

**ABUSE IN THE CHURCH:
AN APPEAL AND CHALLENGE TO PASTORAL MINISTRY**

By

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I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted to any institution for a degree.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

DEDICATION

It is with the greatest of joy and pleasure that I dedicate this study to the following people, who by letting their light shine into my life shaped my life experience and my own life story:

1. My late mother, Rose, who, even after 30 years in spite of being abused, I remember with the sound of her laughter and her always constructive words in my ears.
2. My husband, Nico, for his loving, caring, support and encouragement.
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5. Friends who supported me throughout this venture. Too many of you to name here. Space won't be enough.
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SUMMARY

This multidisciplinary study, which includes Practical Theology and also insights from Psychology and Sociology, investigates experiences of abuse in social structures such as the church. My epistemological approach is social constructionist.

Psychological theories employed are the social constructivist personal construct theory of George Kelly and Gergen's social constructionist theorization. Kelly's theory posits that people construct their own realities in social settings, such as family, culture and everyday social structures. This takes place on a cognitive level through the nervous system. By means of Gergen's social constructionist theorization the role that social constructions (beliefs and practices) play in (often unintentional) abusive practices in social structures as well as the experiences of victims, is explained.

Sociological theories included are Berger and Luckmann's theory of the social construction of reality as well as Anthony Giddens' structuration theory, which emphasizes agency (human action) and structure tensions in social structures. I argue that processes such as typification, reification and structuration, as explained by these theorists can result in abusive actions and behaviours (often unintentional) and experiences of abuse by people in groups. In addition, the lives and teachings of Jesus and Paul are examined from a social constructionist perspective.

A qualitative investigation was conducted with participants who claim to have experienced abuse in groups. Their stories are used as case studies. A narrative thematic analysis reveals that dominant discourses, for example patriarchal worldviews and belief systems which go unexamined, are often imposed on others which results in experiences of abuse. The study is therefore embedded in a postmodern, social constructionist narrative framework constructed from all three disciplines.

Traditions, belief systems and practices should be reflected upon, carefully examined and revisited, and not simply accepted as "reality". Reality is

constructed in social interaction and relationship and should be open to review and change should the need arise, prompted by, for example, unacceptable phenomena, such as experiences of abuse in the church.

The findings of this study are that the church and pastoral care ministry are often experienced as uncaring and abusive. Underlying dominant discourses should be exposed, since they contribute to practices that cause psychological, social and physical traumatising and consequences for people. Pastoral care is often neglected because these actions and behaviours are regarded as "normal" and even "biblical". People are labelled and blamed. Male domination, objectification, humiliation, abuse of power and control, misuse of knowledge and truth claims are the consequence. The study revealed a strong correlation between participants' experiences of abuse and the social constructionist constructs. Therefore social constructionist theory offers an adequate explanation for experiences and actions of abuse in the church.

KEY TERMS:

Intra-disciplinary

Postmodernism

Social Constructionism

Narrative; Discourse

Reflection

Abuse

Dominant discourse

Alternative discourse

Dialogue

DEDICATION

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Modalities of violence

Violence manifests in many forms, such as war, terrorism, murder, rape, abuse. The common denominator is that all forms of violence deprive people of their dignity and freedom (Kirk-Duggan 2006:2). On both the societal and the personal level violence causes disruption in the core of people's being, their sense of meaning, language, their sense of community and their experience of life (De Beer 2007:5). On a personal level it affects people spiritually and religiously, mentally, emotionally, psychologically and physically (Van Aarde 2012:49). Violence that is perpetrated against women is often experienced on the level of their sex and sexuality. Much of this kind of violence manifests in the form of abuse.

Some acts of violence are overt, can be recognized as unacceptable, and are often, though not always, punished. Other forms of violence are hidden. The violence is not exposed, the perpetrator is not made accountable, the victim is not vindicated and as a consequence the healing process is more difficult. From a moral (see Lyotard 1989:132-133, 134; Levinas 1985:19-34, 93-102, 111-112) and biblical point of view Van Aarde (2012:49) describes this situation as follows:

Some acts of violence ... are never mentioned, are denied or are even psychologically suppressed. They may find expression verbally, in gestures expressing attitude, or in the written word in newspapers or in magazines. They can happen in the confines of private households, in public, or in the form of a collective endeavour in a system form. Any deed, attitude or master narrative

that ignores its subjects as individuals and discriminates against people and affects their dignity cannot be justified from a biblical theological point of view nor can it be morally justified.

Philosopher Martin Heidegger (1977:116; cf Borradori 2003:22) emphasizes the necessity of self-reflection – scrutinizing one's own presuppositions and biases in order to ascertain how these affect one's life, even though one might not be aware of it. Philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1976:89) emphasized that it is necessary to reflect on the phenomenon of violence and Emmanuel Levinas (1985:24) explains why: because traumatic and crisis experiences often constitute the location where reflection begins, there where people struggle to find words with which to describe the situation. Fischer (1997:32) puts it as follows: "The thinking is singular, silent, yet also difficult and demanding, which beats a path through the commotion of our times. It opens us to what happens before which we are without measure, destitute, exposed to the weight/the thought of existence."

It is through reflection that one finds a way through the disruptions of life (De Beer 2007:8). This study aims to reflect on abuse in the church as a form of violence. This necessitates open and honest self-reflection by the church as faith community as the first step towards the healing not only of the victims of this covert kind of abuse, but also of the faith community as such.

Victims of abuse find themselves in crisis. A life crisis (see Frankl 1979; Fromm 1976) manifests in various dimensions, such as a crisis of being, of meaning, of language, of social relationships (De Beer 2007:9-10; cf Ganzevoort and Visser 2007:294). A crisis of being affects people in their very existence. A crisis of meaning manifests when people have lost their sense of life as worthwhile, meaningful. They become apathetic and cynical. From a narrative point of view this constitutes a break in their life story (Ganzevoort and Visser 2007:294). Crisis leaves one speechless, voiceless. It becomes a crisis of language. Words lose their meaning and become empty. This leaves the person powerless (De Beer 2007:9). Crisis also manifests in people's social interaction. It destroys the experience of belonging and togetherness. This then has an effect

on the community and community life. In a community in crisis some members are left voiceless and powerless, people view one another with suspicion rather than love, which means that cohesion is compromised. When love no longer binds people together, the door is wide open to violence and abuse.

The impact of violence and abuse is destructive to people and communities, including the faith community. Life becomes meaningless and hopeless, social cohesion is shattered, love disappears. De Beer (2007:10) is of the opinion that remedying this state of affairs is the responsibility of all, and he emphasizes that institutions should take the lead. If the church as institution rises to this challenge, it will have to begin with honest self-reflection. The faith community and believers can easily sustain the illusion that all is well in a believing loving church. If this illusion is maintained, neither the individuals who have been hurt by the church nor the church itself will be healed. The church consists of people and human nature does not consist of only positive traits. The negative and destructive side of humanity will also manifest in the church. It can only be addressed if open and honest reflection and self-reflection is a priority.

In his essay, "Violence and language", philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1976) points out that violence and language are two core factors of being human. He puts it as follows: "[T]he confrontation of violence with language underlies all of the problems which we can pose concerning man. This is precisely what overwhelms us. Their encounter occupies such a vast field because violence and language each occupy the totality of the human field" (Ricoeur 1976:88). He sees human fallibility as twofold: interior and exterior. In their very being people are fallible and because of their fallibility they are open to evil from the outside. He puts it as follows: "Essentially this: that the possibility of moral evil is inherent in man's constitution" (Ricoeur 1967:203). This means that no one is exempt – not even believers, the faith community of the institutional church. According to De Beer (2007:12) reflection on violence should therefore be done from the vantage point of co-culpability and not co-innocence. When co-culpable human beings reflect on violence, it will not only be self-reflection (interior), but also reflection on what is going on in the world (exterior). Evil is in the world and has an impact on

the world. It is the explanation of much of what goes on in the world and in human beings. Baudrillard (2002:13-14) cautions why the illusion of sole goodness should not be nurtured and describes the reality of good and evil as follows:

The crucial point lies in the total misunderstanding on the part of Western philosophy, on the part of the Enlightenment [one could add: on the part of Western religion and religious practice], of the relation between good and evil. We believe naively that the progress of Good, its advance in all fields (the sciences, technics and technology, democracy, human rights [one could add: faith], corresponds to a defeat of Evil. No one seems to have understood that Good and Evil advance together, as part of the same movement. The triumph of the one does not eclipse the other ... In metaphysical terms, Evil is regarded as an accidental mishap, but this axiom from which all Manichaeian forms of struggle of Good against Evil derive, is illusory. Good does not conquer Evil, not indeed does the reverse happen: they are at once both irreducible to each other and intrinsically interrelated. Ultimately, Good could thwart Evil only by ceasing to be Good since, by seizing for itself global monopoly of power, it gives rise, by that very act, to a blowback of a proportionate violence.

Baudrillard (2002:13-14)

Ricoeur (1967:222) concurs that good and evil should be contemplated together, since human beings are predisposed to both. When this balance is not maintained and the illusion of "only good" is cultivated, it is as though evil regains a kind of invisible autonomy and advances exponentially (De Beer 2007:14). This could be what is happening in the church when the illusion of good is fostered at the expense of an honest reflection on the reality of the situation. Human beings have the potential to do both good and evil, and in every situation they have the responsibility to choose which way they will go – the constructive or the destructive option. This will not necessarily be easy. What they choose will

depend to a large extent on the cultural milieu in which they have been socialized and by which they have been conditioned (see De Beer 2007:15). This is another reason why honest and open self-reflection is necessary if the church were to really face up to the reality of damage that is being done to people in and by the faith community, and work towards the healing of these individuals, the faith community and the church as institution.

Honesty with regard to human fallibility and the human potential to do both good and evil is not easy to face, however, especially not by a community and institution that are committed to doing and being good and want to believe of themselves that they are getting it right. If the church chooses to look the other way rather than to reflect self-critically on the reality of the situation, it amounts to camouflaging the gravity of the reality of violence and abuse that also exist within its walls. By doing so the situation is exacerbated and an environment is created in which potential violence can become manifest and can even flourish (see De Beer 2007:15).

Honest reflection and critical self-reflection are needed for transformation to take place – most importantly a transformation of attitudes, of the current rhetoric and emphases in the church in order that a life-giving culture can be created and nurtured in the church – a culture in which meaningful being, a voice, empowerment and a sense of community and belonging can be fostered (cf De Beer 2007:16, 18). Philosopher Martin Heidegger (1976:181) expresses the hope that reflection and questioning will open the door to what is of vital importance in all things and all destinations. He is cautious, however. Even when the highest level of reflection is reached, it will be no more than a preparation for the encouragement that people of this age need (Heidegger 1976:182). Walther Benjamin (2002) is more positive and believes that violence-free situations are possible. He puts it as follows: "Non-violent agreement is possible wherever a civilized outlook allows the use of unalloyed means of agreement like courtesy, sympathy, peacableness, trust, and whatever else ... the proper sphere of understanding, language (Benjamin 2002:244). That true social transformation has taken place can be seen where oppression and violence no longer have free

reign, where they have been incapacitated. In order for this to become a possibility, open and honest communication and information are necessary (De Beer 2007:19-20). Where there is an awareness of the damage being done, a new discourse against violence and abuse can replace the old discourse which created the space for violence and abuse to flourish. The point of departure is that changing a culture, be it that of the faith community or of broader society, is a social and communal enterprise. A new sense of spirituality, morality and meaning is to be created. Dialogue, conscientization and the formation of alternative discourses are the remedy to violence (De Beer 2007:21). It requires a different way of being, doing and believing together where human might is replaced by collective human power/empowerment (see Lévy 1997:57-89).

Transformation begins in the innermost circle, with the self, the own group. A critical reflection on presuppositions and prejudices could lead to a new transformed consciousness, and this, in turn can foster new attitudes and behaviours. Such a transformed consciousness will be characterized by a sense of community, creative language and love. In a transformed community new meanings can be constructed (see De Beer 2007:21). Psychologist Victor Frankl (1979:22) emphasizes the healing power of meaning. According to Erich Fromm, the art of loving (Fromm 1975) is the answer to every problem of human existence and the art of being (Fromm 1993) moves people away from selfishness and egotism to spiritual joy and fulfilment. In the institutional dynamic De Beer (2007:23) cautions that one should distinguish between authentic love and the pretence of love which is characterised by oppression. Such pretence is a distorted form of love which does more damage than good.

1.2 Patriarchy as socio-cultural masternarrative

The Christian Bible originated in a patriarchal context. The socio-cultural master-narrative that resulted from that had a profound, if often invisible impact on the Christian church over the ages. The reason for the invisibility of the strands of patriarchy that are tightly woven into the fabric of the Christian faith community is that it is regarded simply as “the way things are”, or even “the way God wants it

to be”. One does not meddle with the given reality. Phyllis Bird (1994:333) describes the development of this socio-cultural patriarchal narrative and its consequences for women as follows:

The Bible is the product of patriarchal society, inscribing patriarchal models of faith and action in normative writings. It is also an androcentric document, viewing the world through male eyes and assuming men’s experience as the norm. Its portraits of women are men’s portraits, and it allows us not unmediated access to women’s words or to the world of women’s experience. Its view of human nature is consequently deficient, and distorted. Can its portrait of the divine be any more adequate?

Though this male-dominated world has been the given reality throughout the ages, it has always been incongruent with women’s experience – a fact which is recognized and acknowledged more readily today. In spite of this insight in recent times New Testament scholar Pheme Perkins (1993:91) points out that churches still use the Bible as canon to provide the norms by means of which to exercise social control. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (1979:23) puts it as follows: “On this level the Bible often functions as ideological justification of the moral, doctrinal or institutional interest of the Church.” In a male-dominated world, social control will obviously serve male interests. However, such a manipulative and manipulated theology will not survive in today’s postmodern world. By the same token, the instrumental use of the canon to exercise control does not embody the gospel message of love and mutual respect to which the church subscribes. Consequences of such control of one sex over another are gender-based violence and discrimination.

Joan Laird (1989:430) uses the concept “socio-cultural narrative” to enter into dialogue with contemporary culture. A socio-cultural narrative regulates society. It reflects the values of society and defines and allocates roles to people. The socio-cultural narratives may seem acceptable and sound good and right, but if one listens carefully another story can be heard faintly – the narratives of

women that are in discord with the dominant narrative, because women do not necessarily experience goodness, rightness or fairness. The socio-cultural narrative represents the dominant value system of society and becomes a masternarrative. Other voices are silenced, other stories negated. The contra-narrative is difficult to hear.

1.3 Deconstructing the gender-bias mentality

Feminist criticism aims to deconstruct the gender-bias mentality in society according to which more power, acceptance and respect are allocated to people who belong to categories such as male, heterosexual, wealthy, educated, young, healthy (Bons-Storm 1996:25-26). Elizabeth Janeway (1980:13) puts it as follows: “What women want is a world that offers more than two choices – male role, female role, and nothing else.” She points out that the “feminist project” is not just about expanding the possibilities and choices for women in society, but “to change a worldview”. She adds: “The ability to add new perceptions, purposes, and goals to the dynamics of social interaction is not something that the powerful expect from any of the weak; but the powerful are wrong” (Janeway 1980:14). The difference between the power of men and that of women in Western cultures and societies is not an innocuous matter (cf Bons-Storm 1996:25). Profound suffering is the result of an imbalance of power. In a patriarchal system many women fall victim to verbal and physical violence, the latter of which often includes sexual violence. Even silencing women is a form of violence perpetrated by those with power against those the powerful regard as powerless. Hierarchies can force people into silence. According to the patriarchal value system a man’s place is in the public domain where important decisions are made, and women’s place is in the private sphere where the physical needs of others are met.

The disparity between the sexes remains one of the pressing problems of our times – in some cultures even more vital than in others, because often women’s lives are at stake. In her book, *Beyond power: On women, men, and morals*, Marilyn French (1984:442-444) emphasizes the following aspects

necessary for a society which can be a healthy environment for both women and men:

- the humanity of women is to be respected;
- the equality of the sexes is to be recognized and accepted;
- there should be equality between aspects of human existence that have traditionally been associated with women and those traditionally associated with men;
- the inseparability of personal and political values should be accepted;
- the gap between values reflected in policies and the values reflected in human behaviour and systems should be condemned.

Symmetrical relationships are not only the ideal for creating a better and more fair society, but from a Christian perspective this is also the more ethical route to take. The violence resulting from dominance should be exposed as unchristian – not only sexual abuse, but also the many other forms of violence and abuse that are to be found not only in society but also in churches. Conscientization with regard to the socio-cultural narrative which is still one of male dominance is of the essence. Awareness of injustice and suffering will be the motivation for people, especially those who believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ, to transform the current reality to one which better embodies the values of the kingdom of God as taught and lived by Jesus.

1.4 Research gap

1.4.1 What happens to the abused in the church?

In spite of changes in pastoral care practice over the years, persistent themes in pastoral care ministry are: “... careful attention, theologically informed diagnosis, and compassionate support or intervention” (McClure 2012:273). Gerkin (1997:100) describes pastoral care as being “surrounded, enfolded, ‘nested’ so to speak – in a living community of faith and care.” A theology rooted in a reality

can either open up new possibilities for love and community, or it can manifest the shadow side of tradition and be misused or misunderstood only to confuse and deprive people of their freedom (Swinton 2000:102). Belief-practices can on the one hand be beneficial to people or, on the other hand, discourage healing and well-being. Therefore awareness of power structures in churches is necessary (Dunlap 2009:12). The same goes for pastoral practices. Some are conducive to healing and well-being, whereas other pastoral practices are uncaring and unhelpful. Often the problem lies with the attitude of the pastoral caregiver (see Wicks, Parsons and Capps 2003:299; McClure 2012:274).

My personal experiences and observations as a lifelong church-goer include the positive and negative aspects of the faith community and pastoral caregiving. The positive side was expected, but the negative experience was unexpected and left me traumatized, grieving for the loss of my church family and sense of dignity. It took a long time for me to work through this emotionally, communally and spiritually. As a Christian and professional counsellor, I am increasingly faced with stories of abuse in various forms - also in the church context. Such experiences often force people to leave, some of whom vow never to have anything to do with anything “churchlike” or “Christian” ever again. Others go to other churches with unresolved emotional baggage which can lead to further difficulties and relational problems (Tracy 2005:73-127; cf Van Vonderen 1995:118-126) that have a snowball-effect of further trauma and hurt (see Poling 1991:101-110).

Much of the pain inflicted in churches is probably not intentional and deliberate on the part of the so-called perpetrators, but is a consequence of dominant socio-cultural narratives (see Freedman and Combs 1996:32-33, 38-40, 68-72). Not only the socio-cultural narratives, but also belief-practices are often left unexamined (McClure 2012:274). The perpetrators are more often than not sincere in their faith, and believe that they are living in a way that is pleasing to God. On the receiving end of abusive behaviour and actions are women, minority groups or those who for various reasons are unable to stand up against powerful people and systems.

“Doing church” – the way in which people participate in and practise what they know as church – is supposed to serve a mutually beneficial function: people should share in the power, justice and love of God and they should do so in community. Poling (1991:13) calls it a “community in which all persons can grow into their own integrity and be affirmed for the strength of the gifts they bring to the body, recognizing that all members of the community are both strong and weak.” Along with “doing church” goes “doing theology” (see Miller-McLemore 2012:14; Schipani 2012:94; Ballard 2012:168) and even “doing gender” which refers to the practical application of gender roles in the church (Hoeft 2012:416). Loving communities are inclusive and just. To be *inclusive* means to value the inner experience of every person, creating an environment that embraces life to its fullest. To be *just* is to fairly distribute resources necessary for full life (Poling 1991:147-149).

The phenomenon of abuse causes the church to lose members when some people who have been victimized leave, whereas others who experience abuse in silence are overlooked and lost. When abuse is acknowledged by the church the focus is generally on sexual abuse (see Poling 1991). However, there are many other forms of abuse that cause people to feel violated in the church. The focus of this study is on such other, more invisible, forms of abuse that take place in faith communities and damage people.

This study enters into discussion with other disciplines such as psychology and sociology, and makes use of what Van der Ven (1987:292-296; 1988:7-27) calls an intra-disciplinary empirical method in order to come to a better understanding of social and psychological problems related to the phenomenon of violence and abuse suffered in the context of the faith community. The aim is to stimulate reflection on this issue in order that conscientization can lead to the empowerment of people to take responsibility and affect transformation and healing for themselves as individuals and also as a community.

The epistemological point of departure of the study is the social construction of reality through socialization, as developed, exchanged and passed on through the medium of language in relationship from generation to

generation. Reality is constructed by means of the interaction between human agency and the cultures and institutions in which they find themselves. The study shows how grand narratives that function as the dominant discourse contribute to the problem of abuse in systems such as the church. Phenomena such as power, knowledge, social control, prejudice, discrimination and the resulting behaviours such as marginalization, exclusion, rejection and the denial of access to people and groups, will be investigated.

From a psychological perspective, Kelly's personal construct theory as described in *The psychology of the personal construct* (1955) will be utilized. The theory of Gergen (2009) as worked out in his book, *An invitation to social construction*, and that of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966) as described in their classical work, *The social construction of reality*, as well as Anthony Giddens's work, *The constitution of society: An outline of structuration theory* (1984) will be used to establish a theoretical framework for this study. The objective is to reflect critically on the phenomenon of abusive actions and experiences of members of church systems. The study aims to:

- investigate the problem of abuse in the church;
- acquire a deeper understanding of the roots and driving force underlying practices and experiences of abuse in the church;
- point to responsible action for prevention, healing and accountability with regard to the problem;
- promote self-reflection which can lead to the deconstruction and reconstruction of selves, communities and practices;
- develop guidelines for pastoral counselling with people who have been victimised in the context of the faith community;
- dialogue and interact with other disciplines such as psychology and sociology;
- to contribute to the field of practical theology.

The research question focuses on the motivational factors underlying abusive behaviours and practices in the church context. The stories of participants contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of personal, social, cultural and religious constructions that originate from their social and relational webs.

The psychological theorization of Kelly (1955) and Gergen (2009) show how social constructivist and social constructionist theorization explain certain dynamics in social structures. Sociological theories of Berger and Luckmann (1966,1967) demonstrate how human beings solidify their own social constructions to become “reality”. Practical theologian James Poling in his work *The abuse of power* (1991), and Van Vonderen (1995) and Van Vonderen and Johnson (1991) address the issue of harmful behaviours and experiences in the church. They focus mainly on sexual abuse. This narrow focus on deliberate physical harm caused intentionally represents one aspect of abuse in the context of the faith community. Harm inflicted unintentionally but also with devastating consequences for people needs greater attention than it has hitherto received (see McClure 2012:274). This study aims to bridge this gap by making use of case studies. People’s stories will be captured by means of interviews, and will be analysed in order to identify themes that indicate differences in social constructions (belief systems) from a sociological, psychological as well as religious perspective that could lead to destructive behaviours and experiences.

The question is: What causes, motivates and maintains abusive practices in the church structure? Aspects that will be investigated are the following:

- different social constructions of reality with regard to religion and religious practice;
- the church’s silence with regard to abuse in the context of the faith community;
- the question whether abuse and violence are typical of human morality or abberant behaviour;
- the question whether the phenomenon is indicative of a theological problem.

The contribution of this study is an understanding of what lies behind individual experiences of *unintentional abuse* in the church. Uncaring pastoral practices and theories should be analysed and new theories and practices should be developed to improve pastoral care ministry. The examination of religious practices can be useful for ascertaining what role “belief practices” play in fostering or inhibiting healing and well-being (cf McClure 2012:274). This phenomenon can be explained by means of social constructionist theories. The following factors contribute to the problem of abuse in the church which is investigated in this study:

- **Normalizing**

Abuse in the church is often invisible because it is not recognised as such but is seen as “normal”. People, as well as the leadership corps, are desensitized. This phenomenon can also be seen with regard to the most severe forms of violence against women in the home. It is simply seen as normal (see Dutton 1992:51). Because of their being embedded in patriarchal culture, faith communities tend not to recognize the oppression and ill-treatment of women because it is seen as “normal” or even as God’s will. This view is often supported with theology and religious education (Westfield 2008:71). Lampman and Shattuck (1999:7) point out the dangers of this: “Resisting detachment is important ...: when a victim’s spiritual needs, as well as other needs, are not acknowledged and addressed, the result can be a devastating re-victimization. This lack of compassionate caring can set back the process of restoration and recovery indefinitely.”

- **Labelling and blaming**

Labelling the abused or blaming the victim is typical of abuse and abusive behaviour (this is worked out further in Chapter 3). The perpetrators justify their behaviour by placing the blame on those they have harmed. The story of Job in the Old Testament illustrates this kind of secondary victimisation: Job’s friends,

who first came to ‘sympathize with him and comfort him’ (Job 2:11) soon turn on him with harsh accusations.

- **Leaving the church**

Those who experience abuse often leave the church. Some eventually join churches again, but are careful. This is typical of the aftermath of traumatic experiences. Lampman and Shattuck (1999:11) relate the feelings of one such a person: “What was worse was that she felt God had abandoned her: ‘How could He allow this to happen? Where was He?’ Her pain echoed in a desperate cry: ‘My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?’” These individuals often struggle with these questions in isolation because they are labelled as “troublemakers”, and therefore forfeit the comfort of community.

The body of Christ that should love unconditionally, empower, forgive graciously, fails them horribly. This is then seen and experienced as God’s failure to be there for them and ensure justice for them. Guilt is experienced by those who leave because of their inability to forgive. They experience pressure from others to “forgive so that they will not be judged by God”. This kind of interpretation of Scripture revictimizes the victim (see Van der Schaaf and Dreyer 2004:1359).

1.4.2 What is wrong with pastoral ministry?

Had there been a stronger “care” focus (McClure 2012:274) in the faith communities of the respondents of this study, the women could have experienced safety and care rather than abuse and neglect. Alister McGrath (2001:145) emphasizes the importance of pastoral care as an expression of the Christian life:

It cannot be emphasized too strongly that Christianity does not occupy its present position as a global faith on account of university faculties of theology or departments of religion. There is a strong pastoral dimension to Christianity, which is generally inadequately reflected in the academic discussion of theology ...

The writings of individuals such as Richard Baxter and Jonathan Edwards are saturated with the belief that theology finds its true expression in pastoral care and the nurture of souls.

This necessitates a stronger focus on the pastoral care dimension of theology in academic reflection. This would bring to light whether the pastoral care focus is adequate or not. If not, the matter can then be revisited, followed by a “reinterpretation” (see Gerkin 1997:118), and a transformation of praxis.

The problem investigated in this study, namely abuse in the faith community, is one aspect. Another aspect is how people who have been hurt are helped and guided towards healing. Inadequate pastoral care is a further aspect of the problem. That people are not helped and guided adequately, can be attributed to, among others, the following problems in pastoral practice:

- **Success syndrome**

With regard to the “super church” phenomenon in North American culture Salter (1990:144) explains that the church is often;

... tied to the success syndrome of American business and its pastor can become like the chief executive of a corporation. Growth is the bottom line of the super church, and this puts enormous pressure on the church to measure itself with a different measuring stick than God has.

This reduces ministry to “shopkeeping” (Peterson 1987:1-12) and seeks to segregate pastoral ministry from general human “commerce” (Jenkins 2012:316). Spiritual leadership should understand success “...not only as moving people toward a goal, but also in terms of the survival of the family (and its leader) ...” (Friedman 1985:220-221). The question is whether the churches in South Africa have also fallen prey to this business-like corporate mindset and in the process contribute to hurting the members of the church or, at the very least, not providing adequate care. One of the areas on which to focus in order to answer

this question is the relationship between the pastoral caregivers and people who contribute much financially to the church and/or to the pastors personally. What influence do the wealthy contributors have in the running of the business of the church; in other words, what is the extent of their power?

In the success race another possibility is that the church becomes so obsessed with numbers that it loses sight of the persons – human beings, who are in need of the unconditional love, acceptance, grace, intimacy and the empowerment of God that should be embodied in the church and therefore freely available to them in the faith community. Some pastors focus on membership numbers and attendance at Sunday services. They should rather focus on the dying, the confession of sin in the church and the moral reformation in the faith community. Process, being, and relationships should take precedence over doing and producing (see Salter 1990:144).

- **Persons as commodities**

Seeing persons as commodities relates strongly to the “success syndrome”. Kavanaugh (1981:34) distinguishes between the *commodity model* and the *personal model*. The commodity model refers to “being possessed by possessions” and “produced by products”. “Are people of irreplaceable dignity, or are they expendable before the altar of planned obsolescence, competition, ideology, and vested interest?” (Kavanaugh 1981:34)

- **Church leadership sees itself as equal to God**

Reinhold Niebuhr is quoted by Hordern (1962:157):

The major heresy for the Church, be it Catholic or Protestant, is for it to identify itself with God, to suppose that opposition to its way is opposition to God’s ways. When the Church is guilty of such pretensions, it needs to be, and usually is, attacked by a secular force. The secular voice becomes a judgment of God upon a Church that has forgotten its true nature.

The church fails in its mission to wounded people when the people who should be providing care are unapproachable because they see themselves as “above reproach”, pure, holy; in other words, that which in the Christian community describes God and only God.

- **Complacency**

Complacency becomes a problem when church leadership and members are satisfied with themselves and with the status quo, even though people may be falling through the cracks. If people are hurt in and by the church, or wounded people not adequately cared for, the church will not even notice. Therefore, it is the responsibility of church leaders to encourage the church to be self-critical and to be all that it is called to be. Willimon (2000:82-83) puts it as follows:

... in my church, I do not see a great peril from a too critical clergy, but rather from clergy who are far too easily pleased, who seem to have little disagreement with present arrangements, and who think that it is their job as ecclesiastical leaders to suppress all criticism, debate and reform.

Constant self-examination is necessary in order for self-interest not to become more important than the church’s calling to be faithful to God and care for the body of Christ. Such self-reflection should take into account the differences in people’s constructions of reality.

- **Passive-aggressive expressions of disagreements**

Though people should be able to express their disagreements and point out the shortcomings of the church, Willimon (2000:82-83) cautions that:

...we need to fight like Christians. We ought not to demonize our opponents. We ought to be fair and thoughtful in our criticism, taking pains not to bear false witness. We ought to love those with whom we disagree enough to express our disagreements with

them openly, rather than passive-aggressively as so often is the case with clergy arguments.

- **Inadequate accountability**

A lack of accountability and closedness are underlying problems and abuses in the church because “...clergy are probably the least supervised, the least collegially connected of any of the professions” (Willimon 2000:82-83). Willimon (2000:82-83) points out that “...those who practise medicine learn quite early that one of the cardinal principles of medicine is openness, a constant willingness to have a colleague look over one’s shoulder, to have one’s work evaluated by one’s physician peers ...” and points out that clergy could benefit from a new awareness of the communal character of their work.

Sometimes accountability systems are in place in churches, but they are only enforced selectively. Those who are to hold others accountable are often carefully selected to be representative of shared views and belief systems.

- **Clergy role distortion**

One of the role distortions pastors can be prone to is taking on businesslike or corporate roles in the church, as though they were company executive officers. Another distortion of the clergy role is the development of a special clergy class which deems itself higher, more worthy, more pure and gifted than lay people.

Clergy are special, not because they have received some unique grace not to be had by other Christians, nor because clergy know many things that the lowly laity do not. Rather, clergy are significant as officials of the church, as those who have had their lives yoked to the body of Christ in a way that makes their vocation uniquely linked to the *care of the Christian community* (my italics).

(Willimon 2000:10)

Some of the functions that clergy are called to perform include leading the church, caring for congregations, preaching the Word and seeing to it that the church will be church in a way that is conducive to the well-being of all members of the body of Christ as they live out their individual vocations. According to Willimon (2000:12), the “clergy problem is more a matter of morale than morals”. Role distortion can be identified as one of the causes of abuse in the church. A pastor, carer, or counsellor in the church whose idea of “pastor”, “counsellor”, “minister” is one of superiority, high ranking and of being served, can cause much pain when a person in need expects to be nurtured, shepherded or served, as modelled by Christ.

- **Conflicting moral and theological realities**

In a study on clergy and wife abuse Alsdurf and Alsdurf (in Horton and Williamson 1988:167) found the following:

- Pastors still held patriarchally informed attitudes toward women.
- They were concerned about battered women, but at the same time felt torn because the theological perspectives appeared to them to be in conflict with this concern.

That study found that 92% of pastors would not advise the victim to leave the abuser. On average a third of the pastors held the victim wholly or partially responsible for the abuse they experienced. Reasons the abuse was also their fault were, for instance, their “unwillingness to be submissive” and their “overestimating the abuser’s responsibility for the violence”. A large number of the respondents reported that they would advise the wife to stay in the situation and pray and trust God to deal with the abuser.

Another problem in this regard is that pastors often are not trained adequately to deal with abuse (Horton and Williamson 1988:169). It also causes a dilemma when moral and theological stances of pastors are in conflict, when the institution is valued above the individual without regard for her pain; when

current approaches and models are no longer adequate; and when the training of competent caregivers falls short. The result is abused, revictimized and retraumatized people.

1.5 Orientation and methodology

This study is positioned largely within a postmodern paradigm and philosophy. Postmodern thought challenges modernist essentialist assumptions of rationality and absolute universal truth. A postmodern approach, on the other hand, emphasizes the “value-ladenness” of knowledge, the “multi-perspectiveness” of reality, the “social-subjectiveness” of truth, and the role of context, including relational and social interactions in the social construction of reality and knowledge. From a postmodern perspective stories are seen as a way in which people make meaning. The medium used to do so, is language. Knowledge is therefore created socially (Gergen 2009:6-8; 21; cf Mitchell and Egudo 2003:1). Unique and individual emotion, intuition, personal, varied lived experience (note connections with phenomenology and hermeneutics) are celebrated (Alvesson 2002:48). People are therefore allowed and encouraged from this perspective to have unique stories and experiences, and “truth” is not seen as an absolute but as having perspectives. The subjective experiences and stories of people are valued (Smith 2008:23) and not treated with contempt or pressured to change because they are different from what is believed to be appropriate. This is the approach taken in this study.

The approach is intra-disciplinary. For practical theologian Hans van der Ven (1988:18) such an approach “... applies to the inner-theological extension of theological methodology by using the tools and methods” from other disciplines, with as formal object “... the dialectical relationship between what religious praxis is and what it should be.” He emphasizes that the authentic message of the gospel is often distorted by the influence of the power of social institutions and adherence to the social status quo. The structures of modern societies and their relation to church and theology should be studied and investigated by means of critical-empirical theology (Van der Ven 1988:14). This is the aim of this study.

Because of the subjectivity of the experience of abuse by individuals, the study is conducted in a qualitative framework with the following characteristics (Bryman 1988:65-66; cf Struwig and Stead 2001:12-13):

- **Perspectives of participants and researcher**

The study aims to understand experiences of abuse from the perspective of and through the eyes of the research participants. Narratives are analysed and interpreted in association with the participants. I also incorporate my own perspective and experience.

- **Contextual**

Human behaviour does not occur in a vacuum. The social contexts, macro (tradition, culture, church, and the like) as well as micro (immediate individual context and life world), of the participants are taken into account. The social constructionist approach emphasises social relationships and contexts.

- **Process**

Social events and contexts are dynamic and the understanding of process and change are crucial. “It is necessary to understand how prior events play a role in the individual’s thoughts or behaviours” (Bryman 1988:65).

- **Flexibility**

The investigation is approached in an unstructured and open manner. A heavy reliance on theory is avoided. Rather a sensitivity to the unexpected is deemed important, and therefore a flexible approach is adopted in order that what could have been overlooked in the past because of a set of preconceptions can in this way be given the opportunity to surface and be seen.

Qualitative method is about exploring, describing and interpreting the subjective and inter-subjective and/or collective experience of participants (Smith 2008:23, 45). Swinton and Mowat (2006:90-91) suggest that qualitative research method ensures that Christian practice corresponds to the event of God’s self-

communication (see also Moschella 2012:230). Freedman and Combs (1996:22) point to three concepts, namely knowledge, power and truth and indicate that these facets are controlled and organized by social constructionist process in action.

Practical theology as a discipline focuses on faith actions of human beings (Van der Ven 2002:292-293; cf Cartledge 1999:100). An intra-disciplinary empirical approach presupposes dialogue with other social fields of inquiry that are also interested in human praxis (cf Hermans, Immink, De Jong & Van der Lans 2002: vii-viii), while not losing sight of the theological aspect in which it is embedded (Van der Ven 1988:18; cf Cartledge 1999:100, 103). Relevant social constructionist psychological, sociological and theological literature is scrutinized in this study in order to construct a theoretical framework for the interpretation of the participants' stories. Narrative analysis is employed because of its interpretive drive. The focus is on the protagonist's own interpretation of her life and experiences (Bruner 1990:51; Ganzevoort 2012:218-219). For Ganzevoort (2012:220) subjectivity is central to the narrative research process. Mitchell and Egudo (2003:2-3) put it as follows:

The approach is well suited to study subjectivity ... largely because of the importance given to imagination and the human involvement in constructing a story. For sociologists narratives also reveal much about social life or culture, as culture speaks through a story. By seeing how people talk, researchers can analyse how culturally contingent and historically contingent the terms, beliefs and issues narrators address are.

Ruard Ganzevoort (2012:214) points out that "... religious practices that form the core material for theological reflection in practical theology are often directly related to narratives". Individuals who have experienced abuse in the church context were asked to write down their stories in order that these stories could be used verbatim in this study. The stories are interpreted by employing thematic analysis (Gerkin 1984:62; cf Ganzevoort 2012:220; Brown 2012:117-118). No

distinctions are made based on denomination, race, gender or social status. This study reflects on these stories and the religious context and faith praxis in which they are rooted. The aim is to look for reasons for conflict and the consequential experiences of pain. Theological reflection on religious praxis, is about "... reflection on convergences, confluences, and conflicts between the myriads of stories" (Ganzevoort 2012:214). There are three dimensions to a narrative approach:

- the use of narrative in communication such as preaching and pastoral care;
- empirical analysis and deconstruction of religious subjectivity inherent to people's stories;
- a narrative approach empowers marginalized people by creating an audience for their stories in order that their silenced voices may be heard. Ganzevoort (2012:214).

This study aims to gather empirical evidence by collecting the narratives of people's life stories, analyse the narratives, deconstruct harmful discourses and identify religious subjectivity in both the stories of the women and in the actions and behaviours of the so-called "perpetrators". This study aims to provide a platform for marginalized people to find their voice, tell their stories and be heard and read. This can contribute to bringing about changes in the first dimension identified by Ganzevoort, namely the way in which narrative is used in communication such as preaching and pastoral care.

For Van der Ven (1988:15), the direct object of theological study is religious praxis (cf Brown 2012:118; Schweitzer 2012:472). Only through the study of religious practice, that is the religious experience of human beings (reception), the relation of human beings to God (response) and that of human beings to one another (reaction) in individual and communal forms, can one have access to God as "indirect object". Religious praxis, according to Van der Ven (1988:15; cf 2002:28; cf Mager 2012:255), is firstly about religious action of

individuals and groups, including "... perceptual, cognitive, affective, attitudinal, motivational and bodily behavioural aspects" (cf Heckhausen 1980; Firjda 1986; Bandura 1986). Religious action is to be interpreted from the perspective of the interaction. The advance of human action, which may be technical, hermeneutical and transformational, forms part of the religious praxis (see Van der Ven 1988:15). This advance can include pastoral action as well.

Van der Ven (1993:101; cf Cartledge 1999:101-102) calls for what he terms an "Intra-disciplinary empirical approach" to practical theological studies. It applies to the inner theological extension of theological methodology by using the tools of the social sciences, directly aiming at answering theological questions. Joas (1996:1; 2004:309) sees "action" as key not only in philosophy but in almost all of the social and cultural sciences. Action then is "... *the* basic category of the social sciences". I opt for an intra-disciplinary approach as described by Van der Ven as well as Joas. In this study I explore reasons for engaging in, continuing with and remaining silent about behaviours and actions (Joas 1996:1; 2004:309) which some experience as abusive and painful in the context of the church.

This chapter includes a brief overview of postmodern, social constructionist, narrative qualitative research and its underlying principles. Qualitative methodology in the form of verbatim case study narratives is utilized. Mark Cartledge refers to this as "rescripting". He explains it as follows: "Rescripting is the process of interpretation that considers the original terms and content of indigenous theology, or what might be called the local narrative, via individual verbatim testimonies as well as through an analysis of congregational and denominational narratives (Cartledge 2012:592)". Because of the subjectivity of the experience of abuse, this study is conducted in a qualitative framework with the following characteristics as identified by Bryman (1988:64-66; cf Struwig and Stead 2001:12-13):

- **Participants' and researcher's perspectives**

As mentioned above, this study aims to understand and see experiences of abuse from the perspective of and through the eyes of the research participants (Cartledge 2012:592). Narratives are analysed and interpreted in association with the participants better to understand their unique local narrative. I also add my own perspective and experience where I consider it necessary for the process. It is of importance that researchers should be aware of their own subjectivity (Couture 2012:159). I first spend time with each participant, hearing and observing the “telling” of the story, which I believe gives better insight and allows for better interpretation than when only studying written texts. It is important to include emotion, tone, expression, and so on of narrators in my understanding and interpretation of their accounts.

A criticism that has been levelled against narrative approaches, according to Ruard Ganzevoort (2012:222), is that normativity is compromised by the equality given to all participants' perspectives and accounts. Ganzevoort, however, disagrees and argues that a re-evaluation of human subjectivity is rather brought about by the narrative approach. He puts it as follows: “Honoring subjectivity is, however; not necessarily less normative; a narrative analysis of practices can – and should – uncover the hidden normativity within these practices and in relation to the tradition in which they are embedded” (Ganzevoort 2012:222). The uncovering of this so-called “hidden normativity” is the aim of this qualitative process.

- **Contextualism**

As explained by Bryman (1988:65), providing a comprehensive description and analysis of the environment or social context of the research participants is essential. Therefore, tradition, culture, church, among other macro social contexts, as well as the micro contexts, that is the immediate individual context and life world of the participants are taken into account (see Bevans 1992:1; Ballard 2012:164).

- **Process**

Understanding of process and change is crucial because social events and contexts are dynamic. All interrelated events are examined as they take place chronologically and develop. According to Bryman “ ...it is necessary to understand how prior events play a role in the individual’s thoughts or behaviours”. (Bryman 1988:65)

- **Flexibility and the use of theories**

Participants are asked to write down their stories for verbatim use after having read the consent and explanation of the purposes of the study. The aim is to be sensitive to the unexpected and to be flexible in one's approach and expectancy in order to notice what may have been overlooked in the past, so theory is not relied on too heavily and rigidly.

The subjective and inter-subjective and/or collective experience of research participants are explored, described and interpreted, as put forth by Smith (2008:35-50) Qualitative method therefore allows for subjectivity, relativity and multiplicity with regard to information and knowledge. In a postmodern paradigm there is no more room for, or even the possibility of, obtaining one singular, stable, fully discernable truth or set of truths. According to Freedman and Combs (1996:34) there are “multiverse”, multiple possibilities, multiple versions and no essential truths. Epistemologically this study moves away from essentialism to "constructionist multiplism" (my term). The aim of the investigation is to search for meaning (Freedman and Combs 1996:32-34), and not for absolute or “essential” truth.

The study is conducted within a social constructionist frame of reference. In this paradigm people are seen as co-creators of their reality and the meanings they allocate to that reality (Gergen 2009:2-4). This reality and meaning are subjective and created through interaction (relationship) with others in community through language as medium (Gergen 2009:6-8). Life stories and narratives of events are expressed and passed on as discourse from generation to generation through language. Narratives are contextual – they are embedded in culture and

society. From this subjective, context-specific perspective of social constructionism, with its emphasis on language and meaning, qualitative research is the preferred method for studying human phenomena and experience such as the abuse phenomenon focused on in this study. “Practical theology often does not aim for general, objective, and absolute knowledge, but develops local, particular, and in a certain sense subjective understandings.” (Ganzevoort 2012:215) Narrative approaches involve empirical analysis and deconstruction of religious subjectivity (inherent to narrative) and also the empowerment of marginalized voices by creating an audience for their stories (Ganzevoort 2012:214).

Narrative analysis is preferred in this study because of its interpretive drive. It is about the protagonists’ interpretation of things and their life world and experience (Bruner 1990: 51; cf Freedman and Combs 1996:33): it is about “local knowledge”. In this study the religious subjectivity of participants is explored, and analysed, and distorted discourses deconstructed. The same will be done with regard to the abuse and hurtful behaviours of the alleged perpetrators. The study aims to provide a platform and an audience for marginalized voices (see Ganzevoort 2012:214). These voices are more often than not silenced or abandoned by the church system. As Mitchell and Egudo (2003:2-3) put it:

The approach is well suited to study subjectivity and identity largely because of the importance given to imagination and the human involvement in constructing a story. For sociologists, narratives also reveal much about social life or culture, as culture speaks through a story. By seeing how people talk, researchers can analyse how culturally contingent and historically contingent the terms, beliefs and issues narrators address are.

Individuals who have experienced abuse in the church context were asked to first tell me their stories. I decided that face-to-face interaction would be beneficial to improved understanding and interpretation. I tried to minimize my own subjectivity when listening to their stories. I asked them to write their stories in

their own words. These I include verbatim in Chapter 3. Relevant social constructionist psychological (Kelly 1955, Gergen 2009) and sociological (Berger and Luckmann 1966, Giddens 1984) theories are perused in order to identify themes and discourses for a narrative thematic analysis.

In order to corroborate social constructionist theorization up to that point (see Ballard 2012:165) with Scripture, I include a section on Jesus' life as well as Pauline teachings, as seen from a social constructionist perspective, and enter into critical dialogue between the present reality and tradition (Ballard 2012:168; cf Ballard and Pritchard 2006:65-66).

The present reality, according to the intradisciplinary empirical approach presupposes dialogue with other disciplines, such as the social sciences, interested in human praxis, not losing sight of the theological thrust in which it is embedded (see Van der Ven 1988:15). Freedman and Combs (1996:22) focus on *knowledge, power and truth*, and show how they are controlled and organized by social constructionist process in action.

In the narratives of the participants I look specifically for the themes encompassing the organizing of knowledge, power and truth and the role they play in the experience of abuse. I also look for themes pointing to dominant discourses or narratives, such as patriarchal and male dominant worldviews, as well as objectification, prejudice and discrimination – the attitudes and behaviours driven by such worldviews (White 1991:14; cf Freedman and Combs 1996:39-40). The theme of humiliation is a recurring one throughout these stories. It is indicative of the pain and anguish felt in response to abuse. Transferability, dependability, conformability and credibility (Lincoln and Guba 1985; cf Lincoln 1995:275-289) are also considered throughout the study.

Participants were approached to sign a consent document explaining the research process, including the rationale and anticipated value. They were assured of anonymity and confidentiality. The specific knowledge of these participants can contribute to the overall understanding of the phenomenon of abuse in a variety of social contexts. This study aims to make a contribution to practical theology, theology, faith communities and the church as institution.

1.6 Research outline

Chapter 1 is the introductory chapter in which I describe the context of the study and methodology.

Chapter 2 expands on the epistemological choice made in this study. The chosen paradigm is postmodern; the approach is social constructionist and the theories, models and methods are of a narrative nature. In this chapter I include some psychological theorization, focusing especially on Gergen's (2001, 2009) works on social constructionism. Kelly's social constructivist Personal Construct Theory sheds some light on the development of discourse and especially dominant discourse. Sociological theories utilized in this study include the Structuration Theory of Anthony Giddens (1984) and the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966). On a theological level I reflect on some examples from Jesus' life on earth as well as Pauline teachings from a social constructionist perspective. I include a discussion on relativism since this is often the criticism from the side of theology on postmodern thought.

In Chapter 3 the verbatim narratives of the research participants are presented and a narrative thematic analysis is given. Themes that are included are power, knowledge and truth, dominant discourses such as male domination and objectification, as well as the theme of humiliation which is indicated as a common denominator in many of these experiences.

Chapter 4 on abusive discourses provide the culmination of the theorization on social construction in this study. This exploration of abusive discourse, otherwise referred to as dominant narrative and dominant discourse, speaks to the research gap, the research question, and the aims and objectives indicated in Chapter 1. Abuse is defined and discussed in detail, after which social constructionist reflection follows.

Chapter 5 consists of a social constructionist discussion on the church as social institution. The chapter argues that there seems to be a general

consensus by prominent theologians such as Heitink that the current church is in trouble. Suggestions are offered by Heitink for a reorientation of the church to meet the needs of the postmodern world. Several metaphors and their conceptualization are explored. Thereafter a biblical theological discussion follows with Jesus and Paul as examples in relating to the church community from a social constructionist perspective. Finally, social constructionist assumptions are applied to the church as concept.

Chapter 6 considers pastoral care approaches to therapy and the role of social constructions in pastoral care praxis. I include research participants' perspectives of how they see Jesus' approach to people and the hurting especially, proposing and reflecting on Jesus as model. Pauline writing in the book of Galatians is explored from a social constructionist perspective. Thereafter the analogical-familial model is offered as good model for pastoral care. The chapter is concluded with a narratological refiguration of pastoral care and ministry, suggesting self-awareness, humility, empathy and teaching as a move in a direction to improve current pastoral care praxis.

Chapter 7 finally appeals and challenges pastoral ministry to consider, without a total rejection or negation of Christian tradition, a renewed reflection on beliefs and values, a growing of awareness of the malleability and fallibility of strongly held beliefs and values. These beliefs and values are often social constructions, which manifests in "knowledge" and "absolute truths". A recreation of social constructions may be necessary to address what people in the church experience as abusive and hurtful. A discussion of emotions and prayer concludes the chapter.

CHAPTER 2

PRACTICE-ORIENTED PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

Power, knowledge and truth are crucial to a reflection on abuse: “Adopting a postmodern, narrative, social constructionist worldview offers useful ideas about how power, knowledge, and ‘truth’ are negotiated in families and larger cultural aggregations” (Freedman and Combs 1996:22). In this chapter a paradigmatic framework for the study is provided. Practical theology starts its theological reflections from practices, aims at empirically analyzing practices, and should be directed towards the transformation of these practices (Hermans, Immink, De Jong and Van der Lans 2002:vii). Hermans et al. (2002:vii) put it as follows: “From this practice orientation there is a strong connection between practical theology and the social sciences ... For practical theology, it is important to reflect on this emerging concept of social constructionism with the social sciences”. In this chapter, then, I will first introduce my understanding of practical theology as focused on human action and religious practices.

The intradisciplinary approach, as explained by Van der Ven (1993; cf Cartledge 1999:101-102) propose that:

... theology itself become(s) empirical, that is, that it expands its traditional range of instruments, consisting of literary-historical and systematic methods and techniques, in the direction of an empirical methodology, which simply means borrowing concepts, methods and techniques from other disciplines and integrating these into another science by way of parallel dialogue.

In this case, sociology and psychology are the disciplines from which I borrow. I therefore follow an intradisciplinary, postmodern, social constructionist, narrative, empirical-theological methodology. The narrative methodology used here, is mainly borrowed from psychology. I therefore discuss the postmodern paradigm and worldview, which will include an exploration of social constructionism from a psychological, sociological, as well as a theological perspective. A reflection on the narrative approach and method will then follow.

Postmodernism can be seen as a *broad term* for social constructionism, and constructivism as a *narrow term*, used by some interchangeably (see Gergen 2009:vii). I discuss the two terms independently.

... ideas generally called social constructionist; do not belong to any one individual. There is no single book or school of philosophy that defines social construction. Rather, social constructionist ideas emerge from a process of dialogue, a dialogue that is ongoing, and to which anyone – even you as reader – may contribute.

(Gergen 2009:2)

Postmodernism, social constructionism and narrative methodology appreciate subjectivity (Parker 1998:18; cf Gergen 2009:14; Ganzevoort 2012:217; see also Smith 2008) and inter-subjectivity (Cooper-White 2012:24). These are highly esteemed in the narratives used in this study. Together these three disciplines (psychology, sociology and theology) provide a sound theoretical basis from which abuse in the church is better understood and explained. It is, after all, individuals who abuse other individuals. Therefore, psychology can contribute useful information. All of this takes place in a social context, namely the faith community, or church, which is a social phenomenon. In this regard I make use of sociological theory to provide a framework for reflection on institutional abuse.

This chapter engages in dialogue with the two disciplines of psychology and sociology, in order to describe, understand and explain abuse in the church. The postmodern paradigm has practical implications.

Wilmott (1992:58; cf Alvesson 2002:19) states:

... it is ultimately futile to seek a definitive, universally agreed answer to the question of what postmodernism is. Indeed, such efforts to standardise its meaning would seem to contradict what, arguably, is a distinguishing feature of the *movement/argument* of postmodernism; namely the understanding that the (modernist) project of eliminating ambivalence, typified by the establishment of seemingly well-defined rules and procedures to regulate behaviour – is not just self-defeating, but fundamentally disabling.

According to Osmer (1999:126; cf Schweitzer and Van der Ven 1999:126,133, cf Hermans, 2002:viii) three elements distinguish practical theology from dogmatic theology and Christian ethics. They are a *performative orientation* (how best to perform a specific practice or activity in concrete, everyday circumstances); a *theory of formation and transformation* (to guide the praxis of the Christian life over time); and a *practical theological hermeneutic* of the field in which an action or practice takes place, locating the actors involved in moral time and space.

Hermans (1996:6) observes that Browning's "practice-theory-practice" model, is a break from the old "theory-practice" model. Browning (1996:6; cf Hermans 2002:viii), proposes a break from the old "theory-practice" model replacing it with a "practice-theory-practice" model. A crisis happens in practice and forces reflection on its "meaningful or theory-laden practices", after which reflection returns to practice again. Transformation can then follow in response to new insights. This makes theology completely practical (Hermans 2002: viii).

Heitink (1993:18; 1999:6; cf Hermans 2002:viii) defines practical theology as an "action science" with two types of praxis involved: "... the hermeneutical-

oriented theological theory of the mediation of the Christian faith in the praxis of the modern society”. The two types of praxis are, firstly, the mediation of the Christian faith as praxis one and the context of the modern society as praxis two.

Hermans (2002:xi), explains it as follows:

- praxis 1 points to the fact that the typical object of practical theology is the transformation of the intentional actions of persons or groups;
- praxis 1 can never be understood without praxis 2;
- sometimes praxis 2 is supportive of praxis 1, but sometimes it puts constraints on praxis 1;
- it is precisely this interaction between praxis 1 and 2 which breaks the model of practical theology as applied theology;
- It makes it impossible to reduce the object of practical theology to predefined theological categories. Or to put it positively, it puts the living faith (*sensus fidei*) of people within the context of society at the core of practical theology.

Van der Ven (1993:157-224; 1999:330-335; cf Hemans 2002:x) proposes a cyclical or spiral model, which he terms the “empirical cycle”:

- The first phase of this cycle involves developing a *theological problem* from an insider perspective. I have experienced abuse in the church from within, and learned from the experiences of others in the church; therefore I see myself as an insider;
- In the second phase (theological induction phase), *conceptualization* takes place by means of a systematic investigation of theological literature, closely interacting with the actions/practices in question. A practice-oriented research question is formulated, which starts with understanding

- the practices of people, and then aims to transform these practices. This study aims to understand abusive practices in the church to contribute to the transformation these practices, mostly by raising consciousness and encourage continued self-reflection;
- In the third (theological deduction) phase, the *object of conceptualization* is made up of the experiences and reflections of the second phase;
 - The fourth phase is the *empirical testing phase*, where empirical data is gathered from the actions and practices of people, qualitatively or quantitatively. This acquired data is analysed from the perspective of the formulated theological research question/s. Verbatim written stories of people who have experienced abuse are collected qualitatively after they were interviewed, and are analysed in light of the formulated questions in Chapter 1.
 - The fifth stage is about the *theological evaluation*, which is directed towards actions and practices as well as theological theory (which forms the conceptual framework of the research).
 - The practical theologian then *reflects on the results* and the ways in which practice and actions can be transformed. The results will also bring about an evaluation of the theological framework that was formulated in earlier phases of the research.

Hermans (2002:x) describes it as follows: “This practice-orientation brings theology in close contact with the social sciences which study the same actions”. This cooperation is further explored later in the study.

With regard to the *potential to generalize* the results of the study Freedman and Combs (1996:265) explain the postmodern perspective: “In the postmodern world, ethics focus on particular people in particular experiences, and there is considerable scepticism about the applicability of any kind of sweeping, universal, one-size-fits-all truth claims.” Alvesson (2002:3-4) and Smith (2008:46; 49; 180-183) both describe how postmodern thinking values unique subjective feeling, intuition and experience. Paré (1995:3) points to a

move from objective observation to the observer as subject to the inter-subjective space between observed and observer in community. Freedman and Combs (1996:22) explain that: "... while modernist thinkers tend to be concerned with facts and rules, postmodernists are concerned with meaning". Scheurich (1997:62) views the postmodern perspective as suggesting that the researcher as well as the interviewee has multiple intentions and desires, which may be conscious or unconscious. Questions are made up of language which is socially constructed, and are therefore unique and different from person to person (Smith 2008:20, cf Gergen 2009:32).

Questions, as well as answers are therefore unstable, "persistently slippery" and "ambiguous from person to person, from situation to situation, from time to time". Scheurich (1997:62; cf Mishler 1991:66) continues that the relationship between language and meaning is therefore grounded in context, unstable, "and subject to endless reinterpretation. What a question and answer means to the researcher can easily mean something different to the interviewee and this may be everchanging over time and from context to context".

Mishler (1991:135) suggests that "... the central question is whether and how different research practices and forms of interviewing may function to hinder or to facilitate respondents' attempts to construct meaning from their experiences, develop a fuller and more adequate understanding of their own interests, and act more effectively to achieve their purposes". Gergen (2009:33) summarizes this by saying that words do not map the world, and that no words better match or describe the world than any others.

Knowledge, from a postmodern perspective, cannot be separated from human values, and is thus value-laden (Gergen 2009:14). McClintock Fulkerson (2012:362), in support of this view, mentions that "... one liberation insight has been to expose the political, power-laden character of knowledge production". Reality consists of as many perspectives as there are humans, with truth grounded in people's day-to-day living, relationships and experience. Both reality and knowledge are deeply rooted in context and are constructed by humans as they live their lives. Gergen asserts (2009:17) that this means that every

individual can participate in the conversation, has the right to a voice and cannot be “... pushed out of the conversation because others claim Truth”.

Important for the purposes of this work is the acknowledgement by postmodernism of the role of stories as told by people utilizing language and as shared socially (Freedman and Combs 1996:22; cf Cattanach 2008:7-30). Smith (2012:251) speaks of a theological knowledge that lives in bodies, performances and spaces. Practical theology, according to Smith (2012:251) becomes the discipline that “... reflects on this knowledge and brings it into critical conversation with other modes of knowing”.

People’s verbatim stories are used in this work to acquire “knowledge” about their experiences. Conde Frazier (2012:238; cf 2006:327) puts it as follows:

... oral stories carry the knowledge of the people. Orality does not permit the academy to abstract and dilute the power of the narrative. It fosters knowledge that comes from passion and experience and expands the space of the academic world for engaged dialogue and empowerment through agency.

2.2 Social constructionism

Social constructionism resonates with Freedman and Combs’s (1996:22) summary of the postmodern view of reality (which they say has been referred to and labelled as “constructionist”, “the new hermeneutics”, “post-structuralism”, “deconstructionism” and “the interpretive turn”):

- realities are socially constructed;
- realities are constituted through language;
- realities are organized and maintained through narrative;
- there are no essential truths.

Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2008:341) contend that everything, from a postmodern perspective, is open to challenge, including postmodernism itself. From this perspective, then, even postmodernism is a human construction.

Social constructionism postulates that social phenomena, concepts and meaning develop and also how they develop in specific social contexts (Van Schalkwyk 2001:8; cf Cattanach 2008:7-30). “Social construction”, according to Van Schalkwyk, in this frame of reference deals with constructs or applications which are natural and obvious to those who accept, practise and impose it on their followers, but in reality it is a man-made invention of a particular society, structure or culture. Social constructionism presupposes some basic assumptions. Individual realities are created through language (Beyer, Du Preez and Eskell-Blokland 2007:37-41; cf Gergen 2009:17), that is, language is powerfully instrumental in constructing what we consider as truth or reality. Rorty (1989:5-6; Freedman and Combs 1996:22) emphasizes the function of language as that of constructing realities rather than representing objective or external truth. Gergen (2009:5), as one of his “backbone” assumptions, describes reality as “... the way in which we understand the world is not required by ‘what there is’”.

This implies, according to Gergen (2009:6) that our various traditions of truth are simply optional. Brown (2012:378-379, cf Graham 2012:193-194) touches on how religious beliefs (which make up individual religious realities) are affected by language. Ganzevoort (2012:217) goes as far as referring to the Christian faith as “...the language of a community of which the depth grammar is described in its doctrines”. This does not necessarily mean an abandonment of traditions, beliefs and practices altogether. Revisiting, conscientization and reflection at least are justified (Gergen 2009:12; cf Graham 2012:193-194).

This means that the construction process takes place in relationship. Beliefs, laws, social customs, habits of dress and diet – all the things that make up the psychological fabric of “reality” – arise through social interaction over time. In other words, people, together, construct their realities as they live them (Gergen 2009:6; cf Freedman and Combs 1996:23; cf Beyer et al. 2007:44).

Ganzevoort (2012:217) describes the Christian faith as the language of a community.

Gergen (2009:83-87; cf Beyer et al. 2007:44) puts forth a few pointers about individualism, inherited from modernism, and its consequences, which were inherited from modernism:

- **Isolated selves**

The worldview of a separate, private self leads to an “other” mentality when dealing with others. This is characterized by suspicion, distrust and the wearing of masks, never revealing “who I am” to another. Gergen sees this as detrimental to cooperative relations (2009:84). A good example of this type of isolation caused by individualism is Andrews’ (2002:77) description of the isolation of the upcoming middle-class Blacks in the African American church communities (cf Mercer 2012:438-439).

- **Narcissism**

Closely linked to the previous point is the strong focus on individual progress, success, and so on, which can lead to the disqualification and objectification of others (Gergen 2009:84; cf Beyers et al. 2007:44).

Relationships are seen as secondary to individual interests and the first is important only in as much as it serves the latter. Love, service and other virtues (even study, according to Gergen) are utilized for self-gratification and are emptied of their deeper worth (Gergen 2009:84). Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler and Tipton (1985:85) apply this to love and marriage explaining that if marriage is only for self-gratification there is no reason to stay married. Attachments, according to Wallach and Wallach (1983:1), are seen as restraints, and values and customs as impositions. Anderson (2012:62-63) concurs, with his description of the tension between “freedom” and “intimacy” in marriage relationships and the practical theological implications thereof for intimate relationships.

Gergen (1999:119) explains that "...the self is primary reality; relationships are artificial, temporary, and desirable primarily when one cannot function alone". Relationships are avoided if they constrain the self in any way. The problem with this, according to Beyer et al. (2007:44) is that "... relationships cannot always be regarded as secondary to individuals, because 'who we are' is constructed in interaction with others". Gergen sees individualism as inviting us into a posture of competition – a kind of dog-eat-dog world, which threatens our future (Gergen 2009:86). Andrews (2012:406) offers an example of extreme forms of modernistic competition in her explanation of the "... competition of Christian empires for global domination", which contributed to racism in the church. Gergen (2009:86) further explains that the above worldview even exploits nature, natural and water resources for self-gratification.

Butler (2012:104) refers to the American religious imagination which was defined by the idea of freedom: "However, operating just beneath the surface of our democratic principles of power and privilege is an abusive substructure of unfreedom". Beyer et al. (2007:44) concur by their questioning of the reality of the so-called "... personal freedom, free will and choice: all valued and idealized by such societies". Foucault (1980:211; 1990:79; 2003:97) theorized that so-called "abnormalities" and "pathologies" emerged at the same time as the historical process of individuation; that is "differential individualities" (Foucault 2003:48) leading to a paradoxical "... power that controls individuals". Gergen (2009:87) sees resistance to individualization as essential to sustain a free society. Beyer et al. (2007:44) assert that the said power above is characterized by the following aspects:

- **Power and knowledge cannot be separated**

Power in a social group can only be had "... to the extent that they can participate in the *discussions* and *discourses* of that group. If certain community members cannot participate in the stories, metaphors or rites of passage of a community, they do not really have power within that community."

Firstly, “it aims to *normalize* the individual – it places pressure on a person to behave according to the norms of *the particular* society (italics mine).” Secondly, “It *creates structures or institutions* that continuously remind us of (and compare us to) the dominant standards [discourses?] of the culture”. Being an acceptable, good Christian is a good example of a constructed, normalized and idealized concept used to control (abuse) Christians not fitting, sharing in the discussions and discourses in which these constructions and church “cultures” are rooted. People can resist this kind of power, according to Gergen (1999:111; 172; cf Beyer et al. 2007:45). In interaction and relationship with others, we can construct knowledge, stories and ideas which have been suppressed, ignored, denied and used to marginalize individuals or groups of individuals. This, according to Beyer et al. (2007:45) may account for freedom, happiness and healthy living outside the dominant discourses and for those in search of new or alternative meaning to life and existence (cf White and Epston 1990:19-27; Freedman and Combs 1996:137).

Thirdly, it disregards what Beyer et al. (2007:45) term “situatedness”. The Western modernist view suggests that if behaviour doesn’t fit the norm or conform to certain (humanly constructed) criteria, the individual concerned is labelled as abnormal and is pressured into being “fixed” to fit the norm (Gergen 1999:87). The individual may even be given a diagnosis of mental disorder. This supports the belief in the narcissistic (self-contained) individual. Contextual and environmental influences are neglected or ignored completely. In Chapter 1 I noted this as being the current situation in existing literature on abuse (Gergen 1999:87).

Fulkerson (2012:362) mentions about theology, that “... one fundamental liberation insight has been to expose the political, power-laden character of knowledge production ...”. Developments in pastoral care, according to McClure (2012:276-277), have challenged, for example, the image of the pastoral caregiver as shepherd, “... for its sense of dependency wherein the caregiver has more power and knowledge than the dependent sheep ...” and even been rejected by some in favour of the image of journeying together as a herd.

According to Gergen (2009:9) constructions are valuable as far as they are socially helpful or useful. He sees the social construction of the world and social utility as interdependent. McClure (2012:270-271) shows how, throughout history, church practices were systematized to achieve certain goals. Practice was constructed to achieve certain objectives, for example, the cure of souls (Clebsch and Jaekle 1975:21) and guiding Christians in moral living (McNeill 1951:100).

According to White and Epston (1990:19-27) the narrative approach allows for life experiences to take on meaning when they are connected coherently over time in the form of stories (Beyer et al. 2007:46). “Dominant stories” are those which are held by the individual or group as “truth” and considered of more value than other “lesser stories”. Ganzevoort (2012:216-217) concurs by his assertion that we organize our social and other experiences, also religious experiences and spiritual tradition and constructed beliefs (text behind the story) in story (narrative).

As individuals construct their realities, they participate in shaping their future (Gergen 2009:12). The “realities” constructed in the present shapes the future through the influence of the act of “linguaging” (Beyer et al. 2007:47; cf Freedman and Combs 1996:22). People are therefore able to shape and create individual (own) realities. They can rethink, represent and reassign new meaning to experiences which can liberate and empower as they reconstruct their future (Freedman and Combs 1996:11-12; Gergen 1999:140). “Constructing stories is an active process to which people bring beliefs about the world and thus biases. This process is in fact *political* and *has the potential to shape the future* in fascinating and powerful ways”, argue Beyer et al. (2007:47). Gergen (2009:12) invites “... *generative discourses*, that is, ways of talking and writing or representing ... that simultaneously challenge existing traditions of understanding and offer new possibilities for action”.

Gergen (1999:50) argues: “The generation of good reasons, good evidence and good values is always *from within a tradition*; already accepted are certain constructions of the real and good, and implicit rejections of alternatives”.

Beyer et al. (2007:47) continue: "... there is not a single or ultimate truth or reality. Even the stories of science are subject to bias; it is important to situate the findings, facts and 'truths' of science within a particular tradition." Experiences, observations are always interpreted and "storied" in different ways, none of which can lay claim to the title of representing so-called "objective truth", according to Beyer et al. (2007:47). Beyer et al. (2007:47) specifically include church rules (relevant for this study): "This also applies to codes of ethics and to what some consider inviolable sources of morality (church rules, canon law). However, some of these constructions are preferred over others (2007:47)". Freedman and Combs (1996:35) concurs: "while no self is 'truer' than any other, it is true that particular presentations of self are preferred by particular people within particular cultures."

Gergen (2009:12) argues that the constructionist should always have an unrelenting concern with the "taken-for-granted" and its potential to blind to alternatives. He refers to a "critical reflexivity", which is attempting to question and challenge one's own beliefs and ideas, a suspension of the "obvious" and a listening to alternative "framings of reality" and a grappling with the variety of viewpoints. Miller-McLemore (2012:3) applies this assumption: "Other scholars argued that theology is sustained through religious community and narrative".

A social constructionist approach then, asks for a narrative approach and methodology to examine, and when exploring human (social) phenomena, such as, in this case abuse and experiences of abuse in the church.

2.3 A narrative approach

In the previous sections of this chapter the narrative approach has been firmly posited in a postmodern, social constructionist theoretical frame. Ganzevoort (2012:214) identifies three dimensions of the narrative approach:

The first uses narrative forms in practical ministry and religious communication (like preaching and pastoral care). The second involves empirical analysis and deconstruction of religious

subjectivity that is inherent to narrative. The third empowers marginalized voices by creating an audience for their stories.

Empirical analysis and deconstruction inherent in participants' stories will be undertaken in the next chapter. The choice of narrative approach for this work also creates an audience for the stories of people claiming to have been abused in the church.

A neglect of the influence of context and environment in the experiences of abuse and abusive actions was identified in Chapter 1 as the research gap was exposed. From the above it is clear that the postmodern view emphasizes context and environment and the social construction of meaning from within those contexts and environments. Contextual discourse, and especially dominant discourse, is closely connected to context (cultural, historical, and religious, for example). Discourse will be discussed in the following sections with specific focus on knowledge, power and truth (Freedman and Combs 1996:22). I will conclude with a discussion of abusive discourse, which is the thrust of this work in my search for answers.

The research question was: what causes, motivates and maintains abusive practices in the church structure? I included some subquestions pertaining to varying social constructions of reality, whether abuse is a serious reality and problem, why the church and society have been silent, human morality, and whether the problem is indicative of a theological problem. Concurring with McClure (2012:274) who suggests that uncaring pastoral practices and theories should be analysed and developed to improve pastoral care ministry, I will use the narrative discussion below in an attempt to analyse and develop theory to improve abusive pastoral practices.

Pastoral counselling and care, according to Ganzevoort (2012:214) focus on individual stories as they fit into traditions (cf Gergen 2009:37). Narratives (stories) have been part of being human from the earliest days. The same is true for the Christian religion (Ganzevoort 2012:214). Meaning is expressed in and through discourse (Mishler 1991:66). The qualitative frame of the narrative

approach enables the accessing of deep and rich data which is not always possible from quantitative methods such as surveys and questionnaires. In the narrative approach the story itself is the object of study and the focus is on how people and structures make sense of their actions, behaviours and experiences. People's stories are constructed and do not reflect an objective reality, but rather how people make sense of it as described by the language they use (Gergen 2009:2-5; cf Gergen 2009:33; cf Riessman 1993).

A narrative, according to the Oxford dictionary (1992:591) is an "ordered account of connected events". Webster's Dictionary (1966:1503) defines it as a "discourse, or an example of it, designed to represent a connected succession of happenings". Sarbin (1986:9) describes a narrative as "a way of organizing episodes, actions, and accounts of actions; it is an achievement that brings together mundane facts and fantastic creations; time and place are incorporated". Sarbin further argues that "... the narrative allows for the inclusion of actors' reasons for their acts, as well as the causes of happening." (Sarbin 1986:9) Ganzevoort (2012:216) describes narrative as the collective identity, history, and religious traditions structured as story. There is a world behind the text, made up of the context, events, and background of the narrator. There is also the world of the text, which comprises the texture of carefully interwoven elements that together create a sense of meaning. Then there is the world in front of the text, which is a proposal of new world possibility, inviting the reader to respond. Narrative research, according to Lieblich, Tuval Mashlach and Zilber (1998:2) is:

...any study that uses or analyses narrative materials. The data can be collected as a story (a life story provided in an interview or a literary work) or in a different manner (field notes of an anthropologist who writes up his or her observations as a narrative or in personal letters). It can be the object of the research or a means for the study of another question. It may be used for comparison among groups, to learn about a social phenomenon or historical period, or to explore a personality.

Bruner (1990:51) argues that narrative analysis is about “how protagonists interpret things”. Reissman (1993:5) refers to the systematic interpretation of storytellers’ interpretations. It is clear then that people develop individual stories or narratives in conjunction with and in relationship with others. In a recursive process we interact with others and their perceptions of us and dynamically shape our sense of self and identity. Our reality is the world as shaped and created within context. Narratives are thus socially and contextually created in interaction with other narratives in community which gives meaning, order (organization). The contexts are political, social, economic and cultural, which can constrain but also hold potential. Augustine (2002:20) describes this as follows:

... the boundaries of our narratives are constructed through political, economic, social, and cultural constraints and potentials, with our choice of narratives not limitless, but existing within prescribed contexts. This narrative or sense of self arises, not only through discourse with others, but *is* our discourse with others. There is no hidden self to be interpreted. We “reveal” ourselves in every moment of interaction through the on-going narrative that we maintain with others.

Case studies, according to Daniel Schipani (2012:91) are a special kind of narrative, offered in written form. He explains the verbatim (2012:93): “The verbatim is a document written from memory that records an interaction: a segment of the dialogue that took place; and reflection on the relationship between the care-receiver and caregiver”. In this work the verbatim case studies are written accounts of people’s experiences of what they claim to be abuse in various church situations. In these instances as researcher I will search for dominant discourses in these narrative case studies, which may underlie the participants’ experiences. Stories are context-specific, flexible, personal, and concrete and can be validated and understood through interpersonal

communication (Augustine 2002:20). The teller of the story brings their construction of self into the story and makes sense of it as such.

Dominant narratives are the stories told and retold in group or community relations which become seen, held onto and protected as absolute or dominant truth or knowledge (Gergen 2009:48). It is maintained by those holding most power in the group or community (Gergen 2009:48-49). Ganzevoort (2012:214) reminds of the interpretations (dominant narratives) of dominant groups. He refers to such narratives as dominant logic (Ganzevoort 2012:218). Hermans (2001:140) observes: “Within social heteroglossia, people defend embodied truth as absolute truth. Within the polyphony of voices there are dominant voices, using their power to silence others”. Narratives are made up of discourse. Bakhtin (1981:342) lists examples of dominant discourse, which he terms “authoritative discourse ... religious dogmas, political doctrines, moral values, the word of a father ...”. Bakhtin further argues that the authoritative discourse demands unconditional allegiance and acknowledgement. A rejection of it implies rejecting the authoritative structure behind it (1981:341; cf Hermans 2001:126-128).

Dominant narratives and discourse are significant to this study. Gergen (2009:12-13) sees reflection on these taken-for-granted dominant narratives and discourse as vital to our future well-being. The purposes of this work then are to look for relations between dominant discourse and experiences of abuse, to create awareness of and to reflect on and challenge such narrative and discourse as listed in Chapter 1. Finally the aim is to look for possibilities to deconstruct and restory some of these so-called absolute truths. Parker (2012:209-210) discusses the work of homiletics professor Ella Pearson Mitchell and her work in challenging and deconstructing dominant patriarchal narrative and discourse. Language is instrumental in power relationships. People have as much power as they are allowed to participate in the discourses shaping the society as described by Freedman and Combs (1996:38):

To Foucault, language is an instrument of power, and people have power in a society in direct proportion to their ability to participate

in the various discourses that shape that society. The people whose voices dominated the discussion about what constituted madness, for example, could separate the people *they* saw as mad from 'polite society,' sequestering them in madhouses where their voices were cut off from polite discourse.

“Discourses” can be defined as forms of power that circulate in a social field and can attach to strategies of domination as well as those of resistance (Diamond and Quinby 1988:185). From the above theoretical discussion so far it can be safely inferred that a close link exists between knowledge and power. Knowledge is “discoursed” (communicated and passed on) through language. The church in this study qualifies as a discursive field in which knowledge is discoursed in and through church language such as the interactions shared in the narratives in Chapter 3.

A discursive field is the social field referred to above to show how language, subjectivity and power work in social structures – for our purposes in the church. In some discursive fields, such as the church, some discourses have more power and dominate (oppress) all other alternative discourses (Weedon 1987: 185; cf Hermans 2001:33). These discourses bring order and structure to the social institution, system or group and function to sustain and maintain a preferred status quo.

From a postmodern perspective, it is helpful to understand how different social (relational and interactive) structures privilege different types of discourse and others can be marginalized and/or dismissed as irrelevant and bad by those who sustain the dominant discourses. As mentioned before, Freedman and Combs (1996:22) highlighted power, knowledge and truth as important themes in a postmodern, social constructionist, narrative discussion. The relationship and interplay between power, knowledge and truth respectively will be considered now. Dominant discourses and narratives manifest in discursive fields as “truth”, which, as is evident in the participants’ stories, can be very hard to challenge.

Gergen (2009:11-12; cf Beyers et al. 2007:44; cf Hermans 2001:63) asserts that language is an instrument of power and that people have power in a

society (for our purposes, the church) in direct proportion to their ability to participate in the various discourses that make up that society or discursive field. Social constructionist thought stresses the reliance on language and the impossibility of communication without such reliance on language. The difficulty with this view is that, in a social constructionist, narrative approach, language is created in social process, which is loaded with ideology and value. In other words, as Augustine (2002:18) puts it, "...then all scientific writing, and all our attempts at objectivity, are essentially value-saturated products of social agreement ...". In the participants' narratives the experiences of abuse was imposed in all the narratives by those in power positions in the church – and/or by those in close relationship and proximity to the power holders.

Foucault makes it clear that matters of description cannot be separated from issues of power. As perspectives are developed and integrated into society, so are the social arrangements of the society altered. *Discourse* about sexuality, madness, knowledge, and so on, can thus operate as a fulcrum for social change (or stasis)

(Augustine 2002:18).

Could it be that, in the same way that the "mad", according to dominating discourse about what constitutes madness, were sent off to madhouses, their voices quieted and they were excluded and cut off from "polite discourse" – similarly, those in church structures can be excluded and cut off because of their alternative discourses which are then marginalized and treated (with all due respect) as "mad-ly" held against all "powerful truths"? Could it be that those with alternative views are considered separate (Freedman and Combs 1996:38) and somehow excluded or driven away?

Churches (discursive fields) are thus made up of a variety of discourses, competing in how they give meaning to the world. Some, commonly those in power and control, we can assume, will protect, justify, fight for and do whatever

it takes to appropriate, fit and hang on to the status quo. An example is the dominant discourse in patriarchal roots about male dominance and superiority. Van Schalkwyk (2010:282) in her study about the construction of male identity explains that people, in ancient times, valued able-bodied men who could protect their families against danger. Male privileging, of especially the firstborn male child, Van Schalkwyk continues (2010:282), prevailed in the face of enormous economic and political progress. The subjectivity and meaning generated was shaped through compelling experiences rooted in the dominant patriarchal discourse (Van Schalkwyk 2010:282ff). Van Schalkwyk's reference in her article to "firstborn" male child is specifically purposed for her unique study. For the purposes of this work she could have just said male child. She goes on to explain how this plays out in institutions (such as the church which is the focus of this work):

Institutionalized structures bestow upon the firstborn male a gendered subjectivity and an identity scripted by the rules of his place in the birth order and in his maleness. Fairytales (*part of cultures and societies*) also play a formative role in the identity formation of the young child and provide a useful metaphor for the identity formation process of, for example, firstborn males (*Italics mine*).

(Van Schalkwyk 2010:282)

Van Schalkwyk's focus in this article is first-born males. For the purposes of this study, and evidenced in the case studies presented, these dominant discourses are applicable to and visible with regards to all males and not just first-borns. Being male is a privilege. Males hold positions of power, controlling what knowledge is held to be of value in a specific society (cf Freedman and Combs 1996:26).

From a narrative perspective, the above means that male identities are shaped (constructed) and determine how they characterize their “selves” in their own individual narratives of self. Van Schalkwyk (2010:282) explains this type of construction and reconstruction of identity in patriarchal contexts. Again, not just males, but all people’s identities grow, change and vary as they live and actively take part in their socio-historical contexts (Van Schalkwyk 2010:282; cf Augustine 2002:18). These identities shaped by dominant discourses are “lived” in discursive fields in relationship, and work together to marginalize, separate, cut off from “polite discourse”. This is what contributes to the abuse, neglect and exclusion of others holding alternative discourses. Edward Bruner (1986:19; cf Freedman and Combs 1996:38) argues:

... dominant narratives are units of power as well as of meaning. The ability to tell one’s story has a political component; indeed, one measure of the dominance of a narrative is the place allocated to it in the discourse. Alternative, competing stories are generally not allocated space in establishment channels and must seek expression in underground media and dissident groupings.

In agreement with the sentiment of this thesis, Freedman and Combs (1996:38) bemoan the fact that Foucault in his many works on power and knowledge relationships didn’t study other important areas such as race, social class, and gender while the dominant narratives in our society disempower large numbers of people by excluding them from a significant voice in these particular areas of discourse.

The argument that there is an inseparable link between knowledge and power (Foucault 1979:63; 111-112), according to Freedman and Combs (1996:38) means that:

... the discourses of a society determine what knowledge is held to be true, right, and proper in that society, so those who control the discourse control knowledge. At the same time, the

dominant knowledge of a given milieu determines who will be able to occupy its powerful positions. To Foucault, power is knowledge, and knowledge is power. Within the narrative metaphor, the discourses of power studied can be seen as historical, cultural meta-narratives – as stories that have shaped (and been shaped by) the distribution of power in society

(Freedman and Combs 1996:38)

From everything on discourse, language and power so far, it seems that knowledge is categorized, ordered and organized in dominant discourses. These discourses are privileged by those who accept the knowledge contained within the discourses as absolute and truth above all else. All other knowledge is suppressed, discarded, cut off and made out to be of lesser or no value in the particular discursive field. This is what will be looked for in the thematic analysis of the narratives in Chapter 3.

Foucault's (1979:63; 111-112) assertion that power and knowledge are so inextricably joined causes him to use the terms together as power/knowledge or knowledge/power (Foucault 1979:63; 111-112)). Augustine (2002:18) describes how this relates to truth and discourse:

Foucault argues that we predominantly experience the positive or *constitutive* effects of power; that we are subject to power through normalizing “truths” that shape our lives and relationships ... these “truths” (i.e. constructed ideas that are truth claims) are “normalizing” in the sense that they construct norms around which persons are incited to shape or constitute their lives ... this form of power subjugates.

Hermans and Dupont (2001:242) further speak of the internalization of the dominant narratives (truths) of our contexts and refer specifically to religious contexts. These easily become the “truths” of individual and communal

identities. In Foucault's terms, according to Freedman and Combs (1996:39), we become "docile bodies" under "the [internalized] gaze" of those in power who control the discourses in our cultural contexts. These "truths" (dominant narratives/discourses) potentially blind us to other narratives and the possibilities and potential that they may hold (Gergen 2009:12-13).

According to White (1991:14), people come to therapy either when dominant narratives are keeping them from living out their preferred narratives or when:

... the person is actively participating in the performance of stories that she finds unhelpful, unsatisfying, and dead-ended, and that these stories do not sufficiently encapsulate the person's lived experience or are very significantly contradicted by import aspects of the person's lived experience.

(Freedman and Combs 1996:39)

In a church setting, this may be problematic, because those holding positions of power, supporting the dominant discourses, are, more often than not, the same people who are also offering counselling and pastoral services. What if the person being counselled is the person White (1991:14) is referring to above? That is, the one who is prevented from living out her or his preferred narrative or discourse, or the one actively participating in the performance of being church that is in its essence unhelpful, unsatisfying, and dead-end. That is also the one whose lived experience is not sufficiently encapsulated by and even contradicted by these discourses or narratives.

Gergen (2001:2; 12-13; 25; cf 2009:2) contends that, although terms such as "real", "true", "rational", and "objective" are certainly enormously useful within particular communities for affirming traditions, facilitating mutual trust, ensuring forms of coordination and generating collective enthusiasm, they are dangerous and deadly when " ... participants in such communities extend what is local to the

plane of the universal – real for all people, transcendently true, fundamentally rational, indisputably objective”.

When any community’s constructed reality is extended in this way, other traditions are in danger of being annihilated or destroyed. This means, all “... those who don’t see things for what they are, swell in ‘false consciousness’, ‘reason imperfectly’ or are ‘hopelessly subjective’ ...”. They are, in such a context and atmosphere, not likely to gain voice, and will most likely be brushed off as “... obviously ignorant, mere folklore, mythical, mystical, or worse”.

Gergen (2001:12-13) argues that “... it is just this arrogance of the local that stoked the Western colonialist fires – and the subsequent devastation of traditions throughout the world”. The “local” Gergen talks about here is probably referring to the dominating discourses of the self, identity and of any group, such as the church or subgroups (maybe holding on to certain dogmatic beliefs) in the church.

The following section is the peak of this work in that it comprises the culmination of all theorization above with regard to the relationships between power, knowledge, truth and the socially constructed dominant discourse and narrative related to these. Foucault’s work and interest focused much on how the dominant discourses, what he terms “grand abstractions”, contained “truth claims” and how these “truth discourses” dehumanized and objectified many people (Foucault 1980; cf Freedman and Combs 1996:36).

Abuse is nothing less than the dehumanizing and objectifying, among other actions, of people. Beyers et al. (2007:44) early on in this chapter, also mention the concerns about narcissism and the objectifying of others. Beyers and colleagues’, as well as Foucault’s (1980) concerns about the dehumanizing and objectification of others, have to do with modernist, thus individualistic discourse and narrative. What they are saying is that when such “grand abstractions”, “grand narratives” and “discourse” are at work within any social system, it is modernist and individualistic - essentialist . Dominant discourse denies or neglects some experiences, and the result is more often than not

silence – on the part of the abusive system, the surroundings as well as the victim (Walton 2012:180).

Foucault (1980:80-84) refers to the “amazing efficacy of discontinuous, particular and local criticism” to bring about what he called a “return of knowledge” or “an insurrection of subjugated knowledges (Freedman and Combs 1996:39)”. Gergen’s (2009:12) assertion that truth and realities should be revisited and challenged is what this work aims to achieve. The postmodern argument, according to Gergen (1992:57), is not against schools of therapy, but only against their stance of authoritative truth. This work then, concurring with Gergen’s assertion, is not against any particular theological school of thought, but it is taking a stand against the church’s stance of authoritative truth with regard to gender roles, and interpretations of Scripture, amongst others.

What Foucault (1980:80-84) seems to call for here is an upliftment of other “knowledges” which are competing with and in opposition to the effects of the, what I would call abusive, powers linked to the institution (church) as well as the functioning of such organized discourse. This is what this work purposes to stimulate – a closer move to the upliftment of alternative “knowledges”, narrative and discourse, not necessarily rejecting and replacing, but creating space for alternative discourses to gain ground in the church in general.

Freedman and Combs (1996:40) argue that, even in the most marginalized and disempowered of lives there is always “lived experience” that lies outside the domain of the dominant stories that have marginalized and disempowered those lives. Ways of thinking have been developed, according to Freedman and Combs (1996:40), that are based on bringing forth the discontinuous, particular, and local stories of individuals and groups, and also of ascribing meaning to those stories so that they can be part of an effective “insurrection of subjugated knowledges ... an insurrection that lets people inhabit and lay claim to the many possibilities for their lives that lie beyond the pale of the dominant narratives”. These narratives speak of people’s painful “lived experiences” which have been silenced, suppressed and rejected, which leads to

experiences of abuse inflicted by those in power positions in their respective churches.

In the next section a psychological discussion follows on individual psychological process as put forth by Kelly's personal construct theory, which is categorized as social constructivist. Gergen's psychological social constructionist thought has already been covered in the general section above. I include, however, a brief summary of his five "backbone" assumptions (Gergen 2009:5-13) of social constructionism.

2.4 Social constructivism

2.4.1 A psychological perspective

Psychology is the discipline of studying attitudes and attributions and how they are formed. Firstly concerning itself with "both the *cognitive* (intellectual) and *affective* (emotional) sides of a person, as well as the *behaviour that* results from and is influenced by thoughts and emotions (Sternberg 2001:423)". Butler (2012:102) offers a definition that fits in a postmodern, social constructionist, narrative frame: "... psychology theory is a construct that attempts to explain observed complex behaviours, which have their origin in consciousness or unconsciousness, and are interpreted through the features of the culture and experiences of the observer".

Butler's definition presupposes the interaction between individual and the environment as well as subjectivity of the observer. Gergen (2009:1-12) describes social constructionist psychology as placing beliefs, understanding and emotions in the context of relationships in the form of stories, made up of discourses about everything we encounter. These are developed in relationship with others in the world and should be understood in relation to relationship and social environment (cf 1985:266). George Kelly (1955; cf Maddi 1996:174ff) was the first to explain this interaction between individual and environment with his personal construct theory and metaphoric reference to the individual as scientist, developing personal constructs on a cognitive and biological level through the

nervous system in order to make sense of and test experience and reality. Social constructivism is psychological theorization about how certain social phenomena develop in humans in social contexts; for the purposes of this work the social phenomena are abusive actions and behaviour, and the social context is the church.

Chiari and Nuzzo (1996:163-184; 2004) distinguish between two broad categories of constructivism: "epistemological" and "hermeneutic". "Epistemological" constructivism, according to Chiari and Nuzzo, holds that many, equally legitimate constructions of the same external reality can exist, while hermeneutic constructivism views knowledge as "interpretation", interpretations which can be historically as well as culturally and contextually verifiable, in contrast with timeless, universally valid absolutes. These are formed linguistically and are negotiated within social contexts rather than products of cognition or of any one individual.

Chiari and Nuzzo (2004) note: "Although most constructivists acknowledge that a 'real world' exists outside of human consciousness, they are much more interested in the nuances in people's construction of the world than they are in evaluating the extent to which such constructions are 'true' in representing a presumably external reality." Freedman and Combs (1996:15) refer to psychologist Gregory Bateson's (1972) 'map' metaphor which suggests that "... all our knowledge of the world is carried in the form of various mental maps of 'external' and 'objective' reality, and that different maps lead to different interpretations of 'reality'". What is objective and absolute is undeniably experienced, thought about and acted upon in different and unique ways, also affected by people's genetic inherited qualities. Social constructivism should not be confused with constructionist theory. Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2008:342) distinguish constructivism from constructionism. They put it as follows:

Both address the nature of knowing and reject the idea of describing an objective reality. Constructivism, however, is rooted in the biology of cognition – more specifically...each person's

perceptions are filtered throughout individual nervous systems. Each of us brings different assumptions to the same situation – we construe reality differently – as a result of our own mental and symbolic processes and meaning-making structure.

Social constructionism assumes that no one sees an objective reality, but that it expands on the social constructivist view by “...asserting that what we do construct from what we observe arises from the language system, relationships, and culture we share with others”. (Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008:342) Our attitudes, beliefs, memories, and emotional reactions arise out of relational experiences.

Kelly's constructivist theory demonstrates that the act of construing our own reality and meaning originates on a deep personal (even biological) level and not merely on a social level. Kelly's constructivist cognitive dissonance personality theory is known for his emphasis on how people create their own lives through construing experience (interpretation), by forming their own constructs based on experiences, for example religious/non-religious, right/wrong, Godly/ungodly. This work is about the social constructions of people and groups and how they affect relationships in the church – often in destructive ways. Kelly proposes that this construction process, although social, happens on a cognitive level via the nervous system (Freedman and Combs 1996:26; cf Hoffman 1990:2; cf Goldenberg and Goldenberg 2008:342).

Although Kelly focuses attention on cognitive construing, surely it cannot be denied that relationships and social context plays a role in the process, as asserted by social constructionist thought. Kelly distinguishes between *permeable* and *preemptive* constructs. If a person's construct is permeable, new experiences and encounters can be subsumed by it (Kelly 1955:64-68). If it is preemptive, it is closed to new ideas and experiences. This depends on the flexibility and adaptability of the individual. People use their existing construct system to predict and control their environment. If pain is experienced by a perceived discrepancy, the individual takes action to alleviate the discomfort

(Maddi 1996:174-186). Kelly implies that perception of reality has to do with the meaning a person attaches to it. It implies a freedom of choice to change, adapt, or reject any held meaning which does not work for the individual's happiness and comfort. Kelly himself termed his approach "alternative constructivism", which means that a person can construct mentally alternative meaning/s to any idea, event, and experience in the present, past or future. Kelly's personal construct psychology (1955) assumes the following:

- The individual is the creator of his or her own ways of seeing and perceiving their experiential world;
- Constructs are construed by humans and tested for workability;
- Constructs are organized and categorized into mental systems, which make up groups of constructs into subordinate and super-ordinate relationships;
- Similar events/experiences can belong to two or more mental systems, while they do not belong to any system;
- People's practical systems are specifically focused and are limited in ranges of convenience.

According to Kelly (1955:14; cf Chiari and Nuzzo 2009:128; 1996:163-184), constructs are like transparent patterns or templates which function to test reality for a suitable fit, construct reality and make predictions. The success of the fits, constructions and predictions determines whether constructs, and eventually whole construct systems, are accepted, revised or even possibly recreated (Smith 2008:15). Kelly (1955; cf Smith 2008:15-16) distinguishes between different realities by the following distinctions:

- *Individuality*: The differences in people's constructions of experiences and events;

- *Communality*: The communal constructions of people, where similar psychological processes are taking place and employed by different persons of the same community;
- *Sociality*: The extent to which one person construes the construction processes of another. Such individual may play a role in a social process involving the other person.

According to Neimeyer and Bridges (2004) Kelly accentuates that individuality and communality need to be considered together for developing an understanding of people's psychological processes (cf Smith 2008:15).

This is done by looking for similarities to group together, but also by contrasting them, in other words by differentiating them from what they are not. For example, rigidity can only be understood in the light of its contrast, flexibility. These constructions form a basis for individuality (self-definition) and communality (social interaction). Neimeyer and Bridges (2004) write about Kelly's "core constructs" that they are often "unverbalizable" meanings. They are central in the shaping and organizing of our complete construct systems. They ultimately represent our most basic values and sense of self. Core constructs are often private idiosyncratic meanings passed on and given validation as "truth" within relationship and in social context (Smith 2008:15-16). Bugental (1976:283), a student of Kelly, recalls how Kelly very casually stated: "The key to man's destiny is his ability to reinterpret what he cannot deny".

Different from other cognitive psychological theory, there is greater and stronger emphasis in Kelly's theory on emotional experiences, which function as indicators of possible or real challenge or change of existing deep-seated constructs of one's existing predicted or expected reality. Threat and anxiety may be experienced when encountering ideas, views, events or anything which may seem unfamiliar, strange and/or uninterpretable to currently held construct systems. This strong link between emotion and constructed meaning makes Kelly's Personal Construct Theory very suitable for this research and for anyone concerned with issues such as "... relational breakdown, trauma, and loss, all of

which can fundamentally undercut one's assumptive world, triggering a host of significant emotional and behavioural responses". (Neimeyer and Bridges 2004)

Neimeyer and Bridges (2004) highlight the way in which personal identity is constructed and transformed in a social context, focusing on the role of language in defining reality. They go on to stress that the role of the counsellor attempting to assist clients with problems of living is to focus on the created meaning of the counsellee as expressed in language. This is in agreement with postmodernism as well as with other constructivist, social constructionist as well as narrative approaches. It seems like language, according to Kelly's theory, plays a secondary role to the cognitive construing process. Nevertheless, language plays a crucial role in the therapeutic setting (Neimeyer and Bridges 2004).

Smith (2008:15) concurs by connecting Kelly's constructivist theory with social constructionist theory: "The 'fundamental postulate' of Kelly's theory of personal constructs expresses the constructionist outlook strongly – a person's processes are psychologically channelized by the way he anticipates events". Smith (2008:15), however, reminds that Kelly wants the person to be seen as an active scientist testing and making changes to constructs as the need arises. This is different from Gergen's social constructionist theory as I explain in later paragraphs.

Kelly's theory offers an explanation for the constructs which may be held in the church, the anxieties which may be underlying some of the abusive actions when individuals encounter and/or are confronted with alien constructs. Further it may explain why some are silent about abuse – possibly because of communality - they share constructs with others who, possibly unintentionally and unaware, treat others in ways which may be experienced as abuse. It also explains the dynamics between two groups of people: those with dominant discourse and narrative as constructs, and those who hold alternative constructs, discourse and narratives.

Gergen (2009), in the preface to "*An invitation to Social Construction*" comments about social constructionism (which he says some narrowly refer to as

constructivism – hence also my inclusion of constructivist theory above) that one of its most important features is its relevance to the times and its focus on practice.

According to Gergen (2009:2), what we accept as "reality" or "the world" depends significantly on "how we approach it", which in turn again depends on the social relationships of which we form part. Social constructionism then, says Gergen (2009:2) challenges "... long honoured words like 'truth', 'objectivity', 'reason' and 'knowledge'", when grasped completely" and self-understanding, including thoughts, emotions and desires, will be altered and transformed. Everything will come to have entirely new meaning and to be seen in a different light, including world conflict.

... social constructionist ideas emerge from a process of dialogue, a dialogue that is ongoing, and to which anyone – even you as reader – may contribute. As a result, however, there is no one, authoritative account that represents all the participants...many different views, and some tensions among them.

(Gergen 2009:2)

This describes constructionism and my intentions with this work. I vie for ongoing dialogue, a challenging of truths, objectivity, that long-honoured ideas, self and relationships will take on an entirely new level of meaning, and that this study will form part of the process of ongoing dialogue, stimulating further ideas. I now briefly summarise the basic social constructionist assumptions as described by Gergen (2009:5-13) with a fundamental vision in mind: "As we speak together, listen to new voices, raise questions, ponder alternatives, and play at the edges of common sense, we cross the threshold into new worlds of meaning. The future is ours – together – to create".

Different ways of describing, using language and talking, are possible to describe "what there is" (Gergen 2009:5). So my understanding of Hitler's cause does not depend on the happenings: Different language was and is used to

describe the events around the Holocaust, for example. The events in South Africa during apartheid and even now after the liberation from it, do not dictate how conservative thinkers use language to describe it, and how those who appreciate the “New South Africa” and the “Rainbow Nation”, both new constructs for many, tested, challenged and reinterpreted in Kelly’s constructivist paradigm. These new terms in the light of what Gergen says here also is only a reflection of people’s experiences with regard to changes in the context. In the church, greater awareness about different ways of describing could contribute to greater tolerance and less experiences of abuse.

Does this mean that social constructionism denies the reality “out there”? I don’t believe so. It simply means different “realities” or “what there is” exist as constructed in different approaches, cultural thought and experience and relationships. In the church, for example, some may describe the same sermon, depending on tradition and social experience, as liberating, and at the same time, for others, it may be constricting. In Chapter 1 I noted the negligence of influences of context as a gap in existing writings about abuse.

Social constructionism, according to Gergen (2009:5-8) further assumes that the way the world is understood is achieved in relationship. People negotiate, agree, compare views and agree about what constitutes “the world”. Relationship thus takes precedence to anything we perceive as logical and understandable in our reality. Thus, no understanding of existence, objects, people, reality before relationship. “This suggests that any words, phrases or sentences that are perfectly sensible to us now could, under certain conditions of relationship, be reduced to nonsense” (Gergen 2009:8). See Gergen’s (2009:8) discussion of his desk as described by the scientist, physicist, psychologist, and how any one of us can be described differently by people from different professions.

In every social structure or “entity”, for example, church or a tennis game, patterns of coordination (agreed upon in member relationships) which are fairly reliable (context-specific) are developed. These serve certain functions in the specific context. Gergen refers to Wittgenstein’s description of these actions,

words, objects belonging to a certain context as a “form of life” (2009:9). Gergen asserts: “When we say that a certain description is ‘accurate’ ... or ‘true’ we are not judging it according to how well it pictures the world. Rather, we are saying that the words have come to function as ‘truth telling’ within the rules of a particular game ... or ... according to certain conventions of certain groups ... successful functioning within the relational ritual ... became truth telling”. (Gergen 2009:10). It is no intellectual challenge to figure out how this can lead to abusive relationships if there is no awareness of this principle. This can also provide answers to the silence by many – it could simply be acceptable to “abuse” someone who thinks and behaves outside these rule and pattern parameters.

After mentioning the danger of loss of what is possessed, real, or tradition if we deconstruct any of these as not being “absolute truth”, and also abandoning forms of life by abandoning languages of what is real and good, Gergen continues (after referring as an example to churches dying and emptied, becoming community centres, as certain concepts are no longer agreed upon and accepted in a different context): “Sustaining one’s traditions requires a continuous process of regenerating meaning together“. (Gergen 2009:11) Gergen (2009:12) invites “generative discourses ... ways of talking and writing or representing (as in photography, film, art, theatre, and the like) that simultaneously challenge existing traditions of understanding, and offer new possibilities for action”.

Social constructionism and also this work, do not argue for a rejection of tradition, but simply for what Gergen terms “generative discourses”: a revisiting of traditions, patterns of belief and activity, which may clash with new postmodern times, although they may have been perfectly suitable some time ago.

Constructionists, according to Gergen (2009:13), should celebrate “critical reflexivity”, which he describes as

... the attempt to place one’s premises into question, to suspend the ‘obvious’, to listen to alternative framings of reality, and to

grapple with the comparative outcomes of multiple standpoints ...
an unrelenting concern with the blinding potential of the 'taken-for-
granted'. If we are to build together toward a more viable future
then we must be prepared to doubt everything we have accepted
as real, true, right, necessary or essential.

For those readers who at this point might be concerned about a rejection of major traditions, Gergen (2009:13) reminds and concludes that critical reflection as described above is not "... necessarily a prelude to rejecting our major traditions." It simply implies the recognition of these as historically and culturally situated traditions. It also implies the recognition that other traditions may be equally legitimate and valid within their own contexts. It finally acts as invitation to "... the kind of dialogue that might lead to common ground".

This work is therefore about critical reflection - critically reflecting on what some experienced and constructed as abuse in relationship through the use of language. There is also critically reflection on what some call "true", "right", "just", and so on, justifying actions which drive others away from the church.

Kelly's theory as discussed above, with its strong emphasis on affect and constructed meaning serves to explain the emotionally driven abusive discourses in structures such as the church. Similarly, Gergen's social constructionist thought outlined in the previous paragraphs demonstrates and creates awareness that what we often perceive as truth, reality, objective and "out there" only to be studied, learned and applied to our lives, was constructed (shaped, built, formed) by humans in relationship agreeing, by negotiation, talk, and using language, finding their expression in dominant narratives (stories), made up of dominant discourses.

Human/Individual behaviour extends beyond the individual's inner person/processes/functioning, but is driven by and founded on beliefs about what is real, true, good, and so forth. Language is instrumental to represent our constructed realities and worlds, and these constructions are not necessarily true representations or dependent on what is out there, which we would usually term objective matter, reality or truth.

The above serves to emphasise and encourage re-evaluation and critical reflection on those things, truths, ideas, beliefs and whatever else we want to describe that we disagree about in the church, and which disagreements often are imposed on one another as objective truth and reality to be uncritically accepted, “or else...”.

Although talk is about relationships and groups in which relationship and language between people shape realities, the focus to this point was mostly on “individual” or “unique” realities. What is then happening? Is it humans (agents) who create these “truths”, “rules”, and so on, or is it the groups or entities which do the creating, maintaining and sustaining of meaning – social constructions? This has been the age-old debate in sociological circles. People are not mere psychological beings, but are social beings in social contexts. The way is then paved for the following reflection on sociological social constructionist thought.

The church is a social structure made up of human beings, and it is clear from the social constructionist perspective, that knowledge, power and truth are dynamically interacting in church systems, culminating in personal and communal constructs, dominant discourses and narratives. A sociological reflection on social constructionist thought follows in the next section to reflect on these dynamics from a sociological perspective.

2.4.2 A sociological perspective

Sociology, according to The American Sociological Association (2006) is “...the study of social life, social change, and the social causes and consequences of human behaviour and ... investigates the structure of groups, organizations, and societies, and how people interact within these contexts”. Sociology has to do with humans in social groups and settings. According to Barkan (1997:4) humans’ behaviour and attitudes are profoundly shaped by society. People develop patterns of social interaction and social relationships in social settings and social settings shape our identity, actions and behaviour and attitudes.

Sociology thus studies relationships in and between groups. These may be small, for example, a family, or larger social structures, for example

organizations and institutions. Social class, poverty, race, gender and religion are some of the social issues studied by sociologists. Power and conflict are relevant topics for the purposes of this work. People's behaviour, choices and our understanding of others' behaviour are often determined by guidelines rooted in the past.

Sociology has critique and healthy scepticism at its core and critical thinking, according to Appelbaum and Chambliss (1997:5) is "... a willingness to ask any question, no matter how difficult; to be open to any answer that is supported by reason and evidence; and to confront one's own biases and prejudices openly when they get in the way". Sociology explores issues which usually bring about major conflict and controversy (see also Giddens 1987:2).

"Social construction", first termed by sociologists Berger and Luckmann in *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966) deals with constructs or applications which are natural and obvious to those who accept, practise and impose them on their followers, but in reality it is a man-made invention of a particular society, structure or culture in a dialectical process (cf MacDonald 2004:10).

Berger and Luckmann's central thesis is then that the individual is a producer and the individual's social world is the product of their dialectical relationship (Berger and Luckmann 1966:78; cf MacDonald 2004:10). A structure may have its genesis in as few as two people who dynamically interact in what is to become a social system, such as the church which has its beginnings in Jesus and his few disciples (see MacDonald 2004:12). They shape concepts and rules mutually of and for each other's actions. These rules and concepts become set ways or habits in the form of reciprocal roles played by the people (actors) involved in relationship with one another. As soon as more people join the group these rules (and roles?) are conveyed from generation to generation and justified as the group's identity. Berger and Luckmann call this "institutionalization" (Berger and Luckmann 1966:78).

Institutionalization is the process of entrenching meaning in society. Beliefs, actions, knowledge about reality and what it is are firmly set in and shaped by the institutional fabrication of society. So-called "reality", which in the

church, for example, is seen as objective, and which takes the form of institutionalized roles, rules and concepts, is thus, according to this theory, human fabrication with the purpose of creating meaning in the church in a very specific context, such as culture, time in history and human needs at the time. This is seen as an ongoing, dynamic process which develops in levels, with a final level: the symbolic universe. Berger and Luckmann assert that "... the symbolic universe is conceived of as the matrix of all socially objectivated and subjectively real meanings; the entire historic society and the entire biography of the individual are seen as events taking place within this universe". (Berger and Luckmann 1966:114, cf MacDonald 2004:11)

The habitualized activities are reproductions (with very little effort) of actions that are followed with such regularity that they become patterned as solid and even unchangeable. When these patterns become part of shared social interactions, they become "typified" by what Berger and Luckmann refer to as "typification". (Berger and Luckmann 1966:72) MacDonald (2004:12) observes regarding the church: "If one follows Berger and Luckmann's definition of institutionalization, it must be admitted that institutionalization was a process that began among Jesus and his followers and continued with the construction of the church". Berger and Luckmann (1966:79) further theorize:

It follows that the expanding institutional order develops a corresponding canopy of legitimations, stretching over it a protective cover of both cognitive and normative interpretation. These legitimations are learned by the new generation during the same process that socializes them into the institutional order.

As new generations thus get added to the social structure, the social structure (institutionalized typifications) needs to be passed on and justified. This process they call "legitimation".

Important for this work, MacDonald (2004:16) argues that Berger and Luckmann believe that, in the light of human fallibility of human socialization and also in the light of their argument that all human social phenomena are humanly

constructed, no symbolic universe can be completely taken for granted. In the case of the church, this “taken-for-grantedness” could provide further explanation for imposing “truths” and norms, which are typified and legitimized, on others, which may cause experiences of abuse.

Conscientization in the church and pastoral care ministry of Berger and Luckmann’s line of thought and explanation of how current actions, roles and activities becomes part of a “symbolic universe” can stimulate thought and self-reflection on some (or all) of the “shoulds”, “musts” and “oughts” in the church. It may also explain why there is often silence around activities and behaviours which some experience as abuse: the justification may lie hidden in a symbolic universe with solidified (agreed upon) typifications and legitimations which were institutionalized over time from generation to generation. These may have become obsolete in postmodern times. It is therefore important to explore the relationship between different beliefs and the social realities in which they are rooted (MacDonald 2004:27).

Berger and Luckmann’s theory places strong emphasis on human action and the role of human actors in the process of institutionalization, typification, legitimation and the creation of a symbolic universe (cf Smith 1991:51). Anthony Giddens (1984) places stronger emphasis on the duality of structure and actor (agent) which may provide valuable insight into the shaping of humans by the structure as well and how, if this process is ignored and taken for granted, it may contribute to conflict and harmful activities.

Anthony Giddens, in his work *Constitution of Society* (1984) criticizes this approach to social constructionism as being too one-sided, placing too much emphasis on the human actor, neglecting the role the social structure plays. He introduces what he terms duality of agent and structure in his structuration theory. Structuration theory sees socio-cultural systems and human agents as involved in a reflexive process (reflexivity) (Giddens 1984:42-44). This simply means that continuity and change, the reproduction and development of social systems come about through the mutual contribution by both structure (society or

group) and social action (by individuals). Societal structures shape human action and human activity shapes and re-shapes structural patterns.

Social constructions come about through repeated behaviours which are reified as structure. Freewill and determinism are therefore mutually responsible for shaping process and product. Structure is not separate and external to the individuals and the actions of those individuals who make up the structure. Patterns of social action are reproduced and reoccur, resulting in what we conceptualize as social structures, for example, the church.

Just as Gergen has contended from a psychological perspective, Giddens's sociological theory therefore also gives hope: humans can be active participants in bringing about change in our social structures.

When we apply this to the church, according to Giddens, the church does not exist without human actions (agency), but it is made up and exists within each active participant and is made up of patterns of actions, behaviours, rules and so on, which are reified over time. They are eventually almost seen as separate objective entities, but they can only exist while active participating humans continue to reproduce these patterns of behaviours, rules and actions. According to Giddens, humans are knowledgeable and have the ability to reflexively examine the social activity within the structure. "Agency" refers to the power of humans to independently act upon and challenge the determined limitations of the social structure. Giddens (1984:2) argues:

Human social activities, like some self-reproducing items in nature, are recursive. That is to say, they are not brought into being by social actors but continually recreated by them via the very means whereby they express themselves as actors. In and through their activities agents reproduce the conditions that make these activities possible.

Structuration theory thus proposes three key facets, namely structures (component systems of signification, control and legitimation), human action (systems of communication, power and sanction) which are recursively linked by

modalities (interpretive schemes, rules, resources and norms). These modalities are accessed by human actors to recursively link structures and human action, reproducing and modifying systems of interaction, through component relations, following cyclic patterns.

These cyclic patterns involve the continuous attempt, involving three interrelated component systems, to establish meaning, order relations and demarcate behaviour patterns focusing on issues of signification (could we say meaning-construction?), power and control and regulation (Giddens 1979,1984).

As far as signification or signs and communication are concerned, the social actors draw on the sources of shared or mutual knowledge to construct meaning. “Shared meaning” is fundamental to the production and reproduction of the social interactions in the system. Each interaction is in turn shaped by the social interaction. The rules and codes of interpretive schemes are used by the social agents to make sense of new or changed situations (Cohen 1989:27).

Giddens (1979:100) further asserts that, as far as power and control are concerned, authoritative and allocative resources are used to create or generate control over other social actors/people and objects. Power is reciprocally situated in the individual as well as in the organisation or institution, “... but structures of control have transformative capacity over organisational actors through the consistent allocation of resources” (Giddens 1979:93).

While there is a fundamental relationship between actors and power, control is not absolute, and alternative action is known as the dialectic of control (Giddens 1979:6). According to Giddens, control is never absolute in any system, and systems must engage in debate about degrees of application, limits of discretion and adaptation to new social circumstances, changing the “rules”. As far as legitimization and sanctions go, again social agents “... draw upon rules and normative practices that govern legitimate social practice ...” according to each specific unique context.

The values and goals deeply imbedded in structure are articulated as rights and obligations. Rules define normative practice and

mediate appropriate performance through sanctions and inducements. Legitimate social performance is often articulated and sustained through orchestrated socialization, or the rituals, rites and ceremonies of tradition. Broadcasting preferred behaviours and enculturating acceptable practice.

(Giddens 1979)

Cohen (1989:27-28) refers to asymmetrical relationships within and between sanctions and resources, showing that a similar reinforcing interrelatedness which exists between the three key constructing social practices, namely construction of meaning, control and regulation, also exists asymmetrically between sanctions and resources.

Resources are mobilized involving practices which are both normative and follow existing meaning constructions. “Rules not only sanction conduct but themselves also constitute meaning. Structures are sustained through the mutual interaction of resources and rules and without this recursive regeneration they would over time disintegrate and cease to exist” (Sewell 1992:13).

2.4.3 A theological perspective

One of Gergen’s (2009:5-13) “backbone” assumptions of social constructionism is that belief systems (especially dominant narratives, discourses, language) should be reflected on, revisited, tested and challenged. A narrative, according to Dreyer (2003:317), is the history of a group in story form, but also an indicator of the meaning attached to events by the group, for instance, the church. Jesus is the key actor in what Heiler (1961:283-286) termed, among other types, salvation/revelatory type myth. Dreyer (2003:317) refers to the Jesus story as foundational narrative (the story in which the Christian faith and the church are rooted).

Don Browning (MacDonald 2004:12) sees the way that Jesus and his followers initially interacted as active initiating and participating in the social construction of the church through the process of Berger and Luckmann’s

institutionalization. Jesus therefore is a key actor in the foundational narrative of the church and Christian faith. Dreyer (2003:320) argues that the religious personality models behaviour and thought on the godly activities of ancestors, such as prophets, apostles and other charismatic individuals. Faith communities, thus, according to Dreyer (2003:320) position themselves regarding future vision and mission, closely linked to narratives rooted in latent foundational myths.

This positioning with regard to the future should not be described without taking into account the narratives and mythological character of the faith community in question (Dreyer 2003:320). McGrath (1990:35) describes the history of Jesus of Nazareth "... as the precipitating or generative event of Christian doctrine". Behind the Christian faith community lies the foundational narrative, which is the narrative of Jesus. This is the reason for including a discussion of Jesus; firstly because Jesus is generally seen as the modeller of behaviour and thought in the Christian church, and secondly because Jesus so strongly challenged the religious of his time (Grenz 1997:106-109). Finally, I include Jesus, because of my inference that, although Jesus disagreed strongly with the teachings of his times, he returned to the foundational narrative at the root of God's activities: the covenant promise of the Old Testament (cf Grenz 1997:110).

According to La Sor, Hubbard and Bush (1982:1), in addition to reserving the right for himself to be the true interpreter of the Scriptures, Jesus recognized the full authority, as well as the binding nature thereof, for the followers of God (cf Grenz 1997:106). Sanders (1975:62) describes Jesus as a better interpreter of the Scriptures than his contemporaries (cf Burridge 2007:172). Jesus further also saw the Scriptures as fully inspired by God and the foundation for his (often unheard of, unexpected, frightening, alien) teachings (cf Burridge 2007:170).

In the Jesus narrative the Old Testament as we know it was the "Scripture/s", as they were generally referred to, used by Him and his disciples (La Sor, Hubbard and Bush 1982:1). In the gospel of John, Jesus, for example, is said to have challenged the current understanding of the Scriptures and he assigned new and/or different meaning to it. In another example, in Acts 10:35,

Peter is reported as having expressed the gaining of a different, new understanding of the Scriptures. They recognized that, although the Scriptures were inspired by God, humans interpret and give meaning to it. No conflict over inspiration and authority of Scriptures (La Sor, Hubbard and Bush 1982:1), but rather over interpretations. Christ reserved the right to be the only true interpreter, and swords were crossed about interpretations of Scripture and not over the authority and/or inspiration thereof.

There was agreement, and he even followed the Jewish traditions, practices and acknowledged their experiences with regard to reliance on the Scriptures and application, but not on interpretation (see John 5:39, cf the gospels and his discussions with regard to His sonship (La Sor, Hubbard and Bush 1982:1)

In some of the case studies, it is evident that there were church constitutions which dealt with freedom of interpretation – I assume and accept that they were probably talking about peripheral issues, and not the core, fundamentally agreed upon issues (truths?) of our faith. The problem is that these constitutions were only applied and applicable as far as was agreed by those in power, if and when it suited them. Jesus sharply disagreed, according to La Sor, Hubbard and Bush 1982:2), on two points:

- **Legalism**

Similarly to the Old Testament Prophets, Christ also reacted strongly against the emptiness of much of Jewish legalism “... in which routine and ritual had become a worthless substitute for purity of heart, integrity, and social concern (e.g. Mark 7:1-13; Matt 9:13; 12:7; which quotes Hos 6:6)”. Käsemann (1970:40) contends that Jesus “... broke through the piety and theology of his contemporaries, and brought God’s promise and love in place of the Mosaic law, his own endowment with the Spirit in place of casuistry, and grace in place of good works”.

- **Central theme**

He also reacted against the central theme, insisting that He is the central theme and fulfilment of the Scriptures (Law, Old Testament) (cf John 5:39).

This resulted in a reshaping of attitudes towards Him and the Scriptures (see Luke 24:44), but also in sharp conflicts with “...the Jewish officialdom” (La Sor et al. 1982:2). How did he respond to the first disagreement above, that is, legalism and empty tradition? Firstly, In Matthew 5–7, Christ *reinterpreted* the law in the Sermon on the Mount; secondly, He *renounced* prevalent Jewish interpretations of the law; thirdly, He *reemphasized* love, forgiveness, and inward piety; fourthly, Christ *followed a dynamic approach* (as opposed to the static approach of Jewish contemporaries) (La Sor et al. 1982:2), viewing the Scriptures as an “... inspired, authoritative record of God’s activity in history, an activity which presses toward its denouement in his coming kingdom”.

The Scriptures, approached from Jesus’ interpretation and insights, become alive and a dynamic guidance to life and Christianity (John 6:63; John 5:39). They are not an index or list of fixed (reified) principles which serve to regulate religious structure and agency (see Berger and Luckman and Giddens-discussion above) (La Sor et al. 1982:2); fifthly, He brought *fresh import* to some major prophetic themes ... which were neglected by many Jews in their magnification of the letter of the law; sixthly, by the above, He *revolutionized* Old Testament *interpretation*, “... by drawing together various strands of teaching and braiding them into a single cord in himself (La Sor, Hubbard and Bush 1982:2); and finally, He paved the way for His followers, for example, Matthew, who meticulously tried to show the connections of Old Testament Prophecy and Christ’s life. He often repeated the words “to fulfil what was spoken” (see Matt 1:22; 2:15; 17; 23; 4:14; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; 27:9).

The gospel writers were open to reinterpretation, reconstruction and a rethinking of old “truths”. However, their search for links, comparisons, and connections did not mean, and actually show a resistance to, a discarding of traditions, Scriptures, or anything else. One senses an eagerness to find fresh

connections and reconstructions of what was valuable to them with “the new”, which in this case was Christ and Christ’s interpretation. La Sor, Hubbard and Bush (1982:2) summarize:

He was the great prophet like Moses who taught the new law from the mountain, the peerless priest who *made the whole temple system obsolete* (cf Matt. 12:6; John 2:13-15); the wise king, the ‘greater than Solomon’ (Matt. 12:42); David’s son and Lord, rightful heir to Israel’s throne (Mark 12:35-37; 15:2); the triumphant son of man (Dan 7:13ff.; Mark 13:26); and the suffering servant (Isa. 53; Mark 10:45). The great themes of prophetic expectation found their consummation in him” (Italics mine to illustrate La Sor et al.’s description of what, in the context and scope of this work, can be described as a typical social constructionist activity, that is, dialoguing with, deconstructing and reconstruction of old systems and ideas).

In the times after Jesus’ departure, and in the New Testament church, the Scriptures, as reinterpreted by Christ himself, were the foundation of teaching, preaching and the new way of doing faith (Christianity) (La Sor et al. 1982:1; see also Scripture references above). Could Jesus then, in the light of the discussion above, be seen and described as social constructionist? From the above, I understand that He:

- demonstrated that what was believed to be absolute truth, was often the product of human interpretations;
- showed that meaning was given by humans to Scriptures which was not as God initially intended, so they constructed their own realities (in relationship as they were taught, and as it was passed on from generation to generation);
- deconstructed such constructions, by challenging current beliefs, interpretations and practices. Language was used by the Jews to describe the “realities” of who the Messiah would be and what his

- functions and activities would look like, and also to describe what the followers of God should make of the Scriptures, and how they should practise their ways;
- reconstructed the current constructions of what the Scriptures were all about. As described above, he showed how He was the centre and fulfillment of the prophecies, narratives, law and practices described in the Scriptures – a total reconstruction of the Jewish faith and religion;
 - showed that their beliefs were rooted in the culture, history and practices of their time and not necessarily in the truth as revealed by God. It was very natural and fitting in their times to expect a king who would conquer and bring the people of Israel to a place and position of eternal peace and salvation in the light of Old Testament history and narrative;
 - showed how knowledge and power are connected. Those who held the dominant discourses were those who were in power positions.

In addition to Jesus, I have discussed Paul in the next section as another biblical figure who can be described from a social constructionist perspective. Paul is seen in the Pauline narrative as an expert on the Scriptures, to a point of killing those who dared to challenge or think differently about them. Paul's narrative is a total deconstruction and reconstruction of dominant discourses treated as absolute truth, after an encounter with Jesus which left him physically blind. Paul's narrative further explains how he came to spend his life in deconstructing and reconstructing the Scriptures as previously understood to include the Gentiles as the people of God. Paul throughout the New Testament insists on the freedom in Christ, freedom from rules and the law and the imposing of "old" Jewish ways and traditions on those who received Christ (Von Campenhausen 1969:46).

"As a Jew and a rabbi, Saul of Tarsus knew the Old Testament well; as a Christian and an apostle, Paul found the familiar text *pregnant with fresh meaning*", contend La Sor, Hubbard and Bush (1982:3) (Italics mine). Paul seems to have come to a place where he was challenged (by Jesus himself) to

open himself and everything which was familiar to him to the possibility that he was all along misunderstanding or – misinterpreting the “familiar text” that he “knew well” as a Jew and rabbi. One can say that Jesus, in the Bible narrative, challenges Paul to reflect on his beliefs, reality and the consequential behaviour.

Regarding Paul’s leadership and relationship with the churches, Von Campenhausen (1969:46) argues that Paul is a man of the highest authority, but refuses to develop this in the “straightforward and obvious way by building up a sacral relationship of spiritual control and subordination” and that he rejects in no uncertain terms any right or desire to construct such form of authority and leadership (see also MacDonald 1988:52).

Social constructionism assumes a strong relationship between power and knowledge. As Jew and rabbi Paul could be described as a man in a powerful position. Yet, he had to come to terms with and recognise (Gergen 2009:13) the above reality: that his “reality” as far as the Scriptures and relevant knowledge were concerned had different meaning from that which was passed on, learned by and accepted as truth by him, all of which took place in relationship: social context. He found a deeper meaning, value, significance in the Scriptures as he knew them (La Sor et al. 1982:3; cf Von Campenhausen 1969:46-47).

Important to note here is another social constructionist principle in La Sor et al. (1982:3): “The similarities between Christ’s approach and Paul’s are not accidental. Undoubtedly Christ singled out relevant Old Testament passages and taught his disciples the principles by which they were to be interpreted” (see also Ellis 1957:113). The social constructionist assumption is that meaning is assigned in relationship socially. So the new meaning Paul found, was co-constructed in relationship with Christ mainly, but also with the other disciples. He did not discard the Old Testament principles and teaching altogether (Gergen 2009).

Paul depends heavily on the Old Testament in his teachings and in his letters to the different churches, which today form part of our New Testament as the epistles: Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians and Galatians. He further draws heavily from the Old Testament in support of his argumentation regarding

theological themes and doctrines, which can be seen as reconstructions of beliefs and ideas. He challenged the Jews, as well as the Gentiles strongly about their “truths” held with regard to many issues (see especially Romans and Galatians) on beliefs regarding judgment, sin, circumcision, works, the law, and so forth.

Von Campenhausen (1969:46) also refers to Paul’s insistence on Christ’s leadership as well as Christ as central theme when he urges the church not to be slaves of men in 1 Cor 7:23. Paul’s reconstructed meaning was so drastic and radical, that “... the Christ whose followers he had doggedly vowed to stamp out became for him the very heart of Old Testament revelation“(La Sor et al. 1982:3).

For Paul, Christ was not only a factor giving added meaning to the OT but the only means whereby the OT could be rightly understood; it was not merely that he saw Christ in the OT but that he viewed the whole scope of OT prophecy and history from the standpoint of the Messianic Age in which the OT stood open, fulfilled in Jesus Christ and in His new creation.

Ellis (1957:115)

Ellis also talks here about “rightly understood”, which implicates the possibilities of a “wrongly understood”, of course. There’s just no talk here about absolute truth, but rather an understanding of, or “giving meaning to” what is already there (which indeed may be absolute, real or truth), but not free of understanding and a giving of meaning.

The absolute truths (which Müller may have had in mind with his call for “compelling knowledge”) or realities as far as Paul’s doctrines are concerned, according to La Sor et al. (1982:3) are core issues, such as, among others: the fall of man and its consequences for man (Rom 5:12-21); the universality of sin (Rom 3:10-20); the obedience and sufferings of Christ (Rom 15:3); justification by faith (Rom 1:17; 4:1ff; 10:5ff), and final salvation of the Jews (Rom 11:26; Ellis 1957:116). La Sor et al. (1982:4-6).

The freedom with which Paul and other New Testament writers (especially Matthew) sometimes handled the Old Testament has been puzzling. At times they followed no known Greek or Hebrew textual tradition...however, [their] interpretative glosses are usually not arbitrary or capricious but should be classed as quotation expositions which neither follow the text with slavish literalism nor alter its meaning with haphazard interpretation...Paul paid close attention to historical setting and their grammatical structure...to a meaning ... fits an overall interpretation of the Old Testament revelation.

(La Sor et al 1982:4-6)

Paul seems to have used the Scriptures in a way Ballard (2012:168) describes as “theological reflection” with “critical dialogue between the present reality and the tradition” at its core. Paul did not discard the “truths” of Scripture, but reinterpreted it with Christ as centre (cf Von Campenhausen 1969:46-48) as having a newfound freedom in faith which finds its expression in love (see also Ballard and Pritchard 2006:65-66; 82-87). Paul accepted the Scriptures as authoritative revelation (Brueggemann 2009:xx).

This “kind of wisdom”, according to Ballard (2012:168), was termed by Paul Ricoeur as “the second naïveté”. Paul then, didn’t just take tradition and the Scriptures as “absolute truth” in a literal sense, but applied theological reflection as described above. New meaning was constructed which spoke of redemptive activity of God as opposed to “lifeless enslaving laws” (La Sor et al. 1982:5; see also Van Campenhausen 1969:46-47). This calls for a freedom from known ways and traditions. They continue: “The Old Testament context will not tell all one needs to know about the meaning of the passage, but unless one starts there, it becomes easy to twist the Scriptures to one’s own purpose (La Sor et al. 1982:6)”.

From the reflection on social constructionism above, it makes sense that devastation, confusion, fear and anxiety may be caused by assumptions regarding the non-existence of and challenging of objectivity, absolute truth to be found, studied and observed “out there” and critical reflexivity about accepted givens in any setting. Paul demonstrated how current “absolutes” could be approached and how they should be open to revisitation, challenge, deconstruction – reflection (Gergen 2009:26) thus – and finally reconstruction for a fit with the present (Ballard 2012:168). Ballard describes this kind of reflection: “Theological reflection as a deliberate process, therefore, aims to enable us to discern the wisdom of God in the scriptures for faithful living in the present ... The temptation is, however, to avoid the blood, sweat, and tears, to see the method as the substance, and to accept the short cut and easy response“(2012:169).

From a theological perspective, for example, core beliefs form a critical part of the Christian faith and praxis. The easy way Ballard describes above may mean that these beliefs, usually firmly supported by Scripture, are seen by many in very literal terms, but not only that, but also as God’s personally inspired final word. The interpretations thereof, however many, are often seen by those holding to them, as in final (absolute) form and not to be questioned or challenged in any way (see also Smith 1991:51). Gergen (2006:13) asserts that social constructionism’s reflections on core traditions does not mean that they may be discarded, but that they can, and should, be reflected on, re-evaluated, reconsidered, and new meaning negotiated and agreed upon. This kind of “Bible wisdom”, according to Ballard (2012:169, cf Brueggeman 2009:xx), “... only comes from letting the Bible, in all its diversity and strangeness, become a companion on the way ...” and from allowing it, however perverse it may seem, to challenge our current assumptions - constructions. Brueggeman (2009:4) argues that in going about with the Scriptures we “... are *re-describing the world*, that is, construct [ing] it alternately”. The biggest fear, I think, in the church, is that of relativism, leading to an everything-goes-because-nothing-can-be-absolutely-true-and-in-any-way-solid-worldview. This is not what we see in Paul’s

interaction with the Scriptures and also not what is suggested in the reflection above, but rather critical “theological reflection”. (Ballard 2012:168-169)

The reflection on Paul’s example above, in a social constructionist sense, does not deny that tradition or “reality out there” exists, but denies that it is ever free from human interpretation and meaning assigned in relationship, or from language as a medium to describe and create. In summary, the above discussion on Jesus and Paul shows:

- **Freedom**

There is a freedom from tradition and the known. Scripture is reinterpreted and new meaning assigned. The new meaning is free from literalism, from historical context and from known ways of interpretation and application. There is also a freedom from lifeless law.

- **Truth**

Distinguishing between real and not so real “absolute” truths: Jesus’ absolute truths were that He was the central focus and meaning to be found in the Scriptures, based on the historical truths of humanity’s need for salvation and God’s plan of salvation. Similarly for Paul, all interpretation was in the light of these truths. Challenging, deconstructing and reconstructing existing “truth”, “meaning” and practices.

- **Empowerment**

Both Jesus and Paul were empowered by the supernatural Spirit of God to do what they were called to do. They never discarded Scriptures, but under the guidance of the Spirit considered them free from human interpretation and construction.

The approaches and examples of Jesus and Paul above may be understood by some to simply imply and call for relativism in the Christian faith and community.

In this chapter anxiety, fear, anguish, pain, and similar painful and uncomfortable experiences are highlighted often in the face of the perceived threat of existing constructions, concepts or constructs being nullified, challenged or changed. This anxiety is somewhat evident in arguments such as that of Müller (2005:80).

Practical theologian, Julian Müller (2005:77), refers to “compelling knowledge”, and, reasoning from a theological position, argues for a “postfoundationalist” approach to knowledge. This, according to Müller, is a refusal to let go of “compelling knowledge” (Müller 2005:77). Müller (2005:80) sees this approach as a protective measure against the relativistic tendencies often associated with social constructionism.

The kind of knowledge, which mostly cause difficulties in church relationships, seems to be the type which Chiarri and Nuzzo (1996:163-184) refer to as a “... passive or receptive assimilation of a ‘noumenal’ reality of ‘things in themselves,’ uncontaminated by human knowing”. This kind of knowledge is often concerned not with important core issues regarding the Christian faith, but what was learned, passed on and interpreted without a critical approach such as that of Christ and Paul, for example (see also Ballard 2012:168-169).

Even though Müller’s description is indeed attractive and his intentions could be far removed from an insistence on a reality which is independent from human interpretation and conceptualization, surely even the concept “compelling knowledge” has been, and will be, attributed various meanings by various people. “Compelling knowledge” has been passed on from generation to generation as it has been interpreted from the original writings which became what we know as the Scriptures today.

Language has been used to pass it on and to describe (or give life or body or image) to it. “Compelling knowledge” to some is not “compelling knowledge” to others or it may be “compelling”, but with a different meaning, association, mood, and so on, altogether. This is, in light of social constructionist thought, because of different contexts, times in history, cultures, experiences and other influences to conceptualization. This stubborn clinging to and insistence on independent reality is evident in the case studies and the issues which brought

about pain and difficulty in relationships in the church – abuse inflicted and experienced. “Compelling knowledge”, then, should be understood to exist, but not free from human experience, understanding, interpretation, that is, meaning making. The “compelling knowledge” which we should hold on to and protect is the “absolute truths” as mentioned above in the discussion about Paul and the truths on which he built his arguments.

In summary therefore: much, if not all of what are treated and observed as absolutes and facts are man-made and (should be) open to questioning, deconstruction and reconstruction, which is central to social constructionism, such as demonstrated by Jesus and Paul in their approach to the Scriptures.

Counselling and “doing” church, in the light of this, could only benefit from an openness to questioning: a questioning, and possibly deconstruction and reconstruction of existing beliefs, rituals, traditions and even interpretations.

A simple understanding or attempt at understanding this “truth” about humans who actively construct, may in itself make a huge difference in the counselor-counseee-dialogue.

Although I fully agree that objective reality exists, in the light of the above it is important to keep in mind that this objective reality and truth are interpreted and tainted by our experience, context, interpretation and everything already mentioned above from a constructionist perspective, and are seen through these lenses. It must be agreed then, at this point, that no one can make a claim of possessing the absolute truth, because that absolute and “objective” truth can never be “objectively” (that is, free from interpretation, experience, relationship, and so on) defined; even the “compelling knowledge and truth” spoken of above should regularly be revisited to make sure our understanding thereof is as God intended. From a postmodern, social constructionist paradigm, it can be safely deduced that even some of the above can be misinterpreted or misunderstood, which can cause difficulty in relationships: with self, with God and with others in the church. It is therefore relative to what meaning is assigned thereto.

Erickson refers to “many experiential realities” (Freedman and Combs 1996:11; Erickson and Rossi 1981: 206). Erickson (1981:206) also referred to

this as “plenty of alternatives in any situation ...”. So my inference, from the above, is that the different “realities” referred to above by Freedman and Combs, Erickson and other postmodern thinkers refer to that which people perceive and their inner construction of the world as they make sense of it (see also Brueggemann 2009:4).

This is often overlooked in the church structure, which may lead to experiences of some as being abusive and hurtful, while the intention (and experience) of others is to do everything but abuse and harm. At the same time some, such as Paul, maybe need an encounter and challenge to reflect on their current knowledge, interpretations and consequential (often very zealous) actions and behaviour.

Counselling and “doing” church, in the light of this, could only benefit from theological reflection (Ballard 2012:168); an openness to questioning: a questioning, and possibly deconstruction and reconstruction of existing beliefs, rituals, traditions and even interpretations. A simple understanding or attempt at understanding that humans actively construct, may in itself make a huge difference in the counsellor-counselee-dialogue, pastor-member and member-member interactivity. Whether this inner construction process happens biologically, cognitively, behaviourally, systemically or socially is irrelevant. All of these, of course, take place in an individual's interaction with the environment, physically as well as socially, which then manifests in actions and behaviour.

My argument is then for self-reflection, conscientization, acceptance of and integration of relativism in theology and theological theory and praxis. Note that this is not a radical relativism which assumes the non-existence of objective reality overall, but one which acknowledges that no reality is free from interpretation.

From my discussion so far it seems like social constructionism is the absolute ideal and final answer to all. Cromby and Nightingale (1999) challenge this idealistic approach to social constructionism.

Cromby and Nightingale (1999:2) criticize social constructionism as being “wrong” in its very strong emphasis on language, which causes social

constructionists to ignore the role of “embodiment”, “materiality” and “power”; embodiment being the influence of “embodied factors (from missing limbs to cold sores) and ways in which the possibilities and constraints inherent in the material world always already shape and inform the social constructions we live through and with”. Power refers to the “power of institutions, governments and multinational corporations and the inequalities that arise from those structural features of society usually described under terms such as ‘capitalism’ or ‘patriarchy’”(1999:2). Cromby and Nightingale argue that we cannot reduce embodiment, materialism and power merely to language. They then include in “their” constructionism the “real” (Cromby and Nightingale 1999:3), resonating well with my own stance on “objective reality”. They refuse to make claims regarding the ontology, or “lack thereof”. Cromby and Nightingale (1999:3-6) acknowledge that social constructionism contains differences, nuances and incongruencies, but continue to summarize what is agreed upon by most: the principle assumptions.

They include an outline of the disagreements surrounding them. What is mostly agreed upon is:

- **The primacy of social processes**

There is general consensus that our experiential world and the people we are, is “first and foremost the product of social processes (Nightingale and Cromby 1999:3)”. Social institutions, such as the church, are made up of humans, who socially interact, organize and institutionalize in interaction with the structures they engage in. These humans, in turn, are shaped by relationships.

- **Historical and cultural specificity**

The relationships take place in dynamic cultures and history. What we know or think we know, the ways we find this out and what we count as evidence and proof varies along with ever-changing histories and cultures. This means that the “subjectivities of the actual, living people that are constituted in and from those ways of speaking will vary, along with the cultures that produce and sustain them

(Nightingale and Cromby 1999:4). How “women” and “people” are perceived and understood “fit[s] all too neatly with the demands of patriarchy and capitalism” and is “[the] determinants of social practices in which we make and find ourselves as the subjects of ‘patriarchy and capitalism’, or alternatively as their opponents”. In the church setting these dominant discourses are imposed on others and cause relational disruption and pain.

- **Knowledge and activity are intertwined**

The questions we ask and the answers we come up with are rooted in our actions and activities and the purposes thereof at the time of questioning (Nightingale and Cromby 1999:3-4). Knowledge is shaped with what we are busy with. In a church, for example, questions and answers are shaped by the cultural and historical traditions – thus humanly shaped activities.

- **A critical stance**

Very different from positivist, empiricist tradition, assuming that “facts” can be obtained by objective, neutral observation, social constructionism has a strong critical drive, growing from the assumptions of knowledge as relative and practice-born (Nightingale and Cromby 1999:4). The critical stance is what I argue for with regard to beliefs, practices and how we relate to this in the church. I argue for critical theological reflection as described by Ballard (2012:168-169).

There are not only agreements in each of these areas, but also disagreements, namely:

- **The primacy of social processes**

This point varies to some degree with regard to the extent to which it can be applied. Cromby and Nightingale (1999:4) refer to some (for example, Edwards and Potter 1992; Edwards et al. 1995) who “seem to believe that when we talk about ‘reality’ we can only be referring to the world we discursively construct, that

‘there is nothing beyond the text’” and others (for example, Harré 1990) who “accept that there is a real world beyond the text, but argue that what we can know of that real world is a sub-world or *Umwelt* restricted by the physiological, sensory apparatus of our species. One of the points of departure of this work is also that there is a world “out there”. However, no one can lay claim to absolute truth with regard to that, because everything is interpreted. I therefore agree with compelling truths as described by Müller (2005:77-80), but disagree with the view that we all have a universal understanding and interpretation thereof.

- **Historical and cultural specificity**

Disagreements here are an emphasis on the one hand on the significant differences, “even between neighbouring countries, or the important cultural shifts that can occur within one lifetime, and argue that any and all aspects of existence may be subject to enormous variation. On the other hand there are those who emphasize the sameness between and across cultures and argue that these should also be given some attention (Nightingale and Cromby 1999:5). In the church, attention should be given to our differences in the face of our sameness. Although we may be from similar cultures and histories, there are individualities which may be explained by for example Kelly’s (1955) personal construct theory as explained above, but also by individual and communal sense and meaning-making processes.

- **Knowledge and activity are intertwined**

While some social constructionists accept that “there are basic aspects of the world preceding or transcending local human beliefs and activity”, others, such as Burr (1995:5), stating “knowledge and social action go together”, referred to in Cromby and Nightingale (1999:5), believe that “all knowledge is always local and particular”. Aspects of the Christian world which precede and transcend any human belief or activity are the core beliefs of our faith. These are the aspects referred to in what Ricoeur calls “naïveté” (Brueggemann 2009:xx): the belief

that the Scriptures are God-breathed and come with the authority of God. What we have to understand though is that these Scriptures are interpreted and reflected upon by humans.

- **A critical stance**

Cromby and Nightingale describe two “strands”, both emphasizing the social construction, “and therefore malleable nature of our world”, but with regards to the critical approach of constructionism. On the one hand are those who do not acknowledge any political activity in its relativism. On the other hand are those who “hold that while social constructions are relative, they are not arbitrary, but emerge through social processes that are already shaped by influences such as power relationships and material resources”. They therefore “differ in the extent to which they use this understanding as grounds for political (as opposed to philosophical or methodological) critique (Cromby and Nightingale 1999:6).

A continuance to ignore or downplay embodiment and materiality may eventually create the conditions for the tide of knowledge and practice to simply sweep social constructionism away. The many psychologists who have recourse to notions of embodiment and materiality, both in their practice and in their everyday lives, are unlikely either to resign *en masse* or wholly to transform their approach simply because constructionism refuses to believe in them. It seems far more likely that social constructionism will simply make itself irrelevant and trivial, and so waste the valuable gains it has made.

(Cromby and Nightingale 1999:13)

As indicated above, I believe in ‘absolute realities and truths’ which stand independently from language discourse, social processes, historical and experiential context, in agreement with what Cromby and Nightingale (1999:2-13) say above. But, at the same time I firmly believe and hold to this theorizing about

the social, individual, active, form-giving/shaping, transformative ability and character of humans, whether on a cognitive level, as Kelly explained in his social constructivist Psychological Personal Construct Theory (1955) or on a social relational level (Gergen 2009) (social constructionist) as described above in the earlier parts of this chapter.

2.5 Outcomes

This chapter discussed the possibilities of abusive practices in the church based on social constructions of the world, religion, Scripture and church life and action in general. Practices and experiences of abuse are argued to often be rooted in socially constructed “absolute truths” with regard to the world, religion and church, which in this paradigm are known as traditionally, historically and culturally shaped dominant discourses or in the Christian story, grand or dominant narratives.

Critical theological reflection and a willingness and openness to dialogue, challenge and if needed, change or alter ways of seeing and doing are encouraged. Similarly self-reflexivity and a deconstruction and reconstruction of current selves, community and practice are promoted and encouraged. Such an extensive reflection on social constructionism leaves one with a feeling that the one thing that seems to dominate the discussions has to do with reality or the way things are. What is reality? Is there an objective reality which can be finally accepted as objective truth? How do we go about with this? How do we do theology around this? I infer then what one can call an extremist-non-extremist approach to reality.

On the extremist side of the continuum is the acknowledgement that no reality, irrespective of its true existence or otherwise is free from man’s meaning-giving activity and on the non-extremist side is the acknowledgement that in our agreement, social relationship and social interaction we can come extremely close to an acceptable truth. Constructions taking the form of dominant, grand or abusive discourse need to be identified, challenged, deconstructed and reconstructed or replaced with more appropriate discourse in pastoral care and

ministry. In this chapter Jesus and Paul were offered as exemplary role models of doing all of these without discarding the authority of God and the Scriptures.

CHAPTER 3

NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter the case studies are presented in the form of narratives. These are offered verbatim as written by the research participants. A thematic analysis follows. The thematic analysis is made up of quotations of phrases and/or statements by the participants, which I interpret as being rooted in dominant narrative or discourse.

3.2 Narratives

Following are the stories of the participants in their own words:

3.2.1 Narrative 1

The following story is told by a 43-year-old white male who left a church in Pretoria. At the time of writing this story he still experienced intense grief at the loss of his dignity, his church and dear Christian friends. His family was very popular among the church members (about 600), which made the process even more difficult. The story is told by a male who got entangled in the abuses of women. They are still in friendship relationships with many of the members. The story in his own words:

“I was very happy when we first joined this church in Pretoria in 2002 and we quickly made lots of friends. We were generally well accepted by the members and adherents of the church. We, and especially my wife, are well known and respected nationally in our church denomination circles.

As time went by, both my wife and I were identified as leaders. We were approached to lead the young adults in a Bible Study group, and since teaching is really my wife’s gift, she did most of the leading. One of the Bible Study

members was a new student of theology at a reformed institution, where he was taught that it is not biblical for women to teach any group which included men. This teaching started to spread and another young lady called to let us know that she would not attend the Bible Study anymore because of her newfound conviction that women should not teach men in the same group. I think it is important to state that he was the Youth Pastor of the church and was advised by the church leadership (I was told) to do his theological studies at an institution where their teaching was “reformed” and thus “more biblical” than that of other institutions, including the University of Pretoria.

I later asked the senior pastor regarding this policy as it was not mentioned when we were asked to join the group as a couple or at the membership classes of the church which we attended for six weeks prior to becoming members of the church in 2002. He said that my wife could continue teaching the group for now as long as I was also present at the Bible Study groups to oversee her teaching. He further said that he would do a series on the issue. He stated that it is biblical that woman should not teach men and that, as long as he is the pastor of this church, it will remain a principle. He repeated this statement later in a Sunday morning sermon.

My wife was invited by the leadership of the church to become the leader of the educational department. While in the process of arranging meetings with the leaders of the different departments of this ministry, which included adult Bible Study groups run on a Sunday morning at nine o’clock, she was informed by some of these leaders that the adult groups were taken away from her, again based on the above “The adult groups will now be headed by men. Adult men could not report to a woman. She was never informed before she accepted the role, of the “principle” about women in leadership positions, of the reason for taking it away from her or of the mere fact that they are taking it away, but it was clear to me that the senior groups consisted of adult men and women.

It was confirmed later when we enquired that this was indeed the reason. I felt uneasy about the issue and in the way it was done, and studied the Constitution of our church to see if it makes any mention about the role of women

in the church, but found none. It only states that “all people are equal before God”, and that “all members have the freedom before God to interpret the Scriptures in their own way”. When I challenged the pastors on the issue, they were adamant that it is a principle in the Bible and is not open to interpretation. The senior pastor stated that women will always be under the leadership of the men at “his” church.

The church’s Constitution was later also amended to include more elders, to ensure that all ministries are overseen by the elders to ensure male authority. It was clear that the church was going towards a Presbyterian system.

My wife received numerous calls criticizing her for the way she led the ministry and was also called into a meeting with the two pastors of the church, on all occasions about trivial issues. I once compared what I observed as very similar to what happens in abusive husband/wife relationships. My wife was a part of the church; known, loved and admired by all until she accepted the position of leadership.

The relationship clearly changed overnight from one in which she was “courted and treated very well” to one in which she was continuously criticized, humiliated and emotionally abused in my view. She often apologized but never received any apologies or signs of shared responsibility from their side. I was disappointed and hurt to see how this hurt and affected my wife. I live with her and know her heart and commitment and it hurt me to see this behaviour towards her.

I wanted to challenge the pastors about the issue, but after talking to my wife, we decided to let it go, and that she will just try to ignore the constant criticism and carry on with her job. I need to say that no one else was aware of the things that she was so often accused of. It was only two pastors communicating through an elder that “the Leadership was unhappy ...”. She was a popular and loved leader in her different ministries. After she left, those that served under her were deeply hurt. One lady specifically said that it felt as if a leg was amputated. The abuse of my wife also affected and touched others.

In the mean time, I was elected as a deacon and started attending the executive meetings. I was shocked at the way in which the senior pastor spoke to the other pastor when there was a misunderstanding about the preaching roster. He attacked him verbally in the meeting, in a way that I will not talk to my children. The other pastor was very apologetic, but the senior pastor made known the unacceptability of the “slip up”.

My wife was again in trouble when she organized a fun event at the church and sold tickets to cover the costs. I took it upon myself to help organize the event, and spoke to the senior pastor about our intentions before doing any planning. He was elated about the idea and gave us his blessing. I started making posters to advertise the event and also used the overheads during church meetings for this purpose, clearly indicating that we would charge money. My wife was reprimanded by one of the elders in his private capacity two days before the event that it is not biblical to sell anything at church and quoted Bible verses to make his point. My wife responded in a loving way to the complaining elder, making clear what her intentions were, after which he then changed his mind and said that he will gladly support the event. This is the way I believe we can solve our differences in the church.

After the event, however, my wife was again told by another elder at an official meeting that the “Leadership” was unhappy and that it is indeed against church policy to sell things at church. He also stated that the senior pastor said that he was never informed of the event and not aware that we were going to charge money to play the games. I was again very upset and shocked that he will make such a statement, since I personally informed him of our intentions.

We advertised extensively for three months before the event took place (making posters, power point presentations, promotional skits [performances] in the church), never hiding the fact that we would charge money. We could not understand why anyone representing the “Leadership” did not approach us during these three months before the event. We tried to get copies of the church policies regarding these issues, but found none that was in any printed format.

The “Leadership” stated later that it is an “unwritten principle”, but that they are in the process of formulating a special “Rule Book” for all leaders.

During this time, I also learned about an issue regarding a woman who was involved in the music ministry. After being involved in this ministry for nine years, she was left out without any acceptable reason. She was told that the teams were full and she would not be needed anymore, but others informed me that they did not “like her voice”. I approached the assistant pastor who happened to be the leader of this ministry and told him that this lady was very hurt and upset about the fact that she was left out. He later came back to me and told me that she was informed of the reasons for her being left out and that she accepted it. I was not convinced and raised the issue at one of the executive meetings. The response from the senior pastor was again shocking and he challenged the assistant pastor regarding the issue.

It became clear to me at this meeting that other women were also left out during the process of making up the teams and that they were all very hurt. The result was that the assistant pastor was ordered to approach each of these women and to apologize and to reinstate them. I thought that it was the end of that issue, but were phoned days later by the assistant pastor, and he tried to investigate the issue by challenging my intentions for going into the matter. I ensured him that I felt bad for the way in which the selections were done and that the specific woman was very hurt in the process. This ministry was her life and they took it away from her. He later informed me that he had long meetings and discussions with both the senior pastor and other leaders of this ministry, and that they believe that they did not do anything wrong that requires any apologies from their side.

The woman involved later told me that the assistant pastor made her feel like he was suspecting her of having an affair with me, in the way that he questioned her regarding the fact that I challenged them about the issue. I felt very sad that they could not just accept that they have hurt another person and that they only had to do what was decided at the executive meeting, but instead

they preferred to “prove” their righteousness by making a court case out of the whole issue.

Since then, I felt that I could not identify with the way in which the “Leadership” went about their business at the church and told my wife that I could no longer be associated with the Leadership of the church. I did not see the servant leadership that was promoted in the Bible. I did not see how they could treat the women as being “less than men” and still preach that “all is equal before God”. I realize now that the “Leadership” is men that are placed in a position of power and will use any means to keep the control of that power. They seem to be threatened by women who have the potential of challenging their positions, although most women are only too happy to serve under a “loving husband”, or pastor.

When I informed the senior pastor that we have decided to leave the church, he immediately accused me of having a history of not being able to stay at one church. This was not true, we have never left any church because of unhappiness before and belonged to this denomination for more than twenty years. He also stated that us leaving will damage his image. I was again very shocked at his response and that just summed up the whole chapter of our life at this church.

I have been a Christian for more than twenty years and this was the ninth church in our denomination that we attended. My job in a construction company takes me to wherever the work is. Our moving - and therefore often moving church as well - resulted in his interpretation of “us not being able to stay at one church”. This was the first time that I felt it necessary to have to leave the church. The problems started when we were put in a position to challenge and question some things in the church.

I believe we were labeled among the two pastors as being “trouble makers”, whereas we were indeed “pouring out our lives for the Lord” and coming up for those that did not have a voice to protect themselves. In the process, I was disappointed, hurt, saddened and hardened to the fact that not all Christians are “laying down their lives for their friends”. I am sad to say that, for

me this church is comparable to a “business” where the leadership is indeed rather an executive sitting at the top, making sure that their laws are abided by – laws that they often break themselves, with some excuse or other which makes it acceptable for them to do so, instead of serving the flock.

I am sad that I lost real loving friends and brothers and sisters in the Lord due to men who hide behind the same laws that our Lord Jesus Christ came to nullify. I have been deeply traumatized by my experience in this church”.

3.2.2 Narrative 2

The following is a story of a 48-year-old coloured woman. Her husband, pastor of a Johannesburg church in a black community, committed adultery. She tells a story of neglect and rejection by her church. In her own words:

“My husband is a pastor and youth leader of the church we belong to. He also had a daytime job outside of the church. My husband had an extramarital affair with a young woman in her twenties in the church. I trusted and respected this woman prior to discovering the affair. She was like a daughter in my home. I had my son, aged six at the time, and could not always attend all the meetings with them. My husband often came home late. I felt guilty that I wasn’t part of his ministry. I never questioned him. This woman often slept at my home.

One day one of my daughters told her sister that she saw something inappropriate happening between my husband and this woman in our home. My daughters told me about it. I did not know how to confront him. What if my daughters had made a mistake? He was their stepfather, which would just complicate matters. Our relationship became more and more strained, with my husband often “working late” and withholding information from me. He always ministered with this woman by his side. I felt that she took my place next to him in his ministry and his life.

I decided to make an appointment with the senior pastor of the church to discuss the matter with him. He said that he had noticed that “something strange” was going on between my husband and this woman. He then asked me why I did not fulfil my biblical role as my husband’s (pastor’s) wife. I challenged

him about my husband's strange behaviour. He made no effort to talk to my husband or to get involved in our affairs. He said he would pray for me. This made me extremely angry. I felt that this person, the senior priest, should, in his role as senior, but also as shepherd of the flock, at least try to bring us together to discuss the matter.

Questions like "Why are you here, man of God? My family is breaking up" entered my mind. Somehow I felt it had to do with the fact that I'm a woman and that, being in a black society (culture) it is somehow okay and even expected/common for men to abuse/use women and have other relationships. I felt I had nowhere else to turn if the representative man of God did not care about my hurts, concerns and the possible break-up of my family. I was my husband's third wife and surely this should ring a bell that maybe this man has problems in the area of relationships.

I remained a member of the church – lonely, hurt. I stopped attending services. After about a month the senior priest and his wife came to see us at home. He was a different man and played a different role in the presence of his wife. His wife mentioned that she was aware of the unhealthy close relationship between my husband and the young woman, but found it difficult to approach the young woman about the issue, especially because I never mentioned anything about having a problem. She got upset and said that it would be wrong to mention names, but that others were also mentioning and noticing the relationship between my husband and the other woman.

The senior priest said that he discussed the issue with one of the other priests in the church, who informed him that he had already addressed the matter with my husband. This was the first I heard about this. I felt hurt that no one discussed the matter with me at any time. I was discussed and my life issues addressed, but everyone was silent to me – almost waiting for me to come to them. Everyone seemed to be aware of what was going on and I was the last one to find out. I felt that I was excluded often because I was coloured and this was a black community church.

My husband just sat there while the priest, his wife and myself discussed his relationship with this young woman, but did not open his mouth. The priest told me to forgive and forget and to come back to church. He did not consider or understand the rejection I felt, the failure I felt. Forgiveness for me comes when someone claims or accepts their responsibility and asks for forgiveness. This never happened in my marriage. The priest told my husband to ask forgiveness, after which he mumbled “forgive me”. I agreed to go back to church. I felt angry inside that he never admitted or showed regret for the wrong he had done. Where is the presence of God in this man? He is the man of God.

I went back to church, still angry, boiling inside. I did this to please them, but I had so many questions without answers. I even questioned the Lord. “Lord, you gave some all this knowledge of your book, the Bible, but I don’t see it in practice. Don’t they understand the message?” Back in church my presence made my husband very uncomfortable. It was as if I saw him naked. After the service my husband asked to say something to the congregation. He addressed the church, stating that he would like everyone to know that his wife does not come to church because she suspects him of having a relationship with....., mentioning the name of the young woman. He denied having any such relationships. The previous night when the priest and his wife visited our home and where the matter was discussed at length he did not deny the relationship. This portrayed me as the problem, in spite of everything that was said at our home, including the acknowledgement of many of their awareness of the “unhealthy” relationship between my husband and this woman. I was humiliated. Everyone was present, including the children, when he did this.

I stood up and apologized that my husband mentioned our family problems in the church service. The aunt of the young woman got up and said yes, people are aware of the relationship and that the aunt tried to speak to her before, but that she denied everything. The aunt continued that the church should pray for me not to entertain the demon of suspicion. (Did she also entertain the same demon when she questioned the woman regarding her own

suspicious?) She prayed a prayer which was more like a sermon directed to me. I never returned to this church.

Our marriage relationship just got worse. He stayed out late more and more and eventually abused me physically and withheld resources from me as well. Eventually he moved out, and went to live with another girlfriend – all this while he is still pastor of the church.

Another surprise waited for me. He came home recently, sharing the news that he has AIDS. He also asked for a room to stay in. I was devastated and went for numerous HIV tests. He now does not have a vehicle and expects me to provide for him and care for him. What hurts most is my son's regular plea: "Mommy, just give him another chance!" What does a child understand of the pain and devastation I suffered under this "man of God", my son's father?

I do trust, however, that God used the ways in which the church failed me to strengthen me. God took away the load, the hatred. I was left only with God, who took away my anger towards this church family that failed me, abused, humiliated and hurt me. God cared for us when he, the priest of a church did not care."

3.2.3 Narrative 3

The following story was written by a 50-year-old lady about her church in the Northern Cape. In her own words:

"In 1993 our church had a vacancy for a new minister. A minister from Pretoria was invited to preach to the congregation. His English was very poor. The governing body of the church were still considering who to call when they received a telephone call from the above minister. He informed the church that he had already resigned as a Dutch Reformed minister. It was then decided to call him to fill the vacant position. He had only just settled down in the city when he started finding fault with the session clerk and his family. They were the first to leave the church with bad feelings. The new minister then put a stop to the women's fellowship meetings saying that everybody had to do everything

together. Next he stopped Sunday school which resulted in many people leaving the church in search of a church where the children could attend Sunday school. However, a family Bible hour was started before church on Sundays, which was led by a young man who was excellent. It wasn't long though before the minister verbally attacked the young man in front of everybody at the Bible hour because he didn't agree with him. After many similar attacks on the young man, the details of which I do not have, the young man also left the church.

During my time there this minister verbally abused my brother several times. My brother was a deacon and the minister turned up at his house one day and started shouting at him and told him that he wasn't a Christian and was not worthy of being a deacon. Three times he verbally abused him in this way. The minister denied having done this when the elders took him to task. My brother and the minister eventually sorted out their differences – my brother always having to apologize of course and take all the blame.

My husband and I left the church not because of any personal experiences with the minister but because we did not like his authoritarian ways. He did not tolerate anyone disagreeing with him and slowly but surely got rid of all the elders and deacons, who were “always in the wrong”. After several incidents my brother also left the church. The minister went to one of the women in the church who was going through a divorce and told her that she was going to hell.

He now runs the church on his own, doing as he sees fit. He does not have an elder or deacon. He sees himself as the only one who is right and the only one who knows the truth. When Prof Johan Heyns was murdered, he told everyone that it was God's judgement on him – he had received his just deserts. He was always judging people.

My brother finally decided to leave the church after he was reprimanded three times during a Bible Study for turning a page of the Bible during a prayer meeting. This was done in the presence of everyone attending the Bible Study. Although he had put a stop to the women's fellowship, he is now living on the money that this fellowship had raised to start an old age home.”

3.2.4 Narrative 4

The following story is told by a 51-year-old woman. In her own words:

“As a child I went through a very tough time. I was insecure, due to low self-esteem. I was very sick as a child. At the age of 9 I had Sydenham’s chorea, which attacked my nervous system and at the age of 10 I had Rheumatic fever. I missed quite a lot of school during that year. I battled to concentrate in class and did not find it easy to study, due to the stress.

My mother’s family was very gifted. They all played a musical instrument and sang beautifully. My sister started picking out tunes on the piano from the age of 5. She began taking music lessons from the age of 7 and had natural talent. Today she is involved in the music ministry of her church, she is a music teacher, produces musicals, runs the only musical festival (eisteddfod) in a big city, plays piano for nursery schools, and trains a school choir. Her children are also musically gifted.

Only when I got to High School, did I have the opportunity to start with music lessons. Due to bad coordination, I never excelled. In High School I joined the school choir, which I enjoyed immensely. This was one of the few things I enjoyed at school. I was never a soloist, but I have a good voice. I have always given God the glory for the fact that I have a good singing voice. I had to come to terms with the fact that I could never play a musical instrument.

For about 10 years I used to lead the singing in Sunday school, at the church where I taught Sunday school. I also produced Sunday school musical events. If we had a power failure at church, they used to turn to my mother and me to lead the singing. In 1987 I moved to Pretoria. I suffered from depression and felt much rejection; I had a nervous breakdown in 1992. I was admitted to a Psychiatric clinic. In counselling I was asked what the one thing was that I enjoyed in my school days and I said it was being in the school choir. The psychiatrist told me that I should join a choir. I joined the church choir at my present church in 1993. It was quite a big choir and we often did Cantata’s and worked on difficult pieces, which I truly enjoyed.

The church choir in our church also used to lead the congregational singing on a Sunday morning. Then in the year 2000, a decision was taken to choose small Worship groups who would lead the worship in the church on Sundays. These groups would be made up of choir members. So I was put in one of these Worship groups.

In 2002 a new lady was appointed in charge of the worship groups, who decided that everyone should audition for the worship groups. I auditioned and was not chosen to sing in a worship group. A new woman joined our Bible Study. She said she has always been involved in the music ministry. We invited her to come and join the choir. She didn't come forward and when I looked again she happened to be in Worship Group. Of course this hurt me very much.

In about the middle of 2002 I was in hospital for surgery and the associate pastor came to visit me. He then told me that a decision had been taken that our choir, known as "New Song", which by this time was only a handful of people, would become one of the ministry groups, which meant that we would lead Worship once a month. I was grateful to God for this. I used to sing without a microphone and people told me that they could hear my voice in spite of the fact that I didn't have a microphone.

The worship groups were becoming very small and I volunteered my services for a second worship group. They were pleased to have me because by now they didn't have many people for the worship groups. I was a part of this group for about 18 months.

In the meantime a big group got together for three musicals. These were wonderful times of fellowship. I so looked forward to these times. I did not have a major part, but I was part of the group and my voice always came out very strongly.

At the beginning of 2004, the structure of the church changed, so the structure of the Music ministry also had to change. I have been secretary of the music Ministry for the last four years. Seven worship leaders were chosen, and they were allowed to choose their own worship team. One of my closest friends, one of the organists, was not chosen by any of the worship leaders, and I was

not chosen either. We were not the only two people who were not chosen. I felt very hurt. The person in charge of the vocalists was somebody I regarded as a friend; she also trained the choir, called “New Song” and produced the musicals I had been part of. The reason why it hurt me so much is because “New Song” and the musicals had come to an end.

During the whole of 2004, I only sang in a group item during Easter. It just felt as if I had lost my usefulness as far as the ministry was concerned. This was very difficult, as singing has always been a very vital part of my life. What hurt me even more was that my friend had been left out as organist. She was hurting very much. A lot of people were unaware that she was hurting; they thought she had withdrawn due to the fact that her husband had terminal cancer.

The music director was the associate pastor and we had always had a good relationship. Yet I found that I could not talk to him about it, as his wife is a very good friend of mine and I didn’t want anything to come in the way of our friendship, my relationship with him had become very strained. One day I had a call from the woman in charge of the vocalists. She said the music director had received an e-mail from a deacon, enquiring about the fact that I was no longer in worship groups. She asked why I had never spoken to her about it and I told her just how hurt I was at this stage, due to the rejection I felt. She said I must please come to her if I have a problem, and not talk to other people about this, she said I did not have a voice to lead worship, but more of a choral voice. What the difference is, I’m not sure.

My sister, who trains a choir of 75 girls and has been playing the piano for the Durban Chamber Choir, says there is no difference and another friend who also trains choirs said exactly the same.

I never told this deacon about what happened. He acted on his own after enquiring about my absence in the worship groups. After I had put the phone down, I thought to myself that I knew that all the talking in the world was not going to help at all, as they had made their minds up that I was not good enough. All the blame cannot be put on the worship leaders, as they also need guidance from the music director and the woman in charge of the vocalists.

What was happening to me emotionally was that all the rejection I had experienced from childhood came flooding back to me and it intensified my pain. I have been for intense counselling over the last 12 years and have worked through most of my baggage, but one just needs an incident like this to set you back.

The following month I had a phone call from the deacon involved. He had taken the matter up at the deacon's meeting. He said he had spoken about the situation and it was discussed at great length. A decision was made to reinstate everyone who had been left out of the music ministry.

The music director contacted me and said we need to get together for a meeting. We arranged a meeting for a Sunday evening after church. We chatted about it and he wanted to know what was going on. I told him that I had not spoken to the deacon at all. My experience of this deacon is that he is a man of integrity and very humble and that I am convinced that he was convicted by the Lord to bring this matter up. I was questioned over and over about this that I eventually felt as if he thought there was something going on between the deacon and me. He then apologized and said he takes all the blame and is prepared to put me into his worship team. We agreed to this.

I went home, but was very puzzled about it all. I felt as if he was just doing this to soft soap me and please the deacon concerned. I thought the matter was now resolved, but the following week I had a phone call from the woman in charge of the vocalists to say that she and the music director and I should have a meeting together. We got together one afternoon. At the time I was also doing a Counselling course, which was helping me a great deal. In this group I learnt that I could be honest about how I felt about my situation. After a long discussion, they said they had had a meeting with the senior pastor, who said he did not say that everybody had to be reinstated, but that they had to deal with the situation.

This woman again said I had a choral voice and not a voice to lead worship and that they had decided that I would not be reinstated into any worship group. I told them that coming from a musical family, having been involved in

leading singing in Sunday school, it was very difficult to come to terms with the fact that I was not good enough to be in worship groups. I told them that I always had the satisfaction of knowing that I had a good voice. My sister, who is very gifted, had always encouraged me. By the end of the meeting, they wanted to know if I was prepared to do an audition again. I decided that I would rather back down and focus on another ministry. Although I had made the final decision, it was very difficult for me and I felt rejected. I still shed a lot of tears about the matter.

In January 2005 I had a chat to my sister about this. She was shocked. As a professional musician, her standard is high, but she says when it comes to the music ministry in the church, she feels different. She explained that if somebody loves the Lord and has a voice that can keep the tune; she is willing to take that person into her worship group. I think I have dealt with the way I was treated. I also know that the Lord has led me into other ministries. I know that He is in control.”

3.2.5 Narrative 5

This story is told by the same participant who told the story in narrative 4. This event took place in her childhood and demonstrates the long-term effects of abuse. “My mother always tells me that I was a very happy little girl between the ages of one and six years old. She used to look for me only to discover that I had gone out the gate to visit the neighbours, who all loved me to bits. I was not afraid of men at all in those days.

By the time I got to school, I had become more afraid of people, due to the fact that I was very close to my mother and now had to leave my comfort zone. I had to live in my sister’s shadow, as every teacher could not believe that we were sisters. She excelled at everything she did. Fortunately, it did not affect my relationship with my sister at all.

When I was 9 we moved to a new town. My father was a founding member of the church we attended and was also an elder. One of his fellow elders and his wife became good friends of our family. One day my aunt took us

to visit them. My father was not with us; it was just my aunt, mother, sister and I who were there. My mother sent me to fetch something from the car. As I came running up the stairs, our host appeared. He exposed himself to me sexually and made me do something, which was a terrifying experience for me. I ran back up into the flat. My sister noticed that there was something wrong. After we had had lunch, she told my mother that there is something radically wrong with me.

We eventually went back to my aunt's house. I was very naive and did not even know that sex existed. It took my mother and my aunt ages to get an explanation out of me. My mother contacted the minister and this man. The matter was dealt with, he had to resign as an elder, but the subject was closed to me. I don't think my mother realised that I would remember every detail for the rest of my life.

I had grown up with 3 cousins who were a few years younger than me, but as from that day I was petrified of anything that was male. I had a dreadful fear of authority figures. I stayed close to these cousins and the only men I trusted were my father and one uncle.

For 20 years I never spoke to anybody about what had happened to me as a child. It was after all these years that I spoke to a good friend of mine and she spoke to the minister and then I went to see him and was able to talk about it to him, this was very difficult for me. I am now 50 and I have never even been out on a date and had to work hard to come to terms with the fact that I would never get married and have children.

I battled to cope in my work situation, as I could never talk to any of my bosses. I could not stand up for myself and was often humiliated and the chances of promotion were very slight. It still plagued me for many years.

About 12 years ago I started going for intense counselling. I then went to speak to a counsellor who dealt with Inner Healing. She said that even though it wasn't molestation, it is as bad as molestation, as you go through the same emotions. It made me grow up with the thought pattern that sex was dirty. She gave me a book to read and after much counselling I realised that God expected

me forgive this man, who had died many years ago. This exercise was very difficult.

A couple of years later I had a nervous breakdown and started seeing a psychologist. He really helped me to deal with this. It remains at the back of my mind, and at times still gets to me.

Today, I am able to cope; I have a wonderful boss of whom I am not afraid at all. I can at least talk to men without being afraid of them.”

3.2.6 Narrative 6

The following story was written by a 24-year-old psychology Masters student from Mamelodi, Pretoria. She writes:

“I arrived at the church 6:30 in the morning and I got helped 16:30 in the afternoon. I don’t have a boyfriend and I never had one. The first thing the pastor said to me was: “Your boyfriend is no longer interested in you because you have been bewitched”. He went on and said I have bad luck no wonder I don’t maintain long term relationships. I interrupted him and said: “but I don’t have a boyfriend, pastor”, He replied: “I mean your previous boyfriend”. I said: “I never had a boyfriend in my life”. He went “xhaxhaxha ...it is obvious that your mother is not proud of you, I mean you are mature enough. Surely you should be having a man in your life”. I then replied: ” she is in fact very proud of me because I never gave her troubles. In my mind, I had these ongoing thoughts: “Is the pastor promoting young girls should have boyfriends? Am I indeed being stupid for not dating? I mean I expected him to at least encourage sex after marriage as a pastor, pity for him it was the other way round. Everyone in the room was staring at me and going: “a 24 year old lady not having a boyfriend?”

He said: “It’s a shame my girl that you don’t have a man in your life!!!” He asked me: “Do you have a degree?” I replied “I do have an Honours”, he went “um um um, my girl, you can have your honours and your degrees, but if there is no man in your life, you’re worth nothing!!!!” I honestly felt that the pastor is now talking “bull shit”. I mean you don’t just date somebody because its the way of life, you do it because you are satisfied with him. Moreover he even asked how

am I supposed to know if I can breastfeed (practically touching my breasts) if I don't find myself a man who would give me babies.

As he was busy telling me about my future, he would now and then rub and pull my shoulders next to his, hug me, and point my chin with his fingers over and over again. I got irritated with him because I am not a physical person to start with, and secondly, I'm not his wife that he can touch wherever he wants to. I strongly felt humiliated and abused, but I couldn't verbally stop him because he is the pastor who is highly respected by everyone!!!! I stood far from him and he said "don't be scared, come close to me 'honours' ". The pastor further goes on saying that he sees darkness in my life and prescribed Joko tea, Rooibos tea, Five Roses, Coke and seawater to drink every morning. He recommended I buy the "prescription medication" the very same day, so that he can pray for me and I would then quickly find a boyfriend. It is important to note that he sells these (obviously for a profit) on the church premises and he prescribes it to everyone who comes to see him.

When I left the room, I went straight home regretting the whole idea of coming to the church, the patience of standing in the queue on a hot summer day, listening to the "rubbish" that he was telling me and a strong self-blame that I could have disagreed with him in front of everyone.

Along the way, I somehow felt sorry for people who go to that church every single day because I did not feel I was connecting with God and I did not feel the presence of praising God. All I felt was business in the making, humiliation, lack of knowledge to healthy life style and women oppression."

3.3 The dominant patriarchal discourse

After I listened to and read the stories, I decided to broaden my thematic analysis to include more themes than those I initially indicated in my proposal. It was impossible to ignore the "male domination" theme threading through all these narratives. I will not identify just some of what I interpret as belonging to each theme from the narratives offered. I do, therefore, not claim to exhaust all

evidences in these stories representative of the different themes. I offer the words as written by the narrators under each theme heading.

3.3.1 Themes

3.3.1.1 Male Domination

Narrative 1

"... was a new student of theology at a reformed institution, where he was taught that it is not biblical for women to teach any group which included men. This teaching started to spread and another young lady called to let us know that she would not attend the Bible Study anymore because of her newfound conviction that women should not teach men in the same group".

"He said that my wife could continue teaching the group for now as long as I was also present at the Bible Study groups to oversee her teaching".

"He further said that he would do a series on the issue".

He stated that it is biblical that woman should not teach men and that, as long as he is the pastor of this church, it will remain a principle. He repeated this statement later in a Sunday morning sermon.

This respondent, in relaying the story to me initially included a statement by the pastor in a sermon that "... no woman shall preach from the pulpit of this church as long as I am the pastor here ...". He did not include it in his written version.

Narrative 2

"I felt guilty that I wasn't part of his ministry. I never questioned him".

"... withholding information from me".

"... my place next to him in his ministry and his life".

"He then asked me why I did not fulfil my biblical role as my husband's (pastor's) wife".

"Somehow I felt it had to do with the fact that I'm a woman and that, being in a black society (culture) it is somehow okay and even expected/common for men to abuse/use women and have other relationships".

“I was humiliated. Everyone was present, including the children, when he did this”.

Narrative 3

“He put a stop to the women’s fellowship meetings saying that everybody had to do everything together. Next he stopped Sunday school which resulted in many people leaving the church in search of a church where the children could attend Sunday school”.

‘[We left the church because] we did not like his authoritarian ways”.

“He did not tolerate anyone disagreeing with him and slowly but surely got rid of all the elders and deacons, who were ‘always in the wrong”.

“After several incidents my brother also left the church”.

“The minister went to one of the women in the church who was going through a divorce and told her that she was going to hell”.

“He now runs the church on his own, doing as he sees fit”.

“He sees himself as the only one who is right and the only one who knows the truth”.

“When Prof Johan Heyns was murdered, he told everyone that it was God’s judgement on him – he had received his just deserts. He was always judging people”.

“Although he had put a stop to the women’s fellowship, he is now living on the money that this fellowship had raised to start an old age home”.

Narrative 4

“I was questioned over and over about this that I eventually felt as if he thought there was something going on between the deacon and me”.

Narrative 5

“Elder in church”

“He exposed himself to me sexually and made me do something, which was a terrifying experience for me”.

Narrative 6

“He went ‘xhaxhaxha ...it is obvious that your mother is not proud of you, I mean you are mature enough. Surely you should be having a man in your life”.

“Everyone in the room was staring at me and going: “a 24 year old lady not having a boyfriend?”. He said: ‘It’s a shame my girl that you don’t have a man in your life!!!”

“He asked me: “Do you have a degree?” I replied “I do have an Honours”, he went ‘um um um, my girl, you can have your honours and your degrees, but if there is no man in your life, you’re worth nothing!!!!’.”

“Moreover he even asked how I am supposed to know if I can breastfeed (practically touching my breasts) if I don’t find myself a man who would give me babies”.

“As he was busy telling me about my future, he would now and then rub and pull my shoulders next to his, hug me, and point my chin with his fingers over and again. I got irritated with him because I am not a physical person to start with, and secondly, I’m not his wife that he can touch wherever he wants to”.

“I strongly felt humiliated and abused, but I couldn’t verbally stop him because he is the pastor who is highly respected by everyone!!!!!!”.

“I stood far from him and he said “don’t be scared, come close to me ‘honours’ ”.

“I did not feel I was connecting with God and I did not feel the presence of praising God. All I felt was business in the making, humiliation, lack of knowledge to healthy life style and women oppression”.

3.3.1.2 Objectification

Narrative 1

“He said that my wife could continue teaching the group for now as long as I was also present at the Bible Study groups to oversee her teaching”.

Narrative 2

“I felt guilty that I wasn’t part of his ministry. I never questioned him”.

”He then asked me why I did not fulfil my biblical role as my husband’s (pastor’s) wife”.

“Somehow I felt it had to do with the fact that I’m a woman and that, being in a black society (culture) it is somehow okay and even expected/common for men to abuse/use women and have other relationships”.

Narrative 3

“He put a stop to the women’s fellowship meetings saying that everybody had to do everything together. Next he stopped Sunday school which resulted in many people leaving the church in search of a church where the children could attend Sunday school”.

“...slowly but surely got rid of all the elders and deacons...”

Narrative 4

“who decided that everyone should audition for the worship groups. I auditioned and was not chosen to sing in a worship group”. Note that these people are already members of the worship group, and now someone decides they should audition.

Narrative 5

“He exposed himself to me sexually and made me do something, which was a terrifying experience for me”.

“The matter was dealt with, he had to resign as an elder, but the subject was closed to me”.

Narrative 6

”Everyone in the room was staring at me and going: ‘a 24 year old lady not having a boyfriend?’ He said: ‘It’s a shame my girl that you don’t have a man in your life!!!”

“He asked me: ‘Do you have a degree?’ I replied ‘I do have an Honours’; he went ‘um um um, my girl, you can have your honours and your degrees, but if there is no man in your life, you’re worth nothing!!!!’”

“Moreover he even asked how am I supposed to know if I can breastfeed (practically touching my breasts) if I don’t find myself a man who would give me babies”.

“As he was busy telling me about my future, he would now and then rub and pull my shoulders next to his, hug me, and point my chin with his fingers over and again. I got irritated with him because I am not a physical person to start with, and secondly, I’m not his wife that he can touch wherever he wants to”.

3.3.1.3 Humiliation

Narrative 1

“He said that my wife could continue teaching the group for now as long as I was also present at the Bible Study groups to oversee her teaching”.

“He stated that it is biblical that woman should not teach men”.

Narrative 2

“...my place next to him in his ministry and his life”.

“He then asked me why I did not fulfil my biblical role as my husband’s (pastor’s) wife”.

“Somehow I felt it had to do with the fact that I’m a woman and that, being in a black society (culture) it is somehow okay and even expected/common for men to abuse/use women and have other relationships”.

“I was humiliated. Everyone was present, including the children, when he did this”.

Narrative 3

“...the minister verbally attacked the young man in front of everybody at the Bible hour because he didn’t agree with him. After many similar attacks on the young man...the young man also left the church”.

“During my time there this minister verbally abused my brother several times. My brother was a deacon and the minister turned up at his house one day and started shouting at him and told him that he wasn’t a Christian and was not worthy of being a deacon. Three times he verbally abused him in this way”.

“...we did not like his authoritarian ways”.

“My brother finally decided to leave the church after he was reprimanded three times during a Bible Study for turning a page of the Bible during a prayer meeting. This was done in the presence of everyone attending the Bible Study”.

Narrative 4

“I was questioned over and over about this that I eventually felt as if he thought there was something going on between the deacon and me”.

“...who decided that everyone should audition for the worship groups [after being in the groups for a period of time]. I auditioned and was not chosen to sing in a worship group”.

Narrative 5

“He exposed himself to me sexually and made me do something, which was a terrifying experience for me”.

Narrative 6

“He went ‘xhaxhaxha ...it is obvious that your mother is not proud of you, I mean you are mature enough. Surely you should be having a man in your life”.

“Everyone in the room was staring at me and going: ‘a 24 year old lady not having a boyfriend?’ He said: ‘It’s a shame my girl that you don’t have a man in your life!!!”

“He asked me: ‘Do you have a degree?’ I replied ‘I do have an Honours’, he went ‘um um um, my girl, you can have your honours and your degrees, but if there is no man in your life, you’re worth nothing!!!!”

“I strongly felt humiliated and abused,...”

”All I felt was business in the making, humiliation,...”

3.3.1.4 Power and control

Narrative 1

“...it is important to state that he was the Youth Pastor of the church and was advised by the church leadership (I was told) to do his theological studies at an institution where their teaching was “reformed” and thus “more biblical” than that of other institutions, including the university of Pretoria”.

” ...was a new student of theology at a reformed institution, where he was taught that it is not biblical for women to teach any group which included men. This teaching started to spread and another young lady called to let us know that she would not attend the Bible Study anymore because of her newfound conviction that women should not teach men in the same group.”

“...regarding this policy as it was not mentioned when we were asked to join the group as a couple or at the membership classes of the church which we attended for six weeks prior to becoming members of the church in 2002”.

“He said that my wife could continue teaching the group for now as long as I was also present at the Bible Study groups to oversee her teaching”.

“He further said that he would do a series on the issue”.

“He stated that it is biblical that woman should not teach men and that, as long as he is the pastor of this church, it will remain a principle. He repeated this statement later in a Sunday morning sermon”.

Narrative 2

“...withholding information from me”.

“Somehow I felt it had to do with the fact that I’m a woman and that, being in a black society (culture) it is somehow okay and even expected/common for men to abuse/use women and have other relationships”.

Narrative 3

”He put a stop to the women’s fellowship meetings saying that everybody had to do everything together. Next he stopped Sunday school which resulted in many

people leaving the church in search of a church where the children could attend Sunday school”.

“the minister verbally attacked the young man in front of everybody at the Bible hour because he didn’t agree with him. After many similar attacks on the young man...the young man also left the church”.

“During my time there this minister verbally abused my brother several times. My brother was a deacon and the minister turned up at his house one day and started shouting at him and told him that he wasn’t a Christian and was not worthy of being a deacon. Three times he verbally abused him in this way”.

“we did not like his authoritarian ways”.

“He did not tolerate anyone disagreeing with him and slowly but surely got rid of all the elders and deacons, who were “always in the wrong”.”

“The minister went to one of the women in the church who was going through a divorce and told her that she was going to hell”.

“He now runs the church on his own, doing as he sees fit. He does not have an elder or deacon. He sees himself as the only one who is right and the only one who knows the truth”.

Narrative 4

“I was questioned over and over about this that I eventually felt as if he thought there was something going on between the deacon and me”.

“...who decided that everyone should audition for the worship groups [after being in the groups for a long time already]. I auditioned and was not chosen to sing in a worship group”.

Narrative 5

“He exposed himself to me sexually and made me do something, which was a terrifying experience for me”.

“The matter was dealt with, he had to resign as an elder, but the subject was closed to me”.

Narrative 6

“He went ‘xhaxhaxha ...it is obvious that your mother is not proud of you, I mean you are mature enough. Surely you should be having a man in your life’”.

“Moreover he even asked how am I supposed to know if I can breastfeed (practically touching my breasts) if I don’t find myself a man who would give me babies.

“As he was busy telling me about my future, he would now and then rub and pull my shoulders next to his, hug me, and point my chin with his fingers over and again. I got irritated with him because I am not a physical person to start with, and secondly, I’m not his wife that he can touch wherever he wants to. I strongly felt humiliated and abused, but I couldn’t verbally stop him because he is the pastor who is highly respected by everyone!!!! I stood far from him and he said “don’t be scared, come close to me ‘honours’ ”. The pastor further goes on saying that he sees darkness in my life and prescribed Joko tea, Rooibos tea, Five Roses, Coke and seawater to drink every morning. He recommended I buy the “prescription medication” the very same day, so that he can pray for me and I would then quickly find a boyfriend. It is important to note that he sells these (obviously for a profit) on the church premises and he prescribes it to everyone who comes to see him.

When I left the room, I went straight home regretting the whole idea of coming to the church, the patience of standing in the queue on a hot summer day, listening to the “rubbish” that he was telling me and a strong self-blame that I could have disagreed with him in front of everyone.

Along the way, I somehow felt sorry for people who go to that church every single day because I did not feel I was connecting with God and I did not feel the presence of praising God. All I felt was business in the making, humiliation, lack of knowledge to healthy life style and women oppression.”

3.3.1.5 Knowledge

Narrative 1

” ... was a new student of theology at a reformed institution, where he was taught that it is not biblical for women to teach any group which included men. This teaching started to spread and another young lady called to let us know that she would not attend the Bible Study anymore because of her newfound conviction that women should not teach men in the same group”.

“...it is important to state that he was the Youth Pastor of the church and was advised by the church leadership (I was told) to do his theological studies at an institution where their teaching was “reformed” and thus “more biblical” than that of other institutions, including the university of Pretoria”.

“...regarding this policy as it was not mentioned when we were asked to join the group as a couple or at the membership classes of the church which we attended for six weeks prior to becoming members of the church in 2002.”

“He further said that he would do a series on the issue”.

“He stated that it is biblical that woman should not teach men and that, as long as he is the pastor of this church, it will remain a principle. He repeated this statement later in a Sunday morning sermon”.

Narrative 2

”I felt guilty that I wasn’t part of his ministry. I never questioned him”.

“... withholding information from me”.

“He then asked me why I did not fulfil my biblical role as my husband’s (pastor’s) wife”.

Narrative 3

“...the minister verbally attacked the young man in front of everybody at the Bible hour because he didn’t agree with him”.

Narrative 4

“...she said I did not have a voice to lead worship, but more of a choral voice. What the difference is, I’m not sure. My sister, who trains a choir of 75 girls and has been playing the piano for the Durban Chamber Choir, says there is no difference and another friend who also trains choirs said exactly the same”.

Narrative 5

“The matter was dealt with, he had to resign as an elder, but the subject was closed to me”.

Narrative 6

“Everyone in the room was staring at me and going: ‘a 24 year old lady not having a boyfriend?’ He said: ‘It’s a shame my girl that you don’t have a man in your life!!!’ He asked me: ‘Do you have a degree?’ I replied ‘I do have an Honours’, he went ‘um um um, my girl, you can have your honours and your degrees, but if there is no man in your life, you’re worth nothing!!!!’”.

“Moreover he even asked how am I supposed to know if I can breastfeed (practically touching my breasts) if I don’t find myself a man who would give me babies.

“As he was busy telling me about my future...”

“...but I couldn’t verbally stop him because he is the pastor who is highly respected by everyone!!!!”

“The pastor further goes on saying that he sees darkness in my life and prescribed Joko tea, Rooibos tea, Five Roses, Coke and seawater to drink every morning. He recommended I buy the “prescription medication” the very same day, so that he can pray for me and I would then quickly find a boyfriend.”

“...listening to the “rubbish” that he was telling me and a strong self-blame that I could have disagreed with him in front of everyone”.

“...lack of knowledge...”

3.3.1.6 Truth (Dominant discourse)

Narrative 1

” ...was a new student of theology at a reformed institution, where he was taught that it is not biblical for women to teach any group which included men. This teaching started to spread and another young lady called to let us know that she would not attend the Bible Study anymore because of her newfound conviction that women should not teach men in the same group.”

“...was advised by the church leadership (I was told) to do his theological studies at an institution where their teaching was “reformed” and thus “more biblical” than that of other institutions, including the university of Pretoria.”

“...He said that my wife could continue teaching the group for now as long as I was also present at the Bible Study groups to oversee her teaching. He further said that he would do a series on the issue. He stated that it is biblical that woman should not teach men and that, as long as he is the pastor of this church, it will remain a principle. He repeated this statement later in a Sunday morning sermon.

Narrative 2

”I felt guilty that I wasn’t part of his ministry. I never questioned him”.

“...my place next to him in his ministry and his life”.

“He then asked me why I did not fulfil my biblical role as my husband’s (pastor’s) wife”.

“Somehow I felt it had to do with the fact that I’m a woman and that, being in a black society (culture) it is somehow okay and even expected/common for men to abuse/use women and have other relationships”.

Narrative 3

“He put a stop to the women’s fellowship meetings saying that everybody had to do everything together. Next he stopped Sunday school which resulted in many people leaving the church in search of a church where the children could attend Sunday school”.

“...the minister verbally attacked the young man in front of everybody at the Bible hour because he didn’t agree with him”.

“...the minister turned up at his house one day and started shouting at him and told him that he wasn’t a Christian and was not worthy of being a deacon. Three times he verbally abused him in this way”.

“He did not tolerate anyone disagreeing with him and slowly but surely got rid of all the elders and deacons, who were “always in the wrong”.

“The minister went to one of the women in the church who was going through a divorce and told her that she was going to hell”.

“He sees himself as the only one who is right and the only one who knows the truth”.

Narrative 4

“...the minister verbally attacked the young man in front of everybody at the Bible hour because he didn’t agree with him”.

Narrative 6

“He went ‘xhaxhaxha ...it is obvious that your mother is not proud of you, I mean you are mature enough. Surely you should be having a man in your life”.

“Everyone in the room was staring at me and going: ‘a 24 year old lady not having a boyfriend?’ He said: ‘It’s a shame my girl that you don’t have a man in your life!!!’ He asked me: ‘Do you have a degree?’ I replied ‘I do have an Honours’; he went ‘um um um, my girl, you can have your honours and your degrees, but if there is no man in your life, you’re worth nothing!!!!”

“Moreover he even asked how am I supposed to know if I can breastfeed (practically touching my breasts) if I don’t find myself a man who would give me babies”.

“...but I couldn’t verbally stop him because he is the pastor who is highly respected by everyone!!!!”

“The pastor further goes on saying that he sees darkness in my life and prescribed Joko tea, Rooibos tea, Five Roses, Coke and seawater to drink every

morning. He recommended I buy the “prescription medication” the very same day, so that he can pray for me and I would then quickly find a boyfriend”.

3.3.1.7 Prejudice and Discrimination

Narrative 1

“...taught that it was not biblical for women to teach any group which included men.”

“...called to let us know that she would to attend the Bible Study anymore because of her newfound conviction that women should not teach men in the same group...”

“...their teaching was “reformed” and thus “more biblical” than that of other institutions...”

“...my wife could continue teaching...as long as I was also present...to oversee her teaching.”

“...it is biblical that woman should not teach men...as long as he is a pastor of this church, it will remain a principle. He repeated this statement later in a Sunday morning sermon.”

“...adult groups will now be headed by men. Adult men could not report to a woman.”

“The senior pastor stated that women will always be under the leadership of the men at ‘his’ church.”

Narrative 2

“...he then asked me why I did not fulfil my biblical role as my husband’s (pastor’s) wife...”

“...I felt it had to do with the fact that I’m a woman and that being in a black society (culture) it is somehow okay and even expected/common for men to abuse/use women and have other relationships.”

“...I felt that I was excluded often because I was coloured and this was a black community church.”

Narrative 3

“The minister went to one of the women in the church who was going through a divorce and told her that she was going to hell.”

Narrative 4

“...she said I did not have a voice to lead worship, but more of a choral voice.”

“...they had made up their minds that I was not good enough.”

Narrative 5

“I could not stand up for myself and was often humiliated and the chances of promotion were very slight.”

Narrative 6

“xhaxhaxha ...it is obvious that your mother is not proud of you, ... surely you should be having a man in your life.”

“Everyone in the room was staring at me and going: ‘a 24 year old lady not having a boyfriend?’”

“It is a shame my girl that you don’t have a man in your life!!! He said: ‘Do you have a degree?’ I replied: ‘I do have an Honours’, he went ‘um um um, my girl, you can have your honours and your degrees, but if there is no man in your life, you’re worth nothing!!!”

“Moreover he even asked how am I supposed to know if I can breastfeed (practically touching my breasts) if I don’t find myself a man who would give me babies.”

“All I felt was business in the making, humiliation, lack of knowledge to healthy life style and women oppression.”

3.4 Summary

The thematic analysis above took what I believe fit under each of the themes listed as major themes in what these participants experienced as hurtful and abusive. These quotations were my own subjective choices of what I interpreted

to belong under each of the themes. In postmodern spirit, I do not claim for any of these quotes to be a final indicator of the presence of the theme under which I listed it. These are my own subjective choices, based on my own subjective understanding, knowledge and context. This is, however, not all it is. I have to latch on to the intersubjectivity entrenched in this study.

I have made these choices based on my interactions and therefore in relationship as these stories were told to me. I remind the reader also that the analysis was approved by the research participants upon completion. It was offered to each one to read and make or suggest changes which resonated best with their unique experiences. What I can safely do, however, is affirm that social constructionist theory, from which most of these themes were derived, has a lot to offer in an improved understanding of the causes of abuse as experienced by some. It is, of course, not enough to understand the causes.

Social constructionism offers the opportunity of de-constructing and reconstructing, which means that many of the basic assumptions and “truths” on which the above are based and built can be squarely faced, challenged, broken down, changed or completely reconstructed. This, I believe is not only true for the beliefs which inform and drive the behaviour and actions of the perpetrators of abuse, but also for the beliefs off which the experiences of abuse feed. I will discuss this further and make some initial recommendations in the chapter on ministry and practice further on in this work.

CHAPTER 4

ABUSE DISCOURSE

4.1 Introduction

Cultural, environmental and other influences on actions and behaviours in social systems such as the church have been considered in the previous chapters. I postulated in Chapter 1 that these influences generally seem to have been neglected in most literature about abuse in the church system.

From within a postmodern worldview reality does not exist separate from dominant discourse, which is maintained by those in power in social structures and which is also treated as truth or even absolute truth. Michel Foucault (1982:220) speaks about the will to truth with its vocation of exclusion. Those in power simply exclude those who do not share in the truth or otherwise declare them “mad” (cf Foucault 1982:217). In the narratives participants experienced exclusion and were accused of being, and treated as being, different, troublemakers, and so forth.

Brown (2012:116) interprets discourse (writing, speech, action), according to her understanding of Foucault (1972), as “... a strategic deployment of power for the sake of particular interests and [he] envisions human agents as ‘subject positions’ established by interconnected vectors of power-bearing discourses and practices”. Discomfort (anxiety) is experienced when these dominant discourses are challenged or compromised in any way. Neimeyer and Bridges (2004:np) write about Kelly’s view: “... people might experience anxiety when confronted with events that seem almost completely alien and uninterpretable within their previous construct system”. This resonates well with the social constructionist theorists’ assumptions summarized in the social constructionist reflection in Chapter 2; and consequential difficulties experienced when things happen outside existing frames and constructions of what they “should” be, that is, the current dominant discourse, grand narrative or meaning-

making system which are used to distort and apply for the system's own purposes (Turpin 2012:78).

Neimeyer and Bridges (2004:np) further therefore contend that this interaction of meaning and affect has made Personal Construct Theory (Kelly 1955) an attractive framework for those interested in studying topics such as relational breakdown, trauma and loss "...all of which can fundamentally undercut one's assumptive world, triggering a host of significant emotional and behavioural responses".

From the social constructionist reflection in earlier chapters similar sentiment is expressed regarding strong emotion and anxious behaviours when the known (dominant discourse) are confronted with alternatives (alternative discourse). The emotional responses (including the anger, frustration, fear and other emotions) which they refer to here may possibly be understood when they are translated into manipulative abusive behaviours and actions by the perpetrators of abuse on the one hand (cf Foucault 1982:217).

On the other hand, this may mean that these pains may be experienced similarly by those on the receiving end because their "knowns" or "truths" are challenged or perceived to be challenged. Anxiety, fear and extreme discomfort are thus experienced when constructs are threatened in any way. Barker's (2009) article shows how *fundamentalist voices* from the past can create extreme anxiety.

I reflect in this chapter on abuse in general, defining abuse and dissecting the phenomenon before considering it from a social constructionist perspective. I then continue with a reflection on prejudice and discrimination, two important, I believe, concepts underlying experiences of abuse in structures such as the church. These two concepts were also considered in the thematic analysis in chapter three. Prejudice and discrimination, then, I propose is fed by social constructions treated and taken one-and-only-truth and –reality, that is, dominant discourse and/or grand narratives held in structures such as the church. Abuse as consequential attitudes, behaviour and experience of abusive discourse is at the root of this chapter and this work as a whole.

4.2 ABUSE

4.2.1 Definition and reflection

“Abuse” is described in the Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary (1983:3) as adjective: “1. To use improperly or injuriously; misuse. 2. To hurt by treating wrongly; injure. 3. To speak in coarse or bad terms of or to; revile. – *n.* 1. Improper or injurious use; misuse. 2. Ill-treatment; injury. 3. Vicious conduct, practice, or action. 4. Abusive language; slander.” An “Abuser” is the one who commits the above harmful actions. Joy (1999:147) explains abuse: “Abuse is about the imbalance of power in relationships. The more powerful take advantage of and exploit the less powerful, privileging their own needs and feelings over those of others.” Abuse is categorized in the following ways, among others (which I shall exclude as they are not relevant for this work):

- **Spiritual abuse**

Spiritual abuse is described as “...abusive or aberrational practices identified in the behaviour and teachings of some churches, spiritual and religious organizations and groups. These types of groups or organizations could be more accurately defined as a cult”. This definition of Wikipedia implies that every church in which people experience abuse could be defined as “cults”. This assumption calls for more thought as we live in a broken world in which people experience, as shown above in the narratives, abuse which is often inflicted on them unintentionally. The behaviour and teachings referred to above I would like to redefine as social constructions, different “realities” held by individuals and groups, shaped at different times in relationship, culture and history, assumed to be absolute truths. Should these individuals take the time and energy to examine these “truths” or “dominant discourses” as social constructionism specifically from a narrative perspective, would describe them as, and consider the alternative “truths” of others and their, often unique, histories, cultures, background and relationships, there could be less experiences of abuse I

believe. Barker's (2009) case study offers a demonstration of how some "fundamentalist voices" from the past, accompanied with their created reality of a cruel God caused extreme pathology and pain. (This manifests in "cult like" treatments of and behaviours towards others which are hurtful and harmful).

Johnson and Van Vonderen (1991:20) define spiritual abuse ,somewhat differently, as "...the mistreatment of a person who is in need of help, support or greater spiritual empowerment, with the result of weakening, undermining or decreasing that person's spiritual empowerment." It may involve "overriding the feelings and opinions of another, without regard to what will result in the other person's state of living, emotions or spiritual well-being. In this application, power is used to bolster the position or needs of a leader, over and above one who comes to them in need (1991:21)". "It can also occur when *spirituality* is used to make others live up to a 'spiritual standard'", promoting external "spiritual performance" as a means to "proving" a person's spirituality", says Johnson and Van Vonderen (1991:21). What does this look like typically?

They refer to "judgment" when support is needed. "Spiritual neglect" is another form of spiritual abuse (Johnson and Van Vonderen 1991:30). Of critical importance to this study is the following statement they offer:

Spiritual abuse, however, puts people at odds with their best Friend. It causes some people to question, doubt, and even run the other direction from their Source. They see their strongest Advocate as their biggest accuser, their Ally as their enemy. For some people, spiritual abuse can have eternal consequences.

(Johnson & Van Vonderen 1991:29).

In the New Testament Jesus encountered spiritual abuse in the form of "legalistic attack" (Johnson and Van Vonderen 1991:31). Spiritual abuse is thus nothing new. It is found in the Old as well as the New testament, taking place "... from a place of authority." They say: "Spiritual abuse can only come from a place of

power or *perceived* power. In other words, it is possible to be abused by someone who doesn't have any true spiritual authority.”

In the narratives in Chapter 3, much of what was described could be defined as “legalistic attack” as described by Johnson and Van Vonderen. Paul battled with and confronted those who spiritually abused the people of God in this way, the best example being the book of Galatians: legalism for selfish reasons (Galatians 6:12-13). He felt so strongly frustrated about this sort of enforced legalism in the face of the newly found covenant life in Christ, that he expressed the wish early on in Galatians that they would rather go ahead and be castrated!

- **Verbal abuse**

This type of abuse refers to a person using “...profanity, demeaning talk or threatening statements”. In the narratives much of what was experienced included verbal abuse as described in this definition (see also www.godswordtowomen.org/verban_grady.htm).

- **Emotional/psychological abuse**

This includes behaviours such as coercion, humiliation, intimidation, relational aggression, parental alienation. Also when one person uses emotional or psychological coercion to compel another to do something they do not want, or is not in their best interests; or when one person manipulates another's emotional or psychological state for their own ends or commits psychological aggression using ostensibly non-violent methods to inflict mental or emotional violence or pain on another (http://www.valleyoasis.org/_notes/abuse_definitions.pdf).

Every one of the narratives in Chapter 3 is heavily loaded with this type of abuse. Actions described included experiences of coercion, humiliation, intimidation, relational aggression, and people experienced alienation. I invite the reader to read these stories again. Note my social constructionist emphasis on “experiences”.

- **Human rights abuse**

This refers to the violation of every individual's basic human rights. The question arises who decides what is a human's rights, but for the purpose of this work we will accept that it is anything which may threaten or "shatter" our sense of safety, predictability, and trust in the goodness of our world as humans.

This is really true for all kinds of abuse as Allender (in Lampman 1999:38) says: "Harm of any kind, no matter what the motive or the intent of the person inflicting it, shatters our sense of safety, predictability, and trust in the goodness of our world"(1999:38). Allender further contends that it is not only the worldview of abused persons that is affected negatively, but also their God-view: God is doubted and questioned. This is confirmed in the stories by participants. Note the undertones of social constructionist thought in Allender's description (I am not sure if this is even intended to be social constructionist by Allender).

Louw (1999:1-2) asserts that sufferers of pain end up questioning their selfhood as well as the identity of God. I would add to this that victims of abuse are confused about the identity of "the other" as well. In other words, I suggest a victim of abuse is confronted with the person, potential and being of others, which causes future relational problems, as it creates a sense that it can only be difficult to trust again. Buber's (1970:101; 179) call to treat the other as "thou" poses a challenge and so does Levinas's (1981:15; 85) call to face the other in oneself (cf Gergen 2001:185 on the individual's responsibility in his "moral project").

If the people of God, the "other", the supposed light and salt of the earth, adopted family members of the same household are not safe to be trusted, what then about anyone else out there? This confirmed my decision to embark on this multidisciplinary level. Self to self, self to others, self to God relations are affected and infected, may I say, by these acts and experiences of abuse in the church.

4.2.2 Intentionality

Abuse (harm caused), as stated by Allender above, can be inflicted intentionally as well as unintentionally. This has to be kept in mind throughout the reading of this work: that harm or abuse can be inflicted without intentionality on the part of the person/s causing the pain.

It is clear from the above that abuse is far more than physical beatings and the like. In an attempt to define abuse, the abuser's behaviour is significant. Attempts to control and exercise power over another person, the victim, is always and essentially related to abuse (Dutton, 1992:4-7). Dutton explains: "Non-violent behaviours may take on the same property as violent behaviours when their function is to control a victim ..." She continues (1992:18): "It is important to recognize that the abuser typically continues to maintain some level of control even when not actively engaging in abusive behaviour."

Dutton further refers to Pence and Paymar's Power and Control Wheel's identification of eight different methods of using power and control in addition to physical and sexual violence. These include coercion and threats, economic abuse, intimidation, emotional abuse, using male privilege, using children, minimizing, denying, blaming and isolation. Looking at the narratives above, almost all of these methods were applied.

4.3 An abusive church?

Contrary to what we want to believe about the church, it seems that there is enough evidence in this work at least to say, yes, churches can be abusive structures. According to Johnson and Van Vonderen (1991:63-71) the following are characteristic of abusive church systems:

- **Power posturing**

This manifests in a pre-occupation with the authority of the leaders. Constant reminders of the authority of the leaders are typical of this characteristic. Control is central to this style of leadership (Henke 2006:1; cf Pretorius 2007:267). All

the narratives confirm this. See especially Narrative 1 in this regard. The story is one of a constant reminder of the leaders and their authority.

- **Member-performance pre-occupation**

Words such as “submission” and “obedience” are overused in these systems. The narratives confirm this.

- **Unspoken rules**

People’s lives are controlled by unspoken rules which are only discovered once they’ve been broken by the “guilty”; for example, “don’t ever disagree or you’ll never be accepted to minister in this church” or “don’t talk about certain things or they may have to change, let’s rather protect them by keeping the silence (neglect) or by assault (legalistic attack). Should you talk you will be ‘the problem’”. People, especially women, breaking these rules are labelled ‘not submissive’, ‘too strong’, ‘disloyal’ or a Jezebel for exposing abusive male church leaders. In most cases people give in to this “don’t talk” rule and perpetrators are never brought to account for the abusive behaviours. “Victims ‘freeze up’ the pain and anger of being abused (1991:69)”. The narratives also confirm this.

- **Lack of balance**

This refers to extreme objectivism (elevating objective scientific truth above experienced truth) or subjectivism (elevating experiences above the truths of Scripture). The narratives also significantly confirm this.

In the case of physical abuse, especially when handed out to women as the “weaker” sex, women have always had to devise ways to avoid, prevent or get away from being abused physically by men. Many a divorce has at its roots physical abuse. If, for instance, physical abuse took place in a church setting, the problem would be easier to identify and take care of. I’m convinced physical abuse would not be tolerated in any church setting as I know it.

Much, much more difficult to identify and to pinpoint though, because of the absence of marks and other forms of physical evidence as well as the

subtleties of the actions, are emotional and psychological abuses. Add to that spiritual abuse, especially if dressed in a beautiful technicolor spiritual dream coat. Allow me a moment of subjective indulgence.

4.4 Power and control

As we've seen above, power and control are the main goals of those who abuse others. Keep in mind the significance of "power", "knowledge" and "truth" in social constructionist thought (Freedman and Combs 1996:26), referred to in Chapter 2. Kingsolver (2009:425) writes about a time when people who were perceived to be anti-American were prosecuted and labelled as a variety of things, including communist, for example. Kingsolver quotes a discussion about one such individual with his lawyer in which he describes the problem as some in power who have decided that America was a finished product. He continues that America is still in the making, like any country, which he sees as a characteristic of history. He concludes: "You force people to ask questions, and before you know it, they have auctioned off the question mark, or sold it for scrap. No boldness. No good ideas for fixing what's broken...because if you happen to mention that it's broken, you are automatically disqualified (Kingsolver 2009:425). This is the kind of control of knowledge by the powerful and unfortunately some of this "knowledge" has women or other minority groups at its core. Whoever asks questions or points out the brokenness of these belief systems is automatically disqualified, as pointed out by Kingsolver's story above.

Patriarchal societies and structures (with their dominant discourses), often the church, violate the humanity of women. According to Elizabeth Stanco (1985:4) women are often blamed by society for men's "indiscretions", which resulted from their own "unrespectable" behaviour. In confirmation of Stanco's argument, I wish at this point to include here part of my own story (experience) very recently.

I received a "prophesy" directed at myself as co-director of a mentoring ministry to women a few weeks before a weekend retreat for hurting women was to be offered by the ministry. The main thrust of the so-called prophesy was to

let me know as leader of this ministry to women that “God has revealed” to the “prophetess” that women are responsible for the evils in the world. They are beaten, cheated upon, abused, lied to, mistreated, and even raped, because of their disrespectful behaviour toward men. This is disobedience to God, according to the “prophetess”, and women should confess this sin and change their behaviours accordingly. I was asked to read this “prophesy” to the attendees at the weekend retreat.

At this point it would be good to stress that I am of the opinion – as revealed by the narratives as well - that it is not only women who suffer in powerful and controlling patriarchal societies and institutions. Men and other minority groups are also at the receiving end when abuse is handed out in patriarchal systems (with dominant autocratic styles as dominant discourse activities). See the abuses suffered by the male narrator in Chapter 4 in what seems like a system where power and control was the order of the day.

A further conclusion I draw from the narratives is also that patriarchal structures are not about power to men in general. Those who go along with, and those who accept and affirm the patriarchs and their systems, male or female, could be a part of the powerful “inner circle” and by silence, omission, or tolerance, abuse those outside the hierarchy, also male or female. Hoefft (2012:414) speaks of the internalization of sexual violence. This seems to be true about patriarchal practices and views in general. Women also internalize this as Biblical and impose similar abuses on those who believe differently. Where in the power hierarchy one finds oneself and the means used to remain in there, which could be the use of money, status or some other form of celebrity status in society, should also to be kept in mind.

In structures where racism is still rife, race will play a bigger role than gender when abuse is inflicted in an abusive patriarchal structure. A woman, say for example, the well-conditioned “submissive” wife of the patriarch (often ruling the patriarch from inside), can hand out abuse via the patriarch. Where the rich are viewed as of more value and worth than the poor, the poor, no matter what gender will be on the receiving end of abusive behaviour patterns.

In other words, it is those perceived as being of a lesser worth than the elect few in privileged positions, male as well as female, young and old, who are abused. This is about dominant discourses, as discussed in Chapter 2, in any given structure. Consider how, for example, Giddens' theory on this topic can provide explanations for the abuse of power and control in societal structures such as the church.

4.5 Attitudes, prejudice and discrimination

In consideration of and reflection on the case studies, there seem to be attitudes and behaviours which I would like to categorize under the concepts known as prejudice and discrimination respectively. Taking into consideration the social constructionist assumptions discussed in Chapter 2 and elsewhere, it is fair to conclude that powerful stories and their “realities” and “knowledge” find expression in what we commonly refer to as attitudes towards self, the world and “reality”, others' worlds and “realities”: stories.

Neimeyer and Bridges (2004) refer to the linkage between the assumptive world (the “undercutting” thereof), emotional experiences and the resulting behaviours. Prejudice and discrimination are then, in my opinion, two prominent behavioural outflows of attitudes held toward and about, not only certain things and ideas, but also people: individuals and groups.

Attitudes were central in social psychology for a long time (Allport 1924) and apart from the social constructionist, narrative thrust of this work; no discussion about relationships or difficulties in relationships is complete, in my view, without a reflection on attitudes. I further suggest and base the rest of the discussion on my assumption that humans' socially constructed “realities” and stories are what shape attitudes – often experienced by others as abusive.

A discussion of attitudes, prejudice and discrimination, from the work of Baron and Byrne (2003) follows in order to reflect on these and the role they play in abuse.

4.5.1 Attitudes

Attitudes are our evaluations of all and any aspects of the world, “... the extent to which we have favourable or unfavourable reactions to issues, ideas, persons, social groups, objects ... (Baron and Byrne 2003:118)”. Attitudes can be ambivalent, so different attitudes, positive as well as negative, could be held about something, and in any given situation the dominant attitude will prevail. Baron and Byrne use the example of someone holding very positive, favourable attitudes about a chocolate dessert, but who doesn’t eat it because of the dominant (victorious) negative attitude with regards to health – its fat content, or other attributes. Attitudes are also very difficult to change, once held (Baron and Byrne 2003:118).

Ballard (2012:170) refers to sociological studies of religious attitudes with regards to the Bible and suggests a number of ways the Bible should be included as a research subject, for example, how people understand and approach the Bible in their everyday lives, and how a postmodern culture impacts on the understanding of and use of the Bible. Many abuses may be experienced because of different attitudes held such as the above with regards to the Bible. We need to seek to understand how people utilise the Bible (Ballard 2012:170).

We hold positive as well as negative attitudes toward people, which, according to Baron and Byrne (2003:120) play a crucial role in our relations with these persons. Village (2007:2) argues that “the academy remains largely ignorant of what other people do with the Bible”. This is an attitude held by the academy. Attitudes are, according to social psychologists, acquired through social learning. So then, one can safely infer, in line with the social constructionist perspective, that attitudes are socially constructed as well and form a crucial part of every individual’s unique (but shared socially) story, and that people “do with the Bible” in congruence with social learning (Ballard 2012:170-171). Baron and Byrne’s discussion on the social learning theorization about the acquisition and formation of attitudes is firmly situated in a behaviourist approach (2003:121-124).

I will respond from a social constructionist perspective to each of the points raised below. Baron & Byrne's (2003:121-124) discussion includes:

- “*classical conditioning*: learning based on association: reactions learned, thus attitudes shaped and associated with a stimulus”;
- “*subliminal conditioning*: classical conditioning that occurs in the absence of conscious awareness of the stimuli involved”;
- “*instrumental conditioning*: learning to hold the ‘right’ views ...”, praise or rewards are given for holding certain views or attitudes (very, very often unchallenged and untested, I believe!);
- “*observational learning*: learning by example”: the so-called “monkey see, monkey do” approach, which often happens with no intent on the part of the modeller of the behaviour or attitude (see also Bandura 1997);
- “*social comparison and attitude formation*: one basis for observational learning”: Significant for this study the following quote from Baron and Byrne (2003:124), which links well with the basic assumptions of social constructionist thought:

... research findings indicate that hearing others state negative views about this group might actually lead you to adopt similar attitudes – without ever meeting a member of the group in question (e.g., Maio, Esses, and Bell, 1994; Shaver, 1993). In such cases, attitudes are shaped by social information from others (what we see them *saying* or doing, coupled with our own desire to be similar to people we like or respect) (my italics).

The above can be seated in a social constructionist narrative frame because it is not possible to separate any of the above from a social context which is owned by any given individual at any given time. All of the above implies context-bound unique factors (that which is seen as owned and unique to any context, for example cultural practices or any likes and dislikes). Different realities are

shaped, created, carried into and effecting future “realities” by the different forms of conditioning mentioned above, in lesser or greater ways.

It is crucial to highlight here that the role of language, as emphasized in social constructionist thought, does not get any explicit attention in the behaviourists’ mind and theorization. The “hearing of others”, for example, implies social interaction, relationship and most importantly language as medium and carrier of the views and attitudes. Most forms of the conditioning mentioned above are not possible without language as medium.

Keeping in mind that social constructionist thought holds that the shaping of truth/reality (or beliefs underpinning attitudes) in context (family, time and history, culture), the above behaviourist assumptions about the formation of attitudes, sit very well within the social constructionist perspective.

Attitudes are learnt by stimulus-response interactions, observation, copying, and (often unintentional) following of (often unconsciously modelled) examples, rewarding and affirming “right” beliefs and actions, to name a few among other social interactions (in relationship) mentioned above as a psychological explanation for where attitudes come from and how they come into being. Giddens’ sociological thought in this regard can be followed in Chapter 2, especially with regard to the distribution of resources and other practices which keep the “right” attitudes (dominant discourses and stories) alive and well. All of this taking place in social interactions: relationship.

Of further significance is the social constructionist assumption that knowledge (beliefs and values culminating in attitudes) are not representative of objective reality. In the conditioning of attitudes, it is from a social constructionist perspective possible to acquire attitudes based on “truths” and “knowledge” which are indeed far removed from so-called objective reality. What we have learned and acquired through conditioning is subject to human error, misinterpretation and misunderstanding.

The above mostly takes place through and by the use of language, which gives meaning to the constructions which carry and underpin the attitudes held. Many of the attitudes, one can say from a social constructionist perspective, are

presented in what is referred to as dominant discourses, based on privileged knowledge, power and resource management (see the “right” views referred to above which are taught and rewarded) by those in power positions (Giddens 1984). Much is institutionalized as described by Berger and Luckman (1966) and treated as what they term the “sacred canopy”.

Humans’ conditioned “realities” are then shaped into “dominant stories”, often seen as set in stone, which in turn shapes attitudes held and supporting actions and behaviours. How we are conditioned to think about church and doing church shapes our attitudes not only toward church as construction and concept and story, but also toward those who hold to different “church realities” and “stories”. This again, affect actions and behaviours toward favoured or unfavoured others and their “church realities” and “stories”, which may be experienced as hurtful and abusive. According to Baron and Byrne (2003:126) attitudes are functional in that they facilitate:

- **Categorization and organization of information**

Information and views are often supported, although we can’t even remember the origins of our convictions and why we originally situated them in a positive or negative “category”. Equally true is that we oppose those views that fall outside our favoured categories. This is an important point and favours the need, as expressed in my argument, for reflection on the deconstruction of previously held views. Ballard (2012:170) highlights the need for more reflection on our understanding and views with regard to the Bible. We therefore need to reflect more on our categorizations based on our understanding of Scripture. Greider (2012:453) shows how attitudes relating to different religious selves and identities affect our behaviour towards them.

The terms “categorization” and “organization” remind of constructing actions. Information (which is understood and given meaning through language) is categorized and organized to shape a “dominant story” or “reality”. Attitudes function to support these dominant discourses and not only support, but certainly also to maintain and sustain them.

- **Self-expression and self-identity**

Attitudes will serve our basic and central value and belief systems. This is self-explanatory in the light of what was already said from social constructionist, narrative thought. We are active participants in our stories and the creation thereof, and our attitudes help us to affirm the constructed self-in-story. Greider (2012:452) reminds of the diversity found in these selves and “lived experiences”:

... a reality that has remained in the background in Christian practical theology: the persons, families, and communities practical theologians seek to serve have identities that are religiously multifaceted ... weighted by histories, futures, meanings, commitments, joys, and suffering shaped by religious multiplicity.

He writes (2012:453-454) that some Christians approach those with different religions “... with attitudes ranging from disinterest of the privileged to the suspicion of the endangered”. These types of attitudes may be underlying those with different religious selves and identities.

- **Self-esteem**

Self-esteem and egos are boosted by the belief that the attitudes held are the “right” ones, the ones that intelligent, cultivated, sensitive people should hold. Expressing these views sometimes helps these people to feel superior to others (Baron and Byrne 2003:126). It is exactly this superiority, I believe, which leads to abusing power in our churches. Those who hold “right” attitudes, from which “right” behaviours flow, are holier, more spiritual, more welcome to linger in the system longer, as opposed to those with the “wrong” attitudes and behaviours, who are of lesser value in the functioning (and maintenance) of the system. Greider’s (2012:452-454) arguments in the previous section are also relevant here. The sense and attitude of superiority and rightness held with regards to

one's own religious self and identity make for a self-esteem which may contribute to harmful attitudes in the church.

Attitudes, and the actions and behaviours accompanying them serve, affirm and confirm that the created reality and dominant discourses we hold onto are indeed more “true”, “right” and “good” than any other. Being part of the “best”, “superior” or “better” builds self-esteem, and this needs to be confirmed and affirmed.

- **An “impression motivation function”**

By holding the “right” attitudes and views, and acting upon them, we impress others. I believe this is probably an answer to why abusive attitudes continue and why there are not more who stand up and act against them. Arguments will be strong and many to support what are believed to be more impressive in a certain context or audience. For example, even the most abusive behaviours can and will be defended if the audience needs to be impressed, as perceived by those who need to impress – I believe the perception can exist that to be accepted into a system one has to make sure that the decision-makers and power-holders are impressed.

This is probably the attitudes referred to from a social constructionist narrative perspective, which speaks of a sense of superiority with regards to what forms part of dominant stories or discourses held.

Prejudice and discrimination are driven and kept alive by attitudes held onto stubbornly, which, when we consider the above, are almost never consciously questioned, challenged and searched for the rationality behind the values and beliefs held.

Le Pierre (1934), according to Baron and Byrne (2003:128), found that people's attitudes are often not correlating with strong attitudes held. In his research, taking a Chinese couple to a whole range of restaurants, hotels, motels and other public places, he found that the Chinese couple was treated very well at all these venues. Afterwards he wrote to these same venues, asking if they would host Chinese people and the answer from more than 90% was a

resounding no (Baron and Byrne 2003:128-129). It was, however, found later that under certain conditions overt behaviour corresponds strongly with attitudes held. Reasons for non-correspondence:

- **Situational factors**

Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) and Fazio and Roskos-Ewoldson (1994) attribute non-correspondence between attitudes and behaviour to “situational constraints” (Baron and Byrne 2003:130). For example, instead of addressing an issue, which we sense, feel or believe may sour atmosphere, relationships or situations in general, we rather withhold action which would be congruent with our attitudes held.

Another situational factor, say Baron and Byrne (2003:130) is, as I understand it to mean, that people with similar attitudes seem to flock to places where the attitudes can flourish. They say that we tend to prefer situations in which we will be free to express our attitudes congruently. In other words, what the above affirms is that situations can shape behaviour, and behaviour and attitudes in turn determine which situations are entered. Social context then, is playing an important role in attitude and behaviour congruence.

Does this mean that altered stories can be brought about by the perceived effect of an attitude on the relationships at hand? I find this very useful and significant in the context of bringing about change in harmful or abusive attitudes and stories.

The possibility exists that one can be caught up in a whole community of “stories” and “discourses” which are harmful and hurtful. The opposite, of course, is also true: it is possible to find oneself in a community of dominant stories and realities which affirm and confirm identity, self and story. One can therefore still be part of constructing a workable story.

- **Aspects of attitudes themselves**

Baron and Byrne (2003:130) list three important aspects of attitudes which, according to them, affect the link between passionate action and attitude. These

are firstly “attitude origins” which refers to the connection between direct experience and attitude. Attitudes which originated based on direct experience impact overt behaviour.

Attitudes which were shaped as described above in social situations, and interactions can be so experiential that they are difficult to even think about as something created and thus subject to change. The overt behaviours will therefore be influenced more by these stronger experienced “realities” and “stories”. In a culture, for example, where one race or gender is seen as inferior, to another, the behaviours in that culture could possibly be driven by negative attitudes towards certain races and genders, as seen in the narratives quoted earlier.

Secondly, “attitude strength”, in other words, the stronger the conviction about the importance and validity of the assumptions, the more likely to overtly act on the attitude held. “Strength” in turn has to do with intensity (the strength of the emotional reaction), importance (how much and deeply the individual cares about something, and how it personally affects the individual, in other words the vested interest – how much is at stake?), knowledge (how much is known about the topic), accessibility (how easily the attitude comes to mind).

Once again, stronger emotions are held with regard to dominant discourses, because these discourses are held as superior, better, crucially significant in any specific context, truer than any other form of knowledge or belief and, of course, in light of all these, very easily accessible as “the one and only truth”. No selection process needs to guide the process when there’s only one “truth” or “reality” or “story” respectively.

Thirdly, “attitude specificity” (the extent to which the attitude is focused on specific situations, objects or people as opposed to general ones). When an attitude toward a certain gender in a specific context, for example, the submissive position of women in the church of God (as a “law” of God), this will influence behaviour much strongly than in, for example, a book club meeting when women are perceived to take an “unbiblical” role.

Baron and Byrne (2003:132) use religion and church as examples here, which is relevant for this study: how important, for example, is it that one attends services every week (twice, three times, four times a week)? If one is passionate about this, behaviour will be impacted by it. What, for example, if someone else is not as passionate because of different socialization and consequential beliefs regarding church attendance. From the previous discussion one can just imagine how different attitudes can lead to experiences of abuse.

Reflection on how and why these attitudes influence the behaviour of people will give further enlightenment regarding the persistence of behaviours which hurt others.

- **Behaviour**

Ajzen and Fishbein's (1991) theory of planned behaviour, according to Baron and Byrne (2003:133) describes the "how" of behaviour following on attitudes as a rational process in which behaviour options are considered, consequences or outcomes of each are evaluated, and a decision is reached to act or not to act. This they term "behavioural intentions" which are reliable indicators and predictors of particular actions in particular situations. This theory holds that intentions are determined firstly by attitudes (positive or negative evaluations of the behaviour's potential positive or negative consequences) towards a particular behaviour; secondly, by subjective norms, that is, perceptions regarding the positive or negative approval of the particular behaviour by others; and thirdly, "perceived behavioural control": judgement of one's ability to perform the behaviour. I will use one of the scenarios in one of our narratives in Chapter 3 as an example of the praxis of this theory.

Should one assume that the woman in charge of the vocalists, for example, instead of telling the narrator that she simply does not like her voice or that she shouldn't continue to sing in the worship team, may have used the smokescreen that the narrator had a "choral voice", which was not suited to a worship team and could therefore not be considered for the worship team

anymore. How was this belief constructed or was it constructed out of lack of something else to offer?

In application of the theory the question arises: how and why the choice of behaviour? Suppose she wanted to remove the narrator from the worship team. She may have considered as overt action the mere kicking off of the narrator from the worship team. Her attitude towards this choice of behaviour may have been negative (it may yield negative consequences for her – she may be seen as unchristian and unloving by others, which may result in unpleasant consequences in herself - guilt feelings, for instance - and relationally or otherwise (her power position may be under threat). So she chooses to use the “nicer option” smokescreen that the narrator had to be left out of the worship team (after nine years of involvement!) because of the unsuitability of her “choral voice”.

The subjective norms filter through in the assumption that the people who matter (whose opinions she values) in the church will approve of this behaviour choice. She chooses this behaviour because she believes she is capable and able to get away with this, and could readily do this (she has the support of the [powerful] pastor involved). On the other hand, if she believed that this behaviour would result in painful experiences for her or met with disapproval with people she values, or that she would not be able to get away with this because she would have trouble finding powerful (expert) support for her behaviour, she would probably not act on the behaviour intention.

Behaviour choice (treatment of and actions towards other church members) thus depends on attitude towards a behaviour (enjoyable/unenjoyable, pleasant/unpleasant, beneficial/harmful, and so on), subjective norms (friends or members’ perceived approval), and perceived control (whether it would be possible to get away with it and whether they would be able to actually execute it).

Should this woman’s attitude towards her choice to remove the narrator be negative (it would somehow be harmful to herself, or her position) and she believed her behaviour would be disapproved of by the rest of the worship

leadership team, she would, I argue and safely deduce, probably refrain from her actions in question. Similarly, if she perceived that she would not be able to get away with the execution of or be able to carry out the actions (possibly because she would encounter an obstacle, because of justice being upheld in the church by whatever means), she may have acted differently on her negative attitude towards the narrator – hopefully, in a less abusive hurtful way.

Ajzen and Fishbein's (1991; cf Baron and Byrne 2003:133) theory of planned behaviour refers to instances where one has some time to contemplate one's choice of action (Baron and Byrne 2003:134). Baron and Byrne refer to Fazio (1989) and Fazio and Roskos-Ewoldson (1994) whose "attitude-to-behaviour process model" explains the process like this:

Some event activates an attitude; the attitude, once activated, influences our perceptions of the attitude object. At the same time, our knowledge about what's appropriate in a given situation (our knowledge of various *social norms* – rules governing behaviour in a particular context) is also activated ...Together, the attitude and this previously stored information about what's appropriate or expected shape our definition of the event. This perception, in turn, influences our behaviour.

(Baron and Byrne 2003:134)

The example of Narrative 4 above, from this theoretical approach, may look something like this: the narrator's voice, during the audition, is not liked by the woman in question (negative attitude activated). The dislike (negative attitude) influences her perception of the narrator's ability to sing in a certain acceptable way (social norms, for instance, "voices should be like this/that in a church worship team") Together, the dislike and the rule about what voices should sound like in a church worship team (in her case definitely not "choral") influences her (what is experienced by the narrator as abusive) behaviour and actions.

The discussion on attitudes and the theories above bring me to a deeper reflection on prejudice and discrimination as the behaviour outflows of attitudes (mostly negative) held.

However, even positive intentions do not necessarily guarantee positive outcomes. Moschella (2012:224) points out the gaps that between theology and practice: “Even when people of faith attempt to do good, or to ‘practice what they preach,’ their practices, attitudes, and actions, when studied closely, tend to reveal gaps between the group’s stated theologies and its way of life”. She then goes on to illustrate the lack of love shown to some types or categories of people in spite of the church’s proclamation of love for all. There seems to be a discrepancy between values, attitudes and actions, which may explain some experiences of abuse in the face of expectations based on the group’s professions.

4.5.2 Prejudice and discrimination

Prejudice is defined by Baron and Byrne (2003:209) as “an attitude (usually negative) toward the members of some group, based solely on their membership in that group”. Many of these attitudes are irrational and can be beneficial for those holding these views (2003:215). Perpetrators of evil and destructive behaviour and intent, use “demonization”, according to Baron and Byrne (2003:216). The spiritually abusive legalistic attacks as described by Johnson and Van Vonderen (1991:31) are often based on such demonization of others to justify the hurtful and harmful behaviour and actions towards others whom they perceive as enemies to their culture, cause, or religion.

From a social constructionist narrative perspective this usually negative attitude toward others is usually held toward those whose “realities” do not correlate to those of the prejudiced. The reference to these attitudes as irrational is significant in the sense that it highlights the human error component (also realities, stories and any belief constructions) as part of our attitudes held and also that our constructions are dynamic and not static. They can be changed from a position of being irrational to being closer to an agreed rational.

Gadamer's (1979:274-276; 333-341) view is that prejudices are shaped in history and context, and that Scripture is read and interpreted through the eyes of the prejudices of the reader's own time and context and critical confrontation between text and own prejudices is the result. Gadamer's assertion is that prejudices are not necessarily negatively held views, but rather preferred understandings and descriptions which can only take place through the medium of language (Gadamer 1979:325-341).

In Narrative 1, the narrator writes about his sense of being labelled "troublemakers" in their church. Could this be what is meant by demonization? By demonizing those who question and attempt to protect, unjust and abusive behaviours can thus be justified. Andrews (2012:405) refers to the "evil-ification" between religions and writes: "This climate breeds further restrictive practices and incursions ... In short, the preservation of dominance propagates a culture of denying rights and refusing moral, social, or religious responsibility for marginalization or unjust practices".

Prejudice may, however, be subtle and not always explicitly evil (Gadamer 1979:274-276; 333-341) but may simply come in the form of foreknowledge. It may further simply manifest in a focus on age difference, occupation, gender, being overweight, or maybe different interpretations of Scripture as described by Gadamer.

Social constructions are often the preconceived, untested, unexamined ideas held about what is "wrong" (views of superior knowledge, according to Gergen 2001:1-4) leading to attitudes and actions towards others which affects others injuriously and detrimentally. In other words, they also take the shape of prejudices.

Smith (1982:172-174) contends: that "particular power arrangements and relational patterns of discrimination" are relational ways in which dominant oppressive structures pass on discrimination from generation to generation. Discrimination, according to Baron and Byrne (2003:209), refers to the negative actions towards those who are the targets of prejudices. Wordiq.com describes "invidious discrimination as the unfair or unequal behaviour towards and

treatment of another individual or group based on among others, preference, sex, gender or other differences. Ramsay (2012:186) refers to what Smith (1982:172-174) has to say about power arrangements and relational patterns of discrimination as being "... at the expense of those it constitutes as marginal – psychically as well as materially – as it also privileges others. This relational process can be so powerful that it can even be legalized, such as Andrews (2012:403) refers to in her discussion on theological responses to race and racism. The blind eye of the apartheid South-African church De Gruchy protests against (1986:33) can possibly be described as such powerful discriminatory patterns passed on relationally.

It is clear from the discussion above about attitudes, prejudice and discrimination, that different realities and stories, passed on through the language medium established on common ground (see Gadamer's (2004:xvii;117;118) *Vermittlung*. Language, according to Ricoeur (1976:12) is seen as discourse (see also Pieterse 2010:4). These realities and stories, what in social constructionist language can be termed dominant or grand discourse or narratives, can lead to negative attitudes, prejudice and discrimination.

This also explains why most of these actions by those who hold negative attitudes and prejudices, are not "evil" in essence, but are more often than not based on genuine beliefs about what is good, true, real and good reality and story – mostly untested and unchecked.

4.6 Effects and symptoms of abuse in the church

When people are at the receiving end of the abusive or harmful attitudes, they are impacted in a variety of ways. Stanco (1985:20) identifies the effects of abuse as follows:

- **It is accepted as normal**

When people know nothing different, how they are treated and what happens to them is accepted as part of life and of being human. When an individual has, for example, been exposed to incest from a very young age, she sees being abused

sexually as part of being human or a woman. Stanco (1985:20) refers to what I shall call “conditioning” of women for their role in society: “By age 5 or so, she is also likely to have acquired many of the ingredients which make up the ideal female temperament of a female in today’s society which she is expected to exhibit adeptly to others ... she is helpful, nurturant, supportive, loving ... as part of the pink world, incestually assaulted children learn that their female role also entails sexual availability to men”.

The sexual abuse does not stop with the men in sexually abused children’s lives, whose role is really to protect, but continues in future generations because they are comfortable in the conditioned (socially constructed and normalized) role of being used sexually for a man’s pleasure or for any other individual’s pleasure. This means living with what Stanco describes as “terror”, which is the result of a constant state of anxiety, coupled with the unpredictability of the next sexual intrusion and the form it would take. Stanco (1985:22) mentions some of what the victims of these forms of abuse share: “confusion, shame, humiliation, powerlessness”.

Stanco writes this about women, but I believe it is applicable to both males and females who were sexually abused. As the narratives in Chapter 3 also show, confusion, shame, humiliation, powerlessness, and even other painful emotions and experiences, are also not only limited to sexual abuse, but to every one of the stories of experienced abuse told in Chapter 3 by the research participants. This becomes the norm for these individuals coming from abusive backgrounds. I say abusive backgrounds because I also believe that it is true of all kinds of abuse. It becomes normal to be treated in this way. This can possibly explain why so many individuals who are abused stay in those systems and are not even aware that they are being abused.

In the church, having been raised in especially patriarchal churches which allow the pastors or leaders to humiliate, in some cases even sexually abuse and behave in similar abusive ways, some of us accept these behaviours as normal. Westfield (2008:71; cf McGill 2009:107) in her work on religious education by Black Female Professors, argues that “... when Black women use their power ...

to teach other Black women and Black children to be subservient to men, to favour male domination, to submit without question to male authority, abuse, and exploitation ... Black Patriarchy is very much alive in these women". These women educators, it can be deduced, have normalized and internalized patriarchal views and practices, and are contributing to the phenomenon in religious education of female theologians.

From a social constructionist perspective, what is described above is the social construction of an abusive "reality" which becomes "truth" and the "dominant story" of the victim. It beautifully describes how the dominant story/reality/truth is created in social interactions and relationship in a childhood home. The creation of the childhood home story becomes part of the creation of the future reality of the victim because it is so "normal" and the only "reality" which the victim knows and understands and feels comfortable in. Mitchem (2002:x) even refers to this as "embedded theologies" (cf McGill 2009:107).

- **Abuse causes people to withdraw from activities or leave the church**

Silence is the typical result of the above. The terror, shame, humiliation, and powerlessness in the face of whole societies that look the other way, lead to a blocking out of memory of children who are victims of incest. I believe this is the case in the church as well. Being labelled as "liberal", "feminist" (in a system where feminism is clearly portrayed in negative terms and unbiblical), "trouble-maker", "disrespectful", causes people to swallow and go along with the unequal, abusive treatment in patriarchal churches out of fear of the shame, humiliation and powerlessness that are the effects of abuse. Johnson and Van Vonderen (1991:53; 214) share their counselling experiences with many in the church facing the dilemma of staying or leaving.

Women are seen as "proper women" when they submit to the men in their contexts (McGill 2009:107). Others are seen as "good servants" or "good Christians" showing humility by their submission and acceptance of the abusive behaviours (Westfield 2008:71). Asking questions or wanting to be treated as equals comes with the label "rebel", "troublemaker", "disobedient" (Johnson and

Van Vonderen 1991:18; 78), in other words, not complying and not fitting. For many the best option in this abusive situation is silence or leaving the abusive situation.

The result of the above-mentioned silence and withdrawal is that the abuse of others can continue uninterrupted, or is hidden from higher bodies including the church. It also remains undiscovered, just like incest which is kept secret (Stanco, 1985:25; cf Johnson and Van Vonderen 1991:140). It does however continue to hurt the victims and their future families or relationships. Similarly, the individual who leaves the church silently, trying to suppress or block out the hurt (often referred to as “forgiving and forgetting” because that is the Christian thing to do), will go on to the next church with unresolved issues, causing further difficulty in these new relationships.

Edleson and Tolman (1992:7) report that the effects of abuse take the form of both increased physical illness (Johnson and Van Vonderen 1991:188) and emotional problems among women and child victims. Van Vonderen in Johnson and Van Vonderen describe the link between, for example, anorexia and sexual abuse (1991:223). It is the emotional problems, such as suicidal thoughts, guilt and depression, that are equally devastating. According to Edleson and Tolman (1992:8) a positive correlation was found between verbal abuse (psychological maltreatment) and depression by Straus, Sweet, and Vissing (1989). Children observing abuse were found to experience “lower levels of social competency, lower academic achievement, and a variety of emotional problems including depression, suicidal behaviour, and insomnia”.

Herman (1992:33) contends that the common denominator of psychological trauma is a feeling of “intense fear, helplessness, loss of control, and threat of annihilation”. Similarly, in the case of the church, there is a fear to re-connect with another church or to be exposed to similar treatment in the next church. Herman (1992:34) argues that: “Traumatic reactions occur when action is of no avail”.

Post Traumatic Stress usually occurs after an event experienced as overwhelming or life-threatening, in which the individual’s resource pool was not

sufficient to deal with the situation. The event is usually one in which the individual experienced fear, helplessness, or even horror. Typical symptoms are flashbacks, intrusive thoughts, dreams or nightmares, avoidance of reminders of the event, certain numbing of emotions and senses. Many of these can lead to interpersonal relationship difficulties, which may further traumatize the individual (Barlow and Durand 2009:152-153; cf Zehr 1999:139-141).

Victimization is often devastating and affects many areas of one's life (Zehr 1999:138-139). Zehr confirms: "Seemingly minor offenses can be deeply traumatic, even life-altering". He explains that the anger and anguish felt, as well as the pain experienced, are often exacerbated by the belief (social construction?) that "... pain is a bad thing. For Christians, moreover, pain often represents failure: a failure of faith, a failure of God's presumed control over the world" (Zehr 1999:138). The overwhelming traumatic symptoms felt are believed to be a failure to love and forgive as Christ commanded. These experiences and the beliefs that underlie the way they are dealt with in the church, often result in a form of traumatic stress.

Apart from the emotional effects, individuals often face tremendous spiritual effects and challenges. The following struggles victims of spiritual abuse experienced were identified by Johnson and Van Vonderen (1991:41-49):

- a distorted image of God (cf Louw 1999:1-15 on suffering people's questioning and images of God);
- a distorted self-identity of oneself as a Christian (cf Louw 1999:1-2; 14; 47; Graham 2012:197);
- problems relating to spiritual authority (cf Graham 2012:414-415);
- difficulty with the "grace" concept (Johnson and Van Vonderen 1991:46);
- difficulty in the area of personal boundaries, an unclear understanding of "death to self" teachings and "rights" (cf Graham 2012:197; 414-415);
- difficulty with personal responsibility;

- suffering from a lack of living skills;
- difficulty admitting the abuse (cf Zehr 1999:139);
- difficulty with trust (cf Zehr 1999:139).

4.7 Profile of the abuser

The purpose of looking at a possible profile of what can be viewed as abusive personalities is on the one hand to allow for a more pro-active and “hands-on” approach in the prevention of abuse in the church. How this can be achieved will be explored and discussed in later chapters. Are there recognizable qualities inherent in those who seek power and control over those around them? Edleson and Tolman (1992:37-46) describe some such possible qualities. These include:

- **Behavioural deficits**

Generally assertiveness deficiency was confirmed by much research over a number of years. The more specific deficit was found by Maiuro, Cahn and Vitaliano (1986:279-289) to be that batterers could effectively defend their rights and territory, but had difficulty expressing their desires in a socially appropriate manner. This goes along with possible greater feelings of “loss of personal control and more vulnerability to rejection when attempting to express their needs”. They have a greater need for power than men without relationship problems. Edleson and Tolman (1992:37-46) say that this suggests that abusive men may view intimate relationships with women not only as dangerous but as uncontrollable, which may lead to extreme anxiety and anger. They therefore have high power needs but low verbal assertion which does not allow them to satisfy their power needs verbally, which leads to violent (and I believe any other form of abusive) behaviour. Johnson and Van Vonderen (1991:107) explain this type of church leadership as posturing spiritual power rather than real spiritual authority. They further describe these abusive leaders as having a “maddening attitude” (1991:113-114).

- **Depression**

Empirical evidence suggests that depression is a factor for men who batter, often related to the consequences of their abusive behaviour, but also possibly of a longer standing sort (Edleson and Tolman 1992:37-39, 42).

- **Hostility**

Research indicates that men who are physically abusive are more likely to feel angry in conflict situations or relationship anxiety situations than men who choose not to act violently (Edleson and Tolman 1992:39;41). They may have difficulty expressing and labelling any other emotions other than anger. An over-labelling of any type of negative affectivity as anger is likely. Self-generated anger is often used as a rationalization for the abusive behaviour.

- **Alcohol and drug abuse**

Chronic alcohol or drug abuse is a good predictor of abusive behaviour (Edleson and Tolman 1992:36;42).

- **Sex roles and attitudes**

Abusive men see themselves as low in masculinity and low in positive traits stereotypically associated with both sexes. Abuse bolsters their masculine self-images (Edleson and Tolman 1992:40). Also negative attitudes towards women that are promoted culturally contribute to women abuse. Hostility and negativity to women come out in subtle as well as not so subtle ways.

- **Psychopathology**

Not all abusers have psychological problems, but a large part of those receiving treatment have been diagnosed with psychological disorders, especially substance abusers (Edleson and Tolman 1992:41, cf Roy 1982:231). Research of Hastings and Hamberger (1986) identified three major subgroup profiles:

- **Borderline personality disorder**

Individuals who are a-social, withdrawn, moody, and hypersensitive to interpersonal slights. These individuals are viewed by others as volatile and over-reactive. They can be calm one minute and extremely angry the next. High levels of anxiety, depression, and alcohol problems are typical of this group.

- **Narcissistic and anti-social personality disorders**

Persons who are self-centred and use others to meet their needs, and only reciprocate when it is to their advantage. They insist on their perceptions, values and rules being accepted by others. Hesitation to respond to the self-centred demands violates the sense of entitlement to be treated according to their standards, and they respond with threats and aggression.

- **Dependent/compulsive personality disorder**

The last profile is that of *rigid, tense individuals* who are passive and ingratiating and are typical of *dependent/compulsive personality disorder*. They lack self-esteem and have a strong sense of need for one or a few significant others. Rebellious hostile feelings can result from a failure to meet these needs. They have low anger levels and moderate depression.

4.8 A social constructionist reflection

4.8.1 Abuse – a socially constructed concept

Abuse as phenomenon and concept, from a social constructionist perspective, is also socially constructed (Gergen 2009:170-173). Abuse, as experienced by any individual, is, as experience, unique to each individual and has socio-cultural, relational, environmental undertones. The accounts of experienced abuse in the narratives studied in this work, are thus seen as each individual's unique truth. This means it is treated as equal to any other person's truth, whether the two "truths" are directly opposite and different from one another. What is important is that social constructionists respect and accept other "truths".

4.8.2 Essentialism

Essentialism is a way of thinking about “truth”, “right and wrong” and “reality” in contexts such as the church. The modernist (scientific) approach to observable objective truths as transcendental, superior to experienced, subjective truth is an essentialist approach. Gergen (2001:196) speaks about a superior morality assigned to these transcendental truths. In order for this work to have an impact in any way, questions need to be addressed;

... we find our major challenge today is that of conflicting moralities. By what means can we now go on satisfactorily together – living side by side with those whose visions of the good are, for us, a form of hell? ... in light of the anti-foundationalist thrust of constructionist reasoning, there is reason to avoid transcendental warrants for particular kinds of conversation. And, given arguments for the use-based character of meaning, there is little desire to generate abstract, context free ‘rules for good conversations’ ... the practices of particular concern to morality are those relevant to sustaining constructive processes of meaning-making in the face of difference.

(Gergen 2001:196)

From this social constructionist perspective, room should be created and left and a tolerance developed for different realities and truths and rights and wrongs, dependent on different histories, backgrounds, contexts, times about truth and the discovery thereof.

In narrative one the narrator claims that in one of the churches it is written in the constitution that different interpretations of Scripture are a member’s right, but at the same time “unspoken rules” about the ways Scripture should be interpreted are enforced on members, such as women’s roles in the church and

in their marriage, charging monies and the double standards at play in the enforcement of these interpretations.

This is not about relativism. It is about openness to the beliefs of others, holding them in the same regard as one's own beliefs. Again, this is not an openness to anything and everything. It is about an opening up to the possibility that interpretation is a human activity which can be erroneous, or that there are two ways to understand and make sense of one "truth" is not an impossibility. It is about a humble entering into discussion about our beliefs. Beliefs are thus the starting point for all of us.

People in the church experience abuse – seemingly on an ongoing basis. It is not something somewhere in history which we are considering here. The narratives in Chapter 3 revealed that people currently experience hurt in the church.

Works exist addressing the abuse of power in the church: Johnson and Van Vonderen (1991) write about the subtle power of spiritual abuse; Poling 1991 considers the abuse of power as a theological problem; Tracy (2005) considers the process of healing and forgiveness as a consequence of abuse from a biblical perspective; Van Vonderen (2008) considers the individual trauma of dealing with hurt experienced in the church at the hands of the church. Unfortunately the abuse of power mostly written about, especially in church settings, is mainly of a sexual nature.

That abuse may take place in subtle forms is underrepresented in what is written in this regard. Van Vonderen (2008) and Johnson and Van Vonderen (1991) write about and attempt to address these subtle forms of abuse. The subtleties can take the form of hurtful use of power and authority, exclusion, different treatment of individuals based on, among other things, race, gender, sexual orientation, intellect, social status and wealth.

Abuse is often the result of attitudes, prejudices and discrimination, based on different "realities", constructed in the past by a variety of individuals, even more so in modern times with globalization (Gergen 2001:185-197) and the forced interaction of people from across the globe with a variety of histories, and

backgrounds, presenting in the shapes of “realities”, “stories” and “discourses”, each as “true”, “real” and “good” in the eye of the beholder. When this is not understood and tolerated, abuse and experiences of abuse are the unwanted outcomes, which I propose may be one of the reasons for the experiences of the church as unable to provide answers and meet the needs of people.

4.8.3 Spirituality

In Chapter 2 I applied sociological (the contextual issues pastoral counselling attempts to address) theorization on how behaviours and patterns of behaviour become part and parcel of societal structures and the individuals who form part thereof: in this case the church. I see the age-old and ongoing sociological debate about agency versus structure, as discussed in detail in Chapter 2, as holding some explanation and answers to abuse in the church.

The debate has been about whether societies/structures form and change individuals or whether individuals affect, shape and change societies and societal structures. Social constructionist thought is specifically concerned with individuals in social interactions participating in shaping their world, in this case the church world. On the other hand, social constructionism assumes that the church (social context) shapes individuals’ experiences of “reality” and the “world” and “spirituality”.

Ling (2006:2) contends that texts “... presuppose and encode information regarding the social world in which they were produced”. Renita Weems (1995:39) writes about the fact that the social context and the social rules shape language in her book about Old Testament prophets’ use of language and specifically “metaphors” of sex, violence and brutality specifically with regard to women and their bodies.

Is it necessary to think about abuse in these terms? Should we embark on what Ling argues for: an attempt to interpret texts providing some means of revealing and discriminating differences between a current context and that of the authors or objects to be interpreted, which is the ancient world;

Only those who had a certain relationship to power could appreciate some of the assumptions embedded in the metaphor. That is, the metaphor expected its audience to sympathize with the rights and responsibilities that came with power and to understand the threat that women could pose to male honor.

(Weems 1995:41)

Rosemary Reuther (1998:20) reflects as follows on the work of Jesus in Pauline writings:

... a reversal of the patterns of social discrimination in both Jewish and Greek cultures, which prized the superiority of one's ethnicity, Jew or Greek, as well as maleness and free status, at the expense of women, slaves and other ethnic groups. This is found in Greek philosophical formulas in which a man thanks the gods that he was born Greek and not barbarian, male and not female, free and not slave, and Jewish religious formulas where a man thanks God that he was born Jew and not Greek, male and not female, free and not slave.

Reuther argues that the claim of some Christians that "in Christ" these divisions are overcome suggests that the fall is spiritually overcome. It also suggests, according to Reuther (1998:20), a new (reconstructed construct?) which has "potentially upsetting social consequences for life in the Christian community ...". What are the "upsetting consequences" she speaks of here? Could it be what is written about in this work; namely relational issues, such as abusive experiences and practices?

The way, then, that we read and interpret Scripture can be conducive to abusive attitudes, behaviours and actions. The way we have been socialized and conditioned around Scripture, may lead to attitudes, prejudices and

discrimination against some people and groups or some realities and stories which are different from our own interpretations

4.9 Summary

In this section I discussed abuse as described in the literature, focusing on attitudes, prejudice and discrimination. These are usually strongly rooted in socially constructed realities taking the shape of grand narratives or dominant discourse. Abuse was reflected upon as an outcome of social constructionist explanations of especially dominant narratives with their dominant discourses, which are imposed on others without prior reflection on their origin or the origin of the discourse and narrative of others. I finally offered a brief reflection on the New Testament characters of Jesus and Paul and their approach to so-called solidly held beliefs birthed in their history.

CHAPTER 5

A PSYCHO-SOCIO-RELIGIOUS REFLECTION

5.1 An ecclesial perspective

Collins wrote the quote below more than 20 years ago about the seemingly sad condition of the church and the potential it holds. He went on to say that the local churches can provide believers and members with a sense of belonging, support the weak, support and bring healing to the troubled, and guide people in decision-making and growth toward maturity (Collins 1988:20). Rather significant issues from a practical theological perspective. He bemoans, in accordance with the narratives contained in Chapter 3, that:

... many contemporary churches seem to be little more than listless groups of rigid people who never admit to having needs or problems, who attend uninspiring services out of habit ... for many people the church is largely meaningless, not very helpful, and far from the dynamic growth-producing fellowship that Christ intended it to be.

(Collins 1988:20-21)

Collins is not the only author painting such a bleak picture of the church. Dreyer (2009:428) argues that the church finds itself in crisis worldwide.

Heitink (2007:20-21) sees the church in a similar light and calls for an urgent reorientation (2007:40). A variety of metaphors are used in Scripture (see Heitink 2007:26-28) to depict the church, for example “God’s people underway”, the “body of Christ”, the “temple of the Holy Spirit” and the “bride of Christ” (Heitink 2007:26-28). None of these, including “the church of the Lord”, as

explained by Heitink (2007:25) bear any resemblance to stagnancy or the condition of the church described above (see also Dreyer 2009:428-429).

The characteristics of the church, according to Heitink (2007:28-32) are:

- Holiness (“*Heiligheid*”): the church is separated unto God, not separated from the world, but finding itself in the world, temporary and focused on God’s future. This is about the partaking of Christ’s holiness (Heitink 2007:29-30). This has to do with a sanctification of one’s whole life (culture) (Heitink 2007:32).
- Unity (“*Eenheid*”): This is a unity which distinguishes the church as united in spite of differences (Heitink 2007:30), acceptance of diversity. This, according to Heitink (2007:32) has to do with “... de opbouw van de kerk (leiding)”.
- Catholicism (“*Katholiciteit*”): Heitink (2007:30-31) summarizes: “De kerk is alomvattend ... van alle tijden, alle plaatsen en kent allerlei belevingen en culturen ... open voor de vragen en noden van heel de mensheid en mag zich nooit in eighen isolement terugtrekken ... gedwongen over de eigen grenzen van natie, ras, taal stand, sekse, leeftijd heen te kijken ... verschillen tussen mensen mogen geen doorslaggevende rol spleen”. This, according to Heitink (2007:32), refers to “... een grenzen overschrijdende wijze van geloven (identiteit)”.
- Apostolicity (“*Apostoliciteit*”): The foundation of the church is the work of the apostles (Heitink 2007:31), with the consequence that the teachings of the apostles become central. Heitink explains: “Zo ontstond een kerk die getuigend en dienend in de samenleving wilde staan en heldere taal sprak, ook op politiek en maatschappelijk terrain. Vandaag verbinden we apostolaat liver met presentie en diaconaat”. Heitink (2007:32) explains this as “... het gezonden zijn in de wereld (werkkracht)”.

According to Collins, the church has begun to fulfil the great commission: “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of

the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19) This is summarized, according to Collins, in Jesus’ teaching of two laws: to love God and to love others (see also Tan 1991:21-22).

The church is where people congregate and where the faithful assemble, according to Nieman (2012:135, cf Heitink 2007:25-26), that is, where people practise their religious activities in community. Religion, for many of us, is about relating and relationship or “communicating” (Hiltner 1958:20; 201). Hiltner wrote (1958:199) that the church is best understood as an “organ or a body (intricate functioning of interconnected parts) ... so functions that it is a mutually supportive part of the body of which Christ is head ...”, basically an “organic metaphor”. Relating, thus, to a loving a superior being, God (Jesus the head) - as Collins mentions above - and others (other similarly minded or hearted individuals), being mutually supportive and interconnected (see also Jenkins 2012:314). Buitendag (2006:351) argues for a departure from a solid church as basically the gathering of the chosen at a specific time and place. Church, he says, is rather a fluid communicative network of relationships.

Nieman (2012:135) argues: “If this is how faithful people assemble, then practical theologians naturally have great interest in the field that attends directly to such gatherings.” Important for the gist of this work is Nieman’s argument that “If religious traditions are being reshaped by adopting congregational forms, though, it is also possible that the nature of congregating could be recast by the new ways those traditions are making use of such gatherings”, in line with Heitink’s argument for reorientation (“*heroriëntatie*”). Greater sensitivity in examining how the vast variety of religious traditions organize and do church is an obligation, says Nieman (2012:135).

We do church and practise our faith, then, in a broader social context. Heitink (1993:18) sees the job of practical theology as the mediation between the Christian faith and the context of modern society. Postmodern society is where the church finds itself. Nieman (2012:135) writes further: “Therefore, giving an accurate account of ordinary lived religion requires congregational studies to

consider the many forces that shape religious identity and behaviour, not simply within but also far beyond the congregation”.

Social constructionist thought, as reflected upon so far, explains this job of mediating and considering shaping forces at hand as a dialectical process between humans, the institution and finally, the social world. We will explore these further in this chapter.

Heitink (2007:356) is, however, of the opinion that the church is an integral part of the continuance and growth of the Christian tradition, which cannot function in this world without the church as social connection and preliminary (voorlopige) embodiment of the kingdom of God in the world as context (cf Venter 2008:26; cf Dreyer 2009:428). Therefore, Heitink calls for a church showing character and reorientating itself (2007:356).

Sadly, dwindling numbers, massive departure of people from the church and the loss of functionality in the world and community demonstrate stagnation and, says Heitink (2007:21) “Waar het aan ontbreekt is visie, beleid en een doeltreffende strategie om het tijd te keren ... self beoordeel ik de huidige toestand van de kerk als ernstig (2007:21).”

Heitink (2007:20-23) ascribes the stagnation and general crisis condition of the church to the theological foundation of the church. Heitink (2007:74-75) argues for a church which develops and realigns its vision through a process of “inculturatie” (inculturation), which has to do with culture (Heitink 2007:19). The church should equip people to be Christians in the world, so that the church can become visible in this way. He also argues for “initiatie” (initiation), which has to do with education (Heitink 2007:19), into the life world of the church (2007:94-116).

Along similar lines of Heitink’s call for re-orientation, Hess (2012:300), contends that “... religious education is the re-asking and the re-engagement of the depth questions a religious tradition has asked”. “Integratie” (integration), which has to do with identity (Heitink 2007:19), is about interconnectedness and mutuality to maintain unity versus power structures which usually attempt to maintain a form of unity in the church (Heitink 2007:117). “Participatie”

(participation), which has to do with membership, should, according to Heitink, be broadened to concentric in and out as well as out and in participation in the world and community where personal faith and a complete yielding to Christ (Heitink 2007:153-169) are the criteria for being part of the church. He argues further for “evangelisatie” (evangelism), which has to do with “werfkracht” (Heitink 2007:19), that is humble, open and inviting versus imposing on others. Heitink (2007:190-195) terms this *diakonia*.

“Congregatie”, another strategy Heitink (2007:226) argues for is about the core of gathering activities as church and has to do with ritual (Heitink 2007:20). The focus should be on the presence of Jesus Christ through his Spirit. Everyone, including children, should participate in the church services, which is still a part of being church. Heitink’s next strategy is “organisatie” (organization), also about guidance (Heitink 2007:20), which should be “Elke pleidooi voor meer gesag van bovenaf moet gepaard gaan met meer democratische bevoegdheden van onderop, geen hiërarchi zonder democratie” (Heitink 2007:294). Finally, Heitink calls for “contemplatie” (contemplation), which is about spirituality (Heitink 2007:20). Contemplatie has to do with the roots, core and heart of the Christian faith. Heitink calls for careful contemplation and a deepening of understanding of the foundations of the Christian faith and life in general (2007:299).

Heitink values the church as institution, but strongly argues for transformation: “Wanneer ik spreek over transformatie kan dat niet anders betekenen dan dat de kerk een radical veranderingsproces moet doormaken om in een postchristelijke tijdperk dienstbaar te kunnen zijn aan ‘die Sache Jesu’” (Heitink 2007:331). It seems that, according to Heitink, there is hope and a definite place and role for the church institution in this postmodern, or what Heitink terms post Christian period, to impact the world and society. Unfortunately it seems that Heitink is of the opinion that this is not going to happen without a reorientation and transformation of the church in all its dimensions (Dreyer 2009:430). Nieman (2012:140) concurs that practical theology can offer awareness of the role of human practices, especially as they

play out in congregated religious life as well as offer “... a rigorous attention ... to discourse native to these assemblies”.

Before reorientation or in social constructionist terms “deconstruction” and “reconstruction”, reflection is necessary (in social constructionist thought) about the church as structure (Gergen 2009:26). Blessing (2010:16-17) reflects on Jesus’ and Paul’s role in the reconstructions, or “redefinitions”, which impact the Christian church today.

The New Bible Dictionary (Douglas et al. 1992:205) describes the word “church” in the bible as having its roots in the Greek adjective *kyriakos* and used in phrases such as *kyriakon dōma* and *kyriakē oikia*, which means “the Lord’s house”. According to Douglas et al. this is “a Christian place of worship”. They further explain that the Greek *ekklēsia* “mostly designates a local congregation of Christians and never a building” and it was most commonly used to refer to a public assembly of citizens duly summoned, which was a common habit of all the cities outside Judea where the gospel was planted (for example, Acts 19:39). It was also commonly used for the “congregation” of Israel which was constituted at Sinai and assembled before the Lord at the annual feasts in the persons of its representative males (Acts 7:38), but in most of the New Testament the church was the local congregation of believers. Douglas et al. continue: “In God’s purpose there is only one church, one gathering of all under the headship of Christ (cf Heitink 2007:25-32). But on earth it is pluriform, seen wherever two or three gather in his name” (Douglas et al. 1992:205). The church from earliest times is essentially social – a social structure.

In the New Testament, “family” or “household of God” is one of the metaphors used when describing the church or gathering of Christians. The social context of the time was a formative influence in the conceptualization of the church. Jesus and later Paul, says Blessing (2010:10) “... were much reviled for restoring the concept of the family of God in its ultimate form”.

Other metaphors like “covenant people”, “body of Christ” and “bride of Christ” are some of the perspectives that are instrumental in the formation of people’s expectations and experiences of the church. Unfortunately, although

these metaphors imply positive ideas, such as dynamic systems, growth and development; the church, according to Browning and Evison (1997:3), is: “At best, ... a ‘treasure in earthen vessels,’ and its adherents have distorted the Christian message throughout its history”.

“Covenant people” is an Old Testament concept with reference to God’s covenant with Noah (Gen 6, 9) and Abram (Gen 12, 15, 17). In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word used for covenant is *beriyth* which refers to the act of entering into contract/agreement by two partners (Douglas et al. 1982:240; cf Blessing 2010:7-8). Technically, when used with the verb *karath* it refers to cutting a covenant. The word *beriyth* is used along with other terms in a covenantal context. These include *aheb* (to love), *hesed* (covenant love/solidarity), *toba* (goodness/friendship), *salom* (covenantal peace/prosperity) and *yada* (to serve faithfully in accordance with the covenant). It is important to note that these terms suppose that a relationship exists. In the New Testament the same *beriyth* is translated as *diatheke*, which means testament (settlement/disposition). Blessing (2010:8) concludes: “The core of covenant is not a set of rituals or legalistically defined actions, but the love of God ... Covenants were an act of creation, and they resulted in unbreakable relationship – not based on punishments or penalties, but on mutual love”.

Arthur (1999:42) writes that, according to Louis Berkhoff, the New Testament use of *diatheke* instead of the usual translation *suntheke* for covenant probably refers to the fact that one of the parties was divine, in this case God. Verbs like *bo* (to come into covenant relationship) in 2 Chronicles 15:12 and *abar* (to enter into the covenant relationship) in Deuteronomy 29:12 are used to indicate the sharing of the people in the covenant (Douglas, JD et al. 1982:240). For the purposes of this work it is this relationship aspect of the covenant, as modelled by God in interaction with the chosen people, Israel, which is of importance for gaining a better understanding of the covenant foundation on which the church and its identity is formed.

The Decalogue begins with ‘I am the Lord your God’ and closes with ‘your neighbour.’ Within those borders, identity is given or made known and a community is formed. This community does not constitute itself, nor does it evolve. It is created in the formality of a covenant agreement between YHWH, the LORD, and the people. In this agreement, each party becomes forever defined in relation to the other (cf Brown 2002:56).

(Miller 2004:53)

The church, then, cannot be discussed or fully understood separate from an understanding of the covenant relationship. Blessing (2010:9) sees the Gospels as “... recapturing the ‘original’ in an important sense; they are the covenant in a nutshell”. Blessing (2010:9) goes on to say that two things are central to and constituting the covenant, namely, “God’s unbidden and unearned provision of well-being on every level, and our freely given response in love for that One who alone has done these things for us”.

In post-exile time especially, the people’s conceptualization of the covenant changed, in response to their social context; legalism was born in an attempt to rid themselves of Babylonian influence, says Blessing (2010:9), with the consequence that the law and legalism substituted the covenant, instead of a re-orientation (Heitink 2007:19-42, cf Dreyer 2009:428-429) or a re-questioning and re-engagement about the depth questions of this crucial part of church tradition (Hess 2012:300) as done by Jesus himself in the New Testament. In the New Testament Jesus confirms the link and subsequent renewal or rather fulfilment of the old covenant with the new covenant.

Why is an understanding of the church as a new covenant people important for this study? It was concluded above that covenant is about relationship. “This community is *constituted* around the issue of relationships and how it is that members of the community are to live their lives together, their conduct toward one another” (Miller 2004:55). The narratives in Chapter 4 show that people experience hurt by the insistence on asserting certain “laws”, like

women who are somehow less than men; church buildings that are treated as holy entities; turning pages while praying. There is a hesitance to question as suggested by Freedman and Combs (1996:40), and the individual, Shepherd Harrison, in Kingsolver's account, sees the question mark as being auctioned off or sold as scrap, whoever questions gets disqualified, and the consequential abolishment of new ideas (Kingsolver 2009:428, cf Hess 2012:300). A seeming unwillingness to listen to the meanings constructed by others, unwillingness to enter into discussion with, to attempt to understand the social worlds in which other "realities" or "truths" were shaped or constructed (see also Hess 2012:300). Miller (2004:54) argues that the focus in the covenant church is on the relationship of the community to the deity which makes it "a more than human fellowship", finding itself on "transcendent ground" and "As such, this community is not self-defining, but other-defined." "There is no ultimate authoritative claim in this community except that of the deity" (Miller 2004:59). The problem is unfortunately that such authoritative claims of humans are the cause of abuse in the church.

Paul, according to Heitink (2007:26), shows the organic connections between the members of the church and the church itself by using the metaphor of the body of Christ. Heitink (2007:26-27) explains: "... een veelkleurig geheel van diensten en gaven, waarvan Christus het hoofd is. De gemeente als lichaam wordt het meest concrete zichtbaar in de avondmaalsgemeenschap ... als beeld van het verbroken lichaam van Christus." (Yorke 1991: xiv) writes that the body (soma) metaphor implies a relationship between the crucified and resurrected body of Christ and the church as body. According to Dreyer (2009:428), this metaphor further implies a theological foundation or position from which stagnation is not possible. The interconnectedness, interdependence and unity of a healthy, well-functioning body with Christ as head seems to imply flexible adaptability to the context and community of which it forms a part.

Tillard (2001:9) argues that, as the members of the body are different (for example, eye and ear, foot and heart), so also do the members of the church differ.

According to Tillard:

The fact that everything is 'of the church', does not mean that everything is uniform, reduced to one expression and one opinion. Both individuals and local churches are led by the Spirit to a deepening and acknowledgement of their specific characters which are therefore made into an asset for the church. It is important to stress this fact.

(Tillard 2001:9)

Heitink (2007:27) also acknowledges the variety and diversity of the church, similar to the parts of a body and points out the ease with which it can tear and fall apart, but not without harming the body, the unity and believability of the church. Yorke (1991:xiv) points out the multi-cultural and multi-racial and gender-related implications of the metaphor. For Heitink (2007:27) this metaphor draws the attention to membership, ritual and guidance as explained in the introduction above. Dunlap (2012:32) writes about healing and asserts: "What is remarkable is that, all over the world and from the very beginning, the advent of any sort of illness in the body of Christ has never been just about the body of a sole individual. It has simultaneously been a call to respond by the company of saints with whom they worship". This is certainly also true for anyone suffering and experiencing hurt in the church.

Often, this body of Christ interconnectedness and interdependence seem to be some of the most misunderstood aspects of the church. In many of our churches, as seen in the narratives in Chapter 4, it can be inferred that the church has lost sight of the role of Christ through the Holy Spirit in its functioning as church. Tillard (2001:5) writes that Paul coins the expression "body of Christ" to "... characterize the community of the unity of life which comes from the Spirit given by Christ ... to receive salvation from God is to be inserted into a body animated by the Spirit of God, the body of Christ, the church". He concludes that

the above implies that reconciliation with God is inseparable from entering into the unity of the other members of the body and is never a one-to-one relationship with God only, but is in relation to as well as in association with, as body parts such as eye and hand are functioning in association with each other.

Some things (such as giftedness) about the church should not be humanly orchestrated, controlled or manipulated. Can this theological misunderstanding be foundational to the pain that so many suffer at the hands of the church, as implicated by Heitink's (2007:25ff) assertion that the metaphors are not in any way compatible with stagnation? It is then, according to Heitink, on a theological foundational level where stagnation finds its roots. Similarly it can then be asserted that being hurt in the church is not compatible with the implied relationships of the body of Christ metaphor. The head of the body, Christ, through the Spirit could and should not guide and lead to abuses of other members or organs of the body.

Yorke (1991:xiv), similarly to Heitink (2007:25-28), refers to the relationship between the body of Christ metaphor and other ecclesiological images found in the New Testament. Heitink (2007:25) concludes: "De kerk ken teen theologisch grondpatroon dat zich moeilik verdraagt met het begrip stagnatie" and then continues to discuss the other metaphors. Yorke (1991:121) further goes on, in concurrence with what Collins (1988:20-21) and Tan (1991:21-22), had to say about the body or "soma" metaphor:

For Paul, the human *soma* provides a rather useful metaphorical backdrop against which to discuss the kind of relationships that should prevail not only among Christians but also between them and Christ Himself.

Yorke (1991:121) continues, with regard to the body of Christ metaphor, that, according to Paul, the church, both local and universal:

- of those given "... the benefits and the blessings of the new age – whether they be Jew or Gentile, male or female, affluent or indigent, slave or free

- has been endowed with diverse gifts each of which, like the limbs of a human body, must be considered necessary but insufficient for both life and growth.
- belongs to Christ and operates through the Holy Spirit, His Spirit
- is “the place where love, unity, equality, purity, peace and truth are ever to abound.”

While Yorke’s summary is one that can easily lead to an uncritical belief that being “body of Christ” is a utopia of members “living happily ever after in perfect union”. Tillard (2001:5-9) succeeds in a reminding of the fact that we are different, as are our gifts. He also focuses attention on the potential problematic and erroneous thinking that “everything should be uniform, reduced to one expression and one opinion”.

Jesus Christ instituted the use of the bread and wine and calls for a remembrance of his body that was broken for the salvation of humanity. Tillard (2001:79) refers to the Church Fathers Augustine, Chrysostom and Cyril, who saw the bread and cup as the focus of “an evangelical communion intended to be realized by gestures, attitudes, feelings of solidarity day in and day out”. He goes on to say that the “members of Christ and the Christian communities among themselves *ought* to live by being *in truth* ‘one heart and one soul,’ one body animated by one *agape*.” The question faced in final conclusion of this discussion is: what can a proper or better understanding of the *soma* metaphor do to improve relationships in the churches of the case studies and also in the church in general?

Graham, Walton and Ward (2005:109-137) refer to a joint or corporate theological reflection as “Writing the body of Christ” (see also Moschella 2012:231). They talk about theological research method, but this could surely be applicable to what others above (Heitink 2007:19-42; Hess 2012:300) referred to as reorientation (“herorientatie”) and a questioning and re-engaging with beliefs, traditions, and rituals. Dunlap (2012:38) quotes the answer of a woman, when asked about the theological basis for Christian care: “I think your job as a

member of the body of Christ is to embody as much of Christ as you can with your actions ... embody in my actions or my attitude what I think Christ teaches.” According to Cooper-White (2012:30) “... our empathic sensitivity and pastoral imagination are sustained by our sense of being held by God’s empowering love and by Christian community as the body of Christ”. In this spirit, and remembering that many longstanding divisions and animosities, including actions and experiences of abuse show misunderstanding and misconduct of being body of Christ, but also in the broader Christian family of God.

In the Old Testament there is no word directly corresponding to the modern English “family”, as consisting of father, mother and children (Douglas et al.1982:370). Close equivalents are firstly *bayit* (house), used to refer to the dwelling of relatives as well as to groups of people, including the large group, “house of Israel” (including the whole nation) (Is 5:7), secondly *mispaha*, as found in Judges which refers to “clan”, being applied to 600 Danites from two villages in Judges 18, and thirdly *sebet* (tribe).

The relationship between God and His family, or “house” as in Isaiah 5 and also the relationships between family members, are relevant for the purposes of this study. Blessing (2010:10) writes: “In the Old and the New Testaments, God’s acts and people’s response to Him *constitute* the family of God.” Blessing shows how problematic relationships in the family of God violate the covenant relationship with God: “In loving-kindness to those family members, we should not be adversaries. If we do violate trust with the family thus understood, we violate the covenant itself.” Loving God finds expression in loving relationship to others with God’s nurturing and grace internalized and lived in relationship with other family members (Blessing 2010:11, see also Nieman 2012:134).

Anderson (2012:64) points out that *love as equal regard* is central to Don Browning’s practical theology of the family. Witte, Green and Wheeler (2007:7) define Browning’s *love as equal regard*: “... willingly and actively striving for the good (the flourishing) of the other”. Anderson (2012:64) warns: “Although seeking the good of the other is essential, it is subordinate to respect for the

other so as to avoid coercion or manipulation”. Witte et al. (2007:252) also remind that this refers to unconditional love. It does not depend on the response of the other (see also Anderson 2012:64). It seems then that this love also doesn’t imply expectations of a blind conformity to anything imposed on other family members. Browning, according to Anderson 2012:64 (cf Witte 2007:252), insists on respect regardless of obstacles and/or resistance.

Greider (2012:459) refers to intrareligious pluralism, referring to differences in interpretation, understanding and practice in Christianity as a whole, rituals, doctrine, theology and so forth, that are within the Christian religious family. In spite of differences, there is only one “family” of God which identifies itself as the Christian Faith.

Greider (2011:119-135) argues for an intrapersonal religious plurality, which she refers to as “multiple religious belonging” and “multireligiosity” (see also Greider 2012:459). Greider means that people engaging in multiple religions at the same time should be given space and acceptance as this is often socialized and inherited in a variety of cultures. What I would like to see is an intrapersonal religious plurality which allows for a variety of personal interpretations within one church community or family instead of using power structures and methods to impose and control knowledge and so-called “truth” on other family members.

Those who come to faith in Christ as their saviour, become “born again”, based on the analogy of the birth of a baby, but this time it is a spiritual birth (see the discussion between Jesus and Nicodemus in John 3 and 1 John 5:1 that says: “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God”). They are new babies brought into the church families and nurtured, fed and trained up in the faith, similar to that which happens in a biological family. These newcomers are often left with promises of the blessings and joys that can be expected on becoming a member of the new family.

The above interaction, as well as the plurality; group and individual differences referred to above by Greider (2011:119ff; 2012:459) resonate with McGrath's (2001:480) interpretation of the church father Augustine:

- the church must expect to find itself including both saints and sinners.
- any attempt at separation in this world is premature and improper as it would take place in God's time.
- the holiness of the church is not holiness of the members but of Christ.
- the church cannot be a congregation of saints in this world, in that its members are contaminated with original sin.

Spiritual newborns arrive in the church family often. Many a parent will confess (shamefully, but true however) that there are times that they wish away a problematic or difficult child. The child undoubtedly still remains theirs and the well-adjusted family with Don Browning's love as equal regard (Anderson 2012:64) will attempt to work out some kind of solution to accommodate the child's personality in the family, leading to intrapersonal plurality (Greiden 2011:119ff) . Calvin is quoted in McGrath as relating the church to a "mother":

I shall begin then, with the church, into the bosom of which God is pleased to gather his children, not only so that they may be nourished by her assistance and ministry while they are infants and children but also so that they may be guided by her motherly care until they mature and reach the goal of faith. For those to whom God is Father, the church shall also be their mother.

(McGrath 2001:484)

According to McGrath, Calvin based this view on the Cyprian maxim: "You cannot have God as your father unless you have the church for your mother". McGrath further quotes Calvin: "There is no other way to life, unless this mother

conceives us in her womb, nourishes us at her breast, and keeps us under her care and guidance.”

On the other hand, it is also true that a child is often born into a dysfunctional family. I believe the same is true for the so-called spiritual family as well. None of the people in the narratives in Chapter 4 expected to find the church family as dysfunctional as it is portrayed in these stories.

Myers (1997:1-47) describes the misconception of the Jewish family as patriarchal in a dominant, sexist way. She believes a better term to describe these families is “androcentric”, based on the determination of the family line through the father and the inheritance usually passed to sons. According to Blessing (2010:14), it was male-centred, and not male-dominated, as they understood God’s initial command to “be fruitful and multiply” as applicable to both male and female. It was rather interdependent and the whole family shared in the responsibilities, including generating an income. Blessing (2010:14) also refers to Myers descriptions and concludes: “Everyone wore the ‘pants’ in the family; all were breadwinners (literally!) Also, everyone had to take responsibility before God and family for the duties that kept the family alive, fed, sheltered, and protected.” If this is so, the current patriarchal approaches and practices have their roots elsewhere.

The New Testament church was eventually, according to Blessing (2010:16) modelled on the family. The perspective of God as our model in dealing with the church as the family of God with God as father, as described in the theological-familial theory of Balswick and Balswick (1999), call for a revisiting of how churches function. According to the social constructionist reflections in Chapter 2 above, it is, among other contexts, greatly within the family, family relationships and interactions that our understanding of family, relationships, self, other, the world, and so on is shaped and constructed.

5.2 A biblical-theological perspective

I referred to Jesus and Paul in Chapter 2 as social constructionists in New Testament times. Hereafter I include a brief discussion as conclusion to this

chapter on Jesus' and Paul's reconstructive impact and influence on the New Testament church.

Jesus and Paul were chosen for this work because of their, what I believe to be "social constructionist", approach in New Testament times. Blessing (2010:15), in concurrence with this view writes: "Jesus redefined family, however, to realign it with the original intent of creation". She argues that Jesus' redefinition "... changed the basic structure of family, and it changed the way that 'family' interacted with the religious family, particularly that of the Jews". Blessing (2010:16) continues this discussion by pointing out that the church was eventually modelled on the family, while, "... under Jesus, family roles are an extension of the family of God, the Church, itself a mirror of creation".

The church was discussed above as "the covenant people". Jesus, according to Blessing (2010:16), primarily intended to restore the covenant to the centre of things. One can then say that Jesus, in true social constructionist fashion, reconstructed the covenant of the law to what Blessing (2010:16) refers to as "the covenant of the heart in each person and each family". This is a radical reconstruction. Jesus redefined family to include spiritual family members. He not only reconstructed, but taught, healed, and equipped them by the empowerment of his Spirit to grow this family along spiritual lines. These spiritual family relations, according to Blessing (2010:16), take precedence before blood relations.

Myers (1997:1-47) contests the popular views of patriarchal domination in Old Testament Jewish thought. Brown (2002:251) quotes Black: "Paul identifies Christians' inspired utterance of "Abba! Father!" as a sign of their adoption by God, right of inheritance, and emancipation from terrified slavery (Rom 8:14-17; Gal 4:3-7) ... Positively put, God's authority as Father resides not in bullying but in trustworthy fidelity".

That the metaphor of God's fatherhood has been perverted into an abusive patriarchy by stupid, insecure Christians can be neither denied nor justified. It is a sin of which the church should repent. That such perversion has stimulated others to find in Christianity

an “abusive theology that glorifies suffering,” predicated on ‘divine child abuse’, is no less foolish or faithless. Of that, too, the church should repent.

(Brown 2002:254)

Black blames these distortions on a “sometimes unspoken anthropocentrism: the projection on to God of humanity’s own puerility, injustice, and selfishness” and reminds of the Gospels’ warning in Matthew 7 and Luke 11 against comparing the fatherhood of God to the fatherhood experienced on earth with our human fathers, who are in spite of all they do for and give their children, evil. Jesus in these Scriptures denounced the Roman view of fatherhood portraying the father as head of the household with unilateral power, allowing him to do whatever he saw fit. Jesus’ redefinition, according to Blessing (2010:17), was functional in that it addressed the problem of the exclusion of the believing Jews from the synagogues and the Roman and societal persecution by providing a “... ‘home’ and a ‘family’, and the certainty of God’s continued affirmation”. They knew they could turn to their spiritual family to have their needs met. They could thrive and bear fruit, with the blood of Jesus as the sap feeding the root and stem, which became the new bloodline for the people of God, according to Blessing (2010:17).

“Spiritual parenting/parenthood” is a Pauline concept in the New Testament. Paul refers, for example, to Timothy as his son in the faith (1 and 2 Tim). This is interpreted as referring to Paul’s role as the spiritual father of Timothy. This could be understood to mean that Paul takes the fatherly responsibility for the education, care, nurture, and other fatherly duties when he convinces someone of the gospel. Blessing (2010:17) also refers to Paul’s hand in the redefinition or reconstruction (in social constructionist terms) which “... carried Jesus’ redefinition to its radical conclusion”. This meant a redefinition and eradication of human boundaries (Blessing 2010:17), of almost everything as it were: none of the previous “laws” and legalism had any value in this new life;

family life in Christ. Paul not only redefined God's family in Christ, but also the "... chosen people *of the past – the entire sacred heritage*".

The "analogical-familial theology" of Stephen Post as utilized in the work of Balswick and Balswick (1999) is a good example of this newly constructed family, starting with God as father. Balswick and Balswick (1999:18-21) describe it as "a theology of family relationships which is based on the Old and New Testament descriptions of God (as father of course) in relationship with a chosen family, His children, Israel. This relationship involves four sequential, but nonlinear, stages: covenant, grace, empowering and intimacy. Although they apply this theory on the biological family, the usefulness of this theory for the church is in full agreement with the redefinitions of Jesus and Paul referred to above.

They suggest that family relationships will either be "dynamic and maturing" on the one hand or "stagnant and dying" on the other. Heitink (2007:19) doesn't see any chance of stagnation if the church functions as God intended.

Firstly, this model holds "covenant commitment" with "unconditional love" as the core of any family relationship. A relationship based on unconditional love will provide an experience of security. This, in turn, will create an atmosphere of "grace" in which forgiveness and being forgiven is present and actively lived and experienced. In such a gracious forgiving atmosphere family members can experience the freedom to empower one another: accepting each other as unique beings with unique talents, gifts and personalities and supporting, helping and enabling each other to become the person whom God intends them to be.

"Intimacy", an openness and willingness to accept, to know and to be known will be the natural consequence of these loving, gracious and empowering relationships, which then spiral into deeper levels of commitment. Hence a dynamic process relationship evolves rather than a stagnant and dying relationship (in which these components of covenant love, grace, empowering and intimacy are non-existing).

The argument here is thus for a definition of pastoral care which includes these components; dynamic process relationship, covenant love, grace, empowering and intimacy. All of these are congruent with the reconstructed church family by Jesus and Paul as described above. Jesus and Paul placed the creation story of God and the covenant back into their redefinition of the church family in response to the needs of the believers of the time and context (Blessing 2010:16-18).

According to Gerkin (1997:21) "... pastoral care was a significant aspect of the Israelite community life and its tradition, out of which the Old Testament or Jewish Scriptures emerged". This, of course, was before the birth of Christianity. Gerkin then goes on to explore the Old Testament roots of pastoral practice and concludes: "The understanding that pastoral care always *involves a response to human experience is central to the tradition of care...*(Gerkin 1997:21)" (italics mine). Central to pastoral care, then, according to Gerkin, is a response to human experience. I referred above to Blessing's (2010:16-17) point that Jesus' redefinition of the church family was functional in this way. It was a response to the experiences of the newfound Christian community. People who hurt in the church or claim to experience abuse at the hands of the church, require a response from the practical theology and the pastoral care ministry.

Jesus, according to Capps (2008:xx), chose to live and work in the midst of the tensions of the village people. He did not choose to work amongst the healthy and the "good", but rather there where the troubles were. Capps (2008:xx) also refers to a new identity: "... his carpenter role had fitted him for this new identity, as it afforded metaphors for what he sought to accomplish in his new role. He would build where others had been tearing down. He would seek to restabilize the mental and emotional foundations that had become unsteady".

Capps (2008:121-122) describes Jesus' unique approach to the cases of the daughter of Jairus and the haemorrhaging woman. He explains that Jesus understood the whole situation in each individual case and responded immediately, uttered words of power (Capps 2008:123; cf 2008:104) and reassurance and encouragement and did not get involved in trivia, but instead

powerfully transferred his faith (Capps 2008:124). Tan (1991:29) also emphasises the meaning of *parakaleo*, which is to “comfort”, to “exhort”, to “console” and to “beseech”. Jesus also at times acted as “surrogate father” for absent fathers and as surrogate of God, his Heavenly Father (Capps 2008:102-103). Tan’s (1991:29) reference to *Paraklesis*, which is listed as a spiritual gift in Romans 12, refers to “... comforting, encouraging, and supporting others at appropriate times”.

Gerkin (1997:21) wrote that “... as human sociocultural experience has changed, pastoral care practices have likewise been modified to respond to the changing needs of people. Like all history, the history of pastoral care is always in process, continually emerging into an open-ended future.” Gerkin (1997:23) reminds that although change is an inevitable part of the pastoral care process, there are also deep continuities that have shaped and continue to shape pastoral tradition.

In biblical times, three types of early pastoral ancestors are identified by Gerkin (1997:23), namely priests (hereditary and specifically responsible for worship and ceremonial life; the prophets (speaking for Yahweh regarding morality, at times rebuking the community, including the leaders); and the wise men and women, offering general counsel in relation to “the good life and personal conduct”.

Pastoral leadership was mainly provided by the scribes and rabbis, who took over the functions of the priests and the wise (Gerkin 1997:24). Gerkin claims, and asks why this is so, that in recent years the prophetic and priestly roles have been relegated to a secondary place as far as pastoral care is concerned. Wisdom and guidance have become the dominant domain, which includes other metaphorical terms such as healing, reconciling and sustaining. Gerkin (1997:25) explains: “... we only need to recognize that each of these four modes of care as they have been interpreted in the recent past carry a primary connotation of wise care of the individual or, as appropriate, the family”. He continues that the priestly and prophetic roles, mostly communal roles of care

leadership “... have not, until very recently, received substantive attention in relation to the modes and methods of pastoral care.” Gerkin (1997:25) argues for

... a reconfiguration of the primary images that shape our understanding of what is involved in pastoral care of God’s people ... placing alongside the image of the wise and caring pastor providing care and concern for individuals and families another image of the pastor as caring leader of a community of worship and nurture – a community of care ... as prophetic leader who cares both for the people and for the tradition that gives the community its identity. Care for the people of God involve/s care that confronts issues of justice and moral integrity in the life of the people.

What Gerkin refers to as a reconfiguration may well be referred to as a deconstruction of the primary images and a reconstruction to caring images which will confront issues of justice and moral integrity in the life, including the church life, of the people. What Blessing (2010:19) describes as “... the loving binding-together of the breath of God’s Spirit. While it is true that humans are ‘dust and to dust shall return,’ it is of the first importance that we are not *only* dust.”

We need to reclaim all three Old Testament role models as primary in pastoral care, according to Gerkin (1997:26). Gerkin then, it seems, argues for a revisiting of the Christian story and reclaiming that which was beneficial to the whole community. Somewhere in history the meaning of “pastoral care” as construct, changed – I presume by humans as they interacted socially in the community of faith. This change was surely affected by historical and cultural times and contexts, such as the times and events in which Jesus and Paul (Blessing 2010:16-17) redefined or reconstructed the family of God. Gerkin implies here the possibility of changing the construct again. The changes and reconstructions of Jesus and Paul were in response to the need and situation of the people of God, and this is certainly what Gerkin talks about here as well. I

would agree with Gerkin that a revisiting of the Christian story is needed in pastoral care and a reclaiming of the creation story, including the covenant and consequential spiritual and Jesus blood relations (Blessing 2010:16-18), which was central to Jesus' redefinition, and later Paul's as well.

Tan (1991:29) refers to at least five verbs used by the Pauline author in the New Testament relevant to counselling ministry, namely: *parakaleo*, *noutheteo*, *paramutheomai*, *antechomai*, and *makrothumeo*. All these Greek words appear in 1 Thessalonians 5:14: "And we urge [parakaleo] you, brothers, warn [noutheteo] those who are idle, encourage [paramutheomai] the timid, help [antechomai] the weak, be patient [makrothumeo] with everyone ...". According to Tan this verse "emphasizes the importance of a flexible and balanced approach to counselling, one that is sensitive to the needs and specific problems of the individual".

When we talk about a "biblical" view or model of anything could it be possible to get a clearer picture of a "biblical" anything by considering the one "deep continuity", to use Gerkin's term, that has shaped and I believe still continues to shape pastoral tradition: the one and only inspirer, the Pauline author reminds Timothy in the second letter to him (2 Tim 3:16), of the whole of the Bible – the creation story then, namely God? Jesus and Paul both radically brought the deep continuities, that is, the covenant, being part of a spiritual family in the bloodline of Christ, being in Christ and being part of a bigger creation story of God. Looking at the redefinition by Jesus and Paul of the church as put forth by Blessing (2010:16-18) the covenant people, body of Christ and family of God are socially constructed in relationship, utilizing language to create or return to the meaning as intended by God's creation story (Blessing 2010:9-10). I link the above reflection on the church with some basic social constructionist assumptions:

- **Realities are socially constructed**

Realities are constructed through language as medium and are social interactions in specific social contexts (Beyer et al. 2007:37-41; Freedman and

Combs 1996:22-23; Van Schalkwyk 2001:8; Rorty 1989:5-6). This is true for individual as well as communal realities. People construct their realities as they live them. Relationship is core to this assumption; relationship to a context, to God, to others, to self.

When we look at the conceptualizations or metaphors from Scripture as discussed above, being covenant people, family and household of God, Body of Christ, it is clear that the social context of Biblical times and in which the church was institutionalized, is reflected undeniably (see also Blessing 2010:9-19). “Covenant people” are rooted in Old Testament history as we see in the explanation above, termed “the creation story” by Blessing.

Covenant is not language, a word or concept used at all in modern times, but still we continue to refer to the church as Covenant people. “Covenant” was common language used in biblical times since God entered into covenant with Israel. Throughout the Old Testament flowing into the New Testament the promise of the covenant is often referred to and brought up as a reminder. In modern society the word (language) “covenant” is no longer used.

Blessing (2010:193-194) reminds that the reconstructed, newly-seen spiritual family of Jesus is not limited by time and space and the power of this reconstructed church family is in providing for the eternal life of the family. Jesus and Paul interact with and in their social context, that is, in their relationships with the new Jewish believers, the abuses they suffered (exclusion and persecution), in the culture and world they found themselves in.

- **Narrative organizes, contains and maintains constructions**

Freedman and Combs (1996:22) argue that: “... dominant stories or narratives” are those held by individuals or groups as “truth” and as of more value than other “lesser stories” (see also Beyer et al. 2007:46). The creation narrative of God (Blessing 2010:9-10) should always organize, contain, and maintain the church family construction. Paré (1995:7): “While language and culture contribute a context for our creative formulations, narrative provides their form.” The church form is then provided by the God creation narrative as stated by Blessing above

(2010:9-10). Unfortunately, as pointed out by Blessing (2010:4), humans participate in constructing meaning, for example by placing humans in the centre of the story of God instead of putting God "... back in the center in the most thoroughgoing way, the entire Bible is not only *not* a condemnation of people or of women, but is the praise of the God who did all of these things in unflinching faithfulness to all (and each) of his people".

- **Constructing realities shape the future**

As the church is constructed in interaction with the original God story, revisiting concepts such as covenant, family, household, body of Christ, doors are opened for improvement or change (see Beyer et al. 2007:47). This is the reconfiguration, revisiting and change for which Gerkin (1997:34) also argues.

- **"Essential" or "eternal" truths**

Everything that the religious and Jewish held dear was challenged and redefined by Jesus, and Paul later radically built on Jesus' foundation (Blessing 2010:16-19). Post-modernism, as described in Chapter 2 above, has to do with seeing the world in no absolute terms. The way the Scriptures were interpreted, which interpretations were treated as absolute and essential truths, was suddenly totally overturned by Jesus, and later by Paul as well. The post-modern person does not like to be told what is right or wrong, but wants to see, experience and understand it for him- or herself. All structures are questioned and challenged. Things are not just accepted on the grounds of being tradition or "the right way". Questions are asked. Values are not just taken over from tradition. These are just a few of the characteristics of post-modernism (Du Toit 2000:51-61). The post-modern individual enters into discussion with his or her world.

5.3 Summary

This chapter starts and repeatedly interacts with the contention by many that the church is in crisis and that a reorientation, a reconfiguration, a revisiting and definite action are needed. The world is not static, but ever-changing and the

church could become more than a protective measure against the “terror of anomie (Alant, 1990:82)”. The biblical metaphors Covenant People, Body of Christ and Family/Household of God were considered as important for this reflection on God’s and the biblical authors’ implied theologies contained in these metaphors. Heitink’s (2007:20-28) argument is that the metaphors used imply a theology that is dynamic. Stagnation with this theology as foundation, says Heitink, is not possible. Jesus’ and Paul’s social constructionist deconstruction and reconstruction of the church family, covenant, and household codes are considered, which prompts the notion of a return to the original God creation story with God at the centre, a covenant of the heart in individuals who make up the church, family made up of spiritual relations with the blood of Jesus as bonding blood line.

The church is then considered in light of the basic social constructionist assumptions, while still reflecting on Jesus’ and Paul’s reconstructions. Walsh (1987:4) speaks of “consensus” which refers to the sense of “our world” or what could be expressed as “that which is common to us”. This is good and a necessary part of being church, but if this consensus or “our world-ness” makes our boundaries so solid that we deny any interaction or dialogue in order to avoid “contamination” (see also Gerkin 1997:34), stagnation and relational problems result.

This is exactly the problem with a rigid unhealthy traditionalism. Du Toit (2002:106) refers to this as an immunization against any form of criticism, meaning an unwillingness to enter into dialogue because the beliefs held are not negotiable in any way. He says that this is scientifically without integrity. “Most particularly, churches must develop a theology, a rhetoric, and a pastoral strategy that adequately addresses both the ideas and values of the Christian faith and the realities of modern and postmodern life” (Browning and Evison 1997:6).

CHAPTER 6

THERAPEUTIC PASTORAL CARE MODELS

6.1 Introduction

Claebsch and Jaekle (1983) define pastoral care as “... helping acts, done by representative Christian persons, directed towards healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling of troubled persons whose troubles arise in the context of ultimate meanings and concerns” (Watts et al. 2002:183).

Paul Pruyser, clinical psychologist, argues: “I have the growing conviction that people turn to pastors – correctly – because they want to have the opportunity *to look at themselves and their problems in the light of their faith and their religious tradition*, with the help of an expert in just this perspective” (Pruyser in Hamilton 1997:3). Gerkin (1997:97), however, questions pastoral care:

Is there a model for pastoral care that builds on past history yet listens for the issues of the present ... that can inform and shape the practice of pastoral ministry in ways that fit people’s needs in our time and the time just ahead? Are there human needs that have come to the fore in the lives of late-twentieth-century people that make peculiar demands on pastoral care? Do those needs call for some revision of the basic paradigm for pastoral practice that has in many ways worked so well during the middle decades of our century?

(Gerkin 1997:97)

Some years earlier, Gerkin (1984:20) described the hermeneutical approach to pastoral care as a “... process of interpretation and reinterpretation of human experience within the framework of a primary orientation toward the Christian

mode of interpretation in dialogue with contemporary psychological modes of interpretation”.

Gerkin does, however, fear a psychological reductionism (1984:17). What he desires is a move away from psychotherapeutic practice methods, but dialogue with psychology regarding modern ways of interpretation, which he refers to as a practice of hermeneutics: interpreting people’s stories in their linguistic and social symbolic context. Human stories and human experience become central in this method.

Louw (1999:34-35), in agreement, elaborates that the narrative approach to pastoral care deals with people’s choices and how these choices influence various life situations and relationships, inner and subjective conflicts, and their desires and intentions relating to future behaviour and moral issues. In the light of the above Louw then argues for dialogue with psychology. Interpretation and reflection are central to both these approaches.

Gerkin (1984:146) concurs with the above. A new structure of meaning needs to be created for the individual self. Jesus’ reconstruction of the covenant as a covenant of the heart (Blessing 2010:9) seems to create such new meaning for the individual. In this new structure of meaning different fragments of the individual’s story are planned to be integrated with, incorporated and woven into a whole new story unit (Gerkin 1984:146). Again, Jesus’ and Paul’s reconstructions (reinterpretations) integrate the fragments from the creation story of God, including the covenant story, the family of God story, and reintegrate them in a new story of a spiritual bloodline family with covenant of the heart, with God at the centre (Blessing 2010:9-19).

New identity is constructed. Louw, in confirmation, argues that this new integrated structure “...develops within the human eschatological identity before God (1999:35)”.

Gerkin (1997:34) describes pastoral care as a process relationship in which both carer and care-seeker are changed by the encounter. He argues for pastoral care as “hermeneutical” process in which care for tradition, community, individual (in tension) as well as context (cultural, etc) meet. However, reminds

Gerkin (1997:34), the challenge pastoral care faces, is that in “...twentieth century life, the problem of maintaining boundaries of the Christian community while remaining open to the surrounding society continues today.” I agree with Gerkin, but with a caveat: this protective attitude often amounts to abuse of individuals in an attempt by pastoral carers to protect Christian community or Christian tradition (often in the form of absolute truths and dominant discourses) from surrounding society – at the expense of the individual and the gospel and creation story – causing pain and hurt. I refer to those stubborn belief systems which are often not relevant anymore, neither meeting the needs of the present world (Dreyer 2006:169ff). Christie Neuger (2001:iv) introduces her book, *Counseling Women: A Narrative Pastoral approach* with the following assertion:

The problems and choices that bring many women to pastoral counselling are, at the very least, complicated by ... gender training, gender oppression, and the dynamics of racism, classism, heterosexism, and ableism. Pastors need to be equipped with pastoral counselling approaches that are informed by psychological, theological, and clinical methods that address the realities of women’s lives ... We need to be able to help women see their struggles in a way that exposes the cultural biases and distortions at their roots.

Neuger refers here to social constructions in relation to gender, race, class and so on, and the need for dialogue with other disciplines, such as psychology. As suggested by Gerkin, Louw and the examples of Jesus and Paul above, it seems necessary to revisit the church and pastoral care story and meaning, to reintegrate the creation story of God with people and their relations. Other terms which resonate here are Heitink’s reorientation (2007:20) and Capps’ reconfiguration.

6.2 Story of hope

According to Donald Capps (1995:1), "...what pastors have uniquely to give others is hope. Where other professionals may offer hope as a by-product of what they do, the offer of hope is central to what pastors do. Oftentimes it is all that they can offer. To be a pastor is to be a provider or agent of hope."

Pastoral counselling often has to guide the counsellee from a position of hopelessness to one of hope. Capps (1995:2-3) sees this as what makes pastors unique from other professionals. Capps has also set out in another work, *Reframing: A New Method in pastoral care*, "... the degree to which the book of Job centers on his struggle to find new grounds for hope, and by his counselors' failure to recognize that their efforts to reassure him actually contributed to his sense of hopelessness".

Capps notes that "patience", traditionally attributed to Job (James 5:11) is really based on the "perception that in spite of massive losses and grievous sufferings, Job never relinquished his determination to hope. What he did abandon, precisely *in order to remain hopeful, was his religious orthodoxy* (1995:5).

If Erikson [psychological theorist of psychosocial developmental theory] is correct in viewing hope as the heart and soul of religion, it follows that whatever else religious professionals may be, they are the representatives of hope and witnesses to the hope that does not disappoint us.

(Capps 1995:6)

Job's friends were in fact inflicting more pain and hurt on him – abusing him, unintentionally and meaning well. Job, on the other hand, relinquishes orthodox, or traditional religion. What is at issue is the pastoral care and/or counsel to people like Job.

Is agency of hope as set out by Capps defining pastoral practice effectively? Was it because Job had hope that he continued in faith, or was it

because he was alive, lost everything which mattered to him, and had no choice but to hope and believe? Capps' use of the word "agency" in a way brings hope in itself. "Agency" may be understood as a reminder of choice and responsible action, as an action which humans can participate in, negotiate, and bring into being: socially constructing hope (See also the work of Giddens [1984] on the agency and structure tension and interaction).

Jesus, according to Capps (2008:xx), chose to live and work in the midst of the tensions of village people. He did not choose to work amongst the healthy and the "good", but rather there where the troubles were. Capps (2008:xx) also describes a new identity: "... his carpenter role had fitted him for this new identity, as it afforded metaphors for what he sought to accomplish in his new role. He would build where others had been tearing down. He would seek to restabilize the mental and emotional foundations that had become unsteady ...". Capps (2008:121-122) describes Jesus' unique approach to the cases of the daughter of Jairus and the hemorrhaging woman. He explains that Jesus understood the whole situation in each individual case and responded immediately, uttered words of power (Capps 2008:123; cf 2008:104) and reassurance and encouragement and did not get involved in trivia, but instead powerfully transferred his faith (Capps 2008:124). I have already dealt to some degree with Jesus' ministry. "Christian counsellors might expect their clients to bring problems concerning prayer, doubt, doctrine, spiritual growth, or guilt over sinful behaviour. One survey found, however, that only 10 per cent of pastoral counselling deals with religious issues such as these (Clinebell 1984:103). More often, people came with marriage tensions, crises, depression, interpersonal conflicts, confusion, and other problems in living. Jesus had two goals for individuals: "... abundant life on earth and eternal life in heaven" (Collins 1988:39). Collins proposes that 'abundant life' means a life in which Christ's teachings are followed (1988:39).

As this work unfolded, with the strong emphasis on participants' experiences based on possible differing realities, I became more and more interested in how these participants would "story" regarding their expectations for

a counsel and care ministry in the church and I asked each to write a very brief description of what they believe Jesus' pastoral care and counselling ministry would look like today based on what they've known, learnt and experienced in this regard.

Neuger (2001:x; see also Balswick and Balswick 199:18-20) explains that in narrative counselling theory such an approach "...reflects an attentiveness to both culture and person. It is deeply respectful, relies on a consultative rather than an expert model, and is elegant in both its simplicity and its thoroughness. It is efficient, effective, empowering and deeply relational." Neuger (2001:x) elaborates with regard to the relational aspect of pastoral care:

The relationship of focus, however, is not that between counsellor and counselee as much as it is between the counselee and the variety of relationships that form the warp and woof of her life story. It is a theory based on hope and on the foundational reality that human beings are makers of meaning at their deepest core and that reality is constructed as we make meaning out of our experience...Its focus on hope and possibility makes it well suited for all.

Neuger's description reflects what many of the participants had to say about Jesus' ministry as they see it. The rest of this section then is a summary of these descriptions. I have therefore allowed the participants to "story" together about Jesus' counselling ministry. Capps (2008:38) describes the roles of Jesus as the integration of teacher and healer. The views on Jesus' counselling ministry are set out verbatim as written by participants:

- "Jesus' ministry would have been true to what the Bible teaches". Blessing (2010:9;14) concurs with this participant's contention. Jesus did indeed recentre and redefine religion, the covenant, and the Christian family according to the Christian story outlined in the Scriptures. Jesus' ministry was not only true to what the Bible taught, but he also worked,

according to Capps (2008:46; 59) within the laws of nature in his miracle healings, based on his deeper knowledge of these laws (2008:xiv).

- “If Jesus was physically in the church he would reach out to every need by giving of himself, not counting the cost but also explaining salvation to everyone.” Jesus indeed demonstrated this by his death on the cross. This fits with Capps’ (2008:38) contention that Jesus was both healer and teacher.
- “Jesus would love everybody unconditionally and reject nobody. If somebody is grieving, he would go and sit and cry with them in his endeavour to comfort them. The poor, the needy would get equal treatment too”. Gerkin (1997:80), in agreement, states: “Reflection on the actions and words of Jesus as he related to people at all levels of social life gives us the model sine qua non for pastoral relationships with those immediately within our care and those strangers we meet along the way.”
- “Single people, widows and orphans would feel totally acceptable in Jesus’ presence. Anybody who has been divorced would be seen as forgiven. Just as Jesus treated the Samaritan woman in John 4. Once Jesus has forgiven you, he doesn’t withdraw that forgiveness. He does not judge like human beings judge. There would be no abuse or division in the church. Every person would get a fair chance; no one would be treated differently to anybody else”. Capps (2008:50) is of the opinion that Jesus’ charismatic personality characteristics impacted those in need. People were drawn to him and felt good in his presence.
- “Jesus would wash our feet; he would put little children on his lap and tell them to trust him completely as he cannot hurt them. Jesus would be aware of every lonely person in the church and reach out to them”. Capps (2008:41-42) demonstrates that Jesus was present, aware and perceptive of the needs and the circumstances around the needs of those he helped, healed and cared for.
- “Praise God that Jesus loves unconditionally. He has called us to a life of serving Him. John 12:26.”

- “His ministry has a human aspect to it: it is about the person and their need (person and need centred)”. Capps (2008:60; 68; 76), argues that the reasons why Jesus sent one blind man he healed back to the village and advised the other not to go back, was based on Jesus’ understanding of the individual’s unique needs.
- “He allows the person to feel heard and understood”.
- “He meets them where they are at and works with them from there”.
- “He shows love and compassion in everything he does and says”.
- “He is honest and real – saying what should be said (all in love and with compassion)”.
- “He stands for what is right and fair above what others might think”.
- “He challenges the norms and thinks out of the box (not blindly accepting and following all”. Blessing (2010:16) confirms this: “The most important way in which he did this ... was a shock and a revolution”, and maybe most importantly, this radical redefinition, deconstruction and reconstruction, was motivated and based on the needs of the isolated and persecuted believer Jews of the time (Blessing 2010:17).
- “He uses metaphors/comparisons/parables/stories to explain in person’s language and enters their world”. Blessing (2010:16) shows how Jesus used the known family metaphor to refer to the new spiritual relations in him.
- “He confronts where necessary but guides to better (truth in love) – teaches and equips to move forward.”
- “For example, parent needs to discipline child – not nice, but has to be done to make child into person intended to be (just, fair, righteous) and teach and show right way with intense parental love to do things.”
- “One advert that comes to mind is where the one man tells the other that back then when there was a company take-over, there would have been ‘no lawyers’. One thing that there would have been had Jesus been in

- charge of a Counselling and Care Ministry in the church, there would have been ‘compassion, love and forgiveness’”.
- “Jesus’ mission was to do the will of God. His love was evident in all His actions and would have been the foundation of His caring and counselling ministry. He had no agenda but to serve His people. He had all the power available to Him yet He submitted to be the ‘least’. He would have treated all people equal and would have promoted servant leadership. Any unfair or sinful behaviour would have been addressed and dealt with immediately and relationships restored. Forgiveness and healing would have been possible due to mutual respect and open communication”.
 - “Jesus would have been able to expose self-serving leaders whose only interest is to empower themselves and position themselves as the ‘head’ of the church: those that see themselves as ‘elected by God’ to lead the people and to ensure that the church is kept ‘holy and blameless’ by following their rules and regulations. In contrast, Jesus promoted selflessness. He promoted caring for the widows, the orphans and the poor. He would have given a voice to the lowly and the poor in spirit. He would not have tolerated any abuse but rather in love to serve each other.”
 - “It would have been perfect ...”

It is clear from the above that these participants hold social constructions or beliefs of Jesus’ type of pastoral care and counselling ministry, which are not far off the mark if one considers Blessing’s description of Jesus’ redefinition of the church, family, covenant and God’s story (2010:9-16). Surely these were learnt in social contexts and interactions. Surely some of these are also based on how we interpret Scripture, especially the New Testament gospel narratives of Jesus and the person He was.

They have been hurt because of the discrepancies between their experiences and the teaching of the Bible with regards to Jesus and His ministry. Pauline references to new equality (Galatians; cf Reuther 1998; cf Blessing 2010:16); servant-leadership; self-serving motivations of those holding superiority views of themselves based on race, history, religion and so forth; faith and law

finding expression in actions of love, are clearly seen in what the above research participants expect from pastoral care and ministry in their respective churches.

Paul, according to Blessing (2010:17) "... carried Jesus' redefinition to its radical conclusion. From this radical work of Paul, the postmodern, social constructionist and narrative approach, I draw a few pointers for pastoral care and counsel. The following pastoral care model, then, I based on all the foregoing discussions in this work, including postmodernism, social constructionist, narrative thought from psychology, sociology as well as biblical perspectives. I base this model mainly on Paul's letter to the Galatians as Paul's radical redefinitions and reconstructions are clearly spelt out in Galatians 3:26-28 especially. Paul uses, in true social constructionist spirit, the story (narrative approach) of Hagar and Sarah as metaphors.

Hagar, the slave girl, is used as metaphor for the Jewish legalism and insistence on certain laws and rituals to obtain "righteousness" (verses 21-31) – choosing their own "gospel" which is detrimental to the community life of the Galatian church, gains them an air of superiority, based on and rooted in their story as God's chosen people: that of obedience to every detail of the law in order to obtain justification.

Sarah, "the free woman", is used by Paul as a metaphor for the people of God who obtain righteousness by faith in the promised seed. Sarah's barrenness is turned around by God, and she becomes the woman of promise, from whom Christ is born and obtains righteousness and justification on the cross for those who have faith and are free in Christ. This is a radical deconstruction and reconstruction by Paul based on his understanding (Blessing 2010:17). Following is an attempt to build on Paul's model in order to offer a practical response to this study.

Based on the above, Paul built on the covenant story of Sarah and Hagar. In a care situation, the carer should journey with the counsellee and hear and understand her or his story and the social constructions which form part of it. Just as Paul wrote from a position of his story, so the story of the individual

needs to be perceived (Capps 2008:41-42), including underlying thoughts, and perceptions.

The carer now clarifies and makes sure that themes are identified correctly, always staying aware of his/her own story and the possibility of distortion, misunderstanding and misinterpretation. Both reflect on images, metaphors, dominant discourses, and the origins of stories which may be contributing to the experience of difficulty. It will also be essential to reflect on how the story and discourses are playing out maintaining the problem and difficulty. The counsellor will share the images, metaphors and discourses as they come to mind, with the counsellee who will reflect on, respond and consider possible actions to strengthen, enhance, deconstruct or reconstruct. The counsellee also participates in identifying images, metaphors and discourses similarly. In a similar way, the origins of these are explored, and they are checked for workability in the present.

The counsellee responds by entering into discussion with the current story. This may mean identifying and interacting with the sources of the story. It may mean confronting the discourse and deconstructing it as only a manmade construction, which can be reconstructed. Kim Barker's (2009:48-59) article, is an excellent example of this process. As Blessing (2010:17) explains: "... even sacred boundaries that had defined human associations were nothing in Christ ... he had redefined not only what constituted the family *of the past – the entire sacred heritage*". "Although there was only one covenant, that covenant and the covenants of our daily life have a great deal to do with family – but not necessarily in the way we think they must" (Blessing 2010:20). In other words, reflection is needed on the current human associations and "covenants" and whether things may be storied differently from how we think they should be.

As a Christian the counsellee may at this point enter into discussion with God regarding the story. This may lead to a possible return to identifying beliefs and discourses about God, such as the story offered by Kim Barker (2009:48-59). Note that although the process may start off in a linear fashion, process is what is important. At any point, as the story is revisited, or rewritten, and any

one of the social constructions, such as God, may arise at this point, one can return to the first step as explained above, so there can be a continuous return to revisiting, redefining. This can therefore be a never-ending process of becoming aware of beliefs (constructions) held, testing and analysing their source and roots, if necessary, rethinking, deconstructing and reconstructing them in light of the covenant God story (Blessing 2010:9).

At this point the counsellee has to realize the need that brought him/her to the counsellor. The need for an “other” to support, guide, empower, unconditionally accept and understand; the need for positive relationship and reconnection with self, God and others are explored and discussed at this point. Poling discusses in some chapters in his book *The abuse of power A theological problem* (1991), the difficulties experienced in the relationship with self, other, community and God.

The way distorted realities and truths are ingrained in our being as explained in earlier chapters above, brings about a need for a nurturing of the newly constructed discourses and story. The story has to be babied and nursed as one would a newborn baby. The narrator in Kim Barker’s (2009:48-59) article shares how difficult it was to overcome the old fundamentalist voices in her person. She had to nurture the new “knowledge” and “truths” by slowly repeating them to herself on a daily basis as soon as she was overwhelmed by the old fear- and anxiety-evoking voices of the past. Heitink’s (2007:20) call for reorientation is apposite here.

In a postmodern frame there is no absolute truth. The only truth in this frame is what Jesus says about himself: “I am the truth ...”(John 6:14). The only absolute truth, from a Christian perspective, is the truth of God reincarnated as Christ, the justification by faith in Christ. The counsellee needs to be challenged to find out what is absolute truth and to discover for him- or herself that the life and person of Jesus Christ is the culmination of any law, or rule of regulation, and family relationship is to be found in him (Blessing 2010:17-20). Trying to keep the law in order to obtain righteousness nullifies the work of Christ on the cross in exchange for obtaining righteousness by works (Galatians 1).

In the Christian's world, the Holy Spirit of God is believed to gift, empower, heal, help and convict among other roles. The Holy Spirit thus becomes partner on a supernatural level in this process of reconstructing (Blessing 2010:17). Counsellor and counsellee together can explore the Spirit as construction and invite the working of the Spirit in a truer and better understanding of distorted beliefs, truth and knowledge. This may mean a commitment to interact with the Spirit of God regarding the problem, trauma, or difficulty experienced. Paul is clear that the only way for the type of love which is the manifestation of faith in Christ is by the empowerment of the Spirit. The story needs to find new meaning by the sharing or passing on of newfound truths and "realities".

I have before suggested the analogical-familial theology as described by Balswick and Balswick (Visser 2006) as a good model for Pastoral Care in the church, building upon their suggestions for family life. I used the elements of this theory to make some practical suggestions toward a therapeutic model for Pastoral Care in the church. As I said there, that was not my final word or suggestion on the matter of Pastoral Care application. It was a starting point in the direction of positive change. "Shepherding" was highlighted as maybe the most appropriate example for pastoral care given by Jesus Himself. Jesus' shepherding follows in the footsteps of God, the father, who modelled these elements from the earliest creation days. The elements highlighted were:

- **Covenant love**

This should be foundational in pastoral counselling. This means an unconditional covenant love as demonstrated in the Old and New Testament Covenants found in the Scriptures. God's pursuit of relationship was in spite of idolatry, repeated failures, fading loyalty, rejection of God and the law – and regardless of whether it was deserved or not. Jesus' modelled covenant love when He said: "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). Jesus lays down his life with unconditional love and without false motives. Jesus' model will be discussed in the following section.

Alsdurf and Alsdurf (in Horton and Williamson 1988:170) submit some suggestions for an improved Pastoral Care. They suggest that pastors “examine your own attitudes toward women and your views on women’s roles in the marital relationship”. I would like to add to this that pastors should not only examine attitudes and views about women in the marital relationship, but also in the church structure and further attitudes to all members, irrespective of status, race, colour, sexual orientation, or whatever could qualify them as “lesser beings”. The Bible should be read with an alertness to the covenant love of God. Van der Schaaf and Dreyer (2004:1359) say that it is essential to understand the Bible narrative afresh. They write: “Dit vraagt een kritische lezing van en “engagement” met de bijbelse verhalen.” I maintained (Visser 2006): “An overall alertness of the problem of abuse in any form is my suggestion”.

I believe it is not possible to love unconditionally if we have views that only allow us to care under certain circumstances and conditions, or if we hold views that some people are not equal to others”. There should be an active aggressive pursuit to get to know and understand others and their realities, as God demonstrated in the Bible narrative, the beings and experiences of all in their counsel and care, which should, and will (according to Balswick and Balswick) lead into a deepening of the experience of the next element, namely intimacy.

- **Intimacy**

This element refers to the desire and striving to genuinely know and be known intimately. I believe this element could quite easily include a striving and working to really understand one another, even those who have been labelled as “difficult”. Here again the aggressive search to know and understand should start with careful scrutiny and examination of Scripture. Salter (1990:193) refers to the shepherd’s task: “He knows the sheep *individually* (my italics) and is known by the sheep.” We have to tirelessly desire to learn more about all people entrusted to us, those that abuse and

abusive people. We may even recognize ourselves in this pursuit so that we can change our ways.

Edleson and Tolman (1992:8) write about abusers: “While battering itself is the focus of intervention, many individual characteristics of men may affect the course of intervention. Identification of characteristics that discriminate batterers from non-batterers may increase the accuracy of prediction of recidivism and improve understanding of the causes of maintaining factors of woman abuse.”

Of major importance to this work is the getting to know of individuals’ and groups’ realities and stories. At the same time also sharing and showing own realities and stories – and maybe even getting to understand and know our own realities and stories. The focus should never be on knowledge only, but on creating safety in which people can be free to be and accepting of themselves. This is to the glory of God. We were created for His purposes and by Him and should honour that – that is a healthy self-acceptance.

Teaching in the church about the occurrence of abuse in the church, in other words creating awareness thereof, can *empower* the whole body to be pro-active and hands-on in the prevention of abuse. This may include creating opportunities in which people can safely and honestly explore, share and learn more about abuse in their families. The abuser can and should feel safe in the church family to seek help and talk openly about the reasons for the need for power and control over others.

In an atmosphere of grace, forgiveness can be given and found and problems worked through together with the church family. In the same atmosphere of unconditional love those who hurt in their families will in a non-judgmental atmosphere have the freedom to seek support. All of the above is, of course, in keeping with the scope of this work also applicable to the church members, and not just to family members (where it is stated as such), and their difficulties and issues in the process of being family - God’s family.

- **Grace**

Pastoral Care faces the challenge then to firstly create an atmosphere where people feel safe to tell their stories. Herman (1992:162) puts it as follows:

From control of the body, the focus on safety progresses to control of the environment. The acutely traumatized person needs a safe refuge. Finding and securing that refuge is the immediate task of crisis intervention.

I believe that the same is true for any victim of abuse, of whatever sort. This is also true for all of us, we all need safety. Where grace (forgiving and being forgiven) is normative in a community, people are not afraid to tell their stories. They will know that they will not be further victimized because they have failed or if they tell a story of being abused in the context of the community.

We've seen that the actions of the abuser aim to take away control or power from the victim. Therefore it is of utmost importance that Pastoral Care has as its primary focus the creation of a place and space where power and control can be taken back by the victim. This leads on to the next element of *empowerment* of Balswick and Balswick's familial-theological theory.

- **Empowerment**

According to Salter (1990:193) "...skilled shepherds attempt to do all the right things so that the sheep under their care will reach their maximum potential as sheep, that they will become good wool-producing, meat-providing, or reproducing sheep." For those who abuse (sometimes unintentionally) Pastoral Care can facilitate practical help like clinical help or lifeskills training, for example, assertiveness training, because Chapter 4 showed that abusers often cannot express their feelings and needs in socially appropriate ways.

Often their behaviour has its roots in being victims left powerless and helpless at some earlier stage in their life story. For the depression, which is

a factor for abusive persons, Edleson and Tolman (1992:38) suggest that “a supportive intervention environment may offer hope and support in managing the depressed affect”. They stress that focus must not be lost of the abusive behaviour and its consequences in the intervention. Persons who may be suicidal or homicidal should be referred and supported to enter into programmes or services because this may interfere with intervention.

The most important aspect about empowerment is then to create an atmosphere in which people can feel free to develop and grow. Trial and error to discover their gifts and where God wants them to be involved, is allowed, in which there is no fear of failing some perfectionist leader. This can take place in a community where intimacy means open discussion about where we are spiritually, even when we are not sure where God wants to use us in the church.

6.3 A narrative reconfiguration

I offer some qualities needed for a social constructionist narrative approach to pastoral ministry below:

- **Self-awareness**

Social constructionist narrative thought in the light of all discussion above, then, seems to be more effective in relation to a pastoral carer’s own self-understanding and self-awareness. An understanding of self, other and religion from a perspective of one’s own story brings one closer to an understanding of the other and possibly also God.

- **Humility**

What then, is a good model for Pastoral Care and how can it be applied? How will we know that we are successful? Once again, I quote Salter (1990:193): “To whatever extent Christ-likeness is being formed in their flock, they are successful. If their motives are other than what they should be, God will be the judge. Some men’s sins will go before them, some after” (1 Tim 5:24).

It is important here to stress again that the purpose of this thesis is not to criticize the church and church leaders. I agree with Salter (1990:193): “And we should be quite hesitant to criticize a person who is pointing others to Christ. ‘The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice’ (Phil 1:18)”. People are indeed much more complex than sheep (Salter 1990:193). None of the above will be achieved without the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. By this is meant that the first and most important quality and job a pastoral caregiver has to have and do is to achieve a humble understanding of their own humanness. This includes, instead of controlling, a letting go and submitting to the supernatural working of the Holy Spirit. Leaving God to do God’s job and doing what God called us to do is what is of utmost importance here. Secondly, a humble pursuit to understand rather than to be understood is necessary.

Salter (1990:195) reminds of Zechariah’s “Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts” (Zech 4:6). He further says that success often refers to a job well done and that the two opposites – giving my best and total reliance on God – render success paradoxical. In response to this I wish to explain how I understand these two “opposites” to be possible and workable in one ministry. I believe that an understanding of the gospel message and what being “in Christ” means is often central to this possibility. I understand the law has proved insufficient for a proper living together of humans, and also for the working out of relationship between humanity and God.

The keeping of “laws” is more often than not the main ingredient in the recipe for hurting one another. Those who insist on keeping the law have at heart the pleasing of God and doing what “the Bible says”, and often are quick to quote Scriptures. Sadly, they unintentionally deny the work of Christ on the cross (refer to the previous references to Pauline writings on this topic.) By all might and power (see Zech 4:6) they work to protect the “laws”. I do not believe this is what “doing our best” means. I believe that the only

“doing” pastoral caregivers have to be working at is to remain in relationship with Christ and also with others.

I further believe that this is very practical – some may criticize this point as “spiritualizing” practical issues. A return to the basics, as suggested by Alsdurf and Alsdurf, lies at the core of this point. I agree with Spurgeon who once said that no truth is new, and if something claims to be new, it is not true. My first suggestion for pastoral caregivers is to seek Christ in relationship anew and to continue with this “work”, doing their best in it! This will force a total reliance on God by His spirit to empower the church to do the work as he intends in opposition to own efforts, which often cause hurt and abuse of the sheep. Salter uses Paul as example:

It is true that Paul planted many churches and seemingly had hundreds of converts, but we do not know that he ever built an edifice ... what the annual budget was of any church in which he was pastor. What we do know it that *the people he left behind were better people because he had been with them*. Will that be true of us? (my italics)

(Salter 1990:190)

Salter (1990:172) refers to Paul’s example of the humility that I am talking about here. Paul exhorts others to follow his example; in other words it is not weak and inhibited (Phil 3:17). Salter says about Paul: “He had a confidence and security that rested in God’s strength. Humility is a frame of reference that perceives all of life as a gift from a sovereign and gracious God. The ‘ego’ is a channel between God’s enablement and life’s needs”.

This humility should include a willingness to submit to the reality that God works with individuals in God’s own ways and in God’s own time. Trust in and submission to the Almighty God preached in the church will close the distance between preached theology and practice. This form of humility will allow for different interpretations of Scripture without judging them as

somehow secondary to one's own views and frames of reference. I refer to Bons-Storm's statement regarding the views about women:

... pastors and pastoral counsellors acquire a half-conscious frame of reference that shapes their perceptions of women and deeply influences their judgment. Why is there still a deep (albeit often hidden) conviction of the "normality" of the married state for women? I argue that it is related to a basic trait of patriarchy: the importance of the son for the father.

(Bons-Storm 1996:104)

We should prayerfully seek for a humility that allows our ministry to rise above our conditioned, learned, often assimilated without careful consideration attitudes and an acknowledgement of the unconditional love of God for everyone, views and perspectives.

Jesus' reference to the poor woman with her giving in comparison with the giving of the rich is another example of the principle. The rich give a lot and the poor are often not in a position to match the giving of the rich. Yet, the rich are often treated differently because, and this is what I believe to be true, the church needs it. Firstly, this is once again not trusting God to provide. Secondly, it measures people and relationship in an unbiblical and ungodly fashion. People are hurt by this. Thirdly, it transforms the gospel into another gospel rather than the one intended as, for example, described by Paul in Galatians where he reprimands the Galatian Christians about the different gospels.

Romans 12:16 says: "do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of lowly position". Salter (1990:190) writes: "Pastors and churches who have realized their calling have resisted favouritism, in spite of possible detriments to budget or prestige".

- **Empathy**

William Booth is quoted by Salter (1990:174) as answering to the question of what comprises the secret of Evangelism: “Try tears.” This is not about emotionality. This is a real seeking to understand (see *Intimacy*) every individual in our care. Resist labelling. Resist a refusal to listen because of a mind being made up, because of the “difficultness” of the individual, because of a sense of superiority, because of whatever. It is a desire to see from the perspective (reality or story) of the other.

I remember a time at a church I attended many years ago. A new pastor arrived at the church of which I was a member. I overheard a conversation between the church secretary (elder?) and the new pastor in which he offered to have a meeting with the new pastor to give him “background information” about every church member. The young pastor declined politely and explained that he endeavoured to get to know church members on a personal basis. It is not difficult to imagine what the impact of some of such “background information” may be on future relations between a new pastor and existing church members.

- **Teaching**

Burnham (1986:61) sees the practitioner as an active agent in the healing process. He quotes Fisch, Weakland, and Seagal: “For Practice, this view proposes that the therapist’s task is not just to understand the family system and the place of the problem within it but also to take action to change the malfunctioning system in order to resolve the problem”.

The only way to keep in touch with the reality of the lives of our members is to get into their home contexts, and to get to know them and their realities like that. Gerkin (1997:46-47) refers to Richard Baxter’s ministry that emphasized relationships within the family in order to keep in touch with “the real life of their congregation”. Salter (1990:174) quotes Baxter saying that “more outward signs of success” were achieved in this way than of all his public preaching to them.

Capps (1995) also marries the psychological developmental theory of Erikson with pastoral counselling and sees the main purpose of pastoral carers as being “agents of hope”. He explores the origins of hope in humans from the psychological theories of Erikson (known for his life-cycle theory) (Capps 1995:29-30). Erikson believes that the basic “virtue” of hope is central to human functioning. Hope, according to Erikson (Capps 1995:29-30) is the ability to trust and a positive expectation that “I will be fine in this world”, and is developed in the very first what Erikson calls “psycho-social” (referring to the psychological component in interaction with the social environment of the young child) stage of being human, the first life-year of an individual. Capps (2008:38) sees Jesus’ role is one of integration between healing and teaching.

Sociologists such as Berger and Luckmann (1966) and Giddens (1984), as discussed in Chapter 2, theorize about the interaction between the human (agency) and social systems or structures. How can we make sense of pastoral care from an understanding of these theories? Where does pastoral care fit in this duality between human and its environment? Can a better understanding of the relationship between the individual and his/her context guide us to a more effective care of and counsel to pastoral care-seekers? Can a clearer picture be obtained from these theories on behaviours such as abuse in the church? Can it be explained by what Willows and Swinton describe as pastors “applying theology” to their daily encounters?

Indeed, as one surveys the wide range of methods and approaches used by practical theologians, one would perhaps be forgiven for assuming that practical theology is whatever any particular practical theologian says it is! For ministers it is a way of *applying theology* to their daily encounters; for academics, a way of looking at theology that acknowledges the significance of practice in the process of theological reflection; for the counsellor, practical theology works itself out as a critical dialogue partner within the ongoing conversation with contemporary psychological

theories; for the politically aware, practical theology provides a method and a perspective within which the need for social change can be highlighted and initiated, whilst for others, practical theology has to do with telling stories that create meaningful human existence”.

(Willows and Swinton 2000:11-12)

“However, reconciliation of individual church members to the community of Christians, whether that be the community of a denomination or a local congregational community, remains a significant aspect of pastoral care” (Gerkin 1997:31).

CHAPTER 7

ABUSE

AN APPEAL AND CHALLENGE TO PASTORAL MINISTRY

I distinguished above between Christian pastoral care as “helping acts, done by representative Christian persons, directed towards the healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling of troubled persons whose troubles arise in the context of ultimate meanings and concerns” as defined by Clebsch and Jaekle (1983), and psychological counselling as “a professional activity for which there are more definite trainings and structures, but which tries to minimise value-laden presuppositions” (Watts et al 2002:183). From a psychological perspective, according to Watts et al (2002:201):

... the stance is that Christian pastoral care should learn from modern psychological methods and employ them where appropriate, but that it should combine with the distinctive features of its own tradition. To explore, in a more practical way, how psychological and spiritual approaches can be used alongside one another, it will be interesting to look at how counselling and prayer can be used together in Christian pastoral work. Other examples of distinctively Christian practices might have been chosen, such as Bible study or sacramental confession. However, prayer is perhaps the most widespread and paradigmatic Christian spiritual practice.

According to Furniss (1994:8) “social psychology studies the relationship between the individual and society and focuses on attitude-formation and the ‘social self’. Social psychologists have made a major contribution to contemporary social theory ...”. Sternberg (2001:3-5) defines psychology in general as “... the study of the mind, behaviour, and the relationship between them”, seeking to better “...understand how humans and other organisms *think*,

learn, perceive, feel, act, interact with others and even understand themselves (italics mine)”.

From a psychological perspective, in the light of the aims and objectives of this work, then, I am interested in a better understanding of how humans in the church think, learn, perceive, feel, act, interact with others with specific reference to pastoral care and those who experience abuse at the hands of the church. In Chapter 2 social constructionist psychological assumptions have been discussed in this regard.

A further aim is also to promote a better self-understanding by pastoral carers as well as the care seekers (and of course those claiming to have experienced abuse in the church by those who were supposed to offer them pastoral ministry). Pastoral care in the frame of the above as well as social constructionist narrative psychology then, would then ask: How do pastoral carers and counsellors – think, learn, perceive, feel, act, interact with others in the church context as pastoral ministers?

I would like to stress here that, although I do believe that physical abnormalities in, for example, the brain, can indeed have an impact on behaviour, the scope of this work is really the interaction of humans in social context; in this case the church. Gerkin (1997:11), in agreement with this relational view, puts it as follows: “To tour the world of pastoral care means to consider the caring task of the pastor in relation to individuals and to communities”. Understanding some of how individuals develop, come to think, act and interact can only make for a better tour. Gerkin (1997:21) contends that, in addition to the relational aspect, “to tour the world of pastoral care is also to enter into a tradition. Though it was not always known by this name, pastoral care has been a part of the Christian story and its tradition over many centuries of Christian history.”

It is now a good time to further stress that the aims of the social constructionist narrative thrust of this work is not to reject or demean Christian tradition and story in a baby-with-bathwater sense. The social constructionist narrative approach of pastoral care would reflect strongly on beliefs (values) and

the creating of an awareness of the malleability (and/or fallibility) of our strongly held beliefs and values, often manifesting in the form of our “knowledge” and “absolute truth” (social constructions), teaching and showing that many of these are not representative of objective reality at all. Finally it is important for pastoral care to minimize painful experiences and interactions by recreating realities and stories to improve relationship with self, God, and others.

Generally when psychology is discussed, “emotions” are a central concept in our discussions. People who need psychologists are often seen as “emotionally” in need in some or other way. Watts, Rye and Savage (2002:167) argue that “... it was only in the nineteenth century that the very broad concept of ‘emotions’ became an established psychological category”. It was thus socially constructed only in the nineteenth century. Watts et al (2002:167) explain it as follows:

Before that time there had been an older tradition of thinking about what we would now call emotions that was more in harmony with Christian theology and that divided these states into the ‘passions’ and ‘affections’ of the soul. The passions of the soul were seen as signs of and punishments for the original sin of Adam and Eve. The way that lower appetites and desires disobey the will when we are in the grip of passions mirrors the original disobedience of Adam and Eve to God in the garden of Eden. The affections of the soul, on the other hand, were the more refined, spiritual, and aesthetic movements of the soul towards things of truth, beauty, goodness – in short, towards god. The all-encompassing term ‘emotions’ was introduced as part of a secular psychology that gave much weight to scientific method and much less to the Christian tradition. During the nineteenth century, emotion theorists increasingly stressed the importance of mechanical physical processes at the expense of the will and the mind. So in asking whether there is a specifically Christian approach to emotions, we are effectively asking whether what was originally a

secular concept can be re-integrated into a Christian framework.
There is no reason why this should not happen.

(Watts, Rye and Savage 2002:167)

It is natural that people experiencing intense and prolonged emotions should ask the question, "What is wrong: Why am I feeling this?" (Watts, Rye and Savage 2002:167).

Watts et al (2002:168) state that emotions are difficult to define because of the number of different aspects thereof, with no one aspect seemingly fundamental. They highlight three aspects of emotions as of particular significance: physical reactions, thought processes, and behaviour. Differences about which one of these is fundamental led to different approaches to treatment such as physical/biological, behavioural and cognitive. Watts et al. continue: "As well as these three basic response systems in emotions, there are various broader sets of factors that shape our emotional reactions. There are three such that need to be briefly considered here: social factors (the influence of our relationships and general social context); cognitive factors (the influence of how we interpret our experience [and give meaning to them]); and developmental factors (the influence of our past history)."

What the authors say here is of critical importance for the purposes of this study and I believe a more effective approach to pastoral counselling and care in the church. If a pastoral carer sees emotions as strictly "psychological" and thus outside the boundaries of what is biblical and church it may impact strongly on what happens in the counselling encounter. Should emotions be constructed as "sinful" and "undesired", the consequences could be traumatic and a care seeker can be re-traumatized in the "care" encounter.

Watts et al. (2002:170) say firstly, that as far as the social background factors are concerned, close relationships are particularly likely to produce emotional reactions and relationships, and at the same time provide the support systems which make for easier emotional coping. The skill of utilizing those

relationships is also crucial; under- as well as over-utilization can be equally harmful. Secondly, whether events produce strong emotional reactions depend on the sense we make of it; how we interpret it. Self-talk, or in social constructionist language, storying, often leads to prolonged emotional problems as a result of the emotions it produces. Thirdly, developmental factors include the degree with which previous experiences (often in childhood) affect our emotional responses. “However, the basic point is a very simple one, that whether or not events in adulthood produce strong emotional reactions depends very largely on whether they are echoes of painful and difficult events in childhood” (Watts et al 2002:170).

Historical traumatic memories are thus important, but strong emotions could result from strongly held beliefs, values (knowledge, truth), resulting in attitudes and prejudices, which are threatened in some or other way in social interactions, such as in the church. Prayer is an integral part of pastoral care as seen in the discussions about pastoral care above.

From a psychological perspective, certain psychological processes are seen as arising in the practice of prayer. Watts et al (2002: 9) explains that “To talk about the psychology of prayer is not to deny that prayer can be a communion with God, that it can have a special phenomenological quality, and so on. There can be a psychology of prayer without assuming that prayer is ‘nothing but’ psychology.” According to Watts et al (2002:9) some aspects of prayer involve the following:

- *Reflection on experience* (which can be seen as essentially an interpretative activity, learning to apply a religious interpretative framework to recent events) , especially
- *Confession and thanksgiving*, and that such experience is
- *Valuable psychologically*, especially where there is
- *Stressful or unfamiliar experiences*, and prayer
- *Provides one opportunity* for the necessary “working through”

- *Thanksgiving and attributions* is a way of looking for causal factors in an experienced difficulty.

The way a situation is “attributed” can be either beneficial or detrimental. These attributions can be external or internal. They usually have more emotional impact if they are attributed internally than when external reasons can be found for the difficulty. However, too much external attribution can lead to feelings of helplessness. As far as thanksgiving goes, it brings God into the framework of causal attributions for difficulties and problems;

It is perhaps an important part of the spiritual transformation from immature to mature thanksgiving that it should be offered particularly for consolations rather than just for agreeable events. Surveying experience for consolations brings into play a specifically religious interpretative framework, and it is perhaps part of the human value of thanksgiving that it trains people in doing that.

(Watts and Williams 1988:11)

Reference to interpretative frameworks (knowledge and truth, realities, stories) assumes deconstruction and reconstruction as possibilities. The reference to changing the way attributions are made and the reconstruction of “God” as internal as well as external is significant for this discussion and opens up possibilities for pastoral care and – counselling in the church ahead.

In this final section, after a reflection on pastoral care and praxis, I have discussed therapeutic models of pastoral care, including God’s model as described the analogical-familiar theory offered in Balswick and Balswick (1999). Thereafter a reflection on Jesus’ model of pastoral care, including verbatim storying from the research participants on how they see Jesus as pastoral carer and minister. There followed Paul’s radical reconstruction of what the church family is, as set out in his letter to the Galatians was used as basis from which a

ten-point-model of care was created. The chapter finally ended with a discussion of the qualities needed for a postmodern, social constructionist, narrative approach to pastoral care. This work will now be concluded by the findings with reference to the research problems stated in the first chapter.

This study was aimed at stimulating the thinking of pastoral caregivers, to encourage a revisiting of the origin of our faith, which is God and God's creation story, including the man Jesus and one radical "reconstructor", namely Paul. As my personal subjective point of departure as well as the findings, my own awareness was sharpened with regard to the general perceptions on the church. In Chapter 1 it was stated that the church is generally seen in a negative light as exploiting, damaging and hurting in my opinion and personal experience. This I found, from the stories told, as well as the readings, especially in Chapter 5 where the church structure was examined.

The research problem in Chapter 1 was stated in question form: "How do we better understand what lies behind what individuals experience as abuse in the church, often unintended by the "perpetrators". McClure (2012:274) suggests that uncaring pastoral practices and theories should be analysed and developed to improve pastoral care ministry. The findings of this study is that the church and pastoral care ministry are often experienced as uncaring and abusive.

Stark and Bainbridge (1996:26-39, cf Aldridge 2000:96-101) contend that a balancing of cost, compensators (promises about future rewards which have to be held onto in faith explained in supernatural terms) and reward, and the distribution of power and consumables is at play in religious groups. After careful reflection on postmodernism, social constructionism and the narrative approach, it was found that dominant discourses are often at the bottom of (mostly unintentional) actions of and experiences of abuse in the church system. Dunlap (2009:12) also reminds that an examining of religious practices could be helpful in finding out more about the role of "belief practices" in the encouragement of healing and well-being as well as the discouragement of them (cf McClure 2012:274).

Social constructionist assumptions were reflected upon, which included the non-existence of absolute truth, and that what is often accepted and imposed on others as absolute truths from Scripture and as basic to the faith are social constructions, whether they are formed biologically as proposed by psychological social constructivist theory (Kelly 1955) as reflected upon in Chapter 2, or socially in relationships and social context as proposed by Gergen (2009). After reflecting on Berger and Luckman's (1965) sociological theorization with regard to the social construction of reality, followed by Giddens' (1984) social structuration theory explaining the interaction between social structure and agent (individual), the assumption that constructions are constructed, institutionalized and treated as sacred and reality were considered to be applicable to what takes place in the church, and often lead to experiences of abuse, because of different social constructions held. Finally, in Chapter 2, Jesus and Paul were discussed as "biblical social constructionists" and their deconstruction and reconstruction of "reality", "knowledge" and "truth" were considered and reflected upon. The book of Galatians was chosen for the prominent expressions from Paul with regard to reconstruction of traditional beliefs in that community. The question in Chapter 1 was posed: Can this phenomenon, that is, the phenomenon of abuse in the church, be further explained by social constructionist theorization?

The problem was further elaborated on by the question: What happens to the abused in the church. Looking at the narratives in Chapter 4, it was found that people are traumatized, suffer psychological, social, physical traumatisations and consequences. Some go to other churches, often carrying baggage from the abuse suffered. Others leave the church permanently. The narratives confirmed what was proposed in Chapter 1. It was proposed that pastoral care is neglected because of the acceptance of many that these actions and behaviours are normal and biblical. The narratives confirm disillusionment and helplessness with the carelessness with which their pain and anguish were brushed off and disregarded in almost all the stories. The other suggestion – that people are labelled and blamed – was found to be the case in some of the narratives.

I have listed some criticisms as part of the problem statement, including success syndrome, seeing persons as commodities, leaders seeing themselves equal to God, complacency, passive aggressive ways and means to deal with disagreements, inadequate accountability, distortions of Scripture, conflicting morality and theologies. In the narratives there was evidence of all of the above. A thematic analysis was performed in Chapter 4. Themes were chosen to determine the prevalence of the above criticisms in each of the narratives. They were male domination, objectification, humiliation, power and control, knowledge, truth (dominant discourse) and prejudice and discrimination respectively. “Male domination”, “objectification” “humiliation” and abuse of “power and control” were found to be represented in all six narratives to a greater or lesser extent. The misuse of “knowledge” was evidenced in narratives one, two, four, five and six. Truth claims (dominant discourses) were found in narratives one, two, three, four and six. What is important to remember is that all of these participants claim to have experienced abuse. There is therefore a strong correlation between the participants’ experiences of being abused and the social constructionist constructs present in their stories. Social constructionist theory can therefore offer adequate explanation for the experiences and actions of abuse in the church.

Van de Kemp (1991:199) places God in the centre of pastoral ministry: “Much of what I have written heretofore about specific metaphors, models, and paradigms as ethical dimensions of therapy may be helpful if the particularity of the reign of God is the point of departure.” Jesus did just this: God and God’s creation story was the point of departure for his deconstruction of the current erroneous belief systems and traditions of his time. Paul continued what Jesus started.

What seems to be an impossible task can often create feelings of hopelessness in those who are in the shepherding roles of the church flock. I hope that this work will encourage those who feel this way, although it may seem idealistic, especially as far as the suggestions for a total reliance on God is concerned, to re-enter into relationship with God, to humbly clothe themselves

with Christ daily and to experience the practicality of the true relationship with God, the empowerment by God's spirit to do this job successfully and the love that flows from this relationship with our creator and saviour.

I wished to encourage openness about our frail humanity so that those we care for will feel at ease relating to us as humans and not as perfect saints who are superior to them. I hope that God will become a reality (see Van de Kemp quoted above in this paragraph) and also the work of Jesus Christ an example. I pray that the work of Christ will be harmed less by those that are in ministry because of a hunger for power and control over others.

I have not sought to provide all the answers or to claim in any way that this is the last word regarding Pastoral Care. If any one Pastoral Care worker or pastor is stimulated into reassessing their work and the effects of it on those they "care" for, I will have achieved my goal not only with this study, but more so with this chapter.

The dialogue I encouraged Pastoral Care to enter into is difficult to maintain when the realities of participants differ. Bosch (in Kotzé and Kotzé 2001:5) calls this form of dialogue "theology from below", which is exactly what I believe Jesus meant with a shepherding ministry. This grows from self-other participation and not from a privileged position of knowing reflected in Western theologies (Kotze & Kotze 2001:5).

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FACULTY OF THEOLOGY

RESEARCHER:
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DEGREE: PHD PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

TITLE OF STUDY:

**ABUSE IN THE CHURCH: AN APPEAL AND CHALLENGE
TO PASTORAL MINISTRY**

PURPOSE OF STUDY:

This study will critically reflect on the proposed existing phenomenon of abuse of members in the church system, attempting to create an awareness of, interpret, consider possible solutions to prevent, correct and treat the phenomenon and will also strive to provide guidance and direction to the pastoral care domain.

PROCEDURES:

The following are expected of you:

- You will be asked to write the narrative (story) of your experience, which will be included verbatim (in your own words) in the thesis
- Your report will be analyzed and interpreted by the researcher
- Should you so require, the thesis will be available for your perusal when completed before it will be handed in.

RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS:

The writing and reflection on your painful experiences may be an emotionally draining process as you revisit them.
It may also be a time-consuming process.

BENEFITS:

Some of the benefits for you may be:

- You are making a contribution in addressing a very real societal problem as you are fully aware!
- You are a participant in the final result and of whatever positive changes will come about as a result of this research
- It provides you an opportunity to feel empowered by being able to do something in response to a sense of helplessness which are often central of victims of abuse



- You are thus instrumental in understanding the phenomenon, interpreting it, addressing it, and suggesting changes in the pastoral care domain of the church system
- You are given a voice in this work and your story can be told and read

PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS:

Your participation is voluntary and you may at any time withdraw without any negative consequences.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

All information is treated as confidential; your anonymity is assured and the data will be destroyed should you decide to withdraw. The original reports will also be destroyed after completion of the thesis. Your written reports may also be viewed by my supervisor, Professor Yolanda Dreyer of the Faculty of Theology of the University of Pretoria. An external supervisor, from another University may also have access to the material. These individuals are also ethically bound to the confidentiality of the information supplied by you.

I fully understand the information as set out above and agree to participate in the research process.

Signed on _____ 20_____ at **PRETORIA.**

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