**Women in God’s creation**

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In this speech I want to look at the women in God’s creation from African Women theology[[1]](#footnote-1) viewpoint. The image of God in women is a controversial issue. The reason as to why this may be an issue is the literally reading and interpretation of the second account of the creation story, in which woman is given a second class position. **Adding to this is the reinforcement of cultural norms on women.** According to such reading, woman sprung forth from man, as she was created from the man’s “rib” and that she is not equal to man (who is created in God’s image) and cannot have God’s image. This brings the question “Is the woman created in God’s image?” The answer to this question is provided scripturally. A comparative reading of the first creation story with the second one clearly eliminates any doubt on woman’s image. According to the first creation story, woman was created simultaneously with the man in the same image of God. She therefore has equal power and glory with the masculine. She is equally responsible for the perpetuation of creation. Moreover, the image of God vested in a man as well as woman make them equally responsible for procreation, as God is responsible for life and creation. Together with man, she was given dominion over every living thing. Nowhere in the creation stories was man given dominion over the woman. Man and woman share in this power of dominion in which they stand as commanders of the creation. They reflect God’s image in their shared being. Together, they complement one another. Therefore, they need cooperation with one another.

On the other hand, the literal reading of the Bible is harmful. According to this, women are degraded to an inferior being. If the bible is the cause of woman’s perception all over the world, we have a problem. We need to take caution against the literal reading of the Bible since it was written in androcentric language that favours men to women. What then do we have to do? Discard the Bible? Or accept the literal interpretation of the Bible and live with bowed heads? Certainly not. What then do we need to do?

Another reality women need to remember is that the Bible in many instances is the tool of oppression, but it also has liberating elements in itself. has the powerful strength for both the oppressed and the oppressor. We then need to read it with suspicion since its culture is also different from ours.

The second account of the creation story is not negating in itself, but clearly points out woman’s task and responsibility. A careful reading of this account shows woman’s powerful role, that of a helper. Why is the woman given this role? The term “helper” can be defined and interpreted in various ways. A helper is someone who “supports, upholds or backs” others. This means that in order to give support to others one needs to be strong, have the ability to render advice as need be, to bear burdens of herself and of others on her shoulders and to accomplish tasks, which the other is unable to do. Being the helper, women are multi tasked and are able to do to different tasks simultaneously. In this, women reflect the omniscience of God whose image she is. Such reading of the Bible help us elevates the women and their position in the creation. Therefore, taking into account that women are the majority readers of the Bible we need to reread the Bible with liberating eyes and reevaluate our cultures as well.

Women as sisters sharing burdens

We also need to realize that women from different parts of the world are sisters have similar experiences and that we need to learn from one another by sharing our experiences with one another. In this way they can exchange advice. This also facilitates creation of peer groups. Story telling of women is the most important way of transporting experiences and women need to be encouraged to share their stories with other women from different contexts. Stories highlight women’s needs as human beings, needs on which they need to act for their own emancipation. Story telling shows the importance of dialogue among women of different levels of society/societies.

Own experience

Stories such as the above mentioned ones are taken to support women’s subordination with the result that unwritten rules are constructed in communities to confine women’s movement and worth. Women make up a society together with men, but they are not regarded as equal to men. This becomes apparent in the way societies construct gender roles, ascribing roles to women that are seen as inferior. Such roles most often confine women to the domestic sphere.

Taken from my community, gender roles mostly deny women public functions and keep them under male leadership. The consequence of this is that women and married women in particular find it so difficult outside of their homes when they occupy especially leadership positions in the society. Women often are pressurized by their communities as well as by their colleagues at work due to their gender.

The solution to this problem could be: to reevaluate culture and reject what is denying women their full humanity and remind them that they not cower behind men in any activity. Women need to utilize their presence in church and society fully, without guilt and live out our God-given gifts. Since communities contain both men and women, it is important that transforming a society requires the co-operation of both men and women.

Does God display one gender only? Can God be referred to as “Mother”?

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1. African women’s Theology is a type of feminist theology, a branch of liberation theology. Since feminist theology originated in America, it advocated for the liberation of white American and European women. In order to make feminist theology meaningful to women in different contexts other than the white American and European contexts, African women came up with a theology that could address their own experiences. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)