

The *vhusadzi* theology of ministry¹

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Abstract

Culture and religion have both a healthy and an unhealthy effect on the leadership development of women in Africa, in particular, the Vhavenda women. The position of women in the church today is influenced by perceptions which people hold, either from a religious or cultural perspective. Male dominated leadership in the church continues to remain unchallenged because the Bible is used to support and entrench the system of patriarchy. The reasons that are given to subordinate women in the church are not very different from those given in societies and structures outside the church – and these reasons are invariably based on culture and/or religion. The article describes the tenets of the *vhusadzi* theology as the basis of women's leadership roles in ministry. The article focuses on the deconstruction of cultural and religious discourses that hold the church and women captive in subordinate and non-leadership roles and the shifting of these discourses to healthy church practices and policies under the guidance of the *vhusadzi* theology.

Introduction

The aim of this article is to describe the tenets of the *vhusadzi* theology as the basis for women's leadership roles in ministry. This article on the *vhusadzi* theology is based and motivated by the research I have conducted on the leadership of women in the ministry, where personal experiences as a female pastor, serving also as a female chaplain, were laid bare; and the impact of especially African Pentecostal Christian discourses as well as Vhavenda

¹ This article is based on a research thesis entitled "The impact of religious and cultural discourses on the leadership of women in the ministry: A *vhusadzi* (womanhood) perspective", submitted at the University of South Africa in 2011 under the supervision of Professor Christina Landman.

cultural discourses on the lives of women leaders are brought to the surface through literary reviews, questionnaires and interviews.

This commitment to women theology was as a result of seeking to expose the dilemma and reality of women's experiences pertaining to leadership in the church. As a young female minister, I (LMM) became aware of the importance of women's matters pertaining to gender discrimination in Africa and more particularly, in South Africa, and I am also aware of the fact that the church is reluctant to address these issues. My experiences, including the theological training I received which lacked focus on women empowerment for ministry, the scarcity of theological resources on women leadership especially among the South African Pentecostal churches; and my vested interest and the intention to contribute to women theological studies, demonstrate that there is a need to study the role of women in the ministry in Pentecostal churches in Venda. Accordingly, the *vhusadzi* theology is formulated to engage critically the role of religion; in particular, the Christian religion, its sacred texts and African culture have on women in ministry.

The *vhusadzi* theology encompasses the experiences and expectations of Vhavenda women living in the Limpopo Province and around South Africa as well as around the world. It challenges the negative impact of religious and cultural discourses that influence the roles women play in the church or ministry. Ordination of women in the church is influenced by perceptions which people hold, either from a religious or cultural perspective. African women are struggling with serious issues of injustices pertaining to institutionalised sexism, patriarchy, racism and other biases that hinder their access not only to land and to resources that can lead to a better livelihood, but also to leadership roles.

This theology is part of an endeavour to find an African-South African voice in challenging the perceptions that people hold and are harmful to women. It resuscitates and captures the reality of a black African-South African Muvenda woman; to find ways to speak about God as well as describe her ecclesiastical struggles that deny her full humanity status. This approach engages critically the role of religion, in particular, the Christian religion and its sacred texts and the role of culture in the marginalisation and affirmation of women in leadership of the church.

Why not feminist and womanist theology?

Over the last three decades, feminist theologians have engaged actively in issues pertaining to women, the church and worship, and the struggle is more than over.² Feminist theologians argue that biblical interpretation that

² S.A Ross, "Church and sacrament: Community and worship", in *The Cambridge companion to feminist theology*. (Cambridge: University Press) 2002, p. 224.

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relegates women to the background of apostolic ministry fails to consider the patriarchal situation of church and society at the time the New Testament narratives were written; moreover, they take a more literalist approach to the issues than other biblical examples.³

The research has found that feminist and womanist theology is not inclusive of African women's reality, and that they lack analysing women's experiences in culture.⁴ But womanist theology exhibits many similarities to the African women's liberation framework in the sense that we are all Africans and our framework must be African oriented; we experience multiple forms of oppression such as racism, sexism and classism.⁵ Although Masenya notes certain similarities, she is also aware of the differences that prevented her from embracing womanist perspectives, which are as follows:

- African-Americans' experience of slavery is different from the South African's experience of colonialism and apartheid.
- "Womanism" is a term that is originally and uniquely African-American and has been coined to respond to that specific context.

It is against the background of these differences, that the experiences of African-South African Vhavenda women are different from that of feminist and womanist theologies. It is also in this difference that African women around the globe should be able to define their experiences in their own terms and thus embrace their African reality. African women differ significantly from Western feminist and womanist theologians, because the latter's hermeneutics are highly dependent on individual experiences and are void of the experiences of communal life in Africa.⁶

Our focus is on the experiences of women against a South African Venda context, and I find the above theologies not relevant. Against the background of these differences, we acknowledge and embrace the *vhusadzi* theology which does not aim at replacing feminist and womanist theologies, but aims at addressing those aspects that makes African- South African Vhavenda women different from other women elsewhere.

³ Ross, "Church and sacrament: Community and worship", p. 230.

⁴ R.A.M Kanyoro, "Engendered communal theology: An African women's contribution to theology in the 21st century", in N.J. Njoroge & M.W. Dube, *Thalitha Cum! Theologies of African women*, Pietermaritzburg, Cluster Publications, 2001, p. 37-38.

⁵ M.J. Masenya (Ngwana' Mphahlele), "Proverbs 31:10-31 in a South African context: A *Bosadi* (womanhood) perspective." Unpublished dissertation, University of South Africa, 1996, p. 153.

⁶ Kanyoro, "Engendered communal theology: An African women's contribution to theology in the 21st century, 2001, p. 37-38.

African women theologians

African women theologians have tried to address the non-ordination of women in the church. Mbuy-Beya (2001:201), for instance, has asserted that the priesthood of women is a difficult topic to address in the Roman Catholic Church and this is even more the case in Africa. For the church in Africa, the ordination of women in leadership roles in the church continues to be a complex issue. Whenever the issue of ordaining women is raised, it leads to arguments and long discussions that result in misunderstandings and church divisions.

Oduyoye (2001:80-84) addresses the issue of women and the church where she contends that the church is still divided against itself when it comes to gender unity. She points out that the church's attitude and teachings about women are an indication of what the church is about, not what they claim to be. She further states that these attitudes that the church holds regarding women are not only found among men, but also among women, because women have internalised this low opinion of themselves to a large extent, so that they become accomplices in the suppression of their own gender.

It is regrettable that it is still necessary to put the blame for the oppression of women on the church in the twenty-first century (Makoro, 2007:65). Makoro blames the church's doctrinal barrier, the economic barrier and the female barrier that prevent women from assuming leadership positions in the church. According to Makoro, there frequently is an absence or lack of support from other women in the church committees, and it discourages women from involving themselves in the leadership of the church.

LenkaBula (2008:2-7) addresses the concern and search for gender justice in the church and society in Africa. She states that the question of women's full participation in the *ecclesia* in most African churches continues to be a highly emotionally charged and contentious issue even today. She states further that the church tends to justify its refusal of women's participation by resorting to theological arguments and biblical texts that are life-denying and promote violence against women; while others resort to regressive aspects of African culture that discriminate against women. She expresses her opinion as follows:

The marginalisation of women in the church and in church history has painfully demonstrated the ways in which the church participates or colludes with structures of violence and discrimination when it denies women's ministry. It also demonstrates how churches colluded with unjust systems that create and develop hierarchies of oppression, which feed on injustices such as gender injustice (LenkaBula, 2008:7).

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The church today is still faced with the challenge of the ordination of women in the leadership of the church. It is a very hotly debated issue for men and women, the clergy and the laity.

The *vhusadzi* theology

Now, in order to provide the proper background to the *vhusadzi* theology, an overview of the *bosadi* approach, which is a liberationist approach to the reading of the Bible in an African context in South Africa, will suffice (cf. Masenya 1996, 2004). The *bosadi* approach has been developed by Masenya Ngwana' Mphahlele as a response to the distorted image of womanhood due to the African history of colonialism and apartheid. Masenya (2005:156) explains the *bosadi* approach more clearly when she says:

This is an approach that is committed to the African-ness of an African woman in South Africa. It thus critically analyses her context, and challenges and resists the oppressive elements of the African culture, while at the same time it embraces and harnesses the liberative and empowering aspects of this culture, particularly as they relate to women.

Masenya employed the *bosadi* approach to re-read Proverbs 31:10-31 in a South African context, thus analysing the biblical text and its context, identifying those elements that are oppressive and are working against the liberation of women and promoting those elements that are liberative to women. Masenya argues that the text was liberative to its original readers because it elevates the significance of the family and paints a picture of an independent powerful woman who holds her own in the world of men.

The rich collection of Masenya's *bosadi* approach in biblical sciences, with particular focus on the Old Testament, caught my interest with reference to applying its principles in systematic theology. This approach presents us with a rich variety of concepts related to the deconstruction of religious and cultural discourses as they are socially constructed. It gives a voice to women who are Bible readers and whose lives are negatively shaped by different misinterpretations of the Bible.

The *bosadi* approach presents relevant information with a rich variety of concepts related to the deconstruction of religious and cultural discourses. Now, the *vhusadzi* theology makes use of similar insights as laid bare by Masenya. It is therefore proper to mention that the *vhusadzi* theology is an African, in particular, South African voice that challenges the perceptions which have long been held by both men and women and which deny women leadership development in the ministry. Though the *vhusadzi* theology cannot claim total liberation of these women, it does contribute to the proper treat-

ment of women in the church. This theology is part of an endeavour to find an African/South African voice in challenging the religious and cultural discourses that have a negative effect on the lives of Vhavenda women in the church. In this regard, the *vhusadzi* theology resuscitates and recaptures the reality of a black African-South African Muvenda woman in finding ways to speak about God and describing the ecclesiastical struggles that deny women their full humanity.

The *vhusadzi* theology proves itself to be a life-affirming theology by critically engaging the role of religion, in particular, the Christian religion and its sacred texts, on the one hand; and culture, in particular the Vhavenda culture, on the other hand, in both the marginalisation and affirmation of women in the leadership of the church.

There are similarities as well as differences between the *bosadi* approach and the *vhusadzi* theology, in that the *vhusadzi* theology makes use of similar insights and strategies as uncovered by the *bosadi* approach. The *vhusadzi* theology, which is a counterpart of the *bosadi* approach in Tshivenda, focuses on the leadership of women in the church, and on developing this theology in its relation to God (or teachings about God), the person of Christ (Christology), the Holy Spirit, and the church and its practices (ecclesiology).

The vhusadzi theology and the experiences of women

The issue of ordaining women for ministry has created endless arguments among men and women in the church. Women leadership in the church is confounded by arguments about the proper roles women should play. Those who argue for and others who argue against women leadership in the church prefer to site religious and cultural discourses to support their views. Consequently, this has determined the roles that women are playing in the church.

In this research, I have used the qualitative approach with descriptive methods of data collection, where data was collected through questionnaire and interviews. Both men and women responded to questions concerning the leadership of women in the church. Both men and women had different perceptions concerning the issue of women and the role they play in the church. Generally, men interviewed held the opinion that it is not appropriate for women to be leaders in the church. Although a low percentage of women stated that women were not equipped to be leaders in the church; a higher percentage of women contended that women could be leaders specifically in the church. Significantly, both men and women referred to the scriptures and to culture in order to bar women from leadership positions in the church.

Based on the research, women have to prove unequivocally that they are really called by God and that they are doing what they do because of the call of God upon their lives. Those women who fail to convince their leaders

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and laity that God has called them, are subjected to rejection, isolation, frustration and doubt. As a result, women spend considerable time trying to prove their call and when they finally respond to do what they are called to do, it is sometimes too late. The story of Sophia⁷ would suffice:

I was a member together with my husband in a church that does not allow women to be pastors. In my former church, I used to be free and sometimes I would lead other women in the church during women gatherings. In this new church, I did not have the freedom to do what I was doing before. I could only go to church and listen to the male preacher without any active participation on my part. Some of the members who knew me were very concerned and one decided to engage me in the work of preaching. He decided that, because it was wrong for a woman to preach inside the church, and the function was going to be held inside the hall, which is not a church building, there wouldn't be any problem. I agreed to go and preach in the hall and everything went well according to me. It was only after the meeting that I received the message that the church was affected by what had happened. Some of the people who were complaining were women; they asked how I could be allowed to preach the word of God when it is not the tradition of this church to do things that way. We have been in the church for a long time, but we do not do those kinds of things, why do we have to do a new thing now because of this woman who has just come?

It has to be noted here that the pain that has been caused by silencing women's voices in the church is considerable. The faithful followers of the church that make up the majority of its members are without a voice, and are ostensibly without a gift, a talent, the call of God and cannot be sent. Some women refused to accept that God could also work through them or other women because they feared to be labelled as bad women who wanted to be like men, who didn't adhere and observe the prescriptions of their culture and the scriptures, and most of all are an embarrassment to their own people and more especially to their own husbands.

The research finds that both religion and culture play a significant role in influencing perceptions of the leadership of women in the ministry. In addition, the way that people read and interpret the scriptures, also has an impact on women leadership. Consequently, the *vhusadzi* theology is introduced that addresses the pain of these women regarding the negative impact

⁷ The name Sophia is not her real name, it is a pseudonym used for the sake of her protection.

of those religious and cultural discourses that influence perceptions against women's leadership in the church.

The vhusadzi theology and the Bible

The *vhusadzi* theology serves as an empowering theology in contrast to the problem discourses of religion and culture. It does that through engaging itself with the work of deconstructing the problem discourses and thus reconstructing the discourses that empower women with regard to leadership of the church. This is done through consciously engaging the scripture texts that encourage and empower women to assume leadership positions of the church.

When God created human beings as the climax of His creation, He created them male and female in His image:

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.⁸

After creating them, He blessed them to take dominion over the earth. According to the text above, male and female were created equal, both in the image of God and both with the responsibility of taking charge and ruling the earth. It was not God's purpose that a man and a woman should control each other. Man and woman are supposed to be partners who would complement each other, be in mutual agreement and have mutual respect for each other. As partners, they needed each other to enjoy life together, share the joys and sorrows of life and for both to be fully human. The *vhusadzi* theology helps women to realise that it is God who created them in His own image and gave them dominion over the earth. This kind of awareness will assist in deconstructing the patriarchal constructed interpretations concerning the roles women should play in the church. If the creation account is used to deny women leadership role in the church, the search for a new understanding of the creation account will serve as an alternative to the perceptions that have long been held against women.

The second account of creation is normally interpreted to mean that women are inferior to men. The following observation has also been made pertaining to this problematic discourse:

⁸ The Holy Bible: New International Version, 1998.

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For centuries, Christians have taken this story quite literally and acted upon conclusions based on a faulty, literal and uncritical interpretation. Many till today have continued to use it to justify their claims to men's superiority over women, as their God-given right; that the man was created first and woman, second; as proof that woman is inferior and subordinate to man ontologically.⁹

Women's perspectives on the second account of the creation story shows that the discourse that "women are inferior to men" is problematic also in its influence in the view of the roles women should play in the church. This account is used to support the denial of the potential of women to hold leadership positions in the church. The *vhusadzi* theology engages with this text that the literal interpretation is criticised and not supported because of its male centeredness and its incapability to define women in terms of their humanness, womanhood, and leadership potential. The *vhusadzi* theology holds and emphasises that anyone can be a leader irrespective of the order of creation; that is to say, a woman can lead as well as a man. This kind of affirmation regarding women leadership values women for who they are, namely that they are created in God's image and are complete human beings, irrespective of whether they were taken out of a man and/or created in the second place.

When the birth of Jesus was announced to a woman, it never dawned on her that this was the beginning of a radical change in the history of humankind. Jesus came as the saviour of all humankind, in other words, as the saviour of all men and women. Importantly, He treated them both as equal. Jesus' coming to this earth began a journey of salvation, not only spiritually, but also physically, socially, psychologically, culturally and religiously. Jesus Christ's salvation provides a way out of women's struggles against issues of race, gender, class, culture and religion. This salvation means women are now free to be human and to feel safe to be women. This hope is strengthened in the words of Landman (1994:87) when she says:

How, then, does Christ save us from hurting and being hurt?
An iterative piety emphasises that Christ has already saved us
by giving us a new life and thus by empowering us to change
the attitude as well as structures which inflict hurt on people,
such as hierarchies in which men dominate women, and power
games in which people of different races dominate others.¹⁰

⁹ Uchem, R. "Overcoming women's subordination: An Igbo African and Christian perspective: Envisioning an inclusive theology with reference to women. (unpublished dissertation.com: USA) 2001, p. 180.

¹⁰ C. Landman, "The piety of Afrikaans women." (Pretoria: Unisa Press) 1994, p. 87.

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Jesus' salvation symbolises "good news" for women who are hurting, marginalised, facing issues pertaining to sexism, classism, race, patriarchy and other alienating discourses that deny them leadership positions in the church. For women, "good news" means experiencing deliverance from all the ills that deprive them of their full womanhood. This is echoed by the words of Masenya (when she says):

African-South African women continue in faith, to experience the power of the risen Christ confirmed in their everyday lives. It is the power that enables them to cast out demons, to heal the sick and to proclaim liberation to those who are in bondage.¹¹

The *vhusadzi* theology advocates that the power of Jesus' salvation is an important resource in the struggles of African women. When they experience the power of salvation that is available to them, it transforms them and their struggles, to enable them to live meaningful lives and to assume leadership roles in the church. The church needs to demonstrate solidarity with those who are hurting, marginalised and who are being alienated, such as women. Regarding this support, LenkaBula (2005:115) notes:

The churches will need to demonstrate their solidarity with the poor and marginalised. The poor in South Africa are largely women. Women, particularly black women, have to a large extent been alienated from education, including theological education, from the means to support themselves and their families (meaningful employment), and from meaningful life.¹²

With the *vhusadzi* theology, which is life-affirming, with its commitment to the deconstruction of religious and cultural discourses that are life-denying, women can begin to experience meaningful lives. Jesus' salvation when approached from the perspective of this theology holds the potential for full inclusion of African-South African Vhavenda women in leadership positions in the church and for women to experience full womanhood.

Before Jesus ascended to heaven, He gave an instruction to His followers to go and wait in Jerusalem for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This is what happened according to Acts 1:12-14:

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olive Grove, which is near Jerusalem – a Sabbath day's journey

¹¹ M.J. Masenya (Ngwana' Mphahlele), "An African methodology for South African biblical sciences: Revisiting the *bosadi* (womanhood) approach." (*OTE* 18(3):741-751), p. 748.

¹² P. LenkaBula, "Justice and reconciliation in post-apartheid South Africa: a South African woman's perspective (*International review of mission*, 94(372): 103-116) 2005, p. 15.

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away. When they arrived, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying: Peter, John, Andrew, Phillip, Thomas, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James. All these were continually united in prayer, along with the women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, and His brothers.¹³

Now, according to the text above, the experience of Pentecost involved both women and men. It was not only the male disciples of Jesus who were there during the birth of the church, but there were women as well. When the day of Pentecost came, they were together, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, that appeared like flames of fire, resting on each of them, and they began to speak in new tongues as the Spirit gave them the power of utterance. Importantly, the *vhusadzi* theology encourages women to speak of their experiences regarding Pentecost, for it is when they begin to speak that they will find ways of breaking away from the patriarchal nature of the church. Following which, the church will become the church of the Holy Spirit where both women and men become partners in the leadership of the church. It is when women begin to speak that they will be able to redefine, re-evaluate and transform the patriarchal nature of the church.

A few aspects are worth mentioning concerning the experience of Pentecost according to Acts 2: 1-4:

- The experience involved both women and men.
- Individually, they were all given the power of speech.
- All were empowered to become witnesses.
- All were baptised, including the women.

Significantly, both women and men were speaking in other tongues. This baptism did not come as an inherited privilege and it was not gender specific. The Holy Spirit rested on people regardless of their sex, class, status and culture. In the Pentecostal churches today, women are mostly free to exercise the gifts of the Holy Spirit. They are free to pray, become emotional, dance, clap, speak in tongues and raise their voices to sing praises to God. It is in the Pentecostal churches with their Pentecostal understanding where women should have been encouraged all the more to become leaders in the sense of becoming pastors than in any church organisation. Instead, the leadership development of women in the Pentecostal church is still faced with challenges.

Women can never be fully emancipated as long as the spiritual aspect remains separated from the physical aspect and as long as there is no

¹³ The Holy Bible: Holman Christian Standard Bible, 2003.

assurance of a more holistic and liberating understanding of the role of the Spirit within the Pentecostal framework of the work of the Spirit in interpretation.¹⁴ The *vhusadzi* theology takes the insights of Nadar into cognisance that can prove helpful to women when they engage with discourses that are harmful to women, discourses such as “women should remain silent in the church”. When women begin to ask new questions – questions that were never asked before for fear of sinning against the church, it will help to deconstruct the problematic discourses. These questions will bring about new answers, which will enable women to participate fully in the church. Until the church hears what the “Spirit is saying” to the churches, women can never be said to be truly emancipated.

The *vhusadzi* theology encourages women to speak about their Pentecostal experience, and not to remain silent. It is only when women break the silence and begin to speak that they will experience their freedom and become counted in the leadership of the church. Women should speak as they are carried along by the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit comes upon women and rests on them, He gives them the ability to speak, prophecy, and utter words of wisdom that build up the church of God. Why should women remain silent when they are endowed with power to speak? Who is given the mandate to speak on their behalf? Does it offend the Holy Spirit when women speak, prophecy and lead the church as carried along by the Holy Spirit?

The vhusadzi theology and culture

The Vhavenda culture possesses positive elements that endow both women and men with humanity. However, culture also contains negative elements that discriminate against one part of society, usually women. The *vhusadzi* theology criticises the elements that are oppressive to women in the African culture, namely:

- The aspects that do not regard women as human beings.
- Those aspects that discriminate against women in whatever way.
- The aspects which diminish the opportunities for women in life and in effect render them second class citizens in society.
- The practices that promote the unfair treatment of women.

The African culture presents many positive elements, which African people are encouraged to embrace. These are cultural practices that bring the humanness of people back, both men and women. African people treasure the

¹⁴ S. Nadar, “On being the Pentecostal church: Pentecostal women’s voices and visions.” (Ecumenical Review 56(3):354-367) 2004, p. 367.

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culture so much that nothing should be done to jeopardise it. Now, the *vhusadzi* theology is seeking ways to make African culture as woman-friendly as possible.

Many proverbs and sayings about women are related to marriage and how women should conduct themselves in marriage. There are many sayings about women – the wisdom of which is questionable as they do not lead to harmonious living and development of an individual's potential (Oduyoye 2001:3). Proverbs or sayings such as *vhida la musadzi li vuhadzi* (meaning that the grave of a woman is at her in-laws or where she is married), imply that the expectation of culture on a woman is that she should idolise marriage and stay married at all cost. Oduyoye (2001:4) rightly observes:

The result of the idolization of the married state for women is that they lose their status as human beings with a will of their own. They live to do the will of their husbands. In patriarchal families in Africa, a wife is absorbed into her husband's family as a means of production and reproduction. She has no place anywhere else.

In addition, women are expected to get married whether they want to or not, or have personal reasons for not marrying. In fact, the community is not ready to accept an unmarried person and this applies to both men and women. The idolisation of marriage contributes negatively to women getting married even at young age at the expense of self-development, and that denies a woman her full womanhood. Importantly, the *vhusadzi* theology is committed to encouraging family life and the good treatment of both men and women, and does not propagate marriage at the expense of women. The fact is, marriage should be viewed as an institution to which both a man and a woman should be committed to make it work. Men and women should learn to treat each other as human beings and with respect both in everyday life and not less importantly in marriage.

Conclusion

The *vhusadzi* theology upholds and promotes the cultural and religious practices that bestow value and dignity on women's lives, however, it also calls into account the ones that have the potential to create cultural norms that dehumanise women and label them as second class citizens. Significantly, by questioning the unquestionable and suggesting the alternatives, the *vhusadzi* theology has the potential to create a conducive environment for women to address issues that make them vulnerable to both religious and cultural discourses that dehumanise them, thereby finding alternatives to the treatment of women.

The experiences of women in the church made us to note the pain that has been caused by the perceptions that both men and women hold concerning the leadership of women. The perceptions that are held are influenced and based on religion and culture. The majority faithful followers of the church have to spend considerable time trying to prove themselves first, and when they finally get to do what they are supposed to do, it is sometimes too late. Consequently, the *vhusadzi* theology engages critically with the negative elements of African Vhavenda culture and the Christian religion, thereby advocating fair treatment of women and unlimited opportunities as human beings.

As a way of showing its commitment to the leadership of women, the *vhusadzi* theology challenges the stereotypes held by leaders and people who use the Christian religion and the prescriptions of culture as dogmas that cannot be re-visited and deconstructed. In this manner, the *vhusadzi* theology is able to resuscitate and recapture the reality of a black African-South African Muvenda woman in finding ways to speak about God and describing the ecclesiastical struggles and cultural constraints that deny women full leadership in the church.

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