

***“TRANSFORMATIONAL JOURNEYS TOWARDS
LIBERATION”***

***Contextual Bible Study in South Africa: A Contribution to Liberation
and Transformation? An investigation of the Study of the Bible among
Poor and Marginalized Women in the Communities of Pietermaritzburg,
South Africa, with Particular Focus on Its Implications for Individual
and Social Change***

MASTER IN GLOBAL STUDIES 30-MATH

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SCHOOL OF MISSION AND THEOLOGY

STAVANGER, SPRING 2009

“Why always the Bible?” Her neighbours asked teasingly. “There are lots of other books you could read.” Speaking with authority, the woman replied, “Yes, of course, there are many books which I could read. But there is only one book which reads me”

Quote from woman in a village in East Africa (Weber 1995)

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Acknowledgements

Writing this thesis has been a long journey. Many times it has felt lonely, but people have joined along, shaping the journey, and enabled me to continue. It is with deep gratitude that I want to thank those who have played their parts to make my work becoming what it is today.

First of all I want to thank the School of Mission and Theology for supporting my fieldtrip to South Africa and for putting me in contact with the right institution and people there. My thanks go to the Ujamaa Centre in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, for allowing me to conduct my research with them. The staff at the Ujamaa Centre made me feel welcomed and included, providing me with what I needed during my fieldwork. I want to especially thank Bonggi and Maria, friends I could laugh and cry with, learn a lot from and have coffee with. You too made my fieldwork joyful and fun!

I want to thank the beautiful family who hosted me and made me feel like a daughter of the family during a shorter stay in their village. The people of this community contributed to useful information and gave me the privilege to participate in their every-day-life teaching me the “Zulu-way”. Memories from those days will always stay with me. A very special thank goes to the eleven women who allowed me to interview them and who shared their time, hospitality, stories, and experiences with me. My deepest respect goes to your strength and courage. My thanks also go to Mbo Mtshali, who assisted me with translation, and transcriptions of the interviews in Zulu.

Further I want to thank my supervisor, Professor Thor Strandencæs, who has been the most patient and supporting person during this project. Your insights and comments, time, enthusiasm and encouragement has been very helpful and is highly appreciated. My thanks go to my good friend, Silje, for valuable comments towards the end of the writing; “a true friend applies tough love!” I also want to mention Hanne who so kindly provided her flat for my use during long nights and early mornings of writing in the end. My precious friend Elisabeth has supported and encouraged me throughout this long journey, starting even before the project; Thanks for cooking dinners and believing in me! My family must also be thanked for always supporting my travelling to Africa and for believing in what I do and invest my time in.

Marit Breen, Stavanger May 2009.

Abbreviations

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ANC	African National Congress
BSG	Bible Study Group
CBS	Contextual Bible Study
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ISB	Institute for the Study of the Bible
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
NP	National Party
PWA	People Living with HIV/AIDS
SA	South Africa
SG	Support Group
SPWA	Solidarity Program for People Living with HIV/AIDS
TC	Tamar Campaign
UDF	United Democratic Front
UC	Ujamaa Centre
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
VCT	Voluntary Counselling and Testing
WGP	Women and Gender Program

1. Introduction

1.1. Aim of Thesis

In many places one finds that the Christian church not only proclaims the Gospel of salvation in order to bring people to faith but also aims at enabling people to improve their life conditions physically and mentally by equipping them for individual and social liberation and transformation. For this purpose various methods and approaches are made use of. One such method is Contextual Bible Study (CBS). Thus one of the main goals of the *Ujamaa Centre for Biblical and Theological Community Development and Research* in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, is to bring about individual and social liberation and transformation through CBS. The *Ujamaa Centre* (UC) is connected with the School of Theology and Religion of the University of KwaZulu-Natal and represents an interface between socially engaged biblical and theological scholars, organic intellectuals and local communities of poor, working-class, and marginalised people. The centre makes use of biblical and theological resources for individual and social transformation. CBS has been developed at the *Ujamaa Centre* as a method, which aims at individual and social liberation and transformation among the poor and marginalized people. CBS takes place in local bible study groups and involves both men and women. The UC was founded in 1998, bringing together two previously separate organizations, namely the Institute for the Study of the Bible (ISB) and the House of Studies for Worker Ministry, which have been working to bring about individual and social transformation since the late 1980's. The foundation and the work of the *Ujamaa Centre* was also motivated by the deep conflict in the Kwazulu-Natal (KZN) region of South Africa where local communities of poor, working-class and marginalized black South Africans were torn apart by state-sponsored violence. In this context of daily death and violence the cry went up, "How can we hear God speak to us in these times?"¹ The foundation of the *Ujamaa Centre* was a response to this cry.

The purpose of my project is

- to study how the *Ujamaa Centre* makes use of CBS as an instrument for individual and social liberation and transformation,
- whether and how persons in bible study groups are influenced by CBS,

¹ Ujamaa Centre, <http://www.ukzn.ac.za/sorat/ujamaa/history.htm> (Accessed 10.02.09)

- and whether and to which extent CBS causes individual and social liberation and transformation among members of such bible study groups.

The project therefore aims at understanding CBS as a method, and at investigating whether and how members of Bible study groups are affected by the use of CBS; further, whether CBS works as a tool for individual and social transformation and liberation in concrete situations.

The reason why both individual and social liberation and transformation are included is that the *Ujamaa Centre* focuses on both aspects, not only on the individual change. A social being has a role in society, which again is bound to and reflects different structures like economic systems, patriarchal systems, racial systems, hierarchical systems etc. The *Ujamaa Centre's* primary concern is those harmful or sinful structures, which trap and keep people oppressed and marginalized. In focusing on personal and social change this includes therefore also such structures or systems which people are naturally part of due to the roles they play in their respective environments. Change on a personal level will always imply consequences for the context, which the person is a part of, including these systems. It will therefore be relevant to look into what these structures represent, what they do to people, how the *Ujamaa Centre* encounters these structures and their impact on people, and how people engaged in bible study groups deal with them.

1.2. Limitations

Whereas it is possible to conduct a thorough study of representative documents from the *Ujamaa Centre*, relating to CBS as a method, the limits of a master's project prompted me to make certain delimitations, since I cannot deal with the use of CBS in all bible study groups in the entire country of South Africa. On this background my limitations were made regarding the following: *Firstly* my focus was on a few selected bible study groups and events² in the communities in and around Pietermaritzburg, where the *Ujamaa Centre* is located. *Second*, since the female population in many African countries is subject to oppression, marginalization and poverty, I limited myself to a study of women in these Bible study groups and events. *Third*, since it is impossible to draw general conclusions based on a limited number of interviews, only possible to identify certain tendencies, I aimed at engaging female

² Since my fieldwork was limited to a period of three months it was difficult to find consistent Bible study groups that were active during this time. I participated in Bible study groups taking place in one particular church twice where I met women who were part of a Counselling course organized by UC at that time. This Counselling Course and two Training weeks organised by Ujamaa, are these events I am referring to here. Except from this I participated in sporadic CBS groups around PMB.

informants for interviews who represent a variety of age, marital status, and experience. *Fourth*, since it takes considerable time to conduct each interview, transcribe and analyse it, the number of such informants was limited to eleven women.

1.3. Research Question

The problem, which this project aims at answering, can be formulated in the following main research question:

Does the method known as CBS contribute towards individual and social transformation and liberation when used in Bible Study Groups in and around PMB, SA? And if so, what is the nature of such liberation and transformation?

To be able to answer the main question the two following sub-questions must be answered first:

- 1. What are the objectives of CBS as a method, and how is CBS carried out in bible study groups in and around Pietermaritzburg?*
- 2. Does CBS affect the lives of the Bible study participants? in my case a group of eleven selected women. And if so, can individual and social transformation and liberation be identified as part of this influence, and in which way (s)?*

Structure of Thesis

I have structured the thesis in two main parts, which I see useful to the nature of the research. In the first part I study the theoretical aspects of the CBS method and how CBS is carried out in Bible study groups. In the second part I assess whether the method fulfils its aim of contributing towards individual and social transformation and liberation, based on empirical data from participatory observations and interviews.³ The following is presented in Chapter 1-3; A brief presentation of the Ujamaa Centre, necessary background to the field, both socio-political and theological, and the methodological approach of my researched is described here.

Part one consists of chapter four and five, and part two consists of chapter six and seven.

Chapter four studies the methods of the UC in depth with a particular focus of CBS. Chapter five presents an empirical observation of a CBS, showing how the method is carried out in a Bible study. Chapter six is based on empirical data in particular and presents the voices and

³ During my research it became clear to me that the influence of the CBS cannot only be treated in Bible study groups, but also other training and courses that the Centre provides.

stories of the eleven women I interviewed. It includes also analysis and comments to their experiences in light of the South African context and the work of Ujamaa. In Chapter seven the outcome of the analysis and the women's experiences is measured against theories of empowerment, transformation, and liberation and the nature of the processes connected to such. The final chapter brings the two parts together, giving a general conclusion of the whole thesis where the main research question is answered.

Framework

I use written documents by UC, and relevant theories and concepts connected to the Centre's work and theological influence, as frame of reference for my thesis.⁴ In particular, the socio-political situation in South Africa, with the influence of the Apartheid Era, its politic and theology, are presuppositions for the theology of the Ujamaa Centre and the way it applies its methods. The theologies of influence to the Centre are; Liberation theology, Black theology, and Contextual theology in South Africa. Prophetic theology is in the nature of these theological streams; it aims at making the gospel relevant to life matters in the lives of the poor and oppressed. This is also a main concern of the UC, which uses the CBS method as a tool to contribute towards individual and social transformation and liberation. Thus the nature of transformation and liberation becomes an important subject in my research. I draw on the missiology of David J. Bosch⁵ and his understanding of transformation and liberation, Bryant L. Myers' theories of transformational development⁶, and theories of empowerment from Karen Monkman⁷ and from Sida, a Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. They can all be connected to Bosch's thinking of transformation and of Mission as; a quest for justice, liberation, contextualization, and action in hope.⁸ Bosch's contribution to the field of Missiology is based on his concept of Transforming Mission, emphasising that the term transforming is an essential feature of what Christian mission is all about.

1.4. Definitions of Central Terms and Concepts

Many of the terms and concepts used in my thesis are derived from the language used by Ujamaa Centre and its CBS, and must be understood in its context. Sometimes these terms are commonly used in certain theological schools and practices, other times they are unique to the

⁴ Most of the written material produced by the Centre is written by the director of the Centre, Gerald West. His books and articles are also a main source in my research on the written documents about the UC and the CBS.

⁵ Bosch, *Transforming Mission, Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* 1991.

⁶ Myers, *Walking With The Poor* 1999.

⁷ Monkman, "Training Women for Change and Empowerment" 1998:498-509.

⁸ *Ibid.*;400-409,420-447,498-511.

Centre. Some of the terms will be elaborated on further when dealt with later, and some other ones will be defined and introduced whenever relevant to the topic discussed. However I nevertheless present definitions of some central terms and concepts in my thesis here:

Empowerment: Empowerment refers to “increasing the spiritual, political, social or economic strength of individuals and communities. It often involves that the empowered developing confidence in their own capacities”.⁹ Empowerment is also defined as “the expansion in people’s ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them”.¹⁰ *The process of empowerment* is

a process of gaining understanding of, and control over, the political forces around one as a means of improving one’s standing in society. This requires awareness of one’s situation, skill acquisition that enables change, and working jointly in effecting change”¹¹

Liberation: Liberation is understood as “the condition in which an individual has the ability to act according to his or her own will”.¹²

Ordinary and Trained reader: Gerald West introduced these terms in his book *Contextual Bible Study*.¹³ The term *reader* is often used both in a literal and metaphoric sense in that it includes the many who are illiterate, but who listen to, retell and remake the Bible. The term *ordinary reader* is used both in a general and a specific sense. It refers to pre-critical readers, but also those who are poor and marginalized. The latter is similar to the term “the people” or “the masses” as they are popularly used. Often when opposed to the ordinary reader, the term *trained reader* refers to socially engaged biblical scholars who are trained in the use of the tools and resources of biblical scholarship and who read the Bible critically. However, this does not mean that ordinary readers don’t have resources to read the Bible critically, but often they do not use the structured and systematic sets of resources that constitute the craft of biblical scholars.

Patriarchy: Patriarchy is what makes up a patriarchal system and is understood as male power or men being in control of women.¹⁴

⁹ Wikipedia, “Empowerment”, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Empowerment#The_process_of_empowerment (Accessed 15.05.09)

¹⁰ Sidastudies 2004:19

¹¹ Monkman 1998:498.

¹² Wikipedia, “Liberation”, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s_liberation (Accessed 15.05.09)

¹³ Ibid.;8-9.

¹⁴ UNFPA *State of the World Population*, 2008:50.

Poor and oppressed: Refers to “those who are socially, politically, economically, or culturally marginalized and exploited”.¹⁵ The 'poor and oppressed' is often used in connection with the term 'ordinary reader', as opposed to 'trained reader'.

Socially engaged biblical scholars: These are trained biblical readers who are engaged with - and have chosen to collaborate with - the poor and marginalized in their struggles for survival, liberation and life.

Transformation: Transformation means changed people. Changed people are those who have “discovered their true identity as children of God and who have recovered their true vocation as faithful and productive stewards of gifts from God for the well-being of all”.¹⁶

Transformation is also understood as a process, which takes place over time.

1.5. Status of Research

My thesis is written within the discipline Theology of Mission (MT), also called Missiology. Central to MT as a discipline is the encounter between the Christian Church and cultures. It seeks to look at the world from the perspective of commitment to the Christian faith. In this field David Bosch¹⁷ has advocated for a paradigm shift in Theology of Mission, which also has relevance for the encounter between church and culture. Bosch mentions several elements of what he calls an “Emerging Ecumenical Missionary Paradigm”¹⁸, which aims at a “relevant Missiology”¹⁹ for today. The term and reality of *transformation* belong to this new paradigm of “relevant Missiology”, since *transforming* represents “an essential feature of what Christian mission is all about”.²⁰ Some of the elements which belong to the new paradigm which Bosch speaks of, are; Mission as quest for justice, Mission as contextualization, including contextual theology, Mission as liberation, including Liberation theology and “God’s preferential option for the poor”, as well as Mission as action in hope.²¹ These elements are all central in my investigation of the CBS method and how it can contribute to bring about transformation and liberation for the poor and oppressed, women in particular.

¹⁵ West 1993:13.

¹⁶ Myers 1999:14.

¹⁷ Bosch 1991.

¹⁸ Ibid.;368.

¹⁹ Ibid.;349-511.

²⁰ Bosch 1991:Foreword.

²¹ Ibid.;420-507.

Hence the research topic in this thesis is both relevant to the discipline of Missiology and reflects aspects of the new missiological paradigm. Christian mission involves the aspect of transformation (confer quotation of Bosch above) where the Church encounters cultures in a way that impacts the socio-political spheres of society. This is the aim of Liberation theology; siding with the poor, with an emphasis on praxis and action, and on making theology contextual and relevant to the poor and oppressed. The bible study which the Church engages in is an integral part of Liberation theology – and hence also missiologically relevant.

The UC itself has contributed to the study of the CBS and works with contextual theology through people connected to – and working for – the Centre. The process of CBS is still young since it only started in the late 1980's by the ISB, and has been further developed through UC since 1998. UC claims to be open to dialogue with people from outside so that the work can progress. "Further reflection and research is obviously also necessary because many questions still remain".²² By the end of the last chapter in his book, *Contextual Bible Study*²³, West challenges the reader to participate and contribute to this process through dialogue, giving responses to the work of the Centre and the CBS. When speaking of the need for further research, participatory research as a method is mentioned in particular as the appropriate method suited for such research. My own research on the CBS method was done through participation, and was among other factors, motivated by – and can be seen as a response to – this challenge raised by the Ujamaa Centre. Research done by people from outside the UC, on the CBS method, is, however, limited. My particular emphasis on the voices of the women as participants of CBS, was nonetheless influenced by the nature of liberation theology, which focuses on the reality of the poor and oppressed. And through my research these women indirectly contribute; yet being central, to the assessment of the impact of the CBS method and its embedded potential(s). As a "relevant Missiology" (confer quotation by Bosch above) must have a transforming effect on the reality of the people in cultures, so also must CBS as a method be transformative and liberating. Thus empirical research on the methods' impact on the people becomes important.

²² West 1993:78.

²³ Ibid.;79.

1.6. The Ujamaa Centre – a Brief Introduction

The core purpose of the *Ujamaa Center for Biblical and theological community development and research*, is described as following; “Our core purpose is to mobilise, train, support, and empower the poor, the working-class, and the marginalised.”²⁴ In order to achieve its purpose the UC works on a wide scale through its seven different programs. These programs all work for “the values of the kingdom of God and for a society in which all have abundant life (John10.10)”²⁵. The seven programs are: Women and Gender, Solidarity with People Living with HIV and AIDS, Economic Justice, Theology of Work, Religion and Governance, Advocacy and Leadership Development, and finally Research and Pedagogy. Each of the programs, with their different focuses, are structural and organised responses to key aspects of the South African reality. They also overlap, creating coherence across the programs. In order to work for social transformation, the UC is committed to collaborate and work together with other religious communities, the South African government and movements in civil society, sharing their values and commitments. Wherever possible, the Centre works in the languages of the local communities. This shows that the UC wants to engage the grassroots of the different communities that it works in. In addition to using biblical and theological resources, including Contextual Bible study, UC uses what it calls the *See- Judge-Act Method*. This is a method that commits to the ongoing cycle of action and reflection known as praxis, and which I will come back to in chapter four where I go into the methods more in depth. Suffice to say that courses and studies both take social reality seriously in addressing problems, and make use of Bible studies and theological reflection to propose constructive change. The Ujamaa Centre also runs two Campaigns. One is the Tamar Campaign, which belongs to the Program of Women and Gender, and which I will address further in chapter five. The other is the Worker Sunday Campaign, which falls under the Economic Justice and Theology of Work Program. Due to the particular focus of my thesis I will not deal further with the latter.

Since my thesis deals with women in particular, I shall focus on the two programs at Ujamaa that are related to issues of gender; the Women and Gender Program (WGP) and the Solidarity for people living with HIV/AIDS Program (SPWAP). These two programs are related in that they both address the issues of sexuality, gender, HIV/AIDS, and governance. Because of the nature of these issues they need to be approached in an *integrated* manner. The Tamar

²⁴ Quote from Ujamaa Folder; ”Ujamaa Centre for Biblical & Theological Community Development & Research”.

²⁵ Ibid.

Campaign is a thematic Contextual Bible Study, holding a unique place within both of these programs. It addresses issues of gender, gender violence, masculinity and male socialization.

The Women and Gender Program

South Africa faces great challenges in the areas of gender equality and gender violence. It appears as if “gender violence is on the increase, which may be a backlash against increased structural gender equality. [And there are] worrying signs that macho male models are on the resurgence in the popular media”.²⁶ The Women and Gender Program (WGP) at the Ujamaa works towards changing behaviour and attitudes related to these topics. It focuses on the victims and survivors of gender violence, most of whom are women and children, but it also addresses the masculinities that the society constructs. The victims and survivors of gender violence are often members of a Church, but according to the UC the church is often not a safe place to deal with their concerns. Gender based violence is a very sensitive topic in many churches, often connected with shame, with the consequences of being silenced. Social constructed masculinities are also to be found in the Church and can be recognized through patriarchal and hierarchal structures enforcing this silencing. In the experience of UC and its work with women affected by gender violence, the Church reinforces cultural gender socialisations, which must be challenged.²⁷ “In most churches, women do not experience equality, and scrutiny of many church teachings, beliefs and practices reveals a culture of inequality and patterns of domination of women.”²⁸

Therefore it is imperative to understand the constraints within the church, and other faith-based communities, and to find resources that can be used to make the church a force for transforming the damaging features of gender socialisation.²⁹

What concerns the situation of women and gender-based violence in the region of KZN are also in general true for South Africa and other African countries. Therefore the centre works with a range of regional and continental partners, and is committed to increasing this cooperation as well.

We see tremendous opportunities to work through and with our funding partners, their regional offices and their associated projects. We have developed a number of projects and resources that are replicable in other contexts.³⁰

²⁶ Ujamaa Centre, <http://www.ukzn.ac.za/sorat/ujamaa/programs.htm>. (Accessed 10.02.09)

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Norwegian Church Aid, <http://209.85.129.132/search?q=cache:rPohIJ5jjnoJ:www.kirkensnodhjelp.no/en/News/Latest-news/Gender-Audit-of-churches-launched/+gender+audit+of+churches&cd=1&hl=no&ct=clnk&gl=no&client=firefox-a> (Accessed 15.05.09)

²⁹ Ujamaa Centre, <http://www.ukzn.ac.za/sorat/ujamaa/programs.htm>. (Accessed 10.02.09)

Examples of this are seen through the Tamar Campaign, which has been launched and adopted by churches and projects in countries like Kenya, Zambia, Gambia and Nigeria.³¹

The Tamar Campaign

The coordinator of the WGP told me that this very program exists because of the Tamar Campaign.³² The first time the story of Tamar (2.Sam 13.1-21) was used as a CBS was at the South African Lutheran Women's conference in 1996.³³ Since then the text continued to be used as CBS with such a success that the UC was challenged to make something more out of it. The result was the creation of the WGP, which further developed the CBS on the story of Tamar to become the *Tamar Campaign*, first launched in 2000. The aim of the TC is "encouraging the churches to speak out against violence against women and children and with the related aim of supporting survivors of violence"³⁴

Addressing Gender-based Violence

In line with the WGP the Tamar Campaign (TC) addresses issues of gender-based violence, something that is also directly linked to the HIV and AIDS pandemic. The TC has a particular focus on sexual and domestic violence and on challenging churches and religious institutions to address the crisis of HIV and AIDS. The Tamar text in the Bible also reveals the failure of family and governmental structures to protect women and shows the effects that gender violence can have on different aspects of the victim's life, as well as on the community. In our time these may be aspects concerning health, protection and security, children who might be involved, the spread of HIV and AIDS, and crime in the community, to mention some. In chapter six we will also hear from women who are victims of gender based violence, and about the effect of the abuse they have experienced. The Ujamaa considers the particular power of the Tamar Campaign to be that it can be implemented in almost any context. "With appropriate training and resources the Tamar Campaign has the potential to make a significant impact on the region".³⁵

³⁰ Ujamaa Centre, <http://www.ukzn.ac.za/sorat/ujamaa/programs.htm>. (Accessed 10.02.09)

³¹ See Ujamaa Centre, <http://www.ukzn.ac.za/sorat/ujamaa/resources.htm> for the Tamar Campaign and related CBS in countries in East Africa initiated by the Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and the Horn of Africa (FECCLAHA) in cooperation with the UC. (Accessed 15.03.09)

³² Interview with the coordinator of the Women and Gender Program. (Conducted 15.10.09).

³³ For more information on the history of the Tamar Campaign, see article of West, Zondi-Mabizela 2004.

³⁴ Ibid.;10.

³⁵ Ujamaa Centre, <http://www.ukzn.ac.za/sorat/ujamaa/campaigns.htm>. (Accessed 09.02.02)

The Campaign uses the slogan: “Breaking the chains of silence, stop violence”. The further aims of the Campaign are: to encourage churches to speak out against abuse, to promote Bible studies on violence against women, to provide knowledge about different kinds of abuse and suggest dealing with them, to encourage ministers to preach against abuse, and to create awareness of the link between gender violence and HIV/AIDS.³⁶ These aims are to be achieved through mobilising, training and empowering women, which is in line with the vision of the UC.

The Solidarity Programme for People Living with HIV and AIDS

At the Ujamaa Webpage the Solidarity Program for People Living with HIV and AIDS (SWAP) is described as a “strategic tool towards achieving the Millennium Development Goal of halting, and beginning to reverse the spread of HIV and AIDS among women, men and children by 2015.”³⁷ 2006 marks the 25th year since the world first heard about HIV and AIDS. Since then, the disease has become a global pandemic and created an emergency situation like no other disease. This is also true in the South African context, including the province of KZN. In fact, KZN has the highest percentage of people living with the virus and dying of AIDS in all of South Africa.³⁸

Fighting Stigmatisation

Since the pandemic is of global concern, the SWAP collaborates with parties on a regional level including Angola, Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Botswana. One of the most important tasks is to deal with the stigma and discrimination attached to the disease. This requires working with the people who experience the reality of the virus. This is because all parties involved must participate as equal partners in the struggle of curbing the spread of HIV and AIDS. Hence, according to Ujamaa, the participation of those affected with the virus is important;

Their perspectives are needed to make sense of programmes, planning and policymaking for HIV prevention, care and treatment. Their engagement is the key to stamping out stigma and discrimination. Their voice is the surest way to sustain the passion and compassion we need to win

³⁶ Folder from The Tamar Campaign.

³⁷ Ujamaa Centre, <http://www.ukzn.ac.za/sorat/ujamaa/programs.htm>. (Accessed 09.02.09)

³⁸ According to UNAIDS 18.1 % is living with HIV/AIDS in South Africa, http://www.unaids.org/en/CountryResponses/Countries/south_africa.asp (Accessed 10.02.09). 17% of these are girls between 15-24 years old, and only 4% are boys at the same age. (UNAIDS, Status of the Global HIV Epidemic, 2008 Report on the global AIDS epidemic, pp 42.) In KZN 20.1% of the population is infected with HIV. (The National HIV and Syphilis prevalence Survey South Africa 2007 p7), http://www.unaids.org/en/CountryResponses/Countries/south_africa.asp (Accessed 10.02.09)

against the pandemic. This situation calls for developing meaningful involvement and strengthening strategic networks and organizations of people living with HIV.³⁹

Building networks and partnerships with young people and women is of great importance to the UC, since this group of the population is especially vulnerable and exposed to HIV and AIDS. In the SWAP, the Ujamaa challenges the understanding of HIV/AIDS, stigmatisation of victims, and general attitudes among the South African population:

HIV is a virus, not a moral condition. People living with HIV have rights and responsibilities, their voices needs to be heard. Stigma and discrimination must be challenged at all levels as it impacts on people differently as they are not experienced only in terms or HIV and AIDS, and our discriminations in terms of gender and nationality and sexual minorities and race and south north and north south remain fertile ground for a clever little virus like HIV to exploit. Unless we overcome poverty and inequality in every corner of the globe we will not overcome HIV and the cycle of human suffering will continue unabated.⁴⁰

Support Groups

Most of the work in the SWAP takes place within Support Groups (SG) for 'people living with HIV and AIDS' (PWA). The Support Groups promote positive living and offer life skills training to people affected by the virus. To illustrate the nature of these groups the following quote from one of the groups (from 2005) – the Siyaphila Support Group – is useful:

Siyaphila Community Based Organisation was formed in 1997 by people living with HIV/AIDS [PWA's] and those who were affected. We named this group Siyaphila[,] which means "we are living", because at that time the community thought if you have HIV, you will die soon. Our group promote[s] positive living and life skills to PWA's. We started this group because we wanted to support each other, to help the community to understand better about HIV/AIDS, starting from the person who is infected, his/her family and the community. We have targeted Pietermaritzburg, as it is the worst affected area in kwa-Zulu Natal. According to the research by the City Health Department there are 40,3 million people living with HIV in 2005.⁴¹

The Support Groups also offer other activities and services such as counselling, information about HIV/AIDS, awareness creation, motivational support when it comes to engaging in community, formation of new Support Groups, and supporting the VCT⁴² programs and other events.

In this chapter I have given an introduction to the field of research, presenting the aim of the thesis and its limitations, my research questions, relevant definitions, and given a status of the

³⁹ Ujamaa Centre, <http://www.ukzn.ac.za/sorat/ujamaa/programs.htm>. (Accessed 09.02.09)

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Siaphila Community Based Organisation, Annual Report 2005:7.

⁴² VCT stands for Voluntary Counselling and Testing for HIV Prevention. VCT provides the opportunity for people to know their HIV status with quality counseling support to help them cope with a positive or a negative test result. (UNFPA, <http://www.unfpa.org/hiv/prevention/hivprev5b.htm> Accessed 10.02.09)

research, which shows that it is justifiable to relate it to the field of Missiology as well as to previous study done on the topic. My intended contribution to the field has thus been expressed. I have also given an introduction to the UC, its methods and work, with relevance to my study on CBS and women.

2. Methodology

2.1. Qualitative research

The methodological approach of the thesis is twofold. My main methodology is qualitative research based on participatory observation and qualitative in-depth interviews with eleven South African women. The qualitative method serves to probe deeper into the material and the data collected from the field. For this purpose I developed an Interview Guide, which I used as a basis when dialoguing with the women (see Appendix 1), which is appropriate to this study, aiming at establishing empirical evidence related to CBS. Secondly I also investigate written literature on the work of Ujamaa, the South African context and the theologies connected with it - all with relevance to CBS, its purpose and context.

In depth-interviews

It was convenient to choose in-depth interviews as research method as it gives the opportunity for people to share their stories in a one on one sitting. Since the informants are black women coming from poor and marginalized communities they are likely to be vulnerable in terms of their social and economic status, gender, race, health condition, and to power dynamics that could be intimidating to them. On the background on this I focused on building relationships with the women I interviewed during my fieldwork, so that these factors could be limited as much as possible. An in-depth interview carries the potential for the informant to open up more freely to the interviewer in terms of sharing stories from her community. A researcher, not being part of that particular community, could be perceived as a safe person to share information and stories with. Especially when the informant is vulnerable and in fear of being stigmatized by others in the community.

The Informants

The informants remain anonymous and their identity will not be disclosed in the thesis. The purpose of this is to secure the privacy of the informants, but it was also to encourage them to be free to share with me during the interviews. Instead of referring to them as “Informant 1, Informant 2” etc., I chose to give them fictive names. This both maintains a personal touch and makes it easier to keep trace of each individual’s statements. All recorded audiotapes and electronic transcripts used in this process have only been available to myself and one other person who helped me with two of the transcripts that needed translation from Zulu to English. They will all be deleted when the thesis project is finished by June 15th.

2.2. Role of The Researcher

I mentioned that the women I interviewed are vulnerable in terms of their social and economic status, gender, race, health condition, and power dynamics, the latter in particular being challenging in my case as a researcher. My status of being a white, unmarried, non-South African woman also had implications for the fieldwork, some I became aware of, and others I might never know of. These are elements that I had to be aware of the whole time during the fieldwork. As much as I wanted to engage with my informants in a way that built trustworthy relationships where respect and dignity were affirmed, I had to be aware of the fact that I was an outsider. This could cause limitation on behalf of the women in terms of how much they would want to share during the interview. Out of politeness they might even only have told me what they thought I wanted to hear. There was also a language barrier that I became painfully aware of, especially during a stay I had in a Zulu community with people who were limited in their English speaking. When conducting my interviews I only needed translator for two of the interviews. When using translator there is always a chance of misunderstanding and misinterpretations taking place. I tried to avoid this by using another person translating a second time while doing the transcription of these interviews. I found that very helpful.

Challenges of Being an Outsider

Being an outsider could sometimes be beneficiary, other times very challenging. I want to share some of this experience of being a white, unmarried woman. During my fieldwork I had a longer stay in a small and rural village outside of Pietermaritzburg. The fact that I, as a white person, came to live in that community was highly appreciated by the community members. Knowing the South African history of Apartheid, I was prepared for different reactions to my presence in the community. I was surprised by the positive responses and was told that no other white person had ever come to live with them like I did. Some of them told me that it was easier to relate to me when they knew that I was not like “the white people” in their country. Others thought I was bringing equipment and facilities that they could benefit financially from, but when realizing that I was there because I wanted to know them and their culture more, they became very hospitable and I was taken well care of during my stay. Other times during my fieldwork I was faced with the different cultural understanding of what defines a “real woman”. One man, a Zulu, approached my state of being unmarried, referring to the meaning of this being that I was not yet a “real woman”. In his eyes I was still just a girl. The same attribute of being unmarried I found very helpful when relating to some of the women that I interviewed. In their eyes it meant that I was respected and independent. One of

the ladies responded to me saying that I would better remain single, because “husbands are trouble”.⁴³ There are many more examples, but I cannot elaborate further on this here. What I want to emphasise, however, are the challenges of people’s different perceptions of me and my role as a researcher. There could be joys and frustrations about the same thing, as much as experiences of being perceived so differently as a person depending on the contexts. This taught me to be sensitive towards the culture, which I, after all was hosted in as a guest, and be humble in my encounters with its people. Being in the field also included the excitement of realizing that the one time you might think you were left “outside” as an outsider, you might see that in the next incident it meant you had the keys to understand something and get on the “inside” of things. Yet the whole time I was still white, unmarried, foreign and woman. I believe it is valuable to experience marginalization as a researcher and be able to identify with people who feel as outsiders. In my case it was helpful when dealing with the women sharing their own stories of marginalisation and experiences of abuse. Some of the women told me that it was good to share some of the stories with me because I was also a woman, regardless of my lacking their experience. A man conducting a similar fieldwork would obviously not have gained the same kind of information.

A Partial Truth about Reality

On the background of this, I am well aware that my field research carries limitations when it comes to speaking the whole truth about the CBS method and the work of the UC, as much as about the reality of women in South Africa. To assume anything else would be inadequate and presumptuous after such a short stay with the Ujamaa Centre and in South Africa. My portrait of the South African women and their realities, as much as my experience with the Ujamaa Centre, is a partial one, bounded by the social roles assigned to me as researcher attached with certain personal attributes. Yet I do believe that what I have gained of information from the study carries significance and can give a picture, even if only a small one, of the status quo. It can indicate some trends and contribute to throwing light on the use of the CBS seen from the perspective of the women I interviewed and from my own experience. I intend to remain truth to my findings and allow them to speak for themselves.

⁴³ Quotation from conversation with a woman leading a Support Group for people living with HIV/AIDS, living in a village outside of PMB.

3. Background and Theoretical Framework

When investigating the work of the Ujamaa Centre (UC) and the CBS method it is important to understand the different contemporary political and theological streams influencing SA, and which have conditioned the work of UC since its creation in 1998. The history of SA, as much as the context within which the UC stands today, creates a framework for both the theology of UC and the people with whom the Centre works. I will therefore give a presentation of the socio-political situation in SA, and relevant streams of theological influence, namely liberation theology, black theology and contextual theology in South Africa. Both the socio-political and the theological situation of SA are presuppositions, which condition the tools and methods used by Ujamaa, including CBS. Therefore, by going through the theological schools or streams serving as a framework for CBS, this presentation also provides a theoretical framework for my thesis. Additionally I will make use of theories of transformation and empowerment (chapter seven) in order to understand better the nature of transformation and empowerment as achieved through CBS.

3.1. Socio Political Background

Apartheid in South Africa

When the National Party (NP) came to power in 1948, the government of South Africa introduced apartheid⁴⁴ through laws and executive actions. Four strategies particularly characterized their ideology, enforcing the system of apartheid: ⁴⁵ 1. The population of South Africa was divided in four “racial groups”; White, Coloured, Indian, and Africans, each with its own culture. 2. The whites, defined as the civilized race, were to have absolute control over the state. 3. White interests should prevail over black interests, and the state was not obliged to provide equal facilities for the subordinate races. 4. The white racial group formed a single nation with Afrikaans – and English – speaking people, while Africans belonged to several distinct nations or potential nations. The implementation of the policy, which was later referred to as “separate development”, was made possible by The Population Registration Act of 1950, which put all South Africans into the racial categories mentioned above. The African racial group was also referred to as the Bantu group.⁴⁶ The Population Registration Act lead to

⁴⁴ Apartheid means; ”social and political policy of racial segregation and discrimination enforced by white minority governments in South Africa from 1948 to 1994. Africana, <http://www.africanaencyclopedia.com/apartheid/apartheid.html> Accessed 19.02.09.

⁴⁵ Thompson, A History of South Africa 1990:190.

⁴⁶ Africana, <http://www.africanaencyclopedia.com/apartheid/apartheid.html> (Accessed 19.02.09).

the breaking up of homes, which became even more efficient with the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949, and the Immorality Act of 1950. By making marriage and sexual relations illegal across colour lines, these acts created legal boundaries between the races. Hence, the Parliament passed the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act to legalize inequality of public facilities through segregation.⁴⁷ This was all made possible because the NP used its majority in Parliament to eliminate the voting rights of Coloured and African people. During the 1950s the NP was still short of two-thirds in Parliament, but through a blend of legalism and cunning tactics the government managed to remove coloured voters from the common roll. This enabled the NP to practically apply any law and any acts in favour of the white population, with legal support.⁴⁸

Homelands

The Bantu Homelands Citizenship Act of 1970 grouped the black South Africans into different territories, which became a “homeland” for a potential African nation and was administered under white tutelage. Each of these African “homelands” were then free to be “developed along its own lines” with all their rights denied in the rest of the country.⁴⁹ By becoming independent territories, these “homelands” deprived their citizens of their South African citizenships and excluded them from politics. KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) was somehow an exception. Here Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi created a powerful political organization, the Inkatha, which refused to accept “independence” on these terms. Inkatha is still a powerful and influential political party in this province today. I will treat this conflict in KZN in further depth below as it also inspired the creation of Ujamaa and its vision.⁵⁰ During the Apartheid about 80% of the South African population consisted of blacks, and blacks were either eliminated or suppressed under a white minority rule.⁵¹ The NP was in favour of the white Afrikaaner, so even the English speaking whites could suffer under their domination. The Educational system, the media, the churches and land areas were all administered so as to favour the white Afrikaaners.⁵²

⁴⁷ Thompson 1990:190.

⁴⁸ Thompson 1990:191.

⁴⁹ Ibid.; 191, Africana, <http://www.africanaencyclopedia.com/apartheid/apartheid.html> (Accessed 19.02.09).

⁵⁰ Due to the obvious limitations of my thesis I cannot go any further into the apartheid politic and how it was applied. But what can be summed up about the politic is that it basically established White control over all Black South Africans and deprived them of their homelands, rights and citizenships. For more comprehensive account of SA politic, see: Thompson South African politics since 1948, 2008.

⁵¹ SoutAfrica.info, <http://www.southafrica.info/about/people/population.htm> (Accessed 19.02.09).

⁵² Thompson 1990:187-200.

The Apartheid Society

Due to the limitations of this thesis I shall refrain from going more deeply into the apartheid politics, but I find it relevant here to describe some of the implications it had on the people.⁵³

The Apartheid society represented something unique that was distinctive from other countries. South Africa was partly industrialized but with deep divisions based on legal and biologically criteria. Racial categories defined the primary social differences. White South Africans were as prosperous as the middle and upper classes in Europe and North America. They owned cars and lived in houses in segregated areas where the state provided them with all public services needed. The whites had excellent schools, hospitals, parks and playing fields, buses and trains, roads, water, electricity, telephones, drainage and sewerage systems. Media and the controlled press sheltered them at all times from knowing the lives and conditions of the blacks. Few whites ever saw an African, a Coloured, or an Asian at home, and even fewer spoke an African language. Whenever whites encountered blacks, the white was boss and superior and the black servant and inferior. Whites were to regard apartheid society as normal, and its critics as communists. In contrast to the conditions of the whites, the public services for blacks were characteristically inadequate or nonexistent, though this would also differ with areas. The blacks would create their own worlds, socially and economically, parallel and in contrast to the “world of the whites”.

Resistance

During the apartheid era many people also resisted the government;

They focused on the gulf between the theory of apartheid [separate freedoms] and its practice [discrimination and inequality] and on the brutality of the apartheid state – the laws, forced removals, house arrests, and detentions without trial.”⁵⁴

This resistance could also be found in the churches. Soon after the election in 1948, leaders of all the white South African churches, except the Dutch Reformed churches issued statements criticizing apartheid. Over the years many of the church leaders came into conflict with the government. In 1968 the South African Council of Churches (SACC) labelled apartheid a pseudo-gospel in conflict with Christian principles, while initially nearly all the Afrikaaner clergy were united in support of apartheid.⁵⁵ “The Kairos document” gives a theological criticism of the apartheid state and its theology, a document clearly expressing some of the resistance among SA theologians and churches. The document was a significant contribution

⁵³ Thompson 1990:200-204.

⁵⁴Ibid.; 204.

⁵⁵Ibid.

to the struggle against the apartheid system and served to unite and bring hope to black Christians living in oppression in the townships of SA.⁵⁶ It was not only the churches that started resisting, but also educational institutions, authors and women's organizations founded during these years. An example of this is the women's organization "the Black Sash", which used skilful methods to embarrass Nationalist politicians and attract media attention;

Wearing white dresses with black sashes, they stood silently with heads bowed in places where politicians were due to pass, such as the entrance to Parliament buildings. The government banned such demonstrations in 1976, but the Black Sash remained in existence, running offices that gave legal advice to Africans who fell foul of the apartheid laws.⁵⁷

The African National Congress (ANC) obviously fought against the government in different ways under the courageous leadership like Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Oliver Tambo etc. I will not go into detail about the ANC, its politics and struggle against apartheid, but its crucial role in the process of fighting and finally putting an end to apartheid in 1994 must be pointed out. This year was the year when Nelson Mandela became South Africa's first black president.⁵⁸

The Conflict in KwaZulu-Natal

"Local communities of poor, working-class and marginalised black South Africans were torn apart by state-sponsored violence. In this context of daily death and violence the cry went up, 'How can we hear God speak to us in these times?' "⁵⁹ This conflict was an important motivating factor for the creation of the UC in 1998.

The population of KZN was under double pressure; apartheid and internal ethnic strife. In 1975 Chief Mangosuthu Buthezi, a former member of the ANC Youth, founded the Inkatha National Cultural Liberation Movement (INCLM), which later became the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), in KwaZulu-Natal. Initially he seemed to reach the black nationalists, but it soon became clear that IFP was an ethnic movement. It drew on the Zulu military tradition, derived its main support among rural Zulus, and had a divisive effect on the black resistance to apartheid. In parts of KwaZulu-Natal, Inkatha gangs and supporters of the United Democratic Front (UDF) had violent confrontations.⁶⁰ The UDF became a challenge to the IFP because

⁵⁶ The Kairos Document, A theological comment on the political crisis in South Africa 1986: Cover.

⁵⁷ Thompson 1990:205.

⁵⁸ To read more about the Apartheid struggle and the ANC, see Thompson 1990: 204-242.

⁵⁹ Ujamaa Centre, <http://www.ukzn.ac.za/sorat/ujamaa/history.htm>. (Accessed 10.02.09)

⁶⁰ Thompson 1990:230.

the ANC wielded much more political force through them than through the IFP, though all three parties initially stood together in the apartheid struggle.

Although the IFP leadership favoured non-violence, as opposed to the ANC which had created the Umkhonto we Sizwe⁶¹, there is clear evidence that during the time negotiations were taking place, Inkatha and ANC members were at war with each other where Self-Protection Units (SPUs) and Self-Defence Units (SDUs) were formed, respectively, as their protection forces. This was explained by the IFP leadership as a response to the concerted and very public ANC calls for and acts of violence against IFP members and leadership. Many of the attacks carried out by the Inkatha militants were passively and at times actively supported by the South African police force, probably as a result of a coincidence of interest in ensuring that the ANC did not gain political dominance at the coming liberation.⁶²

This shows that there was war even within the different parties opposing the apartheid government. The black people of KwaZulu-Natal were not only victims to the apartheid politics, they now suffered under the war that took place among their own people, also due to issues of ethnicity. The IFP campaigned for an autonomous and sovereign Zulu king (King Goodwill Zwelethini kaBhekuzulu), as head of state. Hence the IFP opposed parts of the proposed South African constitution regarding the governing politics of the province.⁶³

The Ujamaa Centre in Context

The UC was *one* response to the cry of the people of SA and the people in KZN, in that it aimed towards helping people to understand the voice of God in these violent times. The apartheid state claimed that it was a Christian government. Though there was some prophetic witness from churches against apartheid, most of the churches had adopted a position that did not officially challenge the status quo.⁶⁴ Because of the high status of the Bible in the SA churches the UC (then known as the ISB and House of Studies for Worker Ministry) started a process of Bible reading where people were encouraged to use it as a tool to resist apartheid and master life as Christians in these difficult times. Thus, in addition to their political and ideological struggle against apartheid people were now offered theological resources in their struggle for survival. Though apartheid is nonexistent today, the struggle against racial and economic oppression remains and the work of the UC is therefore still relevant, in that it strives to overcome these problems.

⁶¹ Umkhonto we Sizwe (or MK), translated "Spear of the Nation," was the active military wing of the African National Congress in cooperation with the South African Communist Party in their fight against the South African apartheid government. Wikipedia "Umkhonto we Sizwe", http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Umkhonto_we_Sizwe. (Accessed 12.02.09).

⁶² Inkatha Freedom Party, <http://www.ifp.org.za/History/history.htm>. (Accessed 12.02.09)

⁶³ To read more about the conflict in KZN and about Inkatha: <http://www.ifp.org.za/History/history.htm> (Accessed 12.02.09).

⁶⁴ Ujamaa Centre, <http://www.ukzn.ac.za/sorat/ujamaa/history.htm> (Accessed 10.02.09).

So the cry of the vast majority of black South Africans, most of whom are Christian, was how to find a new way of reading the bible so that they could hear God speak to them. The “gospel” proclaimed by the apartheid state and by many of the churches was not “good news” for the poor!⁶⁵

To read the Bible in this context became particularly challenging for the people of South Africa who had been oppressed under the apartheid state, and also for those who experienced the violence in KZN.

The conflict in KwaZulu-Natal in the late 1980’s brought socially engaged biblical scholars, organic intellectuals, and displaced communities into daily contact. We began to read the Bible together, taking seriously the contributions of each other. What emerged is what we now call “Contextual Bible Study”⁶⁶

3.2. Theological Background

Liberation theology

Liberation theology was one of the new theologies born during the 1960’s, which is also described as a “turbulent and radical era”.⁶⁷ Some of these theologies came about as reactions to the former theologies, which had focused on the intellectual challenge of atheism. Contrary to this, the new theological developments were concerned with the challenge of social and economic oppression in the present;

The time had come for theology to join forces with the oppressed and down-trodden in society and engage in a struggle with them and on their behalf. Only in this way could theologians discover the reality of God. [...] If God is real, then this God must be involved in the struggles of the present to bring about liberation from oppression. And if Christianity is true, then its message must be one of liberation. Because of this common theme of liberation from oppression, the various strands of the new radicalism are generally united under what has come to be known by the broader category of 'liberation theology'.⁶⁸

The new theological developments represented a critique of the former theologies, which had merely dealt with the intellectual challenge of atheism without paying attention to the social issues with which the majority of the population was concerned, namely poverty and oppression, injustice and political manipulations. This new theology branched out into several strands of liberation theology; Black theology, Latin American liberation theology, and feminist theology.

⁶⁵ Ujamaa Centre, <http://www.ukzn.ac.za/sorat/ujamaa/history.htm> (Accessed 10.02.09).

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Grenz&Olson, *20th Century theology : God & the world in a transitional age* 1992:200.

⁶⁸ Ibid.;201.

The South African Black theology rose in the middle of the 1970s in response to Apartheid and in dialog with the Latin American theologies of Liberation. Black theology, also called Contextual theology, is a theology of struggle and of liberation from oppression.⁶⁹

In this thesis I will focus on the theologies of importance to the UC. The *Latin American Theology of liberation* is believed to be the starting point of liberation theology.⁷⁰ Some of the fundamental themes in liberation theology from the Latin American context can also be applied to the SA context. I will focus on the significance of context, how this theology deals with the theme of poverty, and also how it is in favour of the poor. This can easily be linked to the reality of Blacks in SA. I will also deal with *Contextual theology*, including the concept of *black theology*, which is understood as a type of contextual theology in SA. In fact both Latin American Theology of liberation and SA contextual theology are aimed at liberation, and are of nature consciously contextual⁷¹. When I refer to “contextual theology” I take it to mean a consciously developed contextual theology. All theologies are contextually conditioned but not all are consciously developed as contextual theologies.

Latin American Theology of Liberation

Latin American theology stands in contrast to Western theology as instead of being conditioned by the nonbeliever’s questions, it is concerned with the questions of the “nonperson”: “The human being who is not considered human by the present social order – the exploited classes, marginalized ethnic groups and despised cultures”.⁷² The theological movement in Latin America has many dimensions, but I will focus on themes from the Roman Catholic theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez who is often considered the “father of Liberation theology.”⁷³ According to him, “our question is how to tell the nonperson, the nonhuman, that God is love, and that this love makes us all brothers and sisters”.⁷⁴ There are four characteristics of liberation theology which are particularly relevant to the UC/CBS and therefore to the scope of my thesis. These I will treat below, namely, 1) Liberation theology

⁶⁹ African Christianity, <http://www.bethel.edu/~letnie/AfricanChristianity/SAContextual.html> (Accessed 12.02.09).

⁷⁰ Grenz&Olson 1992:210-211.

⁷¹ In this connection I want to bring in Bevans’ understanding of all theology being contextual theology, that be “feminist theology, black theology, liberation theology, Filipino theologoy, Asian-American theology, African theology, and so forth. (...) contextualization is a new way of doing theology, at least on the conscious, reflexive level.” (Bevans 2005: 3,16) I will say that this refers to the Black South African theology; the blacks are taking their context seriously into account when doing theology, based on their past and opposed to the Apartheid theology, which also was contextual, but with oppressive and damaging effects. Now, the blacks are focusing on the liberating aspects of theology by taking their own context seriously. They are doing contextual theology on a conscious and reflexive level, or at least aiming for this. (My interpretation).

⁷² Grenz&Olson 1992:215.

⁷³ Ibid.; 213.

⁷⁴ Ibid.;215.

must be contextual, 2) Liberation theology relates to the Latin American context, which is dominated by poverty, 3) Liberation theology and mission arise out of the preferential option for the poor, and 4) Liberation theology is methodological.⁷⁵

Liberation theology is contextual

According to liberation theologians, theology must always be linked to a specific social and cultural situation. Those in power are generally those who define the ruling or what is to be considered acceptable knowledge in this specific context. “Knowledge is so conditioned by social, political and economic realities that it is impossible to rise above them.”⁷⁶ In contrast to this sociology of knowledge, there is another sociological orientation, which is closely related with twentieth-century Marxist thought, which the liberation theologians embrace:

In order to rise above the self-enclosed 'knowledge' of class and race interest, people can and must exercise 'critical consciousness' or 'dialectical thinking'. This means that each person must gain awareness of one's own vested interests and subject them to scrutiny and criticism. By becoming suspicious and critical [dialectical] in relation to the dominant thought-forms of one's own culture, a person's knowledge can rise above this social-environmental conditioning.⁷⁷

The liberation theologians in Latin America seek a truly indigenous theology arising from involvement in its unique socio-cultural and political reality. They seek as their allies those who are victims of the dominant culture within that specific context; those who are “not considered human by the present social order – the exploited classes, marginalized ethnic groups and despised cultures.”⁷⁸ Together with these people, and with reference to these, liberation theologians engage in theological reflection. According to the Latin American liberation theologians, the theologies of Europe and North America are unsuitable for the social situation of Latin America. Therefore, they regard theology always to be contextual, never universal. Thus in their theological reflection they pay specific attention to the people and the socio-cultural context in which they live.

The Latin American context

Poverty is a significant feature of the Latin American context. It is described as being “endemic, pervasive and imposed”, and as “the result of sinful structures of society that work to maintain the extreme wealth and power of the few at the expense of the very humanity of

⁷⁵ Grentz&Olson 1992:214-220.

⁷⁶ Ibid.; 214.

⁷⁷ Ibid.;214-215.

⁷⁸ Ibid.;215.

the majority.”⁷⁹ According to Gutiérrez this majority are the “nonpersons” who suffer under poverty. He calls their condition “institutionalized violence” caused by international capitalism. Conditions can only be changed through a radical break with the status quo:

'A broad and deep aspiration for liberation inflames the history of humankind in our day, liberation from all that limits or keeps human beings from self-fulfilment, liberation from all impediments to the exercise of freedom.' The question, therefore, is not whether the church should 'get involved in politics' or 'take sides'. The question, according to the theologians of liberation, is whose side will it take in the present revolutionary situation.⁸⁰

In this context the liberation theologians wish to take the side of the majority – those who suffer and are oppressed.

The preferential option for the poor

Gutiérrez describes the present revolutionary situation as one that can be characterized by class struggle and conflict. It is a struggle of the rich with the poor. According to Latin American liberation theologians God himself is on the side of the poor:

The poor deserve preference not because they are morally or religiously better than others, but because God is God, in whose eyes “the last are first”. This statement clashes with our narrow understanding of justice; this very preference reminds us, therefore, that God’s ways are not ours.⁸¹

The “preferential option for the poor” does not mean that poor persons automatically stand in a right relationship with God and will go to heaven simply because of their disadvantaged economic situation. Preference for the poor means that,

even though God loves all people, he identifies with the poor, reveals himself to the poor and sides with the poor in a special way. Above all, it means that in the class struggle God sides with the poor against every oppressor who would exploit or dehumanize them.⁸²

Therefore the church must also work side by side with the poor and take their reality seriously. According to liberation theologians, siding with the poor is not the only option for the Christian and the church. They *must* commit to the poor in the attempt to build a more just society through action. This is what they call a “liberating praxis”, the starting point for all genuine theology. It is an involvement “to the degree that the cries of the poor are heard, and

⁷⁹ Grentz&Olson 1992:216.

⁸⁰ Ibid.; 218.

⁸¹ Ibid.;218.

⁸² Ibid.

are given priority over the complaints of the rich.”⁸³ Only then can there be movement toward a more just society.

Critical reflection on praxis

Liberation theology is methodological in the sense that; “theology is a critical reflection on Christian praxis in light of the word of God”.⁸⁴ For liberation theologians theoretical reflection is always a “second act”, following the first and most significant one, namely that of “praxis”. According to Gutiérrez, “praxis” means the commitment to the liberation of the poor, which is an act of theology; “Theological reflection, in turn, is the bringing of the word of God to bear on such Christian involvement for the poor, in order to purify and support it.”⁸⁵ In this way their theology is an “epistemological break” with tradition;

Theology, as here conceived, is not an effort to give a correct understanding of God’s attributes or actions but an effort to articulate the action of faith, the shape of praxis conceived and realized in obedience. As philosophy in Marx’s famous *dictum*, theology has to stop explaining the world and to start transforming it. *Orthopraxis*, rather than orthodoxy, become the criterion for theology.⁸⁶

Hence, liberation theologians believe that knowledge of God comes through obedient commitment to God’s own project for the poor: “to know God is to work for justice. There is no other path to reach God”.⁸⁷ From this we can see that liberation theology moves between two poles, praxis and theory, with its primary focus is on praxis.

3.3. Contextual Theology in South Africa

Bearing in mind the discussion of Latin American Liberation, I will go on to describe Contextual Theology in South Africa. Here liberation theology, as understood by the UC, appears as *South African black theology*. The UC claims to be a product of this black theology, which differs from the black liberation theology that developed among black Africans in America. To clarify this, I will bring in some perspectives from the Black Theology in America, since I find that they have things in common and are in some ways related.

Black Theology

The Black Africans in America were born out of the era of slavery and the social and economic oppression that followed it. They carried a rich religious heritage.

⁸³ Grentz&Olson 1992:218.

⁸⁴ Ibid.;219.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

The traditional Black religious outlook included several abiding themes: the equality of all persons [or the impartiality of God], the justice of and therefore the ultimate triumph of the cause of the Black community and the present experience of frustration.⁸⁸

The civil rights movement of the 1960's gave rise to a new self-consciousness among the blacks, namely that of Black identity. This prompted them to view the gospel as being in harmony with this identity, and having specific relevance for their particular situation. "The response of Black theologians to this need came in the form of "Black theology".⁸⁹ Its concern was with the realities of the experience of blacks in America.

In South Africa the black communities became radicalized in 1977, when Steven Biko founded the Black Consciousness movement. Although not specifically Christian, the Black Consciousness Movement tried to unite the African, Coloured and Indian communities against apartheid. At this point theologians from a number of different South African religious communities began to develop theologies of justice and liberation.⁹⁰

South African Black Theology

Like black theology in America, South African black theology was concerned with the experience of being black, but in the context of South Africa and its different areas. It united its theologians in the conviction that Christianity and the Gospel message had an edge of justice, liberation, and a preferential option for the poor. As described above their common experience was oppression under apartheid and the resistance to the government's politics. Obviously, black theology would have different effects on people according to their various experiences, and according to their different contexts. However, the common theme for black theology, which also applies for South Africa, was always to combine the struggle for liberation together with a theological reflection;

[...] black thinkers struggled with the relevance of the Christian conception of God for a people who were oppressed, often by persons who claimed to be Christian. For this reason, Black theology is generally classified among the theologies of liberation.⁹¹Contextualization

Black theology, involving the process of contextualization being characteristic for all liberation theologies, is also described in this way;

⁸⁸ Grenz&Olson 1992:201.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Prominent among these theologians were the Zulu Lutheran bishop Manas Buthelezi, the Xhosa Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the Cape Coloured Reformed theologian Alan Boesak who mobilized the worldwide Reformed community against Apartheid, the Rev. Frank Chikane - an ordained pastor in the (Pentacostal) Apostolic Faith Mission, and the white South African Dominican Roman Catholic Albert Nolan. African Christianity, <http://www.bethel.edu/~letnie/AfricanChristianity/SAContextual.html> (Accessed 12.02.09).

⁹¹ Grenz&Olson 1992:202.

Black Theology is a theology of black liberation. It seeks to plumb the black condition in the light of God's revelation in Jesus Christ, so that the black community can see that the gospel is commensurate with the achievement of black humanity. Black Theology is a theology of "blackness". It is the affirmation of black humanity that emancipates black people from white racism, thus providing authentic freedom for both white and black people. It affirms the humanity of white people in that it says No to the encroachment of white oppression.⁹²

In South Africa, the oppressors were understood to include the government as well as the many churches that supported the politics of segregation. Many South African theologians opposing apartheid operated in a global theological context that included the Latin American theologies of liberation, and all of them were firmly convinced that the Gospel is political. I have already mentioned the Kairos Document from 1985; this is a theological comment on the political crisis in South Africa.⁹³ It was written by a number of pastors, teachers and theologians in the Ecumenical Institute for Contextual Theology in South Africa;

It criticized both the 'state theology' of the Afrikaners who were defending apartheid on biblical grounds and the 'church theology' of the English-speaking community which appealed to the ideals of reconciliation, justice and non-violence, without understanding that reconciliation requires repentance, that the justice of reform is insufficient in South Africa and that state violence makes individual non-violence impossible in South Africa. They proposed in its place a 'prophetic theology' which fought for justice against tyranny and appealed to those who were oppressed with a theology of hope, rather than appealing to the powerful to reform a radically unjust system.⁹⁴

We can clearly see how the context defines the development of South African Black theology. These theologians are also well known for their voice through the South African Council of Churches.⁹⁵ The greatest work of the Contextualizing theologians is probably their guidance of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission under the leadership of Desmond Tutu. This commission started their meetings in February 1996 and turned in its "final" report in October 1998.⁹⁶

In summing up this chapter I have given a presentation of the relevant socio-political and theological background of UC, and shown that both condition the Centre. The theological background I have presented also serves as a theoretical framework in my thesis.

⁹² Grenz&Olson 1992:202.

⁹³ The Kairos Document 1986.

⁹⁴ African Christianity, <http://www.bethel.edu/~letnie/AfricanChristianity/SAContextual.html> (Accessed 12.02.09).

⁹⁵ To read more about the South African Council of Churches: <http://www.sacc.org.za/> (Accessed 19.02.09).

⁹⁶ To read more about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission: <http://www.bethel.edu/~letnie/AfricanChristianity/SAContextual.html> (Accessed 12.02.09), and http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/trc_frameset.htm (Accessed 19.02.09).

PART 1

4. The Ujamaa Centre's Methods with Focus on Contextual Bible Study

So far I have placed the work of the UC into the context of SA, some of its political history and theology. I have given a presentation of its work and some of the programs at Ujamaa, which are relevant to my study. This chapter will deal with the approaches and methods used by UC, with a particular focus on Contextual Bible Study (CBS). Below I will describe the method by going through the four commitments that people who are engaged in the method commit themselves to. The nature of CBS method will then be connected to ways of seeing transformation and the potential for transformation that the method opens up for

4.1. Prophetic theology

In chapter three I described how Latin American liberation theologians understand theology as a praxis-reflection; it aims at changing the world, not at reflecting on the nature of reality. Thus it has a focus on action rather than on contemplation. This is also true for the work of Ujamaa:

At the heart of the Ujamaa Centre is the concept and practice of praxis. Praxis involves an ongoing commitment to the cycle-spiral of action-and-reflection. This is central to our work. It is praxis that has enabled the Ujamaa Centre to respond to the ongoing and changing realities of South African and Southern African context. We try to respond faithfully to our context, using biblical and theological resources, and then we carefully [and formally] reflect on what we have done and how we have done it. It is praxis that keep us connected both to the community and the academy.⁹⁷

This praxis is seen in the different activities of the UC, CBS being one of these. It also reflects a "Prophetic theology" in contrast to "State theology" and "Church theology" in SA. These concepts were conceived when theologians resisted apartheid and the existing theologies during that time.⁹⁸ Prophetic Theology was then proposed in opposition to State Theology and Church Theology;

Prophetic theology differs from academic theology because, whereas academic theology deals with all biblical themes in a systematic manner and formulates general Christian principles and doctrines, prophetic theology concentrates on those aspect of the Word of God that have an immediate bearing upon the critical situation in which we find ourselves. The theology of the prophets does not pretend

⁹⁷ Ujamaa Centre, <http://www.ukzn.ac.za/sorat/ujamaa/theology.htm> (Accessed 09.02.09)

⁹⁸ The Kairos Document 1986: State theology refers to the theology of the state of SA. "State theology is simply the theological justification of the status quo with its racism, capitalism and totalitarianism. It blesses injustice, canonises the will of the powerful and reduces the poor to passivity, obedience and apathy" (The Kairos Document:1986:3). Church theology refers to the theology of the so-called "English-speaking" Churches in SA: "What we found running through all these pronouncements is a series of inter-related theological assumptions. These we have chosen to call "Church Theology" (The Kairos Document 1986:9)

to be comprehensive and complete, it speaks to the particular circumstances of a particular time and place – the KAIROS.⁹⁹

The UC claims to work prophetically with the Bible, and therefore exercises prophetic theology;

Given the deeply religious nature of our context and the importance of biblical and theological among our peoples, the Ujamaa Centre works prophetically with the Bible and theological resources to bring about liberation and abundant life for all [John 10:10]. We believe, as Jesus taught his disciples, that the kingdom of God must come on earth, as it is in heaven [Matthew 6:9-13]. We recognize that the Bible has an ambiguous presence in South Africa [and the African continent as a whole] and so we are committed to working with it from the perspective of the poor, the working-class, and the marginalized.¹⁰⁰

The Contextual Bible Reading is one of the tools used to work prophetically with the Bible. Before I go on to study the CBS method, I shall briefly describe how the Centre approaches the reality of the people it works with. I see the success of this approach as fundamental to the Centre's work.

4.2. Approaches

Analysis “From Below”

The UC uses what it calls a social analysis “from below” as a fundamental starting point in their work.¹⁰¹ This means that the UC begins with understanding the reality from the perspective of those who are poor, belong to the working class, are HIV-positive, unemployed, abused or otherwise oppressed and marginalized. The UC recognizes that oppressive systems and the power relations that sustain them influence this reality. These different systems are complex, but they are all looked upon as “sinful structures which trap and keep people oppressed and marginalized.”¹⁰² These are some of the systems mentioned by UC:

economic systems which maintain a rich elite and leave the masses in poverty; patriarchal systems which sustain male privilege and power and keep women subservient and subject to various forms of gendered abuse; residual racial systems which maintain white privilege, particularly in the private sector; hierarchical systems which enable a few to exercise control over the many, especially in the churches; cultural systems which stigmatise and discriminate against those who are HIV-positive and those who are striving to live positively with HIV and AIDS; governmental systems that fail to deliver the rich resources of our country to those in need; and ecclesial systems that fail to engage prophetically with the systems mentioned above.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ The Kairos Document 1986:17.

¹⁰⁰ Ujamaa Centre, <http://www.ukzn.ac.za/sorat/ujamaa/context.htm> (Accessed 09.02.09)

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

In Chapter six I will highlight the patriarchal system in particular mentioned here, and how it contributes to women's oppression and marginalization. The "social analysis from below" demands that the Centre works collaboratively with local communities and churches. It gives priority to organized groups within local communities and churches because these have the capacity of "owning" the project. "However, if there are no organized groups, we will offer our support in order to assist local communities in setting up organized structures."¹⁰⁴ The Siyaphila Support group consisting of people living with HIV and AIDS, which I mentioned in Chapter one, is one example of these organized groups.

See-Judge-Act

The See-Judge-Act method is another way that the centre works prophetically, and which is committed to the ongoing cycle of action and reflection known as praxis.¹⁰⁵ It is an inductive method used by Young Christian Worker Ministries, known also as the "Doing theology Spiral" method:

It is a useful way of working to ensure a balance between reflection and action. It is a way of working that is also a process, and important for the results it produces. It is a way of engaging ourselves in a programme of commitment, action and transformation as followers of Christ in the world. It is a way of helping us to link faith, action and politics within our daily lives. The process helps people to develop critical judgement about situations, events and structures. Often the stages [below] overlap intermingle[s].¹⁰⁶

The method is described as "a disciplined method for Christians to engage in social transformation"¹⁰⁷ which was also used by Christians in Latin America in their struggle for freedom and democracy. The method consists of different phases, which each has a different focus. Phase one is SEE, which means to *see* the world in a deeper way opposed to a surface view, phase two is JUDGE, which means to judge what is seen in the light of the Bible and reflect biblically, and finally phase three is ACT, which means to act in the world in light of what the Bible says.¹⁰⁸ The method provides three useful steps making up to what the UC calls an Action Plan:

together with particular local communities and churches various forms of action are planned. Every Ujamaa Centre workshop ends with an Action Plan. The Action Plan is always the product of the particular community with which we work, and must be owned by them. However, we support them

¹⁰⁴ Ujamaa Centre, <http://www.ukzn.ac.za/sorat/ujamaa/context.htm> (Accessed 09.02.09)

¹⁰⁵ The method is derived from the worker-priest movement in Belgium and the pedagogical work of Paulo Freire. Ujamaa Centre, <http://www.ukzn.ac.za/sorat/ujamaa/context.htm> (Accessed 09.02.09).

¹⁰⁶ The Pastoral Cycle, http://www.southwarkjandp.co.uk/resources_files/The%20Pastoral%20Cycle.pdf (Accessed 10.02.09).

¹⁰⁷ de Gruchy, See-Judge-Act: Putting Faith into Action 2005:3.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.; 4-5.

and work with them in a whole range of strategic activities, including advocacy and lobbying, organizational and/or structural change, capacity building, etc.¹⁰⁹

The three different stages of this method are reflected in the diversity of the work of Ujamaa, and are described together with CBS as “a basic resource to enable the voice of the group we are working with to be heard.”¹¹⁰

4.3. Contextual Bible Study

CBS consists of four commitments aiming towards enabling the voices of the marginalized. CBS was started when socially engaged biblical scholars, organic intellectuals and displaced communities came together to read the Bible in the difficult times in SA during apartheid.¹¹¹ “The cry of many Christians is that the crisis in South Africa 'impels us to return to the Bible and to search the Word of God for a message that is relevant to what we are experiencing in South Africa today' ”.¹¹² Experience had taught them that this new message from the Bible could only be seen through finding a new way of *doing or conducting Bible study*. Biblical scholars, “trained” readers, and “ordinary” readers came together acknowledging each other, something that resulted in the CBS.¹¹³ To understand this method of contextual Bible reading, it is helpful to look at the four commitments of those who are engaged in the CBS process.

1. A commitment to read the Bible from the perspective of the South African context, particularly from the perspective of the poor and oppressed

Bible reading, according to this method, begins with the lived reality of the poor, the working class and marginalised communities. This first commitment is founded on the incarnation and life of Jesus; “The incarnation and life of Jesus give clear testimony to God’s preferential option for the poor and marginalized”.¹¹⁴ The poor people’s lives, their daily struggles for survival, liberation and life represent the starting point for their biblical reflection, as everyone who reads the Bible brings his or her context, into the reading. Hence “a commitment of contextual Bible study is that we acknowledge and recognize the environmental factors that have formed us.”¹¹⁵ “When we choose to read the Bible from the perspective of the poor and oppressed in South African context we choose to hear the concerns of the vulnerable and

¹⁰⁹ de Gruchy, 2005:4-5.

¹¹⁰ Ujamaa Centre, <http://www.ukzn.ac.za/sorat/ujamaa/context.htm> (Accessed 09.02.09)

¹¹¹ See chapter one.

¹¹² West 1993:7.

¹¹³ See definitions of trained and ordinary reader in Introduction.

¹¹⁴ Ujamaa Centre, <http://www.ukzn.ac.za/sorat/ujamaa/history.htm> (Accessed 09.02.09)

¹¹⁵ West 1993:12.

marginalized and God's concern for them."¹¹⁶ According to the UC, ordinary people are empowered when they discover that it is legitimate to bring their experience to their reading of the Bible. Therefore it is important to be committed to working from the ordinary people's perspectives, taking their experiences and realities seriously.

2. A commitment to read the Bible in community with others, particularly with those from contexts different from our own

CBS is a communal process in which people come together and read, and Bible reading takes place in the community, underlining the importance of learning from one another through listening and sharing. "We cannot just make the Bible say what we want it to say, and by reading the Bible with others we allow the views and experiences of others to shape us and our readings."¹¹⁷ This commitment can be a challenging task for the trained reader who is often trained within a context where the individual stands in focus. Those who are theologically and biblically trained often find it hard to genuinely listen and learn from ordinary readers of the Bible. It is therefore easy to lose the sense of community consciousness, so awareness about one's own situation and background is important. "So for us reading the Bible with ordinary readers requires something of a conversion experience; we need to be converted to a sense of community consciousness."¹¹⁸ The concept of reading *with* is important here. When the Bible is read *with* ordinary people, the trained reader will not be tempted to interpret *for* them. On the other hand, there is the challenge that any interpretations from ordinary readers are accepted uncritically and without further reflection, with the danger that the contributions of the ordinary readers may become idealised and romanticised. The point here is that contributions from both parties are to be considered valuable and given due reflection. "The contextual Bible study process, however, attempts to avoid these two dangers by reading the Bible *with* ordinary readers."¹¹⁹ The purpose of this is to create a "transforming discourse", where unequal power relations are recognized and where the "culture of silence" is broken;

Readers of the Bible from these communities [the poor and oppressed] have usually had their interpretations silenced and suppressed by the dominant interpretations. Some readers from these communities have even come to accept the dominant interpretations as their own. So if we are really going to read the Bible with ordinary readers we must work together to break the 'culture of silence' and to recover the identity and experiences of the poor and oppressed. The poor and

¹¹⁶ West 1993:13.

¹¹⁷ Ujamaa Centre, <http://www.ukzn.ac.za/sorat/ujamaa/history.htm> (Accessed 09.02.09)

¹¹⁸ West 1993:14.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*;15.

oppressed are not really silent, but they are often not heard and what they say is often the product of centuries of colonization.¹²⁰

It is only when both ordinary and trained readers come together and read the Bible together as active subjects, and being aware of who they are, that there is really a process of reading *with* and a true communal reading of the Bible. The different perspectives are brought into the reading process and may thus contribute to opening up for new ways of understanding and interpreting the text.

3. A commitment to read the Bible critically

The Bible must be read critically. This means asking structured and systematic questions about the Bible, a process where often the biblical scholars have a particular contribution. Ordinary people may not have access to the resources needed to learn how to ask such questions.

According to UC these resources are “deeply valued because they open up the Bible in ways ordinary people do not usually experience”.¹²¹ This is due to the socio-historical, literary, and theological-thematic questions that biblical scholars often pose, and which create a critical consciousness;

A 'critical consciousness' includes asking questions, especially the question 'Why?'. It also includes probing beneath the surface, being suspicious of the status quo. And it also includes systematic and structured analysis.¹²²

Many poor and oppressed people in SA do have a critical consciousness towards their socio-political situation, but somehow this seems to be untrue when it comes to their faith and their reading of the Bible.¹²³ In fact, according to West, few of the Christians probe beneath the surface or are suspicious of the status quo Christianity. They do not usually systematically analyze the Christian tradition and its effects on their context, even though the Christian faith has had both a profound oppressive and a liberatory effect on their context. This commitment in the CBS process is about facilitating the development of critical consciousness in the area of faith, beginning with critical Bible reading. Achieving such awareness is something that everybody can learn when the needed recourses are available.

¹²⁰ West 1993:15.

¹²¹ Ujamaa Centre, <http://www.ukzn.ac.za/sorat/ujamaa/history.htm> (Accessed 09.02.09).

¹²² West 1993:17.

¹²³ *Ibid.*;17-18.

This commitment also includes equipping people with knowledge of three different ways/modes of reading the Bible, although I shall not further elaborate on these here.¹²⁴ Suffice to say that critical consciousness is important for transformation and liberation to take place, which leads us to the last commitment in the CBS process.

4. A commitment to personal and social transformation through contextual Bible study

CBS should lead to both personal and social transformation. The method is not focusing on gaining knowledge about the Bible as such, but on being changed by reading the Bible. “South African society has been shaped by biblical interpretation, often in damaging ways. The challenge that lies before us is to allow the Bible to transform our society for the better.”¹²⁵ The Bible is already a source of transformation for many readers. The challenge is that it is used for the benefits of the poor and oppressed, and not in the way that the apartheid theology was applied, namely to oppress or uphold the status quo of discrimination;

In South Africa, and elsewhere, the Bible tends to be appropriated and applied uncritically, and this can be dishonest and dangerous. [...] It is dangerous because it has led to oppression and death, and it is dishonest because it uses the Bible selectively for narrow interests.¹²⁶

When the CBS process focuses on both individual and social transformation, it includes the “existential, the political, the economical, the cultural, and the religious spheres of life.”¹²⁷ Basically all aspects of an individual’s social reality are of concern. The way transformation is understood in this commitment requires some elaboration and will be dealt with in the following.

Individual and Social Transformation

In the CBS process this last commitment is dependent on the other three commitments. Therefore, one can see the potential for transformation also throughout the CBS process. I wish to point out four perspectives that represent potential transformational power, all taken from different stages in the CBS method. Each of them has a different focus that is unique in the CBS process, equally valuable but emphasizing and challenging different elements. As perspectives they speak from different angles of the CBS process, but all carry transformational power. The first two perspectives in particular have significance directly for

¹²⁴ See West 1993:23-43 for the three different modes of reading the Bible; reading behind the text, reading the text itself, and reading in front of the text.

¹²⁵ Ujamaa Centre, <http://www.ukzn.ac.za/sorat/ujamaa/history.htm> (Accessed 09.02.09).

¹²⁶ West 1993:21.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

the poor and oppressed, while the other two are of a more indirect nature. I will present these four perspectives, which are highlighted in the CBS process as representing potential transformational elements¹²⁸:

1. A new way of seeing reality from the perspective of God's project of liberation

According to the UC, ordinary people are empowered when they discover that it is legitimate to bring along their experiences when reading the Bible. Therefore, the CBS finds it important to commit itself to working from their perspectives, taking their experiences and realities seriously. In discovering this, dignity is affirmed and the people involved can start seeing themselves as active subjects and co-workers in God's project of liberation rather than as passive objects of fate.¹²⁹ This includes rediscovering one's identity and vocation, and a feeling of ownership is gained. This again empowers the individuals' potential for change within their own community. "Bible study plays an important role in breaking the 'culture of silence' of the poor and oppressed".¹³⁰ This means that things that have been kept in secret finally can be spoken of in the public, and only then changes can take place. We will in the next chapter see an example of this through looking at the Tamar Campaign as a practical example of CBS.

2. Providing resources to increase knowledge and a critical consciousness

Many have heard the saying "knowledge is power". I regard this to be true for the CBS as well. Poor and oppressed people are given analytical tools through CBS, which again play a role in developing a critical consciousness. CBS is learning and transferring of critical skills, providing tools and educating the people involved. The knowledge gained is in the hands of the ordinary people and they must apply it on their own and in their own context without being controlled by the trained reader or anyone from outside. This view also reflects the approach of "analysis from below" which the UC works from. It is an attitude of empowering people so that they can own the projects and take responsibility of their own situation.

An important question to be raised here is, whether ordinary people have the resources and facilities to carry out and apply this new knowledge? From what we've seen there is no doubt

¹²⁸ Some of these points are taken from West 1993 in what he writes about the fourth commitment of individual and social transformation, and some are my interpretations inspired by this in addition to own observations and experience of CBS that I participated in during my fieldwork. The presented categories or perspectives here are created by myself based on this.

¹²⁹ West 1993:77

¹³⁰ Ibid.

that they do have the potential for this as the resources are provided through the CBS. But are the right facilities and systems there for them to put it into practice? Very often the communities of the poor lack these facilities, but is this a concern of the UC? Or should it be a concern of theirs? These are matters that will be dealt with in the following two chapters.

3. Challenge all ordinary readers to re-evaluate their Bible reading and apply its message

CBS challenges all ordinary readers of the Bible, including those who do not belong to poor and oppressed communities, to re-evaluate the ways in which they read the Bible and to apply its message. The method itself addresses issues reaching beyond the issues of ordinary people from poor and oppressed communities. It raises an awareness of one's reading of the Bible and how the message can be applied in a fruitful way to issues of unequal power, injustice and oppression. These are issues relevant to all ordinary people regardless of their context and social status, therefore having a wider and more overarching bearing than that of the poor and oppressed alone. This is also because CBS addresses issues of awareness in areas that are normally not spoken of. This category can also affect the prophetic voice of the church. When people are becoming aware of how their bible reading can be connected to relevant issues of society and be applied to address issues of unequal power, injustice and oppression, they have a stronger voice to use against the sinful systems at work.

4. Accountability

CBS empowers ordinary readers, but also develops processes, facilitating the accountability of biblical studies and theological education, for ordinary people.¹³¹ Biblical scholars learn about democracy from below through working *with* ordinary people from poor and oppressed communities. This is important because trained readers are enabled to abandon their tendency to want to be in control so as to learn to take the deeply communal nature of CBS seriously. This awareness or new knowledge can serve to secure the quality and ways of interpreting the Bible, hence avoiding harmful attitudes and practices like the ones emerging from Apartheid theology. This point of accountability also emphasises the theologian as a subject who needs to go through individual transformation to be able to work with ordinary people. This becomes an integral part of the commitment of trained readers who choose to involve themselves in the CBS and work *with* the poor and oppressed.

¹³¹ West 1993:78.

Individual and social transformation is here considered equally important. The individual transformation of the theologian is of importance and must not only be seen as a step towards the social transformation, but as valuable in its own right. The CBS process influences its participants in ways that does not always lead to social transformation, but yet there is a transformation of the individual that must be considered valuable in itself.

In this chapter I have studied the methods and tools used by the UC according to the Centre's objectives of CBS, which aims of contributing towards individual and social transformation and liberation. My focus has been on the four commitments of the CBS method, which people who are engaged with the methods commit themselves to. We have seen that these four commitments carry potential for transformation and liberation for participants of CBS.

5. The Tamar Campaign: A Contextual Bible Study on 2.Sam 13.1-22

In the Introduction chapter I introduced the Tamar Campaign (TC) describing its creation and aims built on theoretical knowledge about the Campaign known from the UC. Here I will describe the actual study process of the text from 2.Sam 13.1-22 (Appendix 2), which is outlined according to empiric material and participatory observation. I will go through the different steps used in the TC as an example of a CBS, and give related comments. This particular Bible Study took place in a Pentecostal church one evening of a week. About twenty people participated including men, women and children.

5.1. The Structure

This CBS is structured in eight questions, which the group works through step by step. The TC often lasts through more than one evening section, but this was not the case for this particular CBS I observed. The coordinator of the WGP told me that it is desirable to have more than one evening to work on the Tamar story. This text touches on many difficult issues that need time to surface. Having enough time to connect with the group is also of importance. It is important that the group feels a sense of security and trust when sensitive topics are brought up;

Tamar Campaign raise secret issues that are not set public, you find that when you do that with married women, issues of marriage will always come out and they will want to discuss that. And they trust me to talk about bedroom issues, issues of kitchen, issues of certain.. [...] with their households and their husbands. [...] Tamar Campaign as a very sensitive issue it touches issues of emotions, of physics that are hidden that people have not talked of. That when we conduct Tamar Campaign you are forced sometimes to be a counsellor. I find myself giving a lot and emotionally drained...¹³²

The congregation that invited the UC organized the event, which took place in their church building. After some time of worship and prayer, the UC and the facilitators were introduced, after which the rest of the evening was spent on the CBS. The one facilitator, supported by two of her colleagues, started off with a brief introduction of the way the UC works and how they apply the CBS method. She emphasized that the CBS is a reading *with*, and not something she would take control of. She invited the participants to actively be involved in the process, and encouraged dialogue; all of them were to interpret and engage in the Bible text together. The facilitator introduced the text that was chosen for the evening, the Tamar story.

¹³² Interview with coordinator of Women and Gender Program at the UC. Conducted 15.10.08.

The congregation had particularly wanted to study this text after it had been introduced to them by one of their own members that had been in touch with the UC before.

The Progress of the Bible Study

The first step in the CBS process was the reading of the text in a plenary session;

1. Read 2 Samuel 13.1-22 in small groups.

The participants started out in one big group, before dividing into small groups later. Two different people read the text out loud in the big group. All the people were English speaking, so the text was read in English. Often when the UC does CBS it is with Zulu speaking members, and then the text is often read out loud both in Zulu and in English. Whether this is done with the whole group or in small groups depends on what is the most convenient for the group and its context. The facilitator normally asks if the text is new to them or if anyone has heard it before. She also asks them what the text is about, as was the case in this event. Here are some of the responses that came out of the first step on the CBS;

- Obsession. Amnon is obsessed with his sister.
- Rape and abuse. In fact it is incest because it happens within the family and Amnon is Tamar's brother. It is rape because Tamar says no to having intercourse with her brother.
- Covering up. Absalon covers up the rape.

The facilitator encouraged the members to speak out and respond freely. She encouraged discussion around the response about covering up. She went on to say that when Absalon covers up the rape he also takes the story away from Tamar and makes his own version of it. This is what often happens in the families when rape takes place as well; "we cover up".

Before the three next questions were given, the facilitator divided women, men and children into separate groups. The children were old enough to read and write. The groups worked through the questions after which they brought their responses back to the plenum. The responses were written down on one large paper, newsprint, and then presented. The next questions were the following;

- 2. Who are the main characters in this story and what do we know about them?*
- 3. What is the role of each of the male characters in the rape of Tamar*

4. *What does Tamar say and do?*

When the responses were given the facilitator made comments to connect their contributions to their own culture. She asked questions like; is it allowed for a girl to go into her brother's room in your Indian culture? Would you in your families and communities cover up a story like this? I noticed that when the children's group was about to give their presentations of the questions, the group encouraged a young girl to speak. Both the young and elder men took part in the encouragement of her speaking public.

After the three groups had given their responses to these questions, the next four questions were given;

5. *Tell the story of women like Tamar in your church and/or community.*

6. *What is the theology of women who have been raped?*

7. *What resources are there in your area for survivors of rape?*

8. *What will you now do in response to this Bible Study?*

There was some confusion around question six; *what is the theology of women who have been raped?* The facilitator explained that this means to think about what happens to the picture a woman has of God when she experiences rape. Does she start to doubt that God exists when he can allow such a terrible thing? Does she lose her faith in God or does she return to God in her pain and with her pain? Will she reject the church or seek comfort in the church community?

General Group Response

When the groups gave their different responses I noticed that the children dared to share more personal stories than those belonging to the other two groups. The children told the group about people they knew who had experienced rape and how they responded to it. The ladies mentioned that women in general probably have a fear of themselves causing the rape, and that they easily feel dehumanized by their surroundings in being rejected socially. I found it interesting that it was the men's group mentioning that women, who are raped lose trust, feel insecure, are self-condemning, start to question God and also future relationships with men. The women agreed to this response. To question seven and eight, the groups seemed to struggle finding concrete contributions. Counselling in church was mentioned, the role of a criminal court and the police. The facilitator then elaborated on these matters that she

considered very important herself. She gave detailed information about the practical steps needed when rape occurs and how they all had a responsibility to guide people in need through this process. She ended off by speaking about the spiritual needs of a person who goes through a trauma like rape. This pointed out a clear challenge to the particular congregation about having counselling facilities available for people who are in need, and for the church as a family to take these issues seriously as they do happen even in church and in Christian families, as it did in the house of David.

5.2. Analysis And Comments

It is obvious that the questions asked in the Tamar Campaign really enabled the participants to relate to the text in a very practical manner. Not all of them knew the particular text, so it is a good thing that the text was read through several times, and also that it was read by people in the group. The participants were from the very beginning of the session encouraged to freely engage and interpret the text from their own perspectives, something that emphasises the UC's desire to relate to the reality of those who study the text. It was obvious that the facilitator already had knowledge about the Indian culture, which increased her ability to have relationship with the group and for them to have trust in her. What I see here is that the facilitator's role is crucial to the outcome of the CBS. In this case the people seemed to engage quite freely. The facilitator allowed them to freely speak and voice their opinions and concerns. She would always lead the next step of the CBS based on their responses and also allow questions to be raised continuously throughout the process. After each response from the small groups she encouraged the bigger group to applaud the others.

Reading In Community

The group seemed to take ownership of the CBS and the reading process, and also to be able to learn through communal reading. The group also seemed to become aware of the steps that needed to be taken in a situation where rape has taken place. Their knowledge on those matters increased based on their interaction with the text and with one another. The group as a whole seemed to open up and engage more and more for each question discussed. They seemed to become aware of their responsibility as Christians and as a Church, to take a stand on matters of gender-based violence. Their suggestions about counselling facilities in church confirmed this. This shows the importance of the facilitator's willingness to invest both in time and commitment to the group. The facilitator's relationship with the participants, trust, and willingness to listen, seemed to enable this engagement. Whether this particular group would apply these things after the UC left for the evening would be up to the group. It is not a

responsibility of the UC, though the facilitator said that she would stay in touch with them and do follow ups in terms of other CBS if they wanted to. The UC was invited to do another CBS a few weeks later, touching upon similar issues to those raised by the Tamar Campaign. Two of the women participating in the second session of the CBS were chosen to participate in a Counselling and Referral skills course that the coordinator of WGP was busy setting up at that time. If the two women will be able to apply their skills in counselling in their church in the future, only time can tell. But this is truly the idea and hope of the facilitator.

From this chapter we have seen people who are engaged in the TC as an example of CBS. We have seen how CBS is carried out in a Bible study group in PMB. Participants of the Bible study seemed to be empowered through taking ownership of the Bible study, becoming aware of issues of gender-based violence, and gaining new knowledge connected to this.

5.3. Conclusion Part 1

Part one of my thesis aims at answering the first sub question as a step towards answering the main research question. The two chapters of part one have showed how CBS is one of the main tools used in the work of UC. Prophetic theology, analysis from below and the See-Judge-Act method, are approaches and tools influencing the CBS method. Together they serve to achieve the aim of contributing towards individual and social transformation. The practical example of the TC, showed how CBS is carried out and how its participants engage in the Bible study process. We have seen the importance of a good relationship between facilitator and community, making CBS a safe place for its participants so that they can engage freely with the sense of their realities being taken seriously. This also enables the participants to take ownership of the Bible reading. From this first part, CBS has shown how theology can be done practically and that the reading process points towards personal and social transformation and liberation.

Part 2

6. The Voices and Stories of Eleven Women in South Africa

6.1. Triple Oppression

“The Bible; A symbol of the presence of God with them, and a resource in their struggle for survival, liberation and life.”¹³³

In his book *Academy of the Poor* (1999), West uses these words to describe the role of the Bible among poor and oppressed South Africans, including women. This quote also represents the theme of this chapter. West mentions that rural black women in South Africa are suffering from oppression of race, class and gender:

[...] not only bear the triple oppression of race, class and gender, but [who] also are expected to carry the threefold load, in development terms, of productive, reproductive and community management functions, and [who] sustain and support the church with their presence, faith and finances.¹³⁴

West’s remarks tie in with the stories told by the eleven interviewed women, who all have stories of struggles for survival, liberation and life. When talking about oppression of gender, it refers to the patriarchal system, which is evident in the lives of many South African women. Male power or men being in control of women is still common in this environment. The oppression of race refers to their situations of being non-white, and the oppression of class refers to the situation of poverty and of being poor. This triple oppression is a primary concern to the UC and its work, which describes it among the “sinful structures”, as follows:

Sinful structures which trap and keep people oppressed and marginalized, including: economic systems which maintain a rich elite and leave the masses in poverty; patriarchal systems which sustain male privilege and power and keep women subservient and subject to various forms of gendered abuse; residual racial systems which maintain white privilege, particularly in the private sector; hierarchical systems which enable a few to exercise control over the many, especially in the churches; cultural systems which stigmatise and discriminate against those who are HIV-positive and those who are striving to live positively with HIV and AIDS; governmental systems that fail to deliver the rich resources of our country to those in need; and ecclesial systems that fail to engage prophetically with the systems mentioned above.¹³⁵

The Women I Interviewed

The women I interviewed represent the kind of people that the Ujamaa wants to engage with; those from poor, working-class and marginalized communities¹³⁶, and where all affected by

¹³³ West 1999:9.

¹³⁴ Ibid.;10.

¹³⁵ Ujamaa Centre, <http://www.ukzn.ac.za/sorat/ujamaa/context.htm>. (Accessed 10.02.09)

¹³⁶ Ibid.

these structures in one-way or another. The women are all able to share how the Bible has become important in their lives, both in a general way, as “a symbol of the presence of God” (Confer the quotation from West above), and as a resource to help them in their various struggles. I want to show how the women linking the Bible to their lives, can be a resource to “the struggle for survival, liberation and life” (Confer the quotation from West above). The UC is particularly relevant for the latter; since the Centre provides useful resources through its CBS and other training methods. All the women have something to say about this through their stories, which also bring light to how the UC relates to the women’s realities, easing their struggles and helping to bring about transformation and liberation in their lives.

I will deal with the stories of the individual woman separately, but present them in five thematic groups, according to what type of challenges and struggles the women represents:

1) Dumisani, Lindiwe and Vusi

These three women are HIV positive and struggle for life and survival. They are also experiencing marginalisation, something which often follow those who are HIV positive.

2) Lalana and Zanele

Struggle with abuse, violence and male oppression.

3) Thoko, Thandiwe and Sibongile

Stand in the struggle with youth in their areas, being involved in church and participate in the UC training weeks. Thoko supports the youth in her area in the struggle against drugs and crime, but has also suffered from the death of her fiancée. Thandiwe has given her life to the youth in her area and is passionate about keeping them away from HIV and AIDS. Sibongile shares her story of feeling marginalised by other blacks because she does not belong to “the right tribe”; yet she enjoys the training weeks of Ujamaa where she learn lots that she can apply at home.

4) Dayita and Shanti

Two Indian ladies who at the age of 49 finally get the opportunity to learn more about counselling and referral skills so that they can help suffering and hurting women, based on their own personal experiences within that area.

5) Siphho

Is a 22 year old mother, contributing to her household but lacking education and jobs. She is now engaged with UC through the counselling course, and sees opportunities through this engagement. Both her parents have passed away and she lives in a rural place with her aunt, grandmother and some children who are survivors of their dad relatives.

Common Themes in the Interviews

The common themes in the five groups are summed up in 1) How they engage with the Bible, and 2) How they find strength and hope in it the Bible whilst living within a culture, which contains those sinful structures, and which “trap and keep people oppressed and marginalized” (confer quotation above). These common themes also reflect processes of self-awareness, empowerment, and a community consciousness resulting in a desire to help others based on own experiences. For 49-year-old Vusi, who is HIV positive, this will obviously look different than for Siphho, who is a young unemployed woman and a mother, because their situation and struggles are different. Comments and analysis of the interviews, which reveal their stories, will take place after the treatment of each group, and will be further developed by analysis in my final chapter.

6.2. Group 1: Living with HIV/AIDS

Lindiwe, Dumisani and Vusi are three women living with HIV and AIDS. They attend the same Support Group (SG) for people living with HIV/AIDS (PWA), which Vusi leads. In the interviews they focus on, 1) their relationship with the Bible and their faith, 2) the fellowship and support in the Support Group for PWA, and 3) Living with HIV and their relation to others in their social context. One of the interviews was conducted with Dumisani and Lindiwe together; therefore their responses are often put together as they agreed with one another. I interviewed Vusi separately.

Positive Living

Although Lindiwe, Dumisani and Vusi are HIV positive, they live healthy and keep positive, despite the disease. They have periods on and off medication, depending on how strong their immune system is, something, which is consistently measured by its CD4-count.¹³⁷ If the

¹³⁷ A CD4 count is the name of a simple blood test, which measures the number of functioning CD4 cells in the body and therefore measures the health of the immune system. Knowing how many functioning CD4 cells are circulating in the blood gives the HIV doctor an idea of how strong the HIV positive person's immune system really is. A normal healthy HIV negative person will have a CD4 count between 600-1200, and a healthy HIV

CD4-count is too low, they take medication, but if it is measured to be above 200 they normally manage without medication. Lindiwe was on additional medication during her pregnancy, preventing her child from being infected with the virus. Her daughter is now healthy and HIV negative. Lindiwe is still breast-feeding and takes medication to maintain the negative HIV status for the baby. A healthy lifestyle is crucial to keep the CD4-count high and the immune system strong. This includes healthy diets, sexual abstinence, exercise and good relationships, which enabled the women to feel included rather than marginalized. The latter is also important for releasing stress, which often follows in the lives of those who are HIV positive.

Not all of them have revealed their HIV status to family and friends. Lindiwe said that she has only told her sister about her status, but not her mother. Her sister didn't criticize Lindiwe, but still she doesn't dare to go for testing herself. Dumisani has finally told her family about her HIV status. She said it used to be difficult to share, but through the SG she got the courage to do so;

I couldn't tell [my family] that I was HIV positive. I wanted to keep quiet. Then I went to the, to this support group and I learned that you must talk, do not stay with your secret. Then I told your [my] family, for one thing Vusi to begin with. [Vusi is family related to her] ¹³⁸

When I asked Dumisani how the family responded to the result of her testing she said; "Well, they were happy about that. It is right that I should go check whether I am positive, rather than for me to say that I have been bewitched, let me say that." I asked the two of them whether they felt discriminated by their community or families in any ways when they disclosed their HIV status. They said that they don't feel discriminated; "No, I'm comfortable, they don't discriminate me".¹³⁹ Vusi, on the other hand, had another experience concerning discrimination.

Vusi said that when she first fell very sick and went for testing, people in her community discriminated her. Indirectly through their actions Vusi felt that the community spoke about her behind her back, both about her sickness and about her husband who didn't treat her well. But after she knew of her HIV status and went to receive medication her health improved. She became healthy and was able to engage with people again. A consequence of this was that she

positive person will normally have a CD4 count between 350-600. Then medication might not be necessary. But if the CD4 is between 200-350 medication will be necessary and the person is at risk to fall sick of AIDS.

About.com "HIV/AIDS", <http://aids.about.com/od/technicalquestions/f/cd4.htm> (Accessed 29.01.09).

¹³⁸ Interview with Dumisani and Lindiwe, Dumisani's quote (Conducted 19.09.08).

¹³⁹ Ibid.

started her own Support Group for people living with HIV/AIDS, which contributed to the community's change of behaviour towards her. She no longer felt discriminated, but rather respected for her courage and healthy life despite of her sufferings and the disease. This was also after her husband died from AIDS;

The community, you know, they don't tell me, but you know they discriminate me, but you see, their signs, that mother is living with it [the HIV virus], I hate some. Mrs Vusi is living, is.. positive, which makes me.. but because I accept I don't say, I never mind about that. [...] they act, they don't come in front of me, yes...but some because they know me, I'm living, I'm...eh... I told you [referring to me as the interviewer] that from 2005 I started my medication, they come to me now and, come to get knowledge, how you are still living? Yes, to disclose some, their status [disclose their status], yes...¹⁴⁰

Fellowship and Support Through the Support Group

Dumisani and Lindiwe were enthusiastic when they spoke about their SG. Dumisani said that people in the SG guides and encourages her whenever she struggles. She said that she believes her CD4-count has increased also because of the mental support she has received through the SG. The increase of her CD4-count is in fact some of the things she mentions as a change since she joined the SG.

Both the women mentioned that other activities in the SG, such as learning about gardening, also help them increase the CD4-count. The knowledge they have gained about gardening encourages healthy eating, which improves their health. The group has made gardens where they grow vegetables and fruit trees; they have introduced the crops to their diets and also sell to others. The group members also supports each another by bringing food when some are too sick to do their own cooking;

That, over there we have a garden [points to the garden outside], we have cabbages so that [they could] cook, and the home could eat food, that is cooked you know. [...] that food that is cheap, as long as it is healthy, it strengthens.¹⁴¹

They all mentioned the importance of having people that they can share their situation with, someone that listens to them and understands. Support Groups for PWA aim at serving that exact purpose. Dumisani said; "it is talking that helps";

It is important because sometimes you arrive with your own problem, for example when I say, remembering that I don't take medication. When I come to someone who's taking medication, I tell them that no, today I have a problem, my hands are getting swollen. He/she then tells me that maybe I ought to try this way, perhaps he/she is then going to tell me about another treatment that I

¹⁴⁰ Interview with Vusi (Conducted 18.09.08).

¹⁴¹ Interview with Dumisani and Lindiwe, Dumisani's quote (Conducted 19.09.08).

can take that I haven't taken, medication. We talk, you see, her, just as she says, it is getting /receiving/finding support.¹⁴²

Dumisani said about another person in the Support Group;

one arrived sick, he/she was very sick, and he/she had lost hope. But upon arriving, we spoke to him/her and told him/her that, no, we are too are like you. To this moment he/she is alive, he/she picked up."¹⁴³ [...] we tell him/her that ought not to feel bad, are not alone. We too. [are in the same situation]¹⁴³

Relationship With the Bible and Their Faith

Lindiwe and Dumisani both seemed to agree that God destined their situation of being HIV positive;

It [the Bible] says everything has its own time. That we are HIV means/shows that it was a time that God knew beforehand we are going [...] that He had set/pre-ordained [...] for us to have that thing.¹⁴⁴ [...] So, by that maybe God knew that at that day they would be HIV positive, so they believe they are accepted by reading that verse and they have faith, they develop faith through reading...¹⁴⁵

These quotes reflect the role of the Bible and the faith that these women have in God. When I asked them about the importance of the Bible, Dumisani answered;

We could say that it is important because even when we read it we have the hope/trust/faith that perhaps we...what can we say? It's important to read it because we sometimes see ourselves that He is with us, because when we find ourselves in whatever situation, and understand about it too, and find the help that we should be getting.¹⁴⁶

Vusi said that she has been reading the Bible more after she fell sick and came to know her HIV status. It gives hope, trust and faith to believe that God is with her. Texts that have helped her in particular are the texts about Tamar and Noah;

Noah says come, hear; there's a rain will come, and that text helped me that we must use condom. We must, this virus is there, we must protect us, but other people don't, they refuse, they say, we don't use condoms as Noah told them that rain is coming, let us build an ark...¹⁴⁷

Vusi said she believes that something can change through doing Bible study. She spoke from the experience of her own SG and the Bible Study they have been doing. She said that the group members come to her and say that it helps to do Bible Study. They also bring their own texts to study and she assists as best as she can.

¹⁴² Interview with Dumisani and Lindiwe, Dumisani's quote (Conducted 19.09.08). This part was translated from Zulu to English. and I have used the exact translation that was given to me by the translator in his transcript.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Dumisani and Lindiwe (Conducted 19.09.08). Comment by the translator during the interview referring to what the two women were saying.

¹⁴⁶ Interview with Dumisani and Lindiwe. Quoted from the translated version from Zulu (Conducted 19.09.08).

¹⁴⁷ From interview with Vusi (Conducted 18.09.08).

Comments and Analysis

In South Africa the HIV prevalence rate for women between 15-49, was 21.8% in 2007. The prevalence rate for men in the same age group was 14.5%.¹⁴⁸ The difference is explained by physiological and social vulnerability to the illness. Women are biologically more vulnerable than men to STD¹⁴⁹ and HIV infection as their genital epithelium is more vulnerable to trauma, and they have a larger area of exposure to the virus.¹⁵⁰ This is why HIV positive men more often infect the women, than HIV positive women infect men. Vusi told me that she was confident about her infection coming from her husband, who also died in AIDS. Encouraged by another HIV positive woman who was part of a SG, Vusi went for testing as soon as she fell ill. She also encouraged her husband to do the same, but he refused. Vusi told me that men often refuse to go for testing, something which also reflects socio-cultural factors that must be taken into account when dealing with HIV and AIDS. The Zulu culture, being a patriarchal culture, encourages certain behaviours as masculine, which define what a “real” man is. Practices of having many sexual partners, high risk-taking and rape can be consequences of such ideals.¹⁵¹ Many cultures, including the Zulu culture, “associate masculinity with a sense of invulnerability, and socialize men to be self-reliant, not to show their emotions and not to seek assistance in times of need.”¹⁵² The fact that Vusi’s husband didn’t want to go for testing can confirm such attitudes, and also research that is done in SA on men and VCT¹⁵³ supports this.

Men are much less likely than women to use voluntary counselling and testing [VCT] services. Men account for only 21 per cent of all clients receiving VCT and only 30 per cent of those in treatment. Men access antiretroviral therapy [ART] later than women in the disease’s progression, with more compromised immune systems and at greater cost to the public health system. These discrepancies appear to reflect men’s belief that seeking health services is a sign of weakness, rather than higher infection rates among women.¹⁵⁴

The majority of the members in Vusi’s Support Group are women. Lindiwe and Dumisani could also share stories of how they believed their infections came from their male partners.

¹⁴⁸ UNFPA 2008:86,98.

¹⁴⁹ STD, Sexual Transmitted Infection, increases the risk of HIV infection.

¹⁵⁰ Long, Messersmith “Reconceptualizing Risk: A Feminist Analysis of HIV/AIDS” 1998:158.

¹⁵¹ UNFPA 2008:51-52.

¹⁵² Weiss, Gupta 2008:52.

¹⁵³ VCT stands for Voluntary Counselling and Testing.

¹⁵⁴ UNFPA 2008:52.

Support Groups Preventing Attitudes of Stigmatisation

The attitude of Vusi's husband, as well as that of her community, shows how serious a matter the marginalization is to those who live with HIV.

Stigmatisation is very often due to ignorance and lack of knowledge about the virus and how it affects those who live with it;

For those infected, HIV/AIDS may change how they perceive themselves and their intimate as well as social relationships [...] To cope with their fears of AIDS, people often distance themselves from the disease through new social representations of it and stigmatization of the 'Other'. Women's inequality vis-à-vis men in many patriarchal societies makes them particularly vulnerable to this stigmatization.¹⁵⁵

Support Groups provide knowledge, which can prevent such attitudes and stigmatization in society. Lindiwe and Dumisani said that they did not have the same experience of stigmatization; something that may confirm the positive effects of their SG. Most important to them is it that the SG provides a safe place to share and talk with others who are in the same situation.

Self-Awareness and Helping Others

We can see that through the SG and the UC these women reached a new level of self-awareness, which also enabled them to encourage and help others who are HIV positive, and share knowledge also to those who are not infected. Vusi, getting courage to go for testing from another friend who was a member of another SG, and Lindiwe, encouraging her sister to go for testing, can confirm this. Also the way that the SG members help one another in terms of cooking and giving guidance about medicines shows the significance of this fellowship. We see that the way they deal with the disease is communal, showing that the individuals have an effect on their relationships and social sphere of society when it comes to awareness building and spreading knowledge about the disease.

God With Them

The increase of self-awareness can also be seen in relation to the role of the Bible in their lives. According to Vusi, the CBS is helping the members of the group. Lindiwe and Dumisani said that the Bible give them hope. It makes them feel accepted and help them to cope with their situation. They also feel that God is with them. The fact that they both believe that God had destined them to be sick, reflects a common belief in South Africa when it comes to HIV

¹⁵⁵ Long, Messersmith 1998:157.

and AIDS. Gerald West and Bongzi Zengele (2004) write about this in the article “Reading Job “positively” in the Context of HIV/AIDS in South Africa”. They talk about retribution theology, which in short argues that what people sow, they will reap. In relation to HIV and AIDS it has the consequences of people believing that they are sick because they have not lived righteous lives. It is also a predominant view in most Christian communities that HIV/AIDS is a punishment from God.¹⁵⁶ The implications of such beliefs have very negative effects on those living with the disease. Dumisani’s comment about her parents, suspecting her of being bewitched when she was sick, can reflect a similar theology or belief. In the article by West and Zibongile, however, members of a particular CBS studying the text of Job took courage despite of this belief and the bad experiences they may have had of such theology. Job was angry with God and cried out to him. So can they. God remained faithful to Job, and so he will be faithful to them in their situations. God still welcome them, accepting their pain and anger. Some of the members of this CBS said that the reading of Job was comforting; others expressed how they began to find healing for both their psyches and their bodies.¹⁵⁷

Support Groups Empower

According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA),

Traditional leaders, indigenous and community elders, as well as faith-based organizations can be an important resource in the struggle to eliminate the spread of HIV, in countering stigma and in helping those affected and infected cope with economic and social hardship.¹⁵⁸

Through hearing the stories and voices of these women, we have seen that the UC does contribute to helping them to cope and in countering stigma, which would normally affect them. The Support Groups for PWA provide a fellowship and a safe place for those affected with the virus, increase the level of self-awareness, provide knowledge that enable them to cope with their lives in a new way, and to decrease stigma in society. This function of a SG is empowering also in that it is long-term in its existence. “Empowerment strategies are aimed at improving women’s status in many societies and, thus, imply cultural change. Such strategies are generally long term and must be tailored to specific social and cultural practices.”¹⁵⁹ The CBS and the Bible, as we have seen, play a significant part in these empowerment strategies seen in the nature of the SG. Together they serve the purpose of developing self-awareness, empowers women to cope with life and social challenges, and to share both experience and

¹⁵⁶ West, Zengele, Reading Job “Positively” in the Context of HIV/AIDS in South Africa, 2004:115.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.; 119-120

¹⁵⁸ UNFPA 2008:61.

¹⁵⁹ Long, Messersmith 1998:160.

own resources with the community. In this way we can see both a process of transformation and liberation developing among individuals living with HIV and AIDS, and their own contribution to the social group which they live in.

6.3. Group 2: Hearts for Community and Change

The next group of women, Sibongile, Thandiwe and Thoko, have participated in the training weeks that the UC arranged four times throughout the year of 2008. They have all been exposed to the UC's methods and work, including CBS. The Tamar Campaign was one of the CBS activities that they had all participated in. They are Christians and attend church weekly, where they also do volunteer work. The church provides them with a place to apply the new knowledge they gain from the training weeks. I will structure this part on the basis of common themes in statements of the women: 1) The role of the Bible, 2) training provided by UC opened their minds, and 3) the Tamar Campaign impacted their perception of being women.

“The Bible Plays a Big Role in My Life”

Their statements on the role of the Bible, reflect a general attitude among black South Africans, which has been emphasized by Gerald West, and which is useful to keep in mind:

It [The Bible in South Africa] plays an important role in the lives of many, particularly the poor and marginalized.¹⁶⁰ [...] the Bible has played and will continue to play a significant role in the life of Christians in South Africa...¹⁶¹

Thoko described the role of the Bible as one of great significance, and of help in the hard times when her fiancée passed away. Through reading the book of Job she found hope and healing. Job stood strong in the hard times, something that encouraged her. She said, “I stand for myself, I know God is there for me.”¹⁶²

Sibongile had discovered that the Bible is “relevant today” [...] Yes, it's relevant, a lot”¹⁶³. The relevance of the Bible is something that all of them mentioned in one-way or another. Sometimes they would link it up with personal stories or other relevant issues concerning society. Thandiwe said that the Bible is guiding her how to live her life; “God never put me in a place where I can't do anything, he'll always give power to do things I need.” She said that the Bible is a strength and a tool for her. Sibongile linked the relevance of the Bible with the way she relates to her priest and his reading of the Bible;

¹⁶⁰ West 1999:9.

¹⁶¹ West 1995:219.

¹⁶² Interview with Thoko (Conducted 21.10.08).

¹⁶³ Interview with Sibongile (Conducted 21.10.08).

It's [the Bible] leading me, it's doing a lot. Cause by reading the Bible, although you choose a certain verse, and it's what the priest always say that he hates. That when you read a certain part, that's what comforts you, and than you think about it; is it really talking to me, or is it talking to someone else? And I really experience that, and I'm going to cope you know. You ask yourself once you read, must I follow it? I do what the Bible say, would it help me? You see, that's quite relevant.¹⁶⁴

From this we see that Sibongile engages in the Bible reading also in her congregation. She elaborated further by saying, "You must read the Bible and not only listen to the priest".

And I also learned when we read the Bible in church, only the priest explains the Bible and everything, we don't get a chance to, to give ourselves time to think about the Bible, I mean to take it to your own self and understand it in your own way. All we took was what the priest says, you see. I didn't use to go home and reread the Bible and understand what it really said, and put it on my own...not what, was said by the priest.¹⁶⁵

Sibongile's realization of reading the Bible in her own capacity is interesting to see in connection to what West says about the CBS, as opposed to inappropriate use of the Bible;

In South Africa, and elsewhere, the Bible tends to be appropriated and applied uncritically, and this can be dishonest and dangerous. Apartheid theology is an example of a process of appropriation and application of the Bible, which is both dishonest and dangerous. It is dangerous because it has led to oppression and death, and it is dishonest because it uses the Bible selectively for narrow interest.¹⁶⁶

“My Experience With Ujamaa, You See; They Opened My Mind”

The training weeks of UC include CBS as well as theoretical and practical teaching combined with other social activities. The degree of influence the UC has on the participants' Bible reading is not easy to measure. Each participant comes from different backgrounds, both in terms of education, status in society, and church life experience. The training can have impact on the participants in so many ways, and will obviously also be shaped by their different backgrounds with their communities and congregations obviously playing a role. However, these women did say a few things that are worth mentioning in connection to this. Thoko said her experience since joining the training with Ujamaa is that her mind has been opened. She connected this both to the Bible reading and to other aspects of life. This is also seen in the interviews with Thandiwe and Sibongile.

Thoko spoke about how her reading of the Bible has changed since she attended the training with the UC. She said that the training made her read more and that it has encouraged her;

Yah, I'm very very influenced. Cause sometimes, you see, as a Youth, you see a Bible as something as...eh..you tell yourself it's far to read, its...As I'm attending this program of Ujamaa, I engage

¹⁶⁴ Interview with Sibongile (Conducted 21.10.08).

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ West 1993:21.

more with the Bible. I need to confirm in the Bible, cause if you confirm..if you touch the things which are in the Bible, yah, people get encouraged.¹⁶⁷

Thoko also said that politically the Ujamaa training has helped her a lot;

Yah, politically I can say it has helped me a lot. Because I'm a politician actually. Eh..there's a lot of riots right now, even, there's no fight, but crisis about South Africa who will be the next president, what what what..So as a Christian, in my church, if you involve yourself to the politician issues, they tend to say that you are not a Christian. Yah, so it [the training] opened my mind, it opened my mind to confront them [people in church] and tell them; if we stand as a church we will see what should come.¹⁶⁸

Sibongile spoke about how she was encouraged to buy her own Bible and learn to read it for herself after she attended her first workshop with UC.

Before I didn't have a Bible, but after I attend the workshop I bought two Bible[s]. I need a Bible. Before I go to sleep, although I do my prayers, I read a certain verse for myself, and then I sleep. I pray and I sleep. I really didn't have a Bible. Only I just go to church, listen to what the priest says and...now I've got my own at home.¹⁶⁹

Thandiwe felt spiritually uplifted in reading the Bible since joining the Ujamaa training. She described the training with the Centre of such nature that it has given her more power to do her things and to cope. At home she's part of the church's Justice and Peace Committee. The Ujamaa training has broadened her view also when it comes to activities and areas she is already involved in, both in church and in the community. She said she wants everyone to learn to read the Bible the way that UC teaches it, because they make it relevant to her everyday life situation. It is applicable to her life and is made relevant to life matters; she said, "Ujamaa gives the broader picture of things in the Bible. I'm able to understand the things from the text that I didn't understand before from the teaching in church".¹⁷⁰

“The Tamar Campaign Encouraged Me in Terms of How I View Myself As a Woman”

All three women had something to say about the Tamar Campaign and how it had impacted them. One thing that stroke me is how they all mentioned that the TC made them realize that they could speak out and stand up for themselves as women.

Thandiwe said that the Tamar story is among her favourite texts in the Bible, and that the story is very relevant to the context in South Africa where rape affects lots of women. She expressed that she had gained new knowledge about rape since she participated in the Tamar

¹⁶⁷ Interview with Thoko (Conducted 21.10.08).

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Interview with Sibongile (Conducted 21.10.08).

¹⁷⁰ Interview with Thandiwe (Conducted 21.10.08).

Campaign, and that she feels the story is relevant for South Africa's women and to issues of equality. The way Jesus relates to women is also a huge inspiration to her. The majority of the participants of these training weeks are men and Zulus. Thandiwe is not Zulu and shared some of her experiences of feeling marginalized by the others, due to her race and gender. She said that being a woman in this group is not easy, referring to the men's attitudes of "being inferior as Zulu men". She continued sharing that the men are not gentle with the ladies and that "they make comments about their bodies as if they were not even there. There's no respect."¹⁷¹ She said that she tried to speak to one of the men about this, but felt she was not taken seriously, "the problem is just with the way they are"¹⁷². This reflects the patriarchal structures dominating the Zulu culture, but there is also a racial dimension here. Even among the Africans in South Africa, the blacks, there are racial issues implying the beliefs of one tribe being inferior to another.

Sibongile spoke about the way the Tamar story was used and taught her as a CBS;

I was hurt. It was like these things were really happening. [...] It was like discrimination. At the same time it was like women was not taken care of, she was raped, she was supposed to be taken to a doctor, or to hospital, to be checked up whether she was not having a disease or something or that she was pregnant. But instead she had to hide it, she was not suppose to tell anyone... inside she was hurt. But now, can't talk about it, so it was sad [...] She had to keep quite and don't tell anyone, and it's not right.¹⁷³

Sibongile is concerned about the fact that Tamar was told to keep quiet about her abuse and rape. This is something she experiences in her own community, including the church. She believes this is wrong, and means that women must speak out and say no in such situations. Her involvement with the Youth in her congregation has also confirmed to her the general attitude of keeping quiet about certain issues, and that people struggle to talk and share their stories with one another; "People just don't open up. People don't talk. That's what breaks relationships as well. People don't talk."¹⁷⁴ I asked her what could be done to change such attitudes. She responded in a way that connects the problem to culture and tradition¹⁷⁵:

It's not easy to be honest. Because us blacks, it's like even talk to you and I look into your eyes and you're older than me, it's rude. As young person looking into your eyes, it's rude. You must face down if you talking to an elder. So now, we still got those believes about our mothers and grandmothers. Because they used to be beaten by their husbands. And they believe that if your husband beat you he loves you, he's putting you in the right track. So it will take time to change.

¹⁷¹ Interview with Thandiwe (Conducted 21.10.08).

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Interview with Sibongile (Conducted 21.10.08).

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Sibongile is Zulu and refers specifically to the Zulu culture.

Somehow or another it will change, but it will take time. Because now those youth that are now growing up they, they talk. They are open, even to their own parents, they are scared to talk to them.¹⁷⁶

Sibongile explained how she has gotten used to having conversations with Youth about these topics, and how she often becomes the negotiator between child and parent. Sibongile's experiences confirm what has been observed in South Africa through research: that "peer counselling may be the most effective way to convey information to adolescents because teenagers are more likely to listen to their peers"¹⁷⁷ The same refers to matters of HIV and AIDS. Married women come to her, sharing their status, but are not willing to tell their husbands. Sibongile has many times encouraged both wives and husbands to share their status and to be open with their spouses. She has even been present and facilitated such meetings between spouses.

From the Tamar Campaign Thoko learnt the importance of sharing and having someone to talk to if matters of abuse occur;

Cause sometimes if you are raped, you are afraid to call out, to speak out, you see. You can find yourself in HIV if you don't speak it out. As they [Ujamaa] told us, you need someone to tell, you need go to police station, after police station hospital, at hospital they'll give you a pill [to prevent contracting HIV] [...] It [the Tamar Campaign] opened my mind as a woman. As I said, I have a boyfriend. If I don't have, if I don't like to have sex with him, he mustn't force me, you see. Yah, I know who I am. He can go to..then to give myself to him why I don't like to. I know...I stand for my rights right now...even if it's a person I like, I need to stand up, and say, no I don't like. Because it's only me, and if I don't speak for myself, who will speak for me?!¹⁷⁸

Comments and Analysis

When it comes to Bible reading, this group of women touches on issues at the heart of UC. We have seen how the UC operates with prophetic theology (confer chapter four), which aims at making theology practical and relevant to the poor and oppressed by addressing their situations and ordeals. CBS provides resources to serve this purpose in the way of using critical "community consciousness" questions in the Bible studies.¹⁷⁹ These question "ground the Bible study firmly in the life of the participants,"¹⁸⁰ drawing both on their local knowledge and analysis and their interpretive resources. It reflects what West speaks of as "working" or

¹⁷⁶ Interview with Sibongile (Conducted 21.10.08).

¹⁷⁷ Mtshali 1994, in Long, Messersmith 1998:160.

¹⁷⁸ Interview with Thoko (Conducted 21.10.08).

¹⁷⁹ West, "Contextual Bible reading: a South African case study", 2006:142.

¹⁸⁰ West&Zondi-Mabizela, "The Bible story that became a Campaign: The Tamar Campaign in South Africa (and beyond)" 2004:8.

“lived”, theologies of ordinary believers.¹⁸¹ For the women in this particular group, it is obvious that they are empowered by the knowledge they gain from the UC training weeks. This is also applied in their congregations and communities. Their experiences of rape, the situation of women, crime and HIV and AIDS in their communities are the contexts they draw knowledge and interpretative resources from when approaching the biblical texts.

Engagement Between Text and Context

The CBS facilitates the process of taking their context into account when they read the Bible, and then creates awareness of the significance of their own experiences and reality. West sums it up in this way,

Those aspects of their historical consciousness not engaged with by their familiar theological sites [whether their church, their parachurch groups, or their individual Bible reading] are activated by the unfamiliar dimensions of the biblical text offered through the 'Contextual Bible Study' process.¹⁸²

To enable engagement between the individual's context and the text is one feature of the CBS process, yet it is done in the context of a group. Thus the women are not going through the process alone. Another significant feature in the women's stories was that they have been enabled to interpret and read the Bible for themselves. After her first workshop with the UC, Sibongile was encouraged to buy two Bibles for herself and start reading them in her own capacity. She now refuses to sit passively and merely listens to the priest's interpretations of the texts, but will now engage in them on her own. Through CBS with UC she has been empowered to read the Bible in her own capacity and has started to discover the different texts in a new way relevant to her life. From this we see that the CBS, starting with individual transformation, is able to, or at least starts the process of, “dismantling”¹⁸³ the system of hierarchy within the churches, and also such ecclesial systems, which according to UC, “fail to engage prophetically”.¹⁸⁴ The CBS fulfils its aim of being prophetic and provides methods for making the Bible a recourse in the women's struggle for survival, liberation and life.

Speaking Out Against Gender-Based Violence

Self-awareness is created through the training through CBS, and in particular through the Tamar Campaign. The women speak of how they learned to stand up for themselves as

¹⁸¹ West&Zondi-Mabizela 2004:8.

¹⁸² West 2006:146.

¹⁸³ Ujamaa Centre, <http://www.ukzn.ac.za/sorat/ujamaa/context.htm> (Accessed 09.02.09)

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

women, learning the significance of sharing and speaking out in relation to gender-based violence, and they report how they now also encourage others to do the same. Thoko also linked the silencing of abuse with traditional beliefs in the Zulu Culture, which we have noticed is influenced by patriarchal and hierarchical structures. Youth today don't want to tell the elders about abuse when it occurs, because the elders are bound to the belief that it is ok. They believe that for a woman to be beaten by her husband means that he loves her (confer quotation by Sibongile above). This also shows the socio-cultural factors of abuse and gender-based violence, which is a great challenge in the Zulu culture. Yet Sibongile believes that things can change over time, but that it is a process. UC is obviously engaged in this process, providing resources through the Tamar Campaign in particular, a campaign and CBS especially addressing gender-based violence. The voices of these women confirm that there are positive effects of the Tamar Campaign, and that it contributes to changes through "breaking the silence of gender-based violence".¹⁸⁵ When people are enabled to speak out against violence, and on matters that are taboos in society and the church, changes can start to take place. As we have seen here, it must start with the individuals, and these – in turn – are encouraged by the CBS in a group context.

6.4. Group 3: Experiences of Abuse

Zanele is only 21 years old, but has been through a lot in terms of abuse and unhealthy relationships with men. Her boyfriend through three years raped and beat her when she broke up with him. She explained the relationship as unbalanced and defined by power struggles between them. When they argued he would say things like,

...no, no, and he'd get all irritated and at times we argue at a point where we didn't mean to argue because he always tried to you know...'I'm the man, more powerful, you should listen to me'...and all these cultural things came in. [...] You know he threatened my life...¹⁸⁶

Zanele said that when she did the Tamar Campaign certain things became clear to her. She realized that over the years she had subconsciously suppressed the abuse from her past. Thanks to a friend of her she was able to seek professional help and went through a period of counselling.

Maybe that Campaign [refers to Tamar Campaign] had brought that out in me. Just then...I broke down..I actually didn't break down, I just started crying. Everything came fresh again in my head, things I had forgotten about, long time ago that came...¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ Slogan of the Tamar Campaign.

¹⁸⁶ Interview with Zanele (Conducted 19.10.08).

Zanele is now doing much better, but is still in the process of healing. She's a devoted Christian and takes courage in the Word of God. Her knowledge of the Bible is striking and she gladly shared how the different characters in the Bible have encouraged her in many ways and how they have brought her hope. Among the characters in the Bible she feels Tamar is one she can identify with and relate to;

Tamar is the King's daughter; she's born into royalty. She's got it all. And that ruined her because of what she represents. The brother, Amnon, probably did this to strip away, to strip her off that, all her privilege, all...like who she is. [...] What she was, the knowledge, you know everything she has...he takes that away, he wants to take that, dehumanise that and just, take that power from her. [...] As a young child, ever since I grew up, not that I was born into royalty but I have just always thought that there was something different about me. [...] you know at that moment [when the boyfriend raped Zanele] he wanted to take what I represented. As much as he wanted to hurt me too, but it wasn't and it probably, it irritated him so much that he wanted to actually take it away...but he can't because...it's just there, it's there. You know..it's something you can't strip someone off...¹⁸⁸

Lalana experienced recurring abuse through eight years, starting from an early age. The abuser was a well-known and respected man both in the community and in her church. She described her home as a broken home with a mother who was "timid and submissive to all men in the world". She said that this man took advantages of her (Lalana's) situation and "traded her for food";

The worst thing to me was that..I was used to get favours [from him] to my family. They would expect these things from him, on Wednesday when I came back home from church my family would wait for the only supper that week, which would be brought by him through me...He even very well knew this, he used me. I was feeling so used, but there was nothing I could do.¹⁸⁹

“Contextual Bible Study is a Safe Place”

Lalana's past of abuse came to a turning point when she started to study theology a few years ago. She felt her old theology was challenged by the way she could now ask questions on her own and find new knowledge in the Bible on matters relating to her as a woman.

I come from a Pentecostal conservative background, so I'm still stuck in old theology. But when I came to university and encounter theology and start questioning things for my own, I see lots of things just doesn't...women shouldn't..in our communities I'd say we still live quite detached from other communities. [Lalana is Indian] In South Africa, what's Indian stays Indian, what's coloured stays coloured and you know...what I know comes from that and how that theology has evolved. When I came to university I started questioning in relation to that...¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁷ Interview with Zanele (Conducted 19.10.08).

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Interview with Lalana (Conducted 08.10.08).

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

In her second year of studying theology she became involved with the work of Ujamaa as a student worker. The CBS method in particular started a change in her along with her involvement in church and professional counselling at that time. She said that her involvement in CBS and the listening to other people's stories of abuse healed her.

Just knowing that I'm not the only...be able to hold somebody's hand, going through the pain, knowing people's feelings..it has all been therapeutic. I think the whole process of studying, working in the communities, all work together to bring about my healing.¹⁹¹

Lalana said that; "the pain is still there, but now it's a tool, it's a tool now against this whole silence. Because the reason why I felt so closed and condemned is because the silence of the church and the community."¹⁹² Lalana is now using her past to help others in similar situations. She described the CBS and the TC in particular, as a powerful method. Both Lalana and Zanele said that CBS provides a safe place for people to speak. It has the ability to facilitate sharing of matters one is "not suppose to talk about", especially not in church. Lalana knows how difficult it is to speak of certain issues within her Indian community. "They don't want to deal with these issues, they don't want to loose face in their families. The way we socialize, we know...this is also why the reason this Woman and Gender Program is so important."¹⁹³

Yes so..CBS really really..I mean I've seen people stand up and speak...the pastor did this to me and so on..see Tamar, She did this, she said no. She said all these things, and people jump up and say this is what happened. And so you know...CBS really does it to me. It's just a safe space. I don't get much time to do formal work, but almost everyday I work personally with CBS method. Cause people know me, I'm not afraid to tell my story, I'm not afraid cause I've come to a place where I have healing.¹⁹⁴

Zanele is convinced that the Tamar Campaign is very relevant to women. "Very relevant, very relevant. Women who are abused, women who have gone through trauma and who have..women..but just to those who have bad experience."¹⁹⁵ For her the Word of God has had great impact on her and her situation, especially knowing that Christ does not condemn her. "I am not condemned by everything that I have been through. And all the mistakes that I've made obviously. So I must go out there and sin no more but create an impact."¹⁹⁶ She speaks

¹⁹¹ Interview with Lalana (Conducted 08.10.08).

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Interview with Zanele (Conducted 19.10.08).

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. It is typical in situations when girls or women have been raped, harassed or otherwise oppressed or badly treated, that some of them will even take some of the responsibility or guilt upon themselves, as Zanele did here ("sin no more"). In her process of gaining full rehabilitation she obviously still has some way to go. Only when

of how the Word of God helped her when she felt that her abusers tried to “take that away from her”¹⁹⁷. Her friends’ support has also been of great importance to her. Zanele believes she can make a change and have impact on other people, based on her own experiences. She said the Tamar Campaign carries great potential;

The potential is that it gives people that area to open up. It probes deeper, but indirectly cause it doesn’t confront you...so it has that potential, it has that ability to actually open up so many doors, of people actually been delivered and be relieved.¹⁹⁸

In Lalana’s experience CBS empowers people;

It’s [the CBS] practical..to have them to read the Bible is the most important. Every time we do CBS they discover that when they read the Bible, it’s different from what the pastor told them the story is. So for me it’s the most empowering thing [...] They want to do this, they want to read the Bible for them to see what God is saying about their situation. [...] the light come on for many women. Tamar is just a safe space, CBS provides a safe space for people, they don’t fear the pastor, the structures, the interpretations.¹⁹⁹

Lalana also emphasized how the CBS enables people to realize that they do have a voice to use in their situations;

You know you can heal from the physical, the physical heals, but the emotional scares stays forever, until someone come to your community and read for you, tell you how things are, the CBS that Ujamaa does, they tell you that you have a voice to use. People don’t really know that they can use their voice. They think, like me, that if I say so and so, they won’t believe and they’ll give me a hiding. My parents are gonna punish me, and you love church. [...] CBS it’s a safe place. You take courage from a story that is never told in the church, that when it’s told it’s always about the successive narrative, the succession story. It’s never told as a story of a woman who was raped and that stood up, stood up against this thing, she was articulate, she was intelligent, she was all these things. And she had a voice and she was heard, she wanted to be heard. The story is so relevant, especially to those of us that have been affected. I feel that I really have a voice, I find myself really empowering women.²⁰⁰

“There’s no Relationship Built With The Facilitator”

As much as Zanele acknowledged the role, which CBS played in bringing changes to her life, she was also critical to certain aspects of the work of Ujamaa. The quote below refers to Zanele’s experience of lack of relationship with the facilitator from the UC, both during the CBS and in the time after:

she is able to identify the perpetrator or abuse as the “sinner” or offender will she be able to further lessen her burdens from the past. But she is on the right track.

¹⁹⁷ Zanele never explained what “that” was, but she kept using it to refer to something she felt was threatened to be taken away when she was abused, but that it was never taken away from her.

¹⁹⁸ Interview with Zanele (Conducted 19.10.08).

¹⁹⁹ Interview with Lalana (Conducted 08.10.08).

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

She [the facilitator from UC] left with all these things hanging. And for us to actually do, I think she could have taken us through more sessions. But it left us hanging; because she just made an appearance once, and she left and there was no building of relationship, there was no...you need that. [...] It's hit and run. Here and then we're gone, that's the weakness. [...] it doesn't help you walk through the situation. It just leaves you at the door, you know with the kind of worms. You know these popping worms and you don't know what to do with them. That could be something that they could look at.²⁰¹

Lalana is sceptical to the way that a CBS like the Tamar Campaign brings out old wounds in people, but then provides no follow up. It's like leaving people alone with their wounds, providing no medicine to help the healing process.

From my observation, because people open up and they tell their stories, but they still coming back to the same context. If they were silenced in their context, in their church, they go back to the same church were they were silenced. If it's in their homes, there's no structures in their communities, that's where they're going. So for me, genuine change can only effective once follow up is taking place. And that's why I find myself very limited, cause I can't follow up everybody. [...] you're not instantly changed, healed or delivered...the CBS creates a platform for that to happen.²⁰²

From Lalana's own experience and from working with wounded and suffering women she sees the need for a support structure;

You need to have women create a plan, especially in an abuse-situation. [...] You need to make sure the kids are safe, you need to make a plan, and then you get out safely. Because you've lost your self-esteem, you've been so abused, you need to build on all those things first...I see a lot of needs and lots of things that are not met in the bible study and the gender desk.²⁰³

Lalana wants the Women and Gender Program at UC to have more consistent Support groups that can take care of follow-ups, which are needed in their work. She refers to similar Support Groups that exist for those affected with HIV and AIDS. "You must have support groups. It must be consistent, it's what lacks in the gender program."²⁰⁴

Comments and Analysis

Lalana and Zanele come from different cultures, the Indian - and the Zulu-culture, but we can see here that their struggle is against a patriarchal system, which doesn't know boundaries of race, class or culture. From listening to the stories of these two women, but also some of the other women's stories that we have heard, it is obvious that South African women are still standing in this struggle even after apartheid and the passing of the new nonracist and non-sexist constitution.²⁰⁵ Apartheid brought with it a racial division between people, and class and

²⁰¹ Interview with Zanele (Conducted 19.10.08).

²⁰² Interview with Lalana (Conducted 08.10.08).

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Groener, "Women in South Africa" 1998:566.

racial divisions among women,²⁰⁶ which still remains in society today. At the core of the patriarchal system “we can identify violence and coercion as the main mechanisms of control”²⁰⁷, which connects these patriarchal structures, permeating the South African society, with gender-based violence of the nature which Lalana and Zanele have described.

Through the Tamar Campaign it is obvious that the UC, as we know, is taking these challenges seriously. The women we have heard so far have also confirmed that there are changes taking place for them in these matters. According to the UNFPA *state of world population 2008*, gender based violence “is perpetuated through social and cultural norms and traditions, reinforcing male dominated power structures.”²⁰⁸ From early infancy, women are taught,

'that they are inferior to men and often to blame for the violence inflicted upon them. As wives or partners, they must hold the family together, at any cost. Women and men both learn to turn a blind eye to, or accept, gender-based violence'. Under these circumstances, domestic violence becomes 'naturalized' and invisible.²⁰⁹

This is why it becomes so important to deal with gender-based violence in South Africa through processes that create awareness around the topic, as well as empowering the women to stand up and speak for themselves. To prevent “domestic violence to become 'naturalized' and invisible” (confer quotation above), it must be spoken of and brought to the surface so that it becomes visible and is possible to deal with. This can actually start with the victims of abuse, and the CBS, which may in turn make women, feel safe and protected. From Zanele we have seen that this is not an easy task. She was suppressing her past of abuse until she took part in the Tamar Campaign. The campaign contributed to her realizing the truth about herself and then was enabled to do something about it. From Lalana we see that she is convinced about the empowering effect the CBS has on its participants. The CBS also creates the necessary safe place for the women to start speaking about abuse and matters that are often not spoken of in church. CBS has the capacity to enable women to use their voices and share their stories of abuse so that the process of transformation can start.

Need For Sustainable Support Groups

When listening to Lalana and Zanele it is important to take into consideration the need of more sustainable Support Groups for women who have experienced abuse and violence. This should

²⁰⁶ Groener 1998:566.

²⁰⁷ Mies, “World Economy, Patriarchy, and Accumulation” 1998:38.

²⁰⁸ UNFPA 2008:30.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

be seriously considered by the UC. These two women speak from their experiences and can therefore identify with the needs for better facilitation during the process of healing. In Lalana's opinion, only then true transformation and liberation can happen. Self-awareness and knowing of one's own situation of abuse are not enough. Therefore, follow-ups in terms of counselling and Support groups are crucial for the process to continue. When the Tamar-text was used as a CBS for the first time at the South African Lutheran Women's conference in 1996, the need for counsellors was taken seriously.²¹⁰

Because the ISB&WM [Young Christian Workers Ministry] realized that the Bible study would be a traumatic experience for many of the participants, they arranged for counsellors to be available. So after the Bible study Bev Haddad and Nhlanhla Mkhize from the Psychology Department at the University of Natal were available for counselling. Many women made use of this opportunity.²¹¹

This shows us that the UC is aware of the effect this type of CBS may have on women. There is a need for counsellors as well as a system or a structure, which can support the women and encourage them to keep on telling their stories despite their vulnerability, and that can enable them to receive counselling. It is the sharing of stories that is the empowering element to these women, something that the UC has experienced when using the Tamar Campaign,

Women are amazed that such a text exists, are angry that they have never heard it read or preached, are relieved to discover that they are not alone, are empowered because the silence has been broken and their stories have been told.²¹²

If these women don't feel secure enough to share, they will not speak and transformation will not happen. In relation to this, I want to quote a woman who had participated in the Tamar Campaign, but not shared much during the Bible study. Afterwards the facilitator approached her, probing her silence. This was her reply;

Umfundisi [minister], what does it help if I say what I feel and what I experience? You get in your car and go back to your manse [church home], but I stay here behind and starve to death and you are nowhere to be found.²¹³

For women like her, there was still not enough safety to tell her story. Telling her story might mean being cast out from her family and the community, resulting in starvation. Hence there is a need for Support Groups for these women. The issues that the Tamar Campaign raises have implications for the participants that require such support and counsellors who are available to them. These are things that the UC obviously are aware of, based on their experiences and

²¹⁰ West&Zondi-Mabizela 2004:5.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² West, Phumzile-Mabizela, Maluleke, Khumalo, Matsepe, Naidoo, "Rape in the house of David: the biblical story of Tamar as a resource for transformation" 2004:8.

²¹³ Ibid.;11.

evaluations of their work. Still the needs of these women are not met appropriately if we take seriously the women we have listened to here. Although the work of Ujamaa is committed to take the reality of these women seriously, it is clear from the women's voices that the reality of these matters are still not met sufficiently.

6.5. Group 4: Using Own Experiences to Help Others

Although there is a lack of response to the need of follow-up or Support Groups for these women, UC has started its work towards a support plan. The coordinator for the Women and Gender Programme has started a course in Counselling and Referral Skills. The first meetings for the participants in this course took place during my fieldwork, where I met the two women in the third group, Shanti and Dayita. Both come from the Indian community, are active in the same church, unemployed and stay home with their children. Shanti is a widow and Dayita is divorced. These women both desire to do something about the needs they see in their churches and communities. They are willing to learn new things and apply them where they live. This is also motivated by their own experiences of hurt and pain. The desire to use own experiences to help others is a common feature that can be seen in all the eleven interviews.

“I would be able to counsel a person cause I've been through so much stuff personally”

Dayita explained her background as one of a “broken home”. She is divorced and has four children with two different men, with one daughter being disabled and in need of full time care. Dayita now takes care of her eighteen-year-old daughter in her own capacity, something, which takes lots of her time and energy. Her involvement in church and own personal reading of the Bible means a lot to her. “I've come close to God now because of my...all my hurts and pains.”²¹⁴ Staying at home with the daughter and being involved in the church gives Dayita opportunities to meet with people who are in need of support and counselling. She said that she hopes to get useful tools for counselling through the course she is now doing with Ujamaa.

Hurt and verbal abuse is experiences Shanti mentioned from her life as well. She believes this Counselling course is something she is chosen to participate in by the grace of God;

Because our church is a big church, and out of all, I mean, two of us were chosen, only two. And it was her and I. And I think that, while we were chosen, we didn't make the decision, it was only God. Because he knew the hurt that we.. He knew it was a problem, he knew about the abuse you see, verbal abuse...so now, today I can go and help there. [...] Because I can feel for the person

²¹⁴ Interview with Dayita (Conducted 22.09.08).

because I know what I've been through. Yes, you know the experience in my life, so I can go out there and you know...feel for another.²¹⁵

Shanti also spoke of how the Bible has had a counselling role in her own life, along with professional counselling; "It [the Bible] is my bread of life. To eat from there. [...] In praying, counselling me."²¹⁶ Shanti described Jesus as a role model in terms of having compassion with people who are hurting;

And like, you know, the counselling course now. That's why we must have compassion, like Jesus Christ had compassion on us. Now you've got a problem and I must fit into your shoes, I must become you and be there for you, you see.²¹⁷

The Counselling course consists of people from different groups of the population and age groups, about 25 people all in all. This fellowship has also made an impact on Shanti;

You know the culture, really stirred me up there. Like that in every other home, in every other culture..it stood out for me. Now I know I can go out to anyone, I feel I'm in the Rainbow nation now. You know..the one thing really stood out for me. And you know that...and in that team we, it was all mixed you know, but we could understand one another. There was a unity, there was love there, everything.²¹⁸

This shows that the Counselling course can do more than teaching people about counselling. It brings people together and can serve the purpose of reconciliation and preventing prejudices they might have against other cultures and traditions.

"There is a Change"

Shanti believes in changes over time, and that she is now in a process of learning new skills that have transformational power;

We're still learning, we're all still in the process. Now this is all something new now, but I know from the first and the second time that...for true, without wisdom we can do nothing, without knowledge, understanding..we have to receive and we have to develop. And there is a change. There is a change at home, like the children.. [...] But there is a change in their life as well...also going to this workshop. It also really brought change.²¹⁹

Shanti was confident that she could bring a change in her community, based on the training she gets from Ujamaa;

²¹⁵ Interview with Shanti (Conducted 03.10.08).

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Shanti refers to the one day at the course when all participants shared challenges and harmful practices within their cultures and traditions that make people suffer.

²¹⁹ Interview with Shanti (Conducted 09.10.08).

Yes I can, in the community. Like going out and...there's so many people with this AIDS, problems, with abuse...there's lots of women out there that I can help...and through the Word as well.²²⁰

Dayita had also done the Tamar Campaign in her church. There, she learned something useful in terms of dealing with her disabled daughter. She is now more aware of how vulnerable her daughter can be in an abuse situation. Dayita said that she has become more protective towards her and learnt that she has to be her daughter's voice. The Counselling course has made her feel stronger when dealing with her daughter, as much as it has brought changes to her own life. "I feel more sure of who I am you know, my inner self, it has helped me a lot."²²¹ She said that even the other people in the course seem to have become stronger and more positive.

Comments and Analysis

Shanti and Dayita have a passion to help others and to contribute to individual transformation and liberation based on their own experiences of hurt and abuse from the past. Faith in God and Bible reading have helped them, something which was also the case for the other women I interviewed. Their faith has implications on how they view the opportunity to participate in the Counselling course; they think God destined it. From this we see that their personal commitment and faith will be of influence in the way that they can help others grow. It reflects a community spirit, which is strong in many South African communities. The community spirit is also known as UBUNTU. UBUNTU refers to,

The importance of group cohesion and solidarity in the survival of African communities, stressing the importance of brotherly group care over individual selfinvolvement, and is based on fundamental belief "a man can only be a man through others"²²²

As much as the CBS and training with UC takes place in community, and being influenced by UBUNTU, we can also see that the effects of the Centre's work also springs from the urge to apply what is learnt in order to contribute to the community's well being. The contribution of women like Dayita and Shanti, based on the training they get from UC, can play a significant role in the process of social transformation and liberation, as well as contributing to the transformation and liberation of individuals.

²²⁰ Interview with Shanti (Conducted 09.10.08).

²²¹ Interview with Dayita (Conducted 22.09.08).

²²² Norwegian Church Aid 2001:21.

6.6. Group 5: “Perhaps I may end up working some day”

Sipho is one of the other ladies who participate in the Counselling and referral skills course. She had experience from the UC before this course, as the Centre has been to her community and facilitated CBS there. She shared some interesting points about how the CBS and training from UC have helped her in the situation of being unemployed.

Sipho said that from her involvement with Ujamaa she had learnt to better understand and deal with her situation of being unemployed. “Their teaching [Ujamaa] of the way of the Bible, I am able to see that perhaps I too may end up working some day.”²²³

Ujamaa works well because while it is true that the Bible has been read for a long time, people have been reading it literally, whereas the people from Ujamaa read the Bible in such a way as to be able to explain it to you so that you too understand fully, instead of merely reading it literally as it is written.²²⁴

Sipho has learnt that “everything has its own time”, according to the Bible. She believes that the time will come when she can get a job and things will change. The way Ujamaa has taught her to read the Bible has made this more real to her in that it has brought hope. She said that she believes in the CBS and the training that Ujamaa provides when it comes to her own community. “Perhaps some day the community here will prosper from the knowledge that the coordinators from Ujamaa have imparted”.²²⁵ Sipho also mentioned another aspect of Ujamaas impact on her community: “They [the people in her community] are now able to work together and to form groups, something that didn’t happen in this way before.”²²⁶

Ujamaa has more than once facilitated CBS in Sipho’s community. Through the SWAP, UC also keeps in touch regularly with one of the members in her community who is leading a Support Group for PWA. The UC now seems to be more present in Sipho’s community and getting to work more consistently with its members compared to other communities. According to Sipho this seems to have a positive effect that might increase the possibilities for transformation.

Comments and Analysis

Based on Sipho’s experiences, we can see that the involvement of UC in her community truly has made an impact. As for individual transformation, Sipho has been empowered by the way

²²³ Interview with Sipho (Conducted 25.09.08).

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid.

Ujamaa has made the Bible relevant to her situation of being unemployed. This reflects the prophetic nature of the theology of UC, which has resulted in giving her the hope of getting a job one day. Siphso is also implying the potential for social transformation in her community due to “the knowledge that the coordinators from Ujamaa have imparted” (confer Siphso’s quotation above). UC has obviously contributed to the increase of knowledge, (about what she didn’t elaborate on), and it has been of such a nature that Siphso believes the community one day can prosper from it. The way the UC has done its work in her community has also brought about unity. This could refer to the way the facilitator or coordinator from the UC related to the community members in a way that created a safe space for them. The level of social awareness seems to have increased in the community. This again might have resulted in a desire to act. The community members are now able to work together and form groups in ways they didn’t do before. For social transformation and liberation to take place, the participation of the whole community is of importance. According to Siphso this is happening in her community through the CBS and a Support Group for PWA facilitated by Ujamaa in this area.

6.7. Summary

In this chapter we have met the eleven women I interviewed in South Africa. We have heard their stories with their own voices, reflecting struggles for survival, liberation and life in relation to UC and CBS. They have all described the Bible as having a significant and defining role in their lives; in it they find hope and encouragement. The Bible is both a symbol of the presence of God in their lives and becomes a resource to deal with struggles of life, which CBS has also contributed to. CBS and the communities in which the CBS has taken place have provided a safe place where participants can learn from each other. Through CBS there has been an increase of self-awareness and self-development, which empowers the women to cope with life. This can again awaken a desire to helping others.

From this we can see how the women confirm that the CBS method used by UC gives results. On the other hand, we have also seen the need for supportive structures and follow-ups, especially in relation to the Tamar Campaign. These are important to the process of awareness and empowerment building, and the critical elements in the CBS process according to some of the women. These matters need to be considered seriously because it is the reality of the women. Their needs cannot be neglected, and the UC has – through its CBS and the Tamar Campaign – created awareness of their needs, and has provided them with both instruments and methods.

7. Transformation Towards Liberation

We have learnt, through listening to the voices of eleven women, that the marginalized and poor are influenced by the work of Ujamaa and its use of CBS. Whether individual and social transformation and liberation is identified as part of this influence, depends on how one defines the process of transformation and liberation, and the elements connected to it. Based on chapter six we have seen that awareness building, and empowerment are elements of this process. This chapter will look into the nature of such transformation and liberation, mainly from the perspective of empowerment. I will look at what potential this transformation and liberation carries for these women, and whether it is useful in their particular context. Assessing this I also use examples from a research done on a CBS in Amawoti, a township community outside of Durban in KZN.

7.1. Transformation

When investigating the nature of transformation and liberation I will use theory from Myers' book *Walking With The Poor* (1999), and theories of empowerment.²²⁷

Myers speaks of transformational development from a Christian perspective. I find his way of understanding transformation useful and relevant for understanding one of the goals of UC, which is to contribute to transformation. I also see that there are similarities in the way of viewing the process and the methods used to achieve transformation.

Categories of Transformational Power

In chapter four I introduced four perspectives or categories representing transformational power in the CBS method. They are 1) *A new way of seeing reality from the perspective of God's project of liberation*, 2) *Providing resources to increase knowledge and a critical consciousness*, 3) *Challenge ordinary readers to re-evaluate their Bible reading and apply its message*, and 4) *Accountability*. In this chapter I want to use the four categories, structuring my interpretations according to Myers' theory. The four categories will also relate to what we now know from the women I interviewed. These categories are only practical tools or guidelines for what *can* be transforming and liberating for the women. Only the reality spoken of by the women themselves, however, can show whether the CBS method and the work of

²²⁷ Myers' theories include ideas from Jayakumar Christian, which are applied in the book *Walking With The Poor*. Theories of empowerment are collected from the book *Discussing Women's Empowerment*, Sidastudies no.3, 2004, and Karen Monkman's article "Training women for Change and Empowerment", 1998.

UC actually contribute towards transformation and liberation. This is also why I want to use theory from elsewhere to test and verify the outcomes. I work with the first two categories together as I see similarities in how they affect the women directly. The other two categories are of more indirect nature, where the focus is on the role of the facilitator and ordinary readers who are not from poor communities, and accountability. Yet these still have great impact on those from poor and marginalized communities. I also deal with these last two categories together.

7.2. God’s Project of Liberation - Critical Consciousness

The women in this study were influenced by the new knowledge and resources provided by the UC and through CBS. Through the methods and resources provided by Ujamaa, they were empowered by becoming aware of their own situation and realities. Their eyes were opened to God’s project of liberation, and they came to realize that it includes them. A concern of West (1995) is that in the CBS process, the Bible is not “merely a strategic tool for liberation; the bible is the source of “God’s project”, which is a project of liberation.”²²⁸ To explain what God’s project of liberation is, I use Myers’ understanding of transformational development from a Christian perspective.

God’s Project of Liberation

Myers’ perspective focuses on the fact that,

the development journey belongs to God and those who are on it, not to experts, donor agencies, or development facilitators. Whatever our framework or our methods, we must be willing to set them aside and let the poor discover their own way, just as we have done²²⁹.

Myers understands the result of transformation as “changed people”; the changed people are those who have “discovered their true identity as children of God and who have recovered their true vocation as faithful and productive stewards of gifts from God for the well-being of all”.²³⁰ In the context of Ujamaa this perspective is seen in the commitment of reading *with* the community in the CBS process. (Confer chapter four). According to West,²³¹ this reading *with*, serves the purpose of creating a transforming discourse where unequal power relations are recognized and where the culture of silence is broken. Here West emphasizes the need of the facilitators to be converted to a sense of community consciousness. The facilitator himself or

²²⁸ West 1995:117-118.

²²⁹ Myers 1999:14.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ West 1993:14-15.

herself must transform to be able to face the reality of the poor and take this reality seriously. In fact both the facilitator and the participants must be aware of who they are and must be considered *active subjects* when reading the Bible together in a CBS. Only then can the process of reading take place as described by West. In Myers' understanding both the facilitator and the participants are in this process of reading *with*, when they recover their true identity and their true vocation. This then, is God's project of liberation.

Taking Confidence in Own Capacity

Another important feature when it comes to seeing God's project of liberation for the poor and marginalized lies in the readers' capacity to take ownership of the project. According to Myers, people need to be part of the project because "they have a history that needs to be heard and respected".²³² The effect of their participation must be empowerment, implying taking confidence in their own capacity to understand, to take ownership and to contribute.²³³ "Empowerment is, after all, one of the means of transformation".²³⁴ CBS has the potential to empower its participants when their realities are taken seriously and when they feel that they are in a safe place to share and voice their opinions. In chapter six we saw that this was the case for the women. When they felt that CBS was a safe place for them to share their stories of HIV/AIDS or of abuse and hurt, they became aware and empowered by telling their own stories and breaking the silence of the specific matters. Their participation in the CBS empowered them, both in terms of reading the Bible in their own capacity, bringing their own interpretations to the reading, and from sharing their life stories and hearing others. Hence they took ownership of the Bible reading because they felt that their realities were considered important.

Hope of a Better Future

According to Christian in the book by Myers,²³⁵ "the act of getting the poor to believe in the possibility of a better future is a major transformational frontier, a 'prophetic act' ". For Christian, healing the marred identity of the poor is the beginning of transformation. These aspects of healing of identity are seen in the work of the UC through the Tamar Campaign when the women are becoming aware of the significance of sharing their own stories. Hope for a better future is also brought to them when they share their stories and realize that they are

²³² Myers 1999:15.

²³³ Confer definition of empowerment, chapter 1, "It [empowerment] often involves that the empowered developing confidence in their own capacities."

²³⁴ Myers 1999:148.

²³⁵ Ibid.;114.

not alone. As we saw from Siphso, reading the Bible contextually brought her the hope of getting a job one day. For Vusi, Dumisani and Lindiwe, hope of a good life after having been infected with HIV was brought through CBS and the Support Group for people living with HIV and AIDS.

Thus we can see that “a new way of seeing the reality from the perspective of God’s project of liberation” (that is the first of the four categories above) is crucial to starting the process of transformation. Alongside with this awareness the women are empowered by “the resources to increase knowledge and a critical consciousness” (that is the second of the four categories above). Both the realization of being part of God’s project of liberation and the development of a critical consciousness work together for empowerment and for taking ownership of the process. This is both transforming and liberating to the women.

7.3. Ordinary People Re-evaluating Their Bible Reading - Accountability

Contextual Bible Reading

Myers argues that Christians need to use the Bible in a way that is detached from an orientation that is merely spiritual; “our first challenge is to free the Bible from its spiritual capacity and allow it to engage and speak to the whole of human life.”²³⁶ This refers to the prophetic use of the Bible, which is what the UC engages in. The Centre uses the Bible in a practical way, thus enabling the participants in CBS to see the texts in new ways, relating to their lives. The Bible reflects the stories of the oppressed, a fact which is to be discovered by the oppressed themselves. Myers believes that the goals of transformation, understood as recovering true identity and discovering true vocation, are derived from the biblical stories. This is true for both the poor and the non-poor, which can be connected to West’s emphasis of the importance for all ordinary readers to re-evaluate the ways in which they read the Bible, and to apply its message, regardless of their social status. When ordinary readers, including the non-poor, learn to read the Bible contextually, they can address issues of unequal power, injustice and oppression.

Relationship Between Facilitator And Participants

Recovering true identity and discovering true vocation are processes towards liberation, the resources of which are found in the Bible. Awareness and empowerment are elements in this

²³⁶ Myers 1999:227.

process. Myers emphasises the fact that all people are included in God's project of liberation. This also has consequences for the relationship between the poor and the non-poor.

The poor suffer from marred identities and the belief that they have no meaningful vocation other than serving the powerful. The non-poor, and sometimes development facilitators, suffer from the temptation to play god in the lives of the poor, and believe that what they have in terms of money, knowledge, and position is the result of their own cleverness or the right of their group. Both the poor and the non-poor need to recover their true identity and their true vocation²³⁷

Myers is talking about non-poor being involved in development work with poor, which cannot blindly be compared with the work of Ujamaa. There are however similarities found in the way that the development worker relates to the poor, and the way that the facilitator of a CBS relates to the participants in a bible study. This is where we see the importance of accountability of biblical studies and theological education for ordinary people.²³⁸ Myers' point here is that the views and attitudes of the one in power (being the development worker or the facilitator) have great implications for the work itself. The facilitator has to be transformed and find his or her true identity so that he or she can face the reality of the poor in a humble and respectful way, thus affirming the dignity of the poor. This point of accountability should also imply that the UC is willing to listen to concerns from participants of CBS. We have seen that Lalana and Zanele have raised important concerns when it comes to the lack of supporting structures for women like them, especially in such a CBS as the Tamar Campaign. In the context of what we have now seen, it seems that their reality is not taken seriously unless their voices are heard on these matters as well.

When ordinary readers re-evaluate their Bible reading and apply its message, they become active subjects in God's project of liberation, which is the prophetic task of the church. Even if struggles against unequal power, injustice and oppression don't affect all ordinary readers directly, they still have a responsibility to fight against these structures, understanding these as part of God's work in the world. It is a call to the whole church community to take part in the struggle, which is prophetic in its act when the message is applied. The reading process requires accountability so that the non-poor does not abuse power. It must also make sure that that the Bible is interpreted in a balanced way where all voices are included and heard.

²³⁷ Myers 1999:14-15.

²³⁸ West 1993:78.

7.4. Empowerment

Quest For Supporting Structures

I want to elaborate on the matters raised by Zanele and Lalana; that there is a need for supporting structures and follow-ups for abused women in connection to CBS, the Tamar Campaign in particular. I will do this by looking more into the nature of empowerment, and the structures, as they seem to be a crucial part of such processes. We will see how this perspective is useful and confirms the opinions of Lalana and Zanele.

“Empowerment strategies are aimed at improving women’s status in many societies and, thus, imply cultural change. Such strategies are generally long term and must be tailored to specific social and cultural practices.”²³⁹ We have seen how crucial empowerment is to the process of transformation and liberation, confirming the process. The goal of empowerment is to

enable communities, individuals and families to read their reality and transform that reality in order to be less dependent on outside resources, services, and regulations and to be in control of their own destiny²⁴⁰

Meaningful change for women doesn’t occur unless women are actively involved in change processes and unless their positionality as women is central to defining needs, interests, and implementation strategies.²⁴¹

In our context these statements can teach us the importance of listening to voices like those of Lalana and Zanele. They are the ones who are to “take control of their own destiny” (confer quotation above), and who can define the needs for meaningful change. UC seems to allow these women to take control of the reading process (confer “take control of own destiny”), but they must also be allowed to express the needs they experience following the reading process. When a CBS enables a person like Zanele to realize that her hurt and abuse has been suppressed, it must also allow her to deal with it. This must happen in a safe place where support is also provided. The change that started during the CBS must also be taken to the next step, which in Zanele’s case was defined by the need for counselling and a Support Group.

Monkman’s Four Components of Empowerment

In the article “Training Women for Change and Empowerment” Monkman (1998) suggests four components, all equally important to the process of empowerment: economic or social empowerment, psychologically empowerment, cognitive empowerment, and political

²³⁹ Long, Messersmith 1998:160.

²⁴⁰ Kaseje 1991:3, in Philpott 1993:101.

²⁴¹ Monkman 1998:500.

empowerment.²⁴² Due to the limitation of this thesis I will not elaborate on the different functions of these components of empowerment, but only use them to emphasize the fact that the process of empowerment is complex and requires awareness in many different areas. Awareness in all these aspects of the women's reality - economic and socially, psychologically, cognitively and politically - affects the empowerment process.²⁴³ Monkman emphasizes the fact that women need more power to control their lives, to meet their practical and strategic needs, and to shape the worlds in which they live in ways that are not themselves oppressive. This is why all the components mentioned above are equally important to the process, and must work together.

Three Levels of Empowerment

In the book *Discussing Women's Empowerment*, three levels of empowerment are suggested to measure processes of change²⁴⁴, supporting Monkman's idea of the need for different processes to work together. These levels are, the immediate levels, the intermediate levels, and the deeper levels. The immediate levels refers to empowerment of the individual in terms of self-awareness and identity building, but also to how the individual perceives the interests and capacity to act on the basis of this. The intermediate level refers to the relationships prevailing in the personal, social, economic and political spheres of life. The deeper levels affect changes in the hidden structures that shape the distribution of resources and power in a society and reproduce it over time. "For any such change to translate into meaningful and sustainable processes of empowerment, it must ultimately encompass both individual and structural levels."²⁴⁵ In Zanele's case, changes in the immediate level had taken place, and she voices the "interest and capacity to act" (refer quote above), so that changes in the next level also can happen.

7.5. The Process of Empowerment

According to Monkman the process of empowerment requires awareness of one's own situation, skill acquisition that enables change, and working jointly in effecting change. All these aspects are in fact seen in the CBS process to different extents. We have also seen that women are empowered when they "change their ideas about the causes of their powerlessness,

²⁴² Monkman 1998:498.

²⁴³ For more comprehensive information about the four components of empowerment, see Monkman 1998:498-499.

²⁴⁴ Sida studies no 3 2004:26-27.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.;27.

when they recognize the systemic forces that oppress them, and when they act to change the conditions of their lives”.²⁴⁶ When women come to realize the injustice of violence and abuse during the participation of the Tamar Campaign, an important feature of the transformation process has taken place. This reflects change in the immediate levels of empowerment according to the theory mentioned above. This is awareness of one’s own situation, to use the words of Monkman. Skill acquisition, enabling change, is crucial for them to take the next step, which is to apply to their own lives this new knowledge about their situation. These are changes, which lead to the intermediate levels. For Zanele this could be going for counselling, and for a person infected with HIV it could be the joining of a Support Group. But what then if there are no counsellors or Support Groups available in that particular community? These must be concerns of the Ujamaa if they are to impact change through the whole process of transformation, and not only “leave them at the door”, to use the words of Zanele. (Confer interview with Zanele chapter six). The Ujamaa seems to be affecting change in the immediate levels of empowerment, whereas the intermediate levels and the deeper levels are conditioned by the changes in the immediate levels. If changes in the immediate levels fail, or are limited due to lack of supporting structures and follow-ups, the next intermediate and deeper levels will not be reached and the process of change will be weakened or even stop. Yet, transformation still takes place, to which extent being conditioned by the level of empowerment.

Bible Study In Amawoti

Seeing CBS as a process, empowering and changing people over time is the experience of CBS in the township of Amawoti, outside Durban city in KZN. Graham Philpott (1993) has done research on a particular CBS in Amawoti, a township community outside Durban in KZN. He followed one particular Bible Study Group (BSG) over the period of four years. His experiences from this research can teach us something important when it comes to taking seriously the needs for supporting structures and committing to work long-term with CBS groups. This is needed for transformation and liberation to take place in its fullest capacity according to the needs of the participants. It is important not to confuse this need with co-dependency, which implies that the participants become dependant on the resources provided through the BSG causing them to be passive objects. Rather, according to Philpott, the participants of this CBS reached a status of independency that changed the way they viewed

²⁴⁶ Morgen and Bookman 1988:4, in Monkman 1998:499.

the needs in their own community during the long process of the Bible studies. The participants were pro-active subjects of the processes taking place. “It emerged in a commitment to the struggle for justice in the community [...] There was a move from a concern for the practical needs of the community, to a commitment to the liberation of their community so that these needs can be met.”²⁴⁷ The CBS members also mention the importance of structures to be set up, which they understand to be,

one channel through which community empowerment takes place – through structures which are chosen by and are accountable to the community. The structures take responsibility for particular issues. In this way, people affected by a problem are involved in solving it. [...] It encourages group responsibility and action, and decreases the danger of individuals in the community developing power bases from which they oppress others²⁴⁸

Here we can see elements of the process of empowerment as being communal, something which, according to Monkman, is an important feature in the process. She believes that collective action has the potential to create a stronger voice and sustain a more powerful challenge to discriminatory structures, and to elicit a more adequate response. Experiences of a collective nature can be more dynamic and achieve greater results in empowering the participants and effecting positive social change.²⁴⁹ We can also see that the work of CBS, as a long process in Amawoti, touches on the different levels of empowerment, the immediate, the intermediate and the deeper level. I believe this can also be true in the case of women voicing their needs together for more sustainable supporting structures. It will enable them to continue the process of transformation and liberation in a protected way where their dignity is not violated. They are the ones who can force the process of change together so that all levels of empowerment are reached.

7.6. Summary And Conclusion of Part 2

I started the chapter by saying that the CBS has had influence on the women that I interviewed. Awareness of one’s own reality equals changes on the immediate and the intermediate levels of empowerment, depending on whether or not the person wants to act according to the increase of self-awareness. Self-awareness and empowerment impact the way the participants relate to their social context, which increases the power of the CBS method to also affect on a wider scale; “it is a transformed person who transforms his or her

²⁴⁷ Philpott 1993:82.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.;84-85.

²⁴⁹ Monkman 1998:499.

environment”²⁵⁰. In line with the theory of transformation represented by Myers we have seen that these features of the processes of transformation and liberation, awareness and empowerment, are crucial factors and also confirmations of the processes. In light of the four categories of transformation that I introduced, we have now seen that they are highly functional and fruitful in the contexts of the women. The women seem to be taking ownership of the Bible reading process through resources provided by the UC, and they have their roles affirmed in God’s project of liberation. This realization can serve as the beginning of the transforming process, as it is crucial to how they feel that the mediation role of the UC and the facilitators of CBS affirm their own realities. This again can empower them to use their voices to reach out to others, as much as uniting them in a communal voice. When ordinary people re-evaluate their Bible reading, it enables them to join in the communal voice against injustice and oppression. Accountability throughout the process of reading *with* keeps the relationships between the poor and the non-poor in balance, and securing the owning of the project to belong to the poor and oppressed.

The Power of Communal Voices

When a community unite together using their voices to address issues of injustice and oppression, they have the power to target the more hidden structural relations of class and gender. This would be empowerment on a deeper level, something that can follow the success of the other two levels of immediate and intermediate empowerment starting with the individual. Empowerment on a deeper level would imply transformation and liberation in its full extent and a result of a long-term process, which include the required supportive structures for those particular participants or community. Empowerment on a deeper level can be seen through the changes indicated in the CBS in the community of Amawoti.

We have also seen that the nature of this transformation and liberation described here is made visible by how the individual who voices his or her situation, and uses it actively, takes part in the prophetic call of the church. This is a call to the church located in society where “sinful structures trap and keep people oppressed and marginalized”.²⁵¹

It is impossible to imagine a transforming community without a transforming church in its midst. Such a church is in love with God and with all its neighbours, celebrating everything that is for life

²⁵⁰ Myers 1999:116.

²⁵¹ Ujamaa Centre, <http://www.ukzn.ac.za/sorat/ujamaa/context.htm> (Accessed 09.02.09)

and being a prophetic voice, telling the truth about everything that is against or that undermines life.²⁵²

This is exactly what the South African theologians who worked against Apartheid aimed at. Even in the aftermath of Apartheid they are still standing in the struggle, believing that they have a prophetic voice that are to be used. The UC is founded on the same theological presuppositions and also stands in the fight with the oppressed and marginalized, using the CBS method among others, to bring about liberation and abundant life for all.²⁵³

But what we have learned through the stories of the women, who are part of this prophetic voice of the church, is that their needs are not fully met in the CBS. This has consequences for the extent of both individual and social transformation and liberation. With the use of the CBS method UC succeeds to empower on the immediate levels contributing towards transformation and liberation for the individual. But the intermediate levels of empowerment will require more supportive structures for the process to continue for some, and be crucial if the deep level of empowerment can be reached and be contributing to social transformation and liberation. Seen from this perspective true individual and social transformation and liberation must be a long-term process pursuing empowerment on all levels, - and with all components working together to address the reality of women from poor and oppressed communities.

²⁵² Myers 1999:115.

²⁵³ Ujamaa Centre, <http://www.ukzn.ac.za/sorat/ujamaa/context.htm> (Accessed 09.02.09)

8. General Conclusion

This concluding chapter aims at bringing together the findings in the former chapters, and answering the main research question; *Does the method known as CBS contribute towards individual and social transformation and liberation when used in Bible Study Groups in and around PMB, SA? And if so, what is the nature of such liberation and transformation?* This question has been studied both with regard to the Ujamaa Centre itself and to the experiences of eleven women who have participated in Contextual Bible Study.

Process

A recurring theme in the thesis can be summed up in the word *process*. This refers both to the nature of my research, which has been a *process*, and to how Contextual Bible Study contributes towards transformation and liberation as a *process*. Based on the experiences and voices of eleven women, we have seen how creating awareness and the *process* of empowerment are both crucial in this respect. According to Myers, transformation means change, which also implies a lengthy *process*. For all the women I interviewed, Contextual Bible Study has impacted their *process* of dealing with self, with life in general, and with specific struggles. Since Contextual Bible Study is conducted in groups, the fellowship – including the interaction of its members – has provided them with a safe place, encouraging these processes and promoting positive change in their lives through awareness creation and empowerment. It has also provided them with the necessary tools and resources to continue these *processes* in their own capacity.

This research has also been a long journey in itself, trying to make sense of all the elements of change and processes. Everything seemed to be connected with everything, and it has therefore been challenging to find a functional structure – in which to present the topic in an adequate way, which at the same time makes sense to the reader. The social anthropologist Clifford Geertz describes this challenge as follows in relation to culture:

Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning.²⁵⁴

My research has looked at concepts of transformation and liberation in order to understand their nature, in relation to the cultures that surround them, and to the people experiencing them and being impacted by them. Culture understood as webs of significance, requires interpretive

²⁵⁴ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* 1973:5.

analysis in search of meaning. This thesis has been a journey in search of meaningful concepts, – that can help us to understand the nature of Contextual Bible Study, and its influence on the women involved. I have not found any law of nature or existing theory adequate to cover the complexity of the matter. I have found that nothing can scientifically measure the impact, nature or degree of awareness – and empowerment taking place in the women’s lives and personalities. Only the women themselves can give an accurate account of their experiences, – sharing their stories and ways of understanding their own reality. Therefore the theoretical framework used in the thesis can only throw light on the different processes that the women are subjects to and part of, and which I observed and experienced through the empirical study. They represent a small part of the impact, which Contextual Bible Study has on its participants. Yet it is obvious that the impact is of transformational and liberating nature, both on an individual and a social level.

A Transformational Journey Towards Liberation

Transformation means change, thereby implying a process towards something. The result of empowerment is transformation, and the result of transformation is liberation. Yet the process of transformation conditions the power and level of empowerment and therefore also influences the result. These things must work dynamically together and be regarded as parallel processes and considered equally important. But no matter the degree of impact or visible results, the women have all been found to be in the process towards liberation. Liberation implies being free from oppression and oppressive structures existing in a culture. The level of empowerment, being the immediate, the intermediate or the deeper level, will be conditioned by the nature of its influence. The Contextual Bible Study, being one such influence, has evidently result in transformation and liberation. The women have all been transformed in one way or another, and they are all in the process towards liberation, yet in different places of the process. Some have come further than others, depending on the levels of empowerment and awareness that have taken place. For some, it is on the immediate level, relating only to the individual itself. Others have reached the intermediate level, impacting their relationships with others. Some even find themselves on a deeper level, where impact on the social and cultural dimension happens. Despite of this, the women are all part of the transformational journey towards liberation; a journey conditioned by their socio-cultural situation and by the different ways Contextual Bible Study was carried out and addressed their situations.

Some of the women lack access to supportive structures in their community, support groups, church or other fellowships, which can provide the safe place needed for creating security,

facilitating growth and openness for sharing their stories. These supportive structures will be more important for some than for others. Nonetheless they are needed. Whether structures have been provided by the Ujamaa Centre or not, the women are all on a transformational journey - even for some only in the beginning phase. This journey is both individual, and social, in that it takes place in community. Bible reading as a communal process in Contextual Bible Study is truly a powerful tool, providing that safe place for growth and change to take place, and it provides the participants with the needed resources and tools to continue the journey towards liberation through awareness and empowerment.

Hence my thesis has provided empirical evidence to affirm the first part of the main research question, - the method of Contextual Bible Study does indeed contribute to individual and social transformation. Further I have also been able to identify the nature of the process of liberation and transformation that is initiated and facilitated by Contextual Bible Study, and to show how closely related this process is linked to the social-political and theological context within which the South African women live. Having listened to the voices and experiences of the eleven women we may conclude that both the vision of the Ujamaa Centre and its objectives of Contextual Bible Study have been fulfilled in their lives. My empirical evidence has thus verified that Contextual Bible Study as a method operates both adequately and legitimately with regard to assisting oppressed and marginalized women in their transformational journeys towards individual and social liberation.

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Appendix 1: Interview Guide

Thesis Project in Master of Global Studies, School of Mission and Theology, Misjonsveien 34, 4024 Stavanger, Norway, 2008-2009.

Thesis Topic: “Contextual Bible Study in South Africa – a Contribution to Liberation and Transformation? An Investigation of the Study of the Bible among Poor and Marginalized Women in the Townships of Pietermaritzburg, with Particular Focus on Its Implications for Individual and Social Change.”

Master Student: Marit Breen

Thesis Advisor: Thor Strandenæs

Preamble:

Oral Information to be Given to Potential Interviewees for Their Consent to Participating in Qualitative Interviews

- Dear respondent, I am a master student from Norway studying in the School of Mission and Theology, Stavanger, Norway. As part of my master thesis project in Global Studies, I am currently collecting data from informants in the townships of Pietermaritzburg.
- The aim of my project is (1) to study the contextual bible study methods of the *Ujamaa* Centre for Biblical and Theological Community Development and Research, (2) how these methods are implemented in bible study groups, and (3) how this kind of bible and the bible study groups affect the lives of their participants. My focus is on female participants.
- One of my methods is to interview female participants in bible study groups about the nature and effects of this kind of bible study. I therefore request you kindly to contribute to my work by responding to some questions in an interview.

- I guarantee that your identity will not be disclosed, and that the information you give me will be treated discreetly and anonymised in my thesis. By the end of the project period (June 15, 2009) all tape recordings and electronic transcripts will be deleted. Further, you may withdraw your participation in this project at any time if you so decide.
- If you give me your consent to participating I will proceed to ask you some questions which I ask you kindly to respond to.

Interview Guide

Key words: Liberation and Transformation.

Categories: The Fellowship / Bible Study Group (BSG), the Bible Texts, Individual and Social Change

Part One: Introduction – Relevant Background Information

- First I would like to ask you some questions relating to yourself, your family situation and your work.
1. How old are you?
 2. Are you married, or have you been married? (Yes / No)
 - If no, are you in a (committed) relationship?
 - If no, do you live with your parents / family?
 3. Do you have any children? If yes, how many and how old are they?
 4. Do you work for salary – and if so, what is your job? Are you a student – and if so, what studies are you engaged in?
 5. How will you describe your health situation?
 6. How will you describe the community which you now live in?
 7. How will you describe your role in your household and in your community?
 8. Do you belong to a Christian church? (Yes / No)
 - If yes, since when?
 - If yes, what motivated you to join the Bible Study Group (BSG)?
 - If no, what motivated you to join the Bible Study Group (BSG)?

Part Two: The Bible Study Group (BSG) / Fellowship

- Second, I would like to ask you some questions relating to the BSG which you attend.
9. For how long have you been part of this Bible Study Group? And how frequently have you attended?
 10. How did you get to know about it?

11. Can you please tell me why you have found participation in the BSG important or useful for you?
12. Will you please describe for me the method of bible study which you make use of in the BSG?
13. What was your motivation for joining it? What kind of expectations did you have? Did you have any interests in particular?
14. Did you find that the BSG meets your expectations? (Yes & No)
 - If yes, please elaborate.
 - If no, please elaborate.
15. Do you find that the Bible study program addresses your own life situation relevantly? (Yes / No)
 - If yes, in what ways?
 - If no, why does it not address your life situation?
16. Is there anything in particular that you think you can learn from those who have studied the Bible in depth and who organize the BSG? Please elaborate.

Part Three: The Bible Texts

- Third, I would like to ask you some questions concerning bible texts which you have studied in the BSG.
17. How will you describe your own Bible reading before joining the group?
 18. How will you describe your own Bible reading after you joined the group?
 19. Are there any texts in the Bible which have influenced you in particular?
 - If so, which ones are they?
 - How will you describe the nature of this influence?
 20. Do you consider these biblical texts to be relevant to your own situation? (Yes/No)
 - If yes, in what way(s) do you think they are relevant?
 - If no, why do you think they are irrelevant?
 21. Do you find that the biblical texts which you have studied have helped you in handling your life in any ways?
 - If so, how have they been of help to you, and in which areas of life?
 22. Are there elements in the texts that you find easy to identify with, such as their historical setting, the people described in the text, or other elements?

23. Will you say that there are connections between the texts and your own life? (Yes / No)
- If yes, can you please name these connections for me?
 - If no, why do you think that there are no such connections?
24. How will you say that the Bible study program contributed to your own reading of the Bible? What do you think have been the strengths, and what have been the weaknesses in this contribution?
25. Do you think that you yourself have something to contribute with towards those who are especially educated in the Bible which you can share with them? Please elaborate.
26. Do you think that you yourself have something to contribute with towards other people whom you relate to, such as members of your family or people in your community? Please elaborate.

Part Four: Individual and Social Change

- Fourth, I would like to ask you some questions relating to how the BSG has affected your life.
27. Will you say that this BSG has affected you in any ways? (Yes / No)
- If no, what are your reasons for thinking so?
 - If yes, has the BSG affected you in terms of how you regard yourself as human? Please elaborate
 - If yes, has the BSG affected you in terms of how you regard yourself in relation to others? Please elaborate
 - If yes, has your participation in the BSG had an effect on your relation to your community?
 - If yes, has your participation in the BSG had an effect on how you think of or see the future in any way?
28. Have you discovered any particular changes taking place in your own life during the time you have been in the study group? If there have been, please elaborate.
- If so, will you say that this change / these changes in your life has / have any influence on your life in your household and / or in your community? Please elaborate on the nature of this influence.
29. While you have been a participant in the study group have you discovered any particular changes taking place in the lives of the other group members?
- If so, will you say that this change / these changes has / have had influence on their life in their households and / or in the community? Please elaborate on the nature of this influence.

30. Do you regard either the bible study, the fellowship, the bible texts, or all, as being important to you? Please elaborate.

Apendix 2: The Tamar Story, 2.Sam 13.1-22

Amnon and Tamar

Some time passed. David's son Absalom had a beautiful sister whose name was Tamar; and David's son Amnon fell in love with her. Amnon was so tormented that he made himself ill because of his sister Tamar, for she was a virgin and it seemed impossible to Amnon to do anything to her. But Amnon had a friend whose name was Jonadab, the son of David's brother Shimeah; and Jonadab was a very crafty man. He said to him, "Oh son of the king, why are you so haggard morning after morning? Will you not tell me?" Amnon said to him, "I love Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister." Jonadab said to him, "Lie down on your bed, and pretend to be ill; and when your father comes to see you, say to him, 'Let my sister Tamar come and give me something to eat, and prepare the food in my sight, so that I may see it and eat it from her hand.'" "So Amnon lay down, and pretended to be ill; and when the king came to see him, Amnon said to the king, "Please let my sister Tamar come and make a couple of cakes in my sight, so that I may eat from her hand."

When David sent home to Tamar, saying "Go to your brother Amnon's house, and prepare food for him." So Tamar went to her brother Amnon's house, where he was lying down. She took dough, kneaded it, made cakes in his sight, and baked the cakes. Then she took the pan and set them out before him, but he refused to eat. Amnon said, "Send out everyone from me." So everyone went out from him. Then Amnon said to Tamar, "Bring the food into the chamber, so that I may eat from your hand." So Tamar took the cakes she had made, and brought them into the chamber to Amnon her brother. But when she brought them near him to eat, he took hold of her, and said to her, "Come, lie with me, my sister." She answered him, "No my brother, do not force me; for such a thing is not done in Israel; do not do anything so vile! As for me, where could I carry my shame? And as for you, you would be as one of the scoundrels in Israel. Now therefore, I beg you, speak to the king; for he will not withhold me from you." But he would not listen to her; and being stronger than she, he forced her and lay with her.

Then Amnon was seized with a very great loathing for her; indeed, his loathing was even greater than the lust he had felt for her. Amnon said to her, "Get out!" But she said to him, "No, my brother; for this wrong in sending me away is greater than the other that you did to me." But he would not listen to her. He called the young man who served him and said, "Put

this woman out of my presence, and bolted the door after her.” (Now she was wearing a long robe with sleeves; for this is how the virgin daughters of the king were clothed in earlier times.) So his servant put her out, and bolted the door after her. But Tamar put ashes on her head, and tore the long robe that she was wearing; she put her hand on her head, and went away, crying aloud as she went.

Her brother Absalom said to her, “Has Amnon your brother been with you? Be quiet for now, my sister; he is your brother; do not take this to heart.” So Tamar remained, a desolate woman, in her brother Absalom’s house. When the king David heard of all these things, he became very angry, but he would not punish his son Amnon, because he loved him, for he was his firstborn. But Absalom spoke to Amnon neither good nor bad; for Absalom hated Amnon, because he had raped his sister Tamar.²⁵⁵

²⁵⁵ The Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version 1989.