

ADDRESSING CHRISTIAN AND XHOSA CULTURAL OBSTRUCTIONS
TOWARDS WOMEN MINISTERIAL AND CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP
DEVELOPMENT IN THE OR TAMBO DISTRICT, EASTERN CAPE, SOUTH
AFRICA.

By

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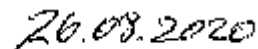
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To my beloved parents , Mrs Ennie Nomhle Jali and Philemon Maqhekeza Jali who, during hard times, raised me up to become a skilful and influential leader. Their good memories and legacy will always be remembered.

Title:

Addressing Christian and Xhosa cultural obstructions: towards women ministerial and Christian leadership development in the O R Tambo District, Eastern Cape, South Africa

Abstract

The research study focuses on the prejudices women encounter in both the church and society concerning the recognition of their leadership potential. Women's leadership is largely defined by men in their cultural context. The church also imposes expectations on traditional African churchwomen, which seem contradictory to what the Word of God teaches. This condition is ironically supported by men who do not necessarily go to church because of their cultural convictions. Thus, the dissertation argues extensively that this untenable situation needs to be challenged.

The study interacts with Biblical texts that are often subjected to erroneous interpretation drawn in support of oppressive cultural practises and used to militate against women leadership. The approach is not entirely subjective as it considers the perspectives of some renowned African theological writers, readers as well as women role models in exploring the extent of women's burgeoning in leadership positions in the Assemblies of God (AoG) church in the O R Tambo district Eastern Cape, South Africa.

Key terms:

Women and oppression; culture and women; gender and stereotypes, community and transformation; women and empowerment; The Assemblies of God church (AoG); church and transformation; equality and women; church and transformation; women and leadership.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The area of concern that gives rise to this research, is the nature and extent of women's development in Christian Ministerial leadership in the O R Tambo District of the Eastern Cape Province. While women are actively involved in the church, they are not afforded the relevant training opportunities as is the case with men, which assist women in their ministerial service. This limitation faced by women may be attributed to their unequal status compared to that of men in the OR Tambo area.

The OR Tambo District is situated in the eastern part of the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. It is predominantly a Xhosa cultural domain and embraces patriarchal and androcentric cultural tendencies. Women are viewed as subordinate and expected to be submissive to men in practically all sectors of life. Thus, the OR Tambo District was chosen because it is considered as Xhosa "proper" and perceived to embrace the core values and practices of the Xhosa culture.

It should also be noted that, not much has been done by various churches towards the development of women to become eligible for ministerial and Christian leadership roles equal to men. Only men are eligible for appointment as deacons, elders and to perform pastoral ministry. Women are confined to teaching each other and children as well as supporting men in primary and secondary church activities. These obstructions have thus been inherited from the ground motives of the Xhosa Culture and the particular church communities in which women function.

This research, then, intends to investigate the Xhosa cultural norms, Christian practices and beliefs that prevent the ministerial development of women in the OR Tambo District located in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. The study refers to three church Assembly of God communities in the OR Tambo District.

1.2 The problem statement

Discrimination is a violation of any person's human rights. The prevention and deficiency of women's development and training for leadership in church ministry is an injustice and a contravention of women's rights. Women in the OR Tambo District are denied the opportunity to develop as ministers for their various churches. Most of the restrictions experienced by the women are based on religious and cultural norms and practices. Thus, the research intends to investigate the Christian religious and Xhosa cultural norms and practices that serve as obstacles in the women's ministerial and leadership development in the OR Tambo District. It interrogates the Christian religious and Xhosa cultural discourses that lead to the undermining of women's development in ministry with a view to develop liberating strategies that will enable women to fulfil their God-given mission/calling in the church. It is, furthermore, hoped that the study will contribute towards the restraining or elimination of stereotypical worldviews on womanhood that negate the significant roles of women in church.

Xhosa cultural practices view women as perpetual minors and inferior to men in all respects. These attitudes and beliefs translate into the church where women are consequently perceived as not cognitively competent enough to lead and dependent on men in all leadership matters. Women are not informed or consulted on major decisions concerning the church. Culture also portrays men as the head of the women, however, if women are trained, they can compete with men on an equal basis in ministerial functions. The advent of democracy in South Africa seems to have threatened men's power and authority over women in society and church. This is aggravated when women who are fortunate to be biblically/theologically trained and therefore not considered eligible for ordination and appointment as clergy. Furthermore, women's responsibilities are restricted to family situations where they are confined to domestic chores, childbearing, and the upbringing of children to be submissive and subordinate to men. These secondary perceptions are not different from those in the church where women are limited to teach other women, girls and Sunday school children.

As a result, the research endeavours to determine how these detrimental cultural perceptions concerning women endorse the erroneous hermeneutical and ecclesiastical perceptions and practices within the church in general and the Assemblies of God in particular.

1.3 Motivation, relevancy and purpose of study

My Christian experience and, in particular, involvement in Christian leadership has resulted in my witnessing of the astonishing obstructions which women encounter concerning eligibility to assume appropriate leadership positions in the church. I am a minister in the church and have observed women progressing in church activities, forming part of the leadership structures and thus, involved in the decision making processes that determine strategic direction of their churches.

However, this does not exist in the Assemblies of God church in the OR Tambo District. Hence, this research focuses on women and their position in the Assemblies of God Church in the OR District.

The exercise is perceived as relevant in that the empowerment of women is significant in the secular world and also the religious world and in the AoG in particular. This suggests that the development of women in the church should keep trend with the secular world. The research focuses particularly on the cultural obstructions that have spilled over into church impediments. It also considers how this can be addressed and overcome in order to free women so that they can develop in Christian leadership.

1.4 The aim of the study

The aim of the study is to investigate the Xhosa cultural obstructions that have spilled over into ecclesial impediments that prevent women in the Assembly of God Churches (AoG) in the OR Tambo District to development in Church leadership, both in pastoral and management positions. The research intends to unpack the inherent unethical, discriminatory and unjust elements of these cultural obstructions and show how these should not determine or prevent women from developing in Christian leadership roles.

Thus, the main research question is:

- What impact does religious and cultural obstructions play on women's ministerial and leadership development in the AoG in the OR Tambo District?

The following subsidiary questions, which emanate from the main research question are also considered:

1. Which Biblical passages are used by the AoG with regard to female leadership and how is the interpretation thereof influenced by the religious and cultural perspectives?
2. Which Xhosa cultural values, beliefs and customs undermine female leadership and how are they interpreted and applied to the role of churchwomen in leadership?
3. How can the negative elements of religious and cultural discourses be deconstructed in order to open future opportunities for women to enter into leadership and the contribution of womanist, feminist theologies?

1.5 Literature review

The literature review that follows is based on interesting views concerning the topic arrived at during my consultation of available studies. The review includes biblical, historical, cultural, gender, theological and Christian leadership literature.

1.5.1 The Bible as a Source

The relevant biblical sources that will be used in this research are from both the Old and New Testament using the New International version (NIV) except where indicated otherwise. The reason for using the Bible as a source is that it is a final arbiter in matters of faith and practice. At the same time, the church does not exist in a vacuum. It exists within a particular cultural context. Thus, the church cannot be divorced from society. The church, including the AoG, has to transform cultures to practise the original purpose of God with regard to women and leadership and such transformation should start within the church.

Old Testament Literature

The Old Testament contains women who exhibited authentic leadership qualities. These will be used as exemplary models for women leadership in the contemporary church.

The story about Miriam (Ex. 15) is an appropriate example in this regard. Miriam is described as a worship leader and prophetess for the Israelite nation. She was also the third in command after Moses and Aaron (Mi. 6:4) or part of the team together with Moses and Aaron. Miriam's position is probably due to the fact that she was trained on the job by her brothers, hence her story is considered relevant for the envisaged study.

Another important Biblical woman leader is Deborah, a married woman, who held two offices. She was a female prophet and a ruler or judge. The children of Israel were delivered from a twenty yearlong occupation by a foreign army, but this was after, Barak, the Israelite General, had been instructed by Deborah to attack the Canaanites. Deborah is a typical leader with a massive responsibility and wisdom in the country, hence, she is utilised in the study as also had the audacity to judge both men and women.

The story of Huldah (2 Kgs. 22:14) is also very appropriate. When Huldah was consulted by the priests in Israel after they had observed that the nation was in jeopardy after departing from the Law of God and she assured them that the coming judgement would come later. This incident shows the confidence the priests had on Huldah. Once more, Hulda typifies a leader greatly honoured by the nation for her religious duties. This will add impetus in this study's intention to show that priesthood is not gender sensitive.

Carol Meyers (2013) in *Re-discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite women in context* is one of the trend setters in women studies in the OT. She examines archaeological discoveries, ethnographic information and the Biblical text and arrives at the observation that the ancient Israelite women were strong and significant actors in the midst of patriarchal challenges. Lessons will be drawn for this research on how the above-cited women succeeded in the midst of these challenges. This research indeed acknowledges that Meyers (2013) encourages women to assume their leadership role in the space of mainstream leadership.

New Testament Literature of Relevance

The culture of male domination in the OT seems to have permeated into the NT era albeit fierce debate. An examination of Scripture suggests some interesting perspectives. Some debate centres around Christ's attitude towards women and Paul's teachings on the role of women in worshipping.

Critical criticism is presented by Ward B. Powers (1996) in *The ministry of women in the Church*. This scholar offers guidelines on ideal practices for today's church. The text also teaches against defending men's positions as against women, which is the core of this investigation. Thus, Christ seems, against all the cultural controversies and debates, to have adopted a positive attitude towards women in ministry.

Jesus attitude is indeed perceived as positive against all people including women. The case in point is when Jesus visited Mary and Martha home (Lk. 10:38-42). Mary joined men in listening to Christ's teachings whilst Martha was busy in the kitchen. Christ praised Martha for having done what is expected of men. This is significant for the study since it frees the inherent mentality of confining women to house duties.

In another case, the Samaritan woman typifies the capability of women's involvement in ministry. Christ entered into a conversation at Jacob's well (Jn. 4:4-26) with her, which was unusual to Jewish men and took the disciples by surprise. However, the Samaritan woman became a changed person after meeting Jesus. She acquired the courage to leave her water jar behind at the well in order to witness to the people about Christ. This is significant for the study in that women should not be confined to teaching Sunday school children and other elementary activities only and instead be given the same mission as men.

Similarly, in Jn. 8:3-11, Christ protected the woman caught engaging in adultery. The woman was not alone in this despicable act and yet nothing is mentioned about the man who committed adultery with her. This shows that Christ had a genuine interest in women. This story is significant for the study because it underscores that men should not consider themselves as above reproach.

Interestingly, according to Jn. 20:1 and Mt 28:8, a woman was the first to arrive at Jesus' tomb and thereafter announced His resurrection. The woman was instructed by Jesus to

witness about His resurrection (Jn. 20:17, 18). It would be strange for women to be passive in the church and yet Jesus sent a woman to deliver the news of His resurrection to the Apostles. The significance in this research is that women can stand alone without husbands or stand alongside their husbands, if any, and equally proclaim the Good News to all people.

In addition, Lk. 8:1-3 shows that, Jesus allowed women to accompany Him and His disciples. The invitation was against the Jewish culture. In Jewish culture, women were not allowed to learn from the rabbis. Thus, Jesus raised women from degradation and servitude to fellowship and service. He showed that all people are equal under God. Women also supported Jesus and his disciples from their resources (Lk.8:2-3). It seems obvious that these women had discretionary money, something not allowed to women in many pagan societies. Thus, it can be argued that many contemporary churches are supported mostly by women in their missionary endeavours. With regard to the intended study, this shows that even the Xhosa people can adopt the same attitude Christ adopted towards women.

Don Williams (1980) in *The apostle Paul and women in the church* makes an important contribution on women's role in ministry. Williams discusses key questions for the church with regard to women's liberation in Christ. He also discussed issues about women's silence in the church. The book is relevant to the research as it deals with whether or not women should be passive or active in the church. The book also paves the way to the rightful place of women in the church amidst an already oppressive environment.

In a similar vein, Dorothy Jean Kelly Patterson (1997), in *Aspects of a Biblical Theology of women in the church*, makes a further significant contribution. Patterson examines the ancient writings and unveils God's original plan and purpose for womanhood in both the OT and NT. She underscores that both man and woman were given equal responsibilities. This study influences this research's conceptualisation of how men and women can be co-leaders and complement each other in ministry rather than competing with each other as often noticed these days. The cultural practices mentioned in the research are thus understood in the light of God's original intention for women. For example, in 1 Tm. 2:12, Paul commands women to be silent in church. It remains to be

seen whether Paul was reducing women to mere spectators in the church or not. Similarly, he retorts in 1 Cor. 11:3 that a man is the head of the wife. It is equally not vivid what Paul means by the word “head”. These passages assist the researcher in crafting a contextual understanding of Paul’s teachings on the role of women in worship.

1.6 Theological Literature on Women in the Church

Denis Draper, Jonathan Ackerman and Emma Mashinini (1991) in *Women hold up half the sky: Women in the church in Southern Africa*, like other scholars, focus on women’s plight in church. Their study, which appeared at a time when women were struggling to be ordained, examines issues concerning women and the church. It traces the woman’s place and views of the early church fathers with regard to women in the church from a historical perspective and unveils the plight of women in ministry. This is significant in the study since it assists in mapping the attitudes on women leadership and how these permeated over time in order to craft the future of women in leadership.

Feminist

The key critical feminist work considered here is Perrian C Lienemann’s (2004) in *The Biblical foundations for a feminist and participatory theology of missions*. Lienemann traces feminist theology of mission from the first century at a time when the church functions were limited to men only. She interprets a number of passages that seem to suggest the notion of women being involved extensively in missionary work during the period marked by an influx of calls to mission. The study had a bearing towards understanding whether or not women can be called despite obstructions by church norms and practices as well as how they can be involved in the church’s decision making processes. It may also help to understand how Scriptures can be understood differently in terms of culture.

African Womanist Theology

Annalet Van Schalkwyk (1997) in *Women’s research- from the periphery- An epistemological and methodological base for feminist missiological/historical research amongst contemporary South African women* traces the obstructions experienced by

women in leadership in the South African context. Van Schalkwyk focuses on the way women have been marginalised from the mainstream leadership because of the western dichotomy of mind and body. The study is significant in that it provides insight on some South African women's failure not experience peace despite significant progress made in the area of multiracial democratic governance, and hence the need for the improvement of and liberation of women. The book shows how women can create a new life in the midst of obstructions, which are issues particularly relevant to this study.

Furthermore, Rosemary Radford Ruether (1998) in her exciting work, *Women and redemption: A theology history* analyses the nineteenth century experiences of women in Africa. Her study considers the perception that women are created to be dominated by men, which emanates from the colonial and cultural experiences that oppressed women in society and the church. The writer appeals to women not to fold their arms, but to challenge the untenable practices. The practices suggested in this study assist in developing women in ministry, which is one of the objectives of this study.

Louise Kretzschmar (1995) in her article "Women and culture: Ecclesial and Cultural Transformation" in C. Villa-Vicencio and Carl Niehaus (Eds). *Many Cultures, One Nation: Festschrift for Beyers Naude* examines women's negative experiences owing to cultural contravenes. In the midst of this apparent predicament, she encourages women to be united and speak against all obstructions. This view is relevant to this study for, women must take a stand for themselves as no one will fight for their rights. The study also conscientises women to understand their plight and find ways to prepare themselves for leadership since their role is indispensable in the church.

Gender and African Women

There exists various literature, such as Ursula King and Tina Beattie's *In Gender, Religion and Diversity: Cross-cultural perspectives*, which focuses on women and culture. Beattie discusses challenging questions concerning gender and the religious phenomenon. The writer dwells extensively on power and authority *vis-a-vis* the authority implied in the Scriptures. Bettie also uses religious, social and cultural data to arrive at and introduce new insights in the field of gender studies. The study is vital in this research as it raises

pertinent questions with regard to the abuse of power and authority, which African culture is notoriously characterised by in particular when it comes to involving women in decision making processes.

Similarly, Louise Kretzschmar (1995) discusses the awful experiences of women as a result of obnoxious cultural practises in her article “Gender and oppression: A South African feminist under view.” In this article, Kretzschmar discusses the relationship between gender and oppression from an African perspective. She outlines the various ways in which women are oppressed and identifies tentative strategies for empowerment. Interestingly, the author observes that oppression may emanate from both men and women. This study also considers the oppression of women by men or other females and outlines obstructions against women's participation that must be resisted irrespective of where they emanate from. Finally, the ethical standards to be maintained are highlighted in this study.

African Cultural Literature and Women:

Existing literature by Oduyoye, Merryambu and Kanyoro, Musimbi (1995), Masenya, Madipoane and Sue Rakoczy (2004) discuss the way women are treated in African cultures. Oduyoye and Kanyoro (1995) in *The will to rise: Women tradition and the church in Africa* discuss how women have been treated in African society and the church. They reject all repressive sexual stereotypes and traditional axioms that are against human dignity, women and men included. Oduyoye and Musimbi discuss the ups and downs of African women where religion and culture shapes life holistically. They also identify and explain issues that society does not expect women to discuss in accordance with culture and women's place in society and the church. The book serves as an awakening for women not to accept every practice, but to challenge and transform views in culture that may be in contra-distinction with the Biblical teaching. Thus, this study underlines that culture should also be understood in context.

Masenya, Madipoane: *Trapped between two “canons”. African South African women in the HIV/Aids era:*

In addition, Masenya's study in *Trapped between two "canons": African South African women in the HIV/Aids era*, carried out amongst the Northern Sotho people examined this community's culture and practices on the payment of dowry. In this instance, culture seems to be a double-edged sword, reducing women to the status of being subjects of men rather than equals. The same situation is evident in the Xhosa culture. It further labels women as perpetual minors. In terms of this study, Masenya's observations assist on how to understand the practice in terms of contemporary views that do not limit opportunities for women in ministry.

Finally, Rakoczy (2004) in the book, *In Her Name: Women Doing Theology*, makes important contributions to the global conversation about women in their context. In her view, women are different from place to place, area to area, country to country but one common feature is that they are not happy. The study notes various obstructions faced by women in their attempts at assuming leadership in the church. It calls for the liberation of women from traditional patriarchal and androcentric practices that undermine women. This study is significant because it is applied in diverse theological contexts, including the Xhosa cultural environment. In its context, women should not look to other people or sources to liberate them but must liberate themselves.

Xhosa Cultural Literature and Women

Despite an apparent paucity of Xhosa writings on culture and women, both Tension Goxo's (1997) and Groves, Susan Clare's (1995) studies are significant here. Goxo's (1997) thesis in *Human sexuality and religious teaching* is pertinent to this study.

In addition, a paper presented at the Pan Africanist conference in Ghana in 1997 by a respected Xhosa writer, presented some astonishing experiences of women under Xhosa cultural practises that obstruct women from being leaders. The conference paper discusses the norm that *kuyanyanyezelwa emzini* (one must tolerate everything done in a marriage homestead) and underlines how this implies that women must not complain about their oppression by men. The payment of dowry (bride price) also implies that women should be undermined by men as their subjects. These practices need to be deconstructed so that women are seen as being eligible for leadership.

Groves, Susan *Gift or Poison? Women experience of the church*:

Finally, Susan Clare Grove's (1995) research, in *Gift or Poison? Women experience of the church*, examines the experiences of Xhosa women who are regarded as minors in all matters of life. As such, the women cannot make decisions without their husbands. This effectively makes women feel sub-human in real life situations. The study is relevant to this research in that women may see themselves as independent in their own right as human beings created in the image of God. A level of respect for women has to be crafted.

Assembly of God History and Women

Peter Watt (1992) in *From Africa's soil- The story of the Assemblies of God in Southern Africa* traces the history and development of the AoG church in Southern Africa. The book is among the first written by an African from an African context. It traces the history of the Assemblies of God in Southern Africa as introduced by the Western missionaries and covers the doctrinal beliefs and the mission praxis of the church. The study is significant to my study since I focus on the attitude and teaching of the missionaries with regard to culture and the role of women in mission. Watt's study also discusses what the missionaries did with cultural issues that appeared to contrast with Biblical teaching. Hence, the reviewed study is pivotal to this intended study.

A further significant study is compiled by A.B. Gamedze and Musa Maluleke (2007): Elijah Maswanganyi: *The Prophet Of Love & Reconciliation And The Three Generals*. The book discusses the history of the Assemblies of God and the exemplary leadership in families by some of the earliest pioneers in Southern Africa. Foregrounding the role of characters discussed in the book is the expression the belief that no human being is born with an oppressive mindset. The book is relevant for my study because it explains the nature of authentic leadership in the context of the Assemblies of God. The study also typifies Christian leadership as based on the primacy of the Scriptures irrespective of gender stereotyping.

Ethical Church Leadership

Books dealing with the essentials of good leadership practise have been utilised in this exercise. Amongst these is Gary McIntosh and Samuel D Rima's (2007) *Overcoming The*

Dark Side Of Leadership that presents good assessment guides for effective leadership. The McIntosh and Rima study deals with essential qualities of good leadership and how to redress any existing dark side of leadership. The book is relevant for the study, especially for people who want to take their leadership acumen to the higher levels. The sentiments expressed apply to both men and women on an equal basis, which ensures that there is no failure in leadership. An awareness of these pointers to potential failure minimizes chances of failure in leadership.

Another critical study is John C Maxwell's (1998) *Laws Of Leadership* that discusses the laws of leadership based on ethical standards, which are informed by the principles of the Word of God. The book is both a theoretical construct and study that can be applied in real life situation, hence beneficial for the study. Maxwell's study helps to build leadership in all areas. The laws are a foundation of leadership and can be applied in every church situation including the intended target population.

1.7 Delimitation and limitations of the study

It is often contended that whatever is not the objective of the study should be regarded as delimitation since the researcher may be tempted to present some valuable and useful information that lies beyond the scope of the study (Leedy 1997:59). This research, therefore, was not intended to cover all aspects impacting on women oppression in church and society. The study is apprehensive about the cultural and religious obstructions that thwart opportunities for development of women in leadership. It provides some information on women's experiences in church and society. Additionally, the study considers some women who have, against all odds, demonstrated their potential in all facets of life.

On the other side of the pendulum, the limitations in the study are naturally associated with the subjectivity of the researcher. In this exercise the researcher is committed to Xhosa women, particularly in the O R Tambo District who are the beneficiaries of this study. Therefore, the outcomes are not generalised to include the experiences of all women in all churches. Instead, thus researcher tries to promote the development of women, in similar environments as portrayed in the research findings, in leadership. The

study encapsulates the need to understand women in their specific situations, in this case the AoG women, and to invite other women to benefit from the recommended turnaround strategies.

1.8 Methodology

Theoretical framework

The researcher uses a qualitative investigation and analysis of the work of selected authors on leadership. There are scholars who have made a significant contribution towards leadership. In addition, a qualitative research of women and their role in Xhosa society, the church, politics and the business world and the place of women in the AoG (Assembly of God) is carried out in this study.

A theoretical framework drawing on a study of the cultural practices concerning women and issues such as the socialisation of women in society, marriage norms and practices, male headship and female subordination in terms of the Xhosa culture, is also used. The issues that possibly obstruct women from assuming leadership in home and society are investigated and I determine whether or not these cultural practices have an impact on attitudes towards women leadership in the church.

In order to ensure that the research subscribes to scientific research practises reputable research literature will be utilised as indicated hereunder;

Mason, Jennifer 2011. *Qualitative researching*. (2nd Ed.

This is a user-friendly book that deals with research techniques. Jennifer Mason does not deal with abstract theoretical discussions but attempts to engage the researcher with own research questions. The technique of data collection, analysis and synthesis is discussed. Following on the suggested research methods will culminate in a valid and reliable outcomes. The book is thus significant for this study.

Vyhmeister, Nancy Jean (2008): *Your Guide to writing Quality Research papers for students of Religion and Theology*. 2nd Ed.

In this book, Nancy Jean Vyhmeister writes extensively on the characteristics of research. Various methods of conducting research, how to source information, the management of data and how to write the final report, are explained in this book. The book is of great significance in this exercise to ensure the validity of the study. Techniques written therein can be applied in any environment.

Non-Empirical Research

Initially, the researcher intended to conduct an empirical research study by conducting interviews with women who might provide information about their life experiences with men in church and the society in general. On review, it was felt that since the researcher grew up in the same community under investigation since birth, there is nothing new the interviewees would offer, relatively unknown to the researcher. The researcher is a bona fide member of the AoG church and a leader in good standing. The researcher, therefore, considered a non-empirical research, based on theological philosophical analysis, theory building, literature survey and conceptual analysis as an appropriate option. The data used was collected from published and unpublished works written on the theme. Material written on women's role in early Christian history assisted in uncovering Biblical narratives on the socio-cultural and historical experiences of women during that time. Finally, various documents, including the Constitution, share some light on the ascertainable challenges faced by women in the AoG regarding their role in leadership.

If I had conducted an empirical research, based on information received from informants, hindrances would have been encountered. Basically, there are four possibilities that would result in such hindrances: (I) I would encounter resistance from women participating in the study who have internalised the patriarchal practices of the AoG and who believe that it constitutes what a "good woman" should be in terms of the Scriptures. Thus, any contrary view is regarded as distasteful to God. (ii) The AoG men would fear that equality with women would practically undermine their authority, power and privilege. (iii) Since I am a pastor and chief leader in the AoG, the interviewees would not feel free to share what they think about the role for women in leadership (IV). The leaders who have theological competence would like their evangelical theology to be questioned, (v) Since, I grew up in the area under investigation, there is nothing new that the interviewees

would present that I do not know. Consequently, I decided to carry out a non-empirical research grounded on literature survey.

This research exercise is valuable in that it equips me with research skills and adds more impetus to the academic world. Thus, the appropriate role and contribution of women in Christian leadership will be enhanced.

1.8.1 Ethical considerations

The researcher is committed to making sure that prospective participants are not rendered vulnerable as a result of their participation in the exercise. The researcher presented all participants with an ethical clearance letter to sign in order to ensure the participants' voluntary consent and that they are not coerced into participation. The participants were assured of their confidentiality and anonymity in the exercise. The researcher also informed participants that they were free to recuse themselves should they feel the need to at any stage of the interview.

1.9 Summary

This chapter presents the preliminary information with regard to the research process, namely, the problem statement, motivation, relevancy and purpose of study, aim, literature review, and method used. It also contains some ethical considerations observed in a research practise. The unflagging interest in the type, place and extent of women Christian leadership is attested to by the relevant literature that has emerged and continues to emerge in this contemporary environment. It is acknowledged that women have minimum leadership experiences in churches as they suffer some forms of gender discrimination and oppression by men. This downgrades women from being human beings, like men, created in the image of God, to a position of being second class human beings. It is indicated that no era or Christian denomination is innocent of excluding women from the mainstream leadership practise and restricting them to areas involving less responsibility and status than the responsibility given to men in general.

The chapter also underscored some apparent resistances to the inclusion of women in a male dominated ministry and the underlying views from churchwomen and churchmen. If

women are able to articulate their particular difficulties encountered in ministry and men express their reluctance to unreservedly accept women in ministry, one can view this against the background of a conservative culture and the impact thereof in contemporary churches.

Therefore, the marginalisation of women throughout history should not create an impression on women that the situation is sacrosanct. Neither should it reinforce the idea that, since patriarchal and prejudicial tendencies persisted for such a long time, they should be viewed as ethical.

1.10 Organisation of Chapters

The research is divided into seven chapters as typified hereunder:

Chapter one outlines the background to the study focusing on how the research has been conducted.

Chapter two discusses religio-cultural environments that have an impact on the understanding of the role of women in church leadership. Biblical texts that are often used to deny women opportunities for leadership development in the OT and the NT are analysed in terms of the hermeneutical and ecclesiastical principles of the AoG with regard to women and the exegesis of the Scriptures. Most importantly, the chapter captures the views of both men and women of the AoG local churches.

Chapter three focusses on the theology of Christian leadership and women by referring to the academic fields of feminist theology. This approach was employed in order to deal with the negative issues of religion and African culture that determine attitudes towards women leadership in general and the AoG in particular.

Chapter four identifies and unpacks sectors where women are often marginalised as a result of African cultural obstructions.

Chapter five examines Xhosa cultural constructs that have an impact on nature and importance of churchwomen in leadership. Importantly, the understanding of *ubufazi* (womanhood) as a language stereotype is analysed.

Chapter six analyses and synthesizes the results of the questionnaire. The results relate to the hypothesis that religion and culture have a negative impact on the empowerment of women in church leadership.

Chapter seven concludes the research and suggests tentative strategies for the AoG with regard to women empowerment so that they are utilised optimally in church in executing their God- given tasks. Finally, the research results are also tested to see if they prove the hypothesis that was tested.

Summary

In sum, the intention of this study is to unveil the religious and cultural paradigms that often prevent women from accessing leadership positions in all facets of life. By exposing this obstruction, women's psyches will develop self-confidence and self-worth as human beings and actively participate in all transformation models geared against injustices perpetrated against women. In all fairness and justice, the combatting of all forms of women oppression is based on the Biblical view that both men and women are created as equals in the sight of God and no one is better than the other.

CHAPTER 2: BIBLICAL, ENVIRONMENT AND WOMEN LEADERSHIP

2.1 Introduction

Controversial passages in the Scriptures were exegeted to find out the perceived restrictions and qualifications for women in leadership practise. The researcher's premise is that women's studies should cover both Bible texts and an understanding of how women lived in Biblical times. In view of this context and the concomitant aim of the research, which is to investigate religious and cultural discourses that have an impact on the development of women in leadership, pertinent OT and NT environments are discussed. A balanced view and contextual understanding of the subject is presented with reference to the 'problem Scriptures'.

2.2 Women in leadership in the Old Testament (OT)

The place and role of women in the ancient religious world has been the subject of attention for decades. Nkabala (2013:1) notes that 'approaches to academic OT studies evolved from the traditional historical critical methods of source or literary criticism, form criticism and redaction criticism to new trends for reading and interpreting the OT texts'. Notably there are variations with regard to the interpretation of key texts regarding the role and position of women in the ancient religious world. Elwell (2001:1281) brings this point home by stipulating that Scripture provides some contrasts with regard to oppressive practises that prevailed in the Jewish nation in Biblical times. Nevertheless, the researchers view is that the Bible is the final court of appeal in all matters of faith and practice. Thus, Scripture is likened to a gyroscope. It has self-balancing power in which every verse is supported by another verse.

2.2.1 Women in the Near East

This section discusses the position of OT women in the Near East. In terms of the research, the word 'woman' refers to a female adult. Youngblood (2014:1193) posits that a woman 'is sometimes used in the Bible to refer to a weak and helpless man' (Is.3 12, 19:16). Nonetheless, a male-dominated culture existed in the ancient Near East with women marginalised and treated as property (Longman 111:2013:1720, Evans 1983:23-

24). The Israelite nation did not have the perspective that male and female were created in the image of God and therefore are equal in the eyes of God. This idea refutes the belief that both men and women are created in the image of God (*imago Dei*) and equal in dignity and worth in the eyes of God (Gen. 1:26-27). Therefore, a careful analysis and exegesis of the Word of God in context, with the help of the Holy Spirit, will help to address contradictions in interpretation. Perhaps, this is what Kretschmar (1991:109) referred to as re-reading of the Bible and Christian theology from a feminist perspective in order to identify all male distortions in understanding the importance of women in church and society at large. Nonetheless, some OT passages were interpreted to mean that a woman is entirely subordinate to a man (Youngblood 2014:1194). One of the Jewish prayers emanating from the ancient times declared that: 'I thank thee that I am not a woman' (Youngblood 2014: 1194). This shows the inferior status attributed to women in Jewish history. Women also produced children and this was prized in ancient times (Longman 2014:1721). Thus, the conception of women was determined 'by the evaluation that was placed upon them by their husbands and sons' (Lupyani 2009:44). Even married women were regarded as children (Van der Walt 1988:17). As such, all women could not challenge the nature of treatment they received.

The subordination of women is best noted in the practise of polygamous marriages in Ancient Israel. A man was allowed to marry more than one wife at a time. Abraham had many wives and concubines, Jacob had two wives and two concubines whilst Esau had three, and Gideon had thirty wives whilst Solomon had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines (Lupyani 2009:44, Van der Walt 1988:17). This indicates that the operative praxis of the Israelite woman was based on the fact that the woman followed men's decisions without questions and was accountable to the husband or father as the patriarchal head of the family. The patriarchal head was recognised as the "the father and master, the ruler and owner of the woman, children, and slaves in the household" (Lupyani 2009:44). Thus, a complex situation, where a man has many wives as depicted above, is created when a man has to be the master and ruler of many wives.

2.2.2 Women's Role in Worshipping

The position of women with regard to the above evokes much interest and attention. Evans notes an important observation that does not raise eyebrows in view of the patriarchal nature of the Jewish nation. Thus, Evans (1983:25-26) states that the male, as head of the family, 'played the major part in most cultic acts'. Whilst much evidence indeed shows that this was indeed the situation, it cannot be disputed that women played a prominent and direct or indirect role in this regard. For example, men were required to appear before the Lord thrice a year and apparently on some occasions women went with them although not required to go because of their family duties (Dt. 29:10-11 Neh. 8:2). A good example is when Hannah went with her husband to Shiloh (1 Sam. 1:3-18). Hannah clearly told her husband the context preventing her visit soon after childbirth and when she would: 'I will not go up until the child be weaned, then I will bring him, that he may appear before the Lord, and there abide forever' (1 Sm. 1:21). This view is confirmed by Evans (1983: 23) who states that women were not restricted in sanctuary worshipping. This practise is in contrast to the general perception that women were not expected to play any significant role in religious activities.

Furthermore, women were required to attend other religious ceremonies and activities. These include the Feast of Tabernacles (Deut. 16:14), the annual Feast of the Lord (Jgs. 21:19-21), and the Festival of the New moon (2 Kgs. 5:23). In addition, OT women, who include Sarah and Rahab, were included in Hebrews 11 amongst the heroes of faith. Quoting Payne's assertion (1962:229), Lupyani (2009:45) concludes the discussion by stating that: 'the restrictions on the worship of women and the introduction of a separate , lower court of the women can nowhere be found in the OT, but are an inter-testamental and unbiblical innovation that developed out of [sic] corrupted Judaism'.

2.3 Women in Leadership in the New Testament (NT)

It is also important to consider the environment women were subjected to in the NT with particular reference to Christ's attitude towards women and Paul's teachings on women. The central motif here relates to arguments for or against maximum utilisation of women in leadership. Powers (1996: 15-16) postulates that, firstly there exists those who believe

that there is no biblical reason for marginalising women in Christian leadership, secondly those who hold the view that women can only play a supportive role to men in ministry, and thirdly those who are of the view that women can exercise their Christian ministry to a certain extent in the church on the understanding that some services are reserved for men only. The researcher does not intend to adopt a neutral stand on the issue as they are aware that the practise of the church from earliest centuries has been to effectively bar women from leadership practice and appropriate empowerment. The assumption, held here then is that the situation in the NT times can be interpreted differently.

The NT depicts that women were accorded much space to showcase their leadership capabilities. Luke's Gospel records that Jesus mother, Mary, and other women were amongst the 120 disciples empowered by the Holy Spirit to start witnessing in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the uttermost part of the world (Acts 7:1-15). This is the culmination of Joel's prophecy who stated that:

And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people, Your *sons and daughters* will prophecy...Even on my servants, both *men and women*, I will pour out my Spirit in those days (Acts 2:17-18 quoting Joel 2:28-29 emphasis added).

The above cited verse confirms the prevalence of women leaders in the NT. It is true that there were many male leaders but it is noted that whenever a leadership role of man is mentioned, the name of a woman also appears. In fact, Bellville et al (2005:54) concludes that 'there are more women named as leaders in the NT than men'. For example, Phoebe fulfilled the role of a deacon (Rom. 16:1-2) while Mary, Lydia and Nympha are mentioned as the overseers in house churches (Acts 12:12 and 16:15), and Euodia and Syntyche are described as overseers and deacons at Philippi (Phil. 1:1). Finally, female names are lacking in the position of eldership which are accorded males, but there is enough evidence that women were afforded leadership positions, hence, it is not surprising that many women accepted the Gospel message.

The general picture shows that women played significant roles as leaders in the NT. Further justification of women's leadership impetus in the NT is typified by that both men and women were equal targets of Saul's merciless persecution of the church. It is thus,

reasoned that since women were involved in new Christian heresies as men and therefore dangerous to Judaism as men, they were imprisoned like men (Powers 1996:23). It is, then, concluded that there would be no need for their imprisonment if they did not play an active role in leadership practise.

2.3.1 Jesus's Attitude towards Women

Balasa (2012:113) makes the allusion that Jesus valued greatly the role of women in ministry and recognised the different roles of males and females in secular and religious circles. The situation persisted despite the Jews of Jesus day not giving 'a very high place for women' (Powers 1996:16-17). The following raises questions when considering the deplorable environment women were subjected to:

A woman could not be a witness in a court case; her testimony was not acceptable. A woman was not to be taught the Law of God; this was strongly deprecated. She was subject to a multitude of other constraints and restrictions (Powers 1996:17).

Notwithstanding the above, Jesus included women in performing a number of tasks. These included praying, addressing the physical needs of people, and allowing women to evince their theological acumen. As will be seen later, women also witnessed the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The rhetoric question is: Are these practises in conflict with the OT practise? This requires an application of Solomon's wisdom. The researcher's perception, which does not negate any contrary view, is that the answer is emphatically 'no'.

Unsurprisingly, the contemporary society grapples with the understanding of Christ's engagement with women in spreading the Kingdom of God. A traditional/conservative view argues that Christ did not include women as part of the original twelve apostles and thus, they should not be eligible for leadership positions in the church (Smith 2001:85). A contrary view is adopted by the egalitarians. Rakoczy (2004:200) notes that it is maintained that for one to qualify as an apostle one should have been with Christ during His mission (Acts 1:21), must have seen the risen Christ (1 Cor. 15:3-9) and must have been commissioned by Christ (Gal. 1:12-17). Undoubtedly, Scripture proves that women fulfilled this criteria.

However, there exists arguments that run contrary to the above. Strauch defends Christ's basis for including only men in the circle of apostleship. He contends that 'Jesus choice of male leadership was an affirmation of the creation order as presented in Gn. 2:18-25' (Strauch 1995:53). He further asserts that 'These men were God the father's choice. Jesus' choice of male apostles was based on divine principles and guidance' (Strauch 1995:54). Indeed, Lk. 6:12 enlightens us that Jesus prayed the whole night with His Father before choosing the twelve. In all, the Strauch view is that He chose the twelve males in complete obedience to His Father.

The whole gamut of Jesus' dealings with women shows how he valued their ministry involvement and the significance thereof in a contemporary church. This is illustrated by Jesus' theological engagement with women on a number of occasions in the Gospels. Some of particular discussions Jesus ever had with women are found in John's Gospel. Explicit examples are: The theological discussion between Jesus and the Samaritan woman where Jesus revealed Himself as the long awaited Messiah (Jn. 4), Jesus' searching talk with Martha with regard to resurrection (Mt. 28:1-8) and Jesus' sending of the message of His resurrection through Mary of Magdalene to His disciples (Jn. 20 :17-18). Therefore, these engagements point to the role Jesus expected women to play as co-partners with men in ministry.

It should also be noted that there are several principles shown in the Gospel according to John, in which Jesus seems to override the cultural practises of His time concerning women. It is appropriate to examine these greatest conversations ever made by Jesus and women. Thiessen's (1990) rational propositions seem to suggest this view. In this regard, Thiessen (1990:62) heightens a deductive assessment of Jesus interplay with women as follows:

He encouraged women to participate optimally in exercising their gifts, Jesus did not perceive women as sexual tools to fulfil the lusts of men but assigned them responsibilities as competent human beings, Jesus did not attach the importance of women in relation to Himself in terms of gender stereotypes and Implied in His interaction with women is the timeless truth that men and women are equal before God as human beings both created in the image of God.

Women, then, had to survive under challenging cultural norms. The researcher is of the view that Jesus' adoption of this attitude worked towards transforming cultures so that they would be in line with God's original purpose for creating humankind. Thus, an examination of some of the greatest conversations ever made by Jesus and women as hinted above is pertinent.

- The Samaritan woman and Jesus (Jn. 4)

In this story, Jesus crosses the socio-cultural and religious roadblocks in that He converses not only with a Samaritan, but a Samaritan woman. As stated earlier, the conversation between a male and a female were frowned upon in terms of Jewish culture. Thiesen (1990:54) in Daub (1950:37) states that the purity laws declared that the daughters of Samaria as menstruates from the cradle. The Samaritan woman is surprised at being addressed by Jesus (Jn. 4:9). The verse is translated "... for Jews have no dealing with Samaritans" (Jn. 4:9). The verb '*sugchrontai*' is utilised to allude to a perpetual unclean state of a Samaritan woman and this assists us to understand the Samaritan woman's perplexed status. Jesus requests for a drink from her vessel, a move that shocks the disciples who did not expect that Jesus would interact with the Samaritan woman. The disciples had indeed thought about restrictions imposed against female sex.

Ultimately, the Samaritan woman believes that Jesus is the Messiah. She, immediately, leaves the water jar to witness to the community about Jesus (Jn. 4:28-30). Leaving her water jar has significant connotations when taking into account the narrative of the disciples leaving their fishing boats to respond to Jesus call to be the fishers of man. Without any doubt, the Samaritan woman depicts a role model for the apostolic ministry.

- Martha of Bethany and Jesus (Jn. 11)

Another intriguing discussion is the one that Jesus had with Martha of Bethany and whose climax is the raising of Lazarus. A careful examination of the narrative shows that John highlights the prominence of Martha even though the story has other characters who are Mary and Lazarus. It is hypothesized that in John's eyes, Martha and Mary were more prominent than Lazarus. Nevertheless, they are all the objects of God's love. As such,

Witherington (1984:108) interprets this as implying that they were all the disciples of Jesus. It is hard to disprove this in the light of Jesus association with them.

John 11:3 in particular, portrays Martha and Mary as women of faith. The message sent to Jesus about Lazarus's illness implies that they only believed that Jesus could help in the predicament (Witherington 1984:109). This view is strengthened when Martha informs Jesus that if He was there, Lazarus would still be alive (Thiessen 1990:57). Jesus assures her that Lazarus will rise again. Ellis (1984:186) notes that this reinforces the belief that the dead will be resurrected on the day of judgement. In Jn. 11: 27, Martha confesses Jesus as the Son of God. This confession, just as Peter's confession (Mt. 16:16-20), can be ascribed to Martha's position in leadership.

- Mary Magdalene and Jesus (Jn. 20:1-18)

In this passage, Christ is revealed as the resurrected Son of God. Mary Magdalene goes early in the morning to the tomb where Jesus was buried and finds it empty. She tells Peter who indeed believes what Mary Magdalene had told him. Peter's acceptance of Mary Magdalene's message was in contra-distinction to the cultural norm of refuting a woman as a credible witness. It is equally significant that Jesus entrusted a woman to proclaim the news of His resurrection. It is possible that He ascribed an apostolic role to Mary Magdalene analogous to other male disciples.

To sum up, it is evident that John's Gospel views women in a positive light and as equal to men in religious matters. Thiessen (1990:60) sums it prudently by stating that :

'Rather than viewing women in terms of their roles of wife, mother and housekeepers was common with Jewish culture, the Johannine Jesus views them as individuals capable of making important decisions and commitments'.

It is, thus, conjured that women must not be along gender and marital status but in accordance to their relationship with God.

2.3.2 Paul's attitude and teaching on women leadership (Pauline Corpus)

The Pauline corpus concerning women presents some interesting debate from the religious pundits. Paul is largely criticised in some quarters for being anti-women whilst

others take an opposite view (Powers 1996:24). The criticism is attributed in some circles to Paul's misunderstanding of eschatological motifs in dealing with women (Ladd 1993:403). Powers (1996:24-25) attributes this misconception of Paul's understanding of women's role to distorting Paul's words 'and then using them to give religious sanctions to a great deal of male selfishness, ego-gratification, and lust of domination over others'. It is thus, crystal clear that Paul treated women as human beings created in the image of God just as men despite the Jewish culture that put women in the same category as one's ox, ass or possession. In this regard, Paul is construed in a number of ways where some accuse him of being anti-women by not allowing women to teach (1 Tm. 2:12), and teaching male headship and female submission (1 Cor. 11:3-10 and Eph. 5: 22-25). However, the writer is of the view that Paul is largely taken out of context in these texts especially when taking into account his inclusion of women in his ministry.

Viewed from a variety of perspectives, Paul created a conducive environment for women to be assisted appropriately for leadership in ministry. Elwell (2001:1284) notes in concurrence that Paul did not forbid mothers from teaching their children since, teaching during Paul's days did not necessarily encompass an undue authority with such a view implying that women were not forbidden from teaching. Smith (2007:128) adds to this view by arguing that God gives gifts to whomsoever He wishes. This means that contradictions that existed during Paul's time with regard to woman's leadership were due to a bizarre interpretation of Scriptures and Paul had to contend with such practises. This further implies that although there were notable cultural obstructions, women showed their character and obedience to God rather than their circumstances. Nonetheless, Paul should be commended for involving women in ministry. A good example supporting this view is when Paul describes Junia (a woman erroneously thought to be a man, as an apostle (Rm. 16: 7). Paul also called Phoebe a *diakonos* (deacon). In addition, Paul acknowledged women as preachers and evangelists as noted in his inclusion of Euodia and Syntyche who helped Paul in spreading the Gospel (Phil. 4:2-3). Women's role in leadership, should therefore be restored as emphasised by Schüssler-Fiorenza (1986:422) in the statement that the goal of women's history must be to 'restore women to history and to restore history to women.'

Subsequently, Paul gives effect to Jesus' teachings and dealings with women. Both males and females are present and receive similar instructions in all of Paul's engagement with the church. Most importantly, Paul often discusses the teaching of women. For instance, Paul describes Timothy in his writing to the Philippians as 'a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the Gospel' (Phil. 2:22). He, in similar vein describes Euodia and Syntyche, as Philippian women who 'have contended at my side in the Gospel' (Phil. 4:3). Undoubtedly, this implies participating in spreading the Good News to the lost world. In addition, Paul's letter to the Romans mentions four women, Tryphena, Tryphosa, Mary and Persis, who worked hard in Christian mission (Rom. 16:12). In the same letter, Paul mentions Phoebe and Cenchrea who have been of great assistance to him (Rom. 16:1-2). There are also other women who were equally responsible for teaching, evangelism and home ministry and these include Priscilla and Aquila who were responsible for the growth of the church. Priscilla also deserves complement for supporting her husband.

The above-noted examples demonstrate that, in spite of the existing difficult situations, women showed their calibre against all odds and ended up standing firm and recognised with men as Christian practitioners. While we may not know exactly the women's ministries from Paul's comments, one thing is certain and it is that these women were involved in some kind of mission activity.

2.4 Women leadership in the Hebrew world

Van der Walt (1988:20) notes that women occupied leadership positions in ancient Israel. The assertion that women were excluded from priesthood in Israel does not hold water. The practise must be seen in the context of what priesthood entailed. On the other hand, Keener (2007:130) posits that restrictions on women in leadership emanated from 'cultural nuances'. In reality, if one looks critically at the status of women in ancient Israel, one will find that women occupied exalted positions in religious and community spheres. For example, Miriam, an older sister to Moses, played an important role as a leader and prophetess. She also orchestrated a great worship celebration after pharaoh's army drowned in the Red Sea with the Israelites safe in the desert (Ex. 15:20-12). Furthermore, it is recorded in 2 Kgs. 22:11-25 that Huldah, the wife of Shallum son of Tikvah, the son

of Harhas, keeper of wardrobes, who lived in Jerusalem in the New Quarter, was mightily used by God and in particular to teach kings and the whole nation the will of God.. Van der Walt (1988:19) notes that women leadership was extended to other domains of leadership and not confined to religious services only. The case in point is Deborah, a prophetess (female prophet) as well as a ruler or judge (Jgs. 4:4-5), who's leadership saw Israel being delivered from a twenty year old suppression by alien armies.

It must be mentioned that the portrayal of women as prophetesses in the OT was not incidental as women occupied leadership positions even when capable men existed. Huldah assumed leadership during the time of Jeremiah and Zephaniah (2 Kgs. 22:12-20). In this regard, an account exists that the king sent the high priest to Huldah to enquire about the will of God regarding the book of law found in the temple. The men recognised and accepted the word of the Lord through the mouth of Huldah, which indicates that she was recognised as a spokesperson for God just as other recognised prophets. This clearly shows that, in Israel's history, "there was little if any prejudice against women uttering a prophecy" (Lupyani 2014:45). This point is further reinforced by Evans (1983:30) in the statement that 'prophetesses arose whenever God wished to brand man with a mark of ignominy'. This statement leads to the conclusion that God's raising of Huldah and Deborah presented a shame to men. In fact, Evans (1983: 30) also sees Miriam's prophetic ministry as a reproach to her brother.

It is, nevertheless, worthwhile to note that, whilst there were more male prophets in the Scriptures than women, the OT prophets foretold that God would pour out his Spirit in the last days upon all flesh and the sons and daughters, servants and hand maidens shall prophecy (Jl. 2:28-29 Ez. 36:27). The fulfilment of this prophecy in the contemporary era is not a mistake. For example, the Apostle Peter quoted from Jl. 2 on the Day of Pentecost and told the astounded Jews that the event was a fulfilment of Joel 2 utterances. Similarly, Scripture states that the Lord gave the word and the company of women who published it was great (Ps. 68:11). This verse clearly is a prophecy for a day when women would be liberated to preach the Gospel without restrictions and work for the Lord alongside men. As will be seen later, this typifies that God is not gender sensitive and that, He does not discriminate against men and women as both y are equal before Him.

To sum up this section, the OT portrays a male chauvinist society in all its facets. Nevertheless women played an important, though secondary role, as members of God's covenant in their own conscience and in addition to their duties as wives and mothers. As articulated elsewhere in the thesis, some prominent women played superbly significant roles in society despite all odds. It, therefore, makes sense, though not acceptable, to conclude from the preceeding discussion that these women were actually disrupting patriarchy. The assertions still reign supreme in our family, cultural and ecclesiastical settings and need to be addressed in a proper context.

2.4.1 Women and Jewish attitudes

Van der Walt (1988:21) unequivocally alludes to the fact that Moses' religion and that of the prophets was replaced by the Jewish religion long before Christ's era. It appears that the Jewish attitude towards women 'was severely discriminatory' (Elwell 2001:1282). As will be seen, quotations from Jewish writings show the Jewish contemptuous attitude towards women and while this may seem exaggerated, there is no doubt about the downgrading of women in Jewish practise. For example, Elwell (2001:1262) posits that 'the rabbis were encouraged not to teach them and not even to speak to them'. Women's inferior status and low esteem is epitomised by Toews (1990:31) when stating that women 'were closer to animals than to men. This means that that they had no status in life. Women were a sneaky trick of the gods to get men into trouble and such sneaky ideologies cannot just be sustained but need to be nuanced in order to uncover any malfeasance. The consequences from the minority of scribes is enormous. These include perceptions that (i) Men were preferred as sexual partners to women. (ii) Philosophers debated the desirability of marriage and many argued that marriage was incompatible with wisdom and civic duty. (iii) Men ruled over women in marriage and in the household and the abuse of wives was a common practise. Finally, (IV) marriage instructions were directed almost exclusively to the wife (Toews 1990:31-32). This situation was so rife that Emperor Augustus devised a system called 'marriage without Hand' (sine Manu) to protect women from husband abuse' (Toews 1990:32).

Clearly, the man is here seen flexing muscles at the expense of women's frailties. A woman is seen in a particular context that does not make any sense, for she is recognised

through her relationship with a man as is the case with Isaiah's wife. Although Isaiah's wife was a prophetess, there is no Biblical narrative about her ministry. She is only mentioned because of her relationship with Isaiah, which leaves one to wonder if she did not contribute to Isaiah's extensive ministry. Interestingly, there is no other prophet mentioned to have been married to a prophet. Furthermore, the woman is viewed as both unimportant, as long as she is not a wife or mother, and not a person in her own right. For example, Esther was chosen as a queen to serve in King Xerxes' palace since she was beautiful and attractive. Primarily, she was meant to serve the interests of the king but God used her to save the Israelites from being destroyed by Haman (Est. 8:11). As a result, the feast of the Purim was declared to commemorate Esther's' fearlessness and diligence. However, it is callous that the Book of Esther is not written by Esther but by a man and from a man's perspective. This typifies the oppression and suppression women were subjected to by men in the Hebrew world.

There are instances where women were 'described as hardworking, compassionate and intelligent' (Evans 1983:33). A Biblical example in this regard is the virtuous women of Prov. 31 in which the woman is described as being skilled and a diligent business woman (verses 13-23), a benefactor of the needy (verse 20) and full of wisdom and respect (verse 26). Nevertheless, the disrespectful attitudes towards women far outweigh their commendable roles. It has already been hinted that women were always confined to house duties with Van der Walt (1988:21) underscoring that they were kept out of the public on the belief that they would seduce men. A similar view notes that women are best suited to the indoor life prevents women from leaving the house (Lupyani 2009:46; Evans 1983:34). Perhaps this explains the confinement of the virtuous women mentioned above to house duties. However, her impact was felt beyond her family as she cared for the poor as one of her priorities.

Kosnik (1977:19) further elaborates that Jewish writings show that every attempt was made to ensure that limited opportunities existed to avoid lustful temptations towards the opposite sex. This creates the perception that women were viewed as the source of temptation as confirmed in the example that Eve gave Adam the fruit to eat (Gn. 3:6). Both Evans (1983: 35) and Van der Walt (1988:21) allude to the fact that a statement

existed in the Talmud that a man must not converse with a woman in order to avoid unchastity. This was prompted by the Canaanite fertility cults that aimed at preserving holiness in the men-only-occupied priesthood office. The reasoning was that women, especially during menstruation, would defile men and therefore not be eligible to perform their sacrificial duties. Strangely enough, God had entered into a covenant relationship with men and women. Women made sacrifices to God (Lv. 12:1-18) and were present during the Torah readings in meetings. In addition, women played a more prominent role in God's redemptive work than their husbands (Jgs.13:1-23). Therefore, Biblical history suggests that women participated in Jewish worship.

The perception of women as perpetual liars further denigrated them. In particular, Josephus stated that no evidence should be accepted from women because of their sex (Evans 1983:35). As such, their testimonies in court carried little if any weight (Evans 1983:34-35).

Restrictions against women were also found in the religious sphere. Men were considered better than women in the Temple. The common view was that, in the Temple and the synagogue, 'men came to learn, the women came to hear' (Lupyani 2009:47; Evans 1983:35). Women were also only allowed to sit in the women's court and separate from men (Van der Walt 1988:23). They were expected to play a passive role in service. The Torah put massive restrictions against women with only men being accepted as priests (Grenz & Kjesbo 1995:65). There is no theological or theoretical argument to justify this practise and perhaps this is the reason the virtuous woman mentioned above (Prv. 31) was confined to house duties. Nonetheless, the restrictions on women can be attributed to the practise of the time since women were confined to household duties. Hence, this further proves that women were equated with animals and perpetually inferior to men in religious and community spheres.

The above revealed that the Jewish tradition portrayed women as perpetually inferior and subordinate to men in all spheres of life. Women had no place in structures of the society except at home as wives and or mothers. However, one can take solace in the fact that some women did not succumb to the restrictions. Some notable examples include Abigail, the beautiful and clever woman who intervened on behalf of her foolish husband (1 Sm.

25:2-35) and the Shunammite woman who influenced her husband that a lodging should be built for Elisha (2 Kgs. 4:8-10). Furthermore, the impact of the virtuous woman was felt beyond her husband because of her call to help the poor in the community (Prv. 31:20).

2.5 Women leadership in the Greek world

Evans (1983:40) notes that the Greek culture viewed women as men's possessions. Unsurprisingly, women were also viewed as better compared to livestock (Van der Walt 1988:24). Primarily, they were perceived as producing efficient and healthy citizens (Van der Walt 1988:24). This means that women were treated in a manner consistent with the perspective that they were subordinate and available for furthering men's lineages. Therefore, a consideration of women as lower than men in status means that they were viewed 'as belonging by nature to a lower genus than men' (Lupyani 2009:48; Evans 1983:40).

2.5.1 Women's status: Roman dispensation

The Graeco-Roman perspectives on women were no less demeaning than the Jewish tradition. The bias that introduced a ban on women's ordination emanated from the ancient Roman law (Wijnaards 2001:58). Another statement by Wijnaards (2001:51) notes that this legal system dominated the Roman world for more than a thousand years. The historical trek shows that there were various debates on pregnancy, menstruation and the issue of women participating in the Holy Communion. The extent to which women should be blamed for tempting women to sin were also debated extensively (Tucker & Liefeld 1987:129). Thus, the Roman law shaped much of the church laws that subsequently evolved.

Nevertheless, Van der Walt (1988:23) asserts that the Roman world viewed women slightly higher than the Greek world. This is seen in the way marriage was perceived by the Romans. Van der Walt (1988:23) further asserts that in the legal code (*patria potestas*) a Roman mother enjoyed the same freedom, dignity and equality as her husband, however, the reality is that the wife was still under the 'manus' (authority) of the husband. As hinted earlier, it is the Roman law that bestowed a lower status to women in society.

This status can well be understood by examining the civil and family laws that treated women at home and in the society at large.

2.5.2 Women and Roman Family law

Raming (2004:36) notes that the Roman trajectory shows that the old Roman law recognised paternal authority through a male descent only. The male descent is formed through relationship by consanguinity on the paternal side or by adoption. The above indicates that women's role in producing children is not entirely recognised as significant. This further indicates the appalling marginalisation of women. All these appalling practises cannot be celebrated. Wijngaards (2017: 2) notes that the following typifies the environment experienced by women under Roman family law:

- The wife was the property of her husband and completely subjected to his disposition,
- He could punish her in any way he liked,
- The wife herself did not own anything of the family property. Everything she or her children inherited, including the dowry that she brought with her to her marriage belonged to her husband.

Rakoczy (2004:31-32) concurs as noted in the views on a similar situation that:

...women were under the complete control of the pater familias, the male head of the extended family unit. He had power of life and death over the family, arranged marriages, appointed guardians. Women could not legally transact business, make contract or will free a slave without his permission. Daughters were not even given individual names but the feminine form of the father's name, e.g. Paul; this first daughter and her sisters were designated as Paula 1, Paula 2, and Paula 3.

This exposition demonstrates that, under old Roman family law men, had absolute authority over wife and children. The wife was indeed under the mercy of her husband. Raming (2004:31) articulates succinctly that the wife could be punished by her husband in any way he deemed necessary and could also arrange that she be killed or sold as a slave.

2.5.3 Women and Roman civil law

The women's rights were severely curtailed under the Roman civil law. The reasons for the existence of this situation is that 'women's rights are variously described as 'the weakness of her sex' or 'the stupidity of her sex' (Wijngaards 2017:2). In this context it becomes clear that the reasons for this view did not emanate from perceived physical weaknesses of the woman but from those allegedly associated with her intellectual capabilities. It is not surprising that women were 'grouped with minors, slaves, convicted criminals and persons who were dumb and mute' (Lupyani 2009:49). Women were indeed regarded as a group of people whose judgement could not be trusted.

2.6 Scriptural basis Re: Women in OT environment

In order to fully comprehend the OT perspectives on women, it is imperative to refer to the book of Genesis. The researcher is of the view that it is where God's original intention and purpose for creating mankind is revealed. For purpose of this exercise, the writer will be confined to the stories in Genesis 1, 2, and 3, which also have a direct or indirect impact on the NT teaching on women. Under examination here is the traditionalist/conservative stance that advocates the inferior status of women in all spheres of a woman's life in the OT (Yarkum 2008:41). This is achieved by analysing thoughts that underscored the OT thinking based on using an exclusive male language. The researcher does not necessarily subscribe to the ground motives that typified the OT standpoints.

- The Creation Story: Gn. 1:26 –27 & Gn. 2:18

The first creation story reads as follows:

Then God said, 'let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of then sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, 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.'

This passage is viewed to portray women as inherently inferior to man. The creation of man and women forms an integral part of God's creation of all mankind.

In this regard, Niditch (1998:16) argues that both male and female were created in the image of God without establishing any superiority or inferiority trajectory. The word 'man' in the image of God is derived from (Hebrew) 'ish' and 'Ishishah'. Despite this image being sullied by sin, it is restored by God's grace. Thus, the masculine part of man and the feminine part of man are made in the image of God. Hence, they were created as co-equals to have dominion over all God's creation as king and queen.

The second creation story (Gen. 2:18) equally typifies this derogatory attitude against womenfolk. Seemingly, in terms of the text, man was created first and, thereafter, the woman. Consequently, Zikmund (1985:22) contends that since man was created first, the woman is under total subjection to man. On the other hand Niditch (1998:106) is of the view that mankind exists in two varieties, namely, man and woman, and this does not imply a rank but reflects only God's deity. Furthermore, Naidoo (2001:37-38) notes that some scholars have interpreted the statement that a woman was created to be the man's helper (help meet) as implying that the woman is subordinate to the man. This view is still prevalent in some Christian churches that teach that a woman (wife) is a man's helpmate and an inferior being to her husband. This view is supported further by Knight (1986:700) in the statement that if a human being is a helper, the one who helps is inferior to the one who is being helped. This term does not describe women as subordinate to man, they were mutual rulers over all creation. They were also partakers of one name 'Adam' (Gen.3:20 and 5:1-2). Niditch (1998:106) argues that mankind exists in two varieties, namely, man and woman, and this does not imply a rank but reflects only God's deity. These feminist theologians mentioned above expose the deplorable experiences women faced by women in ancient times. These seem tendentious and need to be deconstructed.

- Order in the Fall : Gen. 3:1-16

Genesis 3 gives a vivid account of the Fall of Man and Woman and how sin entered the human race. The woman is blamed for the Fall. Scripture records that Eve confessed that the serpent beguiled her (Gen 3:13). The reversal of the order of

creation persists in this regard. Eve took over leadership from her husband and she was deceived by the serpent. Some scholars argue that since the woman was easily manipulated by the snake, she cannot assume leadership in society. The argument is quite intense.

Rakoczy (2004:41-42) posits that a woman is blamed for every evil and sin that permeated human society. Therefore, the reality that a woman can be easily influenced means that she 'is more prone to lead others astray' (Lupyani 2009:27). Furthermore, man's rulership over a woman is God's punishment for her mistakes' (Lupyani 2009:27). The popular verse used to support the above is Gn. 3:16: 'To the woman he said, I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, in pain you will bring forth children; yet your desire will be your husband, and he will rule over you'. The key exclamation 'he will rule over you' implies that men's authority over women is divinely initiated. Seemingly, this view overlooks Gen 3:15 which states that the seed of the woman will strike the seed of the snake. Naturally there is enmity between men and snakes, without focussing on women, as well as between God and the children of Satan (Gen. 3:15, Mt. 10:34-38). Therefore, God is already revealing his divine plan to crush and eternally defeat Satan. That is why Jesus had to come. In fact, both Adam and Eve were guilty rebels before their Creator (Rom. 5:12-21). Furthermore, Jesus Christ, by his shameful death on the cross of Calvary as the second Adam, reversed all the punishment in Genesis, otherwise there would be no point for His coming.

- i) Man and woman were created in the image or likeness of God (*imago Dei*). There are divergent interpretations regarding this concept. Some interpret the concept in a more general sense that includes 'human rationality, conscience, creativity, relationships and everything we are as man' (Ortland 2006: 96). Others advocate the inferiority of a woman to argue that women received the *imago* as men did at creation but in a derived sense (Reutmann 1987:85-86; Lupyani 2009:23). Still further, others argue that the *imago Dei*

“God shared it with man alone” (Ortland 2006:96). In this view, it is argued that the image of God depicts a woman as inferior to man, and this view prevailed throughout the OT theology.

2.7 Women Leadership in the Early Church

The above scenario lays a solid background and a central motif for understanding what transpires in the NT regarding the environment women were exposed to in leadership practise. The early church Fathers and the writers of the NT text regarding women are discussed to determine how these were understood and interpreted by the original audience. It seems, women’s inferior position was imported to the NT era and this ‘influenced the way Latin-speaking theologians and the church leaders would look on matters of women’ (Lupyani 2009:50). Of course, the NT completes what the OT seem to convey and can thus, not be read in isolation to the OT. In this regard, Johnson (2012:281) seems to vehemently object against division of labour based on biological make-up. Indeed, inherent abilities to produce food and reproduce were roles given to both genders (Gen. 3:16-19).

2.7.1 Views of early church Fathers on women

Unfortunately, the early church Fathers contributed highly to the marginalisation of women in Christian history. They unwittingly ‘described women as the cause of sin’ (Rakoczy 2004:30). Some of the church Fathers ‘linked women’s presumed inferior status to Scriptural texts: only the man, they said, was created in God’s image. Moreover, Paul had forbidden women to teach in the church’ (Wijnaards 2017: 1). The church Fathers were influenced largely by Tertullian (155-245 CE) who, steadfastly opposed women teaching, baptising and most importantly their sharing of roles with men and occupying a priestly office (Fiorenza 1983:54). Furthermore, Rakoczy (2004:30) quoting Ruether (1974:157) states that Tertullian has noted the following about women:

You are the Devil’s gateway. You are the unsealed of the forbidden tree. You are the first deserter not the divine law. You are she who persuaded him whom the Devil was not valiant enough to attack. You destroyed so easily God’s image man. On account of your desert, that is, death, even the Son of God had to die.

According to Wijnaards (2001:49), Tertullian's downgrading of women was further reinforced by the Latin Fathers, namely John Chrysostom, Augustine of Hippo, Jerome of Italy and Ambrosiaster of Northern Italy.

Some requisite illustration of the Church Fathers who made derogatory remarks about women is reflected below:

- Chrysostom (349-407) stated that "Among all the savage beasts none is found to be as harmful as woman" (Rakoczy 2004:31 Keane 1988:4). Chrysostom's views are not unique. Stronger views were articulated.
- John Damascene (646-750) stated that a 'woman is a sick she-ass... a hideous tapeworm... the advance post of hell' (Rakoczy 2004:31 Keane 1988:4).
- Cyril of Alexandria, who seemed to adopt a positive stance against women stated that women should be ashamed when thinking about what nature they are (Ruether 1974:157-158).
- Jerome of Italy (345-419/420) who is renowned in the history of Christianity for translating the Scriptures also had bizarre cognition about women. In Jerome's views women were divided into three categories and these are the prostitutes, wife and virgin (Rakoczy 2004:31). He also argued that: 'Virginity is highest. Marriage is inherently polluting and childbearing disgusting. Children are only good as candidates for virginity' (Rakoczy 2004:31).
- Arguing on the inferior status of women, Augustine (354-430), as noted by Wijnaards (2017:2) remarked as follows:

Both nature and the law place women in a subordinate condition to the man. It is not natural order among people that women serve their husbands and children their parents because the justice of this lies in (the principle that) the lesser serves the greater ... This is the natural justice that the weaker brain serve the stronger. This therefore is the evident justice in the relationship between slaves and their masters that they who excel in reason, excel in power.

Augustine further attests that:

Nor can it be doubted, that it is more consonant with the order of nature that man should bear rule over women, than women over men. It is with this principle in view that the apostle says, 'The head of the woman is the man; and, 'wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands. So also the Apostle Peter writes: 'Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him the lord (Wijnaards 2017:2).

- According to Ambrosiaster, the Church father in the fourth century asserted that:

Women must cover their heads because they are not the image of God. How can anyone maintain that woman is the likeness of God when she is demonstrably subject to the dominion of man and has no kind of authority? For she can neither teach nor be a witness in a court nor exercise citizenship nor be a judge – then certainly not exercise dominion (Wijnaards 2001:63 Lupyani 2009:50).

- Epiphanius depicted the view that:

...In very truth, women are a feeble race, untrustworthy and of mediocre intelligence. Once again we see that the Devil knows how to make women spew forth ridiculous teachings, as he has just succeeded in doing in the case of Quintilla, Maxima and Priscilla (Wijnaards 2017:2).

The above exposition demonstrates how the ancient Roman laws lead to the outlandish position of women in society and in religious spheres. Surprisingly, these laws were accepted by the early Church Fathers as standard norms of practice and deciding on what is considered acceptable in real life situations. These misogynist laws impacted on Christian thought, church laws and practices (Rakoczy 2004:30-31). The AoG and those who oppose empowerment of women for leadership, on the basis of their inferior status to men, must know that such a view emanated from the ancient and oppressive Roman laws.

The Greek philosophers also espoused the idea that women are inferior by nature as compared to men. One of the Greek philosophers, Plato (427-347 BC) asserted that women came about as a result of the physical degeneration of human beings. He pointed out that:

It is only males who are created directly by the Gods and are given souls. Those who live rightly return to the stars, but those who are 'cowards' or (lead unrighteous lives) may with reason be supposed to have changed into the nature of women in the second generation (Wijngaards 2017:1).

The inferior status of women vis-à-vis men is further expatiated by Aristotle (384-322) in a way that solicits more clarity as Wijngaards (2017:1) contends. Aristotle considered women as infertile males and therefore, defective human beings (Lupyani 2009:51). His argument, according to Isherwood and McEwan (2001:32) is that since women are deficient in natural heat, they are unable to produce a seed (semen). Therefore, the woman's inability to produce a seed is the reason for her inferiority. Aristotle also argued that because man has a superior intelligence that enables him to dominate society and this translates to a full human being.

As hinted earlier, the Greek culture was adopted by Latin-speaking countries. Wijngaards (2001:55) categorically states that the ground motive of Greek culture is that women do not participate in Holy Communion during their menstrual periods. During this period they were considered impure and should not communicate with others (Wijngaards 2001:55). This gender stereotype removed women from being considered for authentic leadership in religious and secular activities. Moreover, this was promulgated in Roman civil law and as such, the Latin Fathers reasoned that an inferior creature cannot be a priest in terms of the Scriptures (Lupyani 2009:52).

Similar views on women not participating in Holy Communion also persist in some Christian churches in Africa. Those who advocate obstructions to women empowerment often state that 'women are ritually unclean during menstruation, pregnancy and after childbirth' (Lupyani 2009:52). It is argued that the church is a holy place, the sacraments are also holy and therefore, an unclean woman cannot participate in Holy Communion (Rakoczy 2004:237-8). A further view by Owanikin (1992:209) states that occasionally

unclean than men who always maintain a stable biological state and as a result, women are not eligible for ordination as priests.

It is clear that women are prejudiced by tradition owing to their biological makeup. As a man who grew up in an African environment, the significance of blood in religious rituals is well comprehended. As a result, the collaboration between the archaic ancient cultures and the African Religion (AR) is the cause of the obstructionist approach towards women in leadership due to benign neglect of Scriptures.

The researcher noticed the same prejudices against women as an elder in the AoG local church in 1990 that need to be deconstructed. It is bizarre that these prejudices about the impurity of women do not emanate from the church per se but from cultural background. A further bizarre reality is that, these prejudices have been accepted as valid by women who could not challenge such perceptions for fear of being labelled rebellious against men. After being a youth leader for many years, I was trained as a young elder on how to be a program director, particularly on Sundays. Senior elders also showed me how to conduct both Holy Communion and water baptism services. I was informed that women are not allowed to conduct such activities since they are not delegated by God. There was no further elaboration on the matter. I learnt later that since women undergo menstrual cycles, they are considered unclean and cannot lead in the Holy Communion services. More astonishing is the fact that my cultural norms and practises do not allow a man to discuss menstruation with women. Neither can a woman discuss menstruation issues with men. It seemed women's quagmires were acceptable to them without reservations. Perhaps the purification laws in the Book of Leviticus (Lv. 15) influenced this viewpoint.

2.7.2 Women throughout church history in the church

Foremost, Tucker and Liefeld (1987:129) genuinely and honestly noted that the views of theologians in the middle Ages were no less demeaning than the views of the Greek philosophers, teachings of the early church Fathers, Roman law and the church canons. Thus, it is not surprising that they accepted the downgrading of women as valid sources of reasoning (Wijnaards 2017:3).

Major tenets of the theologian's views as extrapolated by Wijnaards (2017:3) are paraphrased hereunder:

- 1) Man was created from God and since everything proceeded from one God, all human beings proceeded from man.
- 2) As a result of the death of Christ on the cross, the church was born and became the spouse of Christ. Similarly, the 'sleeping' of Adam in paradise resulted in Eve being created and being the spouse of Adam (and therefore, inferior to him- added by author).
- 3) As Christ is the head of the church and governs it, so is Adam the head of the woman and he governs her.
- 4) It was also reasoned that since only man was created in the image of God, the woman is subject to a man as is the case with a slave.
- 5) Women cannot hold a public office. They only exist for purposes of giving birth to children.
- 6) Men, unlike women, are the perfect members of the church and qualify, by grace, to be ordained as ministers.

The above scenario depicts a despicable environment that women endured in the historical trek of the church. The situation is further aggravated by the fact that it happened at times when there were no 'Women's Liberation' and 'Equal Rights' movements currently prevalent in this contemporary environment.

2.7.3 Church Law and Women

It has already been articulated that women were marginalised by men as a result of their biological make-up. The situation still persisted during the Middle Ages as propagated by the theologians of the time. It has also been mentioned that the 'Church Orders' were formulated in accordance with the protracted inferior status of woman. It is not an exaggeration that some orders would seem trivial in today's theology. For example, Venables (1998:21) mentions that 'debates about pregnant and menstruating women receiving communion; about women participating in congregational singing; and debates on whether, and to what extent women should be blamed for having lured men into sin

persisted'. Roadblocks against women executing baptism and administering Holy Communion have also been referred to earlier. These were catered for in 'Church Orders'. For example, it was argued in order to bar women from effecting baptism that, if women administered baptism "certainly our Lord would have been baptised by His own mother, and not by John; or when He sent us to baptise, He would have sent with us woman also for this purpose" (Wijnaards 2016:3). The Church orders also directed that women should be silent during the Divine Liturgy. Appropriately or inappropriately, the thinking is gleaned from Paul's theology in 1 Tm. 2:12 that women should keep silent in church.

In sum, it is noted that there has never been any recognised and ordained female minister that involved teaching in the church and preaching in the altar. The canonical regulations that prescribe what is permissible in ministry seem notorious for marginalising women. For example, the *Codex Iuris Canonici*, the present day canon law book of the Roman Catholic Church, presumed women's inferior status to men. It stipulates that only a baptised man can receive ordination (Weinrich 2006:277). If a woman receives ordination, it will not 'imprint a sacramental character...' (Wijnaards 2016:4).

It appears, from the above that, women were passive in religious practises. Since women did not qualify for religious education, the issue of their empowerment was not just remote but effectively unthinkable. Notwithstanding the above condition where women were viewed as inferior to man, there are positive spin-offs regarding the role of women in ministry. Tucker and Liefeld (1987:169) take a different trend and state that women 'were not, as such, perceived as second class citizens'. Venables (1998:22) takes this view further in the argument that in a number of ways, women 'stood as equals to their 'brothers'. It is no wonder that women often volunteered as nunneries and monasteries and not necessarily associated with local churches whilst men were adamant. The writer conceptualises that this, to a certain extent, had an impact in spreading the Kingdom of God. However, the question is whether or not women were considered equal to men or not and in real life situation, and it does not seem to be the case.

2.7.4 Reformation era environment and the post-Reformation period

The reformation era brought about significant changes in the Christian churches. However, there were still vestiges of discrepancies in attitudes towards women involvement in leadership. Tucker and Liefeld (1987:172) note that Erasmus, who understood to be the 'Christian conscience of his epoch', felt that the doctrines affecting women were not taken seriously by the clergy of the time due to sexual bias. But, in all, the situation that prevailed did not regard women as equal to men (Venables 1998:23). As such, there were few opportunities for women in society and church. The reformation Fathers who happen to be prominent religious pundits present interesting theological constructs pertaining to the Reformation era and beyond.

Within the context of Reformation, the reformers, based on the doctrine of apostolic prohibition, reserved the office of pastoral and sacramental ministry to men (Weinrich 2006: 277-278). Appeals to Biblical history and Jesus' engagement with women were surprisingly less frequent. The following reformers are noteworthy:

Martin Luther (1483-1546)

In view of 1 Pt. 2:9, Martin Luther maintained that all believers are priests. This view inevitably includes both men and women. As such, this priesthood office encompasses the right to teach, baptise, preach, administer the Eucharist, pray for others, and judge doctrines and the spirits (Weinrich 2006:278). However, this was conditional. Venables (1998:24) and Tucker and Liefeld (1987:170) concede that Martin Luther presumed women as inferior to men but felt that 'it might be necessary for a woman to preach only in a place where Male presence was restricted (such as in a convent), when it would be 'necessary' for a woman to do so'. Luther based his assertions that women are not eligible for a public office on the basis of the priesthood office on 1 Cor. 14:34 and Gn. 3:16. Without doubt, this restricted opportunities for the empowerment of women.

John Calvin (1509-1564)

Calvin also understood Paul's injunctions as meaning that women should be silent in an "ordinary service or where there is a Church in a regularly constituted state" (Weinrich

2006:278). Calvin argued that the office of teaching is superior in the church and the woman who happens to be under a man's subjection cannot preside over the whole assembly (Weinrich 2006:278). Calvin recognised that some women were called by the Spirit to govern in the OT but he perceived these as the extraordinary acts of God. Acts 2:1-11, women receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The indwelling Spirit bestows women equal rights and obligations as men to speak publicly as God's instruments (Weinrich 2006:278).

John Knox (1514-1572)

John Knox is the most celebrated supporter of John Calvin. It is no wonder that he subscribed to the doctrines espoused by him and helped to establish and reform the Presbyterian church of Scotland with regard to attitude towards women and leadership. As a result, Knox is often remembered for reforming church tradition.

John Wesley (1703-1791)

The situation of women during the post-Reformation era also deserves some exposition.

In his conservative approach, Wesley tried to differentiate between the Quaker views and Methodism where women were allowed to speak publicly. In terms of his strategic approach it is unequivocally noted that:

The ordinary rule of discipline, based on 1 Cor. 14:13 was that women should be in subjection "to the men whose proper office it is to lead and to instruct the congregation". Nonetheless, Wesley claimed that "an extra-ordinary impulse of the Spirit suspends the apostolic regulation and allows a woman to speak in public" (Weinrich 2006:278).

As such, Wesley instituted the order of Local Preachers from the ordinary worshippers, (*including women*, italics mine), (Bentley 2010:558). In terms of Weems (1999:61), these were people who believed that God had called them to proclaim His Word and to serve the society at large. It is argued by some scholars that, Wesley was propelled by lack of ordained clergy to oversee parishes during the eighteenth century (Bentley 2010:558).

What becomes clear in this regard is that the attitude towards women during the reformation period had softened. As a result, it is important to note how Wesley's

endeavours made Christian leadership to spark during the reformation era and how this impacted the historicity of the church globally. It is also significant to note how Wesley manage to produce ethical leaders who were significant role models in their societies.

Notwithstanding notable inroads in the male dominated religious and secular sphere of the church and society after the reformation era, women were still relegated to the backyard in religious sectors with ministry dubbed a male domain (Tucker & Liefeld 1987: 200). Women continued to be marginalised and, thus, excluded from the leadership echelons in the church. This is replicated in the AoG today. As stated earlier, the AoG allows women to support men's ministry as a matter of principle and norm. They are confined to leading other women and girls and also perform caring and nurturing functions other than the ministry. Nonetheless, there seems to be some Biblical and hermeneutical misunderstanding about God's purpose for women in ministry.

2.8 Summary and Conclusion

This chapter explored both the religious and cultural environment experienced by women, and the role of women in leadership in the Christian world. It also focused on the religious and cultural discourses that reflected harmful obstructions to women leadership and concentrated on the role of women in worshipping in ancient societies and the Scriptural basis of the practise. The chapter continued to unpack the attitudes of Jesus and Peter towards women in the New Testament. The views of the Church Fathers, prominent theologians and the reformers were discussed and noted as more or less influenced by the ancient laws regarding involvement of women in ministry. Thereafter, the attitude of Jesus and Paul were unpacked. As a result, the chapter analysis showed that both Jesus and Paul utilised women in ministry. This is revealed by their constructive engagement with particular women in the Bible.

Given the above scenario, it is clear that women experienced torrid times in their attempts at being involved optimally in Christian service. In particular, religious and cultural obstructions hindered their leadership opportunities in religious practise due to the perception that they are not created in the image of God as men and always subordinate to men thus promoting patriarchy in the church.

The next chapter discusses the theology of Christian leadership by referring to the academic fields of feminist theology.

Chapter 3: FEMINIST THEOLOGY, CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP and WOMEN

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter dealt with the religious-cultural environments in the Old Testament and New Testament times that have an impact on the understanding of women in church leadership. This chapter deals with the theology of women and Christian leadership. Controversial issues and questions are being asked in the church today regarding women: Is a woman equal to man? Are women free to exercise their God-given spiritual gifts in the church in the same manner as men? Should a woman be subjected to her husband or the male person in all life issues? This chapter attempts to answer these pertinent issues by bringing to light the definition of Feminist theology, a brief history of its development, the context in which it is done, and explaining its different approaches and content. Feminist theology is found in many religions including Islam, Judaism and Buddhism, but the focus of this chapter is on Christian feminism perspectives particularly African feminist theology with a specific focus on women's liberation from all forms of patriarchal oppression and suppression.

3.2 Feminism- Secular Perspectives

Phiri and Nadar (2005:90) draw on Oduyoye (1986: 121) in their description of what feminism entails:

“Feminism has become the shorthand for the proclamation that women's experiences should become an integral part of what goes into the definition of being a human. It highlights the woman's world and her world-view as she struggles side by side with the man to realise her full potential as a human being. Feminism then emphasises the wholeness of the community as made up of male and female beings. It seeks to express what is not so obvious, that is, that male-humanity is a partner with female humanity, and that both expressions of humanity are needed to shape a balanced community within which each will experience a fullness of being (*sic*). Feminism calls for the incorporation of the woman into the community of interpretation of what it means to be human”. Feminism calls for the liberation of women from oppressive structures...”

Slater (2018:1) clearly outlines that the idea of feminism was “to pursue the human rights of women and achieve the equality of women through property reform, child custody in

cases of divorce, access to education and the right to vote". The above quotations lay down the objectives of the African women theologians. Typically, the objective is to articulate women's experiences contextually in order to address them and this also takes into account the global perspective on women's suppression and oppression.

At first, feminism was viewed as a traditional middle class white movement aimed at political and social liberation of women. Notably, the twentieth century feminism emerged after the post war period with the publication of the key feminist texts: *Second Sex* (1953) by Simone de Beauvoir in France, *Feminine Mystique* (1963) by Betty Friedan (USA) and *Female Eunuch* by Germaine Greer (Australia). The industrial revolution, Second World War, the increase in longevity, decline in birth rates, improved medicine and contraceptives, all gave impetus to the rise of feminism (Martin 1994:149). Thus, women gained control and freedom over their bodies by being able to use contraceptives, and engage in abortion as well as get divorce. As a result, women became aware of the oppression, repression and suppression they had suffered (Phiri & Nadar 2005:91).

Feminism became more vibrant during the 1960's and 1970's as it dealt with women's experiences with men. It was, however, preceded by the feminist movement during the latter half of the 19th century that awakened women's oppression by men on a number of issues such as men's refusal to permit women to take leadership positions. During the 1950s, Susan Anthony campaigned for the women's rights since she considered the Bible as being oppressive to women. In 1895, she published the Women's Bible in which she outlined feminist hermeneutics that played a significant role in feminist theology (Slater 2017:1).

Another prominent occurrence that prompted the women's rights campaign was the emergence of the suffrage movement in the USA and Europe. Whilst Australia was the first to grant women the right to vote and be elected to parliament in...., it was the USA and Europe that had an impact on when human rights were granted. In Britain women above 30 years were granted voting rights in 1918 with the age was lowered in 1928. Other countries followed suit with Germany and Poland allowing women to vote in 1919, France in 1944, Italy in 1945, Yugoslavia in 1946 and Greece in 1945. Iran and Kenya granted women the rights to vote in 1963 (Slater 2017:1).

During the 1960's and 1970's, the ambitions of welfare feminism, which were enabled by the new moral order, added more impetus to the liberation of women. Birth control pills were introduced in order to control childbearing. Women were able to follow certain careers due to their potential and the freedom to do so. Slater (2017:1) posits that around this period the feminist movement gained more impetus due to the civil rights movement in America and the National Organisation of Women (NOW).

The 1960s and 1970s conditions conscientised women on overt and covert acts of oppression by men. The main objective was to make women aware of the atrocities and inhuman treatment by men. It became evident that this untenable situation would not be curtailed unless women stand up on their own, view themselves as different from men and challenge their ignominious situation of being marginalised by men in ministry because of their genetic makeup. The modus operandi was outlined by Paulo Freire in the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972). Reflecting on the above, Martin (1994:158) maintains that the consciousness of a woman about her social and political circumstances is implied. This consciousness was also raised in the manner in which women were excluded from the conventional life streams as a result of a world defined based on with masculine lenses. It, therefore, became necessary that women should aim towards the restructuring of the society governed by an unfriendly culture towards women.

Nevertheless, feminism had its own shortcomings. Quoting Mitchem (2008:4), Rakoczy (2011:14) critiqued that feminism was “meeting only the needs of white women who focussed on gender...” Effectively, the needs of black women and women of colour were ignored. White feminism was, thus, a radical and, sometimes, revolutionary discourse between males and females.

Interestingly, feminism revealed a limited of diversity of thought within itself. For example, there were diversities on the nature of equality and equal rights. Therefore, other types of feminism developed and these include Feminist Womanism and African Womanist theologies. It is thus essential to discuss other expressions of feminism before paying attention to feminist theology *per se*.

3.3 Feminist Theology: General Overview

Since its inception in the West, Feminist Theology has become a global movement that challenges diverse cultural discourses in societies and androcentric interpretation of Scriptures militating against women. Even though women come from different socio-cultural backgrounds and historicity, they seem to be united in the struggle against women's subjugation by men. Clifford (2001:30) notes that women articulate their experiences and understanding of the Scriptures using a variety of relevant scholarly methods. This has become necessary since the simplistic interpretation of the Scriptures resulted in women's marginalisation on leadership opportunities. What has become transparent in my ministry experience is that people read the same Bible, but interpret it differently, perhaps due to lack of theological competence and some cultural ramifications.

Feminism is often viewed with jaundiced eyes since it is associated with western middle class women. Even so, it is defined as a liberation movement accessible to all women. Schüssler-Fiorenza and Collins (1985:3) define feminism as a theological construct that describes androcentrism and theological contradictions that perpetuate patriarchal tendencies in communities and the church. This viewpoint indicates that Feminist theology seeks to unveil the oppressive patriarchal propensities by focusing on the experiences of women in religion and society. Hence, feminist theologians in the west, understood injudiciously by assuming that women's experiences in the west set standards for women's experiences elsewhere including Africa and South Africa in particular.

Despite the above, Feminist Theology contributed immensely to unpacking the science of hermeneutics and, in particular, the history of misogyny in the church. For example, Ruether (1998:272) insists that Christian Feminism in the nineteenth century developed after the typical Christian paradigm that portrayed women as being created to be dominated by men. In this regard, Slater (2011:175) stresses the importance of women's self-assertion and cautions that the "self-realisation of women does not depend on the social definition of feminism, but rather on her natural essence". Slater (2011:175) further asserts that women's self-realisation is deeply entrenched in her own self and her fidelity of being rightly called a woman. There is much to be learnt from this expression than

looking at the words alone. Thus, women should be geared towards utilising their potential and deciding their own vocation without hindrances.

Notably, Feminist Theology has made a significant contribution to women's ordination in some churches. However, some issues have produced more challenges with regard to the role of women in the home, church and society. In fact, the role of women in ministry has caused many divisions even in some evangelical churches. House (1990:11) notes that the situation is so serious that some churches have been ripped apart over the issue of women's ministry. In some instances, women are confounded by the contradictory perceptions they encounter in their churches. Nonetheless, there are no convincing arguments why there are both so few women in leadership positions today and women role models in the higher hierarchies of the churches. Hence, the terrain Feminist Theology tries to find answers to and suggest some guidance.

Feminist Theology established its own methodology and then evolved as standard for women's theologies improved. *The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians* has become a catalyst for change in transforming African women's theological work (Ruether 1998:259). The fact that African women have been brave enough to challenge the ravages of the past women oppression and impacted the contemporary church is encouraging. In essence, African feminism attempts to evaluate those cultural patterns that are detrimental to women's conditions with a view to craft tentative models for a contemporary church.

The approach of feminist theologians, as discussed by Rakoczy (2011:17-18), contains three distinct steps and these are:

- i) Deconstructing and critiquing the nasty experiences of women's oppression by patriarchal practices and culture. In this regard, the church history and theological writings are taken into account and questions asked about Feminist analysis of doctrines used to oppress women including assigning God a male gender. As a result, women have written important theological works for head knowledge and to enhance the value of women in this universe.

- ii. Seeking Biblical and extra-Biblical viewpoints that promote women's personhood, equity and their participation in church leadership. For example, Paul's injunction that women should keep silent in churches (1 Cor. 14:34) has been interpreted as an untenable situation that confronted women. The reality is that, women taught and preached as noted in the Scriptures and , thus, reclaimed women's voices and history which has erased women and rendered them invincible.
- iii. Reconstructing and reformulating Christian thinking of women. This involves adding women who would have felt and experienced the appropriate call of God in the ministry. This includes transforming all beliefs, doctrines and practices through experiences of women.

Thus, in practical terms, Feminist Theology adds new insights and approaches in Christian praxis as the insights legitimately speak for themselves. This freedom has not been seized nor utilised by women as men have often spoken on behalf of women for years.

It must be noted that there is still much to be learnt and done if Feminist Theology is to stand the test of times. Already, women who are passionate about their well-being become more and more conscious about their own wellbeing. Such women research and reflect on women's issues with a view to encourage partnership between men and women in theological practise. The aim is to promote *shalom* (peace) in ministry based on love. Christ gave his disciples one of the greatest commandments to "love thy neighbour our as thyself" (Mt. 22:39). In the context of the thesis, "neighbour" refers to fellow human beings, which in this case is women and men, as equally created in the image of God, a view attested by anthropologists (Slater 2011:51). This assertion calls for the re-interpretation of Scriptures in a manner that is woman friendly or liberating for women. This will pave way for women's involvement in leadership structures and thus, put away the untenable history of misogyny that seems to have permeated ancient and modern societies in both the whole gamut of academic literature and real life situations.

3.3.1 Feminist Theology

Central to Feminist Theology, as an offspring of feminism, is the recognition of full human dignity of women (Ruether 1993:18; Rakoczy 2001:15). As such, it is concerned with the reconstruction of human society, religious institutions included, in order to mirror the equality of women with men (Rakoczy 2011:11). This principle is crucial in understanding the history of human dignity, which has, unfortunately, not been given the attention it deserves in human history. In essence, feminist theology confronts patriarchy as a brutal and inhuman form of oligarchy. Patriarchy portrays women as inherently inferior to men and intellectually, biologically, socially and anthropologically inferior (Rakoczy 2011:10). Put succinctly, women are of lesser value than any man. As will be seen, this view has been espoused universally to the extent that women have virtually been marginalised when it comes to grabbing opportunities to assume leadership positions in society and church.

Men are the initiators and beneficiaries of dogmatism and patriarchy. Akin to patriarchy is the term androcentrism, which describes women as deficient and inferior to men and whose meaning and significance is determined by men (Clifford 2001:21). Thus, women's being in all aspects of life is interpreted by men and this leads to the continued oppression of women in both the church and society (Rakoczy 2011:150).

One of the positive factors in Feminist Theology relates to its opening up of avenues for women to articulate their experiences at the mercies of men because of cultural norms and ignorance of the Biblical principles regarding women in leadership. The history and development of Feminist Theology has been long and it led to the arrival at this current perceived and unprecedented level. Ackermann (1988:3) notes that the marginalisation of women had negative spin-offs for the church and the society at large. Nonetheless, the feminist movement that has permeated the world is the result of women's determination to liberate themselves from the shackles of patriarchy.

The term feminism is associated with women's activism. The first wave of feminism started in North America, focussing on political rights related to women's rights to voting and owning properties (Rakoczy 2011:12). This spread to other dehumanising aspects

faced by women as a result of men's actions. This must be viewed against the background that slaves were imported from Africa and both men and women were regarded as slaves in society and church by their masters. As a result, women distinguished themselves by challenging the status quo encountered in their everyday life. One such woman is Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902) who worked with other women to produce "The Women's Bible", which is a commentary on the Scriptures that demonstrates how women in the Bible experienced oppression. As a general move, women in America demonstrated publicly in front of the government buildings and were arrested by the authorities and consequently imprisoned. It is often said that there is no easy way to freedom and the women persisted until their right to vote was given. The same is with the South African situation where the constitution, particularly section 9 and 10, promotes equality of all before the law irrespective of gender. Nevertheless, the first wave became a catalyst for the second wave feminism in North America and Europe (Rakoczy 2011:13).

The second wave of feminism, which occurred during the 1950s and 1960s, started as a consequence of the civil rights movement and its yearning for greater political freedom in order to acquire economic equality between men and women in male dominated arenas. Slater (2017:1) notes that there were demands for equal pay for equal work, irrespective of gender, reproductive rights and the recognition of women's dignity in their own authority. The ordination of women was practised by some Protestant churches, but others conveniently ignored the practice. By 1970, there were calls to the Episcopalian churches and the Anglican Communion in America and South Africa to ordain women. As a result, Rakoczy (2011:13) explains that the Women's Ordination Conference was held in the Catholic Church in Detroit Michigan in America.

The third wave of feminism developed towards the end of the 1970s. The experiences of women's oppression, during this time based, on race and class appeared to be that of the white middle class in America. Pertinent to this situation, Clifford (2001:12) states that, the Hispanic and African-American women, supported the interests of the white women of the second wave in their own context. Consequently, African-American womanism developed. It included the voices of women of indigenous cultures, Asian and Latin

American women, and denounced the oppression of women on the basis of gender, race and economic class.

Nevertheless, this viewpoint of attempting to liberate women from oppression, which became prominent during the 1970s, encapsulated feminist consciousness that helped in understanding the feminist epistemological concerns. Bragg (2011:30) contends in an objective synthesis of the conditions of this period that, pivotal to feminist epistemology is the understanding of the current situation regarding women's oppression in order to develop strategic ways of correcting the impasse on women emancipation. Undoubtedly, this viewpoint of women's emancipation formed the bottom line of the black feminist thought seeking to liberate women from corporate oppression by both black and white men. This is why race is critical for black feminists who focus on various systems of oppression that provide men with the power to oppress women and sustain patriarchy and male dominance. Hill-Collins (2000:85) elaborates further that black feminist thought clarified the standpoint of black women. That is, black feminist thought underscores the interpretation of reality by those who experience it, namely, black women in their context. In essence, Hill-Collins places experiences and ideas at the centre of her analysis in order to clarify a standpoint without divorcing the expressions of the personalities who created them. Similarly, Bragg (2011:32) lists the core themes for black women's thought as self-defined knowledge of group empowerment, women of rights and privileges on issues affecting them and directing images given to women. African American women also added race and class in women's experiences of triple oppression: gender, race and class. Therefore, women need to be conscious of these core issues and strive to address them to facilitate the involvement of women in leadership. In reality, women's experiences and the ideas expressed by women cannot be detached from the personalities who generated them as these may be directly or indirectly impacted by culture.

An essential feature of the feminist movement is that it opened the eyes of women to their experiences of oppression and tried to make a turnaround to fight for their rights and privileges. Similar difficulties were experienced by women in Africa. For decades, Africa generally, and South Africa in particular, has been perceived as notoriously patriarchal in some circles. The situation has not changed even today.

3.3.2 Womanist Theology

The term originated in the USA in the 1980's as a result of black women who were not satisfied with the way white feminists failed not take cognizance of the situation of African American women and therefore, developed a new social theory, womanism (Slater 2018:2). Black feminism realised that the experiences of Black women in the USA are different from that of white women. Hence, to give expression to African American women's experiences their feminism was dubbed as Womanist theology (Mitchem 2008:52). Thus, the objective was to uncover shortcomings in feminism, which focussed primarily on white women's experiences. In contrast to the feminist ideology, womanism focussed on female experiences in the context of the African American culture, that is, the triple oppression of gender, class and race as noted above.

As per Slater (2017:2) the activist and writer Alice Walker introduced the term in her book, *In search of our mother's gardens*. In essence, womanism is connected to feminism but it allows black women to claim their historical roots, religion and culture. The major point here is that womanism includes both men and women who experienced the same hardships of oppression (Slater 2018:2). This disjuncture is of special significance to those who work in the field of religion in order to bridge religious gaps in practise. The challenge for black women religious scholars is only to speak on prayer mat and not voice publicly their observations and experiences in order to deconstruct all forms of oppression and repression against women.

3.3.3 African Womanist Theology

The term "feminism" caused much controversy among theologians, with, for example, the Anglophone theologians accepting the term while the francophone theologians having some reservations. The situation is not different with African theologians. Phiri and Nadar (2015:93) state that if the definition of feminism, as stated earlier in this chapter is upheld, then women would not have a problem in calling themselves "feminists". The difference between African-American womanism and African Womanist Theology is that African-American womanism deals with white women's experiences as a result of race and class (Rakoczy 2004:14). On the other hand, African Womanist Theology's primary context is the experiences of both men and women, namely, preachers, teachers, sculptures and

poets (Oduyoye 2001:22). This seems palatable as long as women can realistically critique the cultural and patriarchal contradictions that devalue women's status on the basis of gender. Kobo (2018:2) strongly feels that if women concentrate on prayer alone without tackling the issues at hand, that would amount to pseudo-spirituality.

In essence, faith, prayer and spirituality cannot stand apart from oppression (Kobo 2018:3). Even in women's *Manyano* (gatherings) where women are supposed to have an open space to ventilate their painful experiences men often invade this space by checking if the meetings are held in the context of the values and principles espoused by the church. During the *Manyano*, *inkonzo yemithwalo*, liturgical practice, specific themes are selected. An example of these themes is 'trusting God in prayer' (1 Sam. 1: 10-20). Briefly, in this passage Hannah prayed to God to bless her with a son. Particularly, 1 Sam 1:10, Hannah cried to God to give a son. 1 Sam. 1:19-20, Lord *remembered* her prayer. Approaches like these make women sit on their laurels and not address real life issues affecting women like violence, exploitation, powerlessness, marginalisation and cultural imperialism (Young 1990:39). As a solution, Spivak (1992:82) postulates that re-reading of Scripture in context will ensure not only the liberation of women but also men.

Notably, women in South Africa are also not unanimous in their understanding of the term "feminism". For example, Masenya (1997:14-15) recommends a *bosadi* approach to theological reflection on women's experiences as a counter to the Western and North American approaches. Hypothetically, women's problems in Africa need to be salvaged before moving onto feminism since African feminism has not solved gender stereotypes between men and women (Phiri & Nadar 2015:99). As a result, two forms of African feminism, intellectual and popular feminism, were identified.

Intellectual feminism is on the one hand, ordinarily upheld by the educated urban African women. These women have acquired knowledge and skills from abroad and they superimpose these on African women who are imbedded in the ground motives of their societies (Slater 2017:4). On the other hand, popular feminism seems to be an antithesis of African intellectual feminism since it is embedded in the cultural experiences of African women who are not necessarily educated as is the case with African intellectual feminism. This is evinced by the majority of African women who subscribe to Popular Feminism

since it captures their beliefs in their context. Another important feature negating Intellectual feminism is that it was viewed as pro-Western and failed to mobilize women against cultural and oppressive practices against women. Notwithstanding the ideological differences between popular feminism and Intellectual feminism, both underscore the need for women to speak with one voice against their subjugation by men. This compelled some women, such as Madipoane Masenya, Phiri and Nadar, to express their displeasure with androcentric/patriarchal tendencies.

Ordinarily, feminism in Africa should endeavour to address deplorable conditions encountered by African women. Foregrounding the practise is that the African continent has diverse cultures which must be understood in context. There must be unity of purpose, despite diversities, to address gender disparities in the light of women being created in the image of God (Slater 2018:5). In addition, Africa is faced with many challenges that require theological interventions. Phiri and Nadar (2005:100) sum it up in their statement that feminist theology is a good starting point to addressing issues such as HIV/AIDS, poverty and the marginalisation of women in leadership and other challenges.

3.4 African Feminist Theology

All feminist theologies including womanism practice their theologies using experiences of women. Viewed as such, and similar to western feminism and womanism who start with experiences of women, African feminist theologians practice their theology using African women's experiences. Accordingly, African women theologians exercise inclusiveness (Amoah 1995:2). These African feminist also seek to understand equity between men and women as well as at the spiritual, social and moral level and in leadership using Christian lenses. Thus, the contributions of such women are indispensable in order to understand what embraces Christianity. The overall argument is that women should not be discriminated against on the basis of gender.

From an African woman's perspective, theology embodied those women in the academia and those able to express their theology in the form of prayers, songs and poetic lyrics often used in everyday life (Amoah 1995:1). Some women theologians in African Initiated churches or African Independent churches(AICs) also practise their theologies using songs and poetic lyrics spontaneously while focussing on gender issues with feminist critique.

3.5 African Women Leadership and African Feminist Theology

It is proper to mention that the primary focus of many African women is inclusiveness , that is, all women and men (Amoah 1995:2). The women address the perceived anomalies while drawing inferences from religious persuasions and ideologies adding to the Scriptures (Beverley 1999:25). Thus, the women's contribution in this regard is pivotal due to their experiences in life. The women should not be marginalised based on their genetic make-up.

3.5.1 General outline

The contribution of some prominent African women theologians to issues regarding women's leadership is instructive. Oduyoye (2001:23) is of the view that the primary context of women's theology is to make a meaningful contribution to African Christian theology so that it reflects the views of both men and women, namely, preachers and teachers, ordained and lay, sculptures and poets. This includes a reflection on life experiences in their context. In particular, Oduyoye referred to some classical elements of African culture that militated against women in leadership and, as such, reasoned that there should be a women's culture within the general cultural milieu of Africans. It has already been stated that the most powerful movement of theoretic feminist theology, *Circle of African Women Theologians*, was founded by Mercy Amba Oduyoye. In addition, Oduyoye is perceived as the intellectual mother by African women theologians, including those from South Africa. According to Rakoczy (2011:23), the *Circle* focussed on four areas and these are women in culture and religion, cultural and Biblical hermeneutics, history of women, ministry and theological education. As such, women are seen as the

life force in God's creation (Dube 2001:11). Nevertheless, the Circle tried to ensure that power flows from all people and exercised by all irrespective of gender.

Equally important, Bernadette Mbuy-Beya conducted a study on the activities of both men and women in the Roman Catholic Church in the Democratic Republic of Congo in order to assess women's experiences of God and how they expressed those experiences in an ecumenical setting. The study findings noted that the experiences militated against women and thus, she makes a call to the African church to make radical changes in churches and redefine the men-women dealings (Mbuy-Beya 2001:184). In all probability, Mbuy-Beya seems to motivate women to take up their positions and places in church and that the church discourage all forms of exploitation against women and children. Indeed, the Spirit of God is upon all people irrespective of gender and this Spirit should not be quenched.

3.5.2 African women theologians and leadership

Women leadership in Africa, particularly in the church, has always been a contentious issue and it will continue as such in the foreseeable future due to divergent persuasions. Available research acknowledges that the issue of women in church leadership has divided and continues to divide the church against itself (Oduyoye 2001:81-84). In addition, the general observation is that men interpret Scriptures with an androcentric-patriarchal mindset that oppresses women and obstructs women in leadership. Thus, church unity on this issue is lacking as men and women are not treated as equals in Africa due to various cultural and theological dynamics.

The "Circle" motivated some women to voice the experiences that shaped their lives. Their stories range from problems in accessing the theological training and difficulties in utilising their God-given gifts in the church. Those who were fortunate to attend theological training recount instances of discrimination and inequality due to gender stereotypes. The indication is that some women in Africa contributed immensely, particularly after the establishment of the 'Circle', to the Christian heritage owned by Africa (Rakoczy2004:22-23).

Regretfully, Phiri (2002:118-119) notes that dreadful narratives about the marginalisation of women exists. She cites the story of Reverend Victory Nomvete Mbanjwa, a member of the United Congregational Church in Southern Africa who felt the call of God at the age of twenty seven years, but was ultimately ordained at the age of seventy three years. Mbanjwa was the only woman at theological school and often experienced marginalisation by men in church and society. Nevertheless, she refused to be discouraged by African culture and male domination in the church, and thus submitted an application for ordination to challenge the *status quo*. It took three times for her application to be finally approved. What seems to initiate this attitude of men towards women's leadership is that men often think that women want to take the church away from them (Phiri 2002:133). Thus, one wonders how many contemporary women find themselves in this predicament in their efforts to execute the call of God.

The issue of men not recognising women as potential leaders in churches is problematic to African feminist theologians who often promote equality and women empowerment in both church and society. It is for this reason that certain androcentric texts have to be tweaked so that women and other marginalised groups commit to the liberation of women based on the understanding of these Biblical texts that include the Pauline corpus,¹ Tm. 2:8-15 and Gal. 3:28. An exegesis of these texts does not form part of this study, however, similar stories motivate women to fight for their God-given rights to fulfil the church mandate.

Thus, it is considered unfortunate that in the contemporary age women still experience sporadic oppression by men. It is further disheartening to learn that women are still devalued after the democratic dispensation in South Africa where the government of the day promotes equity. Makoro (2007:65) notes that women's experiences contests church leadership due to some doctrinal views and patriarchal leadership structures. Furthermore, cultural constraints make some families reluctant to educate women and girls whilst those who want education do not get the support they need (Makoro 2007:60). These sentiments reveal that the marginalisation of women can discourage women from joining certain churches. Some churches are taking long to transform and open

opportunities for women in leadership. It is for this reason that women should speak with one voice and challenge their degradation in both church and society.

Njoronge (2005:34) observed that women do theologise and articulate their faith, but they are not fully understood or taken seriously by men. This is based on erroneous interpretation of the Scriptures that results in the victimisation of both black and white females. An interesting story is told by a missionary sister and lecturer about women's subordination wherein she shares her personal experiences (Uchem 2001:134-156). Uchem tells that she grew up in a culture that never discriminated between girls and boys in education. Therefore, she had never experienced any form of discrimination. As she grew up, she became aware of prejudices and negativity against women and was hurt for the first time in church matters because of her gender. It was astonishing to her that the church, being a place where love is preached should exhibit such attitudes towards women. The view of the researcher in this regard is that the church should have been more accommodating to women than before and this would have more impact on the community served by the church if women were optimally used.

African women theologians, feminists and womanists adopted a common ground with regard to the oppression of women. The difference lies in the methodological approach and contextual differences. The view of African women theologians is that the African culture influenced how the Bible is understood, particularly with regard to the involvement of women in leadership structures.

3.5.3 South African theological perspectives on women and the Bosadi (womanhood) approach

It is apparent, from the previous discussion on African women theologies, womanist and feminist views on leadership that the obstruction of women in leadership practice is based directly or indirectly on erroneous interpretations of the Bible. This section briefly analyses South African women's views regarding the interpretation of the Bible and the influence of culture on women leadership. Thereafter, Masenya's recommendations on the *bosadi* (womanhood) approach are analysed. These eminent scholars, including Masenya researched on and synthesized facts in a fairly objective manner before arriving at own perspectives on womanhood. Their insights influence the researcher's consideration and development of a *bosadi* approach, which seems applicable to all cultural persuasions in South Africa.

South African theological perspectives on women

It should be underscored that the concern for gender justice in Africa added impetus to the development of women's theologies. LenkaBula (2008:2) states that the issue of women's full participation in the *ecclesia* has been a contentious issue for a long time now, continues to be today and will in the foreseeable future. As already alluded to in the previous section, the churches seem to base the marginalisation of women on theological grounds and their Biblical understanding. Others resort to repressive and oppressive aspects of African culture that put women on the periphery of Christian leadership and, thus, discriminate against women. There are no rational reasons why women should be treated in this manner. Quoting the words of LenkaBula (2008:7), Mudimeli (2011:38) asserts that:

The marginalisation of women in church history has painfully demonstrated the ways in which the church participate 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.

The writer agrees with the sentiments expressed above and is critical of the unsavoury message sent by the church on equality in the mission of the church and opening opportunities for women in leadership. The purpose of this study is to address specifically

such religious discourses that militate against women in leadership in the church and their concomitant development in leadership.

Importantly, another South African woman describes how the Old Testament language was used to influence women to understand God and women in a manner that oppresses them (Landman 2002:85-90). As a result, Mudimeli (2011:39) suggests the “re-language” of these religious discourses. The “re-language” will enable Xhosa women to understand the contribution of language in fostering sexual discrimination. For example, the morphological construction of the word “*Umfazi*” (meaning “woman”, married, unmarried or never married) is derived from two words, namely, “*ukufa*” (death) plus “*ukwazi*” (know). The noun formed from these two words (“*ukufa*” + “*Ukwazi*” = “*umfazi*”, that is, one who is capable of doing a thing knowing fully well that it will lead to trouble or even death. Even a man who performs a thing knowing fully well that it will lead to trouble is associated with a woman’s mentality. Many Xhosa women have internalised this word without knowing its basic meaning and how this leads to the devaluation of women in general, in church and society at large. It becomes important that women should unlearn such oppressive language discourses, mobilise themselves dependently or independently of men, and empower themselves with a view to liberate themselves from all forms of oppression and degradation.

Nadar (2000: 67-83) reflects on the need for a literary approach that uncovers the voice of the text in order to show that the Biblical text is not prejudicial to womenfolk in any imaginable way. She uses the book of Ruth to expose the Kyriarchal philosophical and theological principle that are often used to undermine women. The book of Ruth is one of two books in the Bible (Ruth and Esther) named after women. The story in the book centres around two women, namely, Ruth and Naomi, with males disappearing from the story after the first five verses. The relationship between Ruth and Naomi typifies great closeness between the both females signified by “clinging together” (Ru. 1:14). Nadar (2000:81) portrays Ruth as a role model not because of her submissiveness but because she rises above her gender to ensure her survival. This analysis presents a liberating praxis for South African women who have experienced and still experience both gender

and ethnic-based oppression. It also helps to ponder over alternatives for empowering women in leadership.

The theologies of survival within the context of South Africa are well expatiated (Haddad 1998:5-18). The focus here, is on the transformational nature of theology rather than the liberation permutations. She argues that attitudes on culture, gender, race and class should change. Notably, the lives of African women are characterised by silence that makes it easy for South African women to be taken for granted, hence the need for South African women to unite and speak with one voice against any form of oppression. This will help to change the cycles of oppression experienced in their lives and God will indeed intervene and help them in their struggles for the recognition of their potentials as black women. Haddad's theology is therefore appropriate in this study since it opens avenues for the South African women to speak for and about themselves and to interpret Scriptures for themselves.

Baloyi (2008:7), a male reverend in the Reformed church, analyses the patriarchal tendencies violating women's rights in church and society. He examines biblical passages that give guidance on how men and women should relate to one another in ministry *vis-à-vis* biblical passages that are perceived as oppressive to women. He concludes that women should fight against all forms of domination by men and that churches should find ways to involve women in leadership. His stance is similar to LenkaBula's and Makoro's mentioned above. This study, by a male, is helpful for the study of women in their unique positions. In this sense, one can see how religious and cultural discourses undermine women in ministry and how they can be deconstructed with the help of both men and women.

It is now considered necessary to discuss some discourses that are harmful to the lives of women in the context of the Bosadi (womanhood) approach.

The Bosadi (Womanhood) Approach

The *Bosadi* concept was coined by Masenya (1996) in her analysis of Prv. 31:10-31 from a South African perspective. The term *Bosadi* (womanhood) describes what it means to be a typical Northern Sotho woman and Masenya (1997:442) draws on perspectives held

by other African women theologians to articulate that the *mosadi* (woman) should “stand on her own, affirming her full humanity as a being created in God’s image”. She appeals to human beings to respect humanness (*Ubuntu*) using an African and specifically Northern Sotho idiom: *motho ke motho ka batho* (umntu ngumntu ngabantu- Xhosa version) which means that human beings are human beings through other human beings. Thus, African humanism, to which the Bosadi approach draws on, subscribes to the norms and values that include justice, respect for person and property, tolerance, compassion and sensitivity toward the aged, physically challenged and the less privileged and reliability, (Masenya 1997:448).

Essentially, the *bosadi* approach exegetes a biblical text to identify those elements that oppress and liberate women. It promotes the elements that liberate women. As such, Masenya re-reads Prv. 31:10-31 and pinpoints both the oppressive and the liberative elements of the passage. In this sense, Masenya argues that the text was liberative to the original audience since it highlighted the significance of the family and powerful position women can hold in the midst of oppressive men. Masenya (2010:257) opines further that the text is also liberative to Africans as it portrays life that is comparable to the Israelite nation. In addition, the text helps Africans to realise that the Bible has sections that are relevant and applicable to their own cultures.

Equally significant, Masenya (2010:254) notes that there are some problematic aspects in the text. Firstly, the text seems to be not appealing to the majority of African women who happen to be poor in the country. Secondly, the text confines women to the family life and men in the public sphere. Thirdly, the text portrays an ideal family situation with a mother and father, children and servants. The reality is that most African women are not accustomed to this situation as some find themselves in single-parented families and polygamous families. Furthermore, some have entertained an idea of having a servant or being dressed in the same manner as the woman in Prv. 31:10-31 whilst others not.

Nonetheless, Masenya (1997: 447) criticises some oppressive elements of the African culture using the *Bosadi* approach. She used some of the Northern Sotho proverbs to reveal how women are treated in relation to men. It thus, becomes imperative to ask the question: How is this approach assisting in this current study? The main answer here is

that the approach certainly deconstructs negative views on women and, thus provides a model on how to include women in leadership. Perhaps it is prudent to benchmark against this approach since the Northern Sotho people and the Xhosa people have more or less similar cultural convictions and practises. The approach has cogent concepts on the deconstruction of cultural and religious discourses that are socially constructed. This is accomplished by eliminating the powerful discourses that have negative effects on African women's lives. The *bosadi* approach also opens avenues for women who read the Bible to express understanding as they may have been negatively affected by different interpretations of the Scriptures. The women's articulations of their understanding can assist in the elimination of some oppressive practices in their context.

Glaringly, similarities exist between the *bosadi* approach as presented by Masenya and what the study presents. The word *bosadi* in Northern Sotho is *ubufazi* in Xhosa and *vhusadzi* in Tshivenda. In essence, the *bosadi* approach challenges the notorious tendencies of patriarchy that are applicable throughout various races in South Africa. It also exposes the bizarre interpretations of Scriptures that militate against women. In this sense, Masenya (1995:155) declares that the Bible must not be read with Eurocentric eyes, but with African lenses. The departure point is to a promotion of women leadership in the church. The *bosadi* approach basically resonates the *ubufazi* concept and thus, the Xhosa woman is given an opportunity to deconstruct religious and cultural discourses that are harmful to their well-being and prevents them from entering into positions of leadership. The approach will be customised to Xhosa culture in order to understand the purpose of God for the church mission holistically under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In addition, the study will endeavour to recommend tentative ways of transforming the oppressive ways of language usage.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter sought to unearth the theology of women concerning leadership. It was acknowledged that various terminologies emerged due to the understanding of womanism in context. Women are homogeneous in terms of their lifestyles, experiences and religion, and suffer various forms of discrimination and oppression by men in church

and society. Men and some women are of the ill view that there are some obstructions towards women assuming positions of responsibility in church and society at large. As such pros and cons from Biblical and cultural trajectories were nuanced in order to find out the timeless truth of the Word of God. It was found that these have implications in the church in that the church should promote equal opportunities for men and women in ministry.

Secondly, this chapter attempted to present a feminist view of women-leadership. Usually, the viewpoints on women-leadership have been articulated by men for women. Instead, this chapter acknowledged the views of women, African Feminist Theologians, from their own experiences. The chapter noted that full potential of women has been inhibited and that no church is innocent as noted in its discussion on the abuse of women and the denigration of their value by some Churchmen based on patriarchal tendencies.

Lastly, the above discussion formed part of the background to my case study on Biblical and cultural obstructions towards women empowerment in the AoG discussed in chapter six. When women experience difficulties in ministry, it becomes valuable to view this against the background of what happened centuries ago and the present manifestation thereof. The suppression of women, for centuries now, should not create an impression that it cannot be changed. Rather, it should seek to correct the current praxis by relating it to the Scriptures.

CHAPTER 4: XHOSA CULTURE and WOMEN LEADERSHIP

4.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the role of Xhosa culture as a problematic discourse in women leadership. The viewpoints of women, who have first-hand experiences of what happens in their cultures concerning women, are constructively employed here in order to establish the cultural and religious discourses on women leadership. The women's perspectives are indispensable in this research, both as points of departure points and instruments for motivation and insight for this contemporary study.

The contribution of African women theologians and feminist theologians have, so far, been interrogated. The interrogation has focused on the oppression that womenfolk often experienced in male dominated societies and the resultant restrictions of women in church leadership largely as a result of patriarchal tendencies. However, in the context of this chapter's objective, which is to identify cultural and religious discourses that impact negatively on women leadership, in the Xhosa culture, it is supposed that the extent of such oppression differs from culture to culture and community to community since cultures are *sui generis*.

4.2 Women in traditional Xhosa culture

The Xhosas are one of the major Nguni tribal groups in South Africa characterised by a traditional way of life governed by laws and customs as revealed by their ancestors. In terms of their fundamental traditional beliefs, women are inherently inferior to men. They, nevertheless, believe in the existence of God but their relationship with God is only through their ancestors. This confirms the perception that people are natural constructivists, conceptualise ideas that give meaning to life in their context.

Firstly, there is need to first make a comment on my own background and agenda. I grew up in a patriarchal environment where a man is the head of the family. Women are confined to unpaid household duties such as cooking, cleaning and looking after children, which chores are considered to be in the female domain. Du Toit notes that "these tasks

are not recognised as contributing to the economy” (Du Toit 2009:181). Men can also make decisions willy-nilly without consulting other members of the family. This approach cannot be challenged and it becomes worse for married women as they must always toe the line of the husbands. Whatever, the wife wants to do, she must first ask for permission from the husband with failure to do so usually resulting in a beating by the husband and being left with nowhere to complain. These conditions undermine a woman’s ability to think independently and exercise her will.

Educating a woman is viewed as an unnecessary exercise in my society. A woman is expected to undergo elementary education, which is considered enough for a woman. A woman is expected to get married after attending elementary school under the norm that “the home of a woman is in her husband’s stead” (*ikhaya lentombi lisekwendeni*). My mother told me that she was qualified to enter teacher training after completing her primary studies but her father decided against that and instead arranged that she marry a man she never saw. Thus, women’s educational and skills development was suppressed in all sectors of life.

Regrettable, women have little power and are extremely vulnerable as they depend on men over decisions concerning their future and needs. As a black South African, I have noted with concern many of these contradictions experienced by women in church and society at large. Various questions have thus boggled my mind and these include: Why are some tasks confined to men only in the church and why do men only occupy the executive positions in churches? How far does the theological context impact on the understanding of the role of women in church? The answer to these questions shows that no one individual can have a complete knowledge of everything. The primary purpose of the study is not to claim that I am speaking on behalf of women but to craft a way on “how can women and men experience their true humanity, and what impact can they have on the church and society in South Africa, both now and in the future” (Kretzschmar 1991:107).

In this regard, works of prominent feminist theologians and African woman scholars focusing on their understanding of cultural and Biblical understanding of the role of

women in Christian leadership were reviewed. The conventional definitions of culture clearly reveal that there is a lucid distinction between religion and culture. Interestingly, religion is often perceived as an aspect of culture amongst many contemporary societies. Thus, Kretzschmar (2010:572) describes culture as:

...an integral system which exemplifies the values, beliefs, customs and institutions of a particular community, or group of community. Culture is a way a people have organised themselves to express and preserve their identity and way of life.

In addition, culture is perceived as a system of values and beliefs that determine actions, which even bees and ants do not have (Beattie 1985:13). Furthermore, Beattie (1985:13) concludes her definition by stating that men live in a world with symbolic gestures based on cultural convictions. Ayisi (1988:1) also defines culture as the sum total of people's intellectual and material equipment whereby people satisfy their social and biological needs and adapt to their immediate environment.

It can be viewed from the above that culture covers the communal and collective actions of people. This shows that there is often some interconnectedness between people's lives in general and their cultural practises. Viewed in this manner, religion and culture are juxtaposed as was/is the case in ancient Israel. Put succinctly, culture and religion are inseparable. It can, therefore be problematic if the church tries to divorce herself from culture or vice versa since the church members emanate from the community with their own ground motives. For purposes of contextualisation and brevity, this discussion will touch briefly on African tradition. Hence, the point of departure is that not everything in culture is a debauchery, but the role of the church should be to change those aspects of culture that militate against women.

4.3 Xhosa Cultural Obstructions to Women Leadership

The Xhosa culture comprises both positive elements that endow both men and women with human dignity, and negative elements that discriminate against womenfolk and other members of humanity. A similar notion is found in other South African cultures such as

the Bosadi (Northern Sotho) and Vhusadzi (Venda culture), (see Masenya 1998 and Mudimeli 2011). For this reason, this researcher seeks to make an appropriate interpretation of the experiences of women in the South African context. In many instances, women do not benefit from what people often use as cultural norms and practises. They suffer the most inhuman treatment that undermines their value as human beings. It is, therefore, important to critique such bizarre practises so that culture will be beneficial to all humanity. Nevertheless, it is not an easy task to interrogate cultural practises that have been in existence for a long time. Thus, the following discussion will concentrate on Xhosa cultural practises that tend to devalue women's leadership opportunities.

4.3.1 Xhosa Women and Birth Rights

Typical of all African ethnic groups, the Xhosa culture is marked by the performance of certain rituals such as birth, naming, and initiation into adulthood, marriage and death that signify peak moments in a person's life. Accordingly, these rites often change one's position in society and, thus, determine one's course of life (Nasimiyu-Wasike 1992:41). Mudimeli (2011:97) notes that women's rituals in Africa, as is the case in Xhosa culture, aim to control behaviours, moods, sentiments and women's values conservatively in favour of the total community.

As hinted earlier, culture has far reaching implications for women. The sentiments expressed above are not far from the truth in a Xhosa culture. As a man who grew up in a predominantly Xhosa domain, I have witnessed various malpractices against women and am of the view that the rites have negative and positive connotations in the real life situation of women. These rites promote the subjugation of women and hinder the growth and development of women in their own right. For example, the woman is regarded as impure during childbirth and should be confined to sit behind the door for at least seven days. This situation is not different from other cultures elsewhere in South Africa. Commenting on the situation of the Vhusadzi community in Venda, Mudimeli (2011:98) notes that:

It deprives the women of the nutritious meals they need after giving birth and it is also harmful to her health. Furthermore, the imposed segregation deprives women of the gifts of free movement

and the ability to seek medical or other needed help. Moreover, these rites create a sense of inferiority and self-depreciation, in fact, they subjugate women and deprive them of their self-worth.

The other side of the coin is equally interesting. Edet (1992:27) presents the positive side of the childbirth ritual, which is characterised by an occasion of thanksgiving and celebration to the ancestors. The ritual gives the mother a rare sense of recognition of her accomplishment. It is worth paraphrasing the views hereunder:

Childbirth implies that the woman is on a plane of religious experience, which cannot be translated in terms of masculine experiences. Childbirth reveals feminine sacredness that forms a mystery between the woman's life, nature and divinity. The revelation is communicated in symbols and objectified in rites. The mother becomes conscious of this sanctity that stems from her innermost being. The woman finds the spiritual meaning of the ritual in understanding and living this sacredness (Edet 1992:25).

In essence, Edet presents the experiences of giving birth as a religious experience. This is attributable to the fact that childbirth gives a spiritual meaning to a woman's existence. Interestingly, birth rites often focus on women in Xhosa culture. Thus, the woman feels that life is something precious and worth living.

Contrary to what one would normally expect, the responsibilities of women in these rituals are to a large extent very limited. Women are just spectators as they are the ones who are being "purified". It is nevertheless thought that women should take a more leading and responsible role in childbirth. In fact women should take a more commanding role in all other rituals like widowhood that involve women. Nonetheless, the entrenchment of men's superiority over women enables them to benefit more. This puts a thumb down on the noble idea that the rituals should not be accepted uncritically. The rituals also hinder the growth and development of women in their own context as women. In view of the above, the birthing of a child and widowhood as rituals will also be discussed to give light on deep-rooted implications.

On a positive note, the role played by women, however minimal, shows that women are able to express themselves in terms of leadership. Thus, the woman moves continually from one position to another during the course of her life. The aim of the ritual is to manipulate, in a conservative way, the behaviour and value of a woman so that she can

make a meaningful contribution to the society as a whole in terms of moral leadership. This typifies potential recognition of women as influential not only in family but also in society.

4.3.2 Child Birthing

Child Birthing in Xhosa's, as is in other African communities, is a process that begins before the child is born until a long period thereafter, depending on the norms of the particular family. Mbiti (1969:110) contends that child birthing is remembered in terms of both the date the child was born and in the advent of transforming the child as a member of the society. Thus, a woman is expected, in anticipation of the birth of a child, to observe certain social regulations such as not eating eggs and milk. These are thought to cause problems during child birth. Failure to observe the social regulations results in the marginalisation of the woman. In reality, the truth behind this view has not been tested scientifically.

Most disturbing too, the naming of the child is equally controversial. The child is named by the mother-in-law or the father-in-law or any senior male member of the extended family as may be deemed necessary. The birth of the son is considered more important than the birth of a daughter because the boy will continue with the progeny of the family unlike the girl who is destined to marry into another family and extend the family tree of that other family. After the death of the mother, her name will disappear. Hindrances towards allowing the mother to name her child or at least to be consulted is one of the injustices done in the name of culture. It must, indeed, be mentioned that cultural practises may be regarded as beneficial in one culture whilst viewed as destructive in other cultures.

A woman who does not conceive is exposed to enormous agony. Usually the fault with failure to produce a child in a marriage is placed upon the woman and not the man. As a result, the woman can suffer emotional and psychological disorders with the situation worsened by the ostracism of the woman by the community. She is often derogatively referred to as the *inkabi* (ox) since the ox does not conceive. The situation is beyond her power and no one tries to understand her plight. The woman suffers further humiliation in the event that the husband marries another woman and she bears children. The pain

suffered by this woman when the new wife bears children is beyond imaginable proportions and not caused by own fault. It is for this reason that it becomes more imperative for women to strategize against these diabolical cultural practises.

The woman is also perceived as guilty of imparting ritual impurity while bringing forth the newly born during a moment that the woman actually deserves to have peace of mind comfort and security. On a positive note, the birthing of a child has religious connotations that cannot be translated in terms of masculine experience. The feminine sacredness is a revelation of a continuum between life, the nature of the woman and divinity. History often attests that women play a significant role in moulding children towards Christian life and practice. This assertion has been confirmed by men in society.

The fact that women play a primary role in child birthing without the assistance of men underlines their leadership potential. It is a known fact that Xhosa women usually fear to be involved during the situation of child birthing. For men, it is a shame to be involved in such situations. To a certain extent, this control of the birthing moment by women seems to affirm women's leadership potential. Women should be respected for their bravery and skill in this regard, which is a sign of self-confidence and self-motivation. This is one area that justifies the need for leadership development.

4.3.3 Sexual violence and inequality

There exists various despicable cultural practices that enable an undue derogation of a woman to the status of a child (perpetual minor), which makes her vulnerable to violent activities by men. Slater (2016:39) discusses violence against women such as rape and murder that is often engendered by men on women within cultural practices. Kretzschmar (2009 (b):220), referring to the same conditions suffered by women and children in the African context, attests that "domestic violence in the form of marital rape, emotional abuse and physical battering are common". These cultural practices amount to a form of violent abuse. In addition, this reflects the derogatory status women are often subjected to in order to effectively obstruct their well-deserved freedom and underrate their potential. There can, therefore be no justification in protecting patriarchal customs when men behave like monsters.

Sometimes women suffer neurotic guilty by thinking that they have 'provoked' men in one or another. Women suffer a paralysis (form of being guilty) and subsequently feel inadequate, helpless and irresponsible as a result of this imposition on them. They lack a feeling of self-esteem and self-motivation to fulfil their dreams. Ironically, women hold households, communities and even churches together but under this circumstance they can feel not only inferior but also useless. A further irony is that, men do not accepting their responsibility nor legitimacy of their violent actions. Finally, violence against women and all other forms of domination are not regarded as serious malpractices in traditional Xhosa culture, which probably explains why women sometimes feel guilty after being victimised by men.

In reality, this form of male delinquent behaviour is uncalled for in our societies. It is both a violation of the Constitution and a crime against humanity that borders on defiance of God's purpose for creation mankind. In addition, such behaviour is suggestive of a regression to the evils of Apartheid after a long struggle for freedom and a just and equitable society of all. Nobody would have imagined that vestiges of oppression would still be experienced in a democratic dispensation. Thus, an old dispensation in a new dispensation is a contradiction.

It should be noted that not much has been done by the government of the day to curtail this inhuman practise. It is often noticed that the justice system is slow in curtailing issues of violence against women as reported cases are not followed to the latter. This researcher is of the view that officers who do not perform their role in this regard should be charged of the dereliction of duty. There is need for a corporate exercise by the community, the government and the church as will be seen in the section on the creation of an environment that is conducive for the development of women into leadership.

The church has not played a significant role as a change agent in societies. This is shown by a high level of silence in the pulpit on issues of violence on women. An ideal societal structure is depicted in Mbiti's famous aphorism: 'I am because we are, and because we are, therefore I am' (Mbithi 1989:40). Ordinarily, the assertion denotes mutual respect, mutual understanding and mutual care. The 'salt' metaphor (Mt. 5:13) is also relevant in this regard with the observation that one of salt's features is that it does not compromise

and ensures that its presence is felt whenever mixed with food. Secondly, salt prevents decaying. In the same manner, the church should not co-operate with any form of wrongdoing and prevent the decaying of all social fibres in churches and society. In addition, the Church, being part of the community it serves, is in a better position to do preserve values and prevent the decaying of society's moral values.

In practical terms, the Church should create platforms from pulpits and other Church educative sessions to denounce all forms of violence against women. The Church has at most unduly trivialised, minimized, externalised and made invisible violence against women. Instead, the Church should render women's issues as pertinent and not consider them as 'out there' topics. It is indeed time for the Church to do some soul searching and check if the Gospel that is preached does not contribute to men's proneness to violence, suppression of women and girls and a general tolerance of violence by the society. This involves re-reading and re-interpreting the androcentric texts that include Gn. 1:26-27, Gen. 2:18-23, Gen. 3:1-6, 23, 2Tm. 2:8-15, Eph. 5:22-24 and 1 Cor. 11:3-10, which are often used to militate against women. Therefore, the role of the church is to exegete the Scriptures in context in order for the society to transcend its shortcomings. The Church should further reinforce the view that the Bible has always been and is always reflective of God's time less truth as this will improve chances of women leadership. militate

As a Christian activist, this researcher would conduct awareness campaigns in the church and with government agencies and Non-governmental organisations in order to address issues of violence against women and children. Special sessions can be held for men since they are the most perpetrators of violence. The church and society will be aware of the plight of women and children and support in cash or kind the organisations that are active in this work.

The researcher fully agrees with Oduyoye (2007:16) and those with similar views on the point that we need to overcome all forms of women abuse. We need to treat women as fellow human beings and give them the respect they unconditionally deserve. This necessitates the examination of all aspects of life together with women that is, the laws that have been made, social organisations that have been or are being created, and the associated philosophies, religious beliefs and practises to a great extent.

4.3.4 Girls' Initiation Puberty Rights (Intonjane)

Like other African traditional societies, girls' puberty initiation rites has been prevalent in the Xhosa culture *an intonjane* from the early annals of the Nguni history. The practise and its implications have always intrigued me. Culturally, the *intonjane* is understood as a sacred Xhosa ritual aimed at preparing young girls for womanhood and marriage. The initiate is assigned an elderly woman who has undergone the rite to preside over the *intonjane* in a secluded place. Initially it was observed when a woman reached the puberty stage and if omitted, it can be done at a later stage since the custom demands its observance even after marriage. The ritual seeks to teach women about proper and important aspects of womanhood, and urge the woman to preserve purity in preparation for life of marriage and the parameters of being a wife and mother. Women are also told to be subservient to men all the time in accordance with the dictates of culture.

However, there are several cultural discourses around the girls' initiation rites. In the words of Akintunde (2001:100-102) the discourses associated with these rites include:

- A woman harbours evil spirits if the rite is neglected.
- Early pregnancy and some complications during pregnancy are prevented.
- The man's sexual pleasure is enhanced especially when he is married.
- If the girl has not undergone the rite her image in society will falter.
- The tradition is sacrosanct.
- The rite enhances woman's virginity. Most African societies view virginity as an asset and as such, parents collect more bride price (dowry) if a woman is a virgin

What an unsavoury explanation! Typically, the girl's initiation rites are utilised by men as a form of oppression of women for their benefit. Men use some cultural expectations and norms to subjugate women in favour. For example, the issue of virginity has been greatly interpreted and abused mostly by people who are outside the doctrinal boundaries of the church. Some men believe that sleeping with a virgin prevents HIV/AIDS infection, which is an abnormality and injustice to the treatment of women. In this sense, a woman's virginity is a natural symbol that mediates socio-cultural beliefs of what it means to be a

woman in the African context. Whenever one talks of HIV/AIDS, what comes to mind is the issue of patriarchy and inequality. Therefore, the woman is in most cases always the victim while the man is the perpetrator of the anomaly with culture being used as a facilitator of harm to women such as HIV/AIDS infection in this circumstance.

Nonetheless, the initiation rites facilitate women's unity and a chance for women to practice their leadership skills. The woman selected to mentor women initiates leads the process and works independently of men. In fact, the *intonjane* is supposed to be confidential to men with this responsibility which to prepare young girls for adult life being enormous for the identified female mentor. Groundwork for adulthood requires the mentor to have wisdom, experience and innovativeness in order to prepare the not-yet-adult for responsible adulthood. These responsibilities need leadership competence and so it is admirable that women should, be given such opportunities to lead young girls and decide on their futures

4.3.5 The practice of the Ukuthwala (girl abduction) Custom

The old and archaic practise of women abduction (Ukuthwala custom) is still practised in Xhosa culture even though it is frowned upon in other societies. This practise is akin to sexual violence described in section 4.3.3 and here the victim is again the woman. What happens in this situation is that the intending bridegroom (or brother) with one or two friends waylays the intended bride in the neighbourhood of her home quite late in the day towards sunset or at early dusk and take her by force to the young man's home or close blood relative's. Sometimes the girl is caught unaware or as per a pre-arrangement between the two respective fathers. In either case, the identified woman will show resistance but is not likely to overpower two men.

The forcing of a woman to marry is one of the most abusive ways to treat women and a vicious and inhumane practise. It is against the principles of *Ubuntu* (humanity), which respects all people in their own right. The practice is being challenged a great deal in the present generations but, still continues to be witnessed from time to time. This attests to the fact that women exist in order to satisfy the needs of men. Interestingly, such

perceptions are imported to the church with the result that women are denied the opportunity to exercise fully their God-given gifts.

It, thus, needs to be mentioned that the *ukuthwala* custom denies women the right to make their own choices and lead their own destinies. It is one of the archaic practises that have no place in the contemporary society and violates the ideals of the human rights charter. In fact a radio talk show at the local community radio station Ingwane fm (n.d) on Kholo Lwemveli (Traditional Religion) revealed that more people felt that the custom should be stopped while others felt that it characterises the Xhosa custom and should be continue. Whatever the situation the continued practise of the custom takes the Xhosa nation backwards and it has no place in the contemporary society as it denies women an opportunity to make their own decisions as leaders of their own destinies. It undermines the competence of women as leaders and so the sooner it is outlawed the better. It is this researcher's contention that marriage must be based on mutual agreement between the potential spouses.

4.3.6 The Lobola Custom

Lobola, also known as the bride price or dowry, is the foundation stone for marriage in Xhosa culture. It is, however, the most misconstrued and misunderstood custom. Lobola's intrinsic value, according to Mtuze (2017:40), "did not lie in how many heads of cattle a parent received for the daughter, but in the bond that the *ikhazi* (head of cattle paid) sealed between the two families". What a positive and genuine notion! With due recognition of the above statement, sight should not be lost, as previously stated that the old Xhosa adage is that "cattle begets children". This means if a head of ten (10) cattle is paid, then ten children should be borne by the woman or as may be required. This effectively views the woman as a machine for child bearing and also a violation of women's procreation rights, worse still, and the woman is usually not consulted.

It should be noted, however that, Tiyo Soga, a renowned Xhosa historian, supports the efficacy of this custom in Xhosa social life. He points out that the custom gives protection and status to a woman in marriage life (Soga: 1931:263). It is conceptualised that Soga speaks from a normal situation albeit from a male's perception. Whilst lobola legitimises

marriage in Xhosa cultural life and gives parental rights of the children, it cannot be denied that there are controversial practises that often undermine the status of women as human beings. The matter is worsened by the fact that the course of culture and interpretation has been and is still, in my view, determined by men.

Interestingly, the issue of women (in marriage) being considered as properties of men and therefore owned by men is often addressed (Goxo 1997:80-81). The researcher concurs with the above notion. In fact, when a Xhosa man chooses a wife and pays *lobola* for her, the woman is henceforth regarded as a commodity of him, hence men often speak about “buying” a women. In addition, a man can marry as many wives as he can as long as he has enough cattle to do that in order to show that he is a real man. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why Kretzschmar (2009 (b):220) notes that the payment of *lobola* “results in ongoing problems related to customary law”.

Inversely, a woman who has been chosen for marriage is grateful for being chosen among other girls. She then goes on to show this gratefulness by being obedient to her husband, in-laws and relatives. In all, the woman should recognise that the husband has done a favour by choosing her amongst other women. Therefore, whatever wrong is done to the woman, she should not complain. The common adage is that *kuyanyanyezelwa emzini* (one must tolerate everything done to her in a marriage homestead). This is a suffering whose duration is not known.

Oduyoye’s (1995) views on the meaning of *lobola* in her study of the Asante people in Ghana resonate. Oduyoye (1995:135) considers the exchange of the nuptial gifts during the various stages of negotiation as inappropriate. These gifts must be returned whenever the marriage is dissolved. Thus, the culture of gifts exchange and payment of *lobola* puts women at the mercy of men and binds them to culture. It should also be noted that the negotiation is done by the father of the man with the father of the woman, which leaves the woman out of the picture. Furthermore, if the wife dies, the dead wife’s sister may replace her and gifts or *lobola* will not exchange or paid in this instance. Generally, the subordination of women in marriage is a *sine qua non* that is generally accepted as normal.

The revelations so far reveal that men have more advantages than women in African marriages. Mudimeli (2011:104), using the words of Masenya 2003:121-122) in her research on the Northern Sotho, confirms that, in patriarchal cultures, a man pays *lobola* to gain full control over the wife and her body. In my view, *lobola* is seen as a double edged sword for women because:

- Firstly, the woman for whom *lobola* has been paid is usually respected by the community.
- Secondly, the system also helps to reinforce the patriarchal authority structure in that it enables members of the new household to treat her in whatever way they deem fit.

It can be argued that, many women harbour the thought that they have been bought since *lobola* would have. Those who espouse this view need to unlearn this viewpoint, which is against all humanity.

The *lobola* custom has negative consequences on women leadership. First, a woman must get permission from the husband before one undergoes any form of development. As head of the family the men must always have the final say. The husband may also be afraid that the woman will be more qualified than her husband and try to control him. The men's headship and authority over women is reinforced by *lobola*.

Nonetheless, the *lobola* custom has positive objectives. Ideally, it protects the woman from physical abuse by other men (Soga 1931:263). This signifies the respect accorded to the recognised wife of a woman. In addition, *lobola* legitimises the woman's full responsibility over her offspring's in the family as her husband's recognised assistant. Therefore, the discussion has shown explicitly that the concept of *lobola* has been understood out of its original context in contemporary practise. It is assumed that it was never intended, from its inception, to undermine women's inherent leadership acumen.

4.3.7 Proverbs and African Women

African societies have a way of analysing their cultures and determining what distinguishes them from other cultures throughout history. One such distinction is determined by proverbs and the way they convey a message to the one who receives it. According to Masenya (2010:5) proverbs throw light on the expectation that a woman is destined to marry. For example, Xhosa people usually say “*ingcwaba le bhinqa lisekwendeni*” (the grave of a woman is in her husband’s homestead), which implies that every woman is expected to get married. This further invokes the myth that a woman is nothing without a man. This perhaps accounts for the prevalence of polygamous marriages in Xhosa society.

Mbiti’s (1989) ideas are also significant here. Mbiti (1989:131) alludes to the same point on women’s being viewed as destined for marriage in the observation that a woman who dies without getting married nor having borne children is censored by her community. The implication here is that every woman must aspire to get married and bear children. In addition, the aspiration for marriage is underscored as the greatest hope of every individual and society in general.

Other nationalities have proverbs that show a woman’s attachment to a man within the context of a heterosexual marriage relationship. The following are examples:

- Northern Sotho proverb: A woman’s grave belongs to her husband’s home village.
- Yoruba proverb: A woman who had lost her good character lamented that she was not destined to have a husband (Oduyoye 1995:69).

The woman, once married, is expected to remain married. In this regard Oduyoye (1995:68) posits that society expects a woman to stay married as she has no dignity outside marriage. Viewed in this manner, proverbs indicate that the woman is supposed to get married and that the husband is competent to get married.

Proverbs, particularly in Xhosa culture, teach differentiated roles between males and females. These roles are related to the genetic make-up and dictates of society. In addition, the dictates confine a woman to domestic roles such as the rearing of children and cooking whilst a man usually works outdoors. The woman must conform to these societal dictates to avoid being viewed as an outcast. Therefore, what has been gleaned so far is that the society can prescribe human and inhuman roles for women, which cannot be challenged by a woman.

Some critics outline the negative consequences of proverbs. Oduyoye (1995:60) cites a number of negative consequences emanating from proverbs, which are typical of African societies and the Xhosa culture in particular:

- They teach women to depend on men, for example, *indoda yintloko yekhaya* (man is the head of the family). The expression means that every member of the family is accountable to man and must listen to the instructions and guidance by man.
- They teach the denial of equality between men and women, for example, *indoda yintloko yomfazi*. This common expression means that the woman is always inferior to man.
- They distort human relations: *Ilizwi lendoda alityiwa nja* (what the man says cannot be eaten even by dogs). The background is that dogs can do anything they want to. This means that what the man says must be accepted by women even if it is wrong. This effectively distorts human relations especially when the woman feels that what the man says or do is not correct.
- Women are discouraged not to reach the same level as men, for example, *umfazi lubambo lwendoda*. This means a woman was formed, (not created) from the rib of man. Significantly, she is part of man since created from man's rib and cannot, therefore, compete and be equal with man.
- They promote illiteracy among women, for example, *ingcwaba lentombi lesekwendeni*, that is, the grave of a woman is in her husband's home. This means there is no need to educate a woman as she must get married.

- Finally, they buttress the myth that women are supposed to perform supplementary and complementary roles to men, for example, *indoda itya ukubila kwebunzi layo*, meaning, the man must eat the sweating of his brow. This idiomatic expression means that the man must work hard and provide for his family. There is no need to be assisted by a woman.

Masenya (2010:254) adds other negative consequence of proverbs and these are that: they underscore that the woman's body and her sexuality does not belong to her alone but to the husband and that the man's body can be shared with other women outside the marriage bond. These stereotypes hamper women in leadership and they cannot complain since they will be viewed as rebellious by the society including other uninformed women.

The most disturbing element about proverbs is that they prescribe what a woman is. Proverbs assign different roles to men and women. According to Oduyoye (1995:61), the roles are based on the society's commands and not the physical nature of the woman. This means that the woman has to respect those societal orders. Clearly, the society prescribes what is considered proper and improper for a woman. Once a woman chooses not to honour such orders, she will be declared an outcast in society. As a result, she cannot participate in public life and this exclusion from the public space cannot be reversed by traditional leaders. In addition, the exclusion effectively hampers her opportunity to display her potential in public life and distorts her chances of leadership even on certain menial tasks.

There is need to determine whether or not the Church is part of the culture that oppresses women. There is no categorical answer in this regard. On one hand, there are noticeable attempts by churches to address the incongruity. The efforts of South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu (Hulley, Kretzshmar & Pato 1996: 8-10) and Allan Boesak (Landman 2017:2) in spreading their pragmatic and liberal theological views are a good example of attempts at preventing women abuse in all its facets. Much still needs to be done in this sense. On the other hand, the silence of the Church in denouncing strange cultural practices is a worrying factor. It translates to a lukewarm Church approach towards the provision of the whole counsel of God on human dignity to the whole society. The

message of Christ to the Laodicean church (Rv. 3:14-22) denouncing 'lukewarmness' is appropriate.

Therefore, while limited and at times individual attempts are being made to address the abuse of women in the Church, there exists a huge silence on the matter. This means that the Church's silence on human violations seems to indirectly promote such abuse. As a result, it is time for the Church to renounce all ugly forms of oppression and suppression.

4.4 The Family

The issue of gender relations in the family is closely related to the cultural ramifications militating against women. The family institution exists within a cultural context that impacts negatively on the family situation concerning the role of women. The Xhosa family institution is no exception to this practise. The treatment of women that results in their marginalisation in leadership development has already been mentioned. This section focuses on issues pertinent to the Xhosa family unit that undermine the value of women in all sectors of life and in particular leadership opportunities. The cultural ramifications of these values impact on the (i) nature and status of women and men in family (ii) role differentiation and expectations (iii) the arenas of the struggle.

Men, as already noted, are regarded in Xhosa and other indigenous communities as superior to women in all respects due to patriarchal tendencies. The origin of this perception is not verified other than stating that this has been internalised by the Xhosa's from their forefathers. This myth has been accepted by women for many centuries and has resulted in women seeing themselves as divinely dependent on men. Thus, women cannot make decisions, such as the naming of their children, without consulting their husbands or menfolk. Such notions are currently viewed as suppressive by some enlightened and educated women. In addition, the researcher has witnessed, contrary to the view that women are generally weaker in terms of muscular strength, some instances where some men cannot compete with women in stick fighting, which is a typical traditional test of character, skill and strength among the Xhosas. Women also live longer than men and endure pain and cold more than men.

There are also assertions among the Xhosa people that women are intellectually inferior to men. The term “ubufazi” (womanhood) referred to earlier is a result of this notion. What this implies in practical terms is that a woman can perform a task without realising that it will lead to her own detriment. There, are however, many great people in this contemporary world who do not subscribe to such views due to changing world views. This brings to the next issue, which is the role of differentiation and expectation as expected in a family in the Xhosa context. Critical issues in this regard have to be asked and these are: (i) What are the expectations of the society with regard to the roles of men and women in families and why do these roles and expectations differ? (ii) Can these be attributed to the physical/biological nature of a woman and how have these been proclaimed by the society?

Surely, Biological differences play a major role in the construction of gender stereotypes and socialisation practises in a Xhosa context. Women are primarily responsible for child rearing, cooking and cleaning. Surely, all women are expected to perform these tasks at some point in their lifetime, but the crucial question is whether or not they should be confined in these functions. Interestingly, men as fathers or husbands are not subsumed to these roles. My upbringing in a Xhosa environment made me realise that socialisation plays a significant role in gender inequalities perpetuated against women. Girls are not socialised with boys owing to the fear that the boys will victimise them. Many women accept these specific role but some women do not want to be confined to these and the associated thwarting of their freedom.

Lastly, there is need to focus on women’s participation in the formal economy. Sometimes the woman is the sole breadwinner in the family and while the man would have agrees to his wife’s working, he assumes all control of the money earned by his wife. This practise emanates from the deep ingrained superiority complex over women. This means that gender stereotypes that undermine women’s worth although they perform most of the family responsibilities need to be radically adjusted.

Thirdly, the community environment where these struggles often take place is identified as another area of concern. Domestic violence, referred to earlier, is a worrying phenomenon in Xhosa family institutions. Interestingly, this violence can be perpetrated not only by men, but also by other women, such as the mothers-in-law. Violence can take various forms, for example, sexual harassment. This involves a woman having sex with her husband without her consent. Women are perceived in Xhosa culture as objects of sexual attraction and gratification. A woman is not expected to refuse the man's approach irrespective of her health condition. For a long time marital rape has not been recognised in Xhosa culture although these days some men do take note of such as abuse of women. Other forms of violence include beating, kicking, slapping and biting and these sporadic attacks affect the victim's self-esteem and self-identity. Slater's (2016:40) comments on violence here are significant: "violence juxtaposes the self-realisation of women." As a result, there is a need to determine what causes all this ill-treatment. A quick answer is that patriarchy and men's failure to understand the psychological make-up of women are responsible for this, hence the need for a change in men's attitude.

Closely linked with violence and sexual abuse is the issue of HIV/Aids. Xhosa men unlike their women are usually reluctant to use condoms due to unequal power relations and dominance by men on sexual relations (Rakoczy 2004:287). This makes women substantially vulnerable for suppression by men. Women have no power to insist on condom use (Dube 2003:81). Undoubtedly, women's insistence on condom use leads to violence against them and abused statuses. This situation makes both men and women vulnerable to HIV/AIDS with women being more vulnerable than men in a patriarchal culture.

The above discussion raises an important question concerning the way women are conscientised in the Xhosa culture, because all the literature against customs is written by men. Further questions arise and these are, how are women to be conscientised into their rightful position within the Xhosa culture? How are men to be conscientised into allowing women their rightful and respectful place and role in society? These questions are considered throughout this study.

4.5 The South African Constitution and Women's Rights

One of the major highlights of the democratic dispensation in South Africa is the establishment of the constitution through the Act 108 of 1996. The constitution is the supreme law of the land with its provisions having a binding force on all authorities throughout the Republic of South Africa. It takes into consideration issues, such as gender, religion, the rights of women, the economy and education, which affect the general life of the South Africans and these have not been reviewed and remain binding to all its inhabitants. Therefore, the South African Constitution intends to address the errors and evils of the apartheid regime and to eliminate any forms of alienation and division amongst its people.

The discussion so far suggests that some in the Xhosa community disregard the principle of the humanity of women. It needs to be mentioned that the unwritten codes within Xhosa culture and customary law do not offer women the same legal status as men. There is a clear indication that there is need for change that will place women in their rightful place in families and society in general.

The objective of the Constitution is to ensure equality. It also seeks to eliminate all forms of sexual abuse and means used to justify the use of power by men against women. This is spelt clearly in the Constitution's preamble:

We therefore, through our freely elected representatives, adopt this constitution as the supreme law of the Republic so as to:

Heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights. To lay the foundations for a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people and every citizen is equally protected by the law. To improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each citizen and to:

Build a united and democratic South Africa able to take its rightful place as a sovereign state in the family of nations.

Constitution of South Africa (1996:1)

A consideration of this preamble suggests that the precarious position of women in families and the society noted in the above discussion means that equality in the Xhosa domain (OR Tambo) has not yet been achieved. The attitude adopted by men against

women in all sectors of life implies that women are not protected by law and therefore there is no equality between men and women. It is, then, argued that if the government makes significant strides towards the liberation of women, how much more is needed to be done by the church to address the same plight of women in church and society.

In particular, Chapter 2 of the Constitution deals with the Bill of Rights. The researcher uses the Bill of Rights in the Constitution as a basic principle and not as a religious text for Christianity, Islam, Judaism or other faith communities. This does not, in any way, imply that religious principles play a secondary role in importance. The researcher is also operating from the premise that no community has ever objected to basic human rights as enshrined in the Constitution.

In the same vein, the Women's National Coalition produced the Women's Charter, which stressed changes that women demand in the broader societal context. In particular, Article 8, which deals with family life and partnership states that:

All family types should receive recognition. Acknowledgement of women's responsibilities must be reflected in their decision making powers within the family and in the management of the household. Domestic cares, duties and obligations should be shared by partners and all members of the household.(Women's Charter for effective equality 1994:6).

Equally, Article 9 which deals with custom, culture and religion states that:

- Custom, culture and religion insofar as these impact upon the status of women in marriage, in law and in public life, shall be subject to the equality clause in the Bill of Rights.
- All women shall have the freedom to practise their own religion, culture or beliefs without fear.
- Women, including those under customary law must have the right to inherit (Women's Charter for effective equality 1994:6).

Given the above context, one wonders what the current conditions in the OR Tambo District are.

Significant strides have been done at socio-political level as a sequel to the promulgation of the Constitution. The executive mayor of OR Tambo District is female. The mandate of the district is to provide service delivery to the previously disadvantaged people. The 2016/17 Annual Report shows that much has been achieved under her leadership on

Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP). The district has been successful in spending its grants including the Municipal Infra-Structure Grants (MIG). Generally, districts do not utilise optimally their budgets and this results in cases of the non-fulfilment of their mandates. The district has also managed a qualified audit report for the first time under a female leadership, which demonstrates commitment to delivering basic services and good governance. However, the equity report shows that much needs to be done in terms of the Constitution.

The equity report for OR Tambo district shows that out of eighty (80) middle managers in the district only twenty nine are African females due to the proximity of the area. In addition, while women have been successful in the business sector, some businesses are still dominated by men. For example, the district has a project to motivate women in transport but few are interested, hence the industry is still dominated by men. It appears as if women have no self-confidence and ability to start this business category due to lack of skills.

In the education sphere, Prof Marina Xaba-Mokoena who is also a lay preacher in the Methodist church, has amongst others proved that she is a class of her own. Being born in a Xhosa domain and a Methodist background, Prof Xaba-Mokoena proved that given an opportunity women can achieve great strides. In her own words, she admits that it was not easy to find a way but she was determined to fulfil her ambition (Xaba-Mokoena 2018:1). Her academic achievements start from her decision to pursue medical studies after a stint as a nurse, which saw her qualify as a pulmonologist from Stockholm University. She worked as a pulmonologist at Mthatha General Hospital during the period 1980-1982, and was appointed a member of the scientific committee in respiratory by the International Union against tuberculosis in 1983. She formed the Transkei National Tuberculosis Association in the OR Tambo, which is a counterpart of South African National Tuberculosis Association (SANTA). Her work as resulted in a noticeable decline in tuberculosis infection in the District until HIV hit and it rose again. Prof Xaba-Mokoena has also organised international conferences on diseases and was also influential in opening the medical school at Walter Sisulu University based on Public Health Care (PHC). After her retirement in 1994, she continued to engage in health issues as the

President of the South African Medical Association (SAMA) and by writing articles for the South African Medical Journal (Xaba-Mokoena 2018:1)

The above synopsis is typical of what women can achieve if given an opportunity to prove themselves. Prof Xaba-Mokoena (2018:3) admits that her mother, who was a leader in church, a Sunday school teacher, girl-guider and President of Women's Zenzele (do it yourself) Association, played a significant role in her life. Women of such a calibre are still needed to advance societies more and more. Some women survive under difficult conditions. They sell fruits and vegetables along the streets in order to provide food for their children and husbands due to unemployment of husbands particularly in the OR Tambo area. This cannot be taken lightly since fruit hawking contributes directly to the economic growth of the region and the country as a whole.

Therefore, there are cases where women rise against all odds and manage to progress in life. It is also evident that the opportunities for equal education need to be promoted. The society needs to unlearn the belief of ascribing certain careers to men. Women who have made it in life benefited from the rare opportunities for education and it opened opportunities for growth in social mobility and avenues for economic growth.

4.5.1 Implications of the Bill of Rights in addressing Women Abuse to Women and **Leadership**

The above sections suggest the need to examine the violation of the constitution owing to a negative interplay between women and cultural norms and practices. The struggle for political emancipation was waged by both males and females in this country and thus, it is saddening that some men are not willing to liberate women. Reference has been made to cultural practises and the power relations thereof that have no respect for the constitution after years of freedom. It would seem appropriate to change the negative cultural impact on women to be positive operations faithful to God's Word.

One of the implications is that the lobola custom discussed earlier violates the Constitution as it undermines human dignity. It subjects women as perpetual minors and inferior to men. A deontological view asks the question: is it ethically correct to treat women like minors and deprive them of their freedom, self-identity and self-reliance? The status of women is also severely undermined.

The initiation of girls also elicits much concern. Girls should be given some freedom to determine their future in accordance with the Constitutional imperatives. The understanding gained with regard to cultural norms is that all girls should be married. The initiation should keep trend with modern developments as it overlooks the view that some girls may have no intention to get married. Getting married or not is a matter of personal decision. Thus, if democracy and human rights are to be viewed as meaningful to women and society at large, it must address this nasty oppression and subjugation of women. Above all, the isolation of girls during initiation has negative psychological consequences unimaginable.

The issue of potential violence against women is against the spirit of the Constitution. The sporadic incidents of violence in Xhosa families are linked to the failure among Xhosa men desist from violence and to take serious the yearly campaigns often held from 25 November to 10 December that draw attention against sexual violence. The first step to address this misdemeanour would be to hold perpetrators accountable for their actions. More succinctly, Rakoczy (2011:290) quoting Buckenham and Dlamini (2000:36) stipulates that:

Quick or cheap forgiveness—with an emphasis on understanding why he does it or compassion for his suffering and anguish that comes out violence—is not helpful. It must run deeper, otherwise the violence continues. He must be held accountable and face the consequences of his actions long and short term.

It is clear that some ethical responses to the sexual abuse of women and children should be taken seriously by the in-laws. Very often women's stories reporting their predicaments are not believed. Worse still, women are expected to obey what their husbands order them to do basing their views on the erroneous interpretation of the Pauline Corpus (Eph. 5:22-23, Col. 3:18).

Women also suffer in that often times the police do not take them seriously when then they report violence by their men. The police often advise violated women to settle the matter with their families. The local OR Tambo District newspaper the Daily Dispatch (n. d) reported that one woman reported violence against her by her husband three times, but there was no progress until the husband eventually shot her dead. So easy is the life

of a woman in a Xhosa and other national domains. The docket could not be found when investigations were made. Such actions undermine women's value in society as human beings in their own right and authority. Therefore, the above discussed abusive and derogatory treatment of women is a criminal offence that needs to be taken seriously than is the situation presently.

Furthermore, the Church cannot be absolved from violating the applicable contents of the South African Constitution. Churches are generally constructed in a patriarchal and hierarchical manner. This model is the basis for arguments in formal and non-formal gatherings. Men often argue that Christ did not appoint women as disciples and that a man was first in the creation order. This may, perhaps, be viewed as an unconscious force that drives men to undermine women in leadership and subjugate them as their objects. This view has no room in God's children and does not depict the will of God for women. Although the elites and theologically competent people may understand the contextual theology of the Scriptures, ordinary people in the Xhosa domain may not understand due to theological incompetence and thus, continue to sabotage progress towards the promotion of women leadership.

4.5.2 What are the positive pointers to women's potential for Leadership

The standard norm in the Xhosa culture is that women contribute to the society's vitality by being mothers and bearers of children. Normally women are not expected to interfere in important public issues. Ayandokum (2012:158) states that 'women are expected to stay at home to nurse their babies, and depend on their husbands to provide all they need...' Hence, it is common for a child not to know the father, but it is hardly unthinkable for a child not to know the mother. This typifies the basic leadership skills the mother can have in nurturing the child without undue interference by the husband.

Women can also be responsible for two or more roles at a time. Some men have no problem in allowing their wives to work. They spend much time at work but when they come back home after work, they are expected to fulfil their duties as mothers and wives. I have observed that this practice is more prevalent among African women than among their white counterparts.

4.5.3 Areas that need development in OR Tambo district

Development incorporates a number of issues. It is about challenging the status quo by focusing on inequality and oppression and at the same time reinforce the need for equity, fairness and non-discrimination. Women's development can lead to the emancipation of both men and women. In this case, women are freed from the knuckles of patriarchy and power structures that make them subordinate to men. At the same time men can be freed from ideologies and traditions that are blinded by misconceptions and misinterpretations. Development may also put emphasis on good governance that incorporates men and women in leadership positions.

Some scholars describe development as an individual capacitation that conserves one's autonomy, options and well-being leading to the realisation of the desired goals (Elliot 2008:8). The transformation agenda focussing on women's movement from a disadvantaged position into making their own life choices is central to this study. Whoever is developed appropriately, such as the women who occupy positions of responsibility but rarely at structural levels, will be able to make good career choices.

Areas that may need to be developed on women are critical in OR Tambo District are outlined below.

- Self-definition and self determination

This involves women's ability to show themselves the values and strengths they can contribute to each other. One aspect of women development espoused by Kretzschmar (2009 (b):227) is group empowerment. This provides a space for women to come together and discuss issue that affect them with a view to come up with solutions. Nobody will provide solutions for them as the women's sessions and workshops may be arranged in a way where women engage in a dialogues on socio-cultural, economic, religious, health and family issues that affect them in their daily lives. Such situations are not prevalent in the Xhosa culture because of women's fear of being labelled rebellious and disobedient against men.

Another important aspect would be to share ideas with pioneer women who have remained successful in life despite many obstructions. These may include testimonials on everyday experiences and survival strategies against different forms of oppression. The advantages of women listening to other women speaking about pertinent issues affecting them is enormous with the opportunities for women to listen to other women regarding women's lives being equally encouraging. Thus, communication in such an environment often produces a sense of shared identity and corporate determination.

- Development of leadership and management skills

Female leadership is very limited in the OR Tambo District. The issue of competence in leadership and management is vital in this sense. This can be done by capacitating women on sound leadership and management practice. This can open a host of leadership opportunities in both the church and society at large. As a result, a conscious effort must be made to identify, develop and implement appropriate strategies to open opportunities for women leadership.

- Develop education and theological skills

Women have limited upward mobility on the socio-economic ladder due to limited educational skills. Generally, they cannot compete with men in an open labour market. Those women who manage to manoeuvre their ways to the top are often accused of being politically correct. Many foreign visitors to the area often comment that there is much potential in the area but lack of scientific, technical and organisational skills. The reality is that the policies are in place in this country but these are not effectively implemented with much time and energy being wasted on unimportant issues. The answer then is to educate women as Oduyoye (2007:17) attests that the marginalisation of women over generations has put them on the periphery of intellectually demanding professions and other services.

Strangely, the education of boys is regarded as more important than the education of girls since girls are expected to marry and join their husband's households. The rationale here is that a girl child will add more value to their husband's households. However, one can argue that such archaic views will become outdated if women are educated.

In addition, theological development is another area that needs to be developed. In Xhosa culture, whether one is a churchgoer or not, one still believes in God. The church that one goes to church does not imply forsaking cultural norms. Deifelt (1997:54) contends that theological training enables women to read Scriptures critically and apply it in their contexts. The training will also enable uncover stories of women in the Bible who played significant roles in leadership and replicate them in their circumstances.

4.6 Concluding remarks

The chapter considered the negative aspects of culture that undermine women's eligibility for leadership in a Xhosa environment. These aspects include inequalities in labour, health and education, violence and sexual abuse emanating from cultural convictions. It has been established that these cultural constructs need to be questioned since they are based on the misunderstanding of the traditional role of Xhosa women. Fundamental in the cultural aspects is the belief that culture is static and this view fails to note the changing dynamics of culture resulting from the opportunities in this post-modern society. The complexity and the interrelatedness of these many issues reveals gross inequalities between men and women.

The chapter also examined some aspects of culture that negatively limit chances of women's involvement in leadership. These include women's birth rites and child birthing, girls' initiation rites, the practise of *ukuthwala* custom, *lobola* custom and the use of proverbs to subjugate women. It has been argued vigorously that a positive use of these cultural practices can be a stepladder towards recognising the potential of women in leadership.

The chapter also appraised the South African Constitution's guidelines but noted that these have not been adequately adhered to in the area under investigation. Genuine liberation should embrace a broader society including women based on the principles of equity.

The chapter also pointed out that some women have defied all odds, despite persistent cultural obstructions to women leadership, and managed to progress in life even to the extent of overshadowing some men. Nevertheless, the necessity of identifying

competencies and further development for women has been brought to light. These competencies will open opportunities for leadership.

The overall need for the transformation of the Xhosa culture has been highlighted as a means to make the culture caring and effective. The picture depicted in this chapter is that exploitation is never desirable and that a better way of life is needed. In addition, remaining silent whilst the marginalisation of women persists would be viewed as both unethical and immoral. Therefore, it would be appropriate to develop an operative praxis faithful to the Good News. In my view the Good News refers to the liberating and life-giving practise for both Xhosa men and women. In this way, all cultural practises, secular or sacred would be sifted in the light of the timeless truth of God's Word.

CHAPTER 5: CONTEMPORAY EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN LEADERSHIP IN THE ASSEMBLY OF GOD

5.1 Introduction

The chapter examines the operational theology of the AoG *vis-a-vis* the churches' attitude towards women's leadership and appropriate empowerment based on perceived biblical understanding. As a classical Pentecostal church, the AoG claims to be Bible based, Christ centered and divinely guided by the Holy Spirit with a characteristic of speaking in tongues. This particular branch of the AoG church is situated in a predominantly Xhosa cultural domain and is considered notoriously for its patriarchal inclinations. As a result of the cultural impact on Biblical understanding, it is crucial to understand the people's attitudes towards women leadership and empowerment. In addition foregrounding the discussion, is a brief history of the AoG in South Africa so as to introduce their fundamental beliefs on women leadership.

5.2 Historical Background

The history of the AoG in South Africa dates back to 1908 with the arrival of several Pentecostal missionaries, notably Charles Chawner from Canada, who hailed from different cultural backgrounds. The missionaries claimed that they were guided by the Holy Spirit. They also stated that they were interested in preaching salvation to the people without necessarily interfering with their cultural values and this included the role of women in the church. Little did they envisage the future ramifications of this omission.

Later, Jim Mullan, an Irishman, formed a partnership with Nicholas Bhengu, a South African, with a view to preach the Gospel in areas where there was no AoG church or missionary. This arrangement, amidst the Apartheid era in South Africa, was a kind of Peter-Paul arrangement, that is, Peter goes to the Jews and Paul to the Gentiles (Gal. 2:8), with Bhengu going to the blacks and Mullan to the whites. It is necessary to mention that initially the AoG church was predominantly a black church before any white congregations were formed (Watt 1992:22). This information is vital when considering the age old cultural dynamics that subjugated women to inferior positions in life. Other

pioneers included James E. Bond an iconoclast and builder of the work that still stands even today. History attests that these renowned and humble servants of God were not scholars of note, but were mightily led and used by the Holy Spirit. One may attribute this to their submission to the Holy Ghost as revealed by God to them. They did not prioritise or teach clearly about the appropriate role of women in church, although they were supported and accompanied by their wives throughout their missionary zeal. It can, thus, be postulated that the current position of women in the AoG is a lack of clear direction in this regard.

5.3 Assembly of God Structure

The current church governance of the AoG seems to be very complex and sometimes difficult to understand and yet it is very interesting. Leadership is a combination of Congregational, Episcopal and Presbyterian practices. The structure is developed at national level and cascaded down to the regions. Briefly, the structure is as follows:

The General Council Executive is the highest body of the AoG and is the final council of appeal in all matters affecting the church and members.

- The General Executive is the ruling body of the Assemblies of God that is responsible for the general administration of the church.
- The General Conference (GC) is the consultation forum for the General Executive in the promulgation of all rules and policies. All accredited ministers and elders are members of this body that meets bi-annually.
- The Regional Council_(RC) represents local churches in the region. It also serves as a link between local churches in the region, RC and GC.
- The Local Church comprises all born again believers in a particular locality. Leadership is vested upon the elders and deacons with the pastor being the chief elder. *Women are not eligible and there is no official position in this regard.*
- Management Committees are committees elected by various groups to lead in their context. These committees are all under the general oversight of the elders and the pastor. For example, mothers are elected for the mother's group and girls are elected for the girl's group. The women's committee facilitates and

manages women's fellowship and entrusted with teaching women the spiritual values of wifehood, motherhood and how to be submissive to their husbands. As such, character models of women in the Bible are taught with a view to eliminate divorce in families. They are also responsible for teaching girls on how to live a holy and sustainable Christian life in singlehood. In addition, the girls committee is responsible for organising girls' fellowship and motivating girls to maintain Biblical Christian standards. Both mothers' and girls' committees raise funds to contribute to the overall ministry of the church by bringing souls to Christ.

- The highest administrative body at regional level is the Regional Council (RC), which is composed of pastors, delegates from local churches, elders and deacons. The RC elects a committee to function in between RC meetings. Women's supervisors and pastor's wives are ex-officio members of the Regional Council, but are not eligible for election onto the Regional Council Committee (RCC). The women, nevertheless, vote in the election of the RCC. All matters not solved at regional level are referred to the General Executive for possible guidance and or ratification.

An examination of the AoG shows that it is grounded on patriarchal patterns where men are the only ones making executive decisions in the church. The theological praxis is, therefore, found wanting in terms of orthodox Christianity.

Leadership in the AoG is responsible for crafting the strategic vision of the church and handling disciplinary issues. Strangely, women are involved in the election of leadership but are not eligible for election into executive functions because of their biological make-up. Nothing tangible seems to justify their exclusion, particularly for those skilled and with a desire to lead in the church. It is, thus not ethically right for women to be marginalised in this manner, particularly in a church that is supposed to be exemplary. The issue of culture and patriarchy has long been a challenge faced by women worldwide. The consequences do not correspond with the general welfare and progress of women and therefore harmful in their leadership aspirations. For this reason, Grenz (1997:35) connotes that the wrongfulness or rightfulness will always be determined by its outcome.

In the same vein Oduyoye (2005:480) contends that the suppression of the religious and cultural life of the indigenous people cannot be divorced from the injustices emanating from the Bible. Indeed the Bible, as has been alluded to can be used to justify injustices. This becomes evident when considering women's group in the AoG. The AoG has the Women's Fellowship (*imanyano*) referred to as imanyano by other churches. Basically the purpose is the same, that is, praying for their painful experiences.

However, the development of the Manyano movement has astonishing revelations. Haddad (2017:5) states that the expression of Christianity has always been linked to the missionaries and the colonisation process. Scholars such as Vellem (2007:54) alludes to the same fact that Manyano came at a time when the African blacks were yearning for unity after being fragmented by the colonial and missionary rule. The men were tremendously oppressed since no or limited political, economic or cultural choices. This is understandable among the Xhosa people who were often engaged in wars with colonialists. The education of girls by missionaries was based on preparing the girls for motherhood (Haddad (2017:5). Nonetheless, this does not imply that the Bible was not viewed as important in this context. The Bible and the church has been for a long time to African women and will continue to be like that. It is unfortunate that erroneous biblical interpretation has been used to dehumanise women.

Through woman *Manyano*, a space for women is created. Reference has been made to this women group but it is considered appropriate to have an exposition in the context of the AoG church. It can, thus, not be assumed that women have their own space, there is nothing untoward that can be experienced by women. This is true when considering what is to follow hereunder:

Women Manyano is prevalent in the AoG church. Elderly and young women meet on certain days, particularly on Thursday morning. The reason for meeting on the morning is to have time to back home and prepare for their husbands who are at work. They have limited or no opportunities to think outside their domestic responsibilities as wives. They are to formulate the agenda for the meeting but this must be approved by the leadership of the church as already stated. They are pseudo-agency since they cannot make their independent decisions for things that affect them as women. In this instance, there seems

to be no correlation between womenhood and leadership. Women, in this regard, become the androcentric vessels of men. It becomes strange that women can be subjected to such tenacious situations where they are supposed to express themselves freely.

Therefore, it becomes appropriate in today's world, where enormous changes are taking place in technological, cultural, religious and political spheres, for the AoG to re-evaluate its position regarding the involvement of women in leadership and the capacitation appertaining thereto. The pace of change has become so rapid that no amount of conservatism can curtail it, as a result, the AoG's continued clinging to its old patterns of ministry and outmoded hierarchical structures can only lead to continuous disaster. It is evident that the AoG should be structured charismatically in preparation of any future challenges instead of finding itself trapped in the organisational forms that are increasingly becoming obsolete.

5.4 Doctrinal Position

The AoG is a Bible preaching church that believes in its teaching as a guide of life and practice. The preface of the AoG Constitution (2014) states on 'things commonly believed' that, all Scripture, which are the 66 canonical books, is inspired by God and the inerrant and authoritative Word of God in all matters of faith and practice. However, looking at the theological praxis of the AoG, the extent of adherence to the teachings of the Bible regarding women and leadership needs some serious probing. Forster (2009:131) contends that the reason for misinterpreting the scriptures is that some people read the Bible as any other book in existence or read it in a vague sense. Schüssler-Fiorenza (1986:421) states that the offensive language that is often used against women as stated earlier is the cause for denigrating women. This is the practise in Xhosa which unwittingly even affects the church of God. This becomes evident throughout the study hence a turnaround strategy is absolutely indispensable.

5.4.1 Women and the Experience of the Holy Spirit

As a classical Pentecostal church, the AoG accepts that genuine believers are filled with the Holy Spirit. It is this Holy Spirit that bestows gifts to whomsoever God wishes. The AoG believes that women are eligible for motivational and manifestation gifts (Rom. 12:6-

8 and 1 Cor. 12:1-11), but not the ministry gifts (Eph. 4:11-12). The understanding is that if women function under these ministerial gifts they would have rulership over men, something viewed as prohibited by the Scriptures (1Tm. 2:12).

A narration of what happened on the day of Pentecost is instructive. Men and women had a prayer meeting in the Upper Room before the Pentecost (Acts 1:13-15). The women, like men, were touched by the Lord Jesus and were waiting for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit together with men. This was a departure from the Jewish custom of those days that did not allow men and women to pray together. Interestingly, women in the AoG sit on their side in the church. No particular explanation has been put forward in this regard, but it would seem that the practice emanates from cultural factors where women do not mix indiscriminately with men on certain occasions. Probably, women also sat on their side in the Jewish synagogue. Nonetheless, a new dawn appeared after Jesus came, and men and women could pray together and await the Holy Spirit to guide them in witnessing the risen Christ.

In the same vein, the Holy Spirit fell indiscriminately on the day of Pentecost on men and women as they were waiting together for this experience of the Holy Ghost. This underscores that both men and women became living stones of the New Covenant temple and they all spoke in tongues as the Spirit gave them utterances. In this regard, Peter did not hesitate to say that this was the accomplishment of Joel's prophecy that in the last days, God will pour out the Holy Spirit upon "all flesh" (Jl. 2:28-32, Acts 2:16-18). This was, indeed, a new day and thus attesting to the fact that God operates in His own divine way without gender discrimination.

In addition, Ayandokum (2012:161) asserts that "since the Holy Spirit empowerment was not gender restricted, all who are empowered by the Holy Spirit are to advance the Gospel of Jesus Christ without limitations". This researcher also recognises the longstanding legitimacy of women's ministry in consideration of the reality that:

- The mission of the church is to fulfil the Lord's command to love God as you love your neighbour: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart...Love your neighbour as yourself" (Mt. 22:37, 39).

- Ministry involvement is primarily fulfilling the Great Commission: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations...” (Mt. 28:19-20). This Great Commission becomes a great omission if women are not adequately involved.
- Ministry involves the equipping of saints for the work of ministry (Eph. 4:12-15). The word “saints” includes “women” who are equally regenerated as men.
- The early church’s model of ministry is “characterised by teaching the Apostles doctrine, fellowship of all saints, the breaking of bread and prayer” (Acts 2:42-47). All the Pentecostal churches, including the AoG, should take credence to this impeccable volition and actively involve women too

An objective assessment of the early church practises reflects that almost all the essential elements of the ministry that the Bible often outlines still prevail. Past and present observations reveal that women can perform equally or more if given an opportunity to showcase their potential in the church. Therefore, any church that proclaims the Gospel of Jesus Christ in any cultural domain should take note of these ministry imperatives. It is for this reason that Cunningham and Hamilton (2000:12) argue that women can be set apart by the Holy Spirit to do God’s work in the same way as men. Women indeed do not want to be judged in accordance to their physical make-up but by their potential to authoritatively execute God’s mission on earth.

As a result, the AoG church should be given opportunities to speak about their experiences of Pentecost. This will pave way for the church to break away from the patriarchal nature and allow both men and women to be used by God. In this way, men and women will become partners in leadership and spreading the Gospel of Christ. The other side of the pendulum is that if women become silent in the church and do not speak about their experiences, the patriarchal nature of the church will persist and women will never be treated as full human beings. There are no restrictions in the church for women to speak, but unfortunately women do not voice their discontentment openly for fear of being viewed as rebellious against men. Unfortunately, women’s silence delays transformation in the church. It is, thus, conjured that unless women speak with one voice against their marginalisation, the church will not experience the Damascus encounter.

The existing forms of and space for women participation should be strengthened and enable the empowerment of women in the AoG church. Currently, women are free to pray, clap hands, being emotional while raising their voices praising the Lord and even prophesying. Men also often do the above aspects. These activities should be encouraged further as a motivation for women to excel in their ministry even to the extent of becoming pastors in the AoG. This empowerment will challenge all forms of oppression and inequality in the church. In addition, the empowerment of women can result in the freedom of both men and women from the power structures and patriarchy that suppresses women and men's freedom from ideologies and traditions that are often blinded by distortions and misconceptions. In this sense, women empowerment will enable them to control their own life and change the power relations that often militate against their own wellbeing and the attainment of their desired goals (Elliot 2008:7). The liberating praxis centring on women's movement from oppressive power relations to a situation where they determine their own life choices in ministry is central to the plight of women in the AoG and the focus of this study.

Notwithstanding their silence, the roles played by women in the AoG need some transformation in line with the timeless truth of God's Word. An understanding of the Pauline teachings by preachers guided by the Holy Spirit requires further interrogation for contextual comprehension (refer to chapter 2). How can women be assisted to speak their minds and their personal wisdom in relation to the church? It is often difficult to challenge the preacher who claims to speak through a revelation from God. However, biblically speaking, every revelation should result in the indiscriminate transformation of souls. As a result, it becomes necessary to offer women the freedom to read the Scriptures in their context and not allow men to interpret the Bible for them.

As a result, the AoG should encourage women to articulate their Pentecostal experience and not remain silent. The AoG's breaking of this silence will create freedom under God's grace to deconstruct and enhance all potential roadblocks against women leadership. It is flabbergasting to find that the Bible that is supposed to be used to liberate women is used to oppress women because of erroneous interpretation. The women, together with men, will contribute to the spiritual growth of church members. It is incorrect, not only in

matters of scientific facts, but also unethical and immoral that women should be constrained to silence in the church whilst the Scripture explicitly encourages them to speak as the Spirit directs (Neh. 9:20 Jn 14:26). In any event, who is offended when they speak? Is it the Holy Spirit or the menfolk in the church? The researcher has, on many occasions, witnessed women preaching in certain Christian meetings and God confirms His presence among the saints.

The most logical question to be asked by the AoG churches is: Where women want or ought to be in terms of leadership? The general view is that women are not satisfied with their relegation to the status of nonentities in the church. Instead, women want to serve God with all their might and to be able to make meaningful decisions for the benefit of the church. The church's lack of attention on this question reduces its impact on communities where its service is greatly needed. The feminist theologian's quest for equality, discussed earlier, is that God's call in a woman should be recognised and fulfilled. This is no intellectual theologising. The role of the power base should include men creating a space for women to access leadership roles in the church and, thus, fulfil their God-given ministries.

5.4.2 Assemblies of God Women and their call to Formal Ministry

The people who have wider and better opportunities for ministry in the Pentecostal Churches are those who claim to be called in accordance with the fivefold ministries and serving at that special level. Being called results in one ultimately being recognised as an ordained pastor after successful completion of a four year uninterrupted period of probation under a mentor. The church plays a significant role if one has to pursue a call in way reminiscent of the New Testament pattern: while they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them" (Acts 13:2 emphasis added). Note: God has already called them and the duty of the church is to affirm what the Almighty God has already decided. As a result, a person called to serve the Lord would like to see that desire being fulfilled especially in an evangelical church.

The restrictions imposed on women in the AoG church often lead the women with a desire to serve the Lord to experience insurmountable problems in listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit on the calling. This is the reason for undertaking this study. There is need for these restrictions to be removed even though the means to do so are thwarted and women have no avenue to appeal. This obstruction is not expressly stated in the Constitution, but when one asks, it will be said that this has been a longstanding practice of the church inherited from the early patriarchs of the church. This brings forth the notion that the AoG should re-evaluate its practice with regard to women to be in line with the undiluted Word of God as He is not gender sensitive. This would include developing policies that give guidelines on women's role in the church.

It should be noted that the AoG has no tangible reasons to refute God's decision on the women called to serve Him. Barnabas and Saul were called by God and the church was left with no authority to change what God had already decided. As hinted earlier, the perceived obstructions existing in the AoG emanate from socio-cultural beliefs, patriarchal practices and sometimes bizarre interpretations of the Scriptures. Thus, culture appears more important than a call from God and the church patriarchal tradition is also viewed as sacrosanct and too special to be changed since it has been inherited from the past history of the church. The writer's assertion throughout this work is that the church should always act as a change agent and promote Godly principles and values for mankind.

Some women have not been deterred by the above-noted exclusion from a particular call that presupposes ordination. Women have been observed resorting to innovative ways of trying to fulfil their calling. Some started their home cells, which can develop into new ministries pioneered by the woman. They are encouraged by seeing both men and women converting to Christ, which indicates that both genders recognise the importance of women in ministry. Others join ministries that recognise the divine call of women and the appropriate exercise of their gifts while others, end up backsliding because of frustration. This presents a huge challenge for the AoG. Surprisingly, the AoG has no strategy to address this problem and the church ends up losing some gifted women called by God- a reality that puts the AoG at a disadvantage.

The crucial question is whether or not a “call” is enough for one to be eligible for ministry. The case is double edged for the AoG. On one side women, including men, are not necessarily trained for ministry, but are convinced that they are “called”. On the other side, there are women who have Biblical training and teach Biblical Studies in tertiary schools while others pursue theological training in their own interest. The stance of the AoG is that a theological training is not, necessarily, a pre-requisite for one to be called, as one is not trained for a call but one is trained in the call, (emphasis added). This effectively implies that one is not trained to have a call, but training develops the ministry of one who is already called. A close examination of this position shows that the Godly principles of justice and fairness should be respected in the AoG and allow women to serve the Lord without restrictions. This will ensure the valuing of the importance of theological training. It is for this reason that the AoG theological college was established to, primarily, equip ministers.

Women in the AoG church are not necessarily required to undergo theological training to be eligible for leadership. They qualify for leadership in the women’s group, albeit under the church oversight, by virtue of being born again and spirit filled. Reference has already been made to the androcentric text that are used to subjugate women and need not be repeated here. Furthermore, it is unfortunate that the church exists within a particular cultural context, which is Xhosa culture and may directly or indirectly have a negative or positive impact in the church. Notably, women experience various degrees of oppression as a result of African culture and its prescriptions which allow men to dominate in all sectors of life and render women unequal to men. It is for this reason that the church, based on ethical principles, should lead by example and eliminate all structures in the church that reflect discrimination against women. This can be realized when the age, not only seeks to renovate the old patterns of theological understanding, but also “develop new ways of expressing the reality of the re-creation and reconciliation of humanity in Christ (2 Cor. 5:11-19 & Gal. 3:28)”, (Kretzschmar 1991:111).

Importantly, the reason for the marginalising women in formal ministry is that they would rule over men and this will be contrary to the Biblical teaching that women should exercise rule over men (1 Tm. 2:12). Thus, if a woman is a pastor, she would have authority over

men in the church. This has been the perception from the early annals of the church. As a result, the AoG's has never had a woman pastor in any local church since its inception in South Africa. Women's involvement in executive leadership in the church has been and continues to be minimal. An acceptance of the concepts of shared ministry and leadership in the AoG can have a profound impact in line with the mission of God, *missio Dei*. This view has been cherished for a time by certain individuals in the church, thus showing the need for a re-appraisal of the church's ministry and a clear outlining of the distinction between ministry and leadership or headship. Certainly, this would give a wider scope for women to make major contributions in the church instead of being largely confined to tea-brewing and flower arranging in the church.

The AoG continues to cling to the tradition of the church and not allow women to be involved in overall leadership in the church. This needs to be reviewed. At the same time there is no clear policy on women being involved in the executive functions of the church. The women are only afforded the chance to exercise their potential in the context of the women's fellowships that often meets on Thursdays. Those who work during the day meet in the afternoon on Wednesdays. In the South African context, these Mother's organisations (Haddad 2002:102) are known as Mothers' Fellowships or Manyano. The women's Fellowship in the AoG exists with a purpose to teach old and young wives, and on how to be obedient to their husbands so that they live peacefully at home. This approach was, primarily, designed by the early church patriarchs, hence the AoG local church clings to the same norms without any challenge. Women models found in the Scriptures are taught, for example, the woman of virtue (PR. 31:10-31), 1 Sm. 1, 2) and many others. The teachings must also be applied in a family situation. As a consequence, mothers have an inherent responsibility to teach children and girls how to live a holy and acceptable Christian life.

Nevertheless, sight should not be lost that the church exists within a particular cultural domain stated above. Therefore, an interaction between Scripture and culture is important. It has already been articulated that some cultural practises are beneficial to society and church, for example, respect of human dignity. The church, then, should accommodate constructive issues in culture whilst deconstructing or amending

destructive matters. This approach, which is appreciated in modern Christian practice, falls short of what women would normally wish to do and sustain in life. Women would like to see themselves operating optimally and using their gifts without restraints to the extent that they wish to be considered for top leadership positions in the AoG. In all fairness and justification, women's leadership potential i.e. revealed in their teaching of other young women and girls. Moreover, women's caring for their husbands and children is another justification of their leadership capability. It is clear that the AoG needs to do some soul searching in this regard. In practical terms, the AoG should not look at women based on their physical make-up and gender and instead must consider their potential and giftedness. After all, God does not look at people based on their gender but treats all people equally.

The role of gender consciousness and differentiation cannot be overlooked. Males and females have different physiological and neural differences. What is crucial in about the state of being human is that males and females are fundamentally akin to God and have received the same divine spirit (Klinken 2017:26). Oduyoye (2001:42) further reveals that gender does not define worthiness as it is not present in God. In this regard, the writer's view is that once these masculinities are redeemed, a shared quest for humanity will result in liberation from a patriarchy that often obstructs women in leadership in society and the church. Christian leadership, if well comprehended, is based on the primacy of the Scriptures as the rule of faith and practice, which is a fact always incorporated in this work. Therefore, Johnson (2012:293) cautions that it would be baseless to conclude that the difference between males and females justifies an expression of their traditional roles. In addition, an understanding of God's original purpose of the manifestation of gifts in the church will result in a successful resistance against cultural pressures.

5.4.3 Women and a divine call to ministry

It is indeed stipulated in the statement of faith or things commonly believed by the AoG that, the AoG believes in the **priesthood of all believers**: "you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood.... But you are a chosen people, **a royal priesthood**, a holy nation, a people belonging to God..." (1 Pt. 2:5, 9 emphasis added). It would be imagined, under this injunction that women are not

marginalised in ministry by virtue of them belonging to the priesthood of believers alongside men. This is instead not true as only men are ordained as ministers after a four year probationary period. As such, men are viewed as the specially anointed servants of God who must give spiritual guidance to the “flock”. This limits women’s role in the church and to their groups.

Women excluded because of reasons emanating from an misunderstanding of the term “clergy” that is derived from the Greek term “*kleros*” meaning “inheritance” and who is ordained, and the term “layman” (*laikos*) that refers to is “who is not ordained (Allison 2016:42). Conversely, the term “layman” was used by the Greeks when referring to the uneducated (*idiotes*) masses in the community. Rightly understood, the term “clergy” refers to sharing the inheritance of God, which rightfully belongs to all those in Christ and this includes women. Evidently, something needs to be done in the AoG in order to make sure all born again spirit filled members of the church are viewed as equal with a view to work together in partnership for the Kingdom of God.

Ordinarily, ordained ministers in the AoG are responsible for the overall spiritual oversight in the local church and in leading Holy Communion, burials and the baptism of the new converts. One is ordained as a minister after demonstrating the will and commitment to the work of the Lord during the probationary period as a person with a ‘special’ call. There is no overriding character distinct from other members of the church. Thus, tensions would be detached if ordination is viewed in the light of the NT pattern that considers partnership in ministry. The early church viewed ordination in the context of the local church and linked it with service and not status. There is no doubt that if one wants to engage in service for the church then the Spirit will empower that individual and this may include charisma in leadership. Therefore, there is no theological objection to a women’s ministry that may include counselling and prophesying.

5.4.4 AoG and the position of Single Women in Leadership

In the context of the research, the term “single women” refers to women who are unmarried, never married, separated, divorced or widowed. Single women in the traditional rural communities are those who have not been able to “get a man” while in

the urban communities single women are assumed as those interested in marriage (Gordon 1994:2). This situation exists against the background that women are dependent on men. This situation persists in the church and society at large and negates the importance of single women's role in church.

Generally, women are single because of their decision to remain single or being unlucky enough to get a "Mr Right". The metaphor often used by the Xhosa's to refer to a woman who has passed a certain age without being marriage is "*uDingiwe ududelwe nguJambase*". This metaphor has historical significance in that "Dingiwe" refers to a woman and "Jambase" was the name of a man and the narrative is that "Jambase" never married "Dingiwe" as was expected. This has a negative image for the woman, hence even the church does not utilise single women optimally. Significantly, one of the reasons to remain single is that some of the women who grew up in polygamous marriages had painful experiences learnt from the subjugation of their mothers. Others may not be interested in men because of their sexual orientation. Nonetheless, women who remain single think that they can have some psychological relief and yet they experience the opposite in the church in they are not fully accommodated nor made to freely exercise their potential. Nevertheless, the number of single women in the church grows more than the number of single men, which means that the church should devise ways to manage this reality in the church in accordance with the overall purpose of God for humankind.

It should be noted that single women experience a variety of challenges related to their gender specific behaviour in the AoG. Women can be leaders in their own group of girls so that they can concentrate on the particular needs and expectations of girls in the church. This must be seen in a global context, that is, the general plight of women not only in Africa but also all over the world with churches, including Latin America, particularly North America, the European and the Asian world. As such, Uchem (2003:27) insists that these challenges are "an aftermath of the introduction of medieval Western Christian notions of women's inferiority..." This has a direct or indirect impact on the *modus operandi* of churches that existed then and the churches that existed later. The challenges are discussed hereunder:

- **The place of single women in the church**

The place of single women in the church is highly confusing to the extent that they, do not know where they actually fit into the church echelons. The situation of married women is viewed as better than the single women's situation since once a woman is married, she is called a mother even before she gives birth to a child. On the contrary, if a single woman gives birth to a child she is not called a mother. In addition, a married woman is called by her husbands' surname such that single women feel that they are not relevant in the category of mothers. Mothers care for their husbands, but single women should be obedient to God and serve Him unhindered within their context and they also have leadership capabilities.

In instances where single women are past their prime, the youth become sceptical about using them for fear of being "bullied" by the elderly sisters who may be interpreted by young girls as too strict and sometimes perceived as legalistic in their teachings. This makes single women forfeit their self-concept and self-worth in the church and eventually decide to leave. Some, especially those who feel that the church is their only source of hope and encouragement remain. Nonetheless, the inhospitable conditions create a perception among single women that they are both uncomfortable with local church *per se* and the untenable treatment received in their respective group as stated above.

- Finally, it should also be noted that the seating arrangement in the AoG presents some psychological challenges. Those who have not made a choice to remain single sit alone and those who have children sit alone, which makes the single mothers feel somewhat, ostracised in the church. This persistently emanates from cultural imperatives where a woman who has "a fall" (given birth to a child) does not mix freely with those who have no children. This casts some doubts on why they are in the church in the first place. This practice can be changed, as it is purely cultural and the AoG needs to devise some strategies to make everybody feel appreciated and welcomed in the church. This apparent ostracism affects full participation in the church. The Bible teaches that anyone who is in Christ is a new creature (1 Cor. 5:17). Thus, there is need to create conditions and leadership

practices that encourage spiritual maturity to the level of developing self-confidence and self-worth in working for the Lord within women.

- **Lack of programmes for single women**

Mostly, the needs of single women, particularly widows, are not given the attention they deserve in the church. The church has a variety of appropriate programmes for girls, youth, men, Sunday school and mothers. Notably, there are no programmes tailor-made for the widows and yet they are the most vulnerable group in the church. Some widows experience depression as a result of losing their husbands and as such, they need special attention in order to enable them to contribute optimally to the church. Normally, programmes are meant to support particular groups with common interests where members are free to articulate their problems, advise each other and also carry one's burdens. Interestingly, some are educated and occupy leadership positions in their occupation. They are able to maintain the status that prevailed before the husband's departure such as taking care of the general welfare of the family and children and at the same time being active in the church. The fact that they are able to progress even in the absence of the husband implies that they have leadership capabilities. Hence, limiting single women and in particular widows participation to their groups is not acceptable. My findings from some engagement with some of the women regarding their general welfare in the church noted that they feel disappointed by gender stereotyping in the church and call for radical and appropriate transformation. I empathise with these excluded women on this matter. At the same time the church loses by not engaging them optimally in church activities.

- **Single Women as viewed with suspicion**

The way single women are viewed needs to be seen within the socio-cultural context. The way women are brought up and socialised dictates the attitudes towards single girls and the role they should play in societal structures. Generally, women replicate behavioural patterns they see in their mothers and adults. It has already been mentioned that society views women in the context of marriage. As such, they are accorded little or no status outside of this framework. Their life is

governed by the societal traditions and subjected to the authority of their fathers and other male members of the society or family. When a girl gets married, she will be subjected to her husband and after the husband's death, she will be subject to her brothers or her sons. Such inimical practises are also prevalent in the church situation.

Generally, married women in the AoG do not trust the single women. They think that they can steal their husbands. Single women are also suspected of living a life with double standards and not being fully committed to Christ. The pastors' wives often feel that their husbands are not safe when accompanied by single women, hence pastors, should exercise wisdom when counselling young single church women/mothers. Ordinarily, the general thinking in the church, particularly by married women, is that, all mankind is susceptible weaknesses but God is always perfect. It is not easy to convince the congregation not to be suspicious of single women, who like all humankind have their own frailties. The devil is always roaring like a lion seeking whom to devour (1Pt. 5:8). This calls for church members to be mindful of the devil's devices.

Furthermore, single women experience loneliness in the church. This is caused by lack of both support and total acceptance by the church, which ends up thwarting their spiritual advancement in ministry. This happens against the general context single women who are committed to the church. They are mostly motivated to attend prayer meetings and contribute financially like married mothers and even more. One thing becomes clear, that is, the church loses its warmth, vibrancy and growth if a certain section of the membership does not function optimally. One can imagine the warmth, which men may not, necessarily possess that brought by single women during the fellowship and their contribution towards determining the strategic direction of the church as a result of their skills.

The fact that women generally experience difficulties in leadership due to limited opportunities, as already discussed above, implies that the situation is even worse for single women due to concomitant challenges mentioned above. This means that a single woman is at a disadvantage in the AoG in two fronts and these are

(1) being a woman and (2) being single and widowed. The church is blamed for this conservative situation. Makoro (2007:65) argues that women's hindrances to both assuming leadership positions in the church and their appropriate development are a result of the patriarchal order in the church. The discussion so far points to the need for a turnaround strategy towards women empowerment and incorporation in church leadership as may be required (Chapter six deals specifically with such strategies).

Thus, in certain categories of leadership, single women are precluded from leadership irrespective of their expertise and experience in the Lord. Accordingly, single women do not lead in a group of couples since they lack the relevant experience and exposure in dealing with their partners. The independence of single women is also often viewed as problematic by married women in the church. It is felt that they cannot be role models in the group since they are not married. This attitude compromises the leadership acumen of single women.

This researcher suggests a change of attitude on single women so that they are viewed as complete human beings in their own right and affirmed as created in the image of God just as men rather than being viewed as inferior to men. Despite women being created, like men and in God's image, culture and patriarchy promulgates these injustices which are detrimental to women. Women have a natural right to choose to remain single or to marry (1 Cor. 7:34). Therefore, single women should not be marginalised in leadership simply because they are not attached to a man. The value of a woman does not lie with marriage. In addition, it is clear that the AoG church has serious problems concerning the status of women as defined in Biblical teachings and practices and human rights as enshrined in the Constitution of South Africa.

5.5 Concluding Remarks

The above discussion indicated that the long held culture in some Christian circles of not involving women in leadership in church and society is not based on Biblical teaching. This ideology is based on prejudicial tendencies that portray women as inferior to men

based on their physical attributes and the law. These are influenced by cultural norms and practices that are rooted in the institutions of society that include the church. These views permeated throughout this study. Notably, scholars present blueprints for today's views on women. Slater (2011:163) confidently attests that certain cultural and religious ideologies, structures and theologies, have prevented women from realising their full humanity. Interestingly, Biblical Theology also presents some interesting scenarios, albeit from diversified persuasions, and these are ministry roles for gifted men and women that are interchangeable whilst arguing that certain ministry roles that include being a pastor, elder and preacher should be filled by men only, (Sumner 2003:37). The customary laws are equally astonishing. Women are rendered inferior while men are made by the ancestors to occupy superior positions in the society (Mzondi 2006:9). The case in point is the inability of the wife to inherit from her husband. Finally, women are socialised to be servants (Rakoczy 2001:203). Little is known that all are supposed to be servants of one another. These traditional motives are reminiscent of ancient secular paganism enshrined in Roman law that prejudiced women. Ironically, the AoG consciously or unconsciously seems to embrace this tradition and need to repent on injustices encountered by women in the AoG.

In this light, the chapter noted that Womanist theology offers a blueprint for a turnaround towards a better treatment of women in the light of Godly principles of justice and fairness as required of all humanity. Womanist theology, in contra-distinction to black theology, is not confined to criticising issues of racism and classism. It condemns all forms of sexual gender abuse and patriarchy. In this way it creates a platform for women to articulate their lived experiences of oppression and suppression arising from cultural and religious discourses. Hence, prominent women theologians have served as models and provided inspirational writings to encourage women. Moreover, women theologians interrogate the forces that portray women as subordinate to men and thus impact on church doctrines with a view to shape the spirituality and ethics of the contemporary churches.

Likewise, the current trend is that male theologians should be converted to feminist theology notwithstanding its ascertainable weaknesses. The writer got the sense that Feminist Theology should not just be viewed as intellectual theologising to win arguments

in favour of a particular position but as an endeavour to find God's original purpose for the creation of mankind. Some theologians, such as Allan Boesak, Archbishop Tutu and Njongonkulu Ndungane, have already set the trend of supporting womenfolk in the struggle for their liberation's. Hence the purpose of the thesis is, amongst other things, to gunner for similar role models in the AoG who will impact on both the church's attitudes towards women leadership and other churches as well the public at large.

The chapter noted s that the church and the AoG in particular should review the role of women in leadership and their concomitant empowerment strategies because:

- (i) It negates the significance of women being given spiritual gifts by God that should be utilised holistically in the church.
- (ii) Paul's teachings on the role of women in churches is often understood out of context due to erroneous interpretations as is the case in Eph. 5:21-22 discussed earlier.
- (iii) The early church utilised women extensively in ministry, although, later, these responsibilities were refuted and the discrimination against women persisted.

Hence, Schüssler-Fiorenza (1983:28) referring to Eph. 5:22-33 articulates that Bible texts are themselves androcentric. Indeed, they are used to prevent women from taking their rightful leadership role in the church. This situation is attested by the absence of women in the AoG organisational structure while men occupy positions of authority in the church and make executive decisions. The general perception in the church, especially by men and some women, is that Women are good for their husbands and children at home. Normally, this responsibility should be imported to the church other than subjecting women to unwritten societal patriarchal codes.

Therefore, the AoG should not take the androcentric texts as accurate accounts of how women should be treated. Instead, the texts should be viewed as reductive evidence indicating the need for the appropriate utilisation or full participation of women in the AoG. This calls for the need for the AoG to learn that the androcentric texts must be read in a way that provides clues on how the early church utilised women in ministry as discussed in chapter 2. The AoG can only understand this by extracting

meanings from the texts based on Biblical exegesis rather than imposing their pre-understanding of the texts based on erroneous hermeneutical and ecclesiastical principles and also work towards changing the oppressive culture in society.

CHAPTER 6: TOWARDS EMPOWERMENT AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN THE AoG

6.1 Introduction

The thesis has so far discussed the plight of women in life and society and their marginalisation in leadership based on their perceived inferior status to men. It has been noted so far that, women have not been considered in empowerment programmes in preparation for leadership in the broader community and the AoG in particular. The core of this study is to find solutions towards turning around the status quo in both the church and society.

While women are willing to showcase their leadership skills in all sectors of life, it is observed that they often find themselves reaching the glass ceiling in the church and society. Unfortunately, this situation exists sporadically in some African churches and the AoG in particular. Thus, a turnaround strategy is necessary in the AoG church. The strategy has long term implications that are beneficial to both the AoG and the Kingdom of God as God intended. In addition, women have their rightful place already in the Kingdom instead, it's here on earth where the problem often persists.

Thus, the researcher draws an analogy based on three approaches, which are the Jonah approach, the Esther approach and Daniel approach that can be used to improve or bring about the desired attitude towards women leadership. The Jonah approach, as perceived by the researcher, is an angry assault of whatever is untoward with the cosmic world. Jonah was assigned to go to Nineveh to warn the people about the wrath of God because of their oppression of the Jews (Jon. 1:1-3). Jonah ultimately went to Nineveh (Jon. 3:1-3) and presented the message, but was upset when God showed His kindness to them when they repented. In the second one, Esther identified herself, a little more, with everyone in her culture in order to present an impact. For example, she sent her uncle Mordecai some clothes when she was embarrassed by his Jewishness when he was morning and fasting so that he could not bring reproach to her (Est. 4:4). In this way she acted in a way that compromised her culture. Many churches contest existing cultures

instead of changing the wrongs in culture. This brings in the third and interesting Daniel approach (Dn. 1:6-17) that is discussed below.

Just as Jonah and Esther, Daniel was caught up in a pagan culture that was more engrained than the two. The paganism is noted in the way Nebuchadnezzar, upon his return to Babylon after his victory over Jehoiakim, took both captives that included Daniel and the sacred cups from God's Temple and "placed them in the treasury of his god in the land of Shinar" (Dn. 1:2). Daniel was able to agree with what is right, but at the same time stamp his authority against the violation of his conscience and the God he loves and worships (Dn. 1:8). Daniel exhibited a winsome character, for he is quiet, modest and as hard as steel. Thus, Daniel's character is impeccable and can be replicated in this study. He reflects a picture of the required spirit, civility and firmness needed to contend for the truth that the church must possess within a fallen culture.

It is clear that both the Jonah and Esther approaches do not assist in this venture. The Daniel approach is more preferred because it triumphed over a pounced pagan culture than Esther and Jonah. For example in Esther's narrative the Jewish culture was distinct from the other surrounding cultures and Jonah was called out whilst still in his little enclave, busy with his own interests. Hence, my supposition that the church can learn from Daniel's conduct.

6.2 Cultural Transformation

It has been argued at length in the thesis that patriarchy with all its facets and, which lies at the heart of women's oppression cannot be embraced in a democratic dispensation. It is a regressive philosophy rather than a progressive veneer. This requires concerted and co-ordinated efforts to turn things around in the OR Tambo region. Some elements of culture that are a subject of critique have been discussed previously and it is not considered necessary to repeat them here. Fundamentally, the Women's Charter for Effective Equality in the context of South Africa tried to provide guidance on such obnoxious elements of culture. It is, thus, chronicled in the Women's Charter for Effective Equality (1994:3) as follows:

Women and men shall have equal legal status and capacity in civil and customary law, including, amongst others, full contractual rights, the right to acquire and hold rights in property, the right to inheritance and the right to secure credit

It must be stated that, as a general background towards addressing the challenge under discussion in the OR Tambo municipality, all defective socio-cultural practises and structures should be understood in their historical context. Furthermore, the fact that society and its customs are not immutable indicates that the impact of change on culture needs to be evaluated. For example, there is need to ask whether these cultural ramifications are still relevant to the contemporary society. If yes, they can still be upheld but if not they can be abandoned or radically revised.

The researchers' contention towards addressing this issue is that the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa as a whole and the Bill of Rights, particularly section 10 dealing with fundamental human rights, is the starting point in this venture. Advocacy of this legislative prescript to the community is critical and the modus operandi is crucial as coordinated efforts are required. Therefore, government officials, particularly the as custodians of Government prescripts, should spearhead this venture in partnership with kings, traditional chiefs, headmen, faith communities that includes the AoG, NGO dealing with women's rights in societies, and counsellors.

The suggested collaborative approach will enable every institution to play its role in restoring the dignity of women as well as detect and address any target audience that should include both males and females. At least, some males and females are aware of the ideals of the legislated human rights practise. However, the resultant implications of disregarding these human rights practises are not taken seriously, hence some sporadic incidents of women abuse are still experienced. Such an approach will present a common ground for all interest groups to eliminate the negative attitude towards women that deprives women of their legitimate opportunities to assume leadership positions as may be necessary in their own culture. At the same time, all instigators of women oppression should be given severe sentences. Unfortunately, this is not the case at the moment as the instigators are given light sentences by courts with the option of a fine in most cases.

Women will have confidence in the ability as future leaders in all sectors of life. This can be achieved if women in the community organise themselves as groups to discuss matters that undermine their pursuit of excellence in life. One such issue for discussion can be the question of subordination. That is, how women need to evaluate the perceptions on subordination throughout history and determine whether or not it serves the same purpose in the contemporary society. Ideally, the groups should be cross-cultural, trans-denominational in nature and ignore class distinction and ethnicity. The purpose of the groups is to motivate one another to excel in life notwithstanding the cultural barriers.

Likewise men should form their own groups if this venture has to have positive spin-offs. These groups used to exist in history in the form of men's community *imbozos* (gatherings). They need to be re-established and should be facilitated by traditional leaders. The ethos of these meetings was to educate men on how to deconstruct practises that often oppressed and suppressed women. Anyone found guilty of violation would be charged and forced to pay a fine of a sheep or be ostracized from society for a set period. One could imagine that if men could understand that paying *lobola*, for instance, does not necessarily mean that a woman is inferior to a man then there is a likelihood that families would live in harmony and peacefully with utmost respect for women. Therefore, both men and women's groups should collaborate for purposes of preventing the continued existence of obstreperous hindrances towards women's upward mobility in leadership circles.

6.3 Societal transformation

Generally, the term 'society' refers to a network of relationships between individuals or groups within a socio-cultural context. Its subset, 'community', is characterised by communality, religious and other common practises as shown here in this study's focus on the OR Tambo community as the target population. The crux of the matter is that patriarchy often divides people into groups, based primarily on genetic make-up. The arranged groups are usually along a hierarchical order of victimhood. This resonates with George Orwell's famous delineation of hierarchy where all animals are equal but some

are more equal than others. Admittedly, both males and women are equal and distinct (Sumner 2003:270). But, this must be seen in the context of their similarities. Therefore, the society must make all endeavours to deconstruct all the socio-cultural barriers that prevent women from engaging in leadership. This also needs much effort and patience in order to turn around a practise that has always oppressed women for years with some, including women, still needing to be convinced of the change.

Firstly, discriminatory practises arising from cultural convictions need to be identified and discredited. Questions need to be asked in this regard and these include: Are these cultural practises relevant in the context of the contemporary society? Who is actually benefitting from them? These questions should handle particular societal views such as not permitting girls to eat eggs and denying women the right to own land in their birth places, which oppress women. The crucial issue is to break women's silence that is usually based on the fear of being perceived as disrespectful to men in general and their husbands in particular.

Another point is that society should consider making it compulsory for parents in the OR Tambo region to send all children, including girls, to primary and tertiary institutions to empower them. Keeping girls in schools prevents them from being married at tender ages due to practises such as *ukuthwala* custom (abduction). They will, then, acquire skills to compete with anybody in an open labour market system and end up being recognised as potential leaders in their own right. Other initiatives include:

- **Workshopping women to value their bodies.** This can be facilitated by churchwomen, experienced women in society and health practitioners. Women need to value their bodies as the Temple of God and not objects of male sexual abuse. This is a profound imperative if women are to be delivered from an incessant cycle of abuse and discrimination by men. In these workshops, it is important to move beyond nasty experiences and inculcate hope for the future. Failure to realise this will lead to women blaming other people for their difficulties. As mentioned earlier, there are countless women in the OR Tambo who have been able to overcome colossal obstacles such as educational opportunities, loss of loved ones and especially husbands, sickness, oppression and violence. Dr Xaba-

Mokoena mentioned earlier and a host of others, living and deceased, is a good example in this regard.

- **Providing skills development.** The capacitation of women so that they can start and manage their own businesses is of utmost importance. For this to happen women will identify their training needs. Again, collaboration with government, business, civil society and labour organisation will result in concrete changes in the lives of women other than depending most on men for their livelihoods. Emphasis must be placed on rural, peri-urban and townships for economic development. It is necessary to go back to the past when people owned their businesses and ran their businesses but with women this time around. A document such as the Nation's Development Plan (NDP) is vital in this regard. It provides a shared vision of where communities should be.
- **Reviewing family Codes.** The hierarchy in the family needs to be deconstructed by society and put into a proper context particularly with the phrase 'man being the head of wife' and the 'wife being submissive to the husband'. Surprisingly, these phrases are perpetuated by men who do not even read the Bible or go to church. The role of the church is critical here in order to ensure an accurate interpretation of the Scriptures so that women are not unduly denied being co-leaders with their husbands. The Bible speaks explicitly that two are better than one (Eccl. 4:9-12).

6.4 The church's response to patriarchy

The Church must engage in various activities and strategies to deal with patriarchy, improve the role of women and enable their assumption of leadership positions. These are discussed below.

6.4.1 Awareness of women

The first step is to make women aware of the issues that marginalise women in leadership positions in the AoG. Here, women in the AoG will be encouraged to reflect, engage a discovering of the self as oppressed and develop the logical desire to change the untenable situation towards a search of affirmation and wholeness (Ackermann 1993:23). No turning around strategy can be fruitful without women internalising this truth in the

AoG. This is akin to what feminist theologians call liberation. In earnest, the awareness should lead to growth of women from alienation from themselves (*Fremdbeswimmung*) to their freedom, choice and autonomy (*Selbstbestimmung*). Thus, conscientised women will interrogate the practices and structures that have been used by the church and society to suppress them.

However, the researchers view is that women should also acknowledge the positive forces that have contributed to a positive growth in the life of women in church and society. This balanced appreciation will lessen the tension between the meaning of liberation in the context of South Africa and God's salvific acts and love. The researcher also lives inside the Xhosa web of power and thus concurs that there is need for a critical pedagogy that enables women in the AoG to critique the patriarchal tendencies that have been internalised for a long time. Women have indeed been quiet for too long. As a result, they should be drawn into a theological debate where they can articulate their experiences and begin to map out new ways of addressing the patriarchal silencing and larger marginalisation. They must also feel free to break the cycle of silence, include other gender victims and meet in groups where they unwittingly voice their displeasure. It is only when women speak for themselves that these recommendations can have an impact and be owned by all women.

Admittedly, women may hold divergent views on the extent of their oppression by men. This is attested to by the existence of four categories of women in the AoG when it comes to the extent of women's awareness of the patriarchal based oppression in the church. These categories are: (i) Those who are completely unaware that they are oppressed and, therefore, ignore the needs and frustration of others around them; (ii) those who have been socialised into their respective cultures and do not see the need to participate in any form of women's liberation (internal oppression); (iii) those who are beginning to note women's oppression but nevertheless need some more educational awareness; and (iv) women who are conscientised about women's oppression in the church and require a radical turnaround strategy. This group is the most dominant in the church and supports massive changes towards women's liberation. It is important that all categories must come to level (iv) if the objectives of the study are to be realised. The radically

aware category of women are already determined to move ahead and so making other women aware and join the will enhance corporate ideals towards the turn-around strategies and progress. These women may come up with innovative projects and strategies to address women's total liberation that counteract all socio-cultural barriers to women leadership.

It should be underscore that women must be united in their understanding and demands in the AoG in order for them to freely and optimally utilise their God-given gifts in the church. Any lack of unity will make the women pursue different objectives. Importantly, men's support is indispensable in order to achieve women's objectives in ministry. This calls for current leadership to understand the envisaged transformation and why it is necessary. The leadership will also facilitate sessions for consciousness after communication with other church members.

6.4.2 Change structure

The AoG should transform the current church organogram in order to best address the issue of women's exclusion and cater for the women's inclusion in the church's leadership. This paradigm is underpinned by the fact that both men and women (Rakoczy 2011:42, Okure 1988:49) are created in the image of *God (imago Dei)*. In this sense, women are worthy of all equality with men as their fellow human beings. The fact that the AoG, which is a congregational church, has its leadership elected by the whole congregation makes the confining of eligibility for executive leadership to men only, the oligarchic form of leadership (rulership by the elite few) as espoused by the AoG, irrational. It is indeed paradoxical for women to be excluded from the leadership structure of the AoG despite being in the majority as aforesaid. As a result, a model of ministry that does not wholly accommodate men and women in executive leadership in this contemporary era needs to be reviewed. The problem lies in the top leadership of the church which must include women.

There is need for the development of gender sensitive policies in the AoG. These policies should allow women to contest for and participate in the church's top leadership. In addition, the policies should push a sensitive education of the congregation on orthodox doctrine regarding the controversial texts that are often used as a source of women's

marginalisation. This will absolutely free the AoG from the limited views on women's role in church leadership with a view to create an inclusive ministry that includes women.

Women's ministry is limited despite being given freedom as the children of the promise in the same vein as Abraham. Wayman (2016:555) argues that if this view (Gal 3:28) gives the right to men to become ministers of the Gospel, then the same right should be given to women. For example, what harm does it make to allow women to be elders of other women or allow gifted women of God to attend elders meetings to impart their knowledge and skills? What harm could arise if women become facilitators and leaders in cell groups? It is clear that involving women will lead to the need for further women's empowerment. In this way, the dignity of women and all affected will be upheld by the church, and the bizarre theological misunderstanding exposed and rejected once women have been incorporated in the top echelons of the church.

6.4.3 Theological education and training

Another giant step would be to encourage various AoG women (and men) to attain theological and Biblical training from institutions, such as the Nicholas Bhengu Theological Seminary (NBTS), which offer credible theological teaching. The NBTS is one of the renowned AoG training centre. It has been in existence for some time now but has failed to prioritise women in training. Thus, the institution should establish a ministry school that teaches ministers about equality from the beginning. Bateye (2007:8) cites the example of a woman who established a school for ministers that teaches equality right from the outset and how this played a significant role in removing inhibitions that prevented women from getting to the top in the church and society. In addition, the curriculum should cover other relevant studies for women and introduce women's studies as well. It is also important that women who happen to have a credible theological qualification be recruited to train women in this regard and that it considers introducing short and online courses for those who are far from the institution. This approach takes the distance out for purpose of the study as proved by some women who have studied theological studies out of their interest.

In a similar view, the AoG should set aside weekly bible study sessions where the congregation should be taught how to interpret the Scriptures contextually. Women's

fellowships should concentrate on contextual studies of controversial texts that are often viewed as denying women the chance to assume leadership positions in the AoG other than teachings such as Eph. 5:22-25 that reinforce women's subordination to men. It is high time that the church differentiates between Christian and community values that often creep in in church practises. This radical interpretation of Pauline texts, like the Eph. 5:21, will stress mutual submission against female submission only and question the hierarchical paradigms of church leadership in contrast to servant leadership. This implies an understanding of the Word in context and does not imply that a new Christianity is being introduced. Ackermann (1991:291) utilises a strong term, "depatriarchalization", where a dynamic process emanating from the Scriptures and not one's values and beliefs are not imposed onto Scriptures. In particular, when women are theologically trained they will not blindly accept the traditional practises of the church, and they will be able to teach the whole counsel of God other than concentrating on texts such as Mt 25 that deal with women only.

6.4.4 Gender Stereotyping

As already mentioned, these stereotypes impact on the roles of women and men in the society and church including the AoG. Unfortunately, the use of stereotypes, whether conscious or unconsciously is one of the catalysts for women's oppression and needs to be redressed in the AoG. God's will is fundamental here. Jesus said: I came that they may have life and have it abundantly (Jn. 10:10).

As extensively argued in the thesis, it is not God's will that preaching be primarily confined to men and parenting be restricted to women. Rather, His way is that women are responsible for mothering and men are liable for fathering. This suggests that the women are responsible for "daughtering" and that "sonning" is the responsibility of men. The reality is that the difference does not lie in the activities but on relationships. The best way to deconstruct gender stereotypes in the AoG is follow God's Golden Rule to 'love your neighbour as yourself' (Mt. 22:39). What is encouraging is that love 'believes all things' (1 Cor. 13:7). Thus, there is optimism that men and women in the AoG will establish some consensus on women leadership that is based on Biblical grounds and not on temporary cultural ramifications. The various stereotypes considered here are discussed below.

- **Stereotypes and advertising**

Advertising shapes minds as advertisements may portray a negative or positive image in one's mind. The AoG needs to teach members against all forms of advertising that portray women as inferior to men or reinforce this prejudiced attitude. For example, the sexualised portrayal of women in the media to sell certain products objectifies women while pornography defines women as easily available and vulnerable commodities for exploitation by men. Teachings against these are viewed as worldly and the church has often ignored them to the detriment of womenfolk and yet these stereotypes may be one of the major reasons behind the marginalisation of women in society and the church in particular.

Admittedly, advertising influences people's ideas and values, especially that of the youth, and cannot be left unchecked. The swiftest way to eradicate the stereotyping of women is to eliminate the negative images depicted in some advertisements. The church must analyse the ethical standing of all advertising, and determine the targets of the advertisements and their methods as well as role in defining by women. Firstly, family members in the AoG should be encouraged to teach young people at home about the negative effects of these stereotype. It makes sense to start this campaign at home as a child is likely to listen to their parents more. This teaching should also be imported to the church situation, which must use elders and elderly women, who are supposed to be the vanguards of Biblical doctrine to discuss matters.

- **Socialisation in church**

The church usually presents women with confusing double messages where their acceptance by God is viewed as indicating that they are equal human beings with men and yet they are forced to endure role restrictions as a result of their physical makeup. A number of cultural and religious discourses that present a psychological impact weakening women's view of self-worth have been mentioned in this regard. In reality, girls and boys are socialised separately to enhance the belief that men and women are inherently not similar and expected to perform different role

expectations. Instead, the AoG needs to pay attention to the way girls and boys are socialised. For years now, this has not been perceived as an important factor that needs some attention and failure to do so perpetuates the oppression of girls and women.

The OR Tambo District should address the situation by building places for recreational amenities where boys and girls meet freely and discuss relevant issues that include future careers and engage in debates and play together. This will ensure mutual understanding between males and females and the respect of one another as equal members of God's creation. Equally, the church should organise youth camps where young people relate freely to one another under the guidance of assigned mature Christians. The camps should also provide a platform for youth to freely ask questions on issues affecting them outside the church situation and in preparation for a future life. The youth's understanding of gender issues will lay the foundation for future understanding of male/female equality as human beings.

- **Support Groups**

The plight of women not being seen as valuable enough for leadership in the church is mind boggling to women. The situation becomes worse for women who are widowed, divorced and single. The researcher's conversation with some women in the AoG revealed that the majority favour the formation of meaningful support groups that aim to promote the self-worth of women holistically in the church. They even suggested that these support groups should be well developed so that they can assist in the sharing of women's experience and promote meaningful engagement in the church. This view is greatly supported, but needs to be supported by the church leadership. In this regard Maston (1983:20- 25) asserts that the basic mission of the church is to proclaim God's kingdom on earth and promote mutual understanding, love and companionship amongst its members. With this view in mind, it would be expected of the church to be on the side of people who are hurt and frustrated and offer solace and the redemptive healing "oil" of God's grace.

The church can learn from the example of a widow who is supposed to wear black attire after the husband's passing as a destroyer of the self-concept of a woman. The widow can be targeted by men who think that she has enough money accumulated through the death of her husband. Similarly, it is commonly known that a widow is supposed to get another man after her husband's death to take care of her. A common term, "*Awukaqhwithi na?*" which means "light a match" is often used to ask whether the widow has, as yet, accepted or not accepted any other man after her husband's death. Again this re-enforces the notion that a woman needs a man to succeed in life. This needs to be deconstructed by the communities and the best way is to intensify the community education in the church as mentioned above.

In addition, the AoG should always encourage the widows in the church so that they can feel accepted and serve the Lord without any perceived restrictions. The Bible explicitly states that: 'Do not take advantage of a widow or an orphan. If you do and they cry to me, I will certainly hear their cry. My anger will be aroused, and I will kill you with a sword; your wives will become widows and your children fatherless' (Ex. 22:22-24). Practically, the AoG can host an annual widow's day to boost the egos as important members of the church. They will be motivated to participate actively in the church and in that way play a massive role as servants of God. The International Widow's day was crafted for the same reason. The church can also organise particular days or weekends for the divorced people where they go out for a camp and special speakers arranged to revive their spirits after stressful periods.

Experience shows that churches become more profitable and flourishing when women are involved. In fact, I have yet to see programs that succeed without women playing a role. The AoG is strongly counselled to introduce support programs that aim to restore women's involvement in the church. Ideally, the local church should provide a service to: (i) individual members of the church (ii) church and (iii) the society. This mandate cannot be realised if the majority of church members, in this case women, are not involved in the total mission as Christian soldiers. Opportunities for women must be prioritised for women in all sectors of life, be it political, cultural, religious or otherwise. The church should open opportunities for

women to partake in all church activities. The Great Commission (Mt. 28:19-28) which is gender insensitive is relevant here. Hence, women should be afforded opportunities to lead ministry teams that are assigned to preach the Gospel in particular communities after appropriate capacitation.

Equally significant, the AoG should create a conducive environment for single women to feel more welcomed and accommodated in the church. The plight of single women has already been explained in the previous chapter. They have unique needs and expectations emanating from their general frustrations in life and the church in particular. The reality is that single women join the church for their spiritual development and their general welfare and yet they often experience untenable discourses that result in frustrations. Primarily, young and single women need to be given some skills that will capacitate them to start their projects and live an independent life. Fortunately, great strides have been made by the OR Tambo municipality to fund such projects but, importantly, single women must be prioritised. The success of these projects contributes directly or indirectly to the economy. Similarly, the church should have sessions that target single girls on both spiritual and life issues that will enable women to succeed now and in the future.

The researcher still has to witness the importance of “Mothers’ Day”, which is honoured even by the secular world to promote the importance of the role of women in church and society. This approach must be extended to single women as well. The church can utilise the context of mothers’ Day to teach the church about the value of single women’s role in church and society and on the need to develop their leadership competence.

- **Reconciliation and Shalom**

Reconciliation amongst people is a necessity especially in a situation where some people are aggrieved. This calls for men to repent for their oppression of women and the women to accept their apology. The ultimate goal is that all sectors of the society must be involved in participatory leadership that includes both males and females. Fundamental to reconciliation is repentance by the perpetrators of oppression. This can be initiated by

having get-together meetings with both males and females as may be facilitated by the leadership on a particular Sunday afternoon where refreshments will be served after the gathering. Reconciliation starts in and is implemented in the heart. This resonates, in the case of South Africa, with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) which was coined to bring about peace and stability after decades of apartheid. The TRC did not fail the people of South Africa but the authorities failed the TRC by not implementing the guidelines for reconciliation. Significantly, faith communities, including the AoG, should take a leaf out of the reconciliation attempts to bring peace and stability in their churches.

Closely related to reconciliation, is the Hebrew concept “*Shalom*” which, means peace, completeness and wellbeing (Vine 1985:170). *Shalom* can be used by the AoG to restore the dignity of churchwomen and open opportunities for empowerment. Peace, which emanates from the inside-out and not from the outside-in, should be internalised by the members of the church. Understandable, the Christian life is lived in accordance with the will and purpose of God (Kretzschmar 2009 (a):15) and this requires sacrifice and suffering as was the case with Jesus Christ. As a result, it is important to assert that peace must start with the individual Christian as hinted above. One cannot have peace with other people if there is no peace within themselves. In addition, peace must not only be preached on the pulpit and practised in real life situations. Relationships, love, respect and commitment must indeed reflect what the NT church portrayed hence church members were united (Acts 1:14).

Therefore, the AoG needs to review and redefine the gender roles and power relations based on sexual orientation. This also calls for the involvement of women in the executive functions of the church. For a long time women have been sceptical about the basis of their non-inclusion in major decision making processes. Thus, women need to be vocal and united in their divine struggle. In reality, *Shalom* will be realised when power is shared and all members of the church work together and complement each other even in preaching.

6.4.5 The relevance of “*Ubuntu*” as a concept towards women empowerment in leadership

The term “*Ubuntu*”, derived from Eastern and Southern Bantu languages, encompasses humanness, respect, peace and a just society (Kanyoro 2001:28, Mzondi 2006:1). It communicates an idea of being human: “I am what I am because of who we all are” (Jusu 2016:1894). In essence, *Ubuntu* tells us that all human beings have the same nature, rights and responsibilities. In other languages, it is an equivalent of *unhu* in Shona and *kimuntu* in Kikongo. *Ubuntu* is not a new concept in South Africa. It was used by the first President of South Africa during the democratic dispensation to bring about peace, stability and mutual respect in order to redress the imbalances of the Apartheid era. As stated above, the Anglican bishop, Desmond Tutu, who chaired the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa applied the concept to bring about national reconciliation. In addition, the *Ubuntu* concept is both a god concept and a human concept that the AoG can utilise. The concept brings the ideas that we should take care of other people’s hardships and people must live together in peace and harmony. Thus, *Ubuntu* promotes maturity towards the cordial relationships between humans. It has its foundation in the Biblical teaching of loving one another as yourself, which is a virtue that needs to be pursued by congregants in the AoG. An inculcation of these values in church and society will promote empathy for one another when people meet in groups and exchange gifts of mutual respect.

Another key Hebrew word “*hesed*”, which *pronounces* the nature of God and translates to “unfailing love” in the New living Translation, should be considered here. The King James translates the word as “loving-kindness”. This reference to God’s condition is expressed when God met Moses at Mount Sinai and described Himself as “Yahweh, The Lord and the God of compassion and mercy (Ex.34:6-7). This passage portrays a beautiful picture of God’s loving-kindness, grace and mercy which must be well comprehended by the AoG, for God acts mercifully towards His people. *Hesed* does not only describe the character of God but also teaches Christians to show mercy, loving-kindness and care for other people. Despite the fact that humanity is generally regarded as innately corrupt, the redeemed people should reflect the character of God without

some clandestine motives, hence the Bible instructs us to “love your neighbour as yourself” (Mk. 12:31).

Paul’s typological exposition (1 Cor. 12) instructs Christians on how to relate to one another. This is a typical picture of *Ubuntu* and *hesed* which must reign supreme in all members of the AoG church. Paul uses the symbol of the body to describe how the church has many parts that make one whole body (1 Cor. 12:12). The body should live in harmony (1 Cor. 12:21) and all must exercise love and care for one another (1 Cor. 12:25). This calls for the church and society at large to have cultural days once or twice a year organised by church and societal leaders. These should be typified by singing and dancing together and in that way inculcate the values of Ubuntu. Therefore, the *Ubuntu* concept and the *hesed* concept calls us to respect one another as human beings created in the image of God and this understanding will make a turn-around strategy implementation.

The researcher’s view is that these concepts can be used to promote a change of attitude towards women and their empowerment. Mzondi (2006:8) notes that African indigenous churches have often been characterised by a creative syncretism between traditional beliefs and customs and that of Christianity. Accordingly, the Bible has traces of *Ubuntu*. For example, Jesus had a positive attitude towards women as noted in previous discussions. Hence, Luke describes Jesus as a human being who was always eager to help the poor and the marginalised in a male dominated society. This approach will help the AoG men and women to contextualise the Scriptures and stand together as a united force to transform the church and promote women empowerment. Both men and women will see themselves as equally fully worthy human beings (Masenya 2004:141).

6.5 Explicit Recommendations

In order to best mitigate the vices that plague women in the AoG, the following recommendations are suggested:

- **Gender analysis:** A systematic gender analysis should be done to help the church understand roles, attitudes and behaviour of men and women as

conditioned by doctrine, culture and tradition of the church. This will start with the church formation of Transformation Task Team (TTT) comprising of males and females. The TTT will be mandated to champion the transformation agenda in the church within set timeframes and report its findings to the residential pastor and top leadership of the church. The first step is to establish female representatively in leadership and suggest *mutatis mutandis* ways of normalisation. This involves the development of policies to be followed taking into account Biblical models for authentic leadership. The strategy will embrace both men and women as equal partners.

- **Education:** The AoG should put its house in order through strategies such as a re-reading and re-interpretation of androcentric texts referred to earlier so that they become women friendly. This shows the need for theological education that focuses on biblical texts that include Gen. 1 and 2, which are the more egalitarian with regard to the relationship between males and females and also describe the purpose of God by creating mankind. Paul's teachings such as 1 Cor. 11: 5, 1 Cor. 14: 34-36 and Eph. 5:21-25 that focus on the role of women in worship should also be understood in context. Contrasts between passages, such as 1 Tm. 2:8-15 and Gal. 3:28, are also encouraged within this theological education. This education and associated understanding of these texts will go a long way to reduce both the narrow Biblicism that still prevails and views that render women as inferior to men.

The first step in this regard is to workshop top leadership of the church on the interpretation of the controversial Scriptures. Certain days will be set aside for this training as may be agreed. Thereafter, the training will be conducted for the rest of the congregants as it is easier for the congregation to accept what the current leadership has already understood and accepted. Other operations will hinge on this understanding.

- **Enculturation:** Culture directly or indirectly impacts on how women are perceived since members of the church are also members of the community. The AoG generally agrees with this notion but it must preach about the non-

compromising Gospel of Christ who seemed to recognise women, and try to change the negative issues of culture militating against women. Failure to do so will be interpreted as collaboration with an oppression similar to the Afrikaner churches that co-operated with Apartheid. The freedom brought about by the Gospel cannot be realised while women still suffered under the shackles of oppression.

- **Women submission:** Equally significant, the AoG needs to critique their understanding of submission. Very often subordination favours men with women supporting the teaching that a wife must never challenge what the man says because he is the head of the family. This headship is translated into the church situation. As a result, the suggestion is that women must be given the platform to correct the wrongs that may have been done by men. It is for this reason that Paul talks of mutual submission and the fact that husbands should love their wives (Eph. 5:21-31). Sentiments like these pave the way for the empowerment of women towards leadership. I have met countless women, in my ministry experience, who despite setbacks in life such as loss of a husband or malicious desertion by a husband, are keen to work for the Lord. These women overcome setbacks by the grace of God and the love and power of God is reflected in their lives. Therefore, women filled with the Holy Ghost are already in the process of moral formation and should be recognised as moral agents and accommodated in leadership and must 'go', 'make disciples', 'baptise' and 'teach' (Mt. 28:19-20).

- **Church innovativeness**

There is need for the construction of a new leadership model and deconstruction of the current praxis. In order to pave the way for women empowerment in the AoG. This innovative approach will benefit women and the overall ministry as God intended. Some roles in the church should not be restricted to ecclesial structures only. Any individual must use the gift given to them by God for a purpose. As a Pentecostal church, emphasis should be given on the exercise of gifts without tacit hindrances than the level of position one occupies. A church that puts this emphasis is likely to be more vibrant, powerful and attractive to contemporary society.

Women must be given a leeway for leadership in projects focusing on HIV/Aids, skills development and other health assignments that are aimed at community development. In addition, women must be assigned leadership roles in the church's cell groups, prayer meetings and counselling sessions. Some observations reveal that people, including men, are more interested in projects led by women than those led by men.

6.6 Concluding Remarks

It is proper that both men and women co-lead the church using their God-given potential. The overall perspective is not to put the Body of Christ upside down but to put her right side up. It is not extra-Biblical or post-Biblical for women to be mothers in the church and for men to be viewed as fathers in the congregation as history reveals. It is the right of the Christian congregation to fulfil its God-given mandate corporately as God's family. The fact that God's people need to be mothered and fathered is not a new Christian invention. Speaking analogously, Paul states that there are 'baby' Christians who need just milk and the 'grown' ups who must be fed with strong food. Therefore, it would be foolhardy to pretend as if local churches do not need both mothers and fathers to feed, discipline and motivate the children of God until they reach the fullest knowledge of Christ.

The people of God, including patriarchy, must repent from any sin, as the Bible often stipulates. People often think about themselves and disregard the plight of others. There is tremendous hope for everybody in this debate who puts his or her trust in God's favour. In this sense, one can imagine how marvellous it can be if men and women in the AoG listen to one another and seriously deconstruct their misconceptions. That is, a church that builds bridges of genuine trust would have more impact in society and there would be a decrease in the objectification of women and other issues such as divorces in societies. This view is underscored in scripture, for the Bible states unequivocally: 'How wonderful it is, how pleasant, when brothers live in harmony! For harmony is as precious as the fragrant anointing oil that was poured over Aaron's head...' (Ps. 133:1-2). In a nutshell, David stated that harmony is precious and pleasant. Therefore, it must abound in church and in that way both the complementarians and egalitarians and all those who

love the Lord should possess this blessing. In addition the meaningful solution for the church can be realised after it has united in mind and purpose (1 Cor. 2:16, Phil 2:2).

At present the church has employed a mechanism that excludes women from its executive decision-making processes. Specific recommendations have been put forward and these draw on the view that the church should be part of the solution. A new paradigm shift requires substantial transformation in various levels of the church as indicated. Women, themselves, should be vocal about their plight. There is need to change the structures of the church itself. The writer's view is that the Holy Spirit, the principal agent of transformation, will make women's presence felt and guide the process of transformation using the church members.

The inspired Word of God must guide the church so that it can show some commitment to studying, believing and practising the truth of God as made clear here. The Scripture will correct instances where the church was mistakenly led by the doctrine and tradition of the church. The church should also be encouraged to stand with and for God's timeless truth. Thus, the AoG should, for the sake of God's glory and the triune God, pledge its own fidelity, love and obedience to Him.

CHAPTER 7: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND WAYFORWARD

The thesis examined the religious and cultural discourses that impact on the empowerment of women in ministry. These were viewed as problem discourses that often lead to the marginalisation of women in leadership. The objective of this study was, then, to find a model from an evangelical perspective that would redress this anomaly (chapter 6). Such a redress would be faithful to the all-time truth of the Word of God, that is, Bible-based, Christ-centred and Spirit-driven.

Thus, chapter 1 outlined a general background to the marginalisation of women in the church and showed how this is linked to their physical make-up which triggered this study. The presupposition of the study was that women are denied leadership access as a result of cultural reasons that impact on the understanding of women's role in ministry. Women are often viewed by societies as generally inferior to men and not eligible for leadership positions. This needs a positive change and such change will focus on reviewing some cultural manifestations that militate against women leadership in order to verify its relevance to the contemporary society as well as tweak the hermeneutical and ecclesiastical principles of Biblical understanding. The need was crystal clear in literature consulted in the chapter.

Chapter 2 focused on the role of women leadership in ancient Israel. It was found that women did not participate fully in religious affairs but nevertheless complemented men in religious circles. Reference was made to OT women who played significant roles in the life of the Israelite nation. The obnoxious plight of women in the OT also becomes prevalent in the NT. However, Christ's positive attitude towards women's ministry warrants much recognition as women played a significant role in Christ's ministry. In addition, the reason why Christ engaged women in His ministry is because he did not view people on the basis of gender. The chapter discussed Paul's controversial NT texts that teach on women's role in worshipping. The texts have been a subject of debate for decades now, even by those who do not attend church, with some people arguing that Paul was anti-women while others are of the view that Paul is not necessarily against women as such but his teachings are largely misinterpreted.

Chapter 3 examined the views on feminist theology and its perceived role with regard to women leadership. The study revealed that feminist theology, women's theology and African women theologies concur on views about the oppression of women in most societies and churches. Nonetheless, their methodologies differ according to their contexts. It is for this reason that Smith (2013:110) attests that "If the task of theology is to interpret God's revelation and restate it so that its implications for our context are clear, thus enabling God's people to respond in ways that are faithful to his nature, will, and purpose, then the contemporary situation and context must feature in our theological research". This can be attested to by every Christian generation in that the Word of God that was given to the original audience is also given to the present generation, here and now. For example, the African women theologians' approach is based on their understanding of the dynamics of African culture and how this impacts on the interpretation of the Scriptures. The religious and cultural discourses were also analysed in terms of the South African women's theologies since they analyse Scriptures in accordance with their cultural lenses.

Chapter 4 scrutinised the Xhosa cultural discourses that often result in massive oppression of women. The discourses were understood in the context of the African culture that is oppressive against women and does not expect them to challenge such practise. The chapter noted that the church uses both the cultural religious discourses to deny women access to leadership echelons. The conclusion was that both cultural and religious discourses, which are strongly influenced by the patriarchal practises in the church and masculine Bible interpretation, undermine women's potential and eligibility for executive leadership roles in the church. The chapter also reflected on the protection of women's rights as enshrined in the Constitution of South Africa, which eliminated all forms of gender-based discrimination. However, the total liberation of women has not been viewed as an integral part of the democratic dispensation by the church since African women expect to be discriminated against in one way or another. Thus, the chapter also called for women to be united and speak with one voice against all forms of discrimination.

Chapter 5 presented the doctrinal position of the AoG concerning the role of women in ministry. It has been found that the AoG needs to review the role of women in ministry. The structure of the church is composed of men only and as such, the church does not utilise its opportunities to value women's potential and equity to empower women for leadership positions in the church. In this way, the church has not been exemplary to society in terms of enhancing women's opportunities for leadership opportunities.

Chapter 6 introduced a theology that attempts to address the pain suffered by women owing to their marginalisation in leadership positions. Confidently, the researcher introduced some strategies to deconstruct the cultural and religious discourses that have long been used to frustrate and undermine women's full involvement in ministry.

The following inferences are drawn from my vital observations and experiences as a lifelong member of the AoG church in good standing. Firstly, the current leadership model was quite relevant during the formative years of the AoG. Conversely, the changes taking place in societies today dictate that the AoG should seriously consider its leadership structure and the whole *modus operandi* of church governance. This does not suggest that the church should imitate what the society is doing with regard to leadership practise. A good example is that various women are involved in the world of work these days with some occupying high positions in society and politics. Equally, some are not content with "sitting" in the church' pews while they feel the desire to work optimally for the Lord. As women become more and more spiritually mature, they should be considered for positions in the church that have, traditionally, occupied by men. In addition, sitting women judges should be part of the church Board that s mediate on disciplinary issues.

Furthermore, there is an urgent need in the AoG for women who hold credentials, such as women's supervisors, organisers, pastor's wives and spiritual workers, who assist in local churches and are confined to girls' work on a full time basis to form part of church leadership. The researcher's general observation is that women are not satisfied with being marginalised in major decision-making processes of the church and society although that are not vocal about it. The women's general perception is that only God calls people and not men and they are becoming increasingly weary of all forms of

discrimination in the church. Therefore, they must work together and initiate a change which must be facilitated by men.

It is important that change is achieved in the healing process that must take place within the church and society in general. The healing process is a meandering path often difficult to adhere to but, is nevertheless beneficial. The researcher has always been motivated in this thesis to give good tidings to the afflicted. In this regard Isaiah correctly said that he has been anointed:

To console those who mourn in Zion, To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, That they may be called trees of righteousness, The planting of the Lord, that may be glorified (Is. 61:3).

Critical in the change program is the ‘beauty’ that is needed and the ‘ashes’ that must be eliminated. God delights in giving beauty for ashes as thus is one of His specialities. This calls for more equitable qualities of love, wisdom and grace to replace all forms of injustices and hurt that have pushed women to a lesser expression of their self-worth and self-transcendence. Lastly, the key to healing is forgiving those who would have hurt us. Forgiveness means to release and let go what has hurt you without acting in a vengeful manner. Dale (2014:210) correctly states that “When we live with forgiveness, we are stuck”.

7.1 Way-forward

It is clear from this study that the church in this contemporary environment and, in particular the AoG, must do some re-introspection with regards to attitudes towards women in church leadership. The following preliminary guidelines are suggested for the AoG and these must be implemented under the direction of the current leadership as soon as possible after finalisation of this work. This will kick-start the transformation agenda for the AoG going forward.

- **Develop and legitimise a structure that is inclusive of women:** The AoG believes that the Bible is the inspired and authoritative Word of God and thus, the first thing would be to develop and legitimise a structure that recognises women

and men as equal before God. This valuable point keeps on prompting whenever thinking about a solution to women's predicament in church leadership.

Largely, women in the AoG are, like other African women, are unfortunately affected by cultural constraints that inhibit their chances of eligibility in church leadership. This is clearly demonstrated in instances where women are not considered as candidates for eldership, deaconship and pastoral ministry. Hence, the way forward would be the discipleship of equals in the church with the AoG being an agent of women liberation. Men in the AoG should take a leading role in the discipleship of equals where, in the words of Fiorenza (1997:227), men and women have equal status in ministry, rights and dignity as human beings created in the image of God and also have the same spiritual gifts, talents and vocation. This can only happen when women are accorded leadership positions in the AoG and can exercise their authority as unto the Lord (Grudem 2002:229). Typically, this evinces the spirit of servant hood expected in all those in leadership.

- **Theological capacitation for more women in the AoG:** Another crucial step would be to have more women in the AoG attending theological training. Encouraging steps have already been taken by those who are already theologically competent. . Theological training will enable women in the AoG to see and interpret issues from their feminist perspectives instead of relying male-based interpretations. Further, the women will d be able to find for themselves stories of renowned women in Scripture whose role is undermined as a result of the evils of patriarchy.

Women in the AoG church need to re-examine the hermeneutics of the AoG concerning the controversial texts that are used to suppress women. Since the AoG's inception, women have never challenged the churches ecclesiastical and hermeneutical principles with regard to women's role in church leadership. Hence, more women need to be theologically trained sooner than later. In this regard, Oduyoye (2001:32) is of the view that a theological training of women will enable

the church to overcome the patriarchal tendencies that undermine the church as the true Body of Christ.

- **Partnership in ministry:** It is time that both men and women in the AoG work in partnership in ministry and in that way make sure that all are appropriately empowered. As often noted, leadership goes along with power and this is the reason why some men are sceptical to have the same power as women. Such men are afraid of being undermined by equally powerful women. However, Rakoczy (2001:224) cautions that this power is not 'centred on coercive power but on partnership and mutual empowerment'. In addition, the real image of Christ's church is typified by men and women's partnership on the basis of them being bestowed the same ministry gifts for execution in the church. At the same, mutual empowerment will ensure that clericalism is destroyed since clericalism has disempowered women for many centuries.

- **Women need to be involved in decision-making processes in the AoG:** As stated earlier, women's ministries in the AoG is confined to Women's Fellowships found in all local churches on Thursdays. Although the fellowship groups are led by women's committees, they are under the top leadership of the church's pastor and the elders who happen to be men. Only the top leadership makes executive decisions in the church. Nevertheless, the significance of women's ministry in the AoG is highly significant. They are responsible for raising funds for crusades and do more work in the church than men. Hence, this researcher is of the view that the effectiveness of leadership in the AoG will flourish more and more if women are included.

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