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COURSE: HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY 302

TASK: A CRITICAL COMMENT ON THE MAKING OF AN INDIGENOUS CLERGY.
(WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO BLACK WOMEN CLERGY)

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INTRODUCTION

Even if our focus was on black women clergy, some of our interviewees were either male clergy or men who are still training to be ministers. Our reason for including them as our interviewees on the subject was that they had experienced either working with women as colleagues in the field or as fellow students.

I had the opportunity of interviewing Mr. Raymond Khumalo who is presently doing his first year in theology at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg. He is currently a candidate for ministry in the Methodist Church. And is originally from Swaziland. He is now married to Lerato commonly known as Lovey to us. Her maiden name is unknown to me.

A CRITIQUE OF MY INTERVIEW WITH MR. RAYMOND KHUMALO.

I will follow the aspects on the guideline sheet that was given to us in class to do this.

The material circumstances of the interview - I chose a man as an interviewee because I wanted to get his side or rather his experience on women ministers either as colleagues in ministry or as fellow students. The other reason for opting for a man interviewee is that there are few women clergy in Pietermaritzburg or even in nearby areas. Those who are there were difficult to contact. One of them, who is a Lutheran pastor in Greytown does not have a phone or it is not known to some of the Lutheran Students.

The conditions of the interview were excellent as the place itself is an academic environment, viz Anhouse (a house mainly for Anglican Students doing theology. The house was opened to students of other denominations, especially the Methodist church, this year). The interview was conducted on the 31 August 1994 and the students in the house were under academic pressure and there was no noise problem as such.

Mr. Raymond Khumalo, as I have said before is a first year student and I am a fourth year student. My academic level of education was not a problem for him. He did not feel intimidated by all this. He was very open with me. This could have been made possible by the fact that we are used to each other. But what I liked about him is that he took the interview

serious. He did not bank on the fact that we are familiar with each other.

Non Verbal signs: The interviewee was very confident and did not appear a bit nervous. He only became a bit emotional when he spoke about how other ministers are sexually abusing other people's wives when they are suppose to pastor them. This for him, he says happens when the women go for pastoral counselling. By that time they are either experiencing problems in their marriage lives, mostly or having problems with their children. They are vulnerable during those times he says. He even became more emotional when he said if he was not a minister, he would not have allowed his wife to go for help to another minister. He was highly emotional on this, I could even see his veins on his face and neck. I had the feeling that he might had a nasty experience related to this, possibly a close female relative who got involved in such a problem. I actually felt pity for him.

Restructuring of data: There were some information he did not want to own. He kept on referring to what other people are saying about women pastors. An example of such was on the power of some of the superintendents, who are having women clergy and who usually ask for sexual favours in order to allow the woman through. This infect was a hearsay and I got the courage to ask him about it since he mentioned such abuse by male ministers earlier on in the interview.

The fact that women are powerful when they are ministers can appear true to outsiders (by this I mean ordinary Christians in the Church) but to him. He said that women pastors cannot secure a marriage because men perceive them to be powerful as they are in control of men in the church. He knows that women are marginalised in the church as pastors. They do not have power over men. To a certain extent, she has power over her congregants (men) but men are in all the higher positions in the church. It is worth checking if there is woman superintendent in his church or a woman minister with a higher position other than just being an ordinary pastor.

What I appreciated about him is that he tried to look into the moral aspect of the lives of both women and men ministers. He did not see one side more immoral than the other.

Any significant omissions? On the question of women candidates who had to pay with their bodies to be put through or to be inducted to ministry, he said he does not know of such but later said that that might be possible. I suspect that he knows about the problems as he has a number of friends who are ministers in the church. They usually discuss and share these kind of experiences. He could have said what he said because the two of us know, him not knowing that I know about these allegations, that such information is about to be leaked out somewhere within his church. (I refrain from saying definitely where exactly as I would like to protect some people).

Cross References: Most of the people our group interviewed are

not against women clergy as such or their ordination. What one of the interviewees said is that he is rather against feminist tendencies in some women clergy.

There are no books written on the subject. If there are, they are very scarce. The only book we have on women in the church is "Women Hold Half the Sky". The book does not address the making of an Indigenous women clergy. Some of the articles on church magazines like Challenge do not deal with the subject.

The overall quality of the interview: The interviewee, Mr. Raymond Khumalo, was very open with me although he kept on referring to what other people are saying. He did not want to commit himself to any knowledge of some critical information. He was actually also at ease on the issue of menstruation. Most men that I have come across refrain from calling it by name, when they bring it up as a reason for not being in favour of ordination of women to ministry. The reasons he gave on menstruation were actually an eye opening for me as in townships, especially these days people do not see that as a problem or rather as something to keep women private, since most of them are working in big industries.

I do not think that women ministers are worth being compared to police women because there so many factors to be considered before a police woman gets married. All the things that are supposed to be done by a police woman before she get married are not to be done by a women minister. A police woman in the past, had to notify her authorities about her marriage six months in advance of the actual marriage itself. The prospective husband will then have to be scrutinized. If he belonged to any political organisations or if he had a criminal record of some sort, then the woman had to choose between her job as a police or this man. These are some of the things that are not applicable to women ministers.

I can only credit the comparison when he said people are not used to women ministers just as they were not used to police women when they first began the job. Even though so, they (police women), mostly serve as secretaries or are seen mostly when they have to search a woman suspect on a crime scene.

Overall value of the interview: The interview was enriching in terms of knowing what some male clergy think of women clergy. My interviewee had a tendency of divorcing historical events or church related matters from sociology. He does not seem to look into the social demands of societies in relations to being against or for women clergy.

Since the subject is still history in the making, there was a tendency from both us, i.e Mr. Raymond Khumalo and myself to treat it as a story. No dates were mentioned in the interview. I had to go back to him after the group report back we had in class.

I think that the interview was good as a whole. It was very revealing and enriching as well. I gained a lot of information from it and also a personal interest to pursue the history of Women clergy and their experience in a patriarchal world, in this case the church.