GOD'S IMAGE OR MAN'S GLORY?: A KENYAN POSTCOLONIAL FEMINIST READING OF 1 CORINTHIANS 11:1-16

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ABSTRACT

This study uses a postcolonial feminist analysis to show how a biblical text (1 Cor 11:1-16), because of its patriarchal and imperial background, excludes women from the image of God. It demonstrates how this text has been taken up, developed and appropriated to support the subordination of women throughout the Christian tradition from the Church Fathers to the reformers and right up to the present day postcolonial Kenyan Church context. While this text has been used for a long time to oppress women, this study argues that a critical reading of the text from a postcolonial feminist perspective shows that gender disparity exists in this and in other gender-biased Pauline and post-Pauline texts because they were based on the existing patriarchal and imperial structures, which subordinated women to men. Further the study demonstrates that the texts have continued to subordinate women to men throughout the history of Christian tradition. Most churches, such as the Anglican Church, express belief in the Scriptures. Yet such churches like the Anglican Church of Kenya, which seemingly supports gender equality through its gender inclusive article in its *Constitution,* does not offer guidance about how such texts are to be read and appropriated by Christians. The study offers a method to fill this gap. It is hoped that the academy and the church will avail themselves of this method in their reading practices of the Bible. It takes into account the history of gender and imperial biases in the construction of texts such as 1 Cor 11:1-16 that exclude women from the image of God.

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