

LECTURE SERIES PUBLIC THEOLOGY

An International and Intercontextual Assessment



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1841

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**School
of
Humanities**

Gender and Sexuality

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Learning Outcomes

You will learn:

- how the concept of God as male excludes women
- how the motif of sacrifice is dangerous for women
- how to challenge heterosexist theology
- how this is all relevant to public theology

The Concept of God as Male

- God as male, powerful and strong: Lord, King
- God the Father as personal and masculine: authoritarian, rational
- God as male leads to dominance of men (rich, White men) in society
 - Genesis 2: woman created after man
 - but Genesis 1: man and woman created together

Revising the Concept of God

- Is God actually male?
- 'He' is a metaphor
- Add feminine metaphors? e.g. hen gathering chicks (Psalms/Matthew)
 - as optional extra is not sufficient to challenge the status quo
 - as nurturing reinforces stereotype of women as mothers
- Solution: gender-transcendent God as Supreme Agent?

The Motif of Sacrifice

- Women encouraged to stay with abuser, told to forgive and to pray
- In the Christian tradition:
 - Ancient Hebrews perform sacrifices (Exodus)
 - Jesus death on cross is ultimate sacrifice for human sin
 - martyrdom is an expression of faith (Gospel of John)

Critiquing the Concept of Sacrifice

- Sacrifice is detrimental to all oppressed groups
 - encouraged in women (Ephesians)
- Glorifying sacrifice is dangerous, legitimises abusive relationships
- Redress over-emphasis on sacrifice?
 - Jesus refers to disciples as friends, not servants (John)
- Solution: self-love?
 - justice in relationships
 - image of cross as call to action to end suffering

Heterosexist Theology

- Heteronormativity
 - male/female binary
- Heterosexism
 - discrimination against LGBTQ+ persons
- Colonial Christianity: monogamous, heterosexual, patriarchal
 - LGBTQ+ as deviant, sinful, punishable
- Revise concept of God and theology of sexuality
 - accept bodies, find God outside heterosexual relations

Challenging Heterosexist Theology

- Queer theology questions heterosexual assumptions
 - God as gender fluid
- Incarnation: God in flesh; Galatians: 'neither male nor female'
 - Sodom and Gomorrah: rape; Song of Songs: consensual love
- Solution: God as love? Disrupt idealized heterosexuality
 - move to full acceptance and inclusion of LGBTQ+ persons

Relevance to Public Theology

- Public theology: theology interacting with public issues in church, academy and society
 - who is visible in 'public'; who counts and what matters?
 - hearing dominant voices is selective hearing
- Critique theologies of female subservience and heterosexuality
 - challenge misogyny, homophobia, transphobia
- Uniting publics for common good requires inclusive community
- Solution: solidarity with marginalised, promote justice

Summary

You should now be able to explain:

- how the concept of God as male excludes women
- how the motif of sacrifice is dangerous for women
- how to challenge heterosexist theology
- how this is all relevant to public theology