught the full truth when he found it culturally convenient to do so. The truth about Jesus is that he was not so susceptible to the culturally conditioned attitudes of his contemporaries to the extent that he would prefer to accommodate himself to their prejudices rather than act on the basis of what he recognised to be truth.

The argument of accommodation is therefore weak because we also have to know the other places where he did the same thing. It will be difficult to accept anything from Jesus without questioning as to when he would have been accommodating to the current popular prejudices. V. R. Mollenkott therefore concludes that ‘the simple and obvious explanation for Jesus appointing only men as apostles remains the best one: Jesus approved of an exclusively male eldership, and in setting the pattern for his church he endorsed this and intended it to continue’.²¹⁶ What this implies is that women are restricted from eldership in the church. This entails the exclusion of women from being ordained to priesthood, as well as the placing of women to be in charge of a congregation.

²¹⁶ V. R. Mollenkotte, Op. Cit. p.183.

These are the reasons put across against the ordination of women that had a bearing on the scriptures. The other reasons were more sociological, such as saying since women become pregnant they could not be ordained because a pregnant priest ministering at the altar was inconceivable. Rosemary Radford Ruether puts this clearly when she says the most extreme repugnance against the idea of women in ministry typically is expressed in the question 'can you imagine a pregnant woman at the altar?'.²¹⁷ This means that the fact that women conceive and bear children is a sign of weakness. This has been challenged by the majority of feminists who maintain that childbearing is actually a sign of strength for women.

On the other hand, there have been those who have supported the ordination of women using the Bible as well. Although the majority of feminist theologians agree that several aspects of the Bible need to be set aside and rejected because of their oppressive nature, they still find the liberation thread in the Bible. Talking about this liberative motif which runs through the Bible, Rosemary Radford Ruether finds four prophetic and liberative themes in the Bible that prefer charges against the Bible and Christianity. The four themes includes; God's defence and justification of the oppressed people; the critique of dominant systems of power; the vision of the reign of God in which injustice is overcome and peace and justice prevail; and the critique of ideology, or of religion, since in the context of the Bible, ideology is primarily religious.²¹⁸

4.8 God and the Oppressed People

There are a number of passages in the Bible that are liberative in nature and feminists have used such to push for the ordination of women. In Isaiah.10:1-2, and Amos 8:11, the

²¹⁷ Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Op. Cit.*, p.195.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.* p.24.

Bible talks about the denunciation of oppressive and political power. In these contexts God is seen not as the one who represents the powerful, but the one who comes to vindicate the oppressed. Divine advocacy of the oppressed also seem to be the key to Jesus' ministry in the synoptic tradition. Jesus frames his prophetic mission on the words of Isaiah 61: 1-2:

*The spirit of the sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for captives and release from darkness for prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn*²¹⁹

4.9 A Critique of Dominant Systems of Power

With the above mission Jesus is interpreted by the feminist theologians as carrying out a radical criticism of both types of ideological deformation of religion. In Matthew 20:16, Jesus teaches that the first will be the last. Jesus also says the poor will be filled with good things, the mighty put down from their thrones. The prostitutes and the tax collectors will inherit the Kingdom of God ahead of the Scribes and Pharisees. The language of the Gospels belongs to a tradition that criticises existing power systems and places God on the side of the oppressed. It is this reading of the Bible that gives feminists strength in view of their struggle against those who oppose the ordination of women. Feminists see themselves as the oppressed. For them feminist theology is, therefore, not asserting some unprecedented ideas , rather it is rediscovering the prophetic context and content of Biblical faith itself when it defines the prophetic liberating tradition as norm. In other words, feminism entails making explicit what was

²¹⁹ Kenneth Barker, *Op. Cit*, p.1098.

overlooked in male advocacy of the poor and the oppressed, hence that liberation should start with the oppressed of the oppressed, who in this case are the women.

4.10 The Vision of the Reign of God

Feminists find their salvation in Paul's message to the Galatians 3: 28. 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male or female for you are all one in Christ Jesus' This verse is quoted more than the others in the promotion of feminist theology as well as the ordination of women. It is usually lifted out of the passage, without reference to the context. This text has to be understood in its context. It has to be borne in mind that the Jewish male of Paul's day was expected to thank God daily, that he was not gentile, a slave or a woman. The Greek men used a similar formula to express the same sentiments. Yet in the Christian community, these natural and social barriers for the feminists should break down. Paul Jewett acknowledges that Paul appears to teach female subordination in certain passages.²²⁰ What he means is that when he wrote Gal.3:28, he was inspired by God, but in the other passages he was only writing in a human way namely (1 Cor.11:3-16, 14:33-38, 1 Tim.2:11-15). The fair question to ask is, by what criteria is one to judge what is human in the apostle Paul's teaching and what is divine. One can also go further to ask what right does one have to set one part of Paul against another when it disagrees with their main thesis which in this case is to eliminate the teaching of women submission and their exclusion from ordination?

According to Michael Harper, there are certain things that Galatians.3: 28 does not teach. He says in this text Paul is not declaring the abolition of sexual differences, nor is he saying that male and female no longer matter because people are in Christ.²²¹ The subject

²²⁰ Paul Jewett, The Church and the Second Sex. (London : Geoffrey Chapman, 1968) p.38.

²²¹Michael Harper, Op. Cit. p.49.

which he is addressing should be borne in mind by those who advocate equality between men and women. The subjects that he is addressing are baptism, unity and who inherits the promise to Abraham, not office and equality. Interpreted correctly, according to the traditionalists this passage is about unity not equality. Michael Harper maintains that the Bible says virtually nothing about equality, and Jesus did not pray for it; he prayed instead that 'they may be one' not that we might be equal (Jn.17:21).²²² To this end it may be true to say that equality is not necessarily the way to unity. Michael Harper then concludes by saying 'to deduce from this text that women can be ordained as well as men is a feat of cerebral gymnastics. The text, the context, and the whole letter have nothing whatever to do with the matter of headship and office in the church'.²²³ For Michael Harper, male headship was created by God. It was then affirmed by the early church and many centuries of Christian experience. He quotes Roger Blackworth as saying, what men has created man can abolish, such as slavery, but he can not abolish what God has created, such as headship.²²⁴

4.11 Critique of Ideology or of Religion

It seems correct, therefore, to say that there is no distinction made between men and woman in the gifts and ministries of the Holy Spirit. In Acts and the Letters of the New Testament there is evidence that women played a part in the life and ministry of the church, but there is no evidence that a single woman held office as a presbyter or bishop. In Rom.16:1-2, Phoebe was a helper and not the head, Junias (Rom.16: 7), some have suggested was a female apostle. This according to some traditional theologians is scraping the barrel. However K. Barth commenting on 1 Cor.11:3 says 'it is a

²²² Ibid. p.50.

²²³ Ibid. p.50.

²²⁴ Ibid. p.51.

commandment which for all eternity directs the men and women to their proper place and forbids all attempts to violate the ordinance that governs the relationship of sexes'.²²⁵

In view of a number of passages that seem to present Paul as being thoroughly against women, Feminist theologians have suggested that such texts should be removed from the Bible because they are not inspired. Regina A. Coll suggests that, 'violent and militaristic texts ought not be proclaimed, texts upholding slavery ought not be proclaimed. Texts subjugating women ought not to not be proclaimed. Sexist or patriarchal texts ought not to not be inserted in the lectionary. They have no place in the proclamation of the Christian message'.²²⁶

Realising that the Bible and Christianity have very little room to allow them to realise their goals, Feminist theologians have turned to some heresies that have ordained women as priests. Mary Daly, as a post-Christian theologian is known to have seen no possibility of attaining the total liberation of women in Christianity and through the use of the Bible. This is so because part of being post-modern is to reject all forms of authority, and to give no place to the idea of someone being over another person. In the second century there were three major heresies, all of which eventually ordained women to priesthood. These were the followers of Marcion, the Gnostics, and the Montanists.

4.12 Marcion and Other Gnostics On women

His main problem, like the feminists, was with the Old Testament. He reckoned there was an unbridgeable chasm between the Old Testament and the New Testament, so he got rid of the difficulty by simply teaching that Jesus Christ, the God of Love, came to rescue

²²⁵ Ibid. p.60.

²²⁶ Regina A. Coll, Op. Cit. p.18.

people from the revengeful and misogynist God of the Old Testament. Marcion then did a scissors job on the Old Testament by excluding it from his canon. He also expurgated the New Testament by removing all passages that offended his main thesis. Any passage of Scripture where Paul links with the God of the Old Testament he expurgated. He ended up with a canon of eleven books, one Gospel of Luke, expurgated and ten letters of Paul, mutilated. Tertulian says, Marcion was particularly offended by what Paul wrote about women. He therefore accused him of ‘murder upon the Holy Scripture’.²²⁷ Marcion's followers went on to ordain women to priesthood, a thing that was anathema to the Catholic faith. This is what advocates for the ordination of women find favourable.

The other Gnostics also tried to do away with gender distinctions, which feminists are also trying to do today. The Gnostics like their twentieth century friends appealed to the new order of redemption, which liberated Christians from all inequalities with each other. Their key Bible verse, Galatians 3: 28, was again used, and almost the same arguments are utilised in today's cause of feminism and cry for the ordination of women. Manfred Hauke quotes the Gospel of St Thomas as saying, ‘for women who makes herself a man will enter the Kingdom of Heaven’.²²⁸ Michael Harper observes that this statement is almost word for word the strategy advocated by Simone de Beauvoir in her famous book, The Second Sex.²²⁹ This is the reason why some feminists such as Mary Daly now talk about the post-modern period, by which they mean the end of the Age of enlightenment. As stated before, part of being post-modern is to question all authority and allow no one to rule another. This is doing away with offices of headship. Gnostics therefore ordained women to priesthood, a thing that those who advocate the ordination of women find attractive.

²²⁷Michael Harper, Op. Cit, p.100.

²²⁸ Manfred Hauke, Women in the Priesthood. (San francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991) p.405.

4.13 Montanist Heresy on Women

This heresy began in Phrygia in Asia Minor. One of its early prophetesses, Priscilla, claimed to have an experience of Christ coming to her in the form of a woman. According to Jerome, Montanus, the founder of the movement, had been a priest of the goddess Cybele, before becoming a Christian. However the early Montanists did not allow women to become priests, hence Tertulian transferred to this impressive community, but they allowed them to be prophetesses and to bring prophecy in the meetings. Michael Harper maintains that it was two hundred years later that it was reported that they were ordaining women and Epiphanius, a Church Father, reports that there were female bishops and presbyters.²³⁰ Again they used Galatians 3: 28 as their point of departure. Feminist theologians advocating for the ordination of women also use this verse as a source of their inspiration.

4.14 Church Fathers and the Ordination of Women

It is important to say that the majority of the Church Fathers objected to the ordination of women. They based their objection on scripture. Origen opposed the ordination of women as being unscriptural.²³¹ He used 1 Corinthians 14: 34 as his main argument against the Montanists and enforced the fact that it was a command, which had to be obeyed. He also cites 1 Timothy 2:12. He even banned women from prophesying in the congregation. However, he did not ban women from all teaching, but only public official teaching when women take authority over men. It needs to be pointed out that the Church Fathers, in unanimously condemning the ordination of women, appealed to the example

²²⁹ Michael Harper, *Op. Cit.* p.29.

²³⁰ Ibid. p.101.

²³¹ Ibid. p.103.

of Jesus and the Scriptures, rather than arguments about the need to have a male to represent Christ at the altar.

This can be seen also by considering Epiphanius, another church Father who was most caustic in his attack on women priests. He referred to a situation where women had been ordained as ‘godless and sacrilegious, a perversion of the message of the Holy Spirit, in fact the whole thing is diabolical and a teaching of the impure spirit’.²³² He looked at the Old Testament and concluded, ‘nowhere did a woman serve as priestesses’.²³³ He also says since the Old is fulfilled in the New, there can be no female priests. The exclusion of women does not suggest that they are inferior, and he gave Mary Magdalene as evidence of this. Along the same line of thinking, J. Chrysostom says, ‘the entire female sex must step back from so great a task, but also the majority of male’s’.²³⁴ He bases his view on the example of Christ, who appointed no woman as an apostle, and decisively on the authority of Paul.

One thing that one needs not to deduce from the Church fathers is that they did not accept women for the priesthood because they were inferior, which is what some feminist theologians suggest. To be fair to them, their general teaching on sexuality was consistent with that of the New Testament and was revolutionary for those days. Michael Harper quotes from C. S. Lewis, as saying, ‘the statement that all people are created equal is a legal fiction’. He also quotes from G. Orwell who says ‘all animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others’.²³⁵ All this seems to entrench the fact that equality of

²³² Ibid. p.104.

²³³ Ibid. p.104.

²³⁴ Ibid. p.104.

²³⁵ Ibid. p.116.

office may not be realised easily. Even where men have been the rulers, it has not been that every male has been a ruler. Some men were ruling whereas some were being ruled.

4.15 Feminist Hermeneutics

Feminist theologians have suggested new ways of interpreting the Bible in the realm of feminism. They have talked about feminism as a way of revisioning, reclaiming as well as reconceiving. All these approaches to the Bible are geared towards interpreting the Bible in a way that is favourable to women. To this end there are several different strategies of interpreting the Bible. Below are the two ways that include a Hermeneutic of suspicion and a hermeneutic of critical retrieval and remembrance. Elizabeth Schusler Fiorenza suggests that any revisioning should start with a hermeneutics of suspicion and progress to a hermeneutic of proclamation, of remembrance, and of creative actualisation.²³⁶ Feminists believe that there is an undeniable patriarchal bias in much of Scripture and that women ought to read the Bible with an eye trained towards identifying the influence of patriarchal bias. This will involve not only critiquing what is written, but noting the silences, the place where a woman's perspective is strikingly absent.

Elizabeth Schusler Fiorenza applies a hermeneutic of suspicion to the Biblical canon itself. She notes that the determination of the canon itself was decided by male authorities and therefore may well admit of being biased.²³⁷ For her, inspiration lies not in the sacred books themselves but in the community of believers who discerned the work of the spirit in their lives and gave testimony to it. She rejects the idea that the inspiration of the Spirit within the early community was limited to the Biblical texts themselves. She does not propose abandoning the Bible as many of her contemporaries suggest. What she does

²³⁶ Elizabeth Schusler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her. (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1987) p. xv.

propose is a strategy that some might call 'the canon within a canon'.²³⁸ That is to say that she believes that feminist Christians must focus on those passages in scripture that speak of God's liberation of all persons while dismissing those that reflect patriarchal bias and support the oppression of peoples, women in particular.

From the hermeneutic of suspicion comes the feminist hermeneutic of proclamation. According to Claudia V. Camp, this recognises that scripture and theology are androcentric. To deny this is to deny history. Past history needs not be destroyed; Scripture scholars and theologians research the documents of the past in order to understand the development of the faith. However, everything in Scripture should not be offered for our edification. She suggests that violent and militaristic texts should not be proclaimed. To this end she says true feminism should involve reclaiming what has been lost from the Bible. Reclaiming involves taking into consideration the suffering and struggle of women in patriarchal Christian past and the commitment and leadership of women in first century Christian communities. Reclaiming also involves looking at myths, symbols and metaphors of Christianity that have functioned in maintaining the subordination of women. These should include women and emancipate them. Reclaiming also includes the language. Language tends to control our thinking and words also liberate and imprisons people at the same time. Feminists are, therefore, advocating a change in the patriarchal language that has led to the oppression of women. Reconceiving in feminism entails imaginative articulation in view of the Bible. Imagination here does not entail fantasy; instead it is a way of thinking, a way of knowing. This is a reasonable imagination. All these approaches are captured in the hermeneutics of suspicion.

²³⁷ Ibid. p.xvi.

²³⁸ Ibid. p.xvii.

The second type of hermeneutics is that of a critical retrieval and remembrance. Here feminist scholars acknowledge with the post-Christian feminists that there is ample evidence of the influence of patriarchal bias in the Bible, but they also believe that there is powerful liberative elements that need to be critically retrieved and given more attention than is customary. Scholars such as Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, content that a critical retrieval of these neglected elements can bring about the radical reconstruction of Christianity.²³⁹

All these proposals for interpreting the Bible point to the fact that it is the interpretation that has given people problems. Scripture, when interpreted wrongly, will cause problems. It becomes clear, therefore, that the issue about rewriting the Bible may be a difficult task to carry out considering the view of the feminist theologians. The way forward, seems to be an emphasis upon interpretation. To this end Juan Luis Segundo, SJ, proposes a hermeneutic cycle as an answer to the quest for rewriting the Bible in the metaphorical sense. For him a hermeneutic cycle is the continuing change in our interpretation of the Bible that is dictated by the continuing changes in our present day reality, both individual and societal.²⁴⁰ Rewriting the Bible in the literal sense may not solve the problems raised by the feminists since human life is not stagnant. New challenges will come up after the Bible has been rewritten and that will mean rewriting it again. Segundo's proposal for a hermeneutic cycle seems to make a lot of sense in view of the quest for the rewriting of the Bible.

²³⁹ Ibid. p.xvii.

²⁴⁰ Juan Luis Segundo SJ , The Liberation of Theology. (New York: Maryknoll Orbis Books, 1976) p.8.

In view of this the Church of England passed a resolution in its 1998 Lambeth Conference to allow women to be ordained. Currently the Episcopal Church in America already has women who have been consecrated bishops. In Africa some countries such as South Africa have already started to ordain women to the priesthood. However, in some provinces this is still a bone of contention which some people do not want to hear anything about. It is an issue which will continue to appear on their synod agendas since the pressure seem to be mounting.

4. 16 Homosexuals and the Bible

This is the second challenge to the Bible that has come to the fore recently. This issue has also dominated a number of church conferences including the Lambeth Conference of 1998. In many parts of Africa, this is a non-negotiable issue. In Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe has condemned this practice publicly and likened those who are inclined that way to pigs. The African culture is known to be strongly against this practice although there is some evidence that such a practice has been present and to a limited extent acknowledged in African societies. The reason for saying that homosexuality is not new in Africa is that words for 'homosexual and homosexual activity' do exist in African languages. This means that it existed. According to Kevin Ward, there is evidence that homosexuality came to Uganda (the Uganda martyrs) in the late nineteenth century and in South Africa (the South African mines) in the early twentieth century.²⁴¹ Those sympathetic to homosexuality therefore argue that if homosexuality is a reality and a traceable characteristic in humanity, as it was in Uganda, it does not need to be attacked using the Bible.

According to Letha Scanzoni and Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, the Bible does not have a lot to say about homosexuality and in the original languages the term itself is never used.²⁴² This seems to be incorrect since homosexuals have come up recently calling for the rewriting of scripture, particularly those that attack them. There are six passages from the Bible that have been used to condemn homosexuals. These passages include Genesis 19: 5, Leviticus 18: 22 and 20: 13, Rom 1: 26-27, 1 Corinthians 6: 9 and 1 Timothy 1: 9-10. Given these references, those in support of homosexuality have carried out research into them and come up with different interpretations. Below I will consider some of these interpretations.

Leviticus 18: 22, states ‘You shall not lie with a male as those who lie with a female; it is an abomination’. In addition, Leviticus 20: 13 says ‘If a man lies with a male as those who lie with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination and they shall surely be put to death’. In order to understand these texts one needs to know what obtained from this period. There were some Baal fertility rituals which thrived during this period. It was heterosexuals who used to take part in them so as to guarantee good crops and healthy flocks. It is, therefore, thought that such texts were directed to heterosexuals and not homosexuals. On the other hand, no hint at sexual orientation or homosexuality is even implied. Homosexuals therefore maintain that to use Leviticus to condemn and reject them is obviously a hypocritical selective use of the Bible against them. However, Walter Wink maintains that in Leviticus 18: 22 and 20.13, we have an unequivocal condemnation of same sex sexual behaviour.²⁴³

²⁴¹ Kevin Ward, “Same Sex Relations in Africa and the debate on Homosexuality in East Africa Anglicanism” in James. E. Griffiss, (ed.), Anglican Theological Review. Vol. 83, no. 1, Winter, 2002 (Evanston : Anglican Theological Review Inc,) p.81-111.

²⁴² Letha Scanzoni and Virginia Ramey Mollenkotte, Is The Homosexual My Neighbour: Another Christian View. (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1978) p.54.

²⁴³ Walter Wink, “Homosexuality & the Bible”, Christian Century Magazine. 1979, p1-12.

According to Dean Worbois, the Bible does not speak of gays. Nor does it speak of the earth orbiting the sun. Sexual identity was not a concept of Biblical times. It speaks of homosexual acts only when they are part of sacred prostitution, idolatry, promiscuity, seducing children, rape or violating hospitality. It condemns all such acts, whether heterosexual or homosexual, or having nothing to do with sex.²⁴⁴

However, one of the other texts used to persecute homosexuals is the Sodom story in Genesis 19.

Walter Wink postulates that this is a story about an attempted gang rape in Sodom.²⁴⁵ This is the similar case in Judges 19: 21. On the other hand there seems to be no other reference to the destruction of Sodom being equated with homosexual acts. Instead the crime of Sodom that was worth the destruction of five thriving, wealthy cities on the fertile plains was that of pride or inhospitality. Throughout the Old Testament we find that Sodom is held up as a lesson in wickedness that deserves utter destruction for reasons other than homosexual acts. Examples include Ezekiel 16: 49-50, Wisdom 19: 13-14, Ecclesiastes 16: 8, and Luke 10: 10-13. In all these texts, the sin of Sodom is pride. It was not until the very late books of 2 Peter 2: 4 and Jude 6, that sex is considered a sin of Sodom. Such books are part of those books that were written several years after the death of the apostles, and were talking about the transgression of the natural order of life when angelic and human beings have heterosexual relations, which was a major concern to the popular Stoic philosophy of the time.

²⁴⁴ Dean Worbois, "The Bible and the Homosexual", (Internet , [http. www.truluck.com/html/the-bible-and-homosexuality-html](http://www.truluck.com/html/the-bible-and-homosexuality-html)) p.1-5.

²⁴⁵ Walter Wink, Op. Cit., p.1-12.

In the New Testament, Rom.1: 26-27 has been used to attack homosexuals. However, those who are sympathetic to homosexuality maintain that all these texts refer to idolatrous religious practices that were common during Paul's time. Like any other reference, taking it out of context is like trying to drive a car blindfolded. Like feminist theologians, homosexuals claim that Paul's writings have been taken out of context and twisted to punish and oppress every identifiable minority in the world; Jews, children, women, blacks, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transsexuals, religious reformers, the mentally ill and the list goes on. Therefore, Romans 1: 26-27 has to be understood as being part of his vigorous denunciation of idolatrous worship and rituals. It seems correct to uphold the view that Paul at no point in his writing dealt with same sex orientation or the expression of love and affection between two people of the same sex who love each other.

Walter Wink maintains that Paul was unaware of the distinction between sexual orientation, over which one has apparently very little choice and sexual behaviour, over which one does.²⁴⁶ He seems to assume that those whom he condemned were heterosexuals who were acting contrary to nature, 'leaving', 'giving up' or 'exchanging' their regular sexual orientation for that which was foreign to them. This means that Paul had no concept of homosexual orientation. This idea was not available in his world. Research has shown that there are people who are genuinely homosexual by nature. For such a person it would be acting contrary to nature to have sexual relations with a person of the opposite sex. Those oriented towards homosexuality are, therefore, calling for the expurgation of those texts that have been used to militate against them. It also seems the relationships that Paul describes are heavy with lust; they are not relationships between two consenting adults who are committed to each other as faithfully and with as much integrity as any heterosexual couple.

However, it needs to be pointed out that the Bible takes a negative view of homosexual activity in those few instances where it is mentioned at all. This conclusion does not solve the problem of how we are to interpret Scripture today. There are other sexual attitudes, practices and restrictions which are normative in Scripture but which we no longer accepted as normative. The question is what do we do with them? Below are some of the examples which those inclined towards homosexuality refer to in their defence against the Bible.

The first example is that the Bible through the law found in the Old Testament, strictly forbids sexual intercourse during the seven days of the menstrual cycle (Lev.18.19, 15.19-24) and anyone in violation was to be cut off from their people. Today many people on occasion have intercourse during menstruation and think nothing of it. The question that one can ask is, should they be extirpated? The same Bible that is against homosexual practices is also against such a practice.

On the other hand the punishment for adultery was death by stoning for both the man and the woman (Deut. 22: 22), but here adultery is defined by the marital status of the woman. In the Old Testament a man could not commit adultery against his own wife; he could only commit adultery against another man by sexually using the other's wife. A bride not found to be a virgin was stoned to death (Deut.22: 13-21), but male virginity at marriage is never even mentioned. It is one of the curiosities of the current debate on sexuality that adultery, which creates far more social havoc, is considered less sinful than homosexuality. One would wonder why this is so, perhaps because there are far more adulterers in the churches, hence the quietness. According to Walter Wink, no one is

²⁴⁶ Ibid. p.1-12.

calling for their stoning, despite the clear command of Scripture and adulterers are still being ordained.²⁴⁷

Another prohibition that is clearly stipulated is nudity. This is a characteristic of paradise and was regarded in Judaism as reprehensible (2 Sam.6: 20, 10:4, Isa.20:2-4). Today some communities do not believe that nudity is a sin. The Bible itself is not of one mind on this subject. God seems to castigate the nakedness of Isaiah as a prophetic warning of approaching captivity (Isa.20: 2-6). On the other hand polygamy and concubinage were regularly practised in the Old Testament. Neither is ever condemned by the New Testament with the questionable exceptions of (1 Tim.3:2, 12, Titus1: 6). Jesus' teaching about marital union in Mk.10: 6-8, is no exception, since he quotes Gen.2: 24 as his authority, and this text was never understood in Israel as excluding polygamy. It seems a man could become one flesh with more than one wife through the act of sexual intercourse. So the same Bible that condemns homosexuality allowed polygamy and concubinage. Those such as Kevin Ward who support homosexuality such as Kevin Ward are questioning why people cannot allow homosexuality on the same line of thinking²⁴⁸

On the other hand the Old Testament nowhere explicitly prohibits sexual relations between unmarried consenting heterosexual adults, as long as the woman's economic value (bride price) is not compromised, that is to say, as long as she is not a virgin. In various parts of the Christian world, quite different attitudes have prevailed about sexual intercourse before marriage. Today many single adults, the widowed, and the divorced are reverting to 'Biblical' practice, while others believe that sexual intercourse belongs

²⁴⁷ Ibid. p.1-12.

²⁴⁸ Kevin Ward, Op. Cit. p.88.

only within marriage. Both of these views are Scriptural but the problem is to establish the right one. Those inclined towards homosexuality are therefore found disadvantaged if they are attacked when others whom the Bible refers to as sinners are currently not being considered as such.

The Bible also stipulates the law that allows divorce (Deut.24:1-4), whereas Jesus categorically forbids it Mark 10: 1-12, although Matthew 19: 9 softens its severity. Yet many Christians, in clear violation of a command of Jesus, have been divorced. It is public knowledge that such people present themselves for baptism, church membership, communion and ordination, whereas the situation is different for homosexuals. Once they are known to be homosexual, they are ostracised from the church as if their sin is the worst. The question which people such as Walter Wink raise is ‘what makes the one so much greater a sinner than the other, especially considering the fact that Jesus never even mentioned homosexuality but explicitly condemned divorce?’²⁴⁹ Yet in many parts of the world divorcees are ordained and given ministry in the church, whereas it is only a very small number of countries that have openly ordained homosexuals. This makes homosexuals feel that the Bible is being used intentionally to persecute them; hence they advocate a change in those texts that attack them.

On the other hand the Bible, particularly the Old Testament, regarded the practice of celibacy as abnormal, 1 Tim.4:1-3, calls compulsory celibacy a heresy. Yet the Catholic Church has made it mandatory for their priests and nuns. This is also true for Anglicans for their nuns. Others argue that since God made men and women for each other in order to be fruitful and multiply, homosexuals reject God's intent in creation. What this entails is that childless couples, single persons, Roman Catholic priests, nuns in the Catholic and

Anglican churches are violating God's intention in their creation. This for homosexuals, is fallacious since their childless relationships can be equated to some situations in the church that has been accepted with no problems.

The other thing that surprises homosexual people is the institution of slavery. Both the Old and New Testaments regarded it as normal and nowhere categorically condemned it. This is the reason why Americans cited those scriptures such as 2 Samuel 5: 13, Judges 19-21 and Numbers 31: 18, as their justification to enslave the black Africans. In South Africa, the Boers also quoted the Bible to support their apartheid system. However, all this was heavily opposed by Christians using the same Bible. What this means is that Christians must reinterpret the received tradition in order to speak it to believers of today. Homosexuals argue along the same lines that if homosexuality had been anathematised before in a tradition that was not aware of a homosexual orientation, then such a tradition needs re-reading in view of the new knowledge that God has revealed to humanity.

This then forces people to look at the whole Bible, particularly the Old Testament with its plethora of rules. It is a true observation to say that Christians today regard certain rules as no longer binding. Other things are regarded as binding, including legislation found in the Old Testament that is not found in the New Testament. The worrying thing is to know what the selection principle is. For example, virtually all modern readers would agree with the Bible in rejecting things such as incest, rape, adultery and bestiality but many people would disagree with the Bible on most other sexual mores. For example the Bible condemned the following which are generally accepted; intercourse during menstruation, celibacy, exogamy, naming sexual organs, nudity, masturbation, birth control and the Bible also regarded menstrual blood and semen as unclean, while today, most people do

²⁴⁹ Walter Wink, Op. Cit., p.1-12.

not. Likewise the Bible permitted behaviours which today we condemn, prostitution, polygamy, levirate marriage, sex with slaves, concubinage, treatment of women as property, very early marriage (for the girl aged 11-13). In addition, while the Old Testament accepted divorce, Jesus forbade it.

Given this situation Morton Kelsey is quoted by Walter Wink as saying that homosexual orientation has nothing to do with morality, any more than left-handedness does. It is simply the way some people's sexuality is configured.²⁵⁰ This means that there has to be a new hermeneutic, which takes into account the fact that homosexual orientation is God's design in creation which is diverse. It is agreed that where the Bible mentions homosexual behaviour at all, it condemns it. The issue therefore, is precisely whether that Biblical judgement is correct. As discussed above, the Bible sanctions slavery as well and nowhere attacked it as unjust. However, today no one is prepared to argue that slavery is Biblically justified. As a result those inclined towards homosexuality agree with Walter Wink who has suggested that there is need for a new interpretative grid which is provided by a critique of domination. With this tool, one will be able to filter out the sexism, patriarchalism, violence and homophobia that form the greater part of the Bible. This will lead to its liberation so that it can reveal to people in fresh ways, the inbreaking of God in every age²⁵¹.

4.17 Conclusion

From the foregoing discussion on the challenge that the Bible has faced from feminist theologians and homosexuals, it can be established that there are a number of areas in the Bible that have led to the persecution and suffering of

²⁵⁰ Ibid. p.1-12.

several groups of people. It is also clear from the feminist discussion that there is need to handle scripture with a firm understanding of the original setting and meaning of Scripture. This also applies to the homosexual discussion. A number of Scriptural passages have been uprooted from their original meaning and intention and used wily- nily to support the misplaced intentions of some people. It also came out clearly that the Bible was written from a patriarchal society that took the male of the species as normative. As civilisations progress it has been discovered that men and women are the same and their capacity to internalise knowledge is the same. Women have been leaders of nations, pilots, medical doctors, engineers, leaders of institutions and many other challenging jobs that some men are unable to do. This has led to the call to have women ascend to positions of authority in the church. Likewise the Bible has passages that are explicitly anti-homosexual. These passages however seem to have been written by people who did not have any knowledge of a homosexual orientation. An orientation is a disposition that one can not do anything about. It is like being left-handed; it is given by the Creator. To this effect, there is need to revisit the Bible and reinterpret it in the context of the thriving challenges. This is where Juan Luis Segundo's hermeneutic cycle comes into play. It is clear from the above that there has to be a continuing change in our interpretation of the Bible which will be dictated by the continuing changes in the present day realities.

²⁵¹ Ibid. p.1-12.

CHAPTER 5

‘REWRITING’ THE BIBLE: RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to consider the reactions of Anglican believers in the city of Harare regarding the issue of rewriting the Bible. The fieldwork drew responses from different people representing a wide range of groupings as well as positions in the Anglican Church. There was also a serious consideration of gender in the research process. Considering the numerous number of parishes in Harare, it has not been possible to have representation from each parish. However, there was an effort to have respondents from the high, middle and low-density areas. Since the majority of the Anglican Church members in Zimbabwe are now black people, the majority of the respondents in this research are also black people. The several groups of people found in the Anglican Church in the Diocese of Harare are aimed at bringing people of the same sex, desire as well as condition together, with a hope of building confidence in them and helping them to develop their faith. Most of these groups are well constituted as evidenced by the way in which they have constitutions that guide them in their lives as well as their nature of association. As for the offices found in the Anglican Church, they are universal and documented in the Church’s Acts and Constitution.

5.2 Anglican Church Offices and Groups

It is important to highlight some of these groups and explain what they are and what they do or stand for in the Anglican Church in the city of Harare. This is important since representation from these groups of people was considered in this research. It is important to state that in the Anglican Church there are two broad groups of people, the ordained and the laity. The ordained are those men and in some countries women, who have gone through some theological and pastoral training and then they are ordained to the

priesthood. Ordination is believed to set an individual apart. The ordained ministers are the ones who lead people in worship. They marry those who want to get married, as well as baptise those who want to be baptised. They are also distinguished by wearing clerical collars. This is an external distinction, which makes them different from the laity.

5.2.a. The Bishop

Amongst the group of ministers there are also different ranks and offices. At the top of the hierarchy there is the bishop, who is the senior clergyman and the one who heads a diocese. According to David Sceats, ‘a bishop is a spiritual leader, pastoral director and ecclesiastical chief executive.’²⁵² This is also amplified in The Alternative Service Book, from the Ordination or Consecration of a Bishop. It is clearly stated that:

*the Bishop is called to lead in serving and caring for the people of God, and to work with them in the oversight of the church. He has ... a special responsibility to maintain and further the unity of the church, to uphold its discipline and to guard its faith ... It is his duty to watch over and pray for all those committed to his charge, and to teach and govern them after the example of the Apostles ... He is to ordain and to send new ministers, guiding those who serve with him and enabling them to fulfil their ministry... to baptise and confirm, to preside at Holy Communion, and to lead the offering of prayer and praise.*²⁵³

This simply means the bishop is the one who governs a diocese and is the one who can decide where a clergyman will go and work at a given time. He is also the only one who can confirm people so that they will be permitted to receive Holy Communion in Church.

5.2.b. The Vicar General

Below the Bishop there is a Vicar General. According to Canon 14 of the Constitution and Canons of the Church of Central Africa (Anglican Church),

²⁵² David Sceats, “Orders and Officers of the Church”, in Ian Bunting (ed.), Celebrating the Anglican Way. (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1996), p.180.

²⁵³ The Alternative Service Book 1980. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984) p.388.

The duties of the Vicar General shall be to perform all the spiritual and temporal functions of the Diocesan Bishop except such as may be excluded by the Fundamental Declarations, Constitution, Canon or Acts of this province or the Acts or other binding decisions of the Diocesan Synod. In particular he may summon and preside at the Synod of the Diocese, but may not promulgate the Acts or other binding decisions there made, which shall be without effect until they shall have been promulgated by the Episcopal Synod or by the Archbishop himself²⁵⁴

The Vicar General is therefore a priest who is next in rank to the bishop. When the bishop is away he is the one who looks after the diocese.

5.2.c. The Priests

The great majority of the ordained are priests. Some of these priests are archdeacons. These have jurisdiction over an archdeaconry with more than five parishes. Other priests are called rectors or incumbents if they are in charge of a parish. Others are referred to as priest in charge or resident priest. Such priests will be closely monitored by a senior priest or by the archdeacon under which that parish falls. There are also others who are referred to as assistant priests. These will be under a rector in a parish. However the ministry of all the ordained people is the same as prescribed in The Alternative Service Book, 1980:

Priests are called by God to work with the Bishop and with their fellow-priests, as servants and shepherds among the people to whom they are sent. They are to proclaim the word of the Lord, to call their hearers to repentance, and in Christ's name to absolve, and to declare the forgiveness of sins. They are to baptize, and prepare the baptized for confirmation. They are to preside at the celebration of the Holy Communion. They are to lead their people in prayer and worship, to bless them in the name of the Lord, and to teach and encourage by word and example. They are to minister to the sick, and prepare the dying for their death. They are to be messengers, watchmen, and stewards of the Lord; they are to teach and admonish, to feed and provide the Lord's family, to search for his children in the wilderness of this world's temptations and to guide them through its confusions, so that they may be saved by Christ for ever²⁵⁵

5.2.d. The Deacon

²⁵⁴ Constitution and Canons of the Church of the Province of Central Africa. (1972), p.50.

²⁵⁵ Alternative Service Book 1980, (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1984), p.356.

This is the third group of clergy that is found in the Anglican Church. This is the first stage of becoming a priest. The role of this office is very limited. David Sceats maintains that ‘being a deacon is a kind of preparatory period before someone becomes a Priest.’²⁵⁶ The main difference between these two orders is that a priest may preside at celebrations of Holy Communion, and pronounce the liturgical absolution and blessing on the congregation, whereas deacons may not.

5.2.e. The Churchwarden

The majority of the people in the Anglican Church are referred to as the laity. However amongst the laity there are some offices that are instituted to ensure the smooth running of the parishes. At the top of these offices is that of churchwarden. There are normally two churchwardens in each parish who are chosen at a Parish Vestry meeting. They are chosen by joint consent, if it may be, of the incumbent priest and the annual vestry meeting, but if they can not agree upon such a choice, then the incumbent shall choose one and the vestry meeting chooses the other churchwarden. However, there are certain necessary requirements for someone to be chosen into such an office. According to The Acts of the Diocese of Mashonaland (now Harare), (Act 14.2.a.) “Every churchwarden shall be a communicant member of the vestry (other than the incumbent); of the ecclesiastical division not under church censure and of or above the age of 21 years”²⁵⁷

The churchwardens are the officers of the Bishop from whom they derive their authority on the one hand. On the other hand they are the representatives of the laity in the ecclesiastical division. Their duties are clearly stipulated in The Acts of the Diocese of Mashonaland (Act 14.10). They include assisting the local priest in both his pastoral and

²⁵⁶ David Sceats, Op. Cit., p.190.

administrative duties. They also consult with the bishop on the bishop's nomination of a priest who will have been appointed to work in that parish²⁵⁸. Over and above everything else they are the people who see to it that there is order in the church and that church property is looked after well.

5.2.f. The Subdeacon

According to Canon 18, of the Constitution and Canons of the Church of the Province of Central Africa (Anglican Church), which deals with lay ministries, 'the laity, by virtue of their Baptism and confirmation share with the clergy in responsibility for the proclamation of the Gospel and for the pastoral care of the people of God.'²⁵⁹ This canon has made it possible for men and women who are not ordained to take an active part in the life of the church. They can preach and help with the distribution of Holy Communion in either kind; they can also assist in the preparation of candidates for baptism and confirmation, visit the sick, the aged and the infirm, conduct services of Matins and Evensong, bury the dead as well as baptize in cases of emergency. People who can do all these things have to be trained by the local priest and then get licensed by the Bishop to do so. The people who help with the distribution of Holy Communion, burying the dead, visiting the sick and distributing Holy Communion to the sick people, as well as conduct services such as Matins and Evensong are called Sub- Deacons.

5.2.g. The Sidesperson

²⁵⁷ The Acts of the Diocese of Mashonaland including the Diocesan Regulations (01.08.1974) p.41.

²⁵⁸ Ibid. p44

²⁵⁹ Constitution and Canons of the Church of the Province of Central Africa (1972), p.54.

The other office, which is also quite important, is that of a sidesperson. Such a person can be of either sex. Their responsibility is to ensure that people are welcomed as they enter the church. They also direct them to their seats. In low-density parishes, these people also help with the distribution of pew papers. In general they help the churchwardens in maintaining order in the Church during worship. According to Act 14.10 (ix), of the Acts of the Diocese of Mashonaland (now Harare), one of the duties of the churchwardens is ‘to see to the seating of the congregation in the Church, to maintain quietness and good order during the time of service, both within and as far as may be, without the Church.’²⁶⁰. The churchwardens have given this responsibility to the sidespersons to do on their behalf.

5.2.h. Lay Unions / Associations

Another set of lay people is those who group themselves together under some constitutions that bind them to a particular life style. Most of these groups are not common to every ecclesiastical division. However the Mothers Union is common in all the Parishes in the Diocese of Harare.

5.2.h.i. Mothers Union (MU)

The biggest group of such people is the Mothers Union. This is a worldwide movement of Anglican women who have been married in the Church, or whose Magistrate’s marriage may have been blessed in Church. In Zimbabwe such people have to have been married under Marriage Act 5.11. This is the chapter that maintains the concept of a monogamous union. Some of the Mother’s Union objectives include, keeping Jesus’ teaching about marriage, encouraging parents to bring up their children in the fear of the

²⁶⁰ The Acts of the Diocese of Mashonaland including the Diocesan Regulations (01.08.1974), p.45.

Lord, as well as helping those whose families are in jeopardy. Members of this group are identified by the uniform that they wear which is made up of a white blouse, with a blue collar as well as a black skirt.

5.2.h.ii. Church Women's Association (CWA)

This is a group that is similar to the Mothers Union in that its membership was drawn from women. However, the majority of members of this group are white women. Although this group's constitution does not specify that only white women can become members, white women have dominated it and it has maintained western principles. This has naturally segregated black women who find comfort in the Mothers Union. However, members of this group also commit themselves to serving the church through fundraising as well as the ministry of prayer.

5.2.h.iii. Men's Fellowship

This is a group that seeks to bring men together. They gather together with an aim of committing themselves to serving Christ in many ways such as fundraising, repairs and maintenance of the Church properties. Such a group is common in the low density areas. Their meetings are usually relaxed and characterised by high life. Usually their meetings go with braais and drinks, including alcohol.

5.2.h.iv. Wabvuwi

This group is common in high-density areas although there are few members in low-density suburbs. These men are known for their strict teachings against consuming alcohol, as well as smoking. They are also identified by the blue sash that they wear across their chest.

5.2.h.v. Bernard Mizeki Guild (BMG)

This is another group whose membership is drawn from men. However, members of this group are flexible in that they are allowed to take alcohol as well as to smoke. They are identified by a badge inscribed ‘Bernard Mizeki Guild’ which they wear on their jackets. According to the constitution of this group, the members pledge to assist the church in things such as fundraising, building and doing maintenance jobs that need to be done at the parish where the group exists. They also pledge to assist the local clergy in ensuring that the parish is running smoothly. With regard to family life, the members of this group pledge to uphold the sanctity of Christian marriage and to promote good family life. At big occasions such as the Bernard Mizeki Festival that is commemorated on the second weekend of June each year at the Bernard Mizeki Shrine near Marondera, this group of men also assist by organising collection bags and facilitating the smooth gathering of the collection for that day. They also organise security at this venue.

5.2.h.vi. Youth

The young people are also taken care of through groups such as the youth groups. According to the Anglican Youth Association’s constitution, ‘the age of members belonging to the Anglican Youth Association of Harare shall be between the age of 12 and 35years’.²⁶¹ Such people should be unmarried and without children. According to the AYAH constitution, one of its objectives is ‘to spread the Gospel to all the Youth in the Diocese of Harare and to all others’. It is the hope of this establishment that the young people are groomed in Christian principles so as to become responsible adults.

5.3 Other Groups

²⁶¹ Anglican Youth Association of Harare Constitution: 2000

Recently there have been efforts in some parishes to bring together people such as single mothers, married couples, divorcees, and young adults to try and have people of similar concerns worship together and share their stories.

In addition there are some young people who have dissociated themselves from the youth for the reason that the youth groups are not very strict in their approach to life. Such people have formed groups that are quite austere and strict in their approach to life. One such group is for boys and is called the St. Peter's Guild. The St. Veronicas' Guild is a similar association for girls. These two groups operate on the same principle of austerity and strictness. These people are not permitted to take anything alcoholic, or to smoke, or even to go to movies. They are prohibited from putting on certain types of clothing. The St Peter's Guild members are identified by a white sash that they put across their chest. This group can be seen as a preparatory stage for boys who after marriage will graduate into becoming a Mubvuwi. Similarly the St. Veronica's Guild members are identified by their white blouses with blue collars and blue skirts. It is expected that this is a preparatory stage for girls who after marriage will join the Mothers Union. It is important to mention that these two groups are not very popular in affluent parishes.

Included in my list of respondents is a seminarian. This is simply a man who is in theological seminary training to become a priest in the Anglican Church. This research has therefore drawn people from different parishes but representing all the above groups of people found in the Anglican Church in the city of Harare. In order to obtain a balanced position of the Anglican believers regarding the issue of rewriting the Bible, in the City of Harare, I have therefore randomly picked people representing the above groups from seventeen parishes. These parishes represent the high, the low and the

middle density suburbs. Nineteen people reacted to a questionnaire, with fourteen people having been interviewed.

5.4 Research Findings

The findings of this research can be divided into thirteen areas, all of which are closely related. These thirteen divisions constitute the questions that were asked in the interviews as well as the questionnaires that were used as means of gathering information in this research. An analysis of the answers given to these questions will help one to come to a conclusion on the position of the Anglican believers, on the subject of rewriting the Bible. The following is the statistical representation of the findings of this research.

5.2.i. Passages such as 2 Timothy 3: 16, have been used to suggest that the Bible is from God and therefore inspired. (Yes / No). Explain your answer briefly.

Table 1.

Respondent Name, Group & Parish	Questionnaire/ Interview	Yes	No
Stephen Mutenga (St Peter's Guild), Avondale Parish	Interview	*	
Loveness Nyanhongo (Church Warden), Warren Park	Interview	*	
Aaron Chikomo (BMG), Highfield Parish	Interview	*	
Cleopas Marandu (Church Warden) Budiriro Parish	Interview	*	
Sarah Gwende (Mother's Union), Highlands Parish	Interview	*	
Alexander Mahlava (Youth), Warren Park Parish	Interview	*	
Majory Andrea (Church Warden), Mabvuku Parish	Interview	*	
Tendai Makape (Youth) , Rugare Parish	Interview	*	
Grace Makoni (CWA), Acardia Parish	Interview	*	
Tecla Kachembere (MU), Cathedral Parish	Interview	*	
Milford Mazula (Youth), Hatfield Parish	Interview		*
Bp. Peter Hatendi (Retired), Avondale Parish	Interview	*	
Rev. Shepherd Munzara (Rector) Greendale Parish	Interview	*	
Bp. Nolbert Kunonga (Bishop of Diocese of Harare)	Interview	*	
Rev. Leonard Muzhingi (Ass. Priest) Cathedral Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Taurayi Zindoga (St Peter's Guild), Glen View Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Rev. Isheanesu Gusha (Deacon) Bishop Gaul College	Questionnaire	*	
Danstan Maunze (Subdeacon) Greendale Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Gertrude Gwatidzo (St Veronica's Guild) Mt. Pleasant	Questionnaire	*	
Jonas Shumba (Church Warden) Glen Norah Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Canon Lameck Mutete (Rector) Highfield Parish	Questionnaire	*	*

Respondent Name, Group & Parish	Questionnaire/ Interview	Yes	No
Veronica Nyathi (MU), Highlands Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Simbarashe Basvi (Seminarian) Bishop Gaul College	Questionnaire		*
Susan Vito (MU), Mbare Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Bernard Ngowe (Mubvuwi), Mufakose Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Rev. Simbarashe Mutandwa (Rector) Hatfield Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Richard Mukucha (BMG) Waterfalls Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Elizabeth Tsikwa (MU) Cranborne Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Anna Chuma (Sidesperson) Borrowdale Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Stella Ngaru (MU) Mabvuku Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Clara Stevens (CWA), Avondale Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Maxwell Nyakuomba (Youth) Belvedere Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Nigel and Thelma Nyatsambo (Couple) Marlborough	Questionnaire	*	
TOTALS		30	3

From Table 1, it shows that the majority of the people who were interviewed as well as those who reacted to the questionnaire take 2 Timothy 3: 16 as the basic biblical evidence that shows that the Bible is inspired. However, it is important to consider the views of those who maintain that the above passage cannot be used as a basis to prove that the Bible is inspired. Before doing so, it is also important to mention that one respondent, Canon Lameck Mutete, agrees on one hand and disagrees on the other hand, to the view that the above passage can be used as a basis to support the inspiration of the Bible. According to him, to take this reading and use it as the basis to prove the inspiration of the Bible is ‘using Scripture to defend Scripture’ which to him ‘does not hold water’. He goes on to say that ‘I believe that it is inspired only in as much as there is a clear distinction between God’s word in Scripture and a human element in the writing. Only God’s word in Scripture is inspired. The human bias in context and purpose may not be inspired’²⁶² Canon Mutete is trying to make it clear that there is a distinction between the word of God and the human input in the Bible. It is only the word of God that is inspired.

²⁶² Questionnaire by Canon. Lameck Mutete, St Paul’s Highfield, Harare, June 2002.

On the other hand, Milford Mazula, is of the opinion that the above passage can not be used as a basis to argue for the inspiration of the Bible. For him ‘the Bible is not from God because there is not enough, evidence that those who wrote were inspired. It is a document that makes peace prevail in the nations’²⁶³. This is substantiated by Simbarashe Basvi, who does not believe that the above passage can be used as the basis to argue for the inspiration of the Bible. For him this is so ‘because some of the Scripture in it has got some shortfalls which can not be fully explained.’²⁶⁴

5.2.ii. Is it True or False to say that the Bible is double authored that is between God and human beings.

Table 2

Respondent Name, Group & Parish	Questionnaire/ Interview	True	False
Stephen Mutenga (St Peter’s Guild), Avondale Parish	Interview	*	
Loveness Nyanhongo (Church Warden), Warren Park	Interview		*
Aaron Chikomo (BMG), Highfield Parish	Interview	*	
Cleopas Marandu (Church Warden) Budiriro Parish	Interview	*	
Sarah Gwende (Mother’s Union), Highlands Parish	Interview		*
Alexander Mahlava (Youth), Warren Park Parish	Interview	*	
Majory Andrea (Church Warden), Mabvuku Parish	Interview	*	
Tendai Makape (Youth) , Rugare Parish	Interview	*	
Grace Makoni (CWA), Acardia Parish	Interview	*	
Teclah Kachembere (MU), Cathedral Parish	Interview	*	
Milford Mazula (Youth), Hatfield Parish	Interview	*	
Bp. Peter Hatendi (Retired), Avondale Parish	Interview		*
Rev. Shepherd Munzara (Rector) Greendale Parish	Interview	*	
Bp. Nolbert Kunonga (Bishop of Diocese of Harare)	Interview		*
Rev. Leonard Muzhingi (Ass. Priest) Cathedral Parish	Questionnaire		*
Taurayi Zindoga(St Peter’s Guild), Glen View Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Rev. Isheanesu Gusha (Deacon) Bishop Gaul College	Questionnaire		*
Danstan Maunze (Subdeacon) Greendale Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Getrude Gwatidzo (St Veronica’s Guild) Mt. Pleasant	Questionnaire	*	
Jonas Shumba (Church Warden) Glen Norah Parish	Questionnaire		*
Canon Lameck Mutete (Rector) Highfield Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Veronica Nyathi (MU), Highlands Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Simbarashe Basvi (Seminarian) Bishop Gaul College	Questionnaire	*	
Susan Vito (MU), Mbare Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Bernard Ngowe (Mubvuwi), Mufakose Parish	Questionnaire	*	

²⁶³ Interview with Milford Mazula, St Martins Hatfield, 18 March 2003.

²⁶⁴ Questionnaire by Simbarashe Basvi, Bishop Gaul College, Harare, October 2002.

Respondent Name, Group & Parish	Questionnaire/ Interview	True	False
Rev. Simbarashe Mutandwa (Rector) Hatfield Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Richard Mukucha (BMG) Waterfalls Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Elizabeth Tsikwa (MU) Cranborne Parish	Questionnaire		*
Anna Chuma (Sidesperson) Borrowdale Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Stella Ngaru (MU) Mabvuku Parish	Questionnaire		*
Clara Stevens (CWA), Avondale Parish	Questionnaire		*
Maxwell Nyakuromba (Youth) Belvedere Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Nigel and Thelma Nyatsambo(Couple) Marlborough	Questionnaire	*	
TOTALS		23	10

The question regarding the double authorship of the Bible received mixed reactions as shown in Table 2. There are twenty three people who agree to the idea that the Bible is double authored. This means that the Bible is a product of both people and God. Table 2 shows that ten people do not agree that the Bible is double authored. It is important to note the difference that exists between these two sides. According to Bp Peter Hatendi, a retired Bishop of the Diocese of Harare, ‘to say that the Bible is double authored is going too far.’ He however goes on to say that ‘it is inspired, but the human input renders it fallible, which it is not’.²⁶⁵ This is supported by Bishop Nolbert Kunonga, the Bishop of Harare, who says, “There is one author – God. Inspiration is the key principle. If we say it is double authored then there is no co-operation between God and the writer.”²⁶⁶

On the other hand, the majority of the respondents in this research accept the view that the Bible is double authored. Tecla Kachembere, supports the view that the Bible is double authored ‘in the sense that the Bible was inspired by God, which is to say it came from God and what men wrote was from God and then in some cases the man added his own words. The example is that of Paul in 1 Corinthians 7: 25-26, where he gives his own opinion regarding virgins.’²⁶⁷ Tecla goes further to explain that the place played by

²⁶⁵ Interview with Bishop Peter Hatendi, Avondale, Harare, 09 September 2002.

²⁶⁶ Interview with Bishop Nolbert Kunonga, Diocese of Harare, 16. October 2002.

²⁶⁷ Interview with Tecla Kachembere, Cathedral Parish, Harare, 19 March 2003.

human beings in this double authorship was ‘mainly to do with research and compilation of the information that God had communicated to those whom he had set aside for such a particular ministry.’²⁶⁸

5.2.iii. If the Bible is inspired is it true or false to say that it is the truth

Table 3

Respondent Name, Group & Parish	Questionnaire/ Interview	True	False
Stephen Mutenga (St Peter’s Guild), Avondale Parish	Interview	*	
Loveness Nyanhongo (Church Warden), Warren Park	Interview	*	
Aaron Chikomo (BMG), Highfield Parish	Interview		*
Cleopas Marandu (Church Warden) Budiriro Parish	Interview	*	
Sarah Gwende (Mother’s Union), Highlands Parish	Interview		*
Alexander Mahlava (Youth), Warren Park Parish	Interview		*
Majory Andrea (Church Warden), Mabvuku Parish	Interview		*
Tendai Makape (Youth), Rugare Parish	Interview	*	
Grace Makoni (CWA), Acardia Parish	Interview		*
Teclah Kachembere (MU), Cathedral Parish	Interview		*
Milford Mazula (Youth), Hatfield Parish	Interview		*
Bp. Peter Hatendi (Retired), Avondale Parish	Interview		*
Rev. Shepherd Munzara (Rector) Greendale Parish	Interview	*	*
Bp. Nolbert Kunonga (Bishop of Diocese of Harare)	Interview	*	*
Rev. Leonard Muzhingi (Ass. Priest) Cathedral Parish	Questionnaire	*	*
Taurayi Zindoga(St Peter’s Guild), Glen View Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Rev. Isheanesu Gusha (Deacon) Bishop Gaul College	Questionnaire		*
Danstan Maunze (Subdeacon) Greendale Parish	Questionnaire	*	*
Getrude Gwatidzo (St Veronica’s Guild) Mt. Pleasant	Questionnaire	*	
Jonas Shumba (Church Warden) Glen Norah Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Canon Lameck Mutete (Rector) Highfield Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Veronica Nyathi (MU), Highlands Parish	Questionnaire		*
Simbarashe Basvi (Seminarian) Bishop Gaul College	Questionnaire	*	
Susan Vito (MU), Mbare Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Bernard Ngowe (Mubvuwi), Mufakose Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Rev. Simbarashe Mutandwa (Rector) Hatfield Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Richard Mukucha (BMG) Waterfalls Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Elizabeth Tsikwa (MU) Cranborne Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Anna Chuma (Sidesperson) Borrowdale Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Stella Ngaru (MU) Mabvuku Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Clara Stevens (CWA), Avondale Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Maxwell Nyakuromba (Youth) Belvedere Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Nigel and Thelma Nyatsambo (Couple) Marlborough	Questionnaire	*	
TOTALS		23	14

²⁶⁸ Interview with Tecla Kachembere, Cathedral Parish, Harare, 19 March 2003.

In Table 3, the majority of the respondents uphold the view that all that is written in the Bible is truth. There are four people who subscribe to the view that, although the Bible records can be viewed as the basis of truth, there are other passages which may not be truthful. Rev. Shepherd Munzara maintains that the Biblical records can be said to uphold truth only ‘in as far as it is from God, but not the passages that are from human beings’.²⁶⁹ This is supported by Rev. Leonard Muzhingi who says ‘since the Bible was written by human beings, I do not dismiss the human error in some of the recordings’.²⁷⁰ This is also inferred by Bishop Nolbert Kunonga, who says ‘not all is true. Truth is relative. Context is important for one to understand. It is only true in as far as inspiration is concerned. Truth then may not be truth now’.²⁷¹ However those who uphold the view that all that is written in the Bible is truth, base their position on the basis that God cannot lie. This is what Veronica Nyathi, suggests when she says, ‘everything in the Bible is truth because all that is written in this Book is from God and God does not lie like human beings’.²⁷²

5.2.iv. *Is it true or false that the Bible has got numerous discrepancies and contradictions?*

Table 4

Respondent Name, Group & Parish	Questionnaire/ Interview	True	False
Stephen Mutenga (St Peter’s Guild), Avondale Parish	Interview		*
Loveness Nyanhongo (Church Warden), Warren Park	Interview	*	
Aaron Chikomo (BMG), Highfield Parish	Interview	*	
Cleopas Marandu (Church Warden) Budiriro Parish	Interview	*	
Sarah Gwende (Mother’s Union), Highlands Parish	Interview	*	
Alexander Mahlava (Youth), Warren Park Parish	Interview	*	
Majory Andrea (Church Warden), Mabvuku Parish	Interview	*	
Tendai Makape (Youth) , Rugare Parish	Interview	*	

²⁶⁹ Interview with Rev Shepherd Munzara, Greendale Parish, Harare, 17 January 2003.

²⁷⁰ Questionnaire by Rev. Leonard Muzhingi, Cathedral Parish, Harare, February 2003.

²⁷¹ Interview with Bishop Nolbert Kunonga, Diocese of Harare, 16 October 2002.

²⁷² Questionnaire by Veronica Nyathi, Highlands Parish, Harare, December 2002.

Respondent Name, Group & Parish	Questionnaire/ Interview	True	False
Grace Makoni (CWA), Acardia Parish	Interview	*	
Teclah Kachembere (MU), Cathedral Parish	Interview	*	
Milford Mazula (Youth), Hatfield Parish	Interview	*	
Bp. Peter Hatendi (Retired), Avondale Parish	Interview		*
Rev. Shepherd Munzara (Rector) Greendale Parish	Interview		*
Bp. Nolbert Kunonga (Bishop of Diocese of Harare)	Interview		*
Rev. Leonard Muzhingi (Ass. Priest) Cathedral Parish	Questionnaire		*
Taurayi Zindoga(St Peter's Guild), Glen View Parish	Questionnaire		*
Rev. Isheanesu Gusha (Deacon) Bishop Gaul College	Questionnaire		*
Danstan Maunze (Subdeacon) Greendale Parish	Questionnaire		*
Getrude Gwatidzo (St Veronica's Guild) Mt. Pleasant	Questionnaire		*
Jonas Shumba (Church Warden) Glen Norah Parish	Questionnaire		*
Canon Lameck Mutete (Rector) Highfield Parish	Questionnaire		*
Veronica Nyathi (MU), Highlands Parish	Questionnaire		*
Simbarashe Basvi (Seminarian) Bishop Gaul College	Questionnaire	*	
Susan Vito (MU), Mbare Parish	Questionnaire		*
Bernard Ngowe (Mubvuwi), Mufakose Parish	Questionnaire		*
Rev. Simbarashe Mutandwa (Rector) Hatfield Parish	Questionnaire		*
Richard Mukucha (BMG) Waterfalls Parish	Questionnaire		
Elizabeth Tsikwa (MU) Cranborne Parish	Questionnaire		
Anna Chuma (Sidesperson) Borrowdale Parish	Questionnaire		*
Stella Ngaru (MU) Mabvuku Parish	Questionnaire		*
Clara Stevens (CWA), Avondale Parish	Questionnaire		*
Maxwell Nyakuromba (Youth) Belvedere Parish	Questionnaire		*
Nigel and Thelma Nyatsambo (Couple) Marlborough	Questionnaire		*
TOTALS		11	20

From Table 4, it is clear that twenty people do not subscribe to the notion that says there are some contradictions in the Bible. Eleven people uphold the view that some discrepancies are traceable in the Bible whilst two people did not write anything on their questionnaires. According to Canon L. Mutete, 'if something is divine then there is no discrepancy or contradictions'.²⁷³ This is augmented by Stella Ngaru who says discrepancies and contradictions are 'a sign of human error and not God'.²⁷⁴ However, Loveness Nyanhongo acknowledges that there are some contradictions in the Bible

²⁷³ Questionnaire by Canon Lameck Mutete, St Paul's Highfield, Harare, November 2002.

²⁷⁴ Questionnaire by Stella Ngaru, St James Mabvuku, Harare, May 2002.

‘because the copy that is currently in use is not the original document. Discrepancies are a result of faulty translation’.²⁷⁵

5.2.v. Is it correct to say the God of the Old Testament is different from the God of the New Testament? (Yes / No) Explain your answer briefly.

Table 5

Respondent Name, Group & Parish	Questionnaire/ Interview	Yes	No
Stephen Mutenga (St Peter’s Guild), Avondale Parish	Interview		*
Loveness Nyanhongo (Church Warden), Warren Park	Interview		*
Aaron Chikomo (BMG), Highfield Parish	Interview	*	
Cleopas Marandu (Church Warden) Budiriro Parish	Interview		*
Sarah Gwende (Mother’s Union), Highlands Parish	Interview	*	
Alexander Mahlava (Youth), Warren Park Parish	Interview	*	
Majory Andrea (Church Warden), Mabvuku Parish	Interview	*	
Tendai Makape (Youth), Rugare Parish	Interview	*	
Grace Makoni (CWA), Acardia Parish	Interview	*	
Teclah Kachembere (MU), Cathedral Parish	Interview		*
Milford Mazula (Youth), Hatfield Parish	Interview		*
Bp. Peter Hatendi (Retired), Avondale Parish	Interview		*
Rev. Shepherd Munzara (Rector) Greendale Parish	Interview		*
Bp. Nolbert Kunonga (Bishop of Diocese of Harare)	Interview		*
Rev. Leonard Muzhingi (Ass. Priest) Cathedral Parish	Questionnaire		*
Taurayi Zindoga(St Peter’s Guild), Glen View Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Rev. Isheanesu Gusha (Deacon) Bishop Gaul College	Questionnaire	*	
Danstan Maunze (Subdeacon) Greendale Parish	Questionnaire		*
Getrude Gwatidzo (St Veronica’s Guild) Mt. Pleasant	Questionnaire		*
Jonas Shumba (Church Warden) Glen Norah Parish	Questionnaire		*
Canon Lameck Mutete (Rector) Highfield Parish	Questionnaire		*
Veronica Nyathi (MU), Highlands Parish	Questionnaire		*
Simbarashe Basvi (Seminarian) Bishop Gaul College	Questionnaire		*
Susan Vito (MU), Mbare Parish	Questionnaire		*
Bernard Ngowe (Mubvuwi), Mufakose Parish	Questionnaire		*
Rev. Simbarashe Mutandwa (Rector) Hatfield Parish	Questionnaire		*
Richard Mukucha (BMG) Waterfalls Parish	Questionnaire		
Elizabeth Tsikwa (MU) Cranborne Parish	Questionnaire		*
Anna Chuma (Sidesperson) Borrowdale Parish	Questionnaire		*
Stella Ngaru (MU) Mabvuku Parish	Questionnaire		*
Clara Stevens (CWA), Avondale Parish	Questionnaire		*
Maxwell Nyakuromba (Youth) Belvedere Parish	Questionnaire		*
Nigel and Thelma Nyatsambo (Couple) Marlborough	Questionnaire		*
TOTALS		8	24

²⁷⁵ Interview with Loveness Nyanhongo, St James Warren, Harare, 20March 2003.

Table 5 shows that out of the thirty-three respondents in this research, twenty-four of them do not accept the view that the Bible shows two Gods. The majority of these people take the Bible as being holy and coming from God verbatim hence they refuse to accept that the Bible has any discrepancies or contradictions. Veronica Nyathi maintains that ‘there are no contradictions in the Bible because the moment we allow contradictions in the Bible, it means that the Bible is not perfect.’²⁷⁶ For her to say that there are contradictions in the Bible amounts to saying God contradicts himself.

However, those who subscribe to the view that the Bible shows two Gods do so on the basis of passages such as Exodus 20: 13 and Joshua 10: 28, 28-32, which presents God as being vindictive and malicious compared to other passages such as Matthew 5: 44, and Luke 6: 27-28, which show God’s gracious attitude towards enemies. According to Alexander Mahlava, the Bible shows two Gods ‘because in the Old Testament God instructs the Israelites to force the inhabitants of Canaan to vacate their piece of land whereas in the New Testament Jesus says we should love our enemies.’²⁷⁷ The other respondent did not answer this question.

5.2.vi. *Is it true or false to say that the war between Israel and Palestine is caused by the Bible. Explain your answer briefly?*

Table 6

Respondent Name, Group & Parish	Questionnaire/ Interview	Yes	No
Stephen Mutenga (St Peter’s Guild), Avondale Parish	Interview	*	
Loveness Nyanhongo (Church Warden), Warren Park	Interview		*
Aaron Chikomo (BMG), Highfield Parish	Interview	*	
Cleopas Marandu (Church Warden) Budiriro Parish	Interview	*	
Sarah Gwende (Mother’s Union), Highlands Parish	Interview	*	
Alexander Mahlava (Youth), Warren Park Parish	Interview	*	
Majory Andrea (Church Warden), Mabvuku Parish	Interview		*
Tendai Makape (Youth) , Rugare Parish	Interview	*	
Grace Makoni (CWA), Acardia Parish	Interview	*	

²⁷⁶ Questionnaire by Veronica Nyathi, Highlands Parish, Harare, December 2002

²⁷⁷ Interview with Alexander Mahlava, St James Warren Park, Harare, 18 March 2003

Respondent Name, Group & Parish	Questionnaire/ Interview	Yes	No
Teclah Kachembere (MU), Cathedral Parish	Interview	*	
Milford Mazula (Youth), Hatfield Parish	Interview	*	
Bp. Peter Hatendi (Retired), Avondale Parish	Interview	*	
Rev. Shepherd Munzara (Rector) Greendale Parish	Interview	*	
Bp. Nolbert Kunonga (Bishop of Diocese of Harare)	Interview	*	
Rev. Leonard Muzhingi (Ass. Priest) Cathedral Parish	Questionnaire		*
Taurayi Zindoga(St Peter's Guild), Glen View Parish	Questionnaire		*
Rev. Isheanesu Gusha (Deacon) Bishop Gaul College	Questionnaire	*	*
Danstan Maunze (Subdeacon) Greendale Parish	Questionnaire		*
Getrude Gwatidzo (St Veronica's Guild) Mt. Pleasant	Questionnaire		*
Jonas Shumba (Church Warden) Glen Norah Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Canon Lameck Mutete (Rector) Highfield Parish	Questionnaire	*	*
Veronica Nyathi (MU), Highlands Parish	Questionnaire		*
Simbarashe Basvi (Seminarian) Bishop Gaul College	Questionnaire		*
Susan Vito (MU), Mbare Parish	Questionnaire		*
Bernard Ngowe (Mubvuwi), Mufakose Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Rev. Simbarashe Mutandwa (Rector) Hatfield Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Richard Mukucha (BMG) Waterfalls Parish	Questionnaire		*
Elizabeth Tsikwa (MU) Cranborne Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Anna Chuma (Sidesperson) Borrowdale Parish	Questionnaire		*
Stella Ngaru (MU) Mabvuku Parish	Questionnaire		
Clara Stevens (CWA), Avondale Parish	Questionnaire		*
Maxwell Nyakuromba (Youth) Belvedere Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Nigel and Thelma Nyatsambo (Couple) Marlborough	Questionnaire		*
TOTALS		19	15

Out of thirty-three people in Table 6, it seems nineteen of them do subscribe to the notion that the Bible is to blame for the war that has been raging between Palestine and Israel.

According to Bishop Peter Hatendi,

*it is true that the Bible is to blame for this war. This comes up as a result of the Promised Land. Jews were convinced that the portion of land occupied by the Palestinians was theirs and they had identity with it. As to why God chose the Promised Land where there were people already, is only known by Him in his wisdom. He gave the Holy Land to the chosen people.*²⁷⁸

However fifteen people maintain that the Bible has nothing to do with this war. Anna Chuma is of the opinion that 'the people from these two areas may be the ones that carry grudges from the past, so we can not blame the Bible. Yes, in the olden days they did not

²⁷⁸ Interview with Bishop Peter Hatendi, Avondale, Harare, 09 October 2002.

quite see eye to eye but that does not mean they can not reconcile now.²⁷⁹ On the other hand there are two people who suggest that this war is caused by both the Bible as well as human interest. Rev Isheanesu Gusha maintains that he subscribes to the view that the Bible is to blame for this war, in as far as the Bible has made some places holy and given them to the Israelites as the Promised Land, disregarding the original inhabitants, the Palestinians. However he also attributes this war to the nations such as United States of America that created the nation of Israel in 1948.²⁸⁰ It is also important that one person clearly stated that she knew nothing about this war.

5.2.vii. The Bible is oppressive against women. (True / False). Explain your answer briefly.

Table 7

Respondent's Name, Group & Parish	Questionnaire/ Interview	True	False
Stephen Mutenga (St Peter's Guild), Avondale Parish	Interview		*
Loveness Nyanhongo (Church Warden), Warren Park	Interview		*
Aaron Chikomo (BMG), Highfield Parish	Interview	*	
Cleopas Marandu (Church Warden) Budiriro Parish	Interview	*	
Sarah Gwende (Mother's Union), Highlands Parish	Interview	*	
Alexander Mahlava (Youth), Warren Park Parish	Interview		*
Majory Andrea (Church Warden), Mabvuku Parish	Interview		*
Tendai Makape (Youth), Rugare Parish	Interview	*	
Grace Makoni (CWA), Acardia Parish	Interview		*
Teclah Kachembere (MU), Cathedral Parish	Interview	*	
Milford Mazula (Youth), Hatfield Parish	Interview		*
Bp. Peter Hatendi (Retired), Avondale Parish	Interview		*
Rev. Shepherd Munzara (Rector) Greendale Parish	Interview	*	
Bp. Nolbert Kunonga (Bishop of Diocese of Harare)	Interview	*	
Rev. Leonard Muzhingi (Ass. Priest) Cathedral Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Taurayi Zindoga(St Peter's Guild), Glen View Parish	Questionnaire		*
Rev. Isheanesu Gusha (Deacon) Bishop Gaul College	Questionnaire	*	
Danstan Maunze (Subdeacon) Greendale Parish	Questionnaire		*
Getrude Gwatidzo (St Veronica's Guild) Mt. Pleasant	Questionnaire		*
Jonas Shumba (Church Warden) Glen Norah Parish	Questionnaire		*
Canon Lameck Mutete (Rector) Highfield Parish	Questionnaire		*

²⁷⁹ Questionnaire by Anna Chuma, Christchurch Borrowdale, Harare, August 2002.

²⁸⁰ Questionnaire by Rev. Isheanesu Gusha, Bishop Gaul College, Harare, September 2002.

Respondent's Name, Group & Parish	Questionnaire/ Interview	True	False
Veronica Nyathi (MU) , Highlands Parish	Questionnaire		*
Simbarashe Basvi (Seminararian) Bishop Gaul College	Questionnaire	*	
Susan Vito (MU) , Mbare Parish	Questionnaire		*
Simbarashe Basvi (Seminararian) Bishop Gaul College	Questionnaire	*	
Susan Vito (MU) , Mbare Parish	Questionnaire		*
Rev. Simbarashe Mutandwa (Rector) Hatfield Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Richard Mukucha (BMG) Waterfalls Parish	Questionnaire		
Elizabeth Tsikwa (MU) Cranborne Parish	Questionnaire		*
Anna Chuma (Sidesperson) Borrowdale Parish	Questionnaire		*
Stella Ngaru (MU) Mabvuku Parish	Questionnaire		*
Clara Stevens (CWA) , Avondale Parish	Questionnaire		*
Maxwell Nyakuromba (Youth) Belvedere Parish	Questionnaire		*
Nigel and Thelma Nyatsambo (Couple) Marlborough	Questionnaire		*
TOTALS		12	20

C. S. Banana has raised the question of the use of the Bible as a weapon of oppression in his quest for a rewritten Bible. He says ‘the Bible has been and continues to be used to relegate women to second class status in society.’²⁸¹ However, according to the above Table 7, twenty people out of thirty-three do not subscribe to the view that the Bible is oppressive against women. Susan Vito, says ‘as a woman myself, I have come across a lot of women in the Bible like Debora, Ruth Mary, and Hanna. There are quite a lot of them. All of these played an important role in the Bible.’²⁸² This is supported by Clara Stevens who maintains that ‘those passages that seem to be oppressing women have to be viewed as products of their environments.’²⁸³

Twelve people do accept the view that the Bible is oppressive against women. According to Rev. Leonard Muzhingi, ‘in the Bible women seem not to have been put in the forefront. Jesus chose men as his apostles. Few instances in the Bible involved women as

²⁸¹ C. Banana, “Case of a New Bible”, in, I. Mukonyora and J.L Cox (Eds.), Rewriting the Bible: the real issues. (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1993), p.23.

²⁸² Questionnaire by Susan Vito, St Michael’s Mbare, Harare, May 2002.

²⁸³ Questionnaire by Clara Stevens, Avondale Parish, Harare, August 2002.

if they were significant.²⁸⁴ However, one person maintains that he is not aware of any differentiation that exists in the Bible between men and women.

5.2.viii. What is your position regarding the ordination of women (good/bad). Explain your answer briefly.

Table 8

Respondent's Name, Group & Parish	Questionnaire/ Interview	Good	Bad
Stephen Mutenga (St Peter's Guild), Avondale Parish	Interview	*	
Loveness Nyanhongo (Church Warden), Warren Park	Interview		*
Aaron Chikomo (BMG), Highfield Parish	Interview	*	
Cleopas Marandu (Church Warden) Budiriro Parish	Interview		*
Sarah Gwende (Mother's Union), Highlands Parish	Interview	*	
Alexander Mahlava (Youth), Warren Park Parish	Interview		*
Majory Andrea (Church Warden), Mabvuku Parish	Interview		*
Tendai Makape (Youth), Rugare Parish	Interview		*
Grace Makoni (CWA), Acardia Parish	Interview		*
Teclah Kachembere (MU), Cathedral Parish	Interview	*	
Milford Mazula (Youth), Hatfield Parish	Interview		*
Bp. Peter Hatendi (Retired), Avondale Parish	Interview		*
Rev. Shepherd Munzara (Rector) Greendale Parish	Interview		*
Bp. Nolbert Kunonga (Bishop of Diocese of Harare)	Interview		*
Rev. Leonard Muzhingi (Ass. Priest) Cathedral Parish	Questionnaire		*
Taurayi Zindoga(St Peter's Guild), Glen View Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Rev. Isheanesu Gushe (Deacon) Bishop Gaul College	Questionnaire	*	
Danstan Maunze (Subdeacon) Greendale Parish	Questionnaire		*
Getrude Gwatidzo (St Veronica's Guild) Mt. Pleasant	Questionnaire		*
Jonas Shumba (Church Warden) Glen Norah Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Canon Lameck Mutete (Rector) Highfield Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Veronica Nyathi (MU), Highlands Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Simbarashe Basvi (Seminarian) Bishop Gaul College	Questionnaire	*	
Susan Vito (MU), Mbare Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Bernard Ngowe (Mubvuwi), Mufakose Parish	Questionnaire		*
Rev. Simbarashe Mutandwa (Rector) Hatfield Parish	Questionnaire		*
Richard Mukucha (BMG) Waterfalls Parish	Questionnaire		*
Elizabeth Tsikwa (MU) Cranborne Parish	Questionnaire		*
Anna Chuma (Sidesperson) Borrowdale Parish	Questionnaire		*
Stella Ngaru (MU) Mabvuku Parish	Questionnaire		*
Clara Stevens (CWA), Avondale Parish	Questionnaire		*
Maxwell Nyakuromba (Youth) Belvedere Parish	Questionnaire		*
Nigel and Thelma Nyatsambo (Couple) Marlborough	Questionnaire		*
TOTALS		11	22

²⁸⁴ Questionnaire by Rev. Leonard Muzhingi, Cathedral Parish, Harare, February 2002.

In the Anglican as well as the Roman Catholic Church, the ordination of women has raised a lot of debate. In the Church of England, which is the Anglican Church, a decision to ordain women was reached at a tense meeting, which took place in London on 11 November 1992. The Daily News (11.11.02) reports that at this meeting several high profile Anglicans walked out in disgust, warning that it was the beginning of the end of the Church of England. However, the supporters of the ordination of women hailed this move and saw it as a watershed in the fight for sexual equality and liberation of women and they celebrated in the streets²⁸⁵. In the Church of the Province of Central Africa (Anglican Church), to which Zimbabwe belongs, the issue is still being avoided at all costs. There are no women priests in Zimbabwe, Malawi, Zambia, and Botswana, the countries that constitute the Province of Central Africa.

However, from Table 8, it is clear that the majority of the respondents in this research are against the ordination of women. Out of the twenty-one respondents who are against the ordination of women eight are women and the other one is a couple, whilst twelve are men. The reasons for such a stance vary from social and biblical as well to biological. Bishop Peter Hatendi, maintains that,

*this is such a painful subject for me. I attended the 1988 Lambeth Conference in London where this issue was voted for and I was very disappointed. The issue is that Jesus did not choose women to lead even if some served him well. He did not even choose his own mother to lead even though she was such an important woman. Tradition also teaches us that there was no such a thing.*²⁸⁶

²⁸⁵“Britain’s women Priests mark ten years of acceptance”, The Daily News, 11 November 2002, p.10.

²⁸⁶Interview with Bishop Peter Hatendi, Avondale, Harare, 09 October 2002 .

This is also supported by Danstan Maunze, who maintains that ‘women should not be ordained since they go on monthly periods and this defiles them and makes them unsuitable to stand in God’s sanctuary.’²⁸⁷

However, of the eleven people who support the ordination of women, seven of them are men whilst four are women. Veronica Nyathi postulates that ‘women should be ordained to do the work of the Lord because in the Bible there are women who worked before the Lord. Romans 16 is an example in which Phoebe was a deaconess who was commended by Paul.’²⁸⁸ Only one person did not write anything on this question.

5.2. ix. Is it possible to strip the Bible from the Jewish culture (Yes/No). Explain your answer briefly.

Table 9

Respondent’s Name, Group & Parish	Questionnaire/ Interview	Yes	No
Stephen Mutenga (St Peter’s Guild), Avondale Parish	Interview		*
Loveness Nyanhongo (Church Warden), Warren Park	Interview		*
Aaron Chikomo (BMG), Highfield Parish	Interview		*
Cleopas Marandu (Church Warden) Budiriro Parish	Interview		*
Sarah Gwende (Mother’s Union), Highlands Parish	Interview	*	
Alexander Mahlava (Youth), Warren Park Parish	Interview	*	
Majory Andrea (Church Warden), Mabvuku Parish	Interview		*
Tendai Makape (Youth), Rugare Parish	Interview		*
Grace Makoni (CWA), Acardia Parish	Interview		*
Teclah Kachembere (MU), Cathedral Parish	Interview		*
Milford Mazula (Youth), Hatfield Parish	Interview	*	
Bp. Peter Hatendi (Retired), Avondale Parish	Interview		*
Rev. Shepherd Munzara (Rector) Greendale Parish	Interview		*
Bp. Nolbert Kunonga (Bishop of Diocese of Harare)	Interview		*
Rev. Leonard Muzhingi (Ass. Priest) Cathedral Parish	Questionnaire		*
Taurayi Zindoga (St Peter’s Guild), Glen View Parish	Questionnaire		*
Rev. Isheanesu Gusha (Deacon) Bishop Gaul College	Questionnaire		*
Danstan Maunze (Subdeacon) Greendale Parish	Questionnaire		*
Getrude Gwatidzo (St Veronica’s Guild) Mt. Pleasant	Questionnaire		*
Jonas Shumba (Church Warden) Glen Norah Parish	Questionnaire		*
Canon Lameck Mutete (Rector) Highfield Parish	Questionnaire		*

²⁸⁷ Questionnaire by Danstan Maunze, Greendale Parish, Harare, August 2002.

²⁸⁸ Questionnaire by Veronica Nyathi, Highlands Parish, Harare, December 2002.

Respondent's Name, Group & Parish	Questionnaire/ Interview	Yes	No
Veronica Nyathi (MU), Highlands Parish	Questionnaire		*
Simbarashe Basvi (Seminarian) Bishop Gaul College	Questionnaire		*
Susan Vito (MU), Mbare Parish	Questionnaire		*
Bernard Ngowe (Mubvuwi), Mufakose Parish	Questionnaire		*
Rev. Simbarashe Mutandwa (Rector) Hatfield Parish	Questionnaire		*
Richard Mukucha (BMG) Waterfalls Parish	Questionnaire		*
Elizabeth Tsikwa (MU) Cranborne Parish	Questionnaire		*
Anna Chuma (Sidesperson) Borrowdale Parish	Questionnaire		*
Stella Ngaru (MU) Mabvuku Parish	Questionnaire		*
Clara Stevens (CWA), Avondale Parish	Questionnaire		*
Maxwell Nyakuromba (Youth) Belvedere Parish	Questionnaire		*
Nigel and Thelma Nyatsambo (Couple) Marlborough	Questionnaire		*
TOTALS		3	30

One of the reasons put across by C. Banana, as constituting the need for a rewritten Bible is to liberate God from Captivity of Culture. C. Banana challenged Christian scholars to ‘consider rewriting the Bible so that God can be liberated from dogmas that make God the property of ethnic syndicates.’²⁸⁹ For him the current Bible seems to be culture specific, with the Jewish culture undergirding the Bible. What he seems to be seeking is to come up with a Bible that is free of culture. The big question that comes up is whether this process of de-culturalisation is possible. From Table 9, it is clear that from the thirty-three respondents in this research, twenty nine of them do not appreciate the suggestion that the Bible should be stripped from the Jewish culture. The majority of these people realise that there appears to be cultural oppression in the Bible. However, these respondents suggest that Christians have to apply the Scriptures in the different cultures that are found on earth.

According to Veronica Nyathi, ‘the culture of the Israelites can not be stripped from the Bible because the Israelites were the chosen people and excluding them from the Bible would be tantamount to going against the Scriptures (Rev 22: 18-19), which warns us not

²⁸⁹ C. Banana, *Op. Cit.*, p.17.

to take out or add something to Scripture.’²⁹⁰ On the other hand those who suggests that it is possible to de-culturalise the Bible since women seem to be oppressed on the basis of the Jewish culture and not the Gospel. Alexander Mahlava suggests that it is possible to strip the Bible from the Jewish culture ‘because some cultures allow women to preach in Church but as in the case of the Jewish culture, it would seem to imply that all women in the world are not allowed to preach.’²⁹¹

5.1.x. Homosexuals and Lesbians have called for a rewritten Bible that will be less offensive to them. Is this a good or bad proposal? Explain your answer briefly.

Table 10

Respondent's Name, Group & Parish	Questionnaire/ Interview	Good	Bad
Stephen Mutenga (St Peter's Guild), Avondale Parish	Interview		*
Loveness Nyanhongo (Church Warden), Warren Park	Interview		*
Aaron Chikomo (BMG), Highfield Parish	Interview		*
Cleopas Marandu (Church Warden) Budiriro Parish	Interview		*
Sarah Gwende (Mother's Union), Highlands Parish	Interview		*
Alexander Mahlava (Youth), Warren Park Parish	Interview		*
Majory Andrea (Church Warden), Mabvuku Parish	Interview		*
Tendai Makape (Youth) , Rugare Parish	Interview		*
Grace Makoni (CWA), Acardia Parish	Interview		*
Teclah Kachembere (MU), Cathedral Parish	Interview		*
Milford Mazula (Youth), Hatfield Parish	Interview		*
Bp. Peter Hatendi (Retired), Avondale Parish	Interview		*
Rev. Shepherd Munzara (Rector) Greendale Parish	Interview		*
Bp. Nolbert Kunonga (Bishop of Diocese of Harare)	Interview		*
Rev. Leonard Muzhingi (Ass. Priest) Cathedral Parish	Questionnaire		*
Taurayi Zindoga(St Peter's Guild), Glen View Parish	Questionnaire		*
Rev. Isheanesu Gusha (Deacon) Bishop Gaul College	Questionnaire		*
Danstan Maunze (Subdeacon) Greendale Parish	Questionnaire		*
Getrude Gwatidzo (St Veronica's Guild) Mt. Pleasant	Questionnaire		*
Jonas Shumba (Church Warden) Glen Norah Parish	Questionnaire		*
Canon. Lameck Mutete (Rector) Highfield Parish	Questionnaire		*
Veronica Nyathi (MU), Highlands Parish	Questionnaire		*
Simbarashe Basvi (Seminarian) Bishop Gaul College	Questionnaire		*
Susan Vito (MU), Mbare Parish	Questionnaire		*
Bernard Ngowe (Mubvuwi), Mufakose Parish	Questionnaire		*

²⁹⁰ Questionnaire by Veronica Nyathi, Highlands Parish, Harare, December 2002 .

²⁹¹ Interview with Alexander Mahlava, St James Warren Park, Harare, 18 March 2003.

Respondent's Name, Group & Parish	Questionnaire/ Interview	Good	Bad
Richard Mukucha (BMG) Waterfalls Parish	Questionnaire		*
Rev. Simbarashe Mutandwa (Rector) Hatfield Parish	Questionnaire		*
Elizabeth Tsikwa (MU) Cranborne Parish	Questionnaire		*
Anna Chuma (Sidesperson) Borrowdale Parish	Questionnaire		*
Stella Ngaru (MU) Mabvuku Parish	Questionnaire		*
Clara Stevens (CWA), Avondale Parish	Questionnaire		*
Maxwell Nyakuromba (Youth) Belvedere Parish	Questionnaire		*
Nigel and Thelma Nyatsambo (Couple) Marlborough	Questionnaire		*
TOTALS		0	33

Table 10 shows a unanimous negative response to the efforts being mooted by homosexuals and lesbians to have a rewritten Bible that will be less offensive to them. Most of the responses point to the fact that such sexual inclinations are abominable. Gertrude Gwatidzo maintains that ‘homosexuals and lesbians are Satan’s followers and therefore have nothing to do with the Holy Bible.’²⁹² This is also supported by Bernard Ngowe, who says ‘these (homosexuals and lesbians), are already a perverse lot who do not deserve any serious audience.’²⁹³ Stella Ngaru amplifies this by saying ‘people should not allow themselves to be misled by sinners. Such sinners should repent. They should be shown passages such as Romans 1: 26 and Leviticus 18: 22).’²⁹⁴

5.2.xi. What is your comment to the view that we have to re-read, edit and add what is missing in the Bible. (No / Yes). Explain your answer briefly.

Table 11

Respondent's Name, Group & Parish	Questionnaire/ Interview	Good	Bad
Stephen Mutenga (St Peter's Guild), Avondale Parish	Interview		*
Loveness Nyanhongo (Church Warden), Warren Park	Interview		*
Aaron Chikomo (BMG), Highfield Parish	Interview	*	
Cleopas Marandu (Church Warden) Budiriro Parish	Interview		*
Sarah Gwende (Mother's Union), Highlands Parish	Interview	*	
Milford Mazula (Youth), Hatfield Parish	Interview		*
Alexander Mahlava (Youth), Warren Park Parish	Interview	*	

²⁹² Questionnaire by Gertrude Gwatidzo, Mt Pleasant Parish, Harare, July 2002

²⁹³ Questionnaire by Bernard Ngowe, St Luke's Mufakose Parish, Harare, March 2002

²⁹⁴ Questionnaire by Stella Ngaru, St James Mabvuku, Harare, May 2002

Respondent's Name, Group & Parish	Questionnaire/ Interview	Good	Bad
Majory Andrea (Church Warden), Mabvuku Parish	Interview		*
Tendai Makape (Youth), Rugare Parish	Interview	*	
Grace Makoni (CWA), Acardia Parish	Interview		*
Teclah Kachembere (MU), Cathedral Parish	Interview		*
Bp. Peter Hatendi (Retired), Avondale Parish	Interview		*
Rev. Shepherd Munzara (Rector) Greendale Parish	Interview		*
Bp. Nolbert Kunonga (Bishop of Diocese of Harare)	Interview		*
Rev. Leonard Muzhingi (Ass. Priest) Cathedral Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Taurayi Zindoga(St Peter's Guild), Glen View Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Rev. Isheanesu Gusha (Deacon) Bishop Gaul College	Questionnaire		*
Danstan Maunze (Subdeacon) Greendale Parish	Questionnaire		*
Getrude Gwatidzo (St Veronica's Guild) Mt. Pleasant	Questionnaire	*	
Jonas Shumba (Church Warden) Glen Norah Parish	Questionnaire		*
Canon. Lameck Mutete (Rector) Highfield Parish	Questionnaire		*
Veronica Nyathi (MU), Highlands Parish	Questionnaire		*
Simbarashe Basvi (Seminarian) Bishop Gaul College	Questionnaire		*
Susan Vito (MU), Mbare Parish	Questionnaire		*
Bernard Ngowe (Mubvuwi), Mufakose Parish	Questionnaire		*
Rev. Simbarashe Mutandwa (Rector) Hatfield Parish	Questionnaire		*
Richard Mukucha (BMG) Waterfalls Parish	Questionnaire		*
Elizabeth Tsikwa (MU) Cranborne Parish	Questionnaire		*
Anna Chuma (Sidesperson) Borrowdale Parish	Questionnaire		*
Stella Ngaru (MU) Mabvuku Parish	Questionnaire		*
Clara Stevens (CWA), Avondale Parish	Questionnaire		*
Maxwell Nyakuromba (Youth) Belvedere Parish	Questionnaire		*
Nigel and Thelma Nyatsambo (Couple) Marlborough	Questionnaire		*
TOTALS		7	26

According to C. Banana, the rewriting of the Bible 'would include revision and editing of what is already there, but would also involve adding that which is not included.'²⁹⁵ It would appear, from Table 11 that the majority of the respondents are against C. Banana's proposal. Twenty-six out of thirty three respondents are of the opinion that the Bible should not be tampered with. According to Maxwell Nyakuromba, re-reading, editing or adding what is missing in the Bible 'is a terrible sin'. He goes on to say 'why add or subtract to something that is perfect. Beware of the consequences. Read Revelation 22: 18-19.'²⁹⁶ This is further emphasised by Bishop Peter Hatendi who asks questions as a

²⁹⁵ C. Banana, *Op. Cit*, p.30.

²⁹⁶ Questionnaire by Maxwell Nyakuromba, St Elizabeth Belvedere, Harare, October 2002.

way of responding to this suggestion. He asks ‘do we know what is missing?, How do we know what is missing? If we talk of editing, by whose authority are we going to do that?’.²⁹⁷

On the other hand, the seven respondents who acknowledge the view that people have to re-read, edit and add what is missing in the Bible do so for different reasons. According to Rev. Leonard Muzhingi, ‘we have to re-read , edit and add what is missing in the Bible, but this should be done thoroughly by a team of theologians.’²⁹⁸ This is supported by Gertrude Gwatidzo who maintains that ‘we have to correct grammatical mistakes made in translating the Bible from the original languages, particularly the Shona and Ndebele Bibles.’²⁹⁹

5.2.xii. Is it true / false that a rewritten Bible will affect the canon of Scripture negatively? Explain your answer briefly.

Table 12

Respondent Name, Group & Parish	Questionnaire/ Interview	True	False
Stephen Mutenga (St Peter’s Guild), Avondale Parish	Interview	*	
Loveness Nyanhongo (Church Warden), Warren Park	Interview	*	
Aaron Chikomo (BMG), Highfield Parish	Interview	*	
Cleopas Marandu (Church Warden) Budiriro Parish	Interview	*	
Sarah Gwende (Mother’s Union), Highlands Parish	Interview		*
Alexander Mahlava (Youth), Warren Park Parish	Interview		*
Majory Andrea (Church Warden), Mabvuku Parish	Interview	*	
Tendai Makape (Youth) , Rugare Parish	Interview	*	
Grace Makoni (CWA), Acardia Parish	Interview	*	
Teclah Kachembere (MU), Cathedral Parish	Interview		*
Milford Mazula (Youth), Hatfield Parish	Interview		
Bp. Peter Hatendi (Retired), Avondale Parish	Interview	*	
Rev. Shepherd Munzara (Rector) Greendale Parish	Interview	*	
Bp. Nolbert Kunonga (Bishop of Diocese of Harare)	Interview	*	
Rev. Leonard Muzhingi (Ass Priest) Cathedral Parish	Questionnaire	*	

²⁹⁷ Interview with Bishop Peter Hatendi, Avondale , Harare, 09 October 2002.

²⁹⁸ Questionnaire by Rev. Leonard Muzhingi, Cathedral Parish, Harare, February 2002.

²⁹⁹ Questionnaire by Gertrude Gwatidzo, Mt Pleasant Parish, Harare, July 2002.

Respondent Name, Group & Parish	Questionnaire/ Interview	True	False
Taurayi Zindoga (St Peter's Guild), Glen View Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Rev. Isheanesu Gusha (Deacon) Bishop Gaul College	Questionnaire		*
Danstan Maunze (Subdeacon) Greendale Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Simbarashe Basvi (Seminarian) Bishop Gaul College	Questionnaire	*	
Getrude Gwatidzo (St Veronica's Guild) Mt. Pleasant	Questionnaire	*	
Jonas Shumba (Church Warden) Glen Norah Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Canon Lameck Mutete (Rector) Highfield Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Veronica Nyathi (MU), Highlands Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Susan Vito (MU), Mbare Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Bernard Ngowe (Mubvuwi), Mufakose Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Rev. Simbarashe Mutandwa (Rector) Hatfield Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Richard Mukucha (BMG) Waterfalls Parish	Questionnaire		
Elizabeth Tsikwa (MU) Cranborne Parish	Questionnaire		
Anna Chuma (Sidesperson) Borrowdale Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Stella Ngaru (MU) Mabvuku Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Clara Stevens (CWA), Avondale Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Maxwell Nyakuomba (Youth) Belvedere Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Nigel and Thelma Nyatsambo (Couple) Marlborough	Questionnaire		
TOTALS		25	4

As noted in Chapter three, the process of canonisation of Scripture took many years and it involved several meetings. It is also important to note that this process of canonisation happened at different stages with the first part of the Old Testament not having been canonised until 621BC and the whole section that we call the Pentateuch having been canonised around 400BC. This process involved human beings sitting down and making decisions depending on several factors. Particular criteria were adopted to consider what was to be included in the Bible and what was to be left out. For example, for a book to become part of the Old Testament it had to possess a strong appeal of some kind to survive; it had to attract readers for its religious, nationalistic or literary value.

It would also appear that the Bible that was known and used by the early Christians was different from the one that Jesus and his disciples used. C. Banana notes that Jesus and

his disciples used the Hebrew Bible, while Paul and his converts used the Septuagint³⁰⁰. This means that at this time what we know as the New Testament had not yet been canonised. However, scholars are in agreement that the Jewish canon was then closed in about AD90. It is on the basis of this closure of the canon that C. Banana asks the question ‘has God’s revelation finished? Is it not possible that there is more that needs to be added to the Bible as we know it today to make it relevant to our times and people?’³⁰¹

From Table 12, it seems the majority of the respondents are hesitant to do anything that would change the current canon of Scripture. Out of thirty-three respondents, twenty five do acknowledge that once the Bible is rewritten, that will have a negative effect on the canon. Bernard Ngowe says, ‘a rewritten Bible is likely to cause chaos, disintegration and confusion to the extent of threatening the Christian faith.’³⁰² This is supported by Rev. Shepherd Munzara who maintains that ‘a rewritten Bible will affect the canon of Scripture negatively in that it will bring distortion to the Jewish culture. This will cause confusion. There will be need for versions to suit each cultural background.’³⁰³

On the other hand four respondents feel that a rewritten Bible will actually have a positive impact on the canon of Scripture. According to Teclah Kachembere ‘a rewritten Bible will be more effective in the sense that, what applies to us today will be included and that which applied to the Jewish people only will be changed to incorporate others.’³⁰⁴ This is supported by Rev. Isheanesu Gussha, who also says ‘a rewritten Bible will enable believers to have a clearly defined theology, relevant to all genders, races and classes in the world. A rewritten Bible will be easier to understand since someone would

³⁰⁰ C. Banana, Op. Cit, p.25.

³⁰¹ Ibid. p.26.

³⁰² Questionnaire by Bernard Ngowe, St Luke’s Mufakose, Harare, March 2003.

³⁰³ Interview with Rev. Shepherd Munzara, Greendale Parish, Harare, 17 January 2003.

³⁰⁴ Interview with Tecla Kachembere, Cathedral Parish, Harare, 19 March 2003.

not need to understand the Jewish culture in order to understand certain passages.³⁰⁵

However, four respondents did not have anything to say on this aspect of the questionnaire.

5.1.xiii. As an Anglican Christian would you say it is good or bad to rewrite the Bible? Explain your answer briefly.

Table 13

Respondent's Name, Group & Parish	Questionnaire/ Interview	Good	Bad
Stephen Mutenga (St Peter's Guild), Avondale Parish	Interview		*
Loveness Nyanhongo (Church Warden), Warren Park	Interview		*
Aaron Chikomo (BMG), Highfield Parish	Interview	*	
Cleopas Marandu (Church Warden) Budiriro Parish	Interview		*
Sarah Gwende (Mother's Union), Highlands Parish	Interview	*	
Alexander Mahlava (Youth), Warren Park Parish	Interview	*	
Majory Andrea (Church Warden), Mabvuku Parish	Interview		*
Tendai Makape (Youth), Rugare Parish	Interview		*
Grace Makoni (CWA), Acardia Parish	Interview		*
Teclah Kachembere (MU), Cathedral Parish	Interview		*
Milford Mazula (Youth), Hatfield Parish	Interview		*
Bp. Peter Hatendi (Retired), Avondale Parish	Interview		*
Rev. Shepherd Munzara (Rector) Greendale Parish	Interview		*
Bp. Nolbert Kunonga (Bishop of Diocese of Harare)	Interview		*
Rev. Leonard Muzhingi (Ass Priest) Cathedral Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Taurayi Zindoga (St Peter's Guild), Glen View Parish	Questionnaire	*	
Rev. Isheanesu Gusha (Deacon) Bishop Gaul College	Questionnaire		*
Danstan Maunze (Subdeacon) Greendale Parish	Questionnaire		*
Getrude Gwatidzo (St Veronica's Guild) Mt. Pleasant	Questionnaire		*
Jonas Shumba (Church Warden) Glen Norah Parish	Questionnaire		*
Canon Lameck Mutete (Rector) Highfield Parish	Questionnaire		*
Veronica Nyathi (MU), Highlands Parish	Questionnaire		*
Simbarashe Basvi (Seminarian) Bishop Gaul College	Questionnaire		*
Susan Vito (MU), Mbare Parish	Questionnaire		*
Bernard Ngowe (Mubvuwi), Mufakose Parish	Questionnaire		*
Rev. Simbarashe Mutandwa (Rector) Hatfield Parish	Questionnaire		*
Richard Mukucha (BMG) Waterfalls Parish	Questionnaire		*
Elizabeth Tsikwa (MU) Cranborne Parish	Questionnaire		*
Anna Chuma (Sidesperson) Borrowdale Parish	Questionnaire		*
Stella Ngaru (MU) Mabvuku Parish	Questionnaire		*
Clara Stevens (CWA), Avondale Parish	Questionnaire		*
Maxwell Nyakuromba (Youth) Belvedere Parish	Questionnaire		*
Nigel and Thelma Nyatsambo (Couple) Marlborough	Questionnaire		*

³⁰⁵ Questionnaire by Rev Isheanesu Gusha, Bishop Gaul College, Harare, September 2002.

Respondent's Name, Group & Parish	Questionnaire/ Interview	Good	Bad
Totals		5	28

Having considered the various issues raised by C. Banana and other theologians as constituting a strong case for a rewritten Bible, it is important to investigate the response of the Anglican believers in the city of Harare. Table 13 shows that out of thirty-three respondents, twenty eight of them are against the idea of rewriting the Bible. It is interesting to note some of the reasons given by these respondents.

According to Marjory Andrea, 'when we start to write another 'Bible', it will not be inspired by God. Such a Bible will be characterised by our own interests and what we desire God to do for us. This will also include a different culture from the Israelite culture and it will not be acceptable to other people.'³⁰⁶ In the same vein, Gertrude Gwatidzo disagrees with the whole idea of rewriting the Bible on the basis that it is wrong to say we are rewriting. For her 'the correct word should be "editing" the Bible in order to make necessary corrections on interpretations, spellings and grammar particularly in the Shona and English Bibles.'³⁰⁷

However, for Tecla Kachembere, rewriting the Bible 'should not be done at all, since what is needed is simply new principles of interpreting the Bible'³⁰⁸. This is supported by Simbarashe Basvi who maintains that 'there is no need to rewrite the Bible, what is simply needed is a new hermeneutic which is applicable to our context. You are to give a new hermeneutic to issues of Jewishness, patriarchal biases and oppressive texts.'³⁰⁹ Clara Stevens says 'a big no to the idea of rewriting the Bible. This is a typical example

³⁰⁶ Interview with Majory Nyanhongo, St James Warren Park, Harare, 20 March 2003.

³⁰⁷ Questionnaire by Gertrude Gwatidzo, Mt Pleasant, Harare, July 2002.

³⁰⁸ Interview with Tecla Kachembere, Cathedral Parish, Harare, 19 March 2003.

of the work of the devil. Whoever is doing it should stop forthwith³¹⁰ This is the same kind of thinking that is shown by Maxwell Nyakuromba who says the idea of rewriting the Bible 'is a non- event. It is a waste of precious time and resources. Thinking of such a thing is denying myself eternity.'³¹¹

On the other hand, there are only five people out of thirty-three who support the view that the Bible should be rewritten. According to Aaron Chikomo, rewriting the Bible is not a problem, since through this useful and important books for worship will be chosen to suit the current needs. These books that will have been chosen and rewritten will have to suit our local culture³¹². This is supported by Rev. Leonard Muzhingi who agrees to have the Bible rewritten but gives a caution. He maintains that 'if this is to be done, it would be proper that thorough research be carried out by those people who will do it. These people also need to be inspired for their product to be authoritative.'³¹³

5.5 Conclusion

Considering all that has been shown in the above tables, it is clear that the majority of the Anglican Christians in the city of Harare do not subscribe to the suggestion that the current Bible be rewritten, in as far as adding what is missing and subtracting what is in the current Bible. The general feeling is that the Bible is holy, and it is the word of God hence it should be handled with care. It should be applied in the local contexts in a way that does not make it sound wrong because the Bible does not err. The general feeling is also that those with behaviours that are antithetical to the dictates of the Bible should

³⁰⁹ Questionnaire by Simbarashe Basvi, Bishop Gaul College, Harare, October 2002.

³¹⁰ Questionnaire by Clara Stevens, Avondale Parish, Harare, October 2002.

³¹¹ Questionnaire by Maxwell Nyakuromba, St Elizabeth Belvedere, Harare, October 2002.

³¹² Interview with Aaron Chikomo, St Paul's Highfield, Harare, 17 March 2002.

³¹³ Questionnaire by Rev Leonard Muzhingi, Cathedral Parish, Harare, February 2002.

change their behaviour rather than advocate that the Bible to be changed so that it can support them.

CHAPTER 6

EVALUATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

6.1 Introduction

The best way to evaluate the research findings will be to consider the responses and explanations provided to each of the questions supplied in the questionnaire and interview sheet. The responses can then be analysed and comments made regarding these responses. Below is an analysis of each question and the responses provided.

6.2 Research Findings

The following shows the findings of this research.

6.2.i Question 1

The first question aimed at establishing how people in the Anglican Church in the City of Harare take the Bible in relation to its source. From Table 1, it is clear that the majority of the respondents believe that the Bible is from God. They support the view that it is inspired by God. Although the majority of the people believe that it is inspired by God, some of the reasons given as supporting their position show that some respondents are not well informed in this area of Biblical studies. It seems those without theological education has problems in understanding certain theological terms as well as theological concepts that surround the area of Biblical studies. A good example is the response given by Stephen Mutenga, who says, ‘the Bible is inspired because it is the best selling book.’³¹⁴ The fact that a book is doing well on the market does not necessarily make it inspired. However, the responses by the ordained and the theologically sound

³¹⁴Interview with Stephen Mutenga, Harare, 16.03.03.

respondents show a vast difference. A good example is that given by the Bishop of the Diocese of Harare, Nolbert Kunonga who says ‘the Bible is inspired by God in terms of the message and not the words, which are from a human being who is fallible.’³¹⁵

6.2.ii Question 2

This question sought to establish the knowledge of the respondents regarding the part played by God and the writers of the Bible in the production of the Scriptures. To this end, there are some who maintain that the Bible is a product of God and human beings in the sense that God inspired the writers but he did not take over their faculties. They wrote using their own thought patterns within particular social environments. According to Table 2, it appears this is the commonly held belief. However, those who deny that the Bible is a product of God and human beings want to suggest that all that is in the Bible is from God verbatim. This is a fundamentalist view, which dominates lay people in the Anglican Church in the Diocese of Harare. The belief is that if one accepts that there is human input, this will dilute the Bible and render it an ordinary book. As with the reactions to the first question, there seems to be a divide between those who are theologically informed and those who are not.

6.2.iii Question 3

This question sought to establish whether or not the members of the Anglican Church in the city of Harare take the Bible as ‘the truth’. According to The Concise Oxford

³¹⁵ Interview with Bp. Nolbert Kunonga, Harare, 16.10.02.

Dictionary, ‘truth is the quality or a state of being true or truthful.’³¹⁶ In this sense to say something is ‘true’ simply means that it is in accordance with facts or reality, something that is genuine and not spurious. According to the results of Table 3, there seem to be an almost equal number of respondents who think that the Bible is the truth and those who say that it is not the truth. When one analyses the reasons given for the positions taken, one can see that there is a marked difference between those with some form of theological education and those who do not have such education. A good example is to consider the explanation given by Bp N. Kunonga, on the reasons as to why he believes that the Bible can not be regarded as ‘the truth’ in its entirety. He maintains that to say that the Bible is truth is difficult since truth is relative.³¹⁷ For him truth varies from one person to the other or from one tradition to the other. It also seems that truth has several factors that constitute it such as culture, religion, science and race. On the other hand if one considers the explanation given by Jonas Shumba, a theologically uninformed lay person, on the reason for suggesting that the Bible is the truth, one can also see that it is from a position of faith, and not a critical examination of the Bible. Jonas Shumba says ‘every word written in the Bible is but the sole truth because in its words came life and all is from God, god can not lie.’³¹⁸ Such a view is a fundamentalist position that characterises most lay respondents who are not theologically informed. This fundamentalist stance also blocks any room or possibility for believers to critically analyse the Bible.

6.2.iv Question 4

³¹⁶ H. W. Fowler and F.G. Fowler (Eds), The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990) p.1312.

³¹⁷ Interview with Bp Nolbert Kunonga, Harare, 16 October 2002.

³¹⁸ Questionnaire by Jonas Shumba, Harare, November 2002.

This question sought to establish whether or not the respondents accept the view that has been put forward by some scholars that says the current Bible is inundated with numerous discrepancies and contradictions. This has been one reason for wanting to have the Bible rewritten. For some respondents to say that the Bible has some discrepancies and contradictions is tantamount to saying that it is not inspired. It is interesting to note that the same trend of a huge difference between those with some theological education and those without it. Those with some theological education are able to come up with explanations that are sound in supporting their positions. Sound reasons are given to support the reason why they agree to the view that there are some discrepancies and contradictions in the Bible. One of the factors raised is the issue of different translators bringing discrepancies and contradictions.

Bishop P. Hatendi, also says the human input in the Bible helps to explain the presence of discrepancies and contradictions because human beings are frail; hence they make mistakes.³¹⁹ However a fundamentalist explanation given by Maxwell Nyakuomba, whose reason for believing that the Bible does not have discrepancies and contradictions, is that ‘its lack of understanding and revelation on the part of the reader, hence failure to understand should not be blamed on the author but the reader.’³²⁰

6.5.v Question 5

This question sought to establish the truth or falsehood of the idea that some theologians have put forward that seem to suggest that there are two separate gods reflected in the Bible, that is the God of the Old Testament, and the God of the New Testament. This position has been arrived at by considering events that unfold in the Old Testament where

³¹⁹ Interview with Bishop Peter Hatendi, Harare, 09 October 2002.

³²⁰ Questionnaire by Maxwell Nyakuomba, October 2002.

God seems to be preoccupied in promoting wars that ended up dislodging and ravaging people of others races, who were not Israelites. This leads to the view that this kind of God is vindictive and capricious, whereas the New Testament view of God is that of a peace loving and benevolent God. He is a God who teaches people to love their enemies, and to do good to those who hate them and not to take revenge or fight them.

Table 5 shows that the majority of the respondents do not subscribe to the notion that there are two separate Gods in the Bible. The same trend of a huge difference between the theologically informed and those not informed theologically comes out clearly in the explanations given for saying that there are not two gods in the Bible. The theologically uniformed position seeks to exonerate God and say that whatever he commands whether it's a war, or hatred of one group of people against another is correct. This is what comes out clear from the explanation given by Maxwell Nyakuromba, who says 'God is gracious always; he knows what is good for us. We are limited in everything and God is unlimited so whatever he does is correct.'³²¹ He goes on to say that 'the Bible says God is the same today, yesterday, tomorrow and forever'³²². Those WITH Theological training agree that there is only one God in the Bible but they explain their position differently saying 'there is one God, the seemingly difference, is a result of the shift in God's purpose.'³²³ To this end Bishop N. Kunonga also suggests that this is the same God who shows his bipolar nature³²⁴. His suggestion is that the Bible has the same God who wills both good and bad. On the whole the majority of the people uphold the view that there is one God. This is probably because of what they are taught at church in their catechism as well as in sermons that are preached to them. To say that there are two gods

³²¹ Questionnaire by Maxwell Nyakuromba, Harare, October 2002.

³²² Ibid.

³²³ Interview with Bishop Peter Hatendi, Harare, 09 October 2002.

³²⁴ Interview with Bishop Kunonga, Harare, 16 October 2002.

in the Bible would go against the first commandment that says ‘I am the Lord your God, you shall love no other gods but me.’³²⁵ Such a position is a faith position.

6.2.vi Question 6

This question sought to establish whether or not the respondents would subscribe to the view suggested by some theologians that the war between Israel and Palestine is Biblical in the sense that God chose the Israelites as his own children and promised them a piece of land which the Bible calls ‘the promised land’. This land happened to be the place where Palestinians were staying. It is important to mention that the result of the investigation, shown in Table 6, shows that many people are unfamiliar with this area. A number of people just wrote ‘true’ or ‘false’ without giving explanations as to why they took their position. This shows total ignorance of the question and the war itself. In the few cases, where the explanation has been given, the explanations are far from being associated with the reasons for this war. A good example is given by Veronica Nyathi, who says ‘this war is about the desire in human beings to fight and not from God.’³²⁶ The truth of the matter is that the war between Israel and Palestine is to do with the way in which Israelites subjugated the Palestinians from their land in 1948 when the Americans supported the Jews to do so. There is a strong dimension of the Israelis completely ousting the Palestinians.

On the other hand there is one person who left the question unanswered. This could be because the respondent knows nothing in this area. Richard Mukucha wrote ‘I know nothing about this.’³²⁷ Therefore, any efforts to draw a cognitive conclusion to have the

³²⁵ The Order of Holy Communion and The Service of Baptism (Adopted from ASB 1980) p.9.

³²⁶ Questionnaire by Veronica Nyathi, Harare, December 2002.

³²⁷ Questionnaire by R. Mukucha, Harare, January 2003.

Bible rewritten from this question may not be prudent, given the ignorance and the misinformation that is shown by the respondents in this research.

6.2.vii Question 7

The other reason put forward for the need to rewrite the Bible is that the current Bible is oppressive to women. This question, therefore, sought to establish whether or not this was a view generally shared by the members of the Anglican Church in the city of Harare. Table 7 shows that the majority of the respondents do not subscribe to the view that the Bible is oppressive to women. Different explanations are given to support the positions that the respondents take. For those theologically informed, the summary of their explanations for not believing that the Bible is oppressive to women are on the basis of this book having evolved from a cultural set up that was masculine. They also suggest that the word 'man' has to be taken in its generic sense. However, for others who are not theologically informed, such as Anna Chuma, 'the Bible is not oppressive against women since there are some areas that honor women, and there are several women who are mentioned in the Bible.'³²⁸ It is interesting to note that the majority of those people who do not subscribe to the view that the Bible is oppressive towards women are women themselves. Out of twenty respondents who say that the Bible is not oppressive to women, ten of them are women, and eight are men of whom two are clergy. On the other hand it is also interesting to note that it is the clergy who outnumber the others in supporting the view that the Bible is oppressive towards women. Out of the eight clergy involved in this research six of them feel that the Bible is oppressive towards women.

It is generally accepted that the Bible has been written from a cultural set up that was masculine. Given this background any part, of it that seems to be oppressive towards

women should be read with this background in mind and that should determine the proper application of that in the different social set up in which it will be used. It is also a true observation that any talk of coming up with a universal Bible that gives a universal charter is also impossible given the plethora of human cultures found in the world. Therefore any attempts to use this, as a basis to call for the rewriting of the Bible in the Anglican Church, in the city of Harare, seems to be weak.

6.2.viii Question 8

The other issue that follows directly from question seven, is that linked with the ordination of women. This has been a bone of contention in the mainline churches. Any refusal to ordain women has been seen as a clear expression of the oppression of women being sanctioned by the Bible. It is important to mention that the positions taken by most respondents were from an emotional point of view. As shown in table 8, the majority of the respondents do not subscribe to the ordination of women. Their reasons vary, but on analysis they are either from a position of ignorance, misinformation, cultural, or ecclesiastical standpoints. Most theologically uninformed people uphold the view that women should not be ordained because they menstruate. They suggest that menstruation is a sign of weakness that defiles them. On the contrary, menstruation should actually be seen as a characteristic of strength in women showing that they can conceive and therefore guarantee posterity. On the other hand Bernard Ngowe also gives another example of a misinformed answer when he says, ‘to ordain women is ungodly.’³²⁹ This position lacks facts to support; it shows ignorance and lack of information. Others maintain their fundamentalist position by suggesting that the Bible says women should be submissive to men. They see a woman leading a church service in an ordained capacity as

³²⁸ Questionnaire by Anna Chuma, Harare, August 2002.

³²⁹ Questionnaire by Bernard Ngowe, Harare, May 2002.

going against Paul's teaching in Ephesians 5: 22ff, which says women must submit themselves to men.

On the other hand Bishop N. Kunonga, suggests that in essence there is nothing wrong with the ordination of women; the only problem is that the Church of the Province of Central Africa, of which the Anglican Diocese of Harare is a member has not yet accepted it.³³⁰ This means that he does not see anything wrong with it. Given a choice he would ordain women to the priesthood in the diocese of Harare. As for the others who support the ordination of women, the main reason is that human beings are equal before God's eyes, and also that, although women were not amongst the twelve disciples of Jesus, they also ministered to Jesus. However, it is also important to note that there are some women who are against the ordination of women. Out of the twenty-one respondents who do not support the ordination of women nine of them are women, seven are men and five are clergy. It seems clear from the explanations given that the ordinary women do not have a problem in men leading them in worship in the ordained capacity. The local cultures that teach the submission of women seem to play a large part in this state of affairs. However it also seems that lack of theological exposure has prevented such women from reading documents by some radical theologians such as Mary Daly. Such works could lead them to think differently.

6.2.ix Question 9

This question sought to establish the possibility of stripping the Bible from the Jewish culture that characterises it. It has been suggested by some theologians that the Jewish culture in the Bible needs to be removed so that we can remain with the word of God only and not some Jewish cultural teachings. Table 9 shows a huge number of

respondents going against this proposal. Only three respondents think that it is a good idea to strip the Bible from the Jewish culture. The main reason is that such a thing would liberate women. However, for those who are against this there are several explanations given which also show a difference between the theologically informed and those that are not theologically informed. According to Simbarashe Basvi, a seminarian training for ordination, there is no need to strip the Bible from the Jewish culture. The only way forward is to use a new hermeneutic³³¹. This is a theologically informed stance which simply means that the Bible has to be applied to the local culture. This also follows Bp. N. Kunonga's explanation against the stripping of the Jewish culture from the Bible. He says that there are no neutral beings.³³² It is sustainable to suggest that even if the Bible were written in Africa, it would show some African culture in it. Therefore, the cultural aspect should not cause problems since any other different cultural set up would also produce a Bible that depicts that particular culture.

6.2.x Question 10

This question sought to establish the feelings of the respondents regarding the claims by some people with a homosexual and lesbian orientation, who attack the current Bible as being an oppressive tool against them. The result in Table 10 shows clearly that this issue of homosexuality and lesbianism is heavily despised. There is not a single respondent who supports the idea that the Bible should be rewritten in consideration of the plight of homosexuals and lesbians. It is one question that received some exceedingly emotional answers. The general feeling is that such people are perverts, sinners of the worst type, who should not be entertained. It seems understandable that the respondents take such a position, since homosexuality and lesbianism, are traits that are suppressed, in the Shona

³³⁰ Interview with Bishop Nolbert Kunonga, Harare, 16 October 2003.

³³¹ Questionnaire by Simbarashe Basvi, Harare, October 2002.

and Ndebele culture. The President of Zimbabwe has also taken a very strong position against it, to the extent that he castigates such people as pigs. Given this situation, it helps to explain the reason why no one supported a call for a rewritten Bible. Although the explanations vary, the general thinking is that this practice is evil, a sign of abnormality, unnatural and perverse in the eyes of God.

6.2.xi Question 11

It has been suggested that the rewriting of the Bible entails re-reading, editing, adding and subtracting things from the Bible. This question, therefore, sought to establish whether this was a generally acceptable and shared feeling in the Anglican Church in the Diocese of Harare. Table 11 shows clearly that the majority of the respondents do not subscribe to this notion. It seems that any attempts to temper with the current Bible are just not welcome. For some the answer is NO simply because the Bible gives a stern warning to anyone who will add or subtract anything from it (Rev.22: 18). This shows a fundamental attitude to the Bible, which characterise most respondents in this research.

However, others do not have a problem with editing since this has been happening down the ages. They also do not have a problem with re-reading since this does not entail a change in what is written in the Bible. However they have serious problems with the suggestion to add and subtract anything from the Bible. Bishop P. Hatendi poses some questions; he asks, ‘What is missing?, Who says that?, Who is going to do that?.’³³³ The biggest problem is that scholars are always not in agreement and also that if any rewriting is possible, the result will be subjective. This is so because universality is impossible.

³³² Interview with Bp. Nolbert Kunonga, Harare, 16 October 2002.

³³³ Interview with Bishop Peter Hatendi, Harare 09 October 2002.

6.2.xii Question 12

The other issue that is connected to the rewriting of the Bible is the canon of Scripture. The canon of Scripture is the list of accepted books in the current Bible that have been agreed upon as useful for salvation. This question, therefore, sought to establish whether a rewritten Bible would affect this canon of Scripture, negatively or positively.

Table 12 shows that the majority of the respondents believe that a rewritten Bible will affect the canon of Scripture negatively. Some of the explanations are not congruent with the position taken, it seems true to say that the Scriptures will be open to heresy, and that the Bible will become like any ordinary book. Some respondents with a fundamentalist conception uphold the view that this will be the end of Christianity, and also that this work will confuse Christians.

On the Contrary, those who suggest that a rewritten Bible will affect the canon positively do so on the basis that a rewritten Bible would be more understandable and tolerant. This is relative in the sense that a universal Bible is not possible. It would depend on who would do the rewriting. A Bible rewritten from one cultural set up may not necessarily be acceptable in a different culture without applying it within the thought patterns of that culture. This is also another question, which showed a difference between those who are theologically informed and those who are not. Those who are not theologically informed struggled to understand the meaning of the word 'canon'. This affected their explanations. Their explanations, therefore, ended up being irrelevant and wrong. An example is that of Anna Chuma who says that 'the canon will be changed.'³³⁴ This does not mean anything given the question that was asked. However, it also needs to be

³³⁴ Questionnaire by Anna Chuma, Harare, August 2002.

highlighted that the other respondents only wrote ‘true’ or ‘false’, without explaining. This shows that this is not a familiar area to most people who are not theologically informed.

6.2.xiii Question 13

Having considered most of the areas that are usually raised as cases to call for the rewriting of the Bible, this question sought to establish, every respondent’s position regarding the rewriting of the Bible. Table 13 shows that the majority of the respondents in the Anglican Church do not subscribe to the idea of having the current Bible rewritten.

The explanations given also show the usual stance of faith, and the fundamentalist attitude that shuns any move towards a critical analysis of the Bible which may challenge the status quo. Notable amongst the explanations is the feeling that this act of rewriting the Bible is ungodly, not necessary, and a waste of money. Rev. S. Munzara says this should remain an academic exercise.³³⁵ However, the general feeling is that Christians must not waste time on the irrelevant, they must concentrate on prayer.

6.3 Conclusion

From the above discussion and analysis of this research it would seem correct to conclude that the majority of the people in the Anglican Church in the Diocese of Harare and in the City of Harare, are against the rewriting of the Bible. The idea itself is beyond the comprehension of many people as shown by the majority of respondents in this research. Anyone who desires such is seen as the devil’s advocate. The majority of the respondents would rather spend their time and resources on prayer rather than lobby for the rewriting

of the Bible. Some of the questions that arise have to do with the people who will carry out this task. 'Who are they going to be, and who will give them such a mandate?.'

It is very difficult for such a thing to happen given the plurality of denominations which is now prevalent. If one denomination does not agree on one thing, what more with the plethora of denominations that are now in existence? It would also seem there is need for thorough research to be done that will take into account the new discoveries. However, it has also established that there are two broad divisions of people in the Anglican Church in the Diocese of Harare. On one side are those who are theologically informed whose answers were very different from the others who are not theologically informed. The majority of the lay people in the Anglican Diocese of Harare in the City of Harare are not theologically informed; hence their answers are from a position of faith. This being the observation, and the fact that the majority of the Anglican believers in the City of Harare are lay people who are not theologically informed, it is proper to conclude that the issue of rewriting the Bible is of no value to the Anglicans in the City of Harare.

It seems tenable to say that a universal Bible will have the weakness of amplifying the universal beyond the local, which will render the sacred unintelligible. What is needed is a new hermeneutic, which will take the colour, tradition and environment of the local people. Such a new hermeneutic will use the local images, symbols and traditions. The majority of the people feel that to rewrite the Bible is actually a sin, which the Bible has condemned. The Bible suggests that if anyone tampers with it, he or she does so at his or her own peril. This is attested in (Rev.22: 18), where there is a stern warning against adding or subtracting anything from this book. This is the basis upon which Anglican believers in the City of Harare oppose the rewriting of the Bible. The other reason is

³³⁵ Interview with Rev Shepherd Munzara, Harare, 17 January 2003.

simply that it is not practical given the long history that brought the current Bible into existence.

Chapter 7

OBSERVATIONS ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

7.0 Introduction

The findings of this research show the wide range of differences that ensue between the ordained people and the lay people regarding issues that constitute Canaan Banana's proposal to have the current Bible rewritten. Taking it from his proposal, it seems Canaan Banana was preoccupied with providing a simplistic answer to the politically volatile environment that obtains in the Middle East. It would appear Canaan Banana failed to realise the implications of his proposal, theologically as well as ecclesiastically.

A revisit of Canaan Banana's desire for a rewritten Bible show that he was spurred by a desire:

- 1) to liberate God from the captivity of the Jewish Culture;
- 2) to stop the Bible from being used as an oppressive tool;
- 3) to liberate Christ from being a creation of the Bible;
- 4) to add what is missing from the current Bible and create a universal Bible.³³⁶

Looking at the answers proffered by the interviewees and those who reacted to my questionnaire, it would appear C. Banana has lost touch with the ordinary people. It is clear from the above findings that when one talks about rewriting the Bible, the driving force is a desire to address some critical concerns that the church faces. This is so since the Bible is the source which most churches use. It is the sacred book that is fundamental in most churches.

³³⁶ I. Mukonyora (etal) (Eds), "Rewriting the Bible: the Real Issues". (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1993) p.17.

However for one to appreciate the place of the Bible in the Church, they have to understand what 'Church' means. It would appear from the majority of the respondents in this research that 'Church' is people who are gathered together for the purpose of worshipping Jesus Christ. However, such people are not homogenous. They come from different backgrounds. Some are rich whereas others are poor. Some are educated whereas others are illiterate. In other words the church is a grouping of different people from different backgrounds who happen to have the same desire to worship God.

Given this diversity of people, it is also true from this research that their faith in this object of faith, the universal sacred mystery, which is God, is also different. The levels at which these people conceptualise this God, and how they experience this God in their lives, is also different. It would appear some people are closer to God than others. This also influences their reactions to issues pertaining to the rewriting of the Bible. Given this situation, it becomes clear that faith is a very complicated phenomenon. According to Hebrews 11:1, 'faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.'³³⁷ For some, this assurance is much clearer than for others. Therefore, as people gather in the church, some are faithful while others are agnostics. It is clear from this research that faith is an exceedingly involving phenomenon which many people in the church spend many years trying to understand but to no avail.

With such a state of affairs, it would appear Canaan Banana's quest to have the Bible rewritten affects people at different levels. Those who are theologically sound, especially the clergy, have no problems with the areas that seem to be wrong in the Bible. It would appear their theological training has equipped them with some skills that enable them to

link what happened two thousand years ago to what is happening now through exegesis and hermeneutics, two methods that if used correctly will enable the Bible to speak and make its message relevant for contemporary situations. However, the majority of the lay people, some of whom are illiterate, seem to have problems with Canaan Banana's proposal to have the Bible rewritten. For them the Bible is given as it is by God himself. It is divine, and it is truth.

The issue that comes out clearly from the above findings is that the current Bible is what the people need. It is suitable for them. They do not see anything wrong with it. It would appear this Bible is the one that has introduced the word of God here and has led to the creation of the Church here; hence it is their Bible as it is. This means if the Bible is ever to be rewritten, it will not have any audience. If the people are contented with the Bible as it is now, then it will not have any constituents other than Canaan Banana himself. In addition to this, it is quite clear that people are left with questions to which they do not have answers.

One of these questions has to do with who will shoulder this responsibility which appears to be so involving. Even if such people are there, the other question is who will give such a mandate?. It follows from this discussion that the canonisation of the current Bible involved people who seem to have been moved by the same desire to collate books that would be used for religious purposes. It would appear Canaan Banana's proposal does not go far since it's a lone voice, in a situation where people are contented with the current Bible.

³³⁷ **The Bible**, (RSV) (New York: African Bible Society, 1973) p.1050

It would also appear that Canaan Banana has lost his knowledge of the tools used to analyse scripture such as exegesis and hermeneutics. He seems to be deliberately opting for a fundamentalist approach to the Bible which takes the Bible as it is, word for word without use of these two methods which help to put the scripture in its proper setting and link it to the present by way of application. This fundamentalist characteristic is not found in Banana alone, but in some of the respondents in this research.

A fundamentalist approach is one that suggests that the words of the Bible are given by God as they are. Such an approach deliberately negates the undisputed fact that the Bible has changed its originality through the translations that it has gone through. It is the same approach that suggests that, if something is not in the Bible, then it is not Biblical even when it can be inferred from the Bible. This is the same problem that affected people such as Martin Luther in the sixteen century, who rejected all OF the five sacraments other than Baptism and Holy Communion that are honoured by the Catholic Church on the basis that he could not trace them in the Bible word for word.

Given this background, the findings of this research show that the Anglican Church in the city of Harare does not encourage a critical reading of the Bible. According to Mrs G. Kunonga, Bishop Nolbert Kunonga's wife, who is the president of the Mothers Union in the Diocese of Harare, 'the mothers do not do any critical reading of the Bible. This is so because their critical knowledge is simply not there. They just read it and apply it as it is.'³³⁸ This is true since the majority of these people have no theological education.

³³⁸ Interview by Mrs G. Kunonga, President of Mothers Union in the Diocese of Harare, 19 June 2003.

Critical reading of the Bible is done only at seminary, as shown by the responses given by the seminarians and the clergy. It would appear the clergy in these parishes also deliberately avoid teaching people to read the Bible critically. This is confirmed by Rev. Shepherd Munzara, Rector of St Luke's Greendale Parish, who maintains that 'if I teach my congregation to read the Bible critically, I feel that I may confuse them and disturb their faith.'³³⁹ It would appear the faith of many people in the Anglican Church in the City of Harare is hinged on lack of information.

This critical approach to the Bible is also not common even in liturgical worship. The tendency is for the clergy to entertain people in the church and make them feel bad by preaching some emotionally charged sermons that are characterised by high pitched voices. There is also a tendency to just proffer a cluster of Bible quotations that may not mean the same thing. According to Rev. Shepherd Munzara, 'if I preach a critical sermon, people may end up saying I am not Christian enough which is tantamount to their questioning my integrity which may cost me in terms of respect.'³⁴⁰

The other problem which seem to be of massive proportions in the Anglican Church in the city of Harare is that over the previous years no emphasis has been put on encouraging people to buy and read Bibles. Many congregations were informed that they simply need a Prayer Book (ASB 1980). This is verified by Mrs. J. Kandawasvika, from the Cathedral parish who says, 'for us the prayer book is everything in our worship, at funerals, even at weddings. It has everything that we need in the Mothers Union.'³⁴¹ It is not true that the Prayer Book is everything. Although it contains some Bible readings and prayers and

³³⁹ Interview by Rev. S. Munzara, St Luke's Parish Greendale, 16 June 2003.

³⁴⁰ Ibid

³⁴¹ Interview by Mrs J. Kandawasvika, Chairman of Mothers Union at the Cathedral Parish, 18 June 2003

some services, contains only a small part of the Bible. These prayers and readings have been arranged according to liturgical seasons. This means a lot of passages are left out.

It is also clear from this research that issues of sexuality are not easily discussed in the Anglican Church in the City of Harare. Such issues are also avoided even in Sunday liturgical worship. It would seem that the Shona tradition of being secretive in issues of sex plays a big role in this scenario. For some, it is a question of lack of knowledge about these issues. Mrs. G. Kunonga maintains that issues of homosexuality and lesbianism are not subject matters in the Mothers Union. For her this is a no area for mothers. She says most people avoid this subject because its taboo culturally.³⁴² It would appear the main objectives of the Mothers Union have to do with family issues, of looking after their husbands and children well, and worshipping God and not issues of sexuality even if it may be their own children involved in such practices.

This is also supported by Rev S. Munzara, who says he does not preach on homosexuality and lesbianism because he does not think it is an issue in his parish.³⁴³ For him there is no reason why he should suspect anyone since this is an abomination culturally. It would appear if there happens to be a known homosexual in any of these local parishes in the city of Harare, they will not be easily accepted, either by the laity or by the priest. Any priest who tries to be sympathetic to such people will be labeled as one of them, and in most cases they will suffer ostracism. Most of those clergy who have passed the marriage age and are still bachelors have also been labelled as such and they always find it difficult to survive in a culture that expects people to be married at a certain age.

³⁴² Interview with Mrs G. Kunonga, Diocese of Harare, 119 June 2003.

³⁴³ Interview with Rev. S. Munzara, St Luke's Parish Greendale, 16 June 2003.

It is clear that most people in the Anglican Church in the city of Harare just pass over such topics for cultural reasons. This also touches on other issues such as gender violence. There are still a number of clergy in the Anglican Church in the city of Harare, who do not subscribe to the notion that men and women are the same. They maintain that women are inferior to men.

Given this scenario, issues of the ordination of women are not given any room. As shown in the findings of this research, it would appear even some women are of the opinion that they are inferior to men. This means that C. Banana's claim that the Bible is oppressive is dismissed by such people. On the contrary such people actually suggest that the Bible is a book that liberates the oppressed. For them the Bible as it is currently is actually an agent of emancipation. This means that it may not need to be rewritten. This is only possible through a proper exegetical and hermeneutical analysis of the Bible.

In addition it would appear the catechism that is given to those who would like to be confirmed or baptised in the Anglican Church in the City of Harare also avoids theological issues and issues that have a sexual connotation. The reasons for this simply have to do with the fear of confusing the new candidates and the secretive nature of the Shona culture on sexual matters. According to Rev. Leonard Muzhingi, his catechism classes cover topics such as initiation, confirmation, sacraments, doctrine of the Anglican Church, church law, liturgical seasons, Church hierarchy and faith.³⁴⁴ None of these topics are covered in depth for fear of confusing the candidates. To this end it is true to

³⁴⁴Interview by Rev. L. Muzhingi, Assistant Priest at the Cathedral Parish, 20 June 2003 .

say that there appear to be no theological courses or refresher courses for the laity in the Anglican Church in the city of Harare.

All the lay people in this study, with the exception of the seminarians, have no theological training. There have been efforts to encourage the laity to study theology through the Theological Education by Extension program, but this failed, because not many people wanted to do it if they were not going to be ordained as priests. It would appear the general thinking in the Anglican Church in the city of Harare, is that theological education is for those wanting to be ordained. Even members of lay associations are not given any spiritual direction that goes beyond matters of spirituality and prayer. Examples are the *Vabvuwi* who believe in the healing ministry. Whenever they meet, they are concerned about singing and healing only and not any critical Bible study. Because of this situation very few people are equipped to support C. Banana's proposal to have the Bible rewritten. For most people, it is actually a surprise to hear that the Bible was written by human beings.

On the other hand the issue of institutional limitation plays a major role in the theological ignorance that characterise the majority of the laity in the Anglican Church. The Anglican Church world over is an institution. It is hierarchically structured in a way that removes other people from the majority for as long as they occupy certain offices. At the top of this hierarchy, is the archbishop, then comes the bishop, the vicar general, the dean of the cathedral, the archdeacons, the rectors, the deacons and the laity. It is only those in the higher echelons of power who are theologically sound.

Given this scenario, any matters that have a theological bearing bring confusion to the laity. Given this institutional scenario, some of the people in the echelons of power

actually discourage any efforts by the laity to get theological education for fear of being challenged. The missionary attitude of a priest being the most educated in the area, seem to characterise most of the clergy in the Anglican Church in the city of Harare. To this end the underlying thread is that there is a serious crisis of lack of theological literacy in the Anglican Church. Given this situation, the majority of the respondents in this research did not understand the issues that this research was dealing with.

For some it was actually a shock to hear that any mortal person such as C. Banana had suggested that the Bible should be rewritten. They actually expressed shock at such a proposal. For others C. Banana was turning heretic, by questioning that which they consider sacred. This is also explained by the level of education in most of the people whom I interviewed or those who responded to my questionnaire. The most educated are those who hold doctoral degrees in theology such as Bishop N. Kunonga. As for the priests in this study, they hold the Diploma in Religious Studies from the University of Zimbabwe. Mrs V. Nyathi holds an Accountancy degree. Mr. D. Maunze is a lawyer. However the majority of the laity holds ordinary levels and has then moved on to do some professional training and obtained a certificate or diploma in some other field. However R. Mukucha is illiterate; he has never attended any formal school. Given this scenario the responses given above show a deep rooted problem of lack of theological literacy in the Anglican Church in the city of Harare.

Following this situation of a crisis in theological education in the city of Harare, it would be correct to say that most of the respondents do not even know how the current Bible was put together. They are not aware of the books that were removed such as 1 Clement, the Shepherd of Hermas, The Epistle of Banabas and The Didache. They are also not aware of those books that were put into the canon by accident, especially those books that

claim to have been written by Paul the Apostle, when in actual fact they were written by imposters. For the majority of these respondents, for as long as the current Bible suggests that such letters as Hebrews are written by Paul, they have no reason to question that. It is also clear that even the theologically sound failed to give more information on the canon implying that they may not be that well informed in this subject.

It would appear this issue of the canon and how it came to be what we have now, is such an unknown area to many people in the Anglican Church, in the city of Harare. If this is such a difficult thing for the clergy, who have been educated in these issues, it is obviously a gray area for the laity. This brings us back to C. S. Banana's proposal, which will prove to be a futile exercise since the majority of people are not informed on issues of the canon of Scripture. It would be out of this world for anyone to expect the laity to know all these theological issues and be able to appreciate C. Banana's proposal.

It is therefore clear from the findings of this research that C. Banana is expecting too much from people. He seems to be naïve regarding the situation on the ground, that the church is full of ordinary people most of whom are not theologians. It would appear C. Banana has lost touch with ordinary Christians. It would also appear he is too lofty and removed from the ordinary Christians to the end that he is advocating an elitist Church, composed of people who are very well educated on matters such as gender hermeneutics, liberation hermeneutics, and theology in general. C. S. Banana seems to be envisioning a church that only exists in the figment of his imagination, where everyone is educated and can appreciate such a proposal to have the current Bible rewritten. In reality there is no church that has such people who are theologically sound, as shown in this study. The bottom line is that his proposal is not acceptable in the Anglican Church in the city of Harare.

7.1 Way Forward

Given the foregoing findings and conclusion, it is clear that for any fruitful discussion on matters of theology in the Anglican Church in the city of Harare, something needs to be done. The way forward in this regard should be to respond urgently to the following needs;

- 1) the need to introduce a rigorous theological education to the laity in the Anglican Church;
- 2) the need to encourage a critical reading of the Bible in liturgical worship and in lay associations;
- 3) the need to be open and go across local cultural limitations on matters that are topical and crucial;
- 4) the need to encourage a culture of openness on the part of clergy without being afraid of challenges;
- 5) the ne to fomulate a catechesim that is relevant to the contemporary world, which deals with topical issues that affect people in the here and now;
- 6) the need to discourage people from depending on the Prayer Book at the expense of the Bible,
- 7) The need to demystify, the office of the clergy, so as to make the priest an ordinary person who is not necessarily the one who knows all about church matters,
- 8) The need to challenge people's faith that is not rooted in truth, with a view of building faith on a firm foundation of truth,
- 9) The need to move away from reading the Bible from a fundamentalist point of view,

- 10) The need to encourage a culture of intellectual inquiry that moves beyond spirituality and prayer in lay associations.

Although there were some respondents who felt that the current Bible should be rewritten, the majority of them are against this proposal. It remains a serious blow in the face of fundamentalist to talk about rewriting the Bible which they view as having been dropped from heaven by God. Given this conclusion,⁰ there is need for more teaching in theology for the ordinary parishioners in the Anglican Church to appreciate matters of faith that go beyond spirituality.

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APPENDIX 1

Interview / Questionnaire

1. Passages such as (2Tim3.16) have been used to suggest that the Bible is from God and therefore inspired (Yes / No). Explain your answer briefly?
2. Is it True or False to say that the Bible is double authored that is between God and human beings?
3. If the Bible is inspired, is it True or False to say that it is TRUTH.
4. Is it True or False that the Bible has got numerous discrepancies and contradictions?
5. Is it correct to say that the God of the Old Testament is Different from the God of the New Testament? (Yes / No) Explain your answer briefly?
6. Is it true or false to say that the war between Israel and Palestine is caused by the Bible? Explain your answer briefly?
7. The Bible is oppressive against women. (True / False). Explain your answer briefly?
8. What is your position regarding the ordination of women (Good / Bad). Explain your answer briefly?
9. Is it possible to stripe the Bible from the Jewish culture (Yes / No). Explain your answer briefly?
10. Homosexuals and lesbians have called for a rewritten Bible that will be less offensive to them. Is this a good or bad proposal? Explain your answer briefly?
11. What is your comment to the view that we have to re-read, edit, and add what is missing in the Bible (No / Yes). Explain your answer briefly?
12. Is it True or False that a rewritten Bible will affect the canon of scripture negatively? Explain your answer briefly?
13. As an Anglican Christian, would you say it is good or bad to rewrite the Bible? Explain your answer briefly?