



LANA BOBIĆ

**VIOLENCE AGAINST
WOMEN AND
FEMINIST
THEOLOGY**

When you come to Sunday mass, do you ever wonder how many women present have experienced violence or how many have been abused by their husbands?

- ▶ Estimates published by WHO indicate that globally about 1 in 3 (30%) of women worldwide have been subjected to either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime. Most of this violence is intimate partner violence.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

- ▶ The corpus of human rights had traditionally been aimed at protecting human rights from direct violations by the state, while violations of human rights by individuals were considered a part of the "private sphere" beyond the scope of international law. In addition, the right to the protection of private and family life was historically interpreted as a principle of prohibiting interference of the state in the family sphere, resulting in no sanctions against domestic violence until 20th century.
- ▶ In the early seventies, the second wave of feminism readdressed the question of structural and interpersonal violence against women as a social issue. (first wave of feminism, 19th and early 20th century- right to work, work rights, property rights, child custody...)
- ▶ Today: international documents and legal framework for elimination of violence and discrimination against women (UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women- CEDAW; The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence- Istanbul Convention)

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IS GENDER BASED

- ▶ Gender based violence - violence against a person because of persons gender or violence which is disproportionately affects persons of a specific gender. Women and girls are the most common victims of GBV
- ▶ Violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between women and men, which have led to domination over, and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women
- ▶ Violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared to men

Man who batter use violence to gain control over women. Violence against women is about control and power.

Myth: Alcohol and drugs are major causes of violence.

Truth: Alcohol/drugs are an excuse for becoming violent and are used as justification for abusive behaviour. Although use of alcohol/drugs can intensify violence, an abuser does not become violent because alcohol causes him to lose control over his temper. Violence is used to exert power and control over another, it does not represent the loss of control.

FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

- ▶ domestic violence/intimate partner violence,
- ▶ physical violence,
- ▶ sexual violence (rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking),
- ▶ human trafficking (including prostitution),
- ▶ force labour,
- ▶ slavery,
- ▶ harmful practices (forced marriage, genital mutilation, honour crime)
- ▶ structural violence

STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE

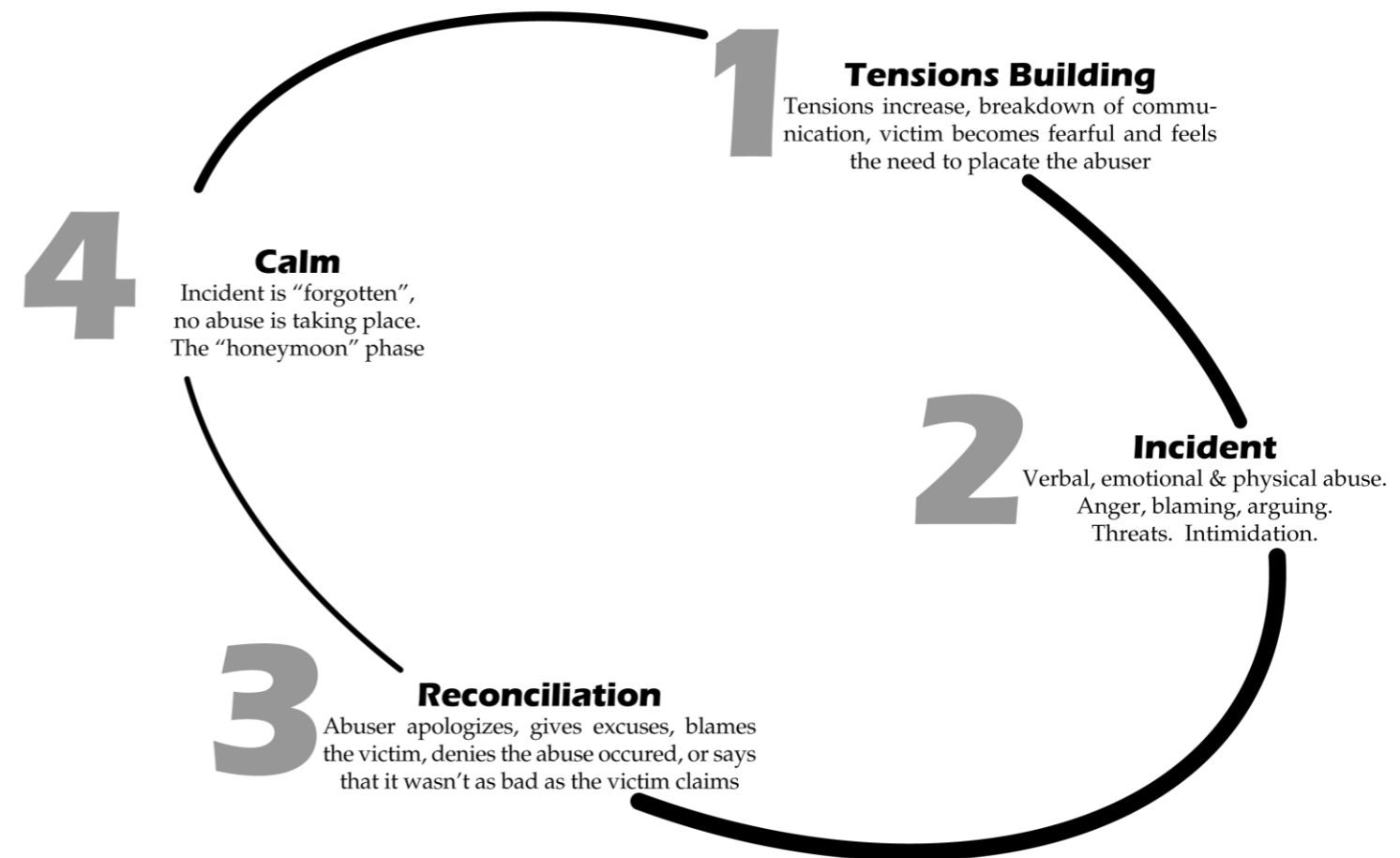
Structural or indirect violence does not refer to individual perpetrators of violence but to relations of violence incorporated in various social, cultural and religious norms and institutions. It may be firmly rooted that it fails to be noticed or even recognised as violence although it in fact is violence, and it is observed, for example, in cultural justifications and excuses that perpetuate certain power structures. As such, it is social accepted and reflects the asymmetry of power in social relations. The existence of structural violence is indicated by the widespread of personal violence. Gender stereotypes are a form of structural violence, and thus, along with other forms of structural violence facilitate personal violence.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE/INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

- ▶ Domestic violence or intimate partner violence is one of the most common forms of gender based violence
- ▶ Everyone can be a victim of domestic/intimate partner violence no matter gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion but women are primary victims of gender based violence - domestic/intimate partner violence disproportionately affects women
- ▶ Home - most dangerous place for women - 87,000 recorded female homicide cases last year, 50,000, or 58%, were committed by the victims' intimate partners or family members. The toll equates to six women killed every hour, or 137 killed every day, by people they know ([United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Research, 2018.](#))

- ▶ Forms: Physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional or psychological abuse, intentionally damaging a family members property, stalking, economic abuse, any behaviour that causes a family member to feel fear for their safety, threatening to do any of above
- ▶ Never starts with physical violence
- ▶ Not an isolated incident, it is a continuum.
- ▶ Not about the loss of temper but gaining control

Cycle of Abuse





FOR A BATTERED WOMAN,
WILL THE
CONGREGATION/PASTOR
BE A PART OF THE
PROBLEM
OR A
PART OF SOLUTION?

HOW TO HELP CONSIDERING THE CHURCH
NEEDS TO HELP BOTH THE VICTIM AND THE
ABUSER

IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING GBV AND THE DYNAMICS OF ABUSE

Without the understanding of the GBV and dynamics of abuse, it is very easy:

- ▶ to put the responsibility on the victim whether for the violence or for forgiveness (forgiveness before justice - “cheap grace” - cannot contribute to authentic healing - Marie M. Fortune: Forgiveness: The Last Step)
- ▶ to oversee the problem of domestic/ip violence as a private (family matter), not a social problem
- ▶ to be manipulated by an abuser - especially an abuser who is deeply connected to faith tradition (Nason-Clarc, Fisher Townsend, Holtmann, McMullin: Religion and Intimate Partner Violence)
- ▶ to treat domestic/ip violence as an isolated incident, loss of temper -> the “solution” might be endangering for women and the family
- ▶ to treat domestic/ip violence as something that can be fixed relatively quickly
- ▶ to treat domestic/ ip violence as something that can be fixed with better commitment to faith (understanding abuse as mans sign of spiritual immaturity and struggle with sin/wrong interpretation of theology of the cross- the suffering of women will save the family as the suffering of the Christ has saved us)
- ▶ to oversee the need for highly professional, specialised services for both victims of violence and the abusers
- ▶ to put keeping marriages (and families) together in front of safety (and lives!) of women

STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE: PATRIARCHAL UNDERSTANDING OF FAMILY

- ▶ Patriarchal societies consider the most important role of women to be that of a wife and a mother (ontological purpose). There is deeply rooted idea that a marriage must be preserved at all costs for the sake of preventing the family and the stigma of being a divorced woman is associated with the assumption that she is the one responsible for divorce.
- ▶ Seeds of intimate partner violence lie in the subordination of females to males, subjecting women, as wives, to male authority and control. These intimate relationships have been institutionalised in the structure of patriarchal family. (Dobash and Dobash: Violence against Wives: A Case Against the Patriarchy)
- ▶ As long as theological traditions cling to submission as the theory of choice for male-female marital relationship, abuse will inevitably continue as the practice (Busset: Battered Women: From a Theology of Suffering to an Ethic of Empowerment)
- ▶ The belief that keeping marriages together is of primary importance and that empowering women to make informed choices on their own might threaten the stability of the family -> responsibility for dissolution of such relationships is on women instead of addressing male violence as responsible (Nason-Clarc, Fisher Townsend, Holtmann, McMullin: Religion and Intimate Partner Violence)
- ▶ Need to understand: Women leaving violent relationships is not the act that destroys marriage and family, the act of violence is (think about it: adultery being a more valid reason for separation than violence)

MODELS OF GENDER RELATIONS

SUBORDINATION

Unequal

Man - complete human being, reasonable, active, fulfilled in public sphere,

Women- incomplete human being, emotional, pasive, exists for man, fulfilled in private sphere

COMPLEMENTARY

human nature, different roles (man authority, women submissive)

Man- reasonable, active, love- a part of life, can be complete human being only in a relationship with women

Women- emotional, passive, love- whole life, can be complete human being only in a relationship with men

EGALITARIAN

complete human beings as individuals.

Man and women do not complement each other through different “natures” but they are free to do it as persons, two complete equals in a partnership.

Equals

Man and Women - sensible and

Differences between man and woman are biological and as such fixed. Biological differences result in psychological and spiritual differences and in different social roles. Women are considered less reasonable and therefore in need of male authority. Such stereotyping of gender roles clearly prevents the achievement of equality between man and women.

The differences attributed to men and women are not perceived as purely biological but as largely shaped by society and culture, social processes, and upbringing.

COMBATING VIOLENCE AGAINST
WOMEN IS ABOUT
CHALLENGING TRADITIONS AND
CHANGING ATTITUDES!

FEMINIST THEOLOGY: CHALLENGING PATRIARCHAL STRUCTURES OF POWER

- ▶ Revealing and deconstructing layers of patriarchy, androcentrism, misogyny from religious tradition
- ▶ Revealing, deconstructing and challenging structures of domination and subordination
- ▶ “Feminist theology and gender as a critical analysis in religion have caused a paradigm shift in the study and view of religious texts, traditions, and communities. Feminist theology caused a paradigm shift in the study and view of religious texts, traditions, and communities. It influenced the transcendence of God as a man, relativized the connection of men with the divine and the transcendental, and women with the immanent and impure, but so far failed to influence too much the male hierarchical church structures that sustain them with universalist and essentialist claims of masculinity and feminine content. (Schüssler Fiorenza: *Congress of Wo/men, Religion, Gender and Kyriarchal power*)

Liberating the Biblical message as a
message
of radical equality

“There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Jesus Christ” (Gal 3,28)

RADICAL EQUALITY IN PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY

“Practice of equal followership of slaves and masters, man and women, Jews and Gentiles, Romans and barbarians, rich and poor, young and old brought the first Christian community in tense relations with her sociopolitical environment. This tension that was created by alternative Christian vision in Gal 3,28 became convenient for induction of the Graeco-Roman patriarchal order in the house church.” (*Schüssler Fiorenza: In memory of her*)

- ▶ The reason for unequal position of women, the primacy of complementary gender relation model, for the position of women to be equal worthy but without equal rights is in the way in which the Church was institutionalised and hierarchically structured within patriarchal society.

THANK YOU!

PROVERBS 3:31

DO NOT ENVY A VIOLENT MAN OR CHOOSE ANY OF HIS WAYS.

RESOURCES:

BOOKS:

1. Nason-Clarc Nancy, Fisher Townsend Barbara, Holtmann Catherine, McMullin Stephen (2018). Religion and Intimate Partner Violence. Oxford University Press. New York.
2. Schüsler Fiorenza, Elisabeth (2016). Congress of Wo/men, Religion, Gender and Kyriarchal power. Feminist Studies in religion Books. Cambridge, MA.
3. Schüsler Fiorenza, Elisabeth (2011). Njoj na spomen. Biblioteka Flaciana. Zagreb.

WEB:

1. <https://www.theraveproject.org>

VIDEOS:

1. Women in Christianity: [Prophetess in the OT](#)
2. Women in Christianity: [Women around Jesus](#)
3. Women in Christianity: [Women in first Christian Communities](#)

PLEASE DISCUSS

EF 5:21-31

21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

22 Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. 28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church— 30 for we are members of his body. 31 “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” 32 This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. 33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

QUESTIONS THAT MIGHT HELP THE DISCUSSION: Are these verses important to me/my congregation? Do I see them as authority on marriage? How do I/we interpret them? Have I ever questioned this paradigm of martial relations? Do I see anything problematic in this paradigm of martial relations? (there are no wrong answers!)