

Women in the *missio Dei*: Problems, achievements and challenges in post-colonial Africa

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ABSTRACT

A patriarchal culture was the impetus behind the way women were excluded based on gender in different religions and most of churches. Many scholars have conducted research into the exclusion of women in participating in the missio Dei in mainline churches. This study, however, explores how women have managed to participate diligently in the missio Dei, despite the challenges and negative effects of patriarchal culture.

The study investigates the background of priesthood and its contribution to choice of gender called to serve God in all structures of the church. The research acknowledges participation of women in different churches despite patriarchal interference. A proper understanding of God creating man and woman in his image as equal is essential for sharing in the mission of God.

Women's participation in all structures of the church is crucial in this time of crisis in many churches. The research also examines the level of growth of female participation in the Protestant Church, as compared to the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox church.

Key terms

Missio Dei, ordination, mainline, AIC – African Independence Church, patriarchal culture, feminist theology, DRC – Dutch Reformed Church

OPSOMMING

'n Patriargale/aartsvaderlike kultuur was die dryfveer agter vroue se uitsluiting in verskillende godsdienste en meeste kerke. Menige 'n navorser het al die weerhouding van vroue se deelname aan die missio Dei in prominente kerke ondersoek. Hierdie studie ondersoek egter hoe vroue tog ywerig in die missio Dei deelneem, ten spyte van die uitdagings en negatiewe gevolge van patriargale kultuur.

Die studie studeer die agtergrond van priesterschap en die bydrae daarvan tot die keuse van geslag om God in al die strukture van die kerk te dien. Die navorsing erken die deelname van vroue in verskillende kerke, ongeag patriargale inmenging. 'n Volle begrip van dat die man en vrou eweneens as die beeld van God geskep is onontbeerlik vir deelname aan die missio Dei. Vroue se deelname in al die strukture van die kerk is krities in hierdie tyd van krisis in vele kerke. Die navorsing analiseer die mate van groei van vroulike deelname in die Protestantse kerk, in teenstelling tot die Roomse Katolieke Kerk en die Ortodokse kerk.

Sleutel terme

Missio Dei, bevestiging, prominente, AIC – African Independence Church, patriargale kultuur, feministiese teologie, NGK – Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 BACKGROUND

1.1.1 Historical role of women in a patriarchal era

Although the question whether women can be allowed in the offices and serve as priestess, ministers and elders is widely researched, there are still opposing views. Some allow women in the offices, while others do not. Allow is actually the wrong word, because it gives the impression that women partaking in the missio Dei must have permission from patriarchal culture. Research is necessary to show that despite the exclusion of women in the offices and as priests, they take part in the missio Dei and make a huge contribution. Many scholars like Leene and Hendriks (2010), Horowitz, (1979), Moyo (2015) and Gary (2013) have done research into exclusion of women in leadership positions in mainline churches.

This research focuses on women's partaking in the missio Dei and their contribution to Christianity. Without the contribution of women, Christianity would not have survived. Major role was played by women in leadership, their commitment in mission work and participation with their husband is well displayed in the latter chapters that confirm that Christianity would not have survived without women. The research, therefore, provides a historical overview of how culture influenced the understanding of Scripture and how this culture marginalised women. In this age where the church is in crisis, it is important to show how women participated in the missio Dei in the past, in spite of being marginalised, and challenge churches that continue to marginalise women. Women have glorified God in the past by sharing in his mission and still do so today. We are, therefore, called to allow them to partake in all aspects of his mission and in all leadership positions.

The Old Testament and the New Testament both describe how God used both men and women to participate in his mission and maintained his relationship with his creation from the Old Testament to date. God chose Israel as the ambassador of his mission for the sake of the universe. Israel was known for their monotheistic belief. God has made himself known through His deeds in history. According to Wright (2006:441), the mission of God "embraces the wholeness of the earth and acknowledged the wisdom of other nations". This implies that missionaries could have established bridges of common concern and engaged with all human cultures and their values, before they introduced the biblical faith, to make sure the message is contextualised.

Missional engagement could have helped to address the ethical, social, economic and political aspects of their worldview in line with the Word (Wright, 2006:458). According to Wright (2006:24) missional is “something related to mission of God” e.g. “Israel had a missional existence to all the nations”. The Christian faith is similar in its diversity of traditions in liturgy and worship, e.g. the Greek, Roman, Coptic and many more (Bosch, 2011:458). The supremacy of Western culture compromised the gospel in Africa (Bosch, 2006:459), whereby African beliefs were labelled as pagan and their culture inferior. Missionaries claimed that the gospel was foreign in African culture, but perfectly at home in the West. The supremacy of the culture of missionaries disrespected the indigenous culture of the Third World and thus culture became a barrier that compromised the missio Dei.

This research investigates how African women came to be excluded from participating in the missio Dei, in all leadership positions and the hierarchy of mainline churches and some of the African Independence Church (AIC) congregations. It also looks at how the exegetical application of Scripture was hermeneutically wrongly interpreted, which led to its misuse by scholars and church leaders to exclude women from leadership positions. Many people live in a diverse cultural setting and this could have been the cause for the misunderstanding of the core concept of God’s mission with his creation (Kirk, 1999:77). The research traces a number of impediments and the unhindered participation of women in the missio Dei and their exclusion from all structures of the church. The importance of this research lies in its critical examination of women’s participation in missio Dei despite the empirical church in a sociological phenomenon. God has used women in missio Dei irrespective of patriarchal culture, from the time of the Old Testament to date, and they have made a tremendous contribution. The research highlights which churches have already accepted women to serve God without limitation and how society accepts women in the 21st century.

The research assesses how God has continued to direct his people from creation into the future (Konig, 1998:23) without considering gender identity. It reviews how the Triune¹ God proceeds with the missio Dei by spreading his Word among his people, through his church (Bosch, 1991:390), in which both men and women have taken part in his ongoing mission. Throughout the missio Dei, the Word of God serves to evangelise from both the Old and New Testaments by both men and women. The research investigates the equality of male and female in God’s image and how God created them equally (Genesis 1:26-27)².

¹ God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

² Genesis 1:26: “And God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.’”

The Bible is the inspired Word of God and was written in a time when patriarchal culture was dominant and that might have influenced a patriarchal interpretation that encouraged exclusion, oppression and discrimination of women. God revealed himself in the culture that he may transform it from within. How culture developed to exclude women and how God acted to protect women by furthering male and female equality in church authority, in spite of their exclusion, are described.

Considering the number of debates that include, myth, different ideology and theories that were used to exclude women, it is rational to study how women take part in *missio Dei*. Female scholars such as Horowitz (1979:187), Bird (1981:153) and Mwaura (1997:33) have argued and explored the school of thought that labelled women as inferior, not created in the image of God and the like. Most scholars who argue for the inferiority of women refer to 1 Corinthians 11:8-9, to substantiate this assertion. The exegetical debate whether Paul was referring to the physical body of a woman that came from the rib of a man (Genesis 2:22)³ or the spiritual aspect of a woman that was breathed into life by God (Genesis 2:7)⁴ continues to rage. To make matters worse, Paul also imposed orders on the church in Corinth that favour men and created the impression that it is justified to keep women from ever leading men and that they are not called to take part in the *missio Dei* in leadership positions (1 Corinthians 14:34)⁵.

God created man and woman in his image. The idea that Eve is responsible for sin (addressed at a later stage) directly influenced the oppression of women by patriarchal culture. Women were treated as property of their husband or dependent on their fathers and were excluded from serving God in religious leadership positions, like pastors and priests.

An assessment of the priesthood and apostle's tradition from both the Old and New Testament aids in the analysis of the main reasons for the discourse on the exclusion of women from church offices. The research also looks at how a number of the AIC is churches brought about a paradigm

Genesis 1:27: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female he created them."

³"Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man.' That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh."

⁴"And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, this is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."

⁵ "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience as also saith the law

shift that gave women an opportunity to serve God without impediment. (The research for participation of women in mainline churches and the AIC is outlined in chapter three and four).

1.2 INTRODUCTION

1.2.1 Women in mainline churches

The Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches have not yet accepted women to serve as pastors and priests in their respective churches, while some Protestant Reformation churches and the Anglican Church have already accepted ordinations of women in their mainline congregations (this move is described in full in chapter three). It reflects the gradual shifts in the ideology of the patriarchal tradition of leadership. It is important to review the role of women in leadership roles in all churches, including mainline and the AIC churches of modern times.

The Orthodox and Catholic traditions share common doctrines in faith. They both believe in seven sacrament and ordination of men only. They classify ordination into the priesthood as a special sacrament. "Sacrament" developed from the Greek word *mysterion*. According to Catholic catechism, a sacrament "is an outward sign of inward grace, ordained by Jesus Christ, by which grace is given to our souls" (Armstrong, 1966:1-31). The ordination of priests is one of the sacraments of the Holy Order. The Holy Order is regarded as the continuation of Christ's priesthood, which He bestowed upon his apostles, and implies that priesthood can only be conferred on baptised men. This excludes women from ordination in the Holy Order (Case & Höpfl, 2012:114).

These churches are mentioned first, because they are regarded as the first churches planted by apostles in the first century. The Catholic Church asserts that women cannot be admitted to the Holy Order, because Jesus Christ did not call any women to be part of the 12 apostles, not even his mother Mary (Staples, 2015:1). According to the apostolic churches, therefore, exclusion of women from the priesthood was instituted by Jesus Christ. The head of the church has to be a male to represent Christ's gender (Daniel, 2010:128) and thus the final decision of the church can only be taken by a male.

Furthermore Wilson (2010:2) states that in the Orthodox Church women cannot be ordained for three concrete reasons, which are:

- their custom
- the nature of the priesthood;
- and gender issues.

A variety of reasons have been given by different churches to keep women from serving in every structure of the church. Those cited around 1960 centered on physical weakness, such as the menstrual cycle, incompetence, lack of intelligence and the like (Wilson, 2011:145). This may not be the case anymore, but it had a marked influence on why women were not considered in some mainline churches for serving in all leadership positions. These churches draw their reference from the Old Testament patriarchal tradition, where ordination into the priesthood was reserved for men, since Aaron was the first priest in Exodus and he was a man. Others believe that cultural tradition forced Jesus to only choose men to become apostles, taking into consideration that Israel was known to be highly patriarchal (described further in chapter three). These are among the reasons often cited by the dominating gender, in reference to biblical times. It is clearly recorded in the New Testament that Jesus Christ cared for the marginalised women and protected them Sered (1997:154) provides further reasons for such exclusion as follows:

“Women are less rational (Islam), woman are more tied to this world because of their role as mothers (Buddhism), woman are the cause of original sin (Christianity), women are polluted because of menstruation (Hinduism and some Japanese religions), and women are by definition private rather than public beings (Judaism).”

In spite of the above, God used both genders and is genderless in his calling. He, however, continues to transform beliefs from within, as inequalities still remain in both mainline churches and AIC churches. Traditional norms and beliefs lie at the heart of the discourse among Christians. Women are still marginalised by patriarchal culture, denying them the opportunity to express themselves and compromising their gifts and abilities inside the church. The role they play go unrecognised and is undermined, despite being the pillars of the church. Many enforce the discriminatory rulings with texts from the Bible and quote these without the proper exegesis, since they usually read the Bible from a male perspective and as West (1999:98) says “certain texts in the canon are read and others ignored”.

Some of the AIC churches are still influenced by their worldview of Africanism. There is a Tswana (one of the official South African languages) idiom that says “Tsaetelelwake e e namagadi, tsawelakalengope”, which can be loosely translated to say that a woman cannot lead men. Lack of academic education in AIC churches does not empower women to understand that some idioms serve to prevent women from assuming leadership roles in certain areas of life. Unfortunately, a large portion of black women are not educated as a result of the community myth that says “you cannot educate a girl child because she will marry soon” and women do not need education, because they cannot be leaders of the nation. This prohibits African women from being leaders in all aspects of life.

Molobi (2008:9) maintains that in South Africa women in AIC churches are often unable to express their abilities inside the church, as they require their husbands' consent in any decision they make. Their husbands are considered to be the heads of the family and often also qualify to assume leadership positions in the church, as the head of the family, even if the church was established by a woman. Some AIC churches remain deeply entrenched in patriarchal culture. This practice is however tantamount to violation Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and God's commandments that ensure the protection of women's rights in all spheres of life, including religion. Women's rights are often challenged under the laws pertaining to freedom of religion and culture. The law that still allows men only to be pastors or priests denies freedom of religion among women. This will research demonstrates how women continue to be denied their religious rights based on gender and reflects that women are still oppressed, suppressed and silenced in both the religious and home environment and even in society.

Although the focus is more on the exclusion of women to leadership positions in the *missio Dei*, attention is given to the heroines of post-colonial Africa who stood out, just like the heroines of the Bible, even though patriarchal culture did not recognise women as equal to men (outstanding religious women is further described in chapter three). Amongst such women are YaaAsantewa, the Commander in Chief of Ghana, who is said to have led the war against British rule in 1900. Graça Machel is a great leader from Mozambique, both a politician and humanitarian. Although she was also the wife of Nelson Mandela, she is known for her own achievements. Candace (332BC) of Ethiopia, famous for her military prowess and field command, was another notable female leader.

Cleopatra (69-30BC), queen of Kemet, was deemed a great linguist and was instrumental in making Kemet (Egypt) into the country that it was. Kahina (688-705 AD) was a North African queen who prevented Islam from being forced into the Western Sudan. Queen Kahina was of the Hebrew faith and refused to abandon her religion. Islamists dealt cruelly with anyone who did not convert. The wives of African kings would rather commit suicide than face the mercilessness of Arabs, but Kahina managed to fight the enemy and conquered them. The queen of Zululand, Nandi (1778-1826), was the highly self-esteem mother of the great Shaka Zulu. She raised her son alone, after the death of his father, into an outstanding and powerful chief of Zululand (Fort, 1950).

The above information clearly shows how against all odds women managed to beat patriarchal culture and tradition that forced them to play a subordinate and submissive role at home, while men were the masters in economic, cultural, political and religious life.

Motivated by this background to exclusion of women in leadership positions, this research investigates patriarchal culture and the participation of women in all structures of the church. Despite exclusion in the church, women are outstanding performers in other spheres of life and thus the challenges that women still experience even in the 21st century is addressed. Despite the church *missio Dei* goes beyond the church. There are Christians for whom the Bible is not yet the liberating book that frees all to partake in the *missio Dei*, according to their calling, and women are thus silenced.

1.2.2 Women in the AIC

The lack of women's roles in mainline churches led to the growth of the AIC. Historically, most AIC congregations were founded by women who attempted to create a platform for women to be religiously free, since they could not be leaders in their mainline churches. Although these churches may have been established by women, they did not always become the public leaders of these churches.

Daniel (2010:134) claims that among the independent churches that were initiated by women are the following: Fumaira and Beatrice, around the year 1700; Mother Jane of Freetown and her Martha Davies Confidentialia Association; Laou's Eglise Deimatiste, founded in 1922; and Christian Abioduns Cheribim and Seraphim Society founded in 1925; the St. John Apostolic Faith Mission near Johannesburg, founded by the Ndebele prophetess Manku in 1952; Alice Lenshina initiated Lumpa Church in 1954 and Catholic separation in Kenyan began by Marrian Rogot from 1952 and Gaudencia Aoko in 1963. These churches are all over Africa and those that started in South Africa are spreading to neighbouring countries, such as Botswana and Zimbabwe (Anderson, 2001:113).

These AICs created many opportunities for women, though in some men are still patronised as the family leaders and church leaders. Women in the AICs adopt the roles of healers and carers for the sick in the church. Pretorius and Jafta (1997:220–221) reveal that in the Zion Apostolic Churches women, who are prophets, can express their gifts and practice them within the church. It is not common in mainline churches to allow women to practice prophetic gifts and a healing ministry that the AICs allow, but in most mainline churches the leadership structure is such that it limits the progress of women's prophetic gifts of God and healing ministry. AICs were deemed a way to restore the dignity of black people, who did not feel at home in mainline churches, as it embraced the African culture (Oduyoye, 1995:3; Muller, 2013: 5).

Scholars, like Mapuranga (2013:2), are of the opinion that women were seeking liberation from the patriarchal culture of mainline churches. This is likely to be true, since women are known to

be the majority in both mainline churches and AICs. This is acknowledged by Mwaura (2005:423) by saying that not only are women in the AICs;

“visible in ecclesial leadership as founders of churches, bishops, and evangelists, but they also function as prophetesses, prayer leaders, healers and heads of church organizations and departments.”

Women in the AICs support members by healing, through immersion, and consultation with a prophet. Healing by immersion is confined to baptism at the river. Healing through consultation can be done by laying on of hands and prayer (Steyn, 1996:8). The continued influence of the Old Testament in AICs can be seen in the use of brass bands, as the Levites of the Old Testament (Molobi, 2011:1). The role that patriarchal culture continues to play in the exclusion of women from influential roles in many AICs, just as in most of mainline churches, necessitates investigation. Perhaps Western missionaries in colonised countries influenced African culture (Kirk, 1999:81), given their dismissal of indigenous culture as inferior to the Western culture.

1.3 CONTEXTUAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN CHURCH LEADERSHIP

1.3.1 The role of the government in female oppression in religion and politics

The research includes South African politics in terms of how it affected women through discrimination that excluded them in their different churches. Culture bias leads to racism and cultural superiority. Missionaries to African countries brought with them a culture that was flawed (Kirk, 1999:78). It gave rise to colonisation and the Apartheid system with a patricidal value chain in which women, especially black women, were seen as lowest on the human totem pole. In South Africa the majority of black people were poor, exploited and marginalised because of race. West (2002:15-26) classifies Apartheid as a “structural sin” and goes on to explain that it was that sin that enabled a minority group of “white middle class people” to possess great assets at the expense of others (West, 2003:11).

1.3.2 Stories of both black and white women during Apartheid

Morkel (2015:127) admits that “as a woman in the patriarchal culture of the South African society in general and the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) in particular, I have become aware of the complexity of being part of the oppressors as a white person, while simultaneously being part of the oppressed as a woman compared to most black women...I was confronted with the problem of infertility. I struggled with my identity as a woman. I began to understand the way in which the DRC abused the Word of God to justify apartheid...I was filled with anger and despair because of

the lies I had been fed all my life and the way in which I had swallowed these...It is difficult not to see my brother's privileged position as heir and owner of the farm where we all grew up as siblings, but from which my sisters and I have been marginalized and excluded."

Patriarchal culture even disregards siblings for being female, whereby the only person of importance is a man. Another story according to Mbatha (2012), Miss Theresa Ramashamola was the only female amongst five men on the death row known as the Sharpeville six. She related how patriarchal society offended and disgraced her for she was the only woman amongst men on the death row. she recalled: "what kind of woman was I who was this unfortunate to be on death-row". Patriarchal society will always remind you that as a woman you should not act like man.

1.3.3 The mistreatment of women detained by the law during Apartheid

According to Goldblatt and Meintjes (1999:7), women experienced the following kinds of abuse:

"Women were abused by the security forces in ways which specifically exploited their vulnerabilities as women, for example rape or threats of rape and other forms of sexual abuse, threats against family and children, removal of children from their care, false stories about illness and/or death of family members and children, and humiliation and abuse around biological functions such as menstruation and childbirth. Women were not only subject to beatings and death threats, but also the horrible acts of rape and murder."

Sideris (1998:84) explains as follows: "Women political prisoners describe experiences of rape, vaginal examinations, stripping and 'body searches'. Pregnant detainees report that they were beaten and given electric shocks. One woman was forced to give birth in front of a policeman who laughed at her labour pains".

Social injustice and gender power games in politics left many women the victims of lost dignity and values during that era. They were often belittled and degraded. Besides the oppression of women during the colonial era, African societies were also subject to patriarchal laws that allowed men greater privilege than women.

African women come from a range of different cultures that vary from society to society. Women are the household managers, in some African countries, while men participate in social, political, economic and religious activities. In other countries, like Democratic Republic of Congo, a woman cannot open a bank account without her husband's consent (Familusi, 2012:300), which makes women unable to take decisions on their own. Hence Darwin's theories were that women are inferior and were biologically inferior to men.

1.4 WOMEN AND CULTURE

1.4.1 Background

Rabuzzi (1982:4) offers the possibility that women are considered inferior because of the lack of recorded accounts that affirm women as equal to men and their cultural responsibility within society. Reading the Bible narrative helped to shape the lives of all who believed in it. The recorded accounts of feminists that were supposed to be applied to both males and females could have shaped and altered the lives of their readers. The tradition and the culture of the man as head of the family in the African culture and the woman in a subordinate position were orally passed down and simply accepted without any substantiation. This makes it difficult for women to challenge African culture as there are no proof of something documented that shows women as equal to men in an African culture.

In many patriarchal cultures an unmarried woman will remain dependent on her father, irrespective of her age. Patriarchal culture and tradition thus put a low value on women in the human value chain. According to Adetunji (2001:106), the cultural and gender bias starts at the birth of a child, because a baby boy is treated with the respect accorded the bearer of a family's lineage. It is a belief still practised in both urban and rural areas. The birth of a baby boy is celebrated as the pride of the family and in Zimbabwe a woman who is unable to conceive was beaten. Chigudu (2004:107) offers the example from his research of how "Georgia's husband battered her for eleven years because they couldn't have children. Her father-in-law finally threw her out because she had 'disgraced her family'."

Women were regarded as the property of their husband and should her husband die, the husband's family would inherit her (Okin, 2013:51). A male figure would take care of her, in her husband's place, irrespective of the woman's wishes. Similarly in South Africa women were sexually abused by their husbands, since he regarded her as his property bought and paid for with lobola (Baloyi, 2009:3). The Middle Assyrian Law Code 33 of Hammurabi (Driver & Miles, 1935/1975) states:

"If a woman is still living in her father's house, but her husband has died, as long as she has sons, she may live in whichever of their houses she chooses. If she does not have a son, her father-in-law is to give her to whichever of his other sons he prefers. If both her husband and her father-in-law are dead, she is a legal widow, and may go wherever she wants."

This law is similar to SA culture that allow widow to be married by brother in law irrespective of his age (Masenya, 1998:83) Although the intent of this law was to keep the bond of the family together, upon the death of the husband, women should be able to give her preference as to

choice of partner. It should be her prerogative whether she wants to marry or not, rather than being forced to marry her husband's brother.

Sered (1997:158) says women were seen as a domestic being. Men had the ultimate authority and women were obliged to obey their husbands (Römer, 1996:14) a culture that had a marked impact on how women were treated. There have been women, however, who took the lead against all odds. Despite the patriarchal culture, Deborah managed to act as a prophetess and as a leader of Israel in Judges 4:4⁶ (Bible, 1989), (other biblical heroines are discussed in the next chapter).

The missionary work of Israel was intended to bring the light to all nations and thus certain selected verses from the Bible cannot be the determining factor for excluding women from serving God in the office of high priest. The world has many cultures that should be taken into consideration when assessing the tribulation of women's exclusion from freely serving God. The Bible's grand narrative is based on a different worldview that made YHWH and his creations known to different nations of diversified cultures. People read the Bible from the particular cultural perspective of their choice, instead of allowing the gospel to transform the culture.

1.4.2 Narratives of women struggling with culture

Baloyi (2009:1), in agreement with a number of scholars, summarises their conclusions by saying that beating wives has become the norm for some African traditionalists to oppress and abuse women. The most shocking tradition was a woman thinking it traditionally inhuman and disrespectful to report an abusive husband (Braathen, 2008:20).

Baloyi (2009:2) asserts that "beating does not only degrade women, but takes away their dignity, humiliates and traumatizes them. The church has a major work of liberating these women from abusive patriarchal culture". Their mistreatment has led women:

- to attempt suicide (Maluleke & Nadar, 2002:10); to divorce (Phoofolo, 2007:372);
- to flee from the house naked (Baloyi, 2009a:139–140);
- to being beaten to death by their husbands (Rampedi, 2010:8);
- to walk long distances, sleeping in the mountains, before reaching their father's home (Phoofolo, 2007:372); and

⁶ Judges 4:4: "And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time."

- to be accused of a crime for being unable to have children (Chigudu, 2004:107).

Baloyi (2009:2) cites a man, 45 years old, boasting as follows: “When she was pregnant with our second baby I enjoyed beating her until she bled. She knows if I start beating I will only stop when I see blood. One day as I was fetching my sjambok in the car, she escaped through the window and she went to her mother’s home”.

In past times abused women’s stories remained untold out of fear of an ineffective justice system, but today some women can fight for their rights and the law even rules in their favour.

1.4.3 HIV/AIDS and women stigmatisation

Stigmatisation is commonly used to define people living with HIV/AIDS. It is derived from the Greek word that means to expose the unusual moral behaviour of certain individuals. Kgalemang (2003:144) describes it as associated with people who have sinned or “have not met the expectation of societal norms and values”. Oluduro (2010:210) has revealed that most women are afflicted with this label. The following narratives indicate how women have suffered due to cultural myth and the effects of poverty in society:

- Thandiwe became a sex worker after the death of her husband, because she did not have any other support. Some of her clients hit her for insisting on the use of condoms. The poor woman became the victim of her circumstances. Poverty and violence marginalise women (Kgalemang, 2003:154).
- Boniswa’s story reads thus: “He married me when I was only 18. He knew he was positive. He married me because I was a virgin. He believed that if he slept with a virgin he would be cured.” (Ackermann, 2003:29)
- Judy contracted HIV/AIDS because her husband was leading a double life (Ackermann, 2003:29). Some African people claim extramarital sex as part of culture (Kgalemang, 2003:155).
- A truck driver, a married man, believed that “sex is natural and he has to do it”. His choice of commercial sex workers, when he was away, was a high risk of HIV/AIDS to his wife (Kgalemang, 2003:154).

These narratives reflect how gender inequality, violence, marginalisation and stigmatisation degrade women.

1.5 FEMALE LEADERSHIP IN DIFFERENT RELIGIONS AND CHURCHES

Ancient tradition was deep-rooted in the Pentateuch books of Moses, where women were excluded even from the office of High Priest and occupied by men only (Deuteronomy 18:5). Although women served God in the Old Testament, culture was misused to deny women access to work in all structures of the church. Women sought to serve God according to their gifts and not be impeded by their gender. As Horowitz (1979:186) asserts, the only visible distinction between women and men is body parts, otherwise women have the same mind and reason as men.

Allowing women to serve God as pastors and priests is still a taboo in most of churches, these offices are reserved for men. Cultural and traditional practices are systematically planned for a certain gender (Moyo, 2015:186). Even the Roman Catholic papacy maintains that the church is not allowed to ordain women. Historically women participated in the ministerial priesthood of the church, but exclusion of women from the priesthood started in the 13th century (Gary, 2013:260). (These are challenges that need further investigation and are addressed in chapter three.) The Bible is an inspirational source for all Christians and contains verses that confirms Jesus's positive sentiment towards women. Galatians 3:28⁷ indicates that men and women are the seed of Abraham. Through faith, men and women are one. Christ removed all divisions and God freed his people from the bondage of the law.

However, women who administer sacraments and pastoral care in some churches, such as the United Church, continue to be subject to a variety of challenges that violate human right codes. Women in ordained ministry experience sexual harassment by parishioners or male clergy (Caron, 1986:4). Few women are considered as urban pastorates for senior positions. Most women in these ministries receive minimum salaries for longer periods than their male colleagues. These types of problems still marginalise women. Despite their inclusion in leadership roles at some churches, many women face discrimination and varying challenges that impede their ability to fully participate in the *missio Dei*.

1.5.1 Feminist theology

Encyclopedia.com (2016) defines feminist theology as follows: "Feminist theology emerged from the notion that Christian theology and the institutional embodiment of Christianity not only

⁷ "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

excluded women's voices and experiences, but also developed practices that are sexist, patriarchal and androcentric.”

According to Keller et al. (2006:1174) Feminist theology originated in 1960 by a group of women from part of the Latin American. They wrote and influenced liberation theology. Feminist theology espoused rather extremist ideologies in promotion of women’s liberation. The detailed analysis of feminist theology falls outside the scope of this research, which instead focuses on the human rights of women to participate in all the hierarchical structures of the church. It pays attention to the way in which Jesus Christ liberated women from patriarchal culture and oppression and the implications of allowing women in all leadership positions. The New Testament after all testifies of women in leadership positions.

Thiselton (1992:430) asserts that some biblical texts do not support women to do the entire task that they are call for, also arguing that certain parts of Scripture are perceived as instruments of power to dominate fellow members of the church. This is supported by Fiorenza’s (1983:6) conclusion that a particular text may convey a specific message to a community. Fiorenza (1983:6) believes that feminist hermeneutics indicate equality in discipleship, as Jesus Christ did not discriminate between men and woman. Feminist theologians endeavour to find the principle that unmask culture dominated biblical interpretation.

1.6 PROBLEM STATEMENT

There is significant growth in recognition of women in the missio Dei in leadership positions in a number of churches and yet despite the progress made, some churches still exclude women from certain structures of the church. The studies cited in the previous paragraphs highlight the culture and traditions that have influenced perspectives on women. The Old Testament contains texts that were used by churches and continue to be used by many modern-day churches to keep women from actively partake in the total scope of the missio Dei. Patriarchal culture and tradition had and continues to have a marked impact on the role of women across the world in different churches. The study, therefore, seeks to establish a missional paradigm that acknowledges God’s use of women in the missio Dei and all structures of the church. The study challenges the hermeneutics of people that claim that the Bible supports the marginalising of women.

1.7 RESEARCH QUESTIONS WHICH ARISES FROM THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

- How did patriarchal culture influence gender relations?

- How did women participate in the missio Dei and what is the role of women in the Bible? What was the role of patriarchal culture and women in the early church and mainline churches?
- What are the roles of women in the AIC?
- What is the possible paradigm of acknowledging women in culture and religion in the missio Dei and all structures of the church?

1.8 RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this research is to bring forth a missional paradigm embedded in the missio Dei that can bring acknowledgement to women's potential as leaders in the church that will allow women to use their gifts as leaders in the churches.

The objectives that should be attained, to achieve the above aim, are:

- to investigate the patriarchs and gender relations
- to expound the role of women as stipulated by missio Dei;
- to investigate the role of the patriarchal culture and women in the early church and mainline churches;
- to investigate the role of African woman in the AIC; and
- to establish a missional paradigm that can allow women to answer God's call without impediment.

1.9 CENTRAL THEORETICAL STATEMENT

If Scripture is read without adopting a patriarchal hermeneutic approach and the contribution of women in the missio Dei and also in leadership positions are accounted for, the unhindered participation of women in the missio Dei as well as in all the leadership positions will be acknowledged to the advancement of Christianity.

1.10 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is conducted as a literature overview and critically provides historical studies from a range of literature, including the Bible, books, journal articles and other publications (Anderson, 2004:11). Data collected from literature is analysed and interpreted to conclude the results of research.

The research critically analyses literature data found through the above sources and interprets it to identify the trends of how women responded to God's call from the Old and New Testament (Kerlinger, 1986:125-126), while indicating all the gaps that are man-made. The influence of patriarchal culture on the understanding and use of Scripture to substantiate their viewpoint is highlighted. The research addresses the exegetical relevance of Paul's hermeneutical interpretation that is misused by scholars. It furthermore observes the current status of a woman's role in mainline churches and the IAC.

The study presents the facts that led to the establishment of African churches, while investigating the involvement of women in African churches and the influence of patriarchal culture within these churches. The research also reviews the contribution of women in African churches.

1.11 STUDY LIMITATIONS

The study limits itself to a historical overview of the marginalising women and their exclusion from the leadership positions of the African church. There are interrelated issues that fall outside the scope of this study and that call for further study. The context of the study is limited to the available comparative literature, i.e. there are studies presently in process that may oppose the relevance of this study on the evaluation of women's participation in the *missio Dei*. Nevertheless, the study lays an informed basis for future research, taking into consideration the period in which the study has been done during the following period: (Masenya (2004), Landman (1994) and Mudimeli (2011). It will be able to offer assistance on the set of issues that are appropriate to identify points that can speak to the acknowledgement of women's participation in the *missio Dei*.

1.12 FORMULATION OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1: Introduction and problem statement

Chapter 2: *Missio Dei* and the role of women in the Bible

Chapter 3: The role of patriarchal culture and women in the early church and mainline churches

Chapter 4: The role of women in the African Independence Church

Chapter 5: Conclusion and a preliminary paradigm for churches

CHAPTER 2 MISSIO DEI AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE BIBLE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The study investigates how God use humanity in his mission irrespective of gender. It focuses on the participation of women in the missio Dei to show that God's calling is inclusive and not exclusive of women, as patriarchal culture alleges. It explores the cultural factors that influenced the marginalisation of woman in the Bible and women of note, in both the Old and New Testament, involved in the missio Dei.

2.2 MISSIO DEI IN THE OLD TESTAMENT AND NEW TESTAMENT

The Bible describes God's mission and the Bible is about God's mission. Wright (2006:532) and Bosch (1991:20) clearly relate how God called his people to participate in his mission for the redemption of his creation, in both the Old and the New Testament. God used both men and women to accomplish his mission work, commonly known as missio Dei. Missio derives from the Latin verb "mitto" for "to send", to describe the activities of God. Missio Dei can be translated as "the mission of God". Bosch (1991:510) asserts that in the Bible, "the mission of God includes all social aspects and the church's missionary involvement. These social aspects refer to "witness, service, justice, healing, reconciliation, liberation, peace, evangelism, fellowship, church planting, contextualization, enculturation and much more" (Bosch, 1991:510). Bosch (1991:10) defines the missio Dei as:

"God's self-revelation as the One who loves the world, God's involvement in and with the world, the nature and activity of God, which embraces both the church and the world, and in which the church is privileged to participate."

This is supported by the concept of the Holy Trinity as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God exists as three persons, but is one being with a single divine nature. The impetus for missio Dei is God seeking the redemption of his people. The mission of God revolves around God and His creation.

Bosch (1991:390) adds that "our mission has no life of its own: only in the hands of the sending God can it truly be called mission, not least because the missionary invitation comes from God alone".

Wright (2006:22) in turn argues that mission lies in action, which he describes as follows:

“Fundamentally, our mission (if it is biblically informed and validated) means our committed participation as God’s people, at God’s invitation and command, in God’s own mission within the history of God’s world for the redemption of God’s creation.”

Wright (2006:49) cites the Bible to describe God’s mission in which he makes himself known every time and in every place, within that particular culture. God makes himself known in the Old Testament, New Testament and also today. The Bible provides passages that “are a product of mission in action” (Wright, 2006:49). In the New Testament the grand narrative focuses on God’s mission encapsulated in the Great Commission to reach out to all the nations until the end of the world. Men and women were participating equally in *missio Dei* from the start. The research now turns to creation and the fall into sin and how it affected the status of women, before proceeding to describe particular women’s participation in the *missio Dei*.

2.2.1 Creation

God’s mission with humanity started in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve lived as equal partners, as they were created, and Genesis 2:15 describes their task as caring for the Garden of Eden. They were in perfect fellowship with God, as their Father in his Kingdom. Knowledge about God helped humanity to understand God’s character and to obey God’s commandments

(Omwenga, 2013:33). Their main service was to glorify God (Middleton, 2006:81). Man and woman were given equal responsibility to manage all of God’s creation, as part of their mission work.

God created man and woman equally in his image to fulfil his eternal plan (Genesis 1:26-27), a sentiment affirmed by Calvinism (Ackermann, 1988:14-28). By making humanity in his image, God distinguished them from the other creatures of creation. Human beings can live in fellowship with God, worship him and serve him regardless of their gender (Helberg, 1988:30). Many people have grappled with the meaning of “man made in the image of God”, failing to understand it, which brought about an ideology in the ancient world to pursue honour and glory by holding forth the image of God as proof of their manhood (Helberg, 1988:52).

The ideology, however, never made man divine and besides, God’s image doesn’t refer to physical features or the sexual distinction between men and women (Keil & Delitzsch, 1996:39). Biblically both men and women are made in the image of God, as indicated in Genesis 1:26. Gillham et al. (2015:38) support this assertion by stating that the image of God in humanity should bring equal respect for both men and women. Confusion arose from patriarchal culture and men’s desire to subjugate women.

2.2.2 The Fall

Both Adam and Eve lived in close relationship with God, until sin broke their bond with God. This fellowship with God was ruined when Adam and Eve disobeyed God's command in the Garden of Eden. Throughout history, Arbel (2012:3) states, Eve has been called different names and represented as:

“a transgressor of God's way, as the Devil's vessel, as associated with the Devil's illicit sexuality and desire, as Adam's deceitful wife, and as a wicked figure who brought death upon Adam and all humanity.”

The conspiracy of labelling Eve in derogatory terms serves to make her the sole culprit to blame for the first sin. Furthermore, it is thought that only she lost the image of God and gender equality after the sin. For this reason West (2003:52) suggests that scholars should not select the Bible texts that marginalise women, especially Genesis 3:2-6. Adam and Eve both committed the first sin, but who led Adam to sin remains a topic of debate. God gave Adam knowledge of all the trees in the garden. Eve has always been assumed to be the source of evil, which Chifungo (2015:153) calls “the sexist myth”.

Sometimes men's sin is referred to the sin of Adam, sin entered the world through him (Romans 5:17). Adam, as the head of the family and Eve's husband, was supposed to take responsibility of his household when his wife invited him to eat the fruit. Adam did not protect his household. Men and women function as a unit and as a unit Adam and Eve fell into sin, yet they blamed each other. As children of God, they were not supposed to blame each other. God gave Adam knowledge of all the trees in the garden. He knew that he will be making sin if he eats the fruit of the tree. Adam ignored God's instruction. God the Father, however, continued to love his creation and manifested his love through maintaining his creation. Helberg (1988:5) defines God's Kingdom as follows:

“The sovereign, living God maintains his absolute rule, in intimate covenant relationship with men and women, through his word in the course of history, despite the fact that man is mortally fallen.”

Sin brought a curse upon humanity and separated it from God. Adam and Eve sinned before the Lord and consequently resulted in their crushing the head of the serpent, while the serpent will strike their heels (Genesis 3:15), i.e. women bearing children in pain (Genesis 3:16). The consequences of Adam's sin were death and having to work hard for survival. They also lost the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:22-24). Gonzales (2010:37) affirms that Adam and his seed broke the covenant of God and human sin brought upon humanity the righteous curse for all

generations, what's more Adam brought death to the world. His son, Cain, was the first to introduce death to humanity upon killing his brother, Abel.

The chain of sins and sinners grew as a descendent of Cain, Lamech, denigrated humanity (especially women) by establishing polygamy (Genesis 4:16-24). God made Adam to marry Eve only, in a culture of monogamous marriage, and God never condoned a practice that could bring complications to family life (Deuteronomy 21:15-17). It is also the reason God provided law to protect women.

Aside from establishing polygamy, Losch (2008:255) explains, Lamech killed a young man and arrogantly boasted to his wives about it (Genesis 4:23-24). He did not tolerate rebukes from his wives for any wrongdoing and in this way he also oppressed them with his arrogance.

Sin continued to offend God in his creation and everything in it, but He did not abandon his creation either. He preserved his creation through Noah and his family (Genesis 6-7). During Noah's life the earth was no longer the paradise God had created, humanity had ruined it with continuous sin. God saved Noah and his family from the floods, because of his faithfulness and obedience (Genesis 6:9-17). He also saved a number of living creatures, both male and female, and seven pairs of all clean animals with every kind of food (Genesis 7:2). Through God's mercy, both male and female creatures were saved to participate in the *missio Dei*.

The patriarchal period brought with it a culture that regards sons as the strength of the family and daughters a weakness, because men dominated the family. Having a son at the time was respected for population growth and upholding the family name. The patriarchal age include Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Despite this patriarchal inclination, many events demonstrate the importance of women during that period.

2.3 PATRIARCHAL CULTURE

Patriarchal culture is when the social system allows men to hold power over women and children and culture serves to justify gender inequality. In most cases the father of the family embraces authority over the mother and children. Patriarchal culture was dominant in the ancient Near East. The patriarchal culture of Israel was influenced by the ancient Egyptian culture during their time in exile (Deuteronomy 26:5-10). This background aids the tracing of the origins of patriarchal culture and its influence on the treatment of women. Patriarchal culture had no respect for women.

It was circa 1915BC to 1805BC that Joseph, a son of the Hebrew people, gained prominence in Egypt. The Nile Delta was a fertile area in Egypt that attracted the Hyksos, nomadic tribes from Syria, Canaan and the east in Arabia. Many came to see the famous Pyramids of Giza and the

polytheistic manmade gods and goddess (Masters, 1979:105). The god Horus was depicted as ruler and king over the entire kingdom of Egypt. Joseph, the son of Jacob and Rachel, was one of the first Israelites to experience human trafficking after being sold to Egyptians by Medians. His Jewish family joined him during famine and their interaction at the time played a major impact on Hebrew culture and the historical setting (Dalman, 2008:449–88). Hebrew boys were killed to control the Hebrew population (Exodus 1:15-21) and poor women were treated as nothing.

From the family of the Hebrew patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob), Joseph the grandson of Abraham was sold for 20 shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites and again sold to Potiphar, one of the Pharaoh's officers (Genesis 37:36). God used these events to save Israel from starvation, as part of his mission.

Joseph was forced into a cross-cultural situation that influenced the culture of the Israelites and Abraham thus became the ancestor of all believers. Israel remained in captivity for 430 years and though they suffered slavery, God was preparing his mission for his chosen people in a foreign country. Yahweh used patriarchal society in spite of the way it treated women.

2.3.1 How patriarchal culture views women

The ancient Hebrew lived in the patriarchal culture that disregarded women, except when the woman had the wealth to give her high social status and influence in society (Labahn, 2014:4). The Hebrews were delivered from slavery by Yahweh, hence they belonged to him through the Abrahamic covenant. God had given them commandments, called the Mosaic Law, created within the context of their culture (Scherer, 1982:479). God clearly designated both men and women, in his great narrative, to share in his mission.

Patriarchal society, however, created their own worldview that distorted God's original intent with making men and women in his image (as previously mentioned). Daly (1973:13) also tells of how confusion over the tradition of God as Father and Christ the Son reinforced male power in patriarchal society. Furthermore, the rulers of empires, like Pharaoh, were considered to be male deities and added to the theory that only man bears "the image of God" (Lyons & Thompson, 2002:17-23). This is an issue of dispute in this study, arguing that both men and women were created in the image of God and thus making men and women equals, as instituted by God at creation (Genesis 1-3).

In patriarchal culture the husband and father had the sole authority to make key decisions in the household. Most marriages were arranged marriages, a custom also practised on areas like Mesopotamia and Sub-Saharan Africa (Meyer, 2014:1). Women were expected to be subordinate and patriarchal family structure rested on men's decisions over all property and land. After

marriage, the woman would usually take up residence in her husband's home. Early Roman law described women as children as they belonged to their fathers, husband and even their sons. Women were simply deemed inferior and an unmarried daughter could even be sold or condemned to die by her father. Women were, furthermore, considered a major source of temptation and sin. Sumerian law punished both men and women with death for adultery, since Sumerian women's virginity in marriage was highly prized. The Jewish tradition of the Old Testament only allowed men and women to worship separately (Johnson, 2001:31).

Even though the Bible speaks of noticeable women who played distinguished roles, the above culture shaped the unequal gender perspective in many churches (Essien & Ukpogon, 2013:286). God used the culture of the people to transform it from within. Laws undermined and discriminated against women, but God demonstrated the value of women by providing laws within the context of patriarchal culture that would aid and protect them.

An example of this relates to the circumstances around menstruation. Women were not permitted to go to the synagogue during this time (Rosman, 2002:112). They were also subject to seven days of uncleanness right after childbirth, during which they were separated from the community and even their husbands were not allowed to have relations with them. The law of God thus showed women during this period (Leviticus 12:2). Even breastfeeding was an advantage given during that period and a clear indication of how God intervened in patriarchal society by giving women the opportunity to feed their children.

Regardless of the culture, God used both men and women to take part in his mission. Among the prophetesses engaged in *missio Dei* were Noadiah (Nehemiah 6:14), a servant girl healed Naaman (2 Kings 5:1-19) and the prophetess Huldah delivered the king's message in 2 Kings 22:14-20). God's mission was centripetal in Jerusalem, as the first chosen nation to proclaim God to the world and the prophets prophesied about Abraham's offspring coming to Jerusalem (Wright, 2009:239).

This covenant liberated the oppressed from their oppressors. Yahweh sought to re-establish his relationship with his people that He loved so dearly and spoke of his bride to show their close relationship (Jeremiah 2:1-4) and yet this sinful wife (Hosea 2:2-23) was unfaithful (Israel) to God and followed foreign gods (Yates, 2010:146).

2.4 MARRIAGE AS SYMBOL FOR ISRAEL'S RELATIONSHIP WITH JAHWEH

The nation of Israel's sinful behaviour made God angry. Their relationship with God used to describe their sealed covenant, their love for each other and their commitment to each other (Deuteronomy 5:1-3). Their wicked conduct of adultery in worshipping other gods (Jer. 3:1),

however, divorced them from God their husband. Israel was tempted into following Baal and Ashtoreth, the fertility religion of Canaanite goddesses (Judges 2:13).

The customs of these countries influenced the morals of Israel. They had a different god for everything. Each city had its own god and each family looked to a particular god for protection. Their moon goddess demanded child sacrifices (2 Kings 17:31). Prostitution was common and also sexual relationships between men (homosexuality), just like in Sodom and Gomorra (Genesis 19:5), while their god even had sexual relations with women in and around the temple. Each god and goddess served a certain purpose, such as gods of love, money, fertility, rain and the like. Poor girls of Carthage earned a salary by working in the temple and women sold their bodies to the temple (Ringdal & Daly, 2005:14). The immorality of this neighbouring nation destroyed the relationship between God and His nation.

It did not only impact negatively on the social status of women and their cultural values, but also promoted the disrespect of women. God has never condoned the degradation of women and even provided laws, as in Leviticus, is to protect women against abuse and their plight in patriarchal society. Despite God's intervention in the plight of women, through Levitical law, it did not right all wrongs as highlighted next.

2.5 GENDER ROLES IN THE ANCIENT ISRAEL WORLDVIEW

This section describes God created laws in the Old Testament to protect women from exclusion, discrimination and disrespect. Biblical narratives reflect how women were marginalised in the patriarchal community (Exodus 22:16-17)⁸, but God never oppressed them. The law in Exodus 22:16-17 served to prevent rape and whoever did had to suffer the consequences of their deeds. These narratives demonstrate God's love for his creation, even in social oppression.

Even if women were oppressed, God protected them with his law. God is a God who crosses frontiers of culture, like that of the patriarchal regime, and used both men and women regardless of the elevated status of men in a patriarchal society. The following descriptions illustrate the extent of social struggle, in terms of the patriarchal culture among Jewish women, and the laws God instituted to protect women, which led to major change and Jesus Christ's ministry.

⁸If a man seduces a virgin who is not betrothed and lies with her, he shall give the bride-price for her and make her his wife. 17 If her father utterly refuses to give her to him, he shall pay money equal to the bride-price for virgins.

2.5.1 Daughters sold as slaves

In patriarchal culture and customs a man was the master of his family, which afforded him absolute control over his wife and children. He had the right to sell their daughters as slaves in order to recoup debt (Exodus 21:7). It was common for the poor to sell their daughters (Nehemiah 5:5) for their survival, but serving as a means of income made women immediately inferior to men. The oppressive law had conditions, such as the oppressor having to release the “female bondservant” on the 7th year of service. Living like a slave for seven years will automatically play into women’s inferiority complex. God introduced the law in Leviticus to protect women and transform from within.

2.5.2 A man can divorce his wife

Marriage is a life time commitment and in some churches a sacrament, but Hebrew customs allowed men to discard women without valid reasons (Deuteronomy 24:1–2). Men could divorce their wives if they disliked them (Shetreet, 1998:49). Women were not consulted in any way prior to divorce, an abuse of women’s rights and another method of elevating men above women. God protected women’s rights by allowing Moses to grant them a divorce from their husband under certain circumstances. It was by God’s grace women were given their right to not be treated inhumanly.

God instituted measures to protect the abused wives of husbands who rejected them. God in no way condoned divorce, but God deemed it just for a woman restricted by the rules of her husband and denied any kind of control of her own life (Numbers 30). Jesus acknowledged the law only to protect the wife, due to the sin of man.

Jesus corrected the above dilemma as indicated in Matthew 19:8-9 follows: “Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard...I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery.” Paul also encourages us to walk in the way of love, in Ephesians 5:3, just as Christ loved us. Love transcends everything, no one will feel superior if he loves his partner.

2.5.3 Adulterous women and men were to stoned

God sees men and women as equal, even when they sin (Deuteronomy 22:22-28), but the Scribes and the Pharisees did not share this sentiment. Although this research is focused on Scripture distorted by abusers to oppress women in the Old Testament, the above text necessitates citing John 8:4 that speaks of a women caught in adultery. The Scribes and the Pharisees were well aware of the Law of Moses (Leviticus 20:10) that instructed both parties to be stoned to death,

but they only subjected women to this punishment in the endeavour to degrade women for sinful acts without the similarly guilty partner. Jesus freed women from this injustice by challenging whoever is without sin to cast the first stone (John 8:7). All sins and men and women were equal before Jesus.

2.5.4 A rape victim must marry her rapist

Rape is a violation of the seventh commandment (Exodus 20:14) that says “you shall not commit adultery”. This law obliged such men to marry their victim in a culture where marrying virgins was highly respected (Deuteronomy 22:28-30). It served to punish men for their sexual immorality against women. It was the way God protected a raped woman, since the loss of her virginity would make it difficult for her to find a husband. Although this text protects women’s rights, a raped woman would still suffer the shame of this violation.

The above discriminating text reflects the assault on women’s values. God challenged this sinful culture and customs, restoring women’s values and protecting them. Among the women who participated in the *missio Dei* in the Old Testament, the following few were selected to show that God used women and called people to action irrespective of gender. The patriarchal culture and its oppressive customs toward women make their deeds even more remarkable.

2.6 WOMEN IN THE MISSIO DEI IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

2.6.1 Sarah – Abraham’s wife

God sought to renew his creation when He called Abraham (Wright, 2009:194). It is for the love of his people that all who believe receive God’s grace and are called the descendent of Abraham. God called Abraham together with Sarah as a family, to complement each other, as He promised that man will be “united to his wife, and they become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24).

Abraham could not have achieved God’s request without the support of his faithful wife, Sarah, who participated in God’s *missio Dei* in a special way. In a Bible commentary, Fretheim (1994:319-674) suggests that “Sarah is made a co-participant in the divine promise regarding a son and his descendants. She has a promise in her own right, not simply through Abraham”.

Isaac was the son promised to Sarah and Abraham. Abraham already had a son with Hagar, called Ismael, but God chose Isaac and his parents to participate in the *missio Dei*. They all thus shared in God’s mission. It was through the seed of Abraham and Sarah that the Israelites had a covenant with God (Genesis 17:9). Abraham remained faithful to God, even though his descendent did not.

Sarah, as the mother of the nation, displayed leadership qualities in her own way as recorded in the Bible and stood by her husband Abraham when God called him to go to Haran (Genesis 12:1-3). Jones (2005:70) describes her as a gorgeously beautiful lady, still attractive and beautiful at 65 years of age. This amazing woman's first challenge was to protect her husband from being killed in a foreign land, when he failed to trust God to keep his family together. Abraham asked Sarah to lie about their relationship, fearing for his life. His dishonesty actually endangered his wife.

Abraham claimed Sarah to be his sister, when Pharaoh desired Sarah (Genesis 20:12)⁹. He was protecting himself and compromising Sarah's sexuality (Firestone, 1993:333), in the fear that Pharaoh would kill him. Anlezark (2000:204) suggests that Sarah was still in control by accepting the challenge to ease her husband's fear that reflected his lack of trust that God would protect him.

Sarah's agreement to Abraham's appeal demonstrates her bravery and good leadership qualities. Although Strauss (1978:21) states that Sarah was obedient to her husband, in actual fact Sarah's faith instilled bravery in her and the belief that God would protect her in terrifying situations. Sarah supported her husband in his trials of life and her marriage survived the test of deception. They both matured in faith.

Sarah brought a slave from Egypt, a common practice at the time. There were no human rights for slaves to speak of, except the prohibition against killing them (Exodus 21:21). The slave girl could be sold as a concubine and hence Sarah's frustration drove her to urge her husband to have a child with an Egyptian slave on her behalf. She became impatient for God's promise to be fulfilled (Genesis 12:1-3)¹⁰. Unfortunately, Hagar's pride resulted in her disrespecting Sarah, upon which Sarah banished Hagar to the wilderness for looking down on her. In spite of Sarah's weakness, God fulfilled his promise. This barren woman was in utter disbelief upon hearing that she would conceive at such an old age (Genesis 18:10, 12). Almighty God does wonderful things. The closed womb managed to conceive at an old age. With God nothing is impossible.

At the age of 90, a barren Sarah bore a son called Isaac. Abraham was 100 old at the. It was amazing how God fulfilled His promise in Isaac, the first descendant of Sarah and Abraham. God

⁹ And yet indeed she is my sister; she is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife."

¹⁰ The Lord had said to Abram, 'Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.'

accomplished His mission. The dead womb gave life at the old age of 90 (Genesis 21:5)¹¹. The mission of God was fulfilled through the women. Van Rooy (1996:148) attests of this in praising the grace of God: “God created life from death, no prospects of life but only deadness womb.”

It was a miracle that an old woman of 90 years could still conceive and bears with the implication that without Sarah there would be no son, called Isaac. Although Abraham had Ismael, God promised (Genesis 17:21) to establish his covenant with Isaac the son of Sarah and not Ismael, the son of Hagar. Truly, God is the Giver of life and his will was done despite Sarah’s old age and weakness. Consequently, Sarah and Abraham’s narrative reflects their involvement in God’s mission, until Sarah’s death at the age of 127.

Like Sarah, Rebeca was barren for 20 years of her marriage with Isaac. God continued to protect women by opening her womb and granting her twins, struggle inside her (Genesis 25:22). God revealed to her that the twins would become two nations and the elder would serve the younger. Isaac loved Esau, the elder sibling, while Jacob was Rebeca’s favourite (Genesis 25:28).

Esau sold his birth right to Jacob (Genesis 25:29–34) for a bowl of lentil stew and this was fulfilled in Rebeca tricking the blind old Isaac into blessing Jacob, by helping him to impersonate Esau as the first-born son of the family. Thus the prophesy that the older (Esau) would serve the younger (Genesis 25:23). Rebeca plotted with Jacob to deceive Isaac and regardless of this deception, God’s will was done. God moved forward with his mission, despite of her lies. Jacob went on to marry Leah and Rachel (Genesis 29:1-30). Jacob did not choose to marry Leah, but persuaded by her father Laban that tradition dictated that she be married first as the eldest. An unloved Leah was trapped in an unhappy marriage, because of Jacob’s preference for Rachel. Jealousy drove a barren Rachel to presented her maids, Bilhah and Zilpah, to Jacob to bear children for them. Ultimately Rachel bore two sons, called Joseph and Benjamin, blessing Jacob with 12 sons and a daughter from his two wives. Jacob’s sons became the 12 tribes of Israel and all participated in God’s mission, together with their slaves.

Jacob would become Israel and the father of the Israelites. Isaac realised later that God had plans for Jacob not Esau. God the Father kept his covenant with Abraham and the *missio Dei* continued with Israel.

¹¹Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

2.6.2 Miriam as fellow leader of Israel

2.6.2.1 The women who assisted Miriam to save her brother

Pharaoh, the ruler of Egypt, ordered midwives to kill the male babies of Hebrew women. Shiprah and Puah, the midwives, disregarded Pharaoh's command and allowed these baby boys to live (Exodus 1:16-17). These Hebrew midwives participated in the *missio Dei* by defying Pharaoh's orders and saving Moses and others, actions motivated by their love and fear of God. Their participation contributed to the redemption of the Israelites from Egypt. It was also a woman, Moses's mother Jochebed, who weaved the basket that saved Moses hidden in the Nile River.

Miriam was the elder sister who saved her brother, Moses, upon Pharaoh's order to kill all Hebrew baby boys to eliminate the threat to his kingdom. This courageous leader watched her brother in a basket on the river Nile during the day (Exodus 2:5-10), until Pharaoh's daughter adopted Moses. God granted Miriam the wisdom to offer to Pharaoh's daughter that she would find a Hebrew woman to care for her brother Moses (his mother). These Jewish women made it possible for her brother to live in the king's palace. Asomgha (2010:193) expresses his respect for Miriam's boldness and participating in God mission by:

- urging her father Amram to not separate from her mother, in fear of any of his sons being killed by Pharaoh (Hammer, 2010:393);
- caring for her brother in a basket on the river Nile;
- arranging that her mother nurse her own child, Moses; and
- leading the Jewish people in the desert together with her brothers, Moses and Aaron.

In patriarchal society it was important for a man like Moses to lead the Israelites out of slavery, which would not have been possible without the women around Moses. God used Miriam to save Moses.

2.6.2.2 Miriam the prophetess

Miriam was a prophetess and a singer, singing the triumph song after Pharaoh's army drowned in the Red Sea (Exodus 15:20-21). Reiss (2010:186) describes Moses as an elitist leader and Miriam as a leader who had a close relationship with the people. She participated by making God known and led the Hebrew women in praising and singing with joy to God, their redeemer. The mighty God drowned their enemies in the Red Sea. Miriam is a good example of a woman faithfully participating in the *missio Dei* in the Old Testament, together with her brothers.

2.6.2.3 Miriam and leprosy

Miriam and Aaron challenged Moses's authority, granted him by God. Miriam was seemingly the instigator by speaking first about the Ethiopian woman Moses had married (Numbers 12:1) and was punished with leprosy (Numbers 12:9). Moses married the Cushite woman (Numbers 12:1) and Miriam was punished for sowing disunity among God's people (Anon, 2012:173) and not supposed to go against the servant of God. Although the narrative indicates that both Aaron and Miriam challenged Moses, yet only Miriam was punished by God as chief instigator of the dispute. Despite her actions, the ever-faithful Moses saved his sister by crying to the Lord and Miriam was healed in seven days. The Cushite woman became part of the *missio Dei* through her life with Moses. Men and women, both Jewish and gentile, became part of the *missio Dei* in Exodus. Deborah is the next prominent woman and featured in Judges.

2.6.3 Deborah

According to the Book of Judges, Deborah was a heroic woman in Israel (Judges 4:4-9). She was the fourth judge, after Othniel, Ehud and Shamgar (all males). She is described by Blessing (1995:35) as a wife, mother, prophetess, poetess, singer and a judge of Israel. Deborah was asked by Barak to fight with him on the battlefield. As a woman, Deborah was not afraid to go to the battle field with men. She assisted Barak who reared the battle field. She challenged all the societal norm that prevent women to do certain jobs that was only reserved to men.

She was a hero of her time and completely changed the perception of the male's hierarchy on the battlefield. She was a woman of substance and her leadership abilities simply demonstrate that God both appointed men and women to share in the *missio Dei*, irrespective of gender. Deborah as a woman was not afraid to go to the battle field with men. She assisted Barak who feared to go to the battle field. She challenged all the societal norm that prevent women to do certain jobs that was only reserved for men

Deborah was blessed by God with remarkable gifts. She was a counsellor, courageous and a joyful wife (Blessing, 1995:35). She never allowed culture to be an obstacle while ruling Israel and trusted God in everything she did. Her life is an illustration of a woman who was faithful to God and restored the obedience of Israel to God. Although she served God circa 1150BC, she continues to challenge women today to not allow anything to hinder them in participating in the *missio Dei* and serve God at home, as a wife and the mother of the family, and the community at large. Deborah was accepted in all areas of life as a good and courageous leader that proves that God used both genders to do His work in Old Testament times. Her support and trust in God enabled Barak to conquer Sisera on the battlefield (Judges 5:19-22).

Consequently, she proved that the role of women depends on the ability to lead the nation in all aspects of life. Men and women are created equal by God. Society may uphold a strongly patriarchal family system that accepts the absolute authority of the father, Scripture justifies equality in gender in participating in the *missio Dei*. Deborah's role as commander on the battlefield reflects that gender roles in the workplace, family setting, the church and the State should not be dictated by the cultural customs of a certain worldview (Raday, 2003:666) God can choose anyone for his mission, such as Ruth of the Moabites who married into Israel in reflection of God's intention to save all nations.

2.6.4 Ruth

2.6.4.1 Background of Ruth

Naomi and her husband, Elimelech, came from Bethlehem to settle in Moab. They served the living God of Israel. Their two sons, Mahlon and Kilion, married Orpah and Ruth respectively who were Moabites and of a different faith than Israel (Jackson, 1994:68). The Bible makes no mention about Orpah and Ruth's religion, but it would be reasonable to deduce that every land had its own gods. Unfortunately, all three women were widowed (Ruth 1:4).

Though Naomi stayed in Moab that believed in foreign gods, it did not alter Naomi's faith in God. As part of the *missio Dei*, Naomi converted Ruth and Ruth became the model of conversion from Moab (Jackson, 1994:68-73). Naomi planned to return, upon hearing that her home country was on its way to recovery. Her faithfulness to God made her not only part with her daughters-in-law, but to also bless them again (Ruth 1:8-9). Naomi encouraged her daughters-in-law to remain in their homeland, having lost their husbands, but Ruth insisted on accompanying Naomi to Bethlehem. Naomi did change her name to Mara to reflect her suffering, but she never rejected God in her devastating situation (Ruth 1:20).

2.6.4.2 Ruth was converted

Ruth sought a new religion and a new home with her mother-in-law Naomi (Nichols, 2010:566). The faithful Ruth told Naomi pledged her loyalty with the words "your people will be my people and your God will be my God" (Ruth 1:16).

Ruth was prepared to be part of God's mission by accepting to be a new daughter of Israel. She gave up everything she loved at home and worship the true God of Israel and God used her to "build up the house of Israel". Moabites were not allowed to worship at the tabernacle, given the hostility between the two nations (Judges 3:12ff). God wants to be known and Naomi made God

known by returning to her homeland that God may fulfil his promises to all the nations. Ruth is an example that God's mission includes all nations, even Moabites.

2.6.4.3 Ruth and her new family

Boaz was a close relative of Naomi's husband, Elimelech, and a wealthy prince from Elimelek. He married this foreign woman from Moab and they were blessed with a son called Obed (Ruth 4:17). God included different women in his mission to show that his will is to save all nations. Through this gentile woman, God built the genealogy of Christ. Obed became the father of Jesse and Jesse the father of David. Bathsheba, the wife of David, was the mother of Solomon. Naomi's tragedy of losing her husband and two sons became a blessing for the nation. It was God's missional work in preparation for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, as Obed was the grandfather of David.

God renewed the life and transformed this foreigner from Moab. Naomi, Ruth and Boaz became a new family (Ruth 4:13), in which the mother-in-law, daughter-in-law and son-in-law participated in the *missio Dei*. They were part of the genealogy of Jesus Christ and showed that God did not despise women, but used them to include all nations.

2.6.5 Huldah the prophetess

Huldah was the wife of Shallum, a mother and prophetess living in the time of Jeremiah. She was most active during the life of Josiah in Jerusalem and among the 23 righteous women respected in Israel (Ilan, 2010:5). The king preferred Huldah's prophecy to that of the prophet Jeremiah, hoping for mercy from Huldah as a woman (Ilan, 2010:5). Huldah was described as arrogant when she delivered messages to the king's messenger. She revealed to Josiah God's judgements for Judah and Jerusalem (2 Kings 22:15-18). Josiah feared God's judgement and trembled at God's words, in the awareness that their sins made them disregard the laws of Moses. He tore his clothes to show his remorse and beg for God's mercy.

Fortunately, he found favour in God's eyes for humbling himself before God and repented from his sins. The above women are some examples of women who took part in the *missio Dei* during Old Testament times. Female prophetesses fully participated in God's mission.

2.7 WOMEN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

2.7.1 Background

Malachi the final book of the Old Testament, According to Stedman (2002:1), narrate the time approximately 400 years before the events of the New Testament. The Old Testament is the

bearer of hope, with many covenants made from one generation to the other, in which God used both men and women to do his will. Some of the Old Testament's prophecies were fulfilled between periods of 400 years (Daniel 7:5), leading scholars like Verkuyl (2002:27) to believe that the Old Testament offers a background message to the New Testament message and is thus the fulfilment of the Old Testament message. Within these 400 years Alexander, the Great had a significant influence on the world into which Christ would be born.

Alexander the Great as he was known was the son of Philip, King of Macedon. His success brought the Hellenic civilization to the ancient Near East. His conquering of large areas of the ancient Near East and Mediterranean world that include Greece, Asia Minor (Turkey), Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Iraq (Mesopotamia) and Iran (Persia) brought education and Greek culture to these nations.

Hellenistic culture and the Greek language served to communicate Christianity in the New Testament. Although he wanted a statue of him to be erected in the temple, he gave the Jews a rich Hellenistic culture (Runia, 1986:33). Alexander was a known polygamist and women were his pawns to producing more sons to promote the political power of males (Hasan, 2014:5). He introduced a new era and a new culture that portrayed him par excellence. The Greek language became a common language of the time. In the dark ages of the Israelites, Alexander the Great conquered all the countries neighbouring Greece. The Jews adopted the Hellenistic spirit by learning the Greek language (Schreiber, 2011:6).

In Greece women were not educated (Katz, 1995). Women belonged to the women's quarters, which was like a prison (Van der Walt, 2007:20). Their quarters were even guarded by dogs at times, while in Rome a girl was considered of marrying age at 14. The father chose the husband, whereby daughters moved from the authority of the father to that of the husband. Wives and slaves worked long hours caring for children and relatives. Women were not supposed to receive an education nor to study medicine, law or participate in politics. It was, however, different for the wealthy living in an upper-class area.

The Greek culture that discriminated against women also influenced the socio-cultural of Israel. Their male gods had the right to abuse female goddesses at their pleasure. The Jewish were exposed to a variety of cultures over the centuries under Egyptian, Syrian, Babylonian, Persian, Greek, Roman, etc. rule. A significant distinction existed between rich and poor women, whereby the latter were marginalised and treated like second-class citizens. They worked as labourers and slaves (Terence, 2011:99).

According to Papazov (2010:1-12) and Van der Walt (2007:205), in Jewish religion women were supposed to sit separately in the synagogue and were not even allowed to speak or be witnesses. Women were prohibited by oral law reading the Torah aloud, barred from public speaking and not allowed to be associated with a rabbi. Jewish women were the property of men, had no rights and were illiterate, although there were Jewish women who managed to acquire wealth and an education within Hellenistic society (Tetlow, 1979.3-29). Political change in rule led to the formation of a political party called the Sadducee or the liberator who believed the Torah to be the sole source of divine authority and supported this divine authority with its laws.

The Sadducees were aristocrats, high priests and peacekeepers between Israel and the Romans who were more concerned with politics than religion. They had the majority of 70 seats in the ruling council, the Sanhedrin (Houdmann, 2014:647). During the time of Christ, the Sadducees were wealthy and held powerful positions. They did not believe in life after death, since it is not mentioned in the book of Torah. The Sadducees preserved the authority of the written Word of God, especially the books of Moses of Genesis through to Deuteronomy. They insisted on strict and literal adherence to the Law of Moses. Hebrews who sought to preserve the Mosaic order separated themselves from the Hellenistic group and were called the Pharisees (Van der Walt, 2007:81).

The Pharisees came from middle-class Jewish families. Similar to the Sadducees, they fiercely protected Mosaic law and fought for the purity laws of Leviticus 11–26 that detailed holiness through the study of Torah and purity, including as it pertains to the period after childbirth and the menstrual cycle. They advocated for a national system of education that would educate most of the population (Huie, 1997:7). They were called scribes for their ability to interpret and elaborate on legal material (France, 2002:33). They believed in the resurrection of the body, a part of their Messianic hope for the hopeless. Their weakness was failing to observe the law they taught and thus Jesus calling them hypocrites (John 7:53-8:11) for disregarding the law of Moses that says “adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death” (Leviticus 20:10). The law of Moses was written after their exodus from Egypt and influenced most of their laws.

The Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt allowed the Hebrew Scripture to be translated into Greek and called the Septuagint, because it was translated by 70 scholars (Archer, 1996:11). The Greek culture influenced the diaspora Jewish community, especially considering the way they related to women. Unfortunately, when Antiochus Epiphanes succeeded his brother Seleucus IV they became persecutors of Jews. He was named the antichrist of the Old Testament and sold the priesthood of Israel to Jason, who was not even an Israelite. During his reign all religious rites were meaningless. This malicious king even destroyed the scroll of the law. Women and children were sold into slavery.

It was at that painful time of emptiness in which the world was devoid of joy, buckling under hopelessness, and God was silent that He sent his only Son to save the world and liberate men and women.

2.7.2 God restored his nation

Even in their sinful deeds, the failing nation did not lose God's abiding love. God, as part of his mission, sent his Son Jesus Christ to relate to Abraham in the New Testament. In one of Christ's multiple names He is regarded as, the Son of Abraham in Matthew 1:1 and the seed of Abraham in Galatians 3:16 and 17. Even though Jesus was related to Abraham, His eternal nature and divinity is of God.

God the Son, Jesus Christ, was the world's High Priest, a Prophet and the King who commissioned the disciples to continuously participate in God's mission by proclaiming the gospel to all creation. God uses the church to participate in his on-going mission of building his kingdom in the whole world (Thomas, 2007:188). It is evident in that He assigned both male and females the task of caring for his earth and it remains their calling (Genesis 1:26). The *missio Dei* from the Old Testament to the New Testament reflects God love for his creation by maintaining it and continuously conveying his message, until sending his Son Jesus Christ in his mission to redeem the world and then they both sent the Holy Spirit to empower the church (Bosch, 2010:113).

Jesus, in his mission, gave himself to become flesh and assume human form to redeem the world (Bosch, 1980:51). Jesus Christ came as the Messiah to fulfil God's mission that all may have life through him (1 John 4:8). Bosch (1991:519) adds that the Triune God moved into the world to initiate the church to continuously participate in the *missio Dei* and "the *missio Dei* purifies the church" (Bosch, 1991:519). Christ, as the good teacher, called his disciples to proclaim the Word of God from generation to generation and his witnesses were both male and female. It was their task to participate in the *missio Dei*. Through the power of the Holy Spirit *missio Dei* will never cease.

This mission is for all of God's people, irrespective of gender. All are invited to participate in God's mission (Bosch, 1980:40). The fact that the Old Testament high priest was Aaron has been misinterpreted by many churches that only men may serve in the top structure of the church (further addressed in chapter three). Throughout the history of God's mission, it has not been of any specific culture that would pinpoint the role of male and female. It is a divine calling that determines who is called and when, how and where to serve God.

God created man and women equal. The cultural worldview led to the marginalisation of women, but the birth of Jesus Christ by a woman brought a new hope to all women for the divine

intervention in different nations. Christ came to renew the covenant and be the liberator of God's people (Howard, 2005:28). It is thus assumed that the church practise Jesus Christ's teachings by commissioning both males and females to serve God, without impediment and hence the many women recorded in the New Testament who were involved in the *missio Dei*.

2.7.3 Mary mother of Jesus Christ

In the New Testament both male and female took part in the mission of God and in Joseph, Mary and baby Jesus the *missio Dei* is shown to be the responsibility of the whole family. Joseph adopted Jesus as his own Son and cared for him and Mary, his mother, was one of the great women who participated in the *missio Dei* to bring it to fulfilment and the example for all women who undertake this mission. She received a unique chance, but still her willingness to be obedient is the model for many women. She was not great in and of herself, but for sharing in the *missio Dei*. Upon being visited by the angel Gabriel to tell her the good news of the Immaculate Conception (Luke 1:28), Mary broke into the following song of praise and joy:

"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior. For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness; behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed. The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is from age to age to those who fear him. He has shown might with his arm, dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart. He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones but lifted up the lowly. The hungry he has filled with good things; the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped Israel his servant, remembering his mercy, according to his promise to our fathers, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

The above song from Mary can be a song for the Advent season. This is attributed to what Jacobson echoed in his commentary on Luke 1:39-45; "Mary sing a song that can be, should be, our song in this Advent season. As we have prepared for the coming of the Christ Child, now we too can sing in thanksgiving, in celebration, in remembrance, and in proclamation of the promise made to our ancestors. Like Hannah, and Mary, and Elizabeth too, this is the time for us to indulge in unadulterated, celebratory joy in the promises that come to us in Jesus. Let us raise our voices in a great cry, magnifying our God."

She accepted God's mission by conceiving the Divine Son, through the Holy Spirit. She contributed in God's salvation plan. She endured with her Son unto the cross. This courageous woman believed everything the angel told her. God became man because of Mary (Pennington, 1998:54).

Mary ensured the perfect formation of all stages of Jesus Christ's growth from infancy to childhood and manhood, faithfully following Jewish customs in raising him. Just like any other Jewish boy,

Jesus was circumcised eight days after his birth and Mary presented the child to the Lord in Jerusalem (Luke 2:41-52). Mary would receive dire prophesy from the prophet Simon that her soul would be pierced by a sword, because of her child Jesus Christ (Luke 2:35) and yet, she was willing to serve God irrespective of the challenges and believing that God would be by her side. Mary's faith enabled her to believe the unbelievable (Van der Walt, 2007:119). In Jerusalem the righteous and devout Simeon rejoiced in holding the Messiah and praised God. The prophet Anna also praised God in the temple upon telling his parents about his greatness. These two prophets, Anna and Simeon, foresaw the future of Mary's Son. Mary and Joseph moulded the Divine Child to bear his responsibilities and nurtured him, complementing each other in the *missio Dei*.

Mary was devoted and diligent in raising her Jesus, a part of the Triune God, whose kingdom reigns forever. Mary is called the Mother of God by Catholics, Anglicans and the Orthodox. These traditions hold her in high regard as Theotokos (God-bearer). She was part of God's mission by raising and caring for the Saviour of the universe, according to God's will, and never distrusted God's power. She prepared him to be the perfect Son, who redeemed the world. Despite God entrusting Mary with this mission, the Roman Catholic Church still do not allow women to be priests. Jesus' work in the synagogue started when He was only 12 years old. Both men and women supported him throughout and reflected his divinity.

When Christ was 30 years of age, Mary requested him to perform a miracle by increasing the wine at a wedding in Cana, serving as the first mediator through this request and Jesus performed his first miracle (John 2:5). Mary was a mother of hope and became a mother to all disciples, until Jesus's death (John 19:25), a faithful mother to all nations who believed in her Son completely. Mary became the hope of the universe in the Catholic tradition (Miravalle, 1993). Mary is highly regarded in the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Church. Boff (1987:109) states their position about Mary, as adopted by the Second Vatican Council, as thus:

"Mary is the woman in the service of others. She was the first person to bring God's love to the universe by accepting to be receptive of God's call, Christ, the Church, redemption--and the ultimate meaning of history. She was the first one to receive the message of salvation and agreed to serve other with her Immaculate Conception (Luke 1:28). That made her the co-redemptrix, co-mediatrix, prototype of Church because she conceived the Savior of the universe. Through her body God planned for the salvation of the world."

Mary mother of Jesus Christ is highly regarded as one of the saint in the Catholic Church. A saint represents to the Catholic Church a person who has led a good life (Fredricks, 2012:219). They believe that patron saints mediate between God and people. All genuine servants of God can pray for the special needs of others.

Mary is a patron of Africa and Chigumira (2014:117-138) urges African Christian women to be inspired by Mary's courage and bring hope amid the HIV/AIDS pandemic that affects so many families. Many believe Mary's spirituality brought hope and joy to the hopeless. Agreeing to be the mother of the living Son of God made her a source of empowerment to helpless women struggling with an ailment, such as HIV/AIDS. Those humiliated for having this disease will be freed by the Son, Jesus Christ. Mary mediated for the people at the Cana wedding, when she asked Jesus to increase the wine (John 2:1-11), and according to Catholic tradition she continues to mediate for the underprivileged and the sick.

Mary held firm to all that was proclaimed to her about her Son and her gender never prevented her from contributing to the mission of God, through the Son, until the end of the world and among his apostles. Mary remained the beloved mother of the apostles, even after the death of her Son and his resurrection on the third day. Mary, by her status, was a leader and attended to the apostles until the pouring out of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2). Kateusz (2013:76) describes Mary's leadership by citing from the oldest Dormition (1902) manuscript as follows:

"Mary taught, believed had been a Eucharistic priest, enacted exorcisms, undertook cures, and sprinkled water and preached the gospel, led the male apostles in prayer, and sent women with writings to cities around the Mediterranean."

The above implies that Mary participated in God's mission and that women were not prohibited from leading men or proclaiming Jesus Christ to all. Mary was by her Son's side throughout his entire ministry. Kateusz (2013) thus rightly asserts that Mary raised Jesus and had a great deal of influence on him. If Mary could mediate for the wine at Cana (John, 2:1), it is also possible that she performed the same work as the apostles. She endured the pain with her Son as He suffered and died on the cross. She was obedient in her task and performed it diligently.

2.7.4 Jesus liberated women

Because of sin, God send Jesus Christ as the second Adam to restore the broken world. Jesus did not follow the customs and culture of Israel, but challenged them to return society to that which God created it to be. He, therefore, sought to proclaim the good news and call humanity to repent from an oppressive culture. Jesus came to guide the societal dilemma of culture (Miguel, and La Torre, 2004:7).

Over the course of his ministry, Jesus did the unconventional, such as his interaction with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well (John 4:27). Jesus spoke of salvation going out from Israel to all the world. Jesus was the new light that transcended the laws that segregated nations and offered the water of life that made a Samaritan woman become a witness in her village. The

Samaritan woman participated in the missio Dei by proclaiming the good news, she received from Jesus Christ, to others. Christ liberated woman to participate in the missio Dei by spreading the good news and in so doing changed the culture and customs set against women (Moore, 1993:210).

His miracles in aid of women, included the daughters and the women who suffered from bleeding (Mark 5:21-23) and the widow of Nain whose son Jesus raised from the dead (Luke 7:11-17). He empowered an immoral woman, who anointed His feet with oil (Luke 7: 36-50), to live a full life of glorifying and preaching Christ. Most of the women that followed Jesus were pivotal examples of God's love for them, even gentile women. Women who demonstrated their faith in following Jesus on his mission were Mary Magdalen, Mary mother of Jesus, Joanna and Susanna (Osiek, 1997:104). Women witnessed when Jesus was crucified and defeated death (John 20:14-18).

Men and women were equally important to Jesus Christ. Jesus restored the dignity of women, caring for the marginalised and protecting them. The status of women improved. Women were allowed to be associated with rabbis, although it was against the custom. He allowed sinful woman to come to Him, to repent and receive a new life, never discriminating against women who were condemned by society for her sinful life. Though it is not clear whether women were disciples or apostles (Botha, 2003:514), given that the 12 apostles mentioned were male, but there are scholars who argue that women also acted as apostles. Keener (2001) asserts that though first-century men often dismissed the testimony of women as apostles, Paul's letter confirmed that Jesus had female disciples. Jesus Christ equipped his people to serve him that "the body of Christ may be built" (Ephesians 4:11), just as God did in the Old Testament.

The argument is, however, not that they cannot serve him, but that they cannot be appointed to the offices of the church. This remains a heated debate among different churches and scholars, since there are those who insist that Jesus Christ did not consider gender when calling people to participate in the missio Dei. There was no discrimination, He used women in his mission and did not limited their actions. They preached the gospel (resurrection) and served Him with their belongings. He gave women an important role to play in the missio Dei.

2.7.5 Other distinctive women in the New Testament

Pentecost is the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on all people, irrespective of gender. Peter even called it the fulfilment of Joel's prophesy, in which man and woman is equally named. This is also a link to the lack of limitations to the witness in choice of vocation or position in Acts 1:8.

The moment the church turned into an institution women were marginalised, even though they participated in the missio Dei during New Testament times. During Paul's ecclesiastical years, he

mentioned many women who worked hard in the early church like Tryphena and Tryphosa (Romans 16:6, 12) and Euodia and Syntyche were considered his fellow workers (Philippians 4:2-3), all participated in the missio Dei. Pauline's letters (Roman 16:1-16) attest of Phoebe's commitment to mission work in the following excerpt:

"I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae, that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well." Jesus was a model of good leadership and so Paul followed him lead and also worked hand-in-hand with different women to perform missional work. He consistently acknowledged the persons that God called to service, irrespective of their gender.

2.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter examines the missio Dei and women's participation in both the Old and the New Testament. God did not base his calling on gender, but patriarchal culture influenced the worldview of the time. God manifested his love for his children by calling on both men and women to fulfil their Christian mission. It is further concluded that although culture created a patriarchal perception of women, God created man and women equal and continued to call on them to share in his mission in both Old and New Testament. Both Testaments show that leadership is not exclusive to the masculine gender, only within the church, but depends on God who empowers those with the ability to serve. Jesus Christ freed both men and women, both Jews and gentiles, from oppression and liberated women to be part of the missio Dei.

While cultural perspectives still influence the role of women in churches, the social and corporate environments are raising the status of women as leaders in different roles. It is disappointing that some patriarchal cultures still lag behind in conforming to human rights practices and accept the role and ability of women, rather than judging them according to their gender. The declaration of human rights does include organisations that could assist in terms of human rights violations. It is, however, debatable whether these organisations can defend gender in a religious structure, as Christ defended the status of women in the New Testament.

CHAPTER 3 PATRIARCHAL CULTURE AND THE EXCLUSION OF WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP POSITION

Women can thus play a vital role in continuing the *missio Dei*, if they are not hindered in this quest. Jesus Christ entrusted them with this responsibility and they played an important part in the development of early Christianity. The following chapter focuses on patriarchal culture and the exclusion of women in leadership position. It also highlights the role of women and early church together with mainline churches.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This study is about the participation of both men and women in God's mission in mainline churches. It focuses on the reasons for the exclusion of women from the high-level structures of mainline churches, in view of the Bible as main source of how God reveals himself. The current status of women in the Catholic Church and Orthodox Church is compared to other mainline churches. The aim is to gain an understanding of the influence of the predominantly patriarchal culture of the Bible on the exclusion of women in leadership positions.

3.2 BACKGROUND OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD IN OLD TESTAMENT

The people of God in the Old Testament were led by the priesthood, entirely comprised of men. The first male priest, prior to the Israelites, was Melchizedek (Genesis 14:18-20)¹². Melchizedek was not born into the priesthood, but was selected by God to be a high priest and also the king of Salem (Hebrew 7:3)¹³. Aaron and his sons became the first to be Levitical priests, subsequent to exile in Egypt (Exodus 28:1-3). The Levitical priesthood was based on the genealogy of Aaronic succession. These priests were spiritual leaders, working in the tabernacle and temple (Numbers 8:16-18)¹⁴. God appointed them, in response to the people's rebellion against God, to aid Moses in doing the will of God (Exodus 32:25-29).

At the Baal of Peor, the Israelites angered God with their immorality with Moabite women and for following them to the sacrificial feast for their god (Numbers 25:1-9). Phinehas, the grandson of

¹² "And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: and blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all"

¹³ "Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually."

¹⁴ "They are the Israelites who are to be given wholly to me. I have taken them as my own in place of the firstborn, the first male offspring from every Israelite woman. Every firstborn male in Israel, whether human or animal, is mine. When I struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, I set them apart for myself. And I have taken the Levites in place of all the firstborn sons in Israel."

Aaron, killed those men who succumbed to the Moabite women. The Levitical zeal became the clerical tradition of the Old Testament and the dogmatic ritual of male priesthood in some churches (Schrieber, 1988:215). It was changed in 586BC, when the temple was destroyed. The Israelites were taken into captivity for 70 years in Babylon and thus the hierarchal succession of priesthood was disturbed for that period.

The exclusion of women in the history of the Jewish priesthood does, however, not mean that women did not play an important role in God's mission. Women served at the entrance to the temple, when the priest entered the Most Holy Place. It was also a place where women could plead for mercy from God. When Moses brought the case of Zelophehad's daughters before the Lord, for example, the Lord showed favour to the daughters and they inherited their father's estate (Numbers 27:5-7). God even provided a law to Israel to protect women who had failed to bear son (Jero, 2015:158). Hannah changed the history of Israel with her plea for a son that would put an end the corruption of temple servants. God's life-giving redemption of Israel, upon the judges instituting rule by king, started with a woman's prayer (Helberg, 1988:84). God granted her a son, whom she then handed back to serve God (1 Samuel 1: 21-22) and praised God for opening the womb of the barren, the childless and the sorrowful woman (1 Samuel 2).

Women were devoted to their service and free-will offerings to God and tabernacle (Exodus 38:8). Women were able to consecrate themselves before God in a very special way through the vow of a Nazarite, whereby they dedicated themselves to the Lord (Numbers 6:2). Rituals were performed for the forgiveness of the sin of a Nazirite (Numbers 6:10-11). Eli experienced the shameful conduct of his sons in sleeping with the women who served at the entrance the tent of meeting (1 Samuel 2:22).

Men and women shared in the sacred meals and great annual feasts (Deuteronomy 16:11-14) and in Joel 3:28 God promised the community the Spirit that would be poured out on all people, regardless of age and gender, even on servants. God called and calls all his people to participate in his mission (Treier, 1997:13-26).

The examples of heroic faithful women given in chapter two already substantiates that women were never excluded from the *missio Dei*. God even used a prostitute, Rahab, who was converted (Joshua 6:22-25). Aaron may have been male, but God intended all people to be priests and indeed said: "You shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:6). There is no mention of gender in this verse, which attests to both men and women being the kingdom of priests. If men and women are all devoted to God, they can all serve God equally. It is an assertion Helberg (1988:16) supports by indicating that the people of God who received salvation and His commandments would be a kingdom of priests (Exodus 19:6). Each and every one of them, male

and female, had a missional task from God they had to carry out. Therefore women should not be discriminated.

3.3 THE HISTORY OF THE EARLY CHURCH ON THE APOSTOLIC FOUNDATION

The New Testament is the fulfilment of the Old Testament. The church did not only start once the apostles (Matthew 28:19-20) were instructed to make disciples of all nations (Great Commission). Jesus Christ repeatedly referred to the Scriptures of the Old Testament and so the New Testament inherited the language, belief, liturgy and Scriptures of the Old Testament (Ericson, 1987:338). Even the historical patriarchal culture influenced the New Testament, i.e. in some traditional churches only men could represent the apostles and Jesus Christ by being ordained as priests.

Jesus was a King, Prophet and High Priest and was the Son of God. That created gender language because Jesus Christ was the Son of God. His gender causes lot of confusion to the patriarchal. But the Son of God as the High Priest came to offer himself as a sacrifice so that all could be freed. There is no longer the Jew or Greek, nor slavery or free, there is no longer male and female (Galatians 3:27-28)¹⁵. Those baptised into Christ practise his qualities, as they have “clothed” themselves with Christ. The division of colour, race, status, gender and inequality is no more. All believers are God’s children (1 John 3:2). Women were freed from slavery.

Among Jesus’s followers was Mary Magdalene, who was a known prostitute and 7 demons cast out of her (Luke 8:2). She was among women who travelled with Jesus during his ministry and considered one of his disciples (Luke 8:1-3). She was also one of the first people to whom Christ appeared after resurrection (John 20:11-18). This research focuses on gender equality, in light of God calling people irrespective of gender to serve him. Patriarchal practices, however, led people to turn the description of men as apostles the basis on which women must be excluded from any offices/priesthood. Information gathered, from different scholars, shows the likelihood of women being apostles during the first century.

Beavis (2013:750) reveals that Mary “depicted as the apostle Philip’s missionary ‘sister’ figures most prominently. Mary (Mariamne), who is never called “Magdalene” in the Acts is portrayed as the one who prepared bread and salt for the apostles implying a eucharistie ministry”. Mary Magdalene was the first to preach the gospel of the good news that Jesus has risen from the

¹⁵ “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

dead (John 20:18). She was the first witness of the risen Jesus and the first apostle of the gospel of the resurrection. This reflects the tradition that she was an apostle.

Thompson (1995:119) shares the same sentiment with De Boer (1997:89) that Mary Magdalene was a disciple and an apostle, because of her testimony of the resurrection of Christ. As an eye and ear witness, she qualified to be an apostle. Scholars such as Thimmes (1998:215), Haskins (1994) and De Boer (1997:89) refer to the gnostic literature that affirms that Christ had male and female disciples and apostles. Though there is no proper evidence of Mary's selection as an apostle, Mary Magdalene was the first to spread the good news of Christ's resurrection (Luke 24:5-10) and as eye and ear witness, fit all the criteria for apostles. It was around the 12th century that Mary was given the title of "apostolorum apostola" by Hugh of Cluny (1024-1109), Peter Abelard (1079-1142) and Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153), according to Jansen (2001:62). Women proclaimed the gospel in a missionary set-up, it was only once the church became structured that only men were allowed.

Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Susanna were wealthy women who provided the financial means for Jesus Christ's ministry to continue (Thimmes, 1998:198). Since Scripture does not indicate who funded the ministerial duties, the women who accompanied Jesus everywhere aided in financing the development of the church of Christ. Mary Magdalene was recorded the most frequently named woman in the New Testament, during Christ's ministry, second only to Mary mother of Jesus. Evangelists mention several women participating in the *missio Dei* during Jesus's ministry.

3.4 THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHURCH

Jesus Christ was the cornerstone of the church, built on the foundation of the apostles (Ephesians 2:20). The Catholic and Orthodox churches has made this into dogma and the tradition of the church prides itself on the apostolic succession (Joint international commission for the Theological dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church: 1990:213), but some are of a different view. Wilson (2010:138) suggests that those churches hold onto that dogma to deny women the opportunity to be ordained into the priesthood. Though Christ selected apostles for his office, He never denied women to participate in the *missio Dei*. It is also acknowledged in the New Testament (Acts 2:17-18) that both men and women received the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Word of God.

Women were actively involved in the *missio Dei* during the time of apostles. Paul worked with a number of women such as Chloe (1 Corinthians 1:11), Priscilla (1 Corinthians 16:19) and Phoebe were called deacons of the church at Cenchrae (Romans 16:1) and many more participated in

the missio Dei. They performed multiple services, including baptising new converts (Campbell, 2009:50). Hoover (2012:221-239) speaks of the influence of translation errors, explaining as follows:

“The document claimed translation bias in the cases of Phoebe and Junia: echoing McArt, Phoebe’s position of diakonos ought to be translated ‘minister’ rather than ‘servant’, while Junia, explicitly identified by Paul as an apostle in Rom. 16.7, had been erroneously deformed into the masculine ‘Junias’ by ‘translators and scholars, unwilling to admit that there could have been a female apostle.’”

Evidence in the New Testament gives the assurance that women were apostles. Similarly, the church of Jesus Christ did not exclude women from the priesthood and in 1 Peter 2:9 the chosen people are called “a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession”. A good relationship with Christ grants women the privilege to fulfil their calling in life, without consideration of gender. Peter highlighted that believers are the chosen nation of God and are all priests of God, irrespective of gender.

This sentiment is supported by Revelation 1:5-6 that says He “who loves us...has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen”.

Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament and also the office of priest, because God the Father in Exodus 19 promised humanity that unto Him there shall be the kingdom of priest. God never suggested any gender in this promise. Both men and women have the privilege to serve God as priest. In line with Exodus 19, Paul articulated in Ephesians 4:5-6 that the chosen nation belongs to “one Lord, one faith and one baptism”. God is the Father of his chosen people, both men and women are children of God and the one is not superior to the other, they are all equal in the eyes of the Lord. Just like unity in the Trinity, there should be oneness in God’s people. He continued in verse 11 to remind them that God gave them different gifts, of which some are “prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers”, these are pure gifts from God that do not need a certain gender to practise. Men and women can, therefore, equally serve in the different offices.

Mary Magdalene witnessed Jesus’ every action and thus she demonstrated that women were participating in God’s mission by preaching and teaching in the times of the apostles (Thimmes, 1998:223). John confirms in Rev 1:6 that through the death and the resurrection of Christ, men and women were made kings and priests for this world. Through Christ, both genders can accomplish his priesthood in missio Dei. These statements support Wijngaards’ (2011:1) assertion that women are also called by God to serve in all structures of the church.

Jesus Christ did not mention the order of Melchizedek or the hierarchal clerical birth rite of the Aaronic priesthood when He chose his disciples in the New Testament. In Christ, women were made the equal partners of their male counterparts.

The central typology of God calling man and woman to serve in priesthood loses the meaning of God's love in his creation if only men were capable of serving at the highest structural level of the church. The ideology of priesthood hierarchal rites betrays God's intention of creating male and female in his image. Men and women have their own relationship with God. The one is not subordinate to the other, but are equal. Ortega (2004) quotes Amoah (1995) who suggests that "God as creator is indeed the source of all things and humanity is endowed with equal capability. In Gods mercy, all humanity shares equally in the common wealth given by God".

The structures of mainline churches, such as the Orthodox and Catholic church, only permit men to be ordained as priest and deny gender equality as created by God. An open letter wrote by Schmemmann (2006), of the Orthodox Church, states: "The Orthodox Church is against women's priesthood...It is well known that the advocates of women's ordination explain the Scriptural and the traditional exclusion of women from ministry by 'cultural conditioning'...Christ did not include women into the Twelve."

He essentially says that women were not appointed to the ministerial order, because they were not men. Jesus Christ the High Priest came to liberate women from cultural oppression and being side-lined in the church. Different methods of interpreting Scriptural authority brought crisis to the interpretation of the Bible. Paul managed to advocate for slaves (Philemon 1:9), why does the church not transform the culture and tradition of excluding women?

Some scholars claim that Paul encouraged the exclusion of women from teaching in the church in his theology (1 Timothy 2:11-14). Considering the worldview of the time, Paul had reasons for excluding women (König, 1998:22). Schrieber (1981:222), however, proposes that one argument used to exclude women from the priesthood was based on "theological grounds that reach back to the order of creation and the designated relationship of the first man and woman prior to the Fall" (1 Timothy 2:11-14).

Paul's well-known words in 1 Timothy 2:11-14 have been extensively debated by different scholars. One of these, Keynes (2014:14), explains that exegesis of the text shows that women should not wrongfully teach men, but humble themselves towards men. In a similar manner, but more recently, feminist theology interpreted this verse as follows (Reed, 2010:48): "Paul communicated with Timothy (1 Tim. 2:9-12) in Ephesus in the first century which had its own historical setting and their problems that forced Paul to respond to their worldview."

There may well be different opinions about the above text, in terms of the context as a whole, yet Paul's relationship with women like Phoebe in the New Testament seems to have been very positive and so perhaps that knowledge should be taken into account, when examining the local circumstances of the time. In the Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ men and women were fully involved as evangelists and church planters (Folarin & Stephen, 2012:7).

3.4.1 Woman and the early church fathers

Women used their homes for worship and as hospices, while they established the new church. Whatever means at their disposal were employed to spread the gospel. Women continued to be involved in the church and enjoyed their "paraclerical" roles, in which they offered advice, prophecy and prayers (Noble, 2013:92). Most were financially independent. Marriage was allowed to deacons, priests and bishops of the East and the West as of the second century (Noble, 2013:112). Married clergy's success was measured in the way he managed his household by the fourth century, just as Paul suggested in 1 Timothy 3.

Challenges in the clerical marriage arose with the advent of the monastic movement. By the close of the 6th century, the papal councilor supported celibacy (Brooke, 1956:3). Gregory the Great issued a letter that prohibited clerical marriage in the 10th century and celibacy started to identify a certain gender of a certain order, becoming a new doctrine of the church (Cholij, 1989:70). In the third and fourth centuries celibacy was a means for men to convey their dedication to God, radically denying pleasure in their life. Although celibacy of priesthood is not forbidden in the Bible (1 Timothy 4:3), it was associated more with the masculine and served to exclude women in this order.

Thomas Aquinas described women as instruments of the devil (Bitel & Lifshitz, 2013:8) and likened the seductive demons with Eve, the first to commit sin to substantiate this generalization. As monks were encouraged in their celibate perfection, St. Jerome would call woman the source of all evil (Popik, 1978). St. Thomas was indeed known for his arguments that women are inferior and subject to man, typical of patriarchal writing. It would become the culture that would find its way into the councils that have promoted it to date.

There are a number of church fathers who participated in shaping the Christian religion and spirituality. The good works of these fathers are highly esteemed in the field of theology, especially for their defence of the faith against secularism (Wilson, 2014:85). The literature is reviewed to ascertain whether the church fathers contributed to hampering female appointment to high-level positions within the church. The medieval theology of the church cites the church fathers as St. Augustine of Hippo, Jerome, Gennadius of Marseille, Pope Gregory the Great, Ambrose, Isidore,

Eusebius and Orosius and many more. The dilemma between some of church fathers and feminist anthropology has been detailed by Ackermann (1988:20) as follows:

“‘Woman,’ in the vulgar eloquence of Chrysostom, ‘is a necessary evil, a natural temptation, a desirable calamity, a domestic peril, a pained ill.’ According to Ruether (1985:116-128), Augustine is the classical source of this type of anthropology. When discussing the question of the image of God, he reflected on the trinity, arriving at the conclusion that the woman “when she is referred to separately in her quality as a helpmeet...then she is not the image of God, but as regards the male alone, he is the image of God as fully and completely as when the woman too is joined with him in one.” (Ruether, 1985:116-128).

Aquinas continued this tradition holding that women are defective by nature. He also said: ‘Father and mother are loved as principles of our natural origin. Now the father is a principle in a more excellent way than the mother, because he is the active principle, while the mother is the passive and material principle. Consequently, strictly speaking, the father is to be loved more.’

Aquinas was influenced by Aristotle, the Greek philosopher, who believed that “female is a defective male”. Hence Aquinas believed that “man is the beginning and the end of woman; as God is the beginning and end of every creature” (Schott, 2003:37). This ideology made him believe that man as a father needs to be loved more, as he represents God’s role and the woman is a helper. The medieval era disregarded that God used both male and females in the Old Testament (Ackermann, 1988:62).

Furthermore Luther suggested, according to Ackermann (1988:14-28), “in the original creation Eve would have been equal with Adam but through the fall she lost her original equality and became inferior in mind and body”. Luther’s argument does not account for the fact that both Adam and Eve had sinned against God. Eve could, therefore, not have been the only one punished. They would both fall for their deceit and not just Eve supposedly losing her original equality. (They were both part of the fall, as described in chapter two.) Although the image of God in man can be shattered, because of disobedience, man does not lose it entirely.

This controversy between feminist theology and the church fathers is of interest, because it occurred in a different time and strove to break all the barriers that prevented women from entering the priesthood in the church. The work of the church fathers was duly acknowledged in its nature, but said to have been accomplished within the culture of ancient times that created some adverse realities for women. Churches fathers of modern times should not prevent women to be pastors. God made both men and women in his image and equal guardians of all creation. Gender

language used for man contributes to the confusion of patriarchal as they read the language man refers to their gender only.

It must be said that not all church fathers contributed to women's exclusion from the office of priesthood. Behr-Sigel (1982:372) records Father Basil of Caesarea's as being more Scriptural, when tackling the issue of the imago Dei. Father Basil believed that men and women were made in the image of God and their strength is in their souls or inner being, not confined to physical weakness as some theologians believed. As Father Basil rightly asserted God made human beings in his image, in order to occupy a higher place in the created order (Staub, 2013).

Furthermore Wooden (2005:12) points out how Pope John Paul's pontificate protected women's rights and their equal dignity with men. Pope John Paul II issued a letter to women (June 29, 1995) that spoke about the degrading history of women and violence against women on the sexual terrain and in doing so, the Pope dismissed the historical worldview of the Israelites (Wooden, 2005:12).

Women have been subjugated, because human beings are sinful, he said, and "the situations in which the woman remains disadvantaged or discriminated against by the fact of being a woman" are the continuing consequences of sin. Women were persecuted by theologians and church fathers of the Middle Ages for the original sin and some even believed women to be more sinful than men (Wijngaards, 1996). The misinterpretation of the Scriptural text of 1 Timothy 2:14 and the origin of the first sin in Genesis 3:1-16 exacerbated matters. This erroneous interpretation did not last, given that it was the result of patriarchal culture (as indicated in chapter two).

3.4.2 Councils that prohibited women to be in position of power in the church

Even though women participated in missio Dei during the time of the apostles, women were kept from positions of power by the early church councils. It was during the 4th and 5th century when women were gradually prohibited access to positions of power in the church, resulting from reasons cited by these councils as follows (George, 2011:14):

- Council of Laodicea (352AD): It was a minor agreement that featured only about thirty members from the local Middle Eastern churches. The Council was only limited to sixty rulings of canons. Their rulings prohibited certain foods during Lent, condemned astrology, recommended the correct "Sabbath Day" and prohibited women from presiding over the church. The council also produced two rulings referencing the canon of Scripture. It was illegal for women to be in priesthood, they were not allowed to go to the altar (George, 2011:7). Balsamon described the banning of women from the altar, as per Canon 11, as follows:

“Their habit of using improperly that which was proper, either through their arrogance or through their base self-seeking, scandal arose. Therefore the Fathers prohibited the existence in the Church thereafter of any more such women as are called presbyters or presidents. And that no one may object that in the monasteries of women one woman must preside over the rest...But for woman to teach in a Catholic Church, where a multitude of men is gathered together, and women of different opinions, is, in the highest degree, indecorous and pernicious.”

If women were indecorous and pernicious, who were the partners in crime mentioned in John 8:4? When the Pharisees sought to have an adulterous woman stoned (John 8:4), Jesus Christ reminded them of the law of Leviticus 20:10 that says both of them should be put to death. Women cannot, therefore, be labelled as indecorous and pernicious without partner in crime.

- Fourth Synod of Carthage (398AD): The early church was in a home owned by women, where they were able to participate within their domains and spread the gospel. As the church grew, however, it attracted male intellectuals who used Greco Roman culture to limit women in certain duties (Pederson, 2008:104), including “woman may not teach men in an assembly...woman may not baptize”. Authors, like Swenson (2008:28), offer evidence that reveal that although women were prohibited from administering the baptism, they did indeed do so.
- Council of Chalcedon (451AD): Canon 15 of the Council states that women less than 40 years of age are not allowed to be ordained a deacon, before the council examines them. It was another way the Council restricted the ordination of deaconesses and yet between 325 before 450AD, women were ordained as bishops and priests in Asia Minor (women’s inclusion in the priesthood is described under mainline churches).

Women may well not be accepted into the priesthood yet, they do participate in the Orthodox Church, Roman Catholic Church, the Southern Baptist Convention and the Church of the Latter Day Saints, irrespective of patriarchal culture.

3.5 MAINLINE: ORTHODOX AND ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH CURRENT STATUS OF MINISTERIAL OFFICE

3.5.1 Introduction of mainline churches

Mainline churches refer to the older Christian churches and more formal churches that include the Methodist, Anglican, Lutheran, Episcopal, Presbyterian, United Church of Christ and Reformed church. Mainline churches have maintained a common similar religious doctrine that emphasises social justice and personal salvation, with differing views on other doctrinal concerns,

such as baptism, communion, liturgy and gay marriage. They share organisations, such as the National Council of Churches. The Catholic and Orthodox Church are also mainline churches, but their doctrinal barriers of worship, cultural issues, women ordination in priest hood and the like sets them apart.

Although the Orthodox Church practices the same faith as that of the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church refuses to acknowledge the authority of the pope. The Catholic Church falls under the guidance of the pope as the supreme head. These two churches have their own dogma that gives them a different identity from Protestants. The Catholic Church has seven sacraments while the Protestant has only two sacraments in their dogma. The Protestant Churches arose from the protest against the dogma of the Catholic Church and their denominations include the Lutheran, Reformed, Methodist, Anglican and many others. This section thus reviews the role of women in the New Testament and mainline churches.

In the New Testament women were a steadfast presence in Christian communities. Among the mainline churches, such as the Catholic and Orthodox Church, women are excluded from certain high-level positions and deemed the domain of men. This is the case throughout the hierarchical structure right up to the highest position of pope. This tradition is rooted in the biblical narrative of the apostles that only identifies men, viz.: Simon Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, James (the son of Alphaeus), Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot (Matthew 10:1-4; Luke 6:12-16). Only a few of these 12 apostles were active and most were martyred around 66AD. This selection of only male apostles led the Orthodox Presbyterian Church to prohibit women from teaching in church when males are present (Bosman, 1993:70). The argument is that only men can act in person of Christ, therefore, women cannot participate in Christ's priesthood (Richert, 2015). The Roman Catholic Church continually comes under attack in this regard, enduring claims that the exclusion of women in this way is an injustice (Richert, 2015).

However information gathered after the apostolic ministry indicated that there were women priests and deaconesses were described by Rossi (1991:73-93), in her translation of Otranto's article, as "few and meagre". Most of the Les sources de l'histoire du Montanisme were lost and only nine books were found. These books only offered up information about the group known as Pepuzians, which were the descendants of Montanism. Montanism, also called Cataphrygians, was a movement stated by prophet Montanus in Phrygia in the 2nd century. Priscillius in Spain also ordained women as priests around 370AD, until the Council of Nicera left the practice (Damsteegt, 2013:3).

There is, therefore, insufficient information on the history of women in the priesthood (Van der Meer, 1973:46-89) and scholars have different perspectives concerning the same issue. Scholars like Van der Meer (1973), Gryson (1972) and Galot (1973) clearly believe that in the ancient church women were never trained for the ecclesiastic ministry (Rossi, 1977:80). Rossi (1977:81) acknowledges the position of women in all ministries that were reserved for men only around 492 to 496AD, which as "ecclesiastical service". This is supported by Damsteegt (2013:21), citing the Bishop of Vercelli in Piedmont in early 900AD who alleged that women were presiding in churches. They were involved in baptism, leadership and teachings before the Council of Laodicea prohibited them. This information goes to show that women have the ability to participate as elders, deacons, priests and in all structures of the church. Women can, therefore, still be allowed to exercise their right to participate in God's mission, without any hindrance. The Orthodox and Catholic Church have created their own doctrine.

When the Pope addressed the question of the ordination of women after the Anglicans allowed women into office, he attested that in the Apostolic Tradition Christ chose his Apostles only from men and thus the Catholic Church continues to adhere to this tradition of excluding women from the priesthood (Wijngaards, 2011). Pope John Paul II, in his Apostolic Letter entitled *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* (22 May 1994), confirmed the exclusion of women in the Catholic Church's priesthood. He said, "I declare that the church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination of women" (Wessinger, 1996:13). In addition to that Cardinal Ratzinger, later pope and now pope emeritus, supported him in 1995 by declaring the church infallible (Lowery, 1996).

Christ elected only men for apostleship, God thus used culture to convey his message and yet irrespective of culture, God called women like Merriam, Ester, Ruth, Lydia, Martha and others for the *missio Dei*. In addition, the commissioning of apostles does not provide the full details of God's deliberate exclusion of women in his selection of apostles, instead there is evidence of women participating in the *missio Dei* in both the Old and New Testament. Critically, the Apostolic Tradition still needs greater historical background to establish the ecclesiastical tradition of the church that was used to exclude women. This statement is supported by the way the church fathers focused more on the weakness and morality of women than their vocational gifts. Jesus Christ brought major change during his time and would have never excluded women from the office of priesthood.

Hopko (1975:158) indicates that there are a number of complicated factors (as discussed under 3.4.3) that affected the ordination of women in the Orthodox and Catholic Church as "humanity is created in the image and according to the likeness of divinity of God". Hopko (1975:163) symbolically relates Christ as the true Adam (1 Corinthians 15) and the Husband (2 Corinthians 11:2). Christ represents the last Adam who is the High Priest and Bridegroom to the Church as

the true Eve. Eve is the "mother of all living", just as Mary is called the "mother of all nations". Hopko (1977:165) likens Mary to the church as bride and Christ is the bridegroom. In this analogy Jesus is the male and the church is the female. It is a metaphor of Paul interpreted to mean that females represent the church (bride) and all men represent Christ (bridegroom) (Jung & Coray, 2001:41).

This is a very important tradition to the Catholic Church, as they believe that "if women were ordained to be priests for God or to do anything canonical in the church, it should rather have been given to Mary" (Damsteegt, 2013:23). This remains a heated debate and there are scholars, such as LeBlanc (1975:45), who don't support the views of these churches. According to LeBlanc (1975:45), their Christian anthropology polarise human beings by sexuality.

The Catholic Church has, however, adopted a new paradigm of reconsidering women by promoting vocational rights. Pope John Paul II elevated women to a new role of pastoral and administrative duties in parishes that do not have priests and women were appointed as chancellors of dioceses around the world. He appointed two female theologians to the prestigious International Theological Commission in 2004 (Wooden, 2005). It is a paradigm shift of the Catholic Church that gives new hope for the major shift of accepting women in the high-level positions of the church. Sisters are allowed to teach men in the Catholic seminary, because they have the necessary qualifications for such courses, yet they cannot be ordained as priest. They can attend the exact same seminaries and be educated by the exact same lecturers, but will never qualify to be priests. Both priests and nuns live consecrated religious lives and yet ordination of a priest is a sacrament of the holy order, but it is not a sacrament when women become nuns. They "do not have ecclesiastical authority and are not responsible for the administration of the church" (Julie, 2013). This old paradigm of men only still hinders Christ's teaching of liberating women from being side-lined by the church.

The church should be a model of Christ's praxis, according to which both men and women are called to the same vocation. Amoah's (1995:2) asserts that the perception of the church should be as follows: "The church is seen as the community of believers who are all children of God the creator and giver of abundant life, integrity and respect to all. The church as an institution is genderless and should preserve the equality and integrity of all creatures."

It should be the church first and foremost that respects the fundamental law of human rights and practises equality among God's creation. Both the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches still believe that their structure was built on Apostolic Succession, as stated in Ephesians 2:20. The doctrine limits women to serve in certain structures of the church. This tradition has excluded women from serving in the Episcopal and priestly office. The verse speaks of church being built

on the foundation of the apostles (Ephesians 2:20), of which Christ is the cornerstone. He was the first one to proclaim the good news in the New Testament and his foundation involved both men and women. This metaphor, therefore, does not only refer to men as the foundations of the gospel because the gospel is for the whole nation.

Jesus called on both men and women to testify of his gospel. The doctrine of apostolic succession should not be an tool to keep women from serving God in all structures of the church. Women that followed Jesus were witnesses of the gospel. They also complied with all the criteria of being apostles. Gender was never a consideration for God in his mission and Jesus Christ used both men and women for the *missio Dei*.

It has been 2000 years since culture and class differentiation, yet Paul indicated that we are one in Christ (Galatians 3:28). Galatians 3:28 assures women equality in exercising their gifts in all spheres of life. Christ came to liberate and restructure the norms of patriarchal culture in the world, but women are still side-lined by the powers that be in the Catholic and Orthodox Church despite their gifts and calling for priesthood.

This has led feminist theology to pursue the improvement of equality between men and women in Christian leadership. The patriarchy perpetuated their own dogma that encourages male domination, for whom Jesus Christ died and empowered to be witnesses of him. Feminism is fighting this imbalance and promotes women's liberation (Keane, 1998:122).

Feminist theologians believe that God does not discriminate, making Apostolic Succession that bars women from the priesthood unacceptable (Ackermann, 1988:14-28). The French Orthodox theologian Behr-Sigel requested the Orthodox churches to leave the past behind and consider the "signs of the times" in her speech at Agapia in September 1976 (Wilson, 2010:137). God revealed himself in history and in his word. He told Moses Who He is (Exodus 3:14) and to this day, He still reveals new aspects of himself. God rules his creation and it continues to exist, because of His providence and the good news of his Word. God came in the flesh when He sent his Son to the world, as written in the New Testament. Jesus Christ came to further his mission on earth and restore God's will. Times have changed from the way women participated at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting (Exodus 38:8) to the way Jesus Christ involved them in his mission (as described in chapter two). Men and women received the Holy Spirit to preach the Word, but some still undermine the gift of the Holy Spirit given to women. Perhaps it is time for these churches to consider the implications of the "sign of the times" and refrain from keeping women from entering the priesthood as vocation.

3.6 VOCATIONS

Merriam-Webster (2016) defines a vocation as a “calling” and refers to someone who loves and serves God. Vocational discernment is the process in which men or women in the Catholic Church discern or recognise their vocation in the church. There are four vocations in the Catholic Church, viz.: married life, single life, religious life and ordained life. Religious life is living a priestly life, brothers or sisters living in communities that embrace spirituality. Holy Orders (ordained life) is the sacrament by which men become members of the ordained clergy - deacons, priests and bishops. Single life speaks of men and women who have renounced the great good of marriage to follow Christ, whereby married life is a covenantal partnership between a man and a woman. Nuns or sisters, brothers and certain monks are not ordained as priests, but promise to live a consecrated religious life. They are all lay people, living in their new religious communities after discovering their vocations and serving God with their specific talents. They dedicate themselves to this new life by taking vows and promising devotion to following Jesus. Most of them live in communities that embrace the holiness, charisma and teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ (McMurry, 2012:10).

3.7 NUNS

In the historical development of the Catholic Church gender has always separated the nuns and priests, whereby they have different vocations within the church. Nuns can be likened to the women of Nazarite in the Old Testament, who took vows to dedicate their lives to the LORD (Numbers 6:2). Both priests and nuns have committed their lives to God and selected celibacy, poverty and obedience to serve God fully. Most nuns devote themselves to the spiritual work of mercy and many are professional nurses, teachers and caretakers of widows, the disabled, orphans and the poor. Gender prevents them from participating freely in all vocations (Bitel & Lifshitz, 2013:65). Keane (1988:10) states that in the synods only men speak about their priesthood and women are mere observers in the Catholic Church, who have “ears and no mouth” to argue for admission to the priesthood.

Merriam-Webster (2016) defines a nun as a woman belonging to a religious order; especially “one under solemn vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience”. The word derives from the Latin for “nonna” – which means grandmother. The English word is Nana, which also refers to grandmother. Bolin (2005) also mentions that in the third century widows and consecrated virgins were called the “spouses” of the Lord Jesus Christ in North Africa and Egypt. These women promised to serve God mainly through prayer. Sisters or nuns are known as the bride of Jesus Christ, who elected them to pray and serve the church like his mother Mary. This motivates them to be part of the *missio Dei*, even if they cannot be priests.

Zavada (2015) explains that the three main types of Catholic nun, who care for the community (as mentioned in the previous paragraph) are as follows:

“Monastic orders which include Benedictines, Basilians, Trappists and Cistercians. The monastic nuns live in a monastery and are dedicated to reciting a range of prayers, from 6am to 9pm, and meditate. They separate themselves from the community. Monks who isolate themselves are referred to as hermits and cenobitic lives together in the community.

Mendicant orders include Dominicans, Carmelites, Augustinians, Trinitarians and Franciscans. They are also committed to daily prayers. They work with charity, school groups and church group on a regular basis. They are a self-supporting group.

Canons regular and clerics regular: The canons regular include the Jesuits, Barnabites and Somascans. These nuns recite prayers daily, care for orphans and establish schools. Three of the above follow a set timetable every day. Others are devoted to charity work and education. The Jesuits even establish universities and educate learners.”

These women are very influential in their own ministry and their work form part of the *missio Dei*. The following women, according to O' Regan (2012), were so remarkable that the Roman Catholic Church has reaffirmed the fundamental value of their competence during their lives:

3.7.1 St. Thérèse of Lisieux

St. Thérèse became ill after her birth and was sent to a wet nurse farm (wet nurse is a woman who breastfeeds and cares for another's child) for a period of over a year. Her mother died when she was only four years old. She became a Carmelite nun at the age of 15. She assisted as sacristan for her community, which is a church official who is in charge of the ceremonial equipment like sacred vessels and vestments of a church. A sacristan prepares everything the priest would need during mass. This includes arranging the books and putting the wine, water and bread in its place before the mass started as well as helping the altar server to be ready before mass and cleaning the holy materials after mass (O' Regan,2012).

She became sick at an early age and had pulmonary tuberculosis. Because of her extraordinary ability to love, she was canonised in 1925. She believed in great love that leads to great deeds. John Paul II proclaimed her a doctor of the church. Her books narrate her spiritual route of love and selflessness, following a personal doctrine of merciful love. Her desire was to be cleansed and inspired by the fire of divine love, seeking to both suffer for love and be cheerful through love (Armstrong, 1993). She believed in the Gospel as sufficient for her life and her love of Mary was enormous.

She would have liked to enter the priesthood, but could not do so because of the canon law. The tradition of the church ordained/s only men. St. Thérèse of Lisieux is often claimed as the patron saint of the worst, given her sickliness. She suffered ill health from a young age, but never complained. She had a passion to be ordained as a Catholic priest, even wondering whether those who desired to be priests on earth would be given a chance to do so in heaven (Stuart, 2003:39). She, like most of women, felt the pain of injustice in being denied the opportunity to fulfil their calling as deacon, priestess and elder of the church. St. Thérèse of Lisieux died in 1897.

3.7.2 Mother Teresa

Mother Teresa was born in 1910 in Skopje, Macedonia and became a Loreto nun at the age of 18. She joined the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, known as Sisters of Loreto in Ireland. Her original name was Gonxha Agnes, but was received as Sister Mary Teresa as part of their vocations tradition. She was involved in educating girls (O' Regan, 2012). She acted as the principal of St. Mary's, upon receiving a "call within a call", and also established the Missionaries of Charity - a Catholic order of nuns committed to helping the poor.

For over 45 years Mother Teresa served the poor, leper, the sick, the dying, the orphaned and AIDS sufferers in over a hundred countries. Gift of Love Hospice was one of her centres in the USA. In South Africa she set up a hostel in a black township. Other sites worldwide included Albania and Iraq. She was regarded as a model of humanitarian aid, i.e. she was involved in saving people's lives, for her selfless work. She received awards such as the Indian Padmashri Award in 1962, for her humanitarian action that saved lives, alleviated suffering and maintained human dignity. In 1979 when she won the prestigious Nobel Peace Prize, Michael (2003) relates, she touched everybody by saying:

"I choose the poverty of our poor people. But I am grateful to receive (the Nobel Prize) in the name of the hungry, the naked, the homeless, of the crippled, of the blind, the lepers, of all those people who feel unwanted, unloved, uncared-for throughout society, people that have become a burden to the society and are shunned by everyone."

The church also honoured her with prizes "for the glory of God and in the name of the poor" Douglas (2003). These included the Pope John XXIII Peace Prize (1971), Nehru Prize for Promotion of International Peace and Understanding (1972), Balzan Prize (1978), Nobel Peace Prize (1979) and Bharat Ratna (1980).

Mother Teresa opposed abortion and made it known upon meeting Hillary Clinton in 1994. Clinton's assisted her in establishing a centre in Washington DC caring for orphaned babies. In 1995 the Mother Teresa Home for Infant Children was founded. She participated in the missio

Dei and was allowed to teach the poor, but could not preach and serve normal congregants in church. She died in September 1997. Much as the church acknowledged her part in the *missio Dei* and expressed pride in her, it would not have accepted her into the priesthood.

3.7.3 Eleanor Josaitis

In 1960 Eleanor Josaitis followed the examples of Jesus Christ by fighting for justice and hope, creating opportunities for the poor and the marginalised. She became a social activist to overcome racism, poverty and injustice as part of the civil rights movement in Selma, Alabama (USA). Selma is a small city in Dallas County with a population of only 20,756 in 2010. Nearly half of Selma's residents were black and fought for the right to vote in 1960. Aided by Martin Luther King Jnr., President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act of 1965 after the march of "Bloody Sunday" in March 1965 (Liptak, 2013).

Josaitis co-founded Focus: HOPE in 1968 with Fr. William Cunningham. They were devoted to finding feasible solutions to the social and economic problems that existed at the time. Their organisations managed to bridge the racial gap in southeast Michigan through food programmes, career training programmes and HOPE Village Initiative that was committed to educate neighbourhood children (McGraw, 2015).

They managed to fund and run practical programmes. Their Machinist Training Institute was used for metalwork and offered classes in basic literacy. Women were given first priority. She reflected the true love that Jesus gave us.

These three examples of outstanding ordinary women and many more worked tirelessly, sacrificing their lives for the love of God and to take part in the *missio Dei*. This description of the involvement of women in the Catholic and Orthodox Church now turns to the work of women in the mainline churches.

3.8 MAINLINE: PROTESTANT REFORMATION CHURCHES AND ANGLICAN CHURCH CURRENT STATUS OF MINISTERIAL OFFICE

There are a number of churches that abandoned the ideology of men as the sole candidates qualified for the priesthood. Although most of these are international churches, this study only feature South African churches to measure the responsive churches that ordain women. International research shows a tremendous growth of women priest and pastors serving in Protestant Churches. Research Released in Leaders & Pastors by Barna Group (2009) indicated that mainline churches have 58% growth of women in priesthood.

The following list of churches have allowed the ordination of women in South Africa (George, 2011:8-14) and is a beacon of hope to all churches of Christ:

- The Anglican Church ordained deacons as of 1965 and from 1970 provinces that wish to ordain female priests may do so
- 1955 Presbyterian Church in South Africa, growth to date
- 1960 Methodist Church in South Africa
- 1990 The Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa
- 1992 Anglican Church of South Africa
- 2005 The Calvinist Protestant Church in South Africa

Although the Lutheran Church ordains female priests, their South African data are not yet listed. Some Protestant and Anglican churches worldwide have already moved a step forward by appointing women as bishops in their churches, although not all offices are open to women.

Previously many churches witnessed the theological struggle that denied women to be ordained (Power, 2008:112). Most of the churches did not allow women to be ordained, due to the influence of patriarchal society against gender. The Protestant Reformation and the Anglican Church managed to usher in change, against all odds, and ordain deaconesses and priestesses. They acknowledged that both men and women have the same vocation of being ordained as elders, pastors, deacons and priests. Both genders qualify to be heirs of the Kingdom of God. Those who are called to different vocations deserve to share in the ministry of Jesus Christ and in his authority. It is God who calls priest and priestesses and not men. If God calls women, the church must follow suit.

If it was possible for women to be actively involved in evangelisation during the time of the apostles, then it is still possible in the 21st century to have an Euodias and Syntyche (Philippians 4:2-3); Phoebe, as deacon of the church at Cenchrea (Romans 16:1); and Priscilla and Aquila (1 Corinthians 16:19). No distinction was made between male and female among the apostles and for this reason women qualify to do fulfil their calling in both the church and society. *Missio Dei* should not lack pastors, elders, ministers and priestesses because of gender.

3.9 PATRIARCHAL INFLUENCE TOWARDS FEMALE CLERGY

According to Reedy-Strother (2011:11), the disparity between different parishes is tremendous as a result of society's bias against clergywomen. They often experience long delays in being

promoted within the hierarchical structures of the church. As a result, society still sees Christian theology the domain of men (Fiorenza, 1986:67-68). Even the remuneration of female clergy is not equal to their male counterparts, another effect of patriarchal influence (Hoffman, 2012:93). Although women are at last ordained as pastors, they still need to work hard to liberate man of its entrenched framework of reference within patriarchal culture.

3.10 CONCLUSION

The above information provides adequate evidence that women are capable of serving at the highest level within the church hierarchy. Although Jesus Christ came to liberate women from 57 the oppression that was fully supported by church fathers, the culture of limiting women to certain activities continues to persist in many churches like the Orthodox and the Catholic church. Reformed Protestant and Anglican Churches have managed to move away from this old paradigm of only men to Christ's paradigm that equally accepts men and women in God's calling to whatever office He deems fit. There is evidence of Mary Magdalene participating in apostolic activities, but patriarchal practices might have prevented all information about women's involvement in that era from being revealed.

Since Medieval times up to the 20th century, there significant strides have been made in the Orthodox and Catholic churches in terms of elevating women from the daily church activities to administrative duties in parishes. Furthermore, women have also been able to serve as chancellors of dioceses and theologians to the prestigious International Theological Commission. The pope as the "Holy Father" and acting in persona Christi means he represent the characteristics of Jesus Christ and should act like Christ by liberating women from being sidelined. There is, therefore, hope of a new paradigm for both churches.

CHAPTER 4 AFRICAN INDEPENDENCE CHURCHES AND FEMALE LEADERSHIP

This chapter addresses the role of women in the African Independent Churches that has emerged recently and is growing enormously. This aids to assess whether the church allows women to participate in the *missio Dei* unhindered.

4.1 BACKGROUND

The main aim of this chapter is to investigate how women are accommodated in AIC and how they originated. A short overview of origins of the AIC is, therefore, given as well as a description of how the gospel is applied to fulfil their leadership role as founders of the churches as prophetesses, priestesses and pastors in most church events (Chitando, 2004:123). The AIC also use the gospel to challenge patriarchal culture and restore their unique way of expressing themselves in an African way. Their theology is firmly entrenched in their African cultures.

The AICs strive to address the crises of African identity, the Eurocentric model of the church, justice, freedom, equal treatment, socio-economic issues and the dying culture of venerating ancestors. This chapter examines contributing factors that influenced the marginalisation of women in serving God in all spheres of life and how the paradigm shifted upon reconciliation with the broken society. Lastly, not all AIC churches are liberated. The continued use of patriarchal culture by some African churches to marginalise women is described.

4.2 INTRODUCTION

AIC originate from Christianity. While Christianity originated in Jerusalem spreading throughout the Near East, into places such as Aram, Assyria, Mesopotamia, Phoenicia, Asia Minor, Jordan and Egypt. The first cross was planted by Portuguese mariners and the faith became active among slaves brought by the Dutch East India Company that settled in the Cape in 1652 (Hofmeyr, 1994:22). The indigenous peoples of South Africa received the gospel from missionaries. Christianity was known for its extensive humanitarian aid and care for the poor, enjoying hospitality with fellow Christians (Latourette, 1938:186). They offered education, medical services, political and economic infrastructure (Kealotswe, 1999:227).

Although there were still people who adhered to the old culture of society, education played a major role in awakening modern African women who do no longer wanted to be associated with the primitive culture of polygamy anymore. Even the beliefs of young men and women on cultural practices, such as initiation known as “bogwera” and “bojale”, were subsequently turned to the

new values of Christianity (Nkomazana, 2005:43). The life skills taught at initiations schools were replaced by formal schools. Traditional healers known to be led by ancestral spirits were replaced by prophets believed to be led by the Holy Spirit (Kelaotswe, 2005:110)

Kealotswe (1999:229) affirms that the gospel was contextualised that society may understand the gospel and be converted. Africans did not only receive the gospel from missionaries, they also received culture that moved them away from ritual specialists and healers (Hexham, 2001:6). Black African people did not give up their beliefs in their culture and could not practice their culture in mainline churches. The significance of the new paradigm of AIC was to contextualise their practices according to African tradition and culture (Henry, 2010:104). Most of the women in the AICs were also their founders and leaders. Furthermore, Kealotswe (1999) argues that African societies transformed by combining culture of both African religion and Western culture, hence the paradigm shift gave birth to AICs.

Some of these churches sought liberation not only for their old culture of healers, but also the empowerment of women in religion, politics and economy. This made contemporary women fight for their rights in all the areas that excluded them, undermined the welfare of women, side-lined and discriminated against women in church leadership as well as excluding them from kingship in their own tribe (LenkaBula, 2005:103-116).

The work of Flanagan (1981: 206-214.) has shown the failure of Western missionary churches to make Africans feel at home, which led to the creation of new churches. Furthermore when European settlers came to Africa and the British conquered the Cape, it influenced the racial division between whites and blacks (Stoler, 1997:345-399). The segregation policy in South Africa was developed in 1948 by D.F. Malan of the New National Party (Ngong, 2009:529) and stimulated the birth of AICs. It was difficult for Africans to patronise European culture and racial division in an African context.

The African church selected for analysis here is St. John Apostolic Faith mission that was initiated by a woman. St. John Apostolic attracts women because of the opportunity of their involvement it offers. There are African churches that have not abandoned patriarchal law, among which are the Zion Christian Church and The Saviour Church of Ghana. These two churches continue to reserve leadership roles for men, because "power belongs to them" (Mapuranga, 2013:303-317). Men are in control and have power over women. Western liturgy could not accommodate them. Their liturgy combines "singing, clapping, dancing and stamping of the feet" ringing of bells and drumming (Ayeboyin & Ishola, 1997:31). Some of these churches have addressed the exclusion of women as church leaders, even though their liberation in AICs has not been fully recognised.

Peel (1968:417) considers the real motive of AICs arose from the predominant European culture of missionary organisations, alien to Africans.

Similarly Akinade (1996:319) explains as follows:

“Liturgies which have been imported from Europe and imposed upon this continent...there are certain emotional depths which are not being reached by Africans by these liturgies...Hymns relate more to European and verses sung to European tunes, the phraseology of the liturgies are archaic, barely intelligible, or often inappropriate in Africa.”

This was the impetus for establishing African religion for African people. AICs use religion as a way to offer mutual aid in poverty. Rituals for healing address their needs and provide hope by empowering each other (Masondo, 2014:3). Their members create a powerful close-knit community of love and support, in which prayer with faith is their way of assisting to each other cope with different situations (Fenyves et al., 1998:8). Women make up the majority of members in AICs. Churches like St. John Apostolic Faith Mission and Bantu Bethlehem Christian Apostolic Church of South Africa and Faith Mission use women as the pillars of AICs as leaders, healers, prophets and managers. This is, however, not the case in other African churches that continue to follow patriarchal laws, such as the two churches mentioned above.

The founders of some AICs say that God called on them to plant a church (Machoko, 2013:31). Unlike the mainline churches that look to the hierarchy of the church structure to determine the preferred gender to lead the church, in AICs the Holy Spirit calls anyone to participate in the *missio Dei*. Oduro (2014:87) suggests that Jesus Christ was the greatest strategist for Christians to emulate. Similarly, AICs employ their own strategies to praise in an African way. They contextualise church activities within the African culture to enable Africans to make the gospel easily understood. The Bible remain their main source, but their theology is rooted in African culture that gives them a new identity (Monyai, 2007:24).

4.3 ORIGIN OF AICs IN AFRICA

AICs are growing in numbers, estimated at 7 000 000 in 34 African nations in 1967 (Barret, 1968:3). Anderson (2001:107) reported in the *World Christian Encyclopaedia* that “83 million Independents and 126 million Pentecostals/Charismatics in 2000”. AICs have been considered “split-offs” from “Western-oriented” missional churches and characterised as “separatist”, “parasitic”, “nativistic” or “sectarian” movements. When their members join mainline churches, they are baptised because of their alleged syncretism (Daneel, 1993:143). It has not stopped AICs from growing in Africa.

Some AICs started in Central Africa in 1862, when the Wesleyan Methodist Mission divided to form the Methodist Society. The Anglican Church in Nigeria was also affected by these divisions and established the United African Church in 1891. The Church of the Watchtower was founded in Zambia in 1908 in what was then called Northern Rhodesia by Elliot Kamwana, a Tonga from Malawi (Anderson, 2001:134). Kamwana was introduced to Russel's Watchtower teachings by Joseph Booth in Cape Town. They became affiliated to the Jehovah's Witnesses in 1936, from which they received their motivation, combining both Christian and traditional practices (Anderson, 2001:134).

Johana Owalo left the Church Mission Society in Kenya in 1914 to initiate the Nomiya Luo Mission. The Eternal Sacred Order of the Cherubim and Seraphim was instituted in 1925 in Nigeria and in 1952 Sierra Leone also witnessed the establishment of the God is our Light Church among the Koro people. In South Africa Rev. Nehemia Tile of the Wesleyan Church led a breakaway of the Thembuland Methodist Church to establish the Thembu National Church in 1882.

The Thembu Church was known for integrating African cultural practices within the church. These practices were foreign to missionary churches, while Africans felt at home practising culture in a Christian world (Lamola, 1988:8). Different churches encountered the splitting off of congregations, even the Roman Catholic Church in Kenya gave birth to the Legion of Mary Church in 1963. Flanagan (1981:213) relates how the Catholic Pope Paul VI saw the persistence of African people in their African Christianity, he responded as follows:

“AIC have little of an explicit theology any more than has African traditional religion, but they have a praxis and spirituality in which a theology is profoundly implicit. Their being is almost an eruption of African traditional religion integrally transmogrified by faith in Christ: the human situation is the same, the solution is different.” African churches grow from strength to strength on African soil.

4.4 BLACK AFRICAN PEOPLE FEEL AT HOME IN AICS

African churches respond to the needs of Africans and fulfil those needs, especially in the ministry of healing. African religions differ according to their worldview, but to most of them healing and the renewal of welfare is their common theme (Hexham, 2001:4). A Zionist church satisfies the traditional requirements of prophecy and healing through Christianity in African churches, which driven by the cultural belief that a person can be healed after consulting traditional healer.

Omenyo (2011:373-390) relates how Grooves (1958:300) documented a written report by missionaries who spoke of an African's popularity after helping a Western missionary, by the name of Andreas Riis, in 1832 in Western Africa. He survived malaria and other diseases that

killed all his colleagues in Africa. Riis was treated by a local traditional herbalist. Africans are known for their beliefs, diviners and seers who use natural herbs to heal people. Most African people enjoy religion and African tradition at the same time, as they are influenced by traditional religious worldview.

AIC congregations favour churches that include protection from evil spirits and offer a good life. Becken (1975:237) appreciates the way the black African community holistically care for the body, the soul and all aspects of life that include dealing with problems of life, transgression against family and God, diseases and education. Black people dance and beat drums to express their joy, they even dance and beat drums when they worship.

Although Mapuranga (2013:308) shows that AICs do not have all the answers, there are those that allow women to practise their gifts. Among those that are governed by women is the Apostolic Church, led by Manku.

AICs that believe in confession of sins prior to healing are St. Elijah in Zimbabwe, ZCC in Moria and the Bantu Bethlehem Christian Apostolic Church of South Africa (Anderson, 1992:113). A member is regarded a new person of the new life after confession. They have their sins forgiven by the Lord before starting a new service. The fundamental belief system of African religion is one of holistic healing (Bediako, 1999:225-266; Nyirongo, 1997:1). Unfortunately, Western missionaries disregarded with this belief, which contributed to the rise of AICs.

They maintain a bond through communal living, in which AICs make a great effort to maintain a close-knit (*koinonia*) connection in African communities that protect loving relationships (Thomas, 1995:21). They worship in a communal way that involves the whole family when appeasing their ancestors. Ancestors are living-dead family members who reveal themselves through dreams, visions and diviners. Africans believe that they continue the familial relationship by honouring and respecting their parents beyond death (Triebel, 2002:192).

Ancestors are the living dead who lived their life well and were role models in the community (Schmidt, 2005:7). They believe that ancestors reveal God's will to his people. They perform rituals in times of drought that involve the whole community, including the chief of that community, requesting their ancestors to mediate for them when they pray for rain at the mountains and is also a way to preserve the unity that missionaries preached Patriarchal culture favours male ancestors, since female ancestors are rare. The next section describes how African churches originated in South Africa.

4.5 SUMMARY OF HISTORY OF AIC IN SOUTH AFRICA

AICs are churches formed and led by Africans in Africa that operate independently from the structures of mainline churches. The abbreviation AIC refers to African Initiated Churches, African Independent Churches, African Indigenous Churches and African Instituted Churches.

Most AICs are rooted in Africa, but have already spread worldwide and are autonomous (Moripe, 1983:873). Apart from these churches, there are also new modern churches classified as charismatic or Pentecostal. The latter were inspired by the Pentecostal churches of North America, sharing the beliefs and practices of Christian churches initiated overseas.

Sundkler (1976:274-276) classified these AICs as Zionist, Ethiopian and “messianic”. In contrast to Sundkler (1976:274-276), West (1974:24) brought a different approach by distinguishing between the Ethiopian type as church of the law and Zionist type or Apostolic as the church of the spirit. West’s distinction rings true, because the Ethiopian type of church broke away from the Anglican Church and still follow the same doctrine as mainline churches (Monyai, 1980:339). Apostolic/Zionist churches, on the other hand, do not have a specific doctrine that is directly link to mainline churches (Monyai, 2007:9).

Among many AICs churches the most popular ones in South Africa, formed and led by black Africans, are: the Zion Christian Church, started in 1910 by Ignatius Lekganyane (Anderson, 2001:288); St. Johns Apostolic Faith Mission in 1939 (Landsman, 2006:1); and the Nazareth Baptist Church (amaNazareth) of Shembe, founded in 1911 (Flanagan, 1981:209). The International Pentecostal Church (IPC) was founded in 1962 by Frederic Modise. The next section describes the involvement of women in these churches.

4.6 SOUTH AFRICAN INDEPENDENT CHURCHES AND MISSIO DEI

4.6.1 Apostolic Faith Mission

The major religious split in South Africa came in March 1903, when Le Roux resigned from the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) and joined the Zionist assembly. Le Roux was known as the black father of black Zionism that welcomed black people to express their experiences in the church (Sundkler, 1976:31). He was deeply influenced by Dowie’s Zionist church, which was part of the Pentecostal church in Johannesburg in 1895. Dowie’s church originated in the United States of American that gave birth to most AICs in South Africa, believing in the gifts of the Holy Spirit and healing by the Holy Spirit.

In his new church of Zion prophecy, healing and speaking in tongues were important. They contributed a great deal to women’s spiritual liberation. They allowed women to express

themselves in an African religion regardless of gender and culture. African culture, like patriarchal culture, did not allow women all the rights given men because of their menstrual blood. In African religions women took part as sorcerers, witches, diviners, herbalists, priests and midwives (Anyinam, 1997:103). Women were in leadership positions and rose to be very influential in roles to the benefit of the church and community (Mapuranga, 2013:75)

The integration of healing into the gospel attracted most indigenous churches that call themselves Zionist (Nel, 2005:4). The Zion branches of the Apostolic Church formed part of the Faith Mission Church (Burger, 1987:225). The first Headquarters of Apostolic Faith Mission was called Zion church in Johannesburg. Other prominent leaders connected to this church were Daniel Nkonyane who formed Christian Catholic Apostolic Holy Spirit Church in Zion in 1910. Edward Motaung formed Zion Apostolic Faith Mission in 1920. Elias Mahlangu formed the Zion Apostolic Church of South Africa in 1917. Paulo Mabilitsa followed in 1920 by originating the Apostolic Church in Zion. Then Ignatius Lekganyane in 1925 formed the Zion Christian Church (Anderson, 2001:97).

They have their roots in Pentecostal churches led by Pieter le Roux and Dowie from America. Le Roux was concerned about sick members of his congregation. As a result he tried to create a new form of worship service for such members. In his previous church he had black woman who left one of his services because she was unable to express her gifts and experience in the church (Sundkler 1976:7). This gifted women needed the church which can relate well with her African tradition. In his new service members were able free to express joy in an African way. While taking into consideration African people had their own rhythm and expression of praising in an African way. He led about 2000 Zulu members in the church established by him and his wife (Le Roux, 2007:4). That attracted many women in his church as they had freedom to praise freely in an African way.

4.6.2 St John Apostolic Faith Mission

The other prominent member, who started her African Apostolic Church in South Africa as a former member of the Dutch Reformed Church, was Christina Manku. Christina and her husband Lazarus were baptized in 1924 into the Apostolic Faith Mission. Manku named her new church St. John Apostolic Faith Mission in 1939. She was gifted in healing and prophecy ministry (Landman, 2006:7).

Before she founded her church, she was sick and sought healing from different sources who prayed for her. Nkitseng and his brother Ismael prayed for the healing of Mme Manku. This powerful prayer led to Manku having a vision that urged her to build a church for God, which she

did in Evaton in the west of Johannesburg and became one of the first women to own a church. Her reputation drew the sick from all over Southern Africa (Thomas, 1997:65). Healing centres were established where patients could be treated until completely recovered. Women participated in caring for these patients and were known to have great compassion for the sick.

Quinn (2002:65) relates how the African churches permitted women to minister and provide a welcoming environment to other gifted women. Their female prophets were elevated to the status of lady bishop, which is only common in the African churches. These African Churches clearly show how they highly regard women in their churches. Church founder Mother Manku was regarded as one of the African saints, as she was known as a prayer woman and hundreds of people were reported to be healed at her ministry. This selfless mother did not seek fame or fortune for her healing prayers and her fee was a shilling per consultation. The little money she accrued from consulting patients aided her to build 70 churches throughout South Africa (Thomas, 1997:65).

Although women are predominant in this church, it does have elements of patriarchy and still have tasks that are only reserved for men. Just like in Islam, there are AICs where a man has to be requested to lead with prayer at the beginning of a service if men are present, as a token of respect (Colin, 2010:12). They continue to be influenced by models of leadership in African culture that recognise man as the head of the family (Molobi, 2011:5). It is by choice that men are given men respect; perhaps patriarchal culture still rules over them. Women serve at the church according to the gift granted to her by God.

Founders of AICs who are married often appoint their husbands as a bishop of the church. Regardless of these shortcomings, women are still regarded as leaders and are seated around the table as leaders of the church during services. West (1972:24) attests of Mrs. Mkhize being appointed as prophet and lady bishop of the Bethsaida Healing Faith Mission. Men and women are both engaged and carry out the same duties. Women are enjoy equal status with men and permitted to take over their husbands' work, as lady bishops or lady ministers, when their husband passes away. Women seldom have to wait for their husband to pass on, before qualifying to be a lady bishop. Both men and women plant churches, because they both experience the Holy Spirit (Mwaura, 2005:422).

4.6.3 Zion Christian Church

Lekganyane Engenas was the founding leader of the Zion Apostolic Church and officially started his church in 1923 (Monyai, 2007:222). He was known as a unique prophet, with special gifts. Anderson (1999:287) alleges that Engenas Lekganyane was baptised with the Holy Spirit, which

is similar to the teaching of the Pentecostal church in the Apostolic Faith Mission and the Assemblies of God. He was influenced by the “black father”, P.L. le Roux, as he came to be known within the African Faith Mission. They were all rooted in the Pentecostal church (Stuart, 2008:19).

According to Martey (2005:2), the gospel of Jesus Christ brought transformation to the oppressed Africans and brought them to the realisation that they are the bearers of *imago Dei*. African churches started to use both culture and gospel to participate in God mission. Lekganyane alleviated poverty by developing economic independence among African people, by establishing a mill that catered to farmers from nearby villages and employed 180 people. Women were part of these programmes. Education also became an important aspect for liberating poor children from poverty. He established the Khotso Bursary Fund to support poor children at the University of the North in 1985 (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 1999).

Similar to Mme Manku, healing centres were opened offering care for the sick and became another avenue for women to participate. Apart from the miracles performed in 1944, when he (Stuart, 2008:19) healed a crippled young man and a barren woman in 1947, he also blessed various objects that members used for protection.

The major initiative of African churches is their contextualisation of the gospel, songs, liturgy, worship, prayers and praise in the African way, i.e. songs and praise were expressed in an African rhythm and way. The choir sings from ZCC hymns from Songs of Zion. They express their joy with hand clapping, drum beating and moving their bodies during services in order to lead the service to a deeper level of spirituality (Siwella, 2015:71).

Although ancestral veneration has only been touched on and not described in depth, the continued influence on patriarchal culture of the male ancestor who established a particular church cannot be disregarded. Ancestral veneration also include Jesus Christ, as the first Ancestor above the rest, to many. This information is supported by scholars like Nyamiti (1998:131), who relates that Christ’s Sonship makes him a brother to black people and an ancestor to them. Bediako (1995:217) expresses a similar sentiment in the assertion that Christ can be deemed the Supreme Ancestor of Africans by virtue of his “incarnation, death, resurrection and ascension into the realm of Spirit power”.

This belief cannot be dismissed in view of the Roman Catholic Church bestowal of sainthood on certain members, since it encouraged Africans to retain ancestor veneration. This veneration is not of Christian origin, but some ancestors are like saints in that they lived a holy life and in close relationship with God. They believe that prayer will be answered, because they have been made

perfect in Christ and thus feel comfortable in expressing their needs through prayer through their solidarity with God (Shorter, 1983:161). Jebadu (2007:5) confirms that the “Catholic faith tradition believes all those who died in Christ are believed to have been with God, including the so-called ancestors and angels, they are God’s friends in heaven”.

All of these factors contributed to Africans refusing to abandon their ancestral roots. Molobi (2005:5) explains how the rejection of traditional roots can be disrespectful to your parents and ancestors, who were good to their children while they were alive. The traditionalist still feels a sense of shame for rejecting his parents after death. In contrast, Stinton (2004:156-157) outlines the critique of "Christ as Ancestor" as follows:

- “There is a danger that conceiving of Christ as an Ancestor may actually encourage people to think of their ancestors as intermediaries, while the scriptures clearly teach that we have just one mediator between God and humanity: Jesus Christ.
- Africans may be encouraged to actually worship the ancestors and place them in a position that only God should hold by offering to them sacrifices and oblations.
- It seems to make Jesus just another human being rather than God-incarnate.”

Female leaders in African churches are growing in numbers. It is important to highlight the position of Jesus Christ as God, not ancestor. He was a healer and most female leaders draw strength from Jesus Christ to aid them in healing their patients, but He cannot be regarded as an ancestor - He is God.

Stinton’s (2004:156-157) argument is a warning to African Christians to guard against syncretism, when relating Christ to African ancestors. Africans should clearly understand that Christ is God and will never be the equivalent of ancestors. He is the only mediator between God and humanity. As Paul confirms in 1 Timothy 2:5, Christ is the only mediator and ancestors cannot be regarded in the same light.

Although most AICs believe in ancestral veneration, they should not jeopardise the context of the Word. According to Landman (2013:3), the role of women in the ZCC church is still minimal. They cannot fill leadership positions, such as pastors or elders, and remain subject to patriarchal principles. The main task of women in church is to pray and sing. Women are separated from Mokhukhu (male choirs), because the ZCC keeps to traditional patriarchal values (Ramogale & Galane, 1997:1). The Biblical substantiation for separating men from women is cited as 1 Corinthians 11:7-9 that reads as follows:

“Man reflects the image and glory of God. But woman reflects the glory of man; for man was not created from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for woman's sake, but woman was created for man's sake.”

The above statement clearly shows that some African churches still follow the patriarchal interpretation of the Bible, in which its teachings are placed within the context of African tradition and customs (Shoko, 2006:5). It is a worldview that marginalises women. In other African churches the very same law that govern at home is also applied in the church. These churches hide the influence of cultural tradition behind Bible verses (Molobi, 2008:289-308). Some African churches remain traditionalist and have a different attitude towards women.

4.6.4 The Saviour Church of Ghana

African churches vary immensely in how they treat women. The above church is one of AIC churches that still cite the passages of Paul in the New Testament that refute the equality of male and female. Literal translations of texts serve to marginalise women and exclude them from the *missio Dei*. Asare-Danso (2011:143) provides an extensive description of the perception of women in the Saviour Church of Ghana: “Female members are not allowed to play active role in the church. They are not allowed to contribute to discussions or deliberations unless they have been given the chance to explain an issue or to answer a question.

Women are to bow to males when they find themselves in the presence of men...women are to clean their husband's feet...women are not supposed to exchange angry words with their husbands, women are required to seek clarification on issues from their own husbands behind closed doors. Married women are expected to cover their heads with veil at all-time in order to help them with sanctify and glorify Christian womanhood.”

It is clear from the above statement that not all African churches have turned away from patriarchal culture and African women still struggle for human rights. Despite the initiatives of AICs to liberate women, many continue to be marginalised.

4.7 MARGINALISATION OF WOMEN IN AICS WITHIN AN AFRICAN WORLDVIEW AND THE CURRENT STATUS OF WOMEN

Africa is a multicultural continent. African culture has positive features that can benefit women, but the same culture can also hold tremendous disadvantages for them. This state of affairs is also noted by researchers such as Masenya (2004), Landman (1994) and Mudimeli (2011) as mentioned under chapter 1(1.12). According to a report on religion in South Africa and around the world (Writer: 2015), South Africa is 80% Christians and is a good number of Christians who can

show justice toward men and women, as God shows to all. It is the role of Christian believers to act as facilitators to redeem God's people from loneliness, anxiety, disease and family conflict as well as share their wealth with the poor that women are not subjected to undesirable marriages for economic reasons (Nurnberger, 2007:25). Patriarchal African culture generally marginalises women and influences the way they are treated in society as well as in certain churches. The following factors impact negatively on the current status of women in some AICs and have led certain communities to discredit women.

4.7.1 Polygamy in African Independent Churches (AICs)

The IPCC and ZCC are two of the AICs that support polygamy at present (Molobi, 2006:10). Since the IPCC (led by Frederick Modise) broke away from the ZCC, they have common spiritual beliefs and African cultural values.

There are members who consider polygamy as a method to alleviate poverty, in that a wealthy man can provide for and sustain poor women within the same church. Such a man can marry up to seven women, as long as he can afford to provide for them. Edward Lekganyane had 23 wives (Verwey, 1995:134).

Polygamy is one of the hindrances to women's advancement in churches, because of its effect on gender equality. While polygamy emerged as part of the African culture, some believe it empowers women and also that "there are not enough men in world for all the African women" (Erastus, 2010). Yet, it also affects the opinion of women's role within the church, because the husband has authority over all decisions.

In Zimbabwe polygamous marriage allows the husband to own large family assets, like land and houses. Wives are only entitled to kitchen utensils in the case of a divorce (Pswarayi, 2012). Married women are forced to remain submissive in polygamous marriages and are consequently deemed incapable of leading the church, always relegated to a subordinate position. African feminism oppose polygamy, arguing that polygamy does not empower women and in fact encourages the superiority of men (Okome, 1999).

4.7.2 Traditionalist - Polygamy in African Tribal Customs

Polygamy is still practiced in Africa and can be categorised into two types: The first is when a man marries a number of women and the second type when a man has a "secret" wife of which the first wife is aware. The man can have children with this woman and support them just like he supports the children he has with his first wife (Zulu, 2015:90). President Zuma is a well-known practitioner of polygamy.

It was on 16 April 2012 that Holgate (2012) reported that President Jacob Zuma married his 6th wife. To some tribes polygamy is the norm. Traditionalists still follow the customary law of sharing a wealthy husband to gain financial security. Socio-economic liberation can thus serve to promote communal African relationships and polygamy. Culturally, an African man consider having many wives and children a sign of wealth, but polygamy degrades women.

Women are still raped in polygamous marriage, even though the husband has more than one wife. Men seeking to show their power over women consider women to be there for their pleasure. Mdyogolo (2014) relate, in her City Press column called If Khwezi could speak, how Khwezi was humiliated and bad-mouthed after accusing President Zuma of rape. Violence against women and rape statistics still reflect the violation of the Human Rights Bill and there is little hope of improving patriarchal dominance as long as polygamy is practised.

Although the Bible speaks of many polygamists, it is descriptive not prescriptive. It is thus debatable whether polygamy is biblical or the disobedience of God's people and oppressive to women. Abraham, our father, only had one wife and it was this wife, Sarah, who allowed Hagar to bear him a child. It was not Abraham's choice, but a barren Sarah who did this out of fear and the reason Abraham agreed to send Hagar and her son away. Abraham married Katura (Genesis 25:1) after Sarah's death (Genesis 23:19). David's house was troubled by rivalry, because of his many wives. His sons, from his different wives, did not have peace (2 Samuel 13; 1 Kings 2:3). Even Jacob was deceived by his father in law, Laban, and only wanted to marry his beloved Rachel (Genesis 29:20). God created one man for one woman. He shall not multiply wives for himself or else his heart will turn away.

Furthermore, Christ (Mark 10:6-8) taught that "man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife...the two will become one flesh". Christ never referred to man and women, which serves to prove that God did not approve of polygamy. God made the first couple, not the first polygamous couple. He made male and female, joining them in marriage, not male and females. The Bible even protects marriage in Hebrews 13:4 that reads "marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge". Further still, the 10th commandment speaks of monogamy by saying "you shall not covet your neighbor's wife" (Exodus 20:17), it does not say You shall not covet your neighbour's wives and further evidence that God does not support polygamy. God protected Sarah against Pharaoh's adultery (Genesis 20:3) and Paul told the elders of the church to have one wife (1 Timothy 3:2). Oni (1996:59) thus rightly asserts that polygamy in Africa marginalises women for the following reasons:

- There are more conflicts and tension between the wives.

- They quarrel because of jealousy and favouritism.
- The senior wife may bear a grudge against young wives.
- The senior wife and young wife are not treated equally.
- There are divisions among the children.
- The man spends very little time with each wife.
- It degrades the women to slave to pleasure the man.

A husband and wife must be submissive to each other, they are equals, and this impossible if the wife is degraded by polygamy. Women in the following situations are denied their human dignity, when forced to participate in these practices.

4.7.3 Arranged early marriages

Arranged early marriage is when a woman marries a man who is chosen by her parents against her will, although she may have a preference for a man with certain characteristics, as dictated by culture. Some tribes force their children to be married off, by elderly people, before the age of 18. Child marriage is most common in poor rural communities and most are forced to leave school for this reason. It bears severe health risks related to early sexual activity and complications during childbearing. No precaution is even taken against sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV, and domestic violence (Nour, 2006).

4.7.4 Barren women and women with female children

Barren women and those who bear female children can be victims of polygamous marriages, to ensure the benefit of male children from a second and third wife.

4.7.5 Widow Cleansing

This process differs from country to country. Widow cleansing is an old practice that was used to discriminate women. It is common in Kenya that the widow undergoes sexual cleansing with a brother of her husband or other relative or with a village cleanser, before she got married again by the brother or other relative of her deceased husband. They ascribe to myth that the ghost of her husband will follow and haunt her (Zulu, 2015:92). The widow has no choice but to agree to this humiliating practice. Another custom that marginalises women is female circumcision.

4.7.6 Female circumcision

Female circumcision degrades women and beats down their self-esteem. According to Van Zyl (1994:1):

“Women and young girls are not enjoying their constitutional right if they are forced to circumcise because of culture. The significance of circumcision is for a girl or woman to gain status from girlhood to womanhood and the readiness for marriage. Female circumcision is the partial or total removal of the external female genital. It is known to be a form of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment that is so painful that it causes young girls to faint during the ritual.”

The research from (UNFPA, 2015:1) alleged that:

“there are long-term consequences which include anaemia, the formation of cysts and abscesses, keloid scar formation, damage to the urethra resulting in urinary incontinence, dyspareunia (painful sexual intercourse), sexual dysfunction, hypersensitivity of the genital area, increased risk of HIV transmission, complications during childbirth, as well as psychological effects.”

The other myth is that it “used to ensure virginity until marriage but primarily to take away all sexual desires and any sexual gratification including masturbation” (Monagan, 2010:168).

Female circumcision can be classified as follows (Cook, 2002:282):

- “Type I: Partial or total removal of the clitoris and/or the prepuce (clitoridectomy).
- Type II: Partial or total removal of the clitoris and the labia minora, with or without excision of the labia majora (excision).
- Type III: Narrowing of the vaginal orifice with creation of a covering seal by cutting and a positioning the labia minora and/or the labia majora, with or without excision of the clitoris (infibulation).”

UNICEF (2013) reported in July 2014 the circumcision of more than 125 million girls and women, in 29 countries in Africa and the Middle East. This is a violation of Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that states that all people have the right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being. All these laws were influenced by God’s commandments. The above statement reflects how the culture of female circumcisions degrades young women. It makes young women lose self-esteem and feel inferior from a tender age. It should be their right

to choose circumcision and not a forced custom. The following section addresses prostitution. It is detrimental to society, but some claim that circumstances leave them no choice.

4.7.7 Prostitution

Prostitution is a form of exploitation, but to some women it is how they support their families. The Medical Research Council (MRC) reports that up to 3 600 women could be raped in South Africa every day (Jones & Nicholson, 2013) and even three-month old babies have suffered this trauma at the hand of a family member. The rate of sexual violence in South Africa is among the highest in the world (Qumbisa, 2013), ascribed inter alia to the new cultural myth in the country that sexual intercourse with children can cure AIDS (Flanagan, 2001). These statistics reflect that the level of sexual violence against women is not decreasing at all, a further degradation of women. It speaks of the way women have been treated in the past and continue to be degraded within the community, despite the high rate of Christianity in Africa.

4.7.8 Young girl's employment

The status of young girls' employment in Africa affects their future. Patriarchal culture jeopardises young girls' chances to obtain an education and be leaders of the church and accounts for the low rate of female leadership in the church. It demeans young girls and will never mould a young girl into a self-confident and independent woman, if she is set to work at a tender age. More girls should be educated so that the world can move away from patriarchal culture and its barriers. Africa has the world's highest rate of child labour and especially tragic, because young children are not fully developed mentally. More than 40% of children aged 5-14 have already entered the labour force, while in 2008 the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) reported the rise in teenage pregnancy at 62% in South Africa (Ramulumo & Pitsoe, 2013). This shows that patriarchal influence still exists and needs to change. The country has a long way to go to protect young girls.

It beats down their self-esteem and makes them feel inferior, because of their lack of education. They will forever consider themselves inadequate, since high-level employment usually requires a certain degree of education. This is even true of certain positions in the church that require a level of education to interpret Scriptural texts. Therefore, being subject to a particular worldview becomes the culture of that environment to the disadvantage of some. It is these circumstances that create a sense of inferiority among young girls who are employed at tender age. This shows that patriarchal culture is still deep rooted and it needs to change. The country still has a long way to go in order to prepare young girls to be leaders of the church and society at large.

There has been a degree of improvement in gender equality and female empowerment since 1994. Passing new laws such as the Employment Equity Act grants women particular employment

rights and new measures by the justice system protects women against any type of abuse. Programmes have been launched in aid of vulnerable children, the elderly, disabled and sick. Although women are not yet fully liberated politically, they do enjoy economic and religious freedom. The different organisations that fight for human rights are to be welcomed, among which are the African Union (AU), African Gender Institute, NGO's, Feminist Africa, SACC and the like. It is also the task of the church to change the face of the world and be a prophetic voice of God. Justice is what God does and justice is what God is. Through Jesus Christ, God's mission was to bring justice to the oppressed and solve the social problems related to culture. The Bible is God's voice that can be used to help the whole world.

Although the Bible is God's revelation and his commands for a just and equal society, it is hampered by erroneous interpretation. Mudimeli (2011:21) believes that the chief aspects that hinders women to assume leadership positions in the church, such as priests and bishops, are the various wrong hermeneutical interpretations of the Bible and culture. Certain structures of the church requires a trained or educated person to conduct the correct hermeneutical exegesis. This will help women to understand their fundamentalist hermeneutical right. The church needs mature gifted leaders who have the capacity to interpret the Bible, in different languages and cultures (Excellence, 2005:18). AICs fundamentalist hermeneutics negatively affect the church at times. They contextualise Christianity according to African custom, i.e. wearing veils in the church has become a doctrine of the church. Wearing a veil in church is a choice, not canonical law any more.

Training women or educating women for their ministerial formation should not prevent women to be the voice of the poor, the sick and the powerless (Maimela, 1998:139).

4.8 COLONISATION AND POLITICS IN RELIGION

4.8.1 Background of Apartheid

Religion suffered under Apartheid and indirectly influenced the birth of AICs. The policy of Apartheid, which promoted racial segregation in churches, was called heresy by South African churches. Apartheid was well known before the National Party rose to power in 1948. There were mainline churches who opposed the policy that oppressed black people during Apartheid. Huddleston, Collins, Reeves and a few other white clerics were forced to leave South Africa, but played key roles in awakening the conscience of Christians in Europe to the evils of Apartheid and the need to support the anti-Apartheid regime (De Gruchy, 2004:6-17).

Among the ways Apartheid oppressed black women to a greater extent, as referred to under 4.7.1, were:

- The Land Act of 1936 only allowed black people to occupy 13% of land in South Africa (Department of Rural Development, 1913).
- The establishment of “Bantustans” in the 1960s: Bantu Education was designed to keep blacks submissive to white interests (South African Union, 1953).
- At Sharpeville, on 21 March 1960, the police shot 69 black people, mainly women (Essa & Pather, 2015).
- Soweto uprising of 1976 (Burke, 2016)

South Africa was governed by an evil Apartheid structure that justified the oppression they inflicted with erroneous hermeneutical exegesis. Cloots (1999:235) relates that according to the TRC report the “Dutch Reformed Church provided a theological justification of apartheid, claiming that it was God's will and that the Bible supported it”. In colonial Africa, factors that affected women were the imposing of discriminatory laws of lower wages for women than men, the loss of land because of forced removals, prohibition of interracial marriage and the denial of all property rights to black people (Parry, 2006:88). The discriminatory laws were brought from overseas to Africa by settlers. African people could not express their Christianity freely in African terms (Ayegboyin & Ishola, 1997:22-23). Even worse, all African people were oppressed in their own land by being denied equal education and being socially segregated (Anderson, 2001: 277).

4.8.2 New paradigm shift from racial discrimination in religion that affected women

Despite the theological confusion of whether Apartheid is Biblical or not, some white theologians fought against the cruelty of Apartheid. Marais and Keet were among the grounded theologians that believed that Scripture does not teach the division of the church of Christ on the grounds of race and colour. Ben Marais and B. Keet expressed their opposition to this regime around 1940 and 1950 (Burnell, 2013). Both black and white people formed different organisations in opposition to Apartheid. Beyers Naudé initiated the Christian Institute, which the government banned in 1977.

Others that made an impact were the black consciousness movement and black theology followed by the SACC, which was later lead by Anglican Bishop Desmond Tutu (Villa-Vicencio, 1982:84). The South African Council of Churches (SACC) is an interdenominational forum in South Africa and was a prominent anti-Apartheid organisation. The SACC was part of the World Alliance of

Reformed Churches (WARC)¹⁶, which had fellowship with more than 200 churches that sought to dismantle Apartheid.

Black people kept on returning to the Bible as source of information and the hope of liberation given by Paul in the New Testament, “for freedom Christ has set us free” (Galatians 5:1).

Apartheid also affected the religion expression of black women, as the following section describes.

4.9 GENDER PERSPECTIVE ON WOMEN DURING THE APARTHEID REGIME

During Apartheid women oppressed each other in the Methodist church. Their women’s organisations reflected the racial divisions of Apartheid amongst women. The Manyano organisation in the Methodist church belonged to black women in their uniform, which symbolised their identity, white women belonged to the Auxiliary and Coloured women to the Women's Association. Methodist woman were struggling to gain a leadership role in the church. Segregation in the church weakened endeavours undertaken toward the missio Dei, given that progress was impeded from many corners of the church. It segregated believers from living in fellowship with one another. Believers did not practise what they preached, because the faith of a true believer is colour blind. Herzfeld (1975:233) counts white power and white racism among the demons Christ came to conquer with his ministry.

Besides racial divisions, Theilen (2004:78) alleges that Pamela Delport (Coloured) struggled to find her identity in her role as President of the Women’s Association. Theilen (2004:78) records her description of how discrimination led to her dissatisfaction as follows:

“You actually felt that there was no place you belonged. What we often said was that we were too black to be white and too white to be black. We sat on the fence. We struggled to find identity in the community of the colored cultural community. We struggled not to get an inferiority complex because we were made aware of the fact that you were not of the upper class. And then besides not being financially secure as well - it made matters even worse. So, you would find that there were a lot of Coloureds, women that had a complex.”

Gaitskell (1997:270) similarly indicates the racial discrimination that separated women’s organisations in the Anglican and Methodist churches. In contrast, there were heroic white women who did not support Apartheid. Elizabeth Petersen of the Anglican church contributed in a broken

¹⁶ WARC declared publicly that “apartheid is a sin, and that the moral and theological justification of it is a travesty of the Gospel and, in its persistent disobedience to the Word of God, a theological heresy (De Gruchy & Villa-Vicencio, 1983:170).

society by caring for abused women of different races in 1993 (Petersen & Swarts, 2009:9). She opened a shelter for abused women in her area, in order to demonstrate the love of Christ, in the midst of the turmoil of post-Apartheid. Janie Swarts also contributed in a local congregation, by partnering with business and non-governmental agencies to launch job creation programmes for unemployed women from poor communities (Petersen & Swart, 2009:17).

Many women have not healed from the wounds of Apartheid that lasted from 1948-1994 and its legacy. These suffering women still need to address the challenges that keep them from participating freely in their particular churches.

Although some churches have accepted women as leaders, women continue to be prevented from assuming the highest position in the church on the grounds of gender, colour and race. The new dispensation holds the possibility of dethroning culture through human rights legislation that may free women from oppression.

4.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter shows that Western churches did not make Africans feel at home and Apartheid also contributed to the birth of AICs, by means of which women have empowered themselves. Healing and prophecy are the main features in AICs. Women are not yet fully involved in the *missio Dei* in African churches like St. John Apostolic Church and Faith Mission and Pentecostal churches. Women continue to be marginalised by patriarchal culture, in that they cannot take the position of archbishop while their husbands are still alive. They are the pillars of the church. Traditional women still adhere to their African culture and treat their husband as the head of the household, even having established churches. The position of archbishop remain the provenance of men, although women are in the majority. Women have nevertheless initiated something that makes them feel at home as Africans.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

Patriarchal culture had a marked influence on African culture and thus some African churches still deny women the opportunity to be leaders inside the church, e.g. the ZCC and The Saviour Church of Ghana. Since patriarchal culture and other external forces continue to shape our worldview, women will always be oppressed in their endeavours to participate in the missio Dei. As long as gender still determines who can be called for the missio Dei, the missio Dei will never conform to God's will. It is God who set forth this mission, not gender. The Bill of Rights, of the Constitution, gives ample opportunity to address all the issues.

5.1 CULTURE AND RELIGION IN THE MISSIO DEI

There is substantial evidence that women participated in God's mission, regardless of patriarchal culture that was used to limit female involvement in religion. Research reveals that patriarchal culture may have excluded women from the missio Dei, but God never hindered them in this way. Women have managed to participate in God's mission, irrespective of patriarchal culture. The Bill of Human Rights also encourages gender equality (Baden et al., 1999:11). The Commission on Gender Equality promote equality among all and does not limit it to race, gender, wealth or religion. Patriarchal culture serves as deciding factor in excluding women from the missio Dei. There has been a paradigm shift in which women are accepted in all structures of a number of churches. Yet the Roman Catholic Church, Orthodox church and some AICs continue to fall back on patriarchal culture to exclude women from certain positions in the church.

Christianity was accepted after entering Africa in the late first century and spread to other parts of Africa. Missionaries converted many people to Christianity (Hexham, 2001:6). The gospel was appreciated as the good news for all humanity regardless of gender, age or race. The new paradigm of Christianity influenced African culture to its benefit.

5.2 SLOW PACE OF PARADIGM SHIFT

The paradigm is slowly shifting, in the sense that women are now acknowledged and permitted to take leadership positions in some mainline churches and AICs, but there are still a range of challenges. The church must testify and make God known as the One that calls and the One that emphasises the equality of men and women that they may both take part in the missio Dei to transform the world.

5.2.1 A preliminary paradigm

According to the Merriam Webster Dictionary (2016), the word paradigm is of Greek origin. Paradigm shift can be defined as the way of changing belief, attitude or changing a way of doing things. Bosch (1991) relates, in his *Transforming Mission*, paradigm shift to the mission of God. The new paradigm refers to the change in theological thinking. The history of religion moves from a modern missionary movement to the establishment of the church. This movement does not depend on its canons of rationality, but is identified as the reign of God (Bosch, 1991:363). It does not mean that the old paradigm will completely disappear, because in Christianity the old culture remains applicable. Bosch (2011:186) observes that the new movement from the primitive Christianity to the Christianity of the 21st century will not present the same. Christian theologies are affected by a number of factors which are ecclesiastical tradition, personal context, social position and culture (Bosch, 2011:186).

5.3 NEW PARADIGM AND FINDINGS

Some Protestant churches have enabled women to become deacons, priests and bishops in the 21st century. The Roman Catholic Church and Orthodox Church have appointed women in high positions of the church, except for ordination into the Holy Order. The New American Catholic Church that transgressed the Canon Law 1024 by ordaining female priests in 2002, responded to women's vocations. African churches have been founded by women, but there is still room for improvement in the manner women can serve God according to their special gifts.

The resistance to the theological ecclesiology at the base of the church structure that prevents women from being promoted to the highest level of the hierarchy of the church contributed to the birth of feminist theology. Feminist theology endeavoured to encourage churches to allow women to serve God in all positions of the church

Feminist theology point out that the Old and New Testament influences the marginalisation of women from serving God in all structures of the church and that certain biblical texts are distorted in order to exclude women in the *missio Dei* (Hadebe, 1999:54).

The church has used the Bible to close the gap of exclusion that was created by patriarchal culture and hermeneutical misinterpretation of the Bible, by emphasising that the Bible must be read from God's viewpoint without gender bias. The new missionary thinking is that since God is a missionary, "God's people are a missionary people" (Bosch, 1991:381). Missionary people are both men and women. God did not assign priesthood to his people on the basis of gender (cf. 1 Peter 2:9).

5.4 Recommendations

- Culture should not become the way through which the church determines the suitable gender for God's mission.
- Christianity must transform culture from within, so that it is no longer used to discriminate against in terms of gender.
- God calls and uses people for his mission irrespective of gender.
- Joel's prophecy will be fulfilled when both genders are accepted to participate in the missio Dei.
- The pilgrim church should be the eschatological community that in anticipating the New Jerusalem, train people to take up their calling irrespective of their gender. All people must serve God at all levels of leadership in God's Church.
- The leaders of the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Church should act in persona Christi to prevent women from being side-lined.
- African churches should use the preliminary paradigm to accommodate both genders in the missio Dei.

5.5 CONCLUSION

This research has addressed the erroneous hermeneutical interpretation and patriarchal dominance that are used by the church and patriarchal culture to deny women the opportunity to freely serve in the missio Dei. The research has also highlighted the shift in paradigm away from patriarchal culture in mainline churches and African churches. Churches must demonstrate this by their openness to women in leadership positions.

It should always borne in mind that context and culture define hermeneutics and understanding. Most mainline churches have improved in the interpreting of biblical texts to the extent that they no longer silence women, but allow them to serve God unimpeded and has aided the church in revising doctrine from its former traditional patriarchal nature to one that conforms to the Gospel of Christ, who liberated women across the centuries. The hermeneutical understanding of Scripture has helped women be accepted in the missio Dei.

Women need to liberate themselves through education, previously denied them, to enable them to assume leadership positions in society and politics as well as pastoral or priestly tasks (Mapuranga, 2013:5).

Participation of women in society, the economy, politics and religion has been of great benefit to society. Women still lack a prophetic voice in Africa's churches, which makes it important to allow women to serve God freely (Ndukwe, 2015:381).

Patriarchal culture remains firmly entrenched and men continue to be viewed as first-class citizens, leaders, decision makers, heads of family, providers and protectors (Theron, 2015:60). A theme for future research could be how the church can challenge culture that polarises the mission of God. Jesus chose women to be the first witnesses to his resurrection (John 20:11). The church needs to open its arms to women being witnesses as pastors, deacons and priestesses. God seeks to transform his people.

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