LECTURE SERIES
PUBLIC THEOLOGY
An International and Intercontextual Assessment
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 Heterosexualist 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