

Gender equality in top management (C-suite): a Christian-ethical perspective

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ABSTRACT

Gender balance in the Western world has made significant progress over the last few decades, and is now reflected in many parts of society, spanning from higher education, legal rights and obligations, and to some extent, access to work life. However, within the corporate world, differences are still reported in areas such as compensation, career progress and leadership roles. In top management, also referred to as the C-suite level in the corporate world, women are still a minority, not reflecting the proportional number of women within higher educational institutions or the number of women in the lower corporate ranks. The number of women in C-suite roles is surprisingly low, despite research showing the benefits of having women in leadership roles, with respect to financial output, overall performance, improved governance, increased talent pool, etc. The corporate world's commitment to gender balance and change is often shared on paper; however, it is hard to track in real life as progress is slow, and good intentions lack actions. This dissertation focuses on the lack of gender balance at the top corporate echelons from a constructive Christian-ethical point of view. It addresses the biblical support for equality in line with the Reformed paradigm. The path to gender balance at C-suite level includes a strategy ensuring that all corporate processes, internal and external, embed steps that support a recruitment process that appreciates gender diversity. It also includes a commitment to influencing lawmakers and other extra-organisational stakeholders towards awareness of the internal working environment and grooming of talent, including the appointment of candidates to various roles, while balancing the influence of unconscious bias and stereotypy. Principles to guide these steps are proposed under the name Gender Appreciative Recruitment Practice (GARP) offering a constructive process based on the foundations of Scripture, as expressed under the Reformed paradigm. A general recommendation to decision-makers and other relevant stakeholders as to the ways in which GARP might operate in real life is included.

Key terms:

Gender equality, C-suite, leadership, recruitment, women's careers, female leaders, business ethics, Gender Appreciative Recruitment Practice (GARP).

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background and problem statement

1.1.2. Background

Whereas the quest for gender equality in many parts of life is showing progress, research shows that it is within the economic sphere where we find the most challenging gap to close (WEF, 2016).

The World Economic Forum updated its Gender Gap Report in 2016 showing that the overall equality gap between men and women may be closed in *only* 83 years, while the most challenging gap, being the economic sphere, will need another 170 years to close. The report focuses on projecting the time needed to close the gap between women and men in employment, education, health and politics. With respect to the reported progress towards economic equality, the report shows a global slowdown in 2016, e.g., the economic participation and opportunity sub-index dipped to 59%, being the lowest point since 2008, hence, the global economic gender gap is not forecasted to close until the year 2186 (WEF, 2016).

The slowdown is reported to be partly due to imbalances in salaries: women around the world on average earn half of what men earn for the same work despite working longer hours. A drop in women's labour force participation is also influencing the slowdown, with women's participation standing at 54% compared to 81% for men. This is despite the fact that women attend university in equal or higher numbers than men in 95 countries (GEM, 2016).

The number of women in senior positions also continues to be low, with only four countries (Jamaica, Colombia, Ghana and Barbados) having equal numbers of male and female legislators, senior officials and managers (WEF, 2017). Although women make up half the world's population (ca 51%), they only occupied 15% of global board positions in 2015 (Eastman, Rallis and Mazzucchelli, 2016). This includes positive changes driven by legislation in countries like Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, India, Italy, Kenya, Norway and Spain that have all introduced mandatory quotas

through legislation to improve the gender balance on the boards of public companies. Norway, which introduced a quota in 2008, has close to 40% female representation on its boards. In Finland, Sweden and France, approximately one in three board directors are women. Recent studies in Norway show a positive effect on (for example) corporate strategic control in boards with female representation (Nielsen and Huse, 2010), whereas in Sweden, recent research indicates that boards with female representation are less inclined to perform account manipulation (NHH, 2017).

Despite the improvements in board representation, there is still a significant shortage of female CEOs and females in C-suite, that is, the top management or the highest echelons of corporate life. When the term “C-suite” (also referred to as “C-level”) is used in this dissertation, all top management positions in a business unit will be included. An officer holding a C-level position is typically considered to be part of top management; these are the most empowered members of the management and thus also the most influential. Typical tasks at this organisational level include setting the company’s strategy, including making high-stake decisions, combined with securing the daily operations aligned to company strategy.

In 2016, one study reports that women hold only 4% of chief executive roles within Europe's largest 350 public companies (Sabic, 2016). Statistics from the USA show that 44% of the workforce within S&P 500 companies are women; however, the number of women participants in the highest echelons of corporate life is only 5% of the CEOs in S&P 500 companies and only 16.5% of the top executives not including the CEOs (Warner and Corley, 2017; Egan and Ordonez, 2017). Interestingly, however, research suggests that companies with women in leadership positions often out-perform their male-led peers. For example, one report published in 2015 concluded that companies with strong female leadership generated a return on equity of 10.1% per year versus 7.4% for those without (Lee *et al.*, 2015). These findings are echoed in a recent report whereby 11,000 companies were analysed, concluding that companies with a woman in the chief executive or chairman role had performed far better than a major global index over the preceding eight years (Nordea, 2017).

Another study found that while having a female CEO did not in its own directly relate to increased profitability, there was evidence that overall company performance improved where more women held C-suite positions, for example as CEO, CFO or COO. According to this study, an organisation where 30 per cent of its leaders are female could add up to six percentage points to its net profit margin (Noland, Moran and Kotschwar, 2016).

Given these compelling findings, it is tempting to ask why the number of female CEOs and females holding leadership positions has not improved more. Can this be due to gender biases when it comes to leadership roles, or is this solely due to the female's professional preferences (Shields, Zawadzki and Johnson, 2011; Hakim, 2000)? An extension to this question is this: if gender imbalances due to preferences may not appear on the surface as discrimination, but be due to choices made by women, will these preference-driven choices in themselves result in discriminatory practices?

This study will not address the underlying motivations of career choices made by women, but will explore whether the lack of female leaders can be attributed to biblical interpretations, or whether in fact there could be support in Scripture for further gender equality, also at C-suite level. Certainly, we find in Scripture numerous examples of female figures taking part in important actions, where they hold important roles with decisive powers, for example Jael (Judges 4:21), Rahab (Joshua 6:17) and Deborah (Judges 4:4). As such examples of female leadership are found in both testaments, this dissertation will examine whether this could have a bearing on increasing the proportion of women as partakers in the corporate C-suite, based on responsible scriptural interpretation under the Reformed paradigm.

This study is based on the Reformed paradigm and focuses on the corporate realm of the Western world, as this is where the most available research covering the practical aspects of corporate life and hierarchy are currently found. In this dissertation the term *Reformed paradigm* refers to the paradigm that emerged in the European Reformation in the sixteenth century accentuating the authority of Scripture as the guiding principle for faith and life.

1.1.2. Problem statement

In this research project, I will be focusing on the gender balance at C-suite level from a Christian-ethical perspective, wherein different stakeholder categories (Carroll, 1991) will be described and considered.

The main research question I will be addressing in this project will be:

- How should the C-suite gender balance in corporate life be guided in the light of a Christian-ethical perspective?

Sub-questions arising from this main research question are:

- Can the existing lack of gender balance at the corporate C-suite level be seen as morally neutral?
- What Christian-ethical principles are applicable to gender balance at the corporate C-suite level?
- When recruiting to C-suite level in corporates, what practices should be avoided as counteracting Christian-ethical norms?
- When recruiting to C-suite level in corporates, what practices should be encouraged as promoting Christian-ethical norms?
- How can guidelines for recruitment practices to corporate C-suite be developed to correspond with the formulated Christian-ethical principles?

1.1.3. Preliminary literature study

I have performed an initial literature study including the following resources, which I have perused in depth.

Rosalind Miles' (2007) approach to women in history is a natural start for considering the roles that women have played in all aspects of society, including taking on informal and formal leadership positions. Whereas Tikva Frymer-Kensky (1992; 2008) highlights the important roles women played in the Old Testament, Carol Newsom *et al.* (2012) include the women from the New

Testament; hence, both represent valuable research with respect to the biblical perception of women's role in society.

I have also been inspired by the two Catholic feminist theologians, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (1938 –) and Rosemary Radford Ruether (1936 –).

Fiorenza as theologian has contributed substantially to the theological discourse, not least by focusing on questions of biblical and theological epistemology, hermeneutics, rhetoric, and the politics of interpretation, thus being one of the pioneers within the field of biblical interpretation and feminist theology (e.g. Fiorenza, 2013).

Ruether, as theologian has been a highly visible part of the movement supporting women's ordination within the Catholic church, arguing for humanity, and thus inclusion of women as a force against patriarchy (e.g. Ruether, 2005).

In addition to the historical views, current research with respect to leadership theories will be researched (e.g., Boaks and Levine, 2015; Northouse, 2018). An understanding of the potential effects of gender-based social stratification (Bottero, 2005) in addition to linguistic (Levon and Mendes, 2016) can also be of interest.

J.M. Vorster (2004) elaborates on women's participation in society from a human rights and Christian-ethical perspective, and from his authorship I have taken substantial inspiration. Central in Vorster's ethical method is a constructive approach focusing on stewardship through positive actions in society, rather than prohibiting actions by way of negation. In other words, Vorster's theology directs what actions to pursue as opposed to what not to do. For Vorster, it will not be sufficient merely passively to refrain from actions which are prohibited according to scriptural norms. This is evident, for example, in Vorster's (2004) views on how the use of Scripture to "defend gender inequality ... contravenes the essential message of the Bible" (p. 184) as men and women "are equal before God and this equality should be the ethical directive in Christian anthropology" (p. 183). I will also engage with scriptural passages used in defence of gender inequality (e.g., 1 Tim 2:11-12; 1 Cor 14:33-34), in as much as such are deemed relevant to this dissertation.

1.2. Aim and objectives

1.2.1. Aim

The aim of this study is to evaluate gender balance in the corporate C-suite from a theological Christian-ethical perspective, and to propose (if possible) how and which Christian-ethical norms can support further steps to achieve an aspiring gender balance in top management. If possible, recruitment guidelines and proposals to foster gender equality at C-suite level with relevant Christian-ethical considerations will be included.

1.2.2. Objectives

In researching the ways that equality and gender balance can be supported through an aspiring practice that is beneficial from a Christian-ethical perspective, the following objectives should be met:

- Study and evaluate whether moral norms for gender practices can be value-free and neutral;
- Locate scriptural evidence on ethical considerations regarding gender practices and especially the role of women in leadership positions;
- Study and evaluate what recruitment practices relevant to the C-suite should be avoided from a Christian-ethical perspective to prevent gender bias stratification;
- Study and evaluate what recruitment practices should be encouraged from a Christian-ethical perspective to support gender equality in the C-suite;
- Study and evaluate how acceptable Christian-ethical practices could be implemented to support a healthy gender balance in the C-suite.

1.3. Central theoretical argument

The main theological proposition in this dissertation will be that Christian-ethical norms can and should add value to the support of practices which increase gender equality at all levels in an organisation and especially at the C-suite level, and should discourage practices which decrease such gender equality.

1.4. Research design/Methodology

My research will be a comparative literary study, conveyed with deontological Christian-ethical principles derived from Scripture in line with accepted rules of interpretation (McKeever and Ridge, 2009; Bennett, 2010, Vorster, 2007, 2017; Hogan, 1987; Gadamer, 2004).

This dissertation will be conducted through a biblical-theological approach, aligned to the work performed by Grudem (2013). If there is a need to use sources outside the Reformed tradition, I will highlight that in my writing (McGrath, 2011). My research will be aligned to the epistemological paradigm of qualitative research compliant with accepted research principles and ethics (Creswell, 2013; Hoyle, Harris and Judd, 2002).

1.5. Concept clarifications

Some key concepts central to this dissertation will be clarified below.

Corporations: Even though this dissertation will focus on the larger companies typically listed on applicable stock exchanges, the norms and principles are believed to be fully applicable to all public and privately-owned corporations irrespectively of size, both for-profit and not-for-profit, as well as non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and governmental agencies/institutions.

C-suite (also referred to as “C-level”): The top management level of a corporation, consisting of Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and Chief Operational Officer (COO). Other members at C-level, dependent on the company, may be Chief Risk Officer (CRO), Chief Ethical Officer (CEO), Chief Information Officer (CIO), Chief Value Officer (CVO), Chief Marketing Officer (CMO), Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) and Chief Technology Officer (CTO).

The number of C-level executives varies from company to company, and could be dependent on the global footprint (Ghemawat and Vantrappen, 2015) and the size of the company, where the larger the company, the more members are reported to be the norm, as there could be more tasks to cover. Other differences may be linked to industry sector(s). One example may be that a

company within the life science industry may have a need for a Chief Medical Officer, a Chief Innovation Officer, etc.

It could be added that the members of C-suite may vary over time, partly dependent on the maturity or development of the company, the financial opportunities or challenges within the current markets, etc. A company under the scrutiny of the media may choose to appoint a Chief Information Officer, whilst the digital revolution may lead to a number of companies opting to have a Chief Digital Officer appointed to meet the constant disruption from the digital evolution.

Reporting line: As a main rule the C-suite reports to the board of directors via the Chief Executive Officer. There may be legal requirements or internal policies that alter the reporting lines (Guadalupe, Li and Wulf, 2013).

Recruitment: The term “recruitment” in this dissertation will reflect the immediate process of appointing a new person in a role. This process may include internal development of candidates, performance evaluation and other steps to groom potential internal candidates, reaching external candidates through contacts with other actors such as vocational organisations and universities, general HR-oriented marketing and brand development (Oddou and Mendenhall, 1991; Wilson *et al.*, 2011).

Recruitment of members to C-suite: The CEO is appointed by the Board of Directors (or selected members of the board empowered to run the process). Many may argue that this is the most important task of the Board, as choosing the CEO is key to the identity and the success of the company (e.g., Larcker and Tayan, 2017). The other members of C-suite are normally hired by the CEO.

1.6. Ethical considerations

I will not use any empirical research based on the opinions of individuals, hence, I cannot foresee any research ethical considerations (Kumar, 2011).

CHAPTER 2: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Introduction

2.1.1. Scope

In this chapter I will address the role women have played in history, highlighting both formal and informal leadership exercised by females. The aim is not to give a complete presentation, but to focus on periods and events in history that can be seen as decisive steps, leading to where we are today.

Whereas most history books are filled with men and their achievements, the number of pages dedicated to women are few, hence, researching the evolution of female leaders is mainly a journey through history itself. Embedded in this is the view society has had on women, hence, the learning from anthropology and sociology plays a vital role in understanding the position women have had throughout the ages. The writing of history only gradually commenced after humans had walked the earth for over three million years. The written sources can thus only be seen as fragments of our common past; for this reason, support from archaeology, anthropology and palaeontology is essential to gain knowledge of how life may have been for our ancestors (French, 2008a). I will thus take a broad view to capture the relevant research into the role of the female leader; as Gibbon (2017) already observed, history may be seen only as a registration of the tribulations, transgressions and absurdity of humanity and as observed by others, history is centred on what mankind has endured, done and appreciated (Roberts and Westad, 2013).

2.1.2. Terminology

Relevant terminology applicable when reviewing historical societies must be addressed. The term “matricentry” is used for societies consisting of siblings and offspring of the women including their male companions and should not be confused with “matriarchy” which equals “ruled by mothers”. The latter form has never been the basis for a state formation, only within family structures (French, 2008a).

It is believed that ten or twelve thousand years ago, men overthrew women, inventing “patrilineality”, whereby full control of the women was needed to ensure proof of fatherhood (French, 2008a). Prior to that the female sex was seen as the only source of life, as paternity was unknown. This gave the females a power highly respected and by some elevated to goddesses (de Riencourt, 1974).

“Patriarchy” is used of a society or government in which men hold the power and women are largely excluded from it, and “patriarchal” describes a system of society or government controlled by men (Oxford Dictionary, 2018). While matriarchy is based on the mother-child relationship, patrilineality is based on male possession of women and children (French, 2008a).

2.1.3. The default sex?

When researching the roles of women in history we find that there are different starting points. One might be found in Genesis 1:27, “So God created humankind in his image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” Another might be the scientific approach whereby the journey of the human race is thought to have started with the female, on account of her original chromosome, thus by some seen as the “default sex” (de Riencourt, 1989).

For decades biologists have argued that, unless there is enough testosterone available in a foetus, the baby will by default be a female, indicating that the female is the first sex unless deviating into male (Miles, 2007). This theory was, however, challenged during the 1990s when the sex-determining gene SRY was identified (e.g., Sinclair *et al.*, 1990).

2.2. From Stone Age to Bronze Age

Gender gaps and discrimination have not always been a part of our human history, hence, grasping the roles that women have played, starting with the Stone Age, requires that biases and assumptions be neutralised; we must focus on what we know from that very early era of human life, not analyse everything with our current views on life.

The Early Old Stone Age (Palaeolithic) is characterised by nomadic societies, surviving as hunters and gatherers. One of the biases related to these humans was that men did the hunting, leaving the homely tasks to females. These early hypotheses arguing that tasks were gender-specific are both by archaeologists and paleoanthropologists believed to be incorrect. This is primarily based on the fact that the pure survival of the Stone Age society demanded that the whole group play active parts, hence, the likelihood of tasks being shared evenly is more likely than gender-segregated activities (Cohen & Bennett, 1993; Sterling, 2014).

On this basis, the women's role in the hunter-gathering society through the phases of the Stone Age is believed to have been diverse, from caring for children to making tools and gathering food. The latter activity contributed to the sustenance of the tribe, as the hunting was irregular and infrequent, and also an activity requiring all members of the tribe taking part, including women and children. Women's role in the mere survival of the tribe was too important to impose inequality, thereby giving the early females a natural freedom with dignity and value, attributes that gradually disappeared when societies became more developed (Miles, 2007).

Gender equality was not only linked to the survival of the tribe. Recent discoveries indicate that various Palaeolithic handprints in France and Spain have been crafted by women. These findings refute previous perceptions that males were the Stone Age artists (Fritz, Tosello and Conkey, 2016).

The early family groups are believed to have been matricentric, with very few men as members, as the group primarily would include women and their offspring, placing the mother in the midst of the group. The core of the social construction then, was that of the women and their children, and their children's children, as these were perceived as belonging to the women, and thereby automatic members of the group (Thomas, 1907).

Women's role as important figures in society is also evident in prehistoric paintings where she is portrayed as taking active part in religious rituals. One example is the "White Lady" in the Drakensberg Mountain caves in South Africa (Miles, 2007). In addition, women are believed to have had leadership roles,

such as counsellors, wise women, society leaders, storytellers, doctors, magicians and lawgivers (Lewenhak, 1980).

Supporting the women's role in society was the view on creation of life. For as long as 125,000 to 275,000 years of human history, it is believed that women were recognised as the only sex responsible for life (French, 2008a). For thousands of years this gave her a goddess-like empowerment (Miles, 2007; de Riencourt, 1989).

Some of the most recognised women during the Iron Age were the queens of Egypt, with Hatshepsut (c. 1473 BC) as one of the highest regarded female leaders from the 1400s BC. Her way to reign as a female leader required political skills combined with processes to anchor her powers. In addition to sharing her vision effectively, she added masculinity to her power by being portrayed as a male pharaoh, gaining honour that led to her being worshiped for 800 years. The adding of the male attributes came gradually after she became pharaoh. It is believed that this reflected her way of handling the social tension in Egypt during her reign (Miles, 2007; Ripley, 2015).

A slow global revolution started during the late Bronze Age (c. 1200 – c. 500 BC) when people gradually understood the male's role in impregnating a woman and thus actively participating in the creation of new life. The former matriarchal mythologies were challenged with the subsequent establishment of patriarchal structures concurrently in many parts of the world, due to the nomadic movements (de Riencourt, 1989). This shift sparked by the demystification of birth was followed by the gradual disempowerment of women (Miles, 2007). One consequence of this evolution was the symbolic changes accompanying this altered perception, reversing all former conceptions, like the male sun and lion overthrowing the female moon and lunar bull. This shift is believed to have had a significant psychological impact shaping the relation between the genders (de Riencourt, 1989).

During the same period a gradual move from horticultural to agricultural subsistence appeared, requiring more manpower to cultivate the earth and grow crops. Whereas women are believed to have been the first horticulturalists, in

that they partook in farming that did not require machinery, men played a more significant role when moving to an agricultural society (French, 2008a).

One significant consequence of the shift from matricentry to patrilineality was the empowerment of men and subsequently the establishment of a patriarchal world. For the women, the consequences were gradual removal of rights and power. First and foremost, she had to see her right to her children being transferred to her husband. For the man to own his children he needed to ensure paternity, hence, the need to control the women. The fact that women continued to care for their children made men believe that she was programmed to do so by nature, showing instinctual behaviour of lesser value. Research shows, however, that caring for offspring is far from instinctive; it is a learned behaviour. Taking responsibility is a choice – it is not instinctual (French, 2008a).

The women did not only lose the right to her children, but she also saw her rights to own property and to inherit disappear, as these former privileges were transferred to her husband or to another male family member. Even though some societies recognised women's contribution within certain sectors, her subordinate position was complete in (for example) stockbreeding and pastoral societies. The taming of animals was ascribed to men, an achievement that further empowered and recognised him. These changes, together with the above-mentioned move from horticultural to agricultural societies, diminished the visible link between the women's economic contributions and society (de Riencourt, 1989).

Summarising the shift of the women's role from the Stone Age to the late Bronze Age, we may say that primitive females were practically equal to men, while cultural and technological developments worked against her, thus reducing her influence and lowering her status (de Riencourt, 1989).

2.3. Antiquity

When the secret of life was revealed, women were demystified and subordinated by men, who supported their stance with interpretations derived from various religions, like Judaism or other religious belief systems. Given that

both Christ, and later, Muhammad spoke about the love of women, these early developments are somewhat puzzling (Miles, 2007).

The view on women in Antiquity can be captured in Homer's *Odyssey* when Telemachus (son of Odysseus) says to his mother (Penelope): "Go, then, within the house and busy yourself with your daily duties, your loom, your distaff, and the ordering of your servants; for speech is man's matter, and mine above all others, for it is I who am master here." The women's voice should not be heard in public (Beard, 2017; Loc. 57). Further, in the funeral oration it is stated that "the greatest Athenian woman was she who was spoken about least by men, whether in praise or criticism" (MacCulloch, 2011:29).

Sources regarding women's roles in ancient Greece are multiple, such as legal rules, literature, political life and the arts; however, they are mostly linked to life in Athens. Democracy in Athens had its clear limitations, as women were totally excluded from public life (MacCulloch, 2011). The ancient Athenian women had no voting rights, nor could they attend meetings in the Assembly or participate in other political roles (Blundell, 1995). As their participation in society was limited, the Athenian women normally spent their lives in the seclusion of their homes. Education was not available for women, irrespectively of class (Roberts and Westad, 2013). A woman had no legal independence, as she was either incorporated under the guardianship of her father or her husband as her *kyrios*. His role was taking care of her in all parts of life. She had limited freedom to enter into contracts, and even though she could have some property rights, her *kyrios* was the only one empowered to dispose of any property or moveable goods belonging to her. Part of her property was her patrimonial inheritance, that is, the dowry, normally transferred to her upon marriage. The husband had access to her dowry during the marriage, but upon a potential divorce he was required to give it back to her original *kyrios*, for example her father or brother (Blundell, 1995).

Aristotle (384–322 BC) was of the opinion that women were the inferior sex, directly addressed in his *Politics*, where he described the male gender as naturally superior, thus also the ruler of the women. Because of this view he is perceived by some historians as a problematic chauvinist (Aristotle, 1992; Smith, 1983). The mere thought that women could give speeches or even run a

state made him dedicate a comedy to the topic (Beard, 2017). Aristotle also argued that procreation was fully dependent on male seed, containing the entire foetus, thus reducing the women's role to being an incubator and nothing else (MacCulloch, 2004).

Several historians and politicians after Aristotle, e.g., Xenophon (c. 430–354 BC), Cato (c. 234–149 BC) and Plutarch (AD 46–120), recognised what they called the “women problem” in their writings, stating that women were created for indoor tasks while men should do everything else, ensuring that they “keep the women on a tight rein”. As stated by Plutarch: “I certainly do not give the name ‘love’ to the feeling one has for women and girls, any more than we would say flies are in love with milk, bees with honey or breeders with the calves and fowl they fatten in the dark” (in Miles, 2007, Loc. 1294; Plutarch, n.d.).

As women lost their freedom, autonomy and control, men were empowered to “own” them, not only in society but supported by rules of law. Whereas Athenian women were not allowed to own or inherit property, their sisters in Sparta could do both. In Rome (215 BC) women could own gold within given limitations. A woman was, however, banned from dressing herself in colourful garments and prohibited from riding a two-horse carriage (Miles, 2007).

There are examples of tribes and cultures where women continued to enjoy equality, and some women could still win power in the political or ruling elite, while others demonstrated that personal achievement in society was recognised. One such example is Sappho (c. 570 BC). Even though most of her writings have been destroyed, she is believed to be one of the first female authors, also recognised by Plato (c. 427–348 BC) as one of the ten best authors. Sappho's work is cited in Plato's *Phaedrus*, in Socrates' second speech addressing love, hence, a female voice heard by both genders (Pender, 2007; Freeman, 2016). Thus, Plato is by some historians referred to as among the rare exemptions in the long-standing history of male-dominated sexism (Smith, 1983).

Equality was also recognised in other parts of the world during antiquity. For example, in Sparta women had title to more land than the men, whilst Arab women relied on their men to pasture flocks owned by them. According to the

Code of Hammurabi (Babylon, 1700 BC) the women's dowry and any other property was hers and not her husband's. An Egyptian woman lending money to her husband could even charge interest on the loan (Miles, 2007). Another example of equality is found within Irish mythology, where women are believed to have fought alongside men during antiquity, even commanding forces in war, like Queen Maedb fighting Queen Findmore. The latter is believed to have had a standing army of female warriors (Miles, 2007).

In Egyptian antiquity, societal gender equality was more visible than in other areas. As partly addressed above, pharaonic Egypt was not purely male-dominated, even though women's main tasks were at home caring for children, while their men's role kept them busy in public non-domestic affairs (Watterson, 2011). Khalil, Moustafa and Moftah (2017) rightfully ask how ancient Egyptian women may influence today's gender roles in Egypt, clearly stating that their female ancestors enjoyed more gender equality than Egyptian women experience today. Firstly, in Egyptian antiquity, dignity had nothing to do with sex, but rather social status, allowing women to be influential while holding important positions. With that came greater gender equality and legal and economic rights within their classes. Contrary to other societies of antiquity, the equal legal rights applied to various aspects of life, such as jobs, owning property, marriage, divorce etcetera. Many of these rights are not granted to the women living in Egypt today. Secondly, the equality was visible when it came to opportunities within education, because from the age of four they received training eventually leading to a relevant certificate. Within the discipline of medicine, more than 100 highly regarded female specialists are recorded via tombs and hieroglyphs.

The natural freedom for women in Egyptian antiquity partly explains the powers held by Cleopatra VII Philopator (69–30 BC), the last pharaoh of Egypt in antiquity. Part of her reign brought peace, stability and recovery after costly wars. However, her dramatic suicide together with her lover Marc Anthony, to avoid being defeated by Octavian, has captured audiences in numerous theatres and cinemas. To some extent one could say that unfortunately her role as a leader is partly blurred by some filmmakers focusing on what is believed to be her sexual behaviour, and that thus, her name has become connected to a

combination of exerting formal societal power and expressing active female sexuality (Moore, 2015; Hamer, 2008).

2.4. Early Christian Era

Women's place in Scripture will be addressed below in Chapter 5. However, as Christianity's mark on all aspects of history is significant, I have chosen to include some observations focusing on Jesus' view on women and the role women played in the early Church.

Jesus demonstrated love for all, including the poor, slaves and women, something that evidentially can be seen as contrary to the traditions. This was reflected when the disciples were amazed to see Jesus talking to a Samaritan woman accused of adultery, treating her with dignity and respect (John 8:1-11), and when the disciples wanted to brush away the woman who was healed after touching Jesus' garment (Mark 5:27).

Contrary to tradition, Jesus also had women as his loyal helpers, such as Mary of Bethany, Mary Magdalene and Salome. Their loyalty was clearly demonstrated when they stayed during Jesus' crucifixion, praying for him and attending to his burial (Mark 15:40; 15:47). Mary Magdalene, the woman whom the disciples had dismissed, was the first he chose to reveal himself to (Mark 16:9). In fact, women are the first to give reports of the empty tomb and the Resurrection also in Matthew's and John's Gospels, irrespectively of the fact that women in accordance with Jewish law could not give evidence (MacCulloch, 2011).

Unfortunately, Jesus' love for women was not fully reflected when his male followers wrote the Gospels (French, 2008a). The importance of female officeholders in the early Church is lacking as most former patriarchal interpretations have influenced historians and church leaders (Eisen, 2000). Paul contributes to evidence these women in his seventh authenticated letter, to the Roman Christians, where he names several women office holders, including the female apostle Junia, that in some versions is often changed into a male (MacCulloch, 2011). This clear break with the Jewish and Greek patriarchal societies is further accentuated in Galatians 3:28 where Paul explains: "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for

you are all one in Christ Jesus.” This statement underlines the belief that Christ obliterated the patriarchal power structures.

Recent research, however, highlights the significant role women played in laying the foundation for growth and prosperity of the early Christian Church. Evidence of women's instrumental role is found in the catacomb frescos, where many Christian women are pictured as persons of authority, for example through giving speeches, hence signalling religious significance and authority (Schenk, 2017).

It is thus believed that women were instrumental in preaching and teaching Christianity during the early days when these societies were unrestrained and self-governed. In the pre-doctrine era various hypotheses were discussed; for example, Prisca of Corinth believed that Jesus would return a woman, while Clement of Alexandria stated that female spiritual capacity equalled that of men. Clement's successor even castrated himself, ensuring that women could be present in his classes (French, 2008a). These societies bear clear resemblance to self-organised behaviour within current complex organisations, giving room for emerging events without specific control and instruction, also recognising that not everything can be foreseen in the uncertainty that typifies any emergent organisation (Plowman *et al.*, 2007).

A further resemblance to self-organisation is found when women chose Christianity rather than marriage, as Christianity gave her the escape from an institution that involved renouncing freedom and subjecting herself to her husband. Remaining celibate allowed the women to argue closeness to God, giving them control over their own lives. Many of these women formed societies and history includes multiple stories of women converting to Christianity and choosing virginity to try to avoid punishment when refusing to marry (French, 2008a).

One that played a significant role in early Christianity is St Helena of Constantinople (c. 250–330). Helena was the mother of Constantine, and in her honour, he built churches and changed Roman laws to reflect Christianity, thus laying the basis for Christian values to gradually be embedded in Roman law.

Helena made pilgrimages to the Holy Land so frequently that she encouraged masses of women to do the same (French, 2008a).

Women's roles within the Church, in the monasteries and through the Reformation, gradually changed. This will be further addressed below.

2.5. Medieval Era

The Middle Ages or medieval period is by many historians seen as the period between classical antiquity and the modern world, divided into early, high and late period. In Europe, the Early Middle Ages began with the fall of the Roman Empire around the fifth century and the late period ended around the fifteenth century with the Renaissance and the Age of Discovery. The period is influenced by Roman, Christian and German components. Even though Roman law had a strong influence on lawmakers and German society started to influence other European countries, Christianity had the strongest influence on human life in the medieval era (Amt, 2013).

In the European countries monarchies gradually replaced feudal systems, while production for profit instead of the former production for use gradually introduced capitalism as the economic system. Foundations for huge personal wealth were laid, while Europe saw the growth of differences in economic, political and social aspects between the sexes. While most women had unpaid domestic duties, poor women were forced to work for unsustainable pay (French, 2008b).

Throughout history, there are multiple times when women's participation in the work force has been questioned, from both moral and social points of view, as her main obligation has been seen by many as taking care of her family. Some have even claimed that the female distinguishing characteristic would get lost in the working women, with negative consequences to the community (Domenico and Jones, 2006).

As part of the monastic movement, many women saw the monasteries as shelters providing a safe environment as a refuge. These communities also became places for scholars, housing some of the greatest teachers of the time, one example being Hroswitha of Gandersheim (tenth century), who wrote

histories and plays with female heroes, and was greatly cherished by Otto the Great (912–973) (French, 2008a).

During the High Medieval Period (c. 1000–1300), the Roman Catholic Church had a major influence on society, centralising its position in Europe. The monasteries still gave leadership opportunities to many women as abbesses governing both men and women. One of these was Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179) who lived a quiet life within the convent. Her writings, however, gave her a voice and visibility in a “men’s world”, so that many influential people including popes and kings solicited her advice (Willadt, 2017). One of the topics she addressed involved seeing divine power also from a feminine aspect, thus, early addressing topics that later became known as Christian feminism (Boyce-Tillman, 1999).

The women’s role in monasteries existed from the seventh to the twelfth century even though no formal legal rights were granted. The final removal of female power came in 1298 when Pope Boniface VIII prohibited women from having positions of power in monasteries. After twelve hundred years of loyal dedication and hard work, the women’s voice was silenced by patriarchy within the very institution they had dedicated their lives to (French, 2008a). During the medieval era, the convent was not allowed to accept all women. Women with dowries were prioritised, while poor women were left outside, thus excluding the unfortunate with lack of funds (French, 2008b).

Another woman of significance from this era was Eleanor of Aquitaine (1122–1204), who grew up as a noblewoman and heir to large areas of land. Her great wealth made her a good match for the future King of France when she married Louis VII, becoming the first Queen of France, and via her second marriage to King Henry II, becoming the Queen of England. She was very far from the typical medieval woman, being in control of her life, having power and making her own decisions (Goodman, 2013). Even with her powers, however, she was unable to change the laws governing inheritance rights, so that her properties upon marriage were shifted to the crown (French, 2008b).

Self-organisation is visible also during this era, as with the early Christian women. During medieval times, women more or less automatically were the

ones caring for the sick, overseeing medical treatment and collecting medicinal herbs in addition to offering comfort to the poor (French, 2008b; Plowman *et al.*, 2007).

Wars and plague haunted Europe during the fourteenth century. By 1450 it is believed that somewhere between 50% and 75% of the people had died; for example, Toulouse had 30,000 habitants in 1335 and by 1430 the number was 8,000. Wars were expensive and raised class struggles, as the rulers levied heavy taxes to fund the wars, leading to revolts and revolutions (French, 2008b).

A notable medieval woman who was famous for exerting societal leadership was Jeanne d'Arc (1412–1431) who dressed as a man and led the French army to victory, defeating England, after having convinced the Dauphin that she was sent by God. Having been captured she was convicted as a witch and burned at the stake (French, 2008b).

2.6. The Renaissance

With the Renaissance (between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries), came the revival of ancient philosophy, art and culture, unlike what was seen as the barbarism of the Medieval era (MacCulloch, 2011).

Martin Luther's theses in 1517 were the start of the religious revolution in Europe, creating the foundation for the Protestants. While many priests joined the Protestants, most nuns continued their service in the convents, even though the Protestant perspective appealed to women advocating gender equality through worship, choirs and readings. Civil wars, bloodshed and local turmoil between the Catholics and Protestants went on for decades and involved both sexes. In France Catholics formed female groups to attack Protestant women, once with a deadly outcome when the wife of a Protestant bookseller was beaten and hung in Aix-en-Provence (French, 2008b).

Irrespective of the above, the majority of women played a subordinate role in society, and this was also reflected in legal sources, for example, lack of right to own property, reduced right to inherit family members, and limited rights to her dower. Differences did exist; for example, in England, France and the Low

Countries landholding was accepted irrespectively of source, giving the women the opportunity for both wealth and visibility. In parts of what we today call Germany, including southern European countries, inheritance was as a rule divided between the males, and the women continued to play an auxiliary role (Ward, 2016). Should an English woman want to sell her property, her husband or similar would have to accept the transaction (French, 2008b).

The rape laws are other examples of the subordinate roles women in general played; even though the punishment was severe, and the women were the victims, the laws deemed the woman's relatives, that is, either the husband, father or other male relative, to be the victims, thereby demonstrating that women were seen as property and not full human beings. The view of women as weak and irrational creatures was also reflected in other laws that, for example, sought to control women's clothing dependent on the male's profession (Ward, 2016).

Widow's rights that earlier allowed a woman to continue her late husband's business were challenged by guilds during the mid-1400s, the first step being to limit her right to merely finish work started by her husband, and the second step being banning her from hiring help, thus stopping her from supporting herself and her family. The solution was for the women to focus on activities not controlled by guilds, e.g., production of candles, soap, broom sticks etc. Within the clothing sector women could only produce inexpensive clothing for women, as the guilds gradually took control of this industry in the cities. In the countryside women's needlework contributed to the survival of the family; it is believed that during the seventeenth century 100,000 women and children were involved in the production of lace in England (French, 2008b).

Even though the women of royal blood lived their lives very differently from the average women, they too were highly influenced by the combat between the Catholics and the Protestants. An example is Catherine de Medici, Countess of Urbino (1519–1589), who was born in Florence, Italy, and at the age of 14 was married to Henri de Valois, Duke of Orleans, who later became the King of France. Because of her personality she was seen as the virtual ruler of France for close to thirty years, primarily via her sons after her husband died. Her somewhat plain looks hid an intelligent, wilful and courageous woman, and as a

queen she gained political acumen, something that she demonstrated more actively when her sons became kings. Many historians blame her for the events leading up to the St Bartholomew's Day massacre, when thousands of Protestants and Huguenots were killed, leading to a brutal turning point in the religious fights between the Catholics and the Huguenots in France (Strathern, 2007). Others claim that there is no proof that Catherine was plotting on behalf of the Catholic Church, and that her previous attempts to create peace between the parties should be viewed as essential in her contribution to history (Knecht, 2014).

Elizabeth I (1533–1603) was Queen of England during a time of change, influencing both the economic and social life in the country. One of the first decisions she made as Queen was to declare England a Protestant country, hereby forming the basis for the Church of England. Known to be prudent in foreign affairs, cautiously navigating between France and Spain, when war with the latter was unavoidable, Elizabeth led England to one of the greatest military triumphs, defeating the Spanish Armada in 1588. Her 44 years on the throne brought stability and growth, preparing England for greatness (Perry, 1990; MacCulloch, 2004).

Even though these noble women had limited influence on ordinary women of their time, history has recognised their contribution as female role models.

2.7. Modern Era and the Industrial Revolution

2.7.1. Introduction

The sixteenth century is seen by historians as the start of the modern world. The early modern world lasts until the end of the Second World War, followed by our current times, the postmodern world (French, 2008b).

The legacy for women at the end of the early modern period is mixed; financially she was oppressed; she was denied a hearing politically, even though some states allowed rich women to hold positions of power. Some states re-instated inheritance rights for rich or noble women, while most women saw themselves as even more dependent on men. However, a gender-polarised world continued

with women not only lacking financial independence, but also fighting prejudice (French, 2008b).

2.7.2. Industrial Revolution

Views on women's participation in work life partly changed with the coming of the Industrial Revolution that started in England around 1780. There are two main reasons why England was the birthplace of this revolution; firstly, England was the richest country, and secondly, England had wiped out the independent peasant class, so that many worked on the farms owned by the few nobles. Gradually this relationship grew into a worker-owner relationship in the factories, laying the foundation for the new elite: the capitalists. With the move to factories, the workers could rely on wages, and from this came the creation of the proletariat. At the early stages, families continued to work as a group, as they had been doing for the property owners; however, gradually the men moved away. Harsh working conditions with contracts more resembling slavery were imposed on the workers, especially women and children. Official investigations during 1800 revealed beating, sexual harassment and severe working conditions mostly affecting women and children (French, 2008c). Gender-neutral corporal punishment was well known in the master-servant relationship long prior to the Industrial Revolution and was seen as the master's legal right. For example, Bacon's *Abridgement* addresses the relationship between master and household servants, elaborating the master's right to remain in authority and instil obedience in the servants, who were to obey the orders given (Steinfeld, 1991).

With the Industrial Revolution came wage differences between the sexes and gender-segregated jobs. The men were better at unifying their demands, hence, cementing the patriarchal privileges and continuing the war against women. Men became the "breadwinners" and women were offered the low-level jobs and were subordinated to the men (French, 2008c).

The same pattern was adopted when the Industrial Revolution grew outside England: women received lower wages than men and continued in the subordinate jobs. Even so, the Industrial Revolution gave the working women a

power that they had lost during the previous patriarchy—economic independence (French, 2008c).

Other lines of income for women came from working in stores or prostitution. In 1915 a link between these two professions was actually argued, as it was believed that the higher paid female store workers turned to prostitution to be able to acquire the goods sold in stores. Unfortunately, many female workers saw the need to move into prostitution to survive, due to the low salaries in normal work. Even though prostitution grew out of the demand by men, women were blamed, as they were seen to be responsible for morality; hence, social reforms meant punishing the prostitutes both physically and mentally (French, 2008c). Alternatively, what superficially could be perceived as efforts to control prostitution in reality entailed exerting moral control over women (Lucas, 1995).

Another social punishment on the working female was that various stakeholders linked working women with the disruption of family values, as well as with alcoholism, promiscuous behaviour, and prostitution, irrespective of the fact that their income contributed to the survival of the family (French, 2008c).

The formation of trade unions was a needed response to the working conditions for all. As in other aspects of working life, these organisations were commonly segregated by gender, such as the Association for the Aid and Benefit of Milliners and Dressmakers, formed in 1843 by women, partly pursuant to the findings issued by the Children's Employment Commission (Walkley, 1980).

Even though labour laws were gradually introduced in most countries, these were mainly focused on children and women. As a starting point this should have been a positive move, but lack of enforcement was often seen, and so these laws were more political than protective. In addition, the legal restrictions made it harder for women to get work in some jurisdictions (French, 2008c). Workforce guidelines and policies had existed via the guilds and apprenticeships formed in the Mediaeval Era. Previous eras had seen similar regulations; for example, the Code of Hammurabi (18th century BC) had labour standards, and the Hindu Law Manu (100 CE) had rules applicable to labour management (O'Shea, 2004; Jones, 2007).

2.7.3. Socialism / Marxism

Monarchs were the heads of state in all European countries in the early nineteenth century. Agriculture was still the most important activity in regions with illiteracy, lack of communication and isolation. Russia, parts of Germany and the Danube states (today's Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia etcetera.) had a semi-feudal society which included workers kept as serfs. Prussia had abandoned serfdom, however, leaving the peasants with very little land, thus leaving them with the only option to seek labour as workers for landowners (French, 2008c).

At the same time, it became increasingly clear that the old European economic systems were not made to handle the society arising from industrialism. Riots with political turbulence took place in many Western countries such as USA, Ireland, Netherlands, Belgium, France and Switzerland. These gradually led to waves of revolutions mainly as a reaction to elitism. New views on equality and human rights introduced new political voices, and socialism was born. Most of the early socialist philosophers, focusing on utopia, included women's independence as a natural part of the liberation of all humans. Even so, during the twentieth century, class struggles were more important for the socialists than feminism, as this was seen by many as a middle-class movement. Feminism is often interpreted as a campaign of privileged women determined to take over men's rights, as opposed to being an ideology challenging the unequal distribution of rights either politically or financially. Thus, socialists and capitalists have dismissed feminism because it encourages structural disruption that removes men's privileges (French, 2008c; Brown, 2012). There were, however, different voices during the advent of the modern industrialised society of the West. For example, the French philosopher Marquis de Condorcet (1743–1794) opined that depriving women of political influence on account of their getting pregnant, and other female-specific bodily dispositions, would be equivalent to removing such rights from men on account of their being afflicted by gout (French, 2008c).

Flora Tristan (1803–1865), married to a man who beat her and nearly killed her, was one of the early voices. Her own personal experiences led to her well-known statement that all women were pariahs. She became a sworn feminist-

socialist and shared her views via her writings, for example *L'Union ouvrière*, published in 1843 (French, 2008c).

Industrialisation gradually created a new class of workers living with no safety net, no land ownership and lacking education. Marx addressed this group as the *Lumpenproletariat*. After seeing the slum these people lived in during the 1840s in London, Friedrich Engels (1820–1895) wrote *The Condition of the Working Class* in England in 1844, sharing his view that workers should unite and stand up to the owners and thus spark a needed revolution. These ideas made an impression on Karl Marx (1818–1883) who from a very early start had challenged traditional thinking. Together with Engels, they laid the ground for communism as a political movement (Marx and Engels, 2002). Whereas Engels addressed women's rights, e.g., addressing this in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Marx's focus was social change that did not advocate women's rights, whereby it can be argued that Marx contributed to women being overthrown by socialism, again establishing a patriarchal organisation (French, 2008c; Engels, 2010; Brown, 2012). As a response to globalisation and the financial crises in recent times, Marx's view on women has been revisited without totally restoring what can be described as an ambiguous marriage to feminism (Brown, 2012; Bargu and Bottici, 2017).

None of the European revolutions resulted in socialism nor boosted the life of people in general. Instead, they replaced the Western European aristocracy with a new elite, the bourgeois, or what we today would refer to as the middle and upper-middle class, where a woman was expected to stay at home making life easy for the men, in order to be seen as a true woman. The working class and black women were hardly seen as humans at all. Legally the wife belonged to her husband, and she was in a similar social position as previously. In England, a woman was still not seen as a legal person when it came to entering into contracts, owning real estate, or controlling her children. Should she get divorced, the husband automatically gained custody of the children and she had no legal claims on visitation. The same occurred in the rest of Europe, whereby the nineteenth century to some extent can be seen as the all-time low for women (French, 2008c).

2.7.4. First wave of feminism and the fight for suffrage

Even with the industrialisation, domestic service was the most important source of work for younger females. By the end of 1800, more than a third of the working women in England were below thirty and one third of the females between the age of fifteen and thirty worked as servants in private homes. In European countries most women preferred being a servant to working in the factories, even though this often involved sexual harassment both by the master and by male servants. An impregnated servant was normally dismissed and had to fend for herself (French, 2008c).

Suffrage qualifications were gradually granted to the very few that owned land. With salary workers came a new legal self-government whereby the individual gained legal rights to control and dispose of his or her own person. This eventually led to legal independence and political rights for white men, while the women still were excluded from exercising the basic democratic right that lies with suffrage (Steinfeld, 1991).

Many philosophers from the time of the Enlightenment (early 18th century), including Jeremy Bentham and Mary Wollstonecraft, addressed the need for equality and the rights of women.

The philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1747–1832), one of the leading thinkers in Anglo-American law, was a political radical instrumental in the creation of welfarism, partly based on his fundamental axiom stating that “it is the greatest happiness of the greatest number that is the measure of right and wrong” (Bentham, 1907). He addressed the need for equality between the genders and emancipation, including the right for women to vote. Despite his view of women, Bentham (1843:211) stated: “The contest and confusion produced by the proposal of this improvement would engross the public mind, and throw improvement in all other shapes to a distance.” He assumed that women’s liberation, as in having constitutive power, was too soon and would set the whole program at risk (Williford, 1975; Hampsher-Monk, 1992).

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797) is seen as one of the founders of feminism in England (Williford, 1975). Her book, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* in 1792, is one of the first works of feminist philosophy and argues the need for

education, whilst requesting that women are recognised as human beings and not objects of display that are eventually traded into marriage. Her view was that women lived in a tyranny ruled by men, and this perception clearly sets the agenda also when addressing the relationship between the genders as damaging to women, as in her opinion, men used their bodies and left them to perish (Wollstonecraft, 1792; Miles, 2007; Rampton, 2015).

Wollstonecraft and others from the late 18th century sparked the first wave of modern feminism, even though women's rights and the quest for equality have been raised many times throughout history. As addressed previously, feminism was sparked in antiquity, and the medieval Hildegard von Bingen addressed divine gender equality, also called Christian feminism (Boyce-Tillman, 1999).

The period between the 1830s and early 1900s captures women's struggle for equal contractual and property rights via the fight for the right to vote and setting a political agenda addressing economic independence as well as sexual and reproductivity issues. Women's perceived inferiority within religion and the church was also addressed.

Long into the twentieth century men were still seen as superior, so that men were awarded privileges while women were denied them (Miles, 2007). As a response to this injustice, Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815–1902), an American suffragist and one of the best-known advocates of women's rights in the nineteenth century, wrote a "Declaration of Rights and Sentiments" for the 1848 Women's Rights Convention (Griffith, 1984; Newman, 1985). While the Church was partly blamed for the treatment of women, alternative interpretations of the Bible, including views of its position on women's roles, were introduced, and consequently in line with this Cady Stanton wrote *The Women's Bible* in 1895. As stated by Larsen (2017), she may have gone a bit too far, but her aim was to use the Bible as an instrument for the good, a tool to promote emancipation and equality. Another important item on the agenda for women's rights was equal rights to education. Success was first seen after courageous women opened schools to ensure that girls could receive higher education, like Emma H. Willard's Troy Female Seminary in the United States that opened 1821, or Miss Beale's foundation of St. Hilda's College, Oxford, England in 1893 (Miles, 2007).

The opportunity to gain education was just part of the journey. Unfortunately, many females having earned higher degrees discovered that the next degrading step was using their educational training. For example, in the medical world, women met additional qualification requirements, hurdle after hurdle, to be allowed to use their profession. The first female doctor in the UK, Elizabeth Garrett, struggled for many years to get patients: men would not use her and women continued with their male GPs. At the same time 6% of the doctors in the USA were female (Fisk, 2003).

The fight for women's rights did not come easy. Resistance came from both sexes as the opponents defended the need to have women as subordinates in the shadow of male domination, as this was seen as "natural" (Miles, 2007).

In addition to the opposition, three important developments slowed down the process: capitalist industrialisation, modern science, and demands for social reforms. The factories pushed segregated tasks for the sexes and involved an end to the family economy where women had her place, while introducing the men as "the breadwinner." "The women question" resurfaced, highlighting a new underclass posing as a challenge for society. Science approached this by partly cementing the former misconceptions, as demonstrated when Darwin used craniology to disparage female intelligence, arguing that the female brain was less evolved than the male brain (Miles, 2007).

Science went on to categorise women as helpless, fragile creatures, who, for example, should not seek higher education as this would "produce ... flat-chested girls" lacking the ability to "bear a well-developed infant"; nor would they have voting rights on account of their "state of nature" (Spencer 1894, in Miles, 2007).

Napoleon was celebrated by men for his *Napoleonic Code* (e.g. Lobingier, 1918), but it has often been forgotten that he saw to it that women lost their right to own property and their freedom, hence becoming enslaved and fully subordinated to men (Göransson, 1993; Miles, 2007).

Few men supported the women's first fights for liberation, even when phrased as the fight for justice to be recognised as human beings equal to men. One exception was William Thompson (1775–1833), a socialist philosopher in

England, who published an appeal on behalf of women in 1825, stating that women could be seen as “involuntary breeding machines and household slaves” equal to the “condition of negroes in the West Indies” (Thompson, 1825). Thompson was ridiculed and few men were tempted to support his views.

A petition was filed in 1832 demanding that women with the same property rights should gain equal voting rights as the men. The man behind this was MP Henry “Orator” Hunt, who also linked voting rights with taxation, stating that taxation should be connected to representation, and that one could not pertain to individuals without the other. The petition was not accepted by Parliament and not until 1918 did women see voting rights in England (The History of Parliament, n.d.).

In addition to England, women in France and America contributed to set the topic of equal voting rights on the agenda, even though the women in the US had a position closer to equality due to their important role during the creation of America (Miles, 2007).

During the fight for suffrage in the US, women were met with accusations that suffrage should be seen as a threat to the family, as the right to vote was an insult to their husbands who already voted in the best interest of the family. The fight took ten years, and not until 1923 was the Equal Rights Amendment submitted to Congress and women gained their constitutional democratic rights (French, 2008c).

Even though the suffragists in England focused on the educated women, women from all sections of society joined the groups, notwithstanding the aggression from opponents. Some of the groups used violence, like the WSPU (Women’s Social and Political Union), breaking windows, chaining themselves to gates, going on hunger strikes etc. Many women were apprehended by the police and sentenced to prison. Eventually the leader Christabel Pankhurst had to flee to Paris and continue to fight underground. The violence and attack on property continued until Emily Wilding Davison killed herself while shouting “Votes for women!” Her funeral marked the end of WSPUs demonstrations. Not

until 1928 were all English women able to execute their democratic rights the same way as men (French, 2008c).

The battle continued in other countries. Even with the suffragettes' battle for voting rights and the support from some political parties, women during the early twentieth century still had limited legal rights and were removed from any sort of political power. Some claim that the suffragettes went too far, thus limiting the support women could have had from both genders. Stereotyping is a common denominator for women during the start of the twentieth century in the Western world, as married women stayed at home managing the house while the men were the breadwinners. Unmarried women could work in some kinds of service professions as waitresses, cooks etc. Statistics from the USA in 1900 indicate that between 19-25 per cent of all women worked outside the home, and participated actively in the workforce (Fisk, 2003; Domenico and Jones, 2006).

Within the working class at the same time in the UK it is estimated that 30-40 per cent of the women worked, contributing significantly to the family budget. However, lacking evidence, it is suggested that the number had been higher at the start of the Industrial Revolution, i.e., prior to the rise of the male "breadwinner" ideal. In the higher classes, women were traditionally focusing on domestic life and were thus seldom involved in working life. They were placed on a pedestal, reflecting the ideal of motherhood and neatly kept homes. If a framework securing political participation and rights for both sexes were to be created, the development of universal human rights would be key (Shvedova, 2005).

Table 1. Voting rights for women and the right to stand for high political office

Country	Year of right to vote	Year of right to stand for political office
New Zealand	1893	1919
South Australia	1894	1895
Finland	1904	1907
Russia	1917	1917

Norway	1913	1945
Sweden	1919	1947
Netherlands	1919	1956
Germany	1919	1956
Brazil	1932	1982
Turkey	1934	1971

In 1954, the United Nations General Assembly's convention on the Political Rights of Women was set into force, whereby women's equal rights to suffrage, holding office etcetera was encouraged (UN Women, n.d.). The journey for equal democratic rights has been long, and in Saudi Arabia, for example, women were first allowed to vote in municipal elections in December 2015 (McDowall, 2015).

2.7.5. Wars and the effect on female's work participation

During the First World War, ten million people were killed in the atrocities it involved. For women the fight for gender equality was pushed backwards. In the years before the Second World War, Hitler introduced the "Gretchen image" of the ideal woman, which involved an emphasis on women being dirndl-wearing traditionalists, and even though the Weimar Constitution gave women the right to vote, they could not play a role in public life, and the Nazi party early ensured that women could not serve in the party, as their role was to breed to produce Aryan offspring (Miles, 2007).

Most researchers today recognise the disruptive impact war has on gender equality, but contemporary knowledge during the Second World War was limited (Peniston-Bird and Vickers, 2016).

Ironically it can be argued that the women's work life was improved during the Second World War as their contribution in the collaborative war efforts was highly acknowledged, whereas the end of the war involved a significant step backwards. However, there was a significant increase after the end of the war, especially when it came to married women from the older generation participating in work life (Summerfield, 2013). Goldin (1991) compared two

surveys from 1944 and 1951 in the US, and concluded that the participation rate primarily affected childless women, thus concluding that the war had a limited effect on female work participation. When revisiting the numbers focusing on the long-term effect (1940–1960), an increase also for women with children is reported, but variations contingent on aspects of family status, socio-economic level and education are reported (Goldin and Olivetti, 2013).

Helen Harris (2017) has reviewed data within 17 European countries from 1940 to 1960 and concludes that while the growth rate in work life participation declined from 1940 to 1950, there was an increase during the decades 1940 to 1960. Admittedly, though the difference is statistically significant, the numbers are relatively small. An interesting observation in Harris' report is the difference between sectors, that is, white-collar participation decreased while the growth is found in all other sectors (blue-collar, agricultural and services). This is counter-intuitive when comparing these findings to those of Goldin and Olivetti (2013), who found a correlation between higher mobilisation and higher education.

The mobilisation of women during the Second World War showed that women could combine paid and unpaid work at home, thus shifting the perceptions of decision makers. However, the use of part-time and shift work enhanced the belief that women were secondary workers, something that was reflected in salaries, whereby women were paid less than men were, as men still were considered the breadwinners, with women merely adding to the family income (Summerfield, 2013).

The increase in jobs for women both during and after the Second World War did not include a wider promotion of gender equality. Waves of post-war initiatives supported by the media encouraged women to stay at home tending to their children. The key message was that the work at home was the predominant obligation for her sex. It would appear that the traditional expectations on women, to act as domestically oriented caregivers to the family, had survived the substantial war effort exerted by women, and that in the post-war era such expectations still contributed significantly in policy-making towards women (Summerfield, 2013).

On additional outcome of the Second World War was the emergence of management as an academic field. Prior to the Second World War in the West, organisations were directed traditionally, with owner and professional emphasis, but in the decades following the war, hired, salaried managers quickly emerged as the real decision-makers of organisations (Drucker, 2011). It would seem, then, that now women seeking a place in organisations had encountered yet another barrier to traverse: the organisational management.

2.7.6. Further waves of feminism

The second wave of feminism in the modern era (1960s–1980s) expanded the fight, addressing all issues aiming for full equality. Betty Friedan initiated the modern wave of feminism in 1963, when in her book *The Feminine Mystique* she dared to raise the question, “Is this all?”, thus challenging the story of the happy housewife. She founded the American National Organization for Women in 1966. In 1971 the US National Women’s Political Caucus was founded, followed by the International Feminist Congress in 1973 and the UN Decade of Women’s Rights in 1975. This wave is also recognised by several law reforms during the 1960s and 1980s supporting equality in the industrialised world, culminating with the recent Icelandic law making it illegal to pay men more than women (Miles, 2007; Iceland Equal Pay Standard, 2018).

The visible trend in the modern wave of feminism is to recognise that the woman’s opponent is not the Church, nor the state, nor the law or the government; it is in fact the man beside her—the personal had now become political (Miles, 2007). The journey for women back into the public eye has, however, been slow. The first female prime minister was Sirimavo Bandaranaike in Sri Lanka in 1960, followed by Golda Meir in 1969 in Israel, Benazir Bhutto in Pakistan in 1979, and Vigdis Finnbogadóttir became Iceland’s first female head of state and Gro Harlem Brundtland in Norway in 1981. While the UK had their first female prime minister in Margaret Thatcher in 1979, the USA has still not managed to elect a female president (Miles, 2007; Skard, 2015).

Even with the introduction of all the modern appliances like washing machines, “hoovers”, food processors, microwaves etc. the number of hours spent by

women in cooking, cleaning and doing unpaid household chores has not changed, as women work even harder to meet higher demands for equality partly driven by these new tools (Miles, 2007).

Despite many countries having equal pay legislation, women are still paid only ten per cent of the total income in the world, and own a mere one per cent of the property in the world, even though they comprise one third of the global work force (Miles, 2007).

Within the working world, women make up the lower grades with limited room for promotion, continuing as subordinates with lesser pay. The gradual improvements in the industrialised world have primarily benefitted white women. The feminist movement has, for some black women, side-tracked the main battle, that is, the battle against racism (Miles, 2007).

Starting in the 1990s a current third wave of feminism can be identified, addressing micro-political topics supporting gender equality all over the world. An interesting addition to this may be seen as the #MeToo campaign. This will be addressed further below.

2.7.7. Current situation

2.7.7.1. Overview

Although women make up half the world's population (ca 51 per cent), they only occupied 15 per cent of global board positions in 2015 (Eastman, Rallis and Mazzucchelli, 2016). This constitutes positive changes driven by legislation in countries like Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, India, Italy, Kenya, Norway and Spain, nations which have all introduced mandatory quotas through legislation to improve the gender balance on the boards of public companies. Norway, which introduced the quota in 2008, has close to 40 per cent female representation on its boards. In Finland, Sweden and France, approximately one in three board directors are women. Recent studies in Norway show a positive effect on (for example) strategic control in boards with female representation (Nielsen and Huse, 2010), whereas in Sweden, recent research indicates that boards with female representation are less inclined to perform account manipulation (NHH, 2017).

In 2016, one study reports that women hold only 4 per cent of chief executive roles within Europe's largest 350 public companies (S&P, n.d.). Statistic information from the US show that 44 per cent of the workforce within S&P 500 companies are women, however, the number of women participants in the highest echelons of corporate life is only 5 per cent of the CEOs in S&P 500 and only 16.5 per cent of the top executives not including the CEOs (Warner and Corley, 2017; Egan and Ordonez, 2017). Interestingly, however, research suggests that companies with women in senior leadership positions often out-perform their male-led peers. For example, one report published in 2015 concluded that companies with strong female leadership generated a return on equity of 10.1 per cent per year versus 7.4 per cent for those without (Lee et. al., 2015). These findings are echoed in a recent report whereby 11,000 companies were analysed, concluding that companies with a woman in the chief executive or chairman role had performed far better than a major global index over the past eight years (Nordea, 2017).

Another study found that while having a female CEO did not on its own relate to increased profitability, there was evidence that company performance overall improved where more women held C-suite positions, for example as CEO, CFO or COO. According to this study, an organisation where 30 per cent of its leaders are female could add up to six percentage points to its net margin (Noland, Moran and Kotschwar, 2016).

2.7.7.2. World Economic Gender Gap Report

Starting in the 1970s women have started to appear in organisational leadership roles. As educational opportunities have increased steadily, so have work opportunities emerged for females. Even though women are moving into managerial roles, they still meet challenges in moving to the executive level and receiving the same compensation as their male colleagues (Chandler, 2011).

The World Economic Forum (WEF) has been addressing the gender gap for 11 years, issuing yearly reports to address the developments, and focusing on the gender differences within the key areas of health, economics, politics and education. While the gaps are closing within the areas of health and education, workforce and politics still show significant inequality between the genders

(Leopold, Ratcheva & Zahidi, 2017). In the 2017 report, it is stated that given the current rate of change there will be another 217 years until gender parity is reached. Unfortunately, the report shows that the gap is widening, that is, moving from the 170 years reported in 2016. Supported by LinkedIn, WEF expanded the research in 2017 to address the lack of women in leadership in 12 different industry sectors, and reports that only 22 per cent of the senior leaders are women. Energy/mining and manufacturing shows less than 20 per cent women in leadership roles. As within many gender-related developments, progress is very slow, whereas, during the last ten years, the growth of female participation in leadership roles has grown by just above 2 per cent (Leopold, Ratcheva & Zahidi, 2017).

Further, the data provided by LinkedIn show that only healthcare, education and the non-profit sector have more than 40 per cent women in leadership roles. The historical reasons are obvious as all three sectors have been dependent on female workforce for centuries. The flipside is that these sectors offer lower salaries than sectors with more men in leadership positions, hence, large growth in number of females within one sector many decrease salaries compared to other sectors. The sectors showing growth in female leadership participation include legal, finance and real estate, all indicating a higher rate in hiring female leaders during the last 10 years than previously. An interesting observation in this study is what they address as a “catch 22”, whereby it only seems possible to increase the number of women in organisational leadership if there are already women in senior leadership positions (Leopold, Ratcheva & Zahidi, 2017).

When it comes to compensation, the report shows that the global average pay for women is \$12,000, in contrast to the \$21,000 men receive. While men and women are paid differently for the same job, there are further angles to the pay gap. Firstly, women are more inclined to work in sectors with salaries below the average, such as health rather than finance or technology. The two latter sectors are historically monopolised by men; hence they report higher average pay. Secondly, women are still more inclined to have part-time work, balancing the responsibility for tasks in the home including children and the care of other family members (Leopold, Ratcheva & Zahidi, 2017).

From 2013 to 2017 two thirds of the OECD member states have set into force laws to ensure equal pay. To push this even further, countries like UK, Australia, Japan, Germany and Sweden are requesting that gender pay gaps are made public every year (Leopold, Ratcheva & Zahidi, 2017). As mentioned above, Iceland has moved even further, making it illegal to pay different salaries to men and women for the same work, this through a law that was in effect from January 2018 (Iceland Equal Pay Standard, 2018).

2.7.7.3. The World Bank – legal boundaries

As presented above, some instances of gender-neutral legislation have been passed to ensure female participation in all parts of working life and to support equal opportunities for success. Unfortunately, women still encounter legal barriers affecting their ability to succeed on their own.

Since 2009 the World Bank has issued reports based on the collection of data focusing on legal boundaries constraining women's economic opportunities. The fifth edition, *Women, Business and the Law 2018* was issued in 2018 (World Bank Group, 2018). The report addresses seven indicators: accessing institutions, using property, getting a job, providing incentives to work, going to court, building credit and protecting women from violence. Out of the 189 countries covered, 104 countries, still had laws limiting females' access to the economic world by banning women from holding specific jobs. Further, the report shows that 59 countries lack laws to prevent sexual harassment, and within 18 countries husbands may stop their wives from entering the work life (World Bank Group, 2018).

2.7.7.4. Further boundaries

Various theories have been offered to explain the lack of females in leadership positions including gender differences in leadership style, motivational factors, and societal preferences. The glass ceiling effect was introduced by Marilyn Loden in a speech in 1978, and is defined as "the unseen, yet unbreakable barrier that keeps minorities and women from rising to the upper rungs of the corporate ladder, regardless of their qualifications or achievements" (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1985).

The link between the number of women in leadership and an organisation's active recruitment of women is addressed by many. For example, Ng and Sears (2017) indicate a positive correlation between companies with female CEOs and active steps to increase the number of females in management. The same survey indicates a negative correlation when the company is owned from abroad.

Another survey indicates that women at the top do not always promote their sisters, because of the "QB response" (Queen Bee), that is, when women with success in male-dominated corporations tend not to support the promotion of junior women. The QB effect was somewhat nuanced, as although women in leadership positions were found not to support quotas for junior women, they were supportive when it came to applying quotas for peers, i.e., other women in the same rank as themselves (Faniko *et al.*, 2017).

Demographic and type of sector are visible differentiators when investigating the glass ceiling. For example, within the accounting industry, one survey reports that the females in private accounting firms were more prone to report a glass ceiling than their peers in public accounting (Cohen, 2017). Similar results are reported within the high-tech sector, where one survey found that the glass ceiling can be explained both through internal and external recruitment processes (Fernandez & Campero, 2017).

Gender differences in leadership styles have been subject to various surveys, indicating that men often apply traditional "command-and-control" style, and are more prone to apply transactional leadership, while women apply "interactive" leadership style. Such proposed links between leadership styles and gender could also address the need for both genders to lead in line with their own values and selves, while also indicating that a woman's promotion is rarely advanced by transformational leadership in the same way as a man's (Hentschel *et al.*, 2018).

The "glass cliff" was first proposed by Ryan and Haslam (2005) in a study focusing on the financial performance of FTSE 100 companies before and after appointing new members of the board. The survey showed that companies with newly appointed women at the board were more prone to have poor

performance prior to the women taking office, concluding that women compared with men have a tendency to be appointed to roles connected to more commercial risk. This tendency is also relevant to female executives within the corporate world, being more inclined to accept leadership roles when a company is in distress, when the probability of a breakdown is at its highest (Ryan *et al.*, 2016).

Another obstacle women may encounter internally within an organisation can be found in the theories on managerialism. Managerialism occurs when the management of a company applies knowledge and ideology to institute itself, resulting in the disempowerment of owners, employees and other stakeholders (Diefenbach, 2013; Klikauer, 2015). This may imply, for example, that irrespective of instructions from the board, management may opt not to promote women in leadership positions.

In addition, multiple forms of harassment and bias may eliminate women from moving up the ladder in their sector (Salin, 2015). Biases may also be linked to sexual stereotyping, in which Hollywood has been a front-runner, for when studying television series from 2005 to 2006, researchers found that whereas male characters would most likely represent work life, the females continue to have interpersonal roles involved with romance, family, and friends (Lauzen, Dozier and Horan, 2008). Even so, the #MeToo campaign in 2017 spun out of Hollywood actresses setting sexual harassment on the agenda. The campaign soon spiralled into other sectors, and multiple countries. Thus far the consequences have been most visible in the political world, where various male politicians have been forced to step down, and within the media sector, forcing leaders and others to resign (Newsweek, 2017).

When it comes to the women themselves, researchers agree that the most important factor influencing women's decisions to enter the work force are societal norms: parenthood, conservatism, tradition, religion and education (Shah, 1990; Golding, 2006; Dao, 2014; Göksel, 2013; Mehmood, Ahmad, and Imran, 2015). With respect to education, there seems to be consensus that in societies where women's education is increasing, the cost of not working increases, with a subsequent increase in work force participation.

Cultural and political aspects such as tax regimes and governmental child care grants are also mentioned by the OECD 2004 as influential on a women's choice (Jaumotte, 2004). The country's economic situation as an effect is addressed by Olivetti (2013), pointing to a U-shaped dependency between the factors. Others point to the size of the service sector, number of part-time positions, birth control, domestic tools and family norms. With respect to family norms, a woman's mother-in-law comes across as more influential than the woman's mother, when it comes to her participation in the work force (Fernandez, Olivetti, and Fogli, 2004; Morrill and Morrill, 2013).

An additional provocative observation could also be that the quest for gender equality has the opposite effect. Sanandaji (2016) offers an interesting explanation in his book *The Nordic Gender Equality Paradox*, claiming that steps taken to empower women may unintentionally hold them back. He argues that maternity leaves where the mother is away from the working world can be seen as a deficiency when women are battling with their male colleagues for leadership roles. This perception is founded partly on comparing the US to the Swedish maternity legislation; whereas the US mother is entitled to 12 weeks unpaid leave, in Sweden the mother will receive 480 days paid leave of which 390 days equals close to 80 per cent of her standard pay. When comparing the same countries' ratio of females in leadership position, USA reports 43 per cent against 31 per cent in Sweden and across all Nordic countries (Sanandaji, 2016).

2.8. Summary

In this chapter I have addressed the journey of women through history, highlighting both formal and informal leadership exercised by females, including her current challenges to gain financial and political emancipation.

- In the Stone Age primitive females were practically equal to men, while in the late Bronze Age cultural and technological developments worked against her, thus reducing her influence and lowering her status.
- Antiquity was largely dominated by men, so that women lost their rights and inequality became mainstream. In many parts of the world women

were not seen as human beings, and consequently were mostly treated as the property of men.

- In the early Christian societies women held leadership positions and were vital to the emergence and growth of the Church. Their role diminished in line with the growth and organisation within the Church.
- The Medieval era partly involved a positive shift for women, as the concept of "woman" changed, allowing some women to take on influential roles.
- During the Reformation, even though the Protestants advocated gender equality, the gender status remained mainly unchanged.
- From the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century to the present, there have been scientific, technological, social and political changes, together with struggles for suffrage and equality within both the financial and political worlds.
- Socialism (including Marxism) does not influence a women's role significantly.
- The emancipation of women has continued until the present time, when she again has the right to own property, hold democratic rights via voting, and holds leadership roles in voluntary, political and private corporations.
- Irrespective of the astonishing developments, women are still outnumbered in the economic world, and this means that she receives lower pay and holds fewer seats in the top management of corporations.
- In 2016, only 18 countries are reported to have no formal legal restrictions influencing women's economic freedom.
- Multiple challenges and theories are offered to describe and explain the current situation.

In the next chapter, Chapter 3, I will elaborate on epistemology, from both historical philosophical and Christian perspectives, and set out my interpretative position.

CHAPTER 3:

EPISTEMOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

As research activities aim at creating deeper understanding of reality, philosophical assumptions linked to what reality is and how it can be observed are relevant to determine methodological choices and expectations (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2012). The typical approach is to address the basic philosophical research assumptions through two strands of thought, one focusing on what reality is and the other focusing on what we know about this reality.

In line with academic tradition, I will therefore give a presentation of the epistemology forming the basis for my position in this dissertation. With the use of scriptural references, the aim of my work is to identify the will of God, and through that, be able to deduce applicable truths relevant to gender equality at C-suite level, aiming for a sound epistemology based on our current understanding of the sources. Sound epistemology needs to be based on an examination of the two concepts of this field of scholarship, namely Christian philosophy and ontology/epistemology.

The term “philosophy” will be used as a term describing the theoretical overarching structure with ontology and epistemology as separate branches of philosophy. For me, “ontology” is a field within philosophy focusing on the study of reality, while “epistemology”, also a field within philosophy, is both the study of knowledge and how to acquire knowledge, sometimes termed as justification. Theories within ontology include, for example, pluralism, dualism and materialism, while examples of theories within epistemology are relativism and rationalism (Audi, 2011).

As many of the sources below use these terms as inter-related, I will only highlight deviations where the differences are of importance, therefore a strict delineation between philosophy, epistemology and ontology will not be applied. The reasoning behind this is that most of my sources do not address the

theoretical content of these terms directly. On the other hand, relevant for my dissertation is the adoption of the terms and the contextual importance they bring. Based on Foucault's (2002) argument for the importance of context, the sources below will be used to highlight their relevance to scriptural texts, applying the Reformed Christian epistemology.

As presumptions on ontology and epistemology are recognised to be of essential importance, not least as foundational in research, I will visit these philosophical constructs in more depth below, before moving on to how thinkers from antiquity and onwards have addressed the topics (Striker, 1996; Davies, 2004). Although fundamental in research, and even though elusive and sublime, the philosophical components set forth in this chapter have evoked strong feelings and heated debate to this day (Donaldson, 2008; Pratt, 2008).

The different debates on research philosophy, as briefly reported below, will give some indication of the weight attributed to these matters in the social research community; however, they also reveal a lack of understanding of the nature of these academic building blocks among the partakers in the discourse. For example, Johnson and Duberley (2000) demonstrate that any proposition on what is the correct epistemology in itself presupposes knowledge about the circumstances in which the knowledge is found, and that this brings the argumentation onto an inescapable path of circularity. They support their argument logically by asserting that epistemology cannot sustain any grounding in scientific knowledge, as this would imply science that is grounded by the use of science.

Included in this chapter will be clarifications regarding the Reformed theological tradition, including my position on the authority of scriptural and ethical policies (rules and guidelines) and the interpretation of both Scripture itself and other relevant sources.

3.2. Theories of knowledge

3.2.1. Ontology

As mentioned above, ontology is a field within philosophy focusing on the study of reality. "Reality" in this context refers to what is or exists, while recognising

that there are different categories or entities within reality, which are often the origin of debates among philosophers, depending on the academic field.

Within the natural sciences, realism and relativism are typically debated. The traditional approach to realism views the world as concrete, stating that science can only advance via investigating what is directly linked to the subject observed. Transcendental realism, on the other hand, assumes a more independent scientific approach. Within relativism, internal relativism anticipates one single reality, stating that the scientific approach will always be based on indirect information as the basis for elementary natural processes, but also accepting that scientific laws are unquestionable and sovereign. Relativism moves further by stating that humans create scientific laws, also implying that these are not something merely to be discovered by the human observer (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2012).

When it comes to social science, addressing the behaviour of human beings, internal realism, relativism and nominalism have been debated. If applying relativistic ontology, one would accept that gender and racial discrimination, for example, are viewed differently among people, dependent on gender and race in addition to context, religion and country, and that viewpoints will differ depending on the observer. On the other hand, internal realism would see gender and racial discrimination as phenomena existing independent of the research evidently affecting the consequences of both concepts. In contrast, nominalism will not see any truths, but will focus on how truths differ from person to person. As an example, gender would be applied as an excuse for why women are less successful in the corporate world than men (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2012).

3.2.2. Epistemology

As mentioned above, “epistemology”, also a field relevant within philosophy as well as theology, social and natural science, is both the study of knowledge and how to acquire knowledge. Included in this realm are alternative methods of researching the nature of both the physical and the social worlds. Embedded in epistemology is also the extent of human knowledge, in short, how much do we know and how can we know, and how do we use our resources to gain

additional knowledge. The theme includes whether all things are knowable and whether there are limits to knowledge (Audi, 2011; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2012).

“Knowledge” in this context relates to objective analysis and studies not necessarily covering subjective observations, perceptions and opinions. To some extent, the concept can be seen as a construct where true belief based on the right ground plays a vital role. Knowledge can be acquired when we observe the world around us, through memory or reflection as well as through inherited presuppositions adding to our own reflections (Audi, 2011).

As within ontology, there are divergent views addressing the supervision of social science. The positivism paradigm argues that the best method of researching human and social behaviour is through applying objective methods of measurement on an external social world. To some extent, this construct involves a mix of the ontological presumption that our reality is external and objective, and the epistemological presumption that knowledge needs to be based on observations of this external reality to be significant. Social constructionism argues that reality is far from objective and is to be viewed as a social construct determined by people, focusing on what people are thinking and feeling through both verbal and non-verbal communication (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2012).

3.2.3. Justification

When it comes to constituting knowledge there are limitations; for example, will a lucky guess, misinformation or faulty reasoning not give solid evidence or sound reasoning, even if these actions result in true belief? By contrast, the belief when retrieved the right way can be deemed justified. This is where the theory of justifications plays a decisive role.

The theory of justification is a part of epistemology attempting to understand the justification of a proposition and a belief (not religious). Roughly explained, justification can be described as the reason why a person maintains a belief, essential to the concept of knowledge. Included in this theory is the focus on elements of belief and the link between belief and truth. The basis for belief is debated: some argue that all reasons for beliefs are likely to be true, others

refer to knowledge as the source of belief, while a further group refers to the responsible or virtuous formation of beliefs (Audi, 2011).

When an allegation brings uncertainty, justification can be used to justify the allegation by removing or reducing the uncertainty, or it could alter the allegation completely. To serve its purpose, justification can, for example, find evidence in the senses, or by addressing norms and rules, or by logical deduction. We acquire justification in the same way as knowledge, that is, by observing the world around us, by using our consciousness, by reflecting on what we know and remember, and through other influences (Audi, 2011).

3.2.4. Religious knowledge

The quest for knowledge eventually leads to religion, in short, addressing whether knowledge and justification can play a role within this domain. One of the key questions of this debate relates to whether God exists or not, and the role of faith. According to Audi (2011), a broad application of epistemology may include not only our knowledge, our justified belief, and our rational beliefs, but also specific types of acceptance, presumption, and faith. He goes on to state that there should be no reason to refuse religious knowledge or religious justification, because justification stands stronger than rational belief.

3.2.5. Interpretation and exegesis

Scriptural interpretation to retrieve guidance for current hiring protocols in the top management layers will establish the foundation for my dissertation, therefore defining the term “hermeneutics” and the related term “exegesis” is relevant. My understanding of the terms is based on Grudem’s definitions (2013:109):

Hermeneutics is the study of correct methods of interpretation (especially interpretation of Scripture).

Exegesis is the process of interpreting a text of Scripture.

3.2.6. Feminist epistemologies

Before approaching the developments of epistemology throughout history, one further concept needs to be addressed. Feminist epistemology is a confluence of gender theory through the lens of feminism and established epistemology, addressing issues related to equal access to, and participation in, processes and institutions where knowledge is created and translated. In simple terms, one could say that the concept mirrors the struggles of many minority groups striving to regain the significance of their own life (Narayan, 2004). The focus ranges from addressing women's ways of knowing and women's experience to women's knowledge. Feminists' battles with traditional philosophers, who view gender-related questions as marginal in the field, sparked the need to ensure that the world is viewed also from women's perspective (Alcoff and Potter, 2013).

The concept of feminist epistemology is at this point not recognised as a theory, but more as a branch of social epistemology. Part of the reason behind this is the debated content of the topic. Some see feminist epistemology as a project addressing the special way women can gain knowledge, while others see it as a tool for the political agenda of gender equality, and still others push a more radical agenda attacking truth and the belief of objective reality. The latter is linked to feminist epistemologists claiming that adding this additional layer will have an impact of our view of the world, also affecting the nature of science and knowledge (Narayan, 2004).

3.3. Antiquity

3.3.1. Sophists and Socrates

Throughout time, it is fair to assume that human beings have looked for the answers to the questions philosophers focus on both within our physical and spiritual world. Early humans explained life through a religious or mythical approach. For example, if the crop failed one year, this was seen as a punishment from the gods.

Focusing on the Western thinkers, the first written sources relevant to my dissertation are the ancient Greek philosophers. Approximately 600 BC the first

examples of logical thinking within this tradition are captured, moving away from a mythical approach. With logical thinking, that is, looking to explain the world not through supernatural powers, but through observing the world as it is, philosophy as a field was born (Bartholomew and Goheen, 2013).

The concept of motion intrigued Greek philosophers. Many of the pre-Socratic thinkers were primarily focusing on metaphysics and not epistemology, so that most of them agreed that knowledge remained unchanged, thus permanent. While this was before the acceptance of the concept of one omnipotent God, religious thinking was not in conflict with secular thinking, as the first philosophers focused on explaining nature and topics we today would classify as science.

Thales (624–546 BC) discovered that all living elements contained water, therefore stating that water is the primary element and that the truth about all matters is to be found in water. He recognised God in water, and believed that the world was floating on water, as this was the most beautiful thing (Bartholomew and Goheen, 2013).

Thinkers went on to explain our foundation on few primary elements containing both truth and God. Anaximander (610–546 BC), having been a student of Thales, argued that everything in our physical world was founded on a matter he termed *apeiron*. He saw this the original substance and something that could not be experienced because of its binary effects existing between hot and cold, and air and soil (Bartholomew and Goheen, 2013).

After him came thinkers claiming that the air, earth and fire were the core seminal elements. One of those was Heraclitus (535–475 BC) who was fascinated by the changes that took place in the world, evident in his most famous statement that everything flows in alignment with one universal divine law. Heraclitus differentiated human laws from divine laws, not addressing a single omnipotent God, but recognising that the divine was the opposite of human. By doing so, he aimed to remove the human sense of justice from his understanding of God. His thinking had great influence on subsequent Western thinkers, even visible today both when addressing natural law and the foundation of religious thinking (Bartholomew and Goheen, 2013).

Parmenides of Elea (c. 515–450 BC) was one of the most influential pre-Socratic thinkers, often referred to as the founder of metaphysics, that is, ontology. He introduced two views of reality: one where change is impossible, where existence is timeless and unchanging, and the other where one's senses lead to impressions that are distorted and fraudulent. As a consequence, his Monist philosophy, based on the denial of the reality of change, defines a significant turning point in the history of Western philosophy, sparking an intellectual transformation later also critiqued by Aristotle and still echoed today (Beckman, 2018).

Democritus (460–370 BC) introduced the concept of the atom, stating that nothing can be divided *ad infinitum*, meaning that there are limits to how small a particle can be. He approached the question of the beginning of time by arguing eternity combined with motion and void spaces and added on the hypothesis of images; he addressed the effect our senses have on our sensations and thoughts, distinguishing between rude, imperfect and false perceptions versus the true ones. He embedded his notion of deity in his theories as the divine godlike figure inhabiting the air while influencing some of the phenomena we struggle to explain (McGibbon, 1965).

The pre-Socratic philosophers' influence on Christian epistemology may not be obvious at the first glance; however, their quest for understanding the world and their desire to grasp the truth embedding divine influence are important. Even at this stage, the inclusion of the divine reflects a higher order of reality with one omnipotent God.

Philosophical thinking subsequently moved the centre of attraction from the natural world into ontology focusing on the ethical life of the individual in society or within political life, through the Sophists, who lived in an agnostic society, where the gods were created by humans, not seen as creators of the world (Bartholomew and Goheen, 2013).

The sophists Protagoras (490–420) and Thrasymachus (459–400) were humanists, recognising no divinity affecting human life, consequently introducing a secular orientation. A decisive contribution to their stand was that God could not be observed, therefore God could not be said to exist. With this

angle, the sophists advocated that the source of truth came from within the humans, also sharing a scepticism when it came to laying out ultimate truths (Bartholomew and Goheen, 2013; Bremmer, 2007).

Socrates (469–399 BC), one of the most influential thinkers of Western philosophy, ironically did not leave any writings; however, his thinking is captured by his students, in particular Plato and Xenophon. On the basis of these writings, it is evident that Socrates did not accept the sophists' approach, but challenged their lack of relevance to the life of humans. Embedded in this was Socrates' quest for an ultimate standard for authentic behaviour and knowledge, also reflecting the unlimited rationale of integrity, virtue, endurance, justice, devotion and the good (Bartholomew and Goheen, 2013; Kahn, 1981).

Socrates' approach was the exploration of our souls, that is, the core of humanity, searching for the meaning of a happy life, also accepting that our souls held an inherent moral with logic and rational. His emphasis on universal ethical standards and morality from within the human soul is of great interest to my dissertation (Long, 1988).

3.3.2. The pinnacle of Greek philosophy – Plato and Aristotle

Plato's (427–347 BC) most famous legacy is his theory of forms or ideas underlining his whole philosophy, which recognised the world as split between two dimensions, on the one side the visible earthly world and on the other side the invisible, external world. Plato's universal view embedded humanness and creation of an orderly world, in a sense forerunning the Christian view of the creation; however, within Plato's universe any God would be deemed as part of the same universal order as human beings. Relevant within Christianity is Plato's view of the third level of the soul, the ability to apply reason, differentiating the human race from animals (Plato, 1977).

According to Plato, knowledge is naturally inherent, and is an instinctive part of our human mind, therefore he also argued that what we experience via our senses cannot be the origin of knowledge, as the objects captured through our senses are exposed to change, and for Plato, knowledge was permanent. Consequently, our knowledge is gained by transforming what our senses experience, applying reasoning to see the unchanging objects – or somewhat

simplified, one acquires knowledge by contemplating matters with one's own mind (Bartholomew and Goheen, 2013; Olson, 2015).

Plato is believed to be the first to argue that knowledge is justified belief, partly based on his writings *Theaetetus* and *Meno*. His views were later adopted by Edmund Gettier (see further below) in the modern theory of justified true belief as knowledge, also concluding that justification requires knowledge of divergence, and that the rationale of knowledge is oblique. Plato further held that knowledge is instinctive, whereby all learning is based on developing ideas already captured by our souls. According to Plato's interpretation of Socrates, our souls exist prior to birth with perfect knowledge; hence, learning is merely recalling the ideas deeply embedded in our souls. This doctrine of recollection is heavily debated, including statements indicating that our soul is trapped in our bodies and that overcoming the body is needed to reach true knowledge (Fine, 2003).

Even though Aristotle (384–322 BC) was a student of Plato, he approached the universal questions in a different manner than his teacher. When Plato had his focus on an invisible world, Aristotle investigated the world around him to discover the truths. Although Aristotle had a different view on reality than Plato, there is little doubt that his work is a continuation of his teacher's work. Aristotle was the first to state that illusions may play tricks with our minds. He illustrated that via the stick in the water that visually may appear as bent even though straight when retrieved from the water. According to Aristotle, it is not our senses that deceive us, but the way we draw conclusions and the theories we apply that let us believe that the stick is bent. Aristotle linked knowledge to our souls, not seeing knowledge as inherited, but arguing that all living things have souls and that intellect is dependent on two key factors: the passive parallel to matter and the active parallel to form. His foundation for ontology and epistemology was substance, covering both a physical thing and the essential nature of the same thing, for example, saying that the essence "humanness" equals the form of "a person" (Bartholomew and Goheen, 2013; Olson, 2015).

Even though Plato and Aristotle disagreed on the question of inheritance, both exposed rationalisms, i.e., recognising our minds' role in acquiring knowledge.

Both thinkers marked the pinnacle of Greek philosophy, their legacy influencing Western philosophy and Christian thinking significantly.

3.3.3. Stoicism and Neoplatonism

With the Greek civilisation at the verge of being absorbed in the Roman Empire, Greek culture faced new challenges, shifting the focus of the Greek thinkers towards ethical and practical acumen, managing uncertainty and increased complexity in life (Bartholomew and Goheen, 2013).

Stoicism arose as one of the new philosophical schools, founded by Zeno of Citium (335–263 BC), focusing on the link between human happiness and wisdom, the main objective being to gain happiness via knowledge and wisdom. The Stoics relied on a universal order giving them the honourable endurance that we today refer to as “stoic” (Bartholomew and Goheen, 2013). Stoicism spread across the Mediterranean area with the expansion of the Roman Empire, but lost its influence with the fall of the empire; even so, Stoic philosophy continued to exert significant influence on Christian belief, and resurfaced as a philosophy multiple times (Tanner, 2017).

Another notable school was Neoplatonism, which was aiming to revitalise the legacy of Plato, seeking to build on Plato’s themes handed down by his followers. The school was established by Plotinus (AD 207–270) and grew to become the leading philosophical school in the late Roman Empire. A key part of Neoplatonism advocates that reality can be derived from a single principle, namely the One or the Good, expanding Plato’s Good in the Republic, and for that reason, viewing the One as the cause of reality (Plotinus, 1991).

From this transcendent being the world was created, equalling what Neoplatonism recognised as the world’s soul. All living beings including humans are embedded in this universal soul, also reflecting that our souls are temporarily housed within our physical bodies, longing for being one again with the One after being freed from the physical boundaries (Rist, 1964). Neoplatonism is recognised as the last pagan philosophy, also influencing early Christian thinking, for example, St. Augustine of Hippo, who started out as a Neoplatonist. The influence on Christianity is partly recognised in Christoplatonism, a term used by several to describe Platonic influences on the

Church. Especially relevant is the dualism between good (that is, the spirit) and evil (that is, matter). The impact is debated, one example being Randy Alcorn (2004), pinpointing how Christoplatonism counters the view that everything God has created is good. Christoplatonism further claims that our souls exist irrespective of our bodies, a belief that counters Scripture, in which our bodies are seen as an essential part, as for example in Genesis 2:7 (Coleman, 2017).

3.3.4. Skepticism

The next significant change in epistemological thought was Skepticism, emerging after the death of Aristotle. Two schools arose, the first, academic Skepticism or dogmatic Skeptics, was founded by Arcesilaus (316/5–241/0 BC), a leader of Plato's Academy, who rediscovered Socrates and argued that nothing could be known with confidence. The other school was the Pyrrhonian Skepticism or Stoic Antipater, contradicting the Academics, stating that the mere knowledge that something is impossible in fact involves knowledge of something (Vogt, 2010). Some would claim that Pyrrhonism represents the most mature thinkers within skepticism during antiquity, partly because of its further development of previous skeptics like Protagoras, Socrates and Democritus (Groarke, 2009).

The influence of Greek philosophy on Christianity and modern philosophy will be addressed further below.

3.4. The Medieval Period

3.4.1. Augustine – the transitional phase

The mixture of Greek philosophy and Scripture is evident in medieval times, both being essential for our interpretation of the philosophy of that time. Paving the way for Augustine (354–430) were early Christian thinkers who incorporated Platonism with Christian philosophies, reflecting the dualism of both worlds. Justin Martyr (103–165) and Irenaeus (125–202) had the same quest, that is, to defend Christianity while critiquing the worldly pagan ideologies. While the Greeks found truth in the conclusions drawn from history, Justin argued the word as basis for truth (John 1:14), uplifting people of the world (John 1:9), a belief deeply anchored with large groups of people also today. Irenaeus on the

other side was more apprehensive with respect to the challenges embedded in pagan philosophy, being partly influenced by Gnosticism and partly battling the dualism between God and matter. A third Christian thinker, Origen (185–254), was less critical of Platonism, seeking to bridge the philosophy with Scripture, by arguing, for example, that we are all created as souls destined to participate in God's divinity (Bartholomew and Goheen, 2013; Walker, 2015).

As mentioned briefly above, Augustine had a Neoplatonist non-Christian start; however, after embracing Christianity, he laid the foundation for being recognised as one of the most important thinkers influencing both Christianity and Western philosophy, leaving an unparalleled legacy (MacCulloch, 2014).

Part of his legacy is his own ideas of philosophy and theology, with a range of procedures and angles. He matured in his adaptation to Christianity throughout life, his later thinking clearly corresponding with Scripture, reflected for example in his *Confessions*, and advocating his doctrine of inwardness or inner self. Embedded in his belief was the grace of Christ essential to human liberation, contributing to the doctrine of original sin and the theory of just war. His epistemological position draws upon Plato, addressing recollection as a vital part of knowledge, but still accepting that God includes the known in the knower (Bartholomew and Goheen, 2013; MacCulloch, 2014).

Augustine viewed the link between human knowledge and God's illumination as essential, enabling us to acknowledge and understand ideas. His theory had two key elements; when it came to ideas, Augustine agreed with Plato, seeing ideas as constant and only accessible to our minds, while still being part of God. His theory on illumination is based on an analogy from Plotinus (205–270) and other Neoplatonic philosophers, stating that a human's knowledge is dependent on God's illumination, ensuring that we can see and observe (Bartholomew and Goheen, 2013).

Augustine disapproved of Skepticism, as noted in his works *On the Free Choice of the Will* (389–395), *On the Trinity* (399/400–416/421) and *The City of God* (413–426/427). The last is recognised both as his most significant achievement and also as one of the outstanding pillars in the history of Christian philosophy, addressing the conflict between the earthly and the heavenly, i.e., the

omnipresent battle between good and evil, while scrutinising human history and its connectivity to all eternity (Augustine, (2003; MacCulloch, 2014).

3.4.2. Early Medieval

Augustine's death marks a shift in academic philosophy, whereby a mixture of pagan, Germanic and Christian paradigms slowly developed European culture and Christianity.

The orthodox Christian Boethius (480–524) gained a central position at the Roman court under Theodoric, a Gothic ruler. His *Consolation of Philosophy* is recognised as his most important work, in which he explains his philosophical position after having been imprisoned, awaiting execution after being wrongfully found guilty of treason (Boethius, 2009). The work is structured as a dialog between himself and Lady Philosophy, with the underlying thought being that our chaotic world is in need of balance and order (Lerer, 2014; Myers, 2015).

Boethius continued the Neoplatonist views by advocating God's universal truths based on realist ontology. He was less true to Scripture than Augustine, and his most significant heritage to philosophy lies in his being the first of the Scholastics. For Boethius the mere complexity and multifaceted nature of reality explains why God is the only one who can hold everything together (Marenborn, 2015; Lagerlund, 2016).

Anselm (1033–1109) is another thinker from the early medieval period, living as a Benedictine and becoming the Archbishop of Canterbury after some persuasion. Being a faithful Neoplatonist follower of Augustine, Anselm described his philosophy as "faith seeking reason", stating that Christian faith may be explained through rational arguments, even though not always referring to Scripture. His legacy is primarily his ontological argument for the existence of God, a line of thinking that was ridiculed when Anselm lived, and to this day debated (Bartholomew and Goheen, 2013; Hogg, 2017).

3.4.3. Late Medieval

After the translation of Aristotle's *On the Soul* into Latin during the early 13th century, the epistemology based on Plato and Augustine that had influenced the Early Medieval times was slowly uprooted.

Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), a Dominican theologian, was part of this shift, basing his thinking on the Neoplatonist inheritance and Aristotle, arguing two types of knowledge, firstly knowledge about God and secondly knowledge of the cosmos. Pursuant to this, Aquinas advocated that thinking and reason did not refute faith's central place as part of the quest for knowledge, also stressing that faith reflects certainty, not uncertainty. According to Aquinas, faith plays an active role while bridging opinions and knowledge, recognising faith as more reliable than opinions, but not as solid as knowledge (Kruger, 2016).

Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae* further reflects his epistemological view, again demonstrating Aristotle's influence, perceiving that knowledge is gained when our active intellect interprets what has been picked up via our senses (Aquinas, 2011). As part of his epistemological point of view, Aquinas distinguished between two cognitive movements, i.e., speculative and practical, the latter reflecting the human will (action) and the speculative referring to our thoughts, our knowledge (Aquinas, 1998). In essence, knowledge for Aquinas is collected by the use of our senses. The next steps involve our intellect, whereby knowledge moves from what is perceived by our senses to the universal aspect, resulting in true knowledge (Bartholomew and Goheen, 2013; Kruger, 2016).

Two contemporary philosopher-theologians also highly influential during the High Middle Ages were John Duns Scotus (1266–1308) and William Ockham (1288–1347). Both shared the same Aristotelian orientation as Aquinas and approached their work from a Christian position; however, they diverging from Aquinas' views in many aspects.

John Duns Scotus advocated the Aristotelian view that God's creations, that is humans and animals, have senses and intellect as their cognitive powers. While the senses are all linked to physical organs, he sees our intellect as immaterial. Knowledge is further gained via abstraction, that is, for Duns Scotus human beings draw knowledge from the abstract. Connected to this is his doctrine of

the “univocity of being”, whereby he argues that, of all the abstract in the world, the concept of existence exceeds everything else. For Duns Scotus, this entailed that being is the main purpose of our intellect. He also holds the metaphysical position that God and humans are divergent, as God’s transcendent position gives no commonality to humans. This is further reflected in his epistemology whereby he, while protecting faith, argues separate natural and spiritual worlds, contradicting Aquinas’ dualistic epistemology (Williams, 2016; Williams, 2017).

The English Franciscan friar Ockham’s most important legacy is what history has named Ockham’s razor (also referred to as Occam’s razor), a principle addressing problem-solving, stating that when facing a problem with hypothetical solutions, one should choose the one with the least assumptions, whereby unnecessary parts are “shaved away”, supporting the argument that uncomplicated hypotheses are in most cases to be preferred as opposed to the more intricate ones (Backer, 2016; Heylighen, 1997).

Ockham’s epistemology includes the rejection of the scholastic theory of species, while embracing the theories of abstraction. His line of thinking was that the theory of species played no vital role in a prosperous theory of cognition, recognising two sets of cognition, i.e., the intuitive and the abstract. Ockham’s main idea is that a cognition intuitively sparks numerous valid judgments concerning the external things that were the source of the intuitive cognition. He further assumes that this intuition does in fact not stop God from guiding our intuition in a different direction, even causing misleading judgements. On the other hand, even under certain exceptional circumstances, our intuitive cognitions may cause untrue beliefs, and still render sparks of truthful contingent judgement (Pasnau, 1997; Spade and Panaccio, 2016)

3.5. The Renaissance and Reformation

3.5.1. The Renaissance

The Renaissance represents a blend of medieval inheritance and new ideas. It was an exceptional historical era, with adventurers exploring the world and the development of altered ways to understand the life of humans.

With the Renaissance came a flow of cultural creation within literature, painting, sculpture, architecture etcetera, where the art is characterised by its love for realism. Interestingly, the thinkers of the time looked backwards into antiquity for inspiration, and studies of Greek and Hebrew resurfaced, with significant effects on biblical studies. One example is John Colet (1467–1519), an Englishman, who in 1497 gave lectures on Paul's letter to the Romans, abandoning the Scholastic approach while interpreting the letter in its historical view (Bartholomew and Goheen, 2013).

Innovation was another key element during the Renaissance, introducing the doctrine of progress. To merge innovation with the legacy of antiquity was for the thinkers of that time to forego the grandeur of history. Humanism emerged, applying thinking from Augustine and Neoplatonism, adding religion to their thinking, and enhancing the development of philosophy (Bartholomew and Goheen, 2013).

Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499) one of the humanist philosophers, revived Neoplatonism at his Academy in Italy, using the framework, but by leaving out the dualistic parts, focusing on the monistic direction only. In line with the innovative Renaissance theme, Ficino grew an interest for astrology, an activity that was not accepted by the Roman Catholic Church, as having links to magic (Bartholomew and Goheen, 2013; Seigel, 2015; Plumb, 2017).

Another Platonic thinker was Pico della Mirandola (1463–1493), who picked up some of the most significant themes of the Renaissance: dignity, uniqueness and the glory of mankind. These topics are captured in his *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, part of which can be interpreted as unbiblical through a celebration of human freedom, i.e., an introduction to what was to come during the Enlightenment (Della Mirandola, 1956; Seigel, 2015; Plumb, 2017).

Aristotelianism emerged with a more dominant power than Platonism during the Renaissance. Thinkers like Pietro Pomponazzi of Mantua (1465–1525) and Jacopo Zabarella (1533–1589) are both recognised as philosophical exclusivists, building their thinking of the legacy of Italian Aristotelianism. While embedding naturalistic humanism in anticipation of Spinoza, this branch of philosophy, referred to as Averroism, dismissed Christian faith, criticised the

Church, and recognised experience and reasoning as the only authoritative aspects of philosophy (Bartholomew and Goheen, 2013; Petrescu, 2016).

3.5.2. The Reformation

The Reformation is about Christianity—about regaining lost aspects of the gospel, about God’s creation, about one omnipotent God diminishing dualism, and about renewal of theology, hence the philosophical legacy from this period is limited. This is further strengthened by the fact that Martin Luther (1483–1546) distanced himself unconditionally from philosophy (Bartholomew and Goheen, 2013). Although somewhat critical towards the classical strands of philosophy, Luther contributed to epistemological thought through his view on how humans may know God. His contention was that we as humans cannot elect to know God through our will, but that only God’s redemption could extend such knowledge to us (Luther, 2011). John Calvin (1509–1564), had a less agnostic attitude towards classical philosophy than Luther, and his position was that through *sensus divinitatis* we as humans may all know God, as this knowledge is imbedded in each of us by nature (Calvin, 2012:1:3:1).

Martin Luther and John Calvin both recognised that by serving our neighbours we serve God in all aspects of life. The Reformers reintroduced the scope of sin and salvation, while highlighting justification as a vital step for salvation (Smith, 2017). Their mark on Christian thinking is highly regarded; for example, Calvin’s legacy is thoroughly captured in Dutch Calvinism established during the 20th century. Some Reformers had a more favourable view of philosophy, for example, Pietro Martire Vermigli (1499–1562) saw philosophy as a blessing from God, only to be dismissed when becoming fraudulent, and Nicolas Taurellus (1547–1606) and Theophilus Gale (1628–1678) attempted to develop a Christian philosophy (Bartholomew and Goheen, 2013). Taurellus aimed to establish a consolidated philosophical and theological truth, thereby defending the doctrine of creation through a philosophical point of view (Blank, 2014).

3.6. The Early Modernist

3.6.1. Transition to the secular

The impact of the Renaissance and the Reformation laid the foundation for new thinkers focusing on humanity, science and the role of individuals, without addressing theology. Giant thinkers like Descartes and Kant set their significant marks in this period. Even though the role of the individual increasingly became the centrepiece of thinkers, with God being placed in the background during this era, Christian philosophers also had a great legacy influencing modern philosophy today (Bartholomew and Goheen, 2013).

Philosophy, politics, science and communications were rejuvenated in Europe during the period 1685 to 1815, an era referred to as the Age of Reason, or more commonly the Enlightenment. The latter term is not generally acknowledged, because of its somewhat negative association to previous periods (Israel, 2002). Nevertheless, in this dissertation I will use the term Enlightenment to distinguish this period from the succeeding eras.

As many of the philosophers from this period were mathematicians, a more accurate way of gaining knowledge emerged where objectivity and scientific knowledge played important roles. The 17th century was a period of freedom of thought in which knowledge was constantly challenged and disrupted (Scott, 2016).

Francis Bacon (1561–1626) directed focus on scientific knowledge, something that is visible in *New Organon*, in which he attempted to succeed Aristotle's *Organon*. According to Bacon, reason is the path to knowledge, and knowledge should be acquired via inductive methods, focusing on facts. While insisting that facts lie in the objects themselves, which may be seen as a step towards naturalism, Bacon contributes to widen the gap between faith and knowledge (Bacon, 2014; Bartholomew and Goheen, 2013; Henry, 2017).

Rene Descartes (1596–1650) followed Bacon's lead and trusted the power of knowledge via applied scientific reasoning to decipher the laws of nature, empowering humans to master nature through the use of technology. His method, explained in *Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting Reason*,

involves doubting everything until proven. This view is also captured in the phrase *Cognito, ergo sum*. By doubting everything, Descartes' method implied building a strong base for knowledge by pursuing a rational procedure. Even though Descartes applies his method to prove that God exists, his line of thinking is revolutionary and to some extent hard to link to his Christian belief. The mere fact that his line of argument to prove God's existence was based on conclusive human knowledge, meant that he had relinquished the Scholastic approach. For Descartes, reason and science as building blocks for knowledge was more important than experience, laying the foundation for him being recognised as the father of modernity (Bartholomew and Goheen, 2013; Descartes, 2017; Scott, 2016).

Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) is recognised as the founder of British empiricism. He advocated that knowledge in all parts of life can be gained by applying geometric methods. While Hobbes and Descartes had the same devotion to mathematics and disregarded Aristotle, they did not see eye to eye with respect to the role our minds play in gaining knowledge. Like Descartes, Hobbes was a Christian. In line with his naturalism, he strove to link his philosophy to Scripture, arguing for a nature / Scripture dualism. Dualism in a sense is also recognised in his political philosophy; in Hobbes' view, the world is controlled by uncertainty made possible because of our doubts about everything; as a consequence, his theory of sovereignty is founded on ambiguity (Bartholomew and Goheen, 2013; Walker, 2015).

John Locke's (1632–1704) most famous writing is his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, in which he advocated that there are no inherent ideas in our minds, as our minds must be seen as a blank slate, gradually filled with ideas generated through experience while using our senses (Locke, 2004). This approach is referred to as the foundation for empiricism, with a great influence on the Enlightenment philosophers. His thinking has also contributed to classic liberalism, whereby the existence of governments is based on the individual's rights and the social contract. This line of thinking justified the English "Glorious Revolution" in 1688, an event that directly influenced the American and French Revolutions in the eighteenth century (Bartholomew and Goheen, 2013).

Blaise Pascal (1623–1662) argued that our ability to reason is limited because of the mere fact that we are humans, and that adding Christian faith is the only way our minds can serve us accordingly, also recognising the shortcomings of our human ability to reason. A recognisable trait of his work is his justification of the human position on the basis of Christian revelation. Pascal recognised skepticism as one of the most important philosophical angles, by that setting forth the hardship of identifying one true philosophy. Pascal found his sources in Scripture, seeing the heart as key for religion, and this perspective sets him far apart from Descartes (Coleman, 2013).

Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677) who was an excommunicated Jew, advocated that context and truth need to be positively separated in Scripture, in addition to the scriptural message being the source when determining reason. Contrary to Descartes' dualism, Spinoza applied monism, arguing that God or Nature is the only substance for thought, adding that humans gain knowledge via multiple stages (imagining, reason and intuition), and also accepting that we inherit knowledge, including the knowledge of God (Schneider, 2016). Spinoza's views involve a challenging balance between philosophy and theology, as he on one hand acknowledged the Scripture's revelation and on the other hand did not accept reason being a scriptural subject, though seeking to explain this by discriminating between Scripture and the word of God (Bartholomew and Goheen, 2013).

As shown above, the early modernists from the Enlightenment era balanced their thinking between theology and philosophy, some advocating that the two be merged while others strove to move philosophy in a secular, scientific direction. An interesting aspect is that irrespective of direction, all saw the need to have a position on Scripture, since they were heavily influenced by the Reformation, but also themselves heavily influencing the epistemology of this period. The legacy from this period is undoubtedly a deeper understanding of the world around us, merged with the philosophy and the impact of Scripture.

3.6.2. The Early Modern

Moving towards our time, secular philosophy grew as many thinkers struggled with the lack of reconciliation between philosophy, science and theology,

arguing a materialistic view on humans. Developments within science shifted to a more realistic ontology merged with positivistic epistemology within the science of nature, embarking on the quest for new insights in line with Humboldt's (1769–1859) approach, also abandoning the concept of classical truth (Bourner and Simpson, 2005).

This line of approach can be attributed partly to the church's loss of its powers and influence on academia and society, and partly to the centralisation of societies introducing secular elites, echoed by political fights for democracy in the Western world. The centre of attention for thinkers of this time was consequently justice and democracy, whereby the philosophical modernists of this time applied reductionism while placing theology in the back seat.

The Scot David Hume (1711–1776) is one of the thinkers who demonstrated trust in the secular science of this period, doubting our ability to apply reason, but not, however, advocating radical skepticism. This is reflected in his most famous writing, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, in which he advocates his epistemological position based on human observation as the foundation for knowledge, also dividing the concepts of reason and emotion (Hume, 1985). For Hume, reason is derived from our observations, and therefore has higher value than knowledge based on our ideas, which stem from our cognition. Regarding emotions, Hume applied a two-tier system, whereby, for example, physical pain should be recognised as the primary tier, whilst cognitive experiences like pride should be recognised as the second tier. Religion is lacking from Hume's epistemology, consequently deemed irrelevant by him. His position on theology is made clear in *The Natural History of Religion* and *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*. In both he argues his anti-theism partly on the basis of the lack of justifiable evidence for the existence of God and partly on his statement that we should abstain from believing in something that may cause unease and social turmoil (Bartholomew and Goheen, 2013).

Like Hume, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) cracked part of the strict rationalistic foundation of the Enlightenment thinkers, as he questioned the role science and nature plays for humans, advocating our sense of freedom to be of overarching importance. This is clearly visible in *The Social Contract*, where he starts by stating that all humans are born free. Even though his epistemology

lacked theological form, he built on a reflection of inherent morality, and contributed to the rise of Romanticism, easily identified in his trust in nature, stating that nature is always right, reaching out to us via our moral senses (Rousseau, 1997; Bartholomew and Goheen, 2013).

If forced to mention only one philosopher from the Enlightenment, Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) would be the obvious choice. He is by far the most significant thinker from this era, leaving behind a legacy of tremendous impact on the history of thought and philosophy. *The Critique of Pure Reason* is the pinnacle of his contribution, being recognised as one of the most impressive philosophical works in Western philosophical history, in which he not only attacks the logic of the Enlightenment thinkers, but also shares his theory of knowledge. His work sets out to create the base for the reality of contemporary science and the prospect of human autonomy. Kant's view on the concepts of time and space are indispensable to our experience, in the same way as cause and effect. His approach in the *Critique* also involves investigating what knowledge we can gain purely by thinking, not adding experience and perception. Not very much, is his verdict (Kant, 1998).

Kant's epistemological position assumes the difference between what we as humans can know about the world, and what the world really is, naming this "transcendental deduction". This does not mean that Kant saw a difference between our perceptions of the world and the real world, blaming potential divergence on our interpretation or lack thereof. According to Kant we have two sources of knowledge: sensibility and understanding, the latter relevant to our ability to understand concepts, while the first refers to our ability to apply our intuition. Kant also argued limitations with respect to the scope of knowledge, whereby knowledge, according to him, cannot be extended to the metaphysical dimension, because of our minds' limitations when accessing space and time (Kant, 1998; Bartholomew and Goheen, 2013; Palmquist, 2015).

Pursuant to this position is also Kant's view on religion, captured in, for example, *Religion within the Boundaries of Bare Reason*, where he attacks the hierarchy within the Church and challenges the lack of proof for the existence of God, partly applying rationality to conquer religion, while at the same time arguing the link between morality and religion (Kant, 2017). Nevertheless,

Kant's insistence on human freedom makes it hard to harmonise his position on reason with our Christian mindset (Palmquist, 2015).

With his subjective idealism, Kant paved the way for other thinkers like Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831), who recognised the importance of history in understanding and forming philosophy. Hegel further argued the existence of a self-knowing *Geist*, a merger of the lives of all humans and God, also serving a greater existence. Following up on Kant's legacy, Hegel argued the freedom of humans, but insisted that freedom needs to be gained, and should not be seen as a virtue that exists automatically. This position is thoroughly addressed in his *Philosophy of Right* (Hegel, 2015).

While religion was becoming extraneous, Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) managed to merge philosophy and religion even during the Enlightenment era. His approach involved our human consciousness embedding feelings and intuition, hence introducing a romanticised religious interrelation that balanced human freedom (Schleiermacher, 2015).

As mentioned above, the pinnacle of Enlightenment philosophy is captured by Kant introducing human freedom as an essential part of philosophy, ensuring that religion is forced into a subordinate role.

3.7. The Modernists

3.7.1. Romanticism

In the post-Enlightenment era the romanticism sparked by Schleiermacher and others grew rapidly in the turn of the nineteenth century and continues to play a significant role also today in the Western world. The key message in Romanticism is that our feelings are the source of both universal truths and morality. Romanticism may be seen as a direct answer to the idealist and rationalist movements of the Enlightenment, as it focuses on inspiration rather than reason, the complexity of the human self, the human will and the divinity of religion. The Romantics also accepted the influence of tradition, learning and art, also addressing human knowledge and interpretive concepts, therefore being relevant also from a Christian epistemological point of view.

The influence of the Industrial Revolution (also addressed in Chapter 2) needs to be seen as an important source of influence on Romanticism, balancing science and progress with oppression and severe poverty, setting the scene for Marx and Engel's political quest and focus on society.

Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) is regarded as the founder of modern Utilitarianism, captured in *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, in which he presented the equation of utility, equalling the total sum of all pleasure resulting from one concrete action, minus the suffering due to the same action. This ethical theory will be further addressed in Chapter 4. In line with Utilitarianism, Bentham argued the logic of the human will as opposed to what Aristotle argued as the logic of the understanding (Bentham, 1996).

Bentham's student, John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) was as a thinker both a naturalist and a utilitarian, focusing his work on exploring the effects of an empiricist outlook. Part of his position on knowledge was that humans are instilled with an innate *a priori* knowledge of what is right and wrong (Mill, 2001). Unlike many other philosophers, his work was well received during his lifetime; however, Mill is not recognised as one of the major thinkers. Interestingly, he is referred to in *Das Capital* as one of Marx's inspirations (see further below). As a liberal politician, he was for a short period of time a member of the House of Commons, where his most memorable action was participating in an unsuccessful rally for women's rights (McCloskey, 2015).

The third notable romanticist is Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1850), recognised as one of the first self-declared atheist thinkers. Ironically, some of his sources are religious, for Christian, Hindu and Buddhist saints influenced his view on asceticism, even though he compares religious belief to lack of education. For him, the source of any knowledge is suffering, with the natural consequence being that the only escape from this is asceticism. His major work is *The World as Will and Idea*, where he, following Plato, shares his view on reality as a creation in our minds, adding that nothing exists outside our cognition (Bartholomew and Goheen, 2013; Schopenhauer, 2012).

During his short life, Søren Aabye Kierkegaard (1813–1855) left a significant legacy inspired by Socrates, especially when it came to his view on truth. Even

though he did not set out to work as a philosopher, he is received as the most influential thinker in Western philosophy originating from the Nordic region. He paved the way for externalism, thereby influencing succeeding thinkers like Heidegger and Sartre. His epistemological position identified the self as the centre of knowledge and cognition, balancing this with a Christian perspective. Growing up as a Christian in Denmark, Kierkegaard embedded Scripture not only in his Christian philosophy but also in other parts of his philosophical work, though being critical of the inflexible approach within the Danish state church (Bartholomew and Goheen, 2013).

With Charles Darwin (1809–1892) Western philosophy took another major step away from God, as Darwin's natural science involved a true break with Aristotle's classical teleology. In Aristotelian teleology, all developments in nature took place according to an existing plan, while Darwin contradicted this view by arguing the survival of the fittest, founded on his theory of natural selection (Darwin, 2009). Darwin's theory is seen by many as a great threat to Christianity; however, Darwin himself leaves the door open for a creator, and is cautious about applying a strong atheistic approach (Flannelly, 2017; Bartholomew and Goheen, 2013).

As mentioned above, the Industrial Revolution had significant influence on the modern thinkers. Karl Marx (1818–1883), also addressed in Chapter 2, founded Marxism as both a philosophical and political movement in his quest to revolutionise the world. In his work *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, published after his death, he reverses the philosophy of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831), moving from idealism to materialism (Marx, 1970). Marx's epistemological stance is partly a consequence of the world he lived in, but one can detect concepts that are recognised much later in history. His approach, in contrast to contemporaneous thinkers, and partly in line with Hegel, considers a total reality embedding both institution and observation, thereby arguing that all true knowledge originates from viewing and/or touching an object. Whereas Hegel saw his own philosophy aligned to Christianity, Marx rejected any positive impact, also clearly stating that "religion is the opium of the people" (Folloni, 2014; Jones, 2016; Solomon, 1974).

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), a son of a pastor, early on rejected Christianity, leaving a legacy of philosophy that may be described as anti-Christian. In Western society he is recognised as a symbol of atheism, elevating humans to being masters of their own destiny, while viewing our species as superhumans (*Übermensch*). His most famous work, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, reflects this view to the full. Though applauding the spirit of the Enlightenment, Nietzsche's irrationalism did not resonate with the theories of the Enlightenment, but acknowledged Heraclitus's view that "everything is in flux" (Ansell-Pearson, 2018; Nietzsche, 2016).

3.7.2. Pragmatism

Through Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914) philosophy took a new turn, with the dawn of American pragmatism. Peirce was a firm believer in scientific methods and the role they play when establishing truths. His epistemological point of view, assuming that human knowledge includes continually enhancing estimations, abandoned theories of introspective self-knowledge. Another important contribution from Peirce is semiotics. Even though theories of signs had been known throughout history, Peirce is recognised as the thinker who identified the significance of signs, also capturing the importance of interpretation of signs as physical and cultural artefacts. For him this became an intellectual obsession, partly also recognising that semiotics in fact may involve the study of anything. Part of his legacy is the identification of logic as the main branch of semiotics, and in addition, his definition of abductive reasoning (Peirce, 1974; Hoopes, 2014).

In the early 20th century, Bertrand Russell (1872–1970) prompted the rebels against absolute idealism in Britain, being viewed as one of the architects behind analytic philosophy. Included in this is the presumption that linguistics often contributes to philosophical misunderstanding, the solution being to restate propositions applying an ideal formal language based on symbolic logic, and through this method uncovering their correct logical form. Russell further argued that acquiring knowledge is dependent on truths based on previously acknowledged and analysed matters. Aligned to this, he saw that human knowledge could only be gained through logic based on our senses' recognition and observation (Russell, 2013).

3.7.3. Positivism and analytic philosophy

One of Russell's students, Ludwig Josef Johann Wittgenstein (1889–1951) had two visible philosophical phases: the early period, captured by his work *Tractatus*, and the later period, captured in *Philosophical Investigations*. Like Russell, he argued the need for representative language as the preferred method of capturing facts, and then, argued for stark positivism. With the influence on scientists and thinkers, his positivism was later included in all disciplines. During his later period, Wittgenstein came across as more moderate, moving away from his concept of positivism and portraying the world in a precise manner. Particularly relevant for this dissertation is the assumption that language needs to be interpreted in its context, including the notion that a word also needs to be interpreted in relation to the situation where it was used (Ambrose and Lazerowtiz, 2014).

Edmund Husserl (1858–1938) initiated another significant philosophical direction, namely phenomenology, arguing that no *a priori* knowledge is required to gain knowledge of the world. Descartes can be seen as the father of phenomenology; however, one significant difference is that Husserl identified experience rather than reason as the key source for humans to gain knowledge. Linked to this approach is the trust Husserl placed on human intuition as one of the ways to reinforce experience, enabling us to explain facets of the object observed (Husserl, 2014).

As a student of Husserl, Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) further developed phenomenology towards hermeneutics, recognising that Husserl's trust in the "Archimedean point" of knowledge was displaced. According to Heidegger, our egos are not separated from the world and embedded with ideas. This perspective is reflected in his work *Being and Time*, where he returns to the original approach of the phenomenological project, being the things themselves, inlaying the individual's day-to-day experiences. Via the hermeneutical circle Heidegger addresses how we can understand a complete text by reference to parts of the text, and how our understanding of these parts is also dependent on the whole text. In short, there is an interrelationship between an understanding of the parts and an understanding of the whole, creating a circle. Additionally, the hermeneutical circle also stresses that interpretation of any text also needs

to rely on the historical, cultural and literary context to get the true meaning of the text (Heidegger, 1996; Schmidt, 2016; Mulhall, 2017).

In continuity with the thinking of Husserl and Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900–2002) made further adjustments to establish the modern hermeneutics. *Truth and Method* captures his work both within philosophical and epistemological thinking. Gadamer argues that all interpretations are founded on our biases and preconceptions, therefore they will vary from person to person, and consequently neutral bias-free observations are impossible. In addition, Gadamer saw all interpretations as situation-based and also influenced by their historical context. He stated that all people have a consciousness affected by history, meaning that our consciousness is shaped by history and culture. The interpretation of a text is, in short, a fusion of perspectives where the resonance between the text's history and the reader's background will be decisive for the reader's interpretation (Gadamer, 2004).

With the modernists, philosophy moved further away from Christianity, through the development of theories addressing secular and religious thought. The epistemological focus on context and human intuition indicates growing acceptance of implicit truths, in addition to skepticism with respect to the sovereignty of reason and reductionist science. This period's technological advancement did not only contribute positively to society. The negative impacts—for example, suppression of freedom, war, nuclear arms capabilities and environmental destruction—influenced the thinkers, also muting the optimism spanning from science.

In the following section I will address and expand on some of the aspects relevant to the postmodernist movement.

3.8. The Postmodernists

3.8.1. Embracing the holistic – introducing deconstruction

The school of postmodernists is somewhat ambiguous, so is the choice of thinkers relevant to this offshoot of philosophy. Even though the most known philosophical voices in the contemporary discourse may belong to the postmodernists, they comprise a minority among thinkers. In this section I will

focus on thinkers with epistemology supporting an open and holistic approach relevant for the interpretation of texts, and for that reason relevant to my dissertation.

Michel Foucault (1926–1984) was a French philosopher with a major influence and legacy impacting secular hermeneutics. To Foucault epistemology was essential, especially when denying the fusion of knowledge with power, also maintaining a binary relationship between the concepts of power and knowledge. He advocated that knowledge calls for its own reasoning irreducible to influence of power, and that science should be viewed in contexts based on interpretations. From an epistemological standpoint, this addresses the concept of knowledge as a sublime entity, partly in line with Plato's ideal forms (Foucault, 2002). Another important aspect of Foucault's thinking is the recognition of how power may have a direct impact on the expressed meaning, and linked to this, how social dominance reflected in our language should be deemed as part of any interpretative procedure. Many have seen Foucault's focus on power and the relationship between body and sexuality as support for feminism, even though he has few references to gender in his work (Deveaux, 1994).

Jacques Derrida (1930–2004), on the other hand, is regarded as very controversial, as his main contribution to epistemology addresses deconstruction as the tool to interpretation. He advocates that every aspect of a text be observed, including not only the words themselves but also the font, layout, paper margins, and footnotes, allowing these to be viewed separately. This holistic approach involves, quite uniquely, deducing content also from the textual presentation (Derrida, 2016).

Paul Ricoeur (1913–2005) is most known for combining phenomenology and hermeneutics, whereby his contribution to hermeneutics is extensively known, within both secular and theological communities. His philosophy is postmodern constructivism, with an epistemological position whereby he addresses both metaphor and narrative, while embedding biblical and mythological angles in his approach to hermeneutics. Even though he approached philosophy and religion separately, he contributed actively in studies focused on the interpretation of Scripture (Ricoeur, 2013).

The re-introduction of religion in philosophy is also visible in the works of Slavoj Žižek (1949–), which are infused by religious thinking, and mainly central Christian themes, even though Žižek is a self-described atheist. He is especially focused on the coming of Christ and potential effects. From an epistemological point of view, his recognition of religion is central, in addition to his acceptance of our ability to acknowledge religion (Žižek, 2003).

Summarising the thinking of the postmodernists, it is noticeable that elements like blind reliance on reason and human rationality, among others, is declining in philosophical thinking. This again involves the acceptance of epistemology, recognising the need to investigate texts and expressions of power and control even more deeply, and welcoming a progressively holistic interpretative method. In summary one may say that postmodernism contributes to epistemology through depth while promoting a holistic view and adding ambiguity to previous epistemological practices.

In the next section I will move on to focus on the current Reformed philosophy and epistemology.

3.9. The Contemporary

3.9.1. Reformed philosophers

Despite his background in law, the Dutch scholar Herman Dooyeweerd's (1884–1977) most important legacy is within Christian philosophy and theology, as he claims that religion is the root of all aspects of our lives. His Kantian influence is highlighted when using the term "transcendental" in his most important work, also reflecting his starting point as a philosopher. Dooyeweerd's position was that all theoretical thoughts are developed from abstraction, through identifying and separating the reality and items support the steps of theorising. He further argued that the "origin of meaning" is the source of all theoretical thoughts, also admitting that theoretical thought can never be viewed as neutral or independent of the thinker. In line with these aspects, Dooyeweerd argues three fundamental aspects to an idea: the world, coherence of rationalities and origin of meaning (Dooyeweerd and Strauss, 1996; Choi, 2006).

From a Christian perspective, Dooyeweerd addresses the meaning of being via three transcendental ideas: God as the creator of all, the meaning of totality via Christ and the meaning of diversity via the cosmos with both individual and modal structures (Choi, 2006).

3.9.2. Reformed epistemology

Reformed epistemology addresses the thinking related to the question, “How can one know that what one knows about God is true?” It claims that belief in God can be explained by experiencing the divine, beyond disagreements or evidence available to others.

In the tradition of John Calvin, Protestant Christian philosophers like Alvin Plantinga and Nicolas Wolterstorff are spokesmen for Reformed epistemology. The common view held by these thinkers is that belief in God is self-evident, hence no proof or tests are required. Sensing the divine is equal to sensing another person; God’s existence is basic.

Alvin Plantinga (1932–) argues that religious belief needs to be accepted in epistemology as rational and logical; thus, this belief does not require proof of God’s existence, as religious belief is basic for humans, a concept he named “proper functionalism”. Plantinga includes the concept of “warrant” in his epistemology, addressing whether the belief adheres to adequate operating cognition and mental abilities, or simply whether what makes the difference between true belief and knowledge. These epistemological directions are clearly visible in his philosophical work addressing evil, where he renounces atheistic undertakings that use the presence of evil to overthrow the belief in God. Plantinga does not accept that science excludes religious belief, arguing that contradictions are only visible when an atheist presents his/her arguments; as a consequence, potentially frivolous discrepancies would only derive from methodological resistance within naturalism (Plantinga, 2000; Boyce and Plantinga, 2014).

Wolterstorff (1932–) advocates the importance of Christian faith within academic scholarship, also arguing the obvious fit between religion and academic pursuits. Wolterstorff’s epistemological position clearly distances his position from foundationalism and evidentialism, as he maintains that Scripture

does not hold indisputable truths to address all theorising activities. He is not a supporter of the theory of warranted beliefs, thus arguing that knowledge cannot be acknowledged merely due to it being based on alternative warranted beliefs. Wolterstorff further argues that any scientific activity is based on one belief or another, from the interpretation of data, background of the data or control. In *Reason within the Bounds of Religion*, Wolterstorff (1984) addresses the relationship between a Christian scholar's personal religious commitment and his/her academic approach, proposing seven approaches from a control angle:

1. Personal faith should not limit the scholar's theories, as the Bible does not hold answers to all theories, and even when potential answers may be addressed in the Bible, extensive answers may be lacking.
2. More than one theory may be agreeable to the scholar, agreeing with the original engagement of the scholar.
3. In addition to the scholar's faith commitment, further sources including reflections based on the surrounding world need to be included in the weighing of the theory.
4. When weighing and searching for theories, the scholar's commitment should be applied internally.
5. The authentic commitment of the scholar will seldom incorporate all his/her control beliefs.
6. The same theories may be shared by Christian and non-Christian scholars.
7. Neither controls nor data can be extracted from certainties that are elementary.

Through the postmodernist and the contemporary Christian philosophers, the reductionists' one-sided perceptions of reality, starting with the Enlightenment and onwards, are progressively declining. Skepticism towards realist positivist metanarratives is increasing as part of the progressing philosophy and embedded epistemology. With this approach comes a holistic recognition of the influence of ontological sources outside the domain of natural science accepting

its proven limitations. This philosophical position clearly supports the position that the truths and learning that may be extracted from Scripture under the Reformed paradigm are relevant to all topics of natural, sociological and societal significance.

I will now move on to focusing on scriptural interpretation, explaining prudent and responsible modes aligned to Reformed hermeneutical principles.

3.10. Scriptural Interpretation

3.10.1. Hermeneutics and exegesis

This section elucidates the principles of scriptural interpretation that I will use in this dissertation to deduce biblical meanings applicable to gender-related topics in the twenty-first century. I will use the terms “hermeneutics” and “exegesis” according to Grudem’s definitions (2013:109) as follows:

Hermeneutics is the study of correct methods of interpretation (especially interpretation of Scripture) ... Exegesis is the process of interpreting a text of Scripture.

Essential to my dissertation will be processes of exegesis to determine how Scripture can give guidance to recruitment policies supporting gender balance in top management positions. For the purpose of uncovering the principles of Reformed hermeneutics, a natural starting point may be the statement of the Westminster Confession (2010), which reads:

The infallible standard for the interpretation of the Bible is the Bible itself. And so any question about the true and complete sense of a passage in the Bible (which is a unified whole) can be answered by referring to other passages which speak more plainly.

Calvin’s position on the authority of Scripture is captured as follows:

The authority of Scripture is derived not from men, but from the Spirit of God (Calvin, 2012, 1:7).

One way of restating this is that Scripture holds the full and sole authority, being the sole source for answering all questions. This is, however, not the case, because language is equivocal and subject to interpretations. No word has one sovereign meaning, but each requires clarification by the use of other words, which again will be lacking sovereign meaning. Therefore, my position is that all words need to be defined by the use of other words; consequently, no word by itself will at any point of time have a clear and explicit meaning.

Both from philosophical and epistemological perspectives, studies whether ecclesiastical or secular require responsible interpretative practices with a central doctrine, as language's ability to carry meaning is essential.

Whereas the Catholic magisterium has claimed authority with respect to interpretation and exegesis, Protestant and Reformed circles have not advocated a top-down approach with respect to interpretative practice, notwithstanding the fact that church leaders have sometimes exercised their authority in such a way. Interpretation is further addressed within certain communities by official church principles often referred to as "dogmatic" or "systematic" theology, guiding readers in their biblical interpretations. To some extent within the Reformed paradigm, this may be comparable to the Catholic magisterium, though lacking the official mark.

Identifying accepted hermeneutical principles, as applied by these communities, will be relevant to my work; hence, I will expand on the main influential sources relevant for Reformed hermeneutics. In addition, I will elaborate relevant sources from Reformed thinkers, laying the foundation for my principles used in this dissertation.

3.10.2. Barth

The Swiss Karl Barth (1886–1968) is highly influential in this area, addressing both Protestant theology and dialectical hermeneutics in his work. Even though he was a Protestant theologian, Pope Pius XII described him as the most important theologian since Thomas Aquinas. His theology is based on dialectical interpretations and exegesis, also named neo-orthodox theology. Barth's philosophical position mainly focused on creating a response to liberal theology within the academic arena in the years before World War I. Influenced

by wartime, he argued the need to revisit the previously praised liberalism. He also engaged in discussions with theologians and secular thinkers, addressing topics like existentialism (Porter and Robinson, 2011). Barth's most significant legacy is captured in his magnum opus, the *Church Dogmatics*. Even though he never managed to complete it, his work includes thirteen volumes and is of great importance as one of the most voluminous works of systematic theology ever produced (Barth, 2017).

Barth's emphasis is on the supremacy of God, highlighted by his renewed views of the Calvinistic doctrine of election, human sin, and the absolute qualitative difference between God and humans. His commentary, *The Epistle to the Romans*, is his most famous work, representing a turning point with regard to his previous thinking (Barth, 1968).

According to Barth, God's word is threefold, best expressed via preaching, Scripture and revelation:

The presupposition which makes proclamation proclamation and therewith makes the Church the Church is the Word of God. This attests itself in Holy Scripture in the word of the prophets and apostles to whom it was originally and once and for all spoken by God's revelation (Barth, 2009:6).

Even though Barth describes the Word of God divided between the three methods of transference, he insists on their prevailing unity:

It is one and the same whether we understand it as revelation, Bible, or proclamation. There is no distinction of degree or value between the three forms (Barth, 2009:8).

Barth's stance includes criticism of historical theological biblical interpretation. His approach is focused on disclosing a fresh scriptural message, by merging historical and literary criticism. Barth's approach is that Scripture needs to be read in its historical context, also partly viewed as a work of art, and interpreted with a free approach to the language used (Wallace, 1988).

Included in Barth's hermeneutical approach is not only his recognition of language as a literal textual description, but also of the need to eliminate secondary meanings. He recognises that the reader's preconceptions may have an impact, and that potential extracts of the text submitted to interpretation may alter perceptions. If the approach merely involves examining the text from a theoretical view, a complete hermeneutical approach would be lacking, and would risk the loss of a full understanding of the message (Webster, 1998).

Barth's hermeneutical direction is highly beneficial in the search for the answers in my dissertation, because of the broader contextual interpretations of relevant situations and parts of Scripture included in the exegesis, while still accepting historical and textual necessity.

3.10.3. Berkhof

Another significant contributor influencing Reformed theology and methods of scriptural interpretation is Louis Berkhof (1873–1957). In his *Systematic Theology* Berkhof (1953) recognises Scripture as the highest epistemological authoritative source. This is visible when introducing faith and the discussion of God's existence through faith, whereby he states:

... this faith is not a blind faith, but a faith based on evidence, and the evidence is found primarily in Scripture as the inspired word of God, and secondarily in God's revelation in nature (Berkhof, 1953:21).

For Berkhof the main source of knowledge of God is Scripture. However, the above quotation lacks a statement of his hermeneutical and exegetical stand. These topics are thoroughly addressed in Berkhof's *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*, recognised as his major contribution to the interpretation and application of Scripture within the Reformed paradigm (Berkhof, 1950).

As in *Systematic Theology*, Berkhof reinforces his conviction that Scripture is inspired by the divine, and that this inspiration is naturally recognised as the most important source for scriptural interpretation. *Principles of Biblical Interpretation* also holds a thorough description of his principles applicable to scriptural interpretation, including linguistic aspects, and his position on the topics of ambiguity and supposed inaccuracy. His stance with respect to

apparent conflicting messages is that these should be seen as superficial, because sound *hermeneutica sacra* (interpretation) will reveal the true meaning. Pursuant to this, according to Berkhof, Scripture does not hold conflicting messages. On this basis, Berkhof gives guidance regarding interpretive principles supporting the quest for biblical truths, for example, use of words including grammatical meanings, both reflecting current use and how these may have been applied when Scripture was written.

3.10.4. Grudem

Wayne Grudem, a leading current philosopher and theologian, has addressed the role of Scripture in theology, explaining as follows:

a) **Authority:** *“The authority of Scripture means that all the words in Scripture are God’s words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God”* (Grudem, 2013:73).

b) **Clarity:** *“The clarity of Scripture means that the Bible is written in such a way that its teachings are able to be understood by all who will read it seeking God’s help and being willing to follow it”* (Grudem, 2013:108).

c) **Necessity:** *“The necessity of Scripture means that the Bible is necessary for knowing the gospel, for maintaining spiritual life, and for knowing God’s will, but is not necessary for knowing that God exists or for knowing something about God’s character and moral laws”* (Grudem, 2013:116).

d) **Sufficiency:** *“The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contained all the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains all the words of God we need for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly”* (Grudem, 2013:127).

Grudem’s approach to explain the role of Scripture is through systematic theology, so his search for complete combined truths will offer guidance to my exegetical interpretation in this dissertation. His approach involves focusing on Scripture’s importance within the above-mentioned activities, though his approach does not include definitions of direct hermeneutical or exegetical activity. I place particular trust in Grudem’s theological interpretations, as he

reads the biblical text from a perspective of *tota scriptura* and reflects this approach constantly in his systematic theology.

I now move on to focusing on some relevant principles of scriptural interpretation, based on the authors presented above, in addition to other contributors from the Western philosophical movements embedding epistemology and ontology impacting this dissertation.

3.10.5. Interpretation principles

3.10.5.1. *Broad approach*

When seeking guidance in Scripture for my determination addressing suitable ethics to be used to obtain gender equality in C-suite, I will lay out below some of the main principles applied when pursuing to disclose scriptural testimonies relevant to my research questions (Chapter 1).

The quest for meaning, that is the hermeneutics, includes the study of how we read Scripture, hereunder applying historical-critical modalities, such as source criticism, historical criticism and textual criticism. These approaches are all aimed at carefully analysing the sources, not applying negative judgement, even though the phrase “criticism” may indicate a different approach.

There is a wide range of interpretative methodologies that allow us to access a more complete understanding of Scripture. These methods should be used in combination, thus avoiding exclusivity, to help us reach an accurate and objective result. Even though there are differences between the Old Testament and the New Testament, requiring different interpretive angles, illustrated by (for example) Barton's (1996) focus on how to read the Old Testament and Brown's (2015) approach to understanding the New Testament, the same interpretative methods should be used.

3.10.5.2. *Textual criticism*

No original copies of the handwritten four Greek Gospels exist, and the text we today read in Scripture is based on documents that have been copied multiple times and that contain multiple discrepancies, long before printing was invented. The concept of textual criticism, then, refers to the comparison of these ancient

Greek handwritten copies. More precisely, textual criticism undertakes to detect the most trustworthy language of the text, via a quite complex process with specific rules governing how to evaluate the text, aiming to increase our confidence in relying on the text (Brown, 2015; Wegner, 2006).

3.10.5.3. *Historical criticism*

Historical criticism aims to uncover the original content of the text within its authentic context, while reconstructing the historical circumstances applicable to the author and the reader of the text. This approach covers, among other aspects, the literal sense, that is, the message the authors were trying to share with the reader. The approach of historical criticism is to read literature in the way it was meant to be understood when it was written. Decoding the literal sense may require thorough insight into the ancient language, grammatical issues, customs and idioms (Brown, 2015; Jackson, 2016).

3.10.5.4. *Source criticism*

Source criticism involves the interdisciplinary evaluation of relevant sources from which the writers gathered their information. A challenging part in this aspect is that the writers of the New Testament most likely did not take part in the life of Jesus; as a consequence, the evangelists' messages are based on oral stories handed down by many in line with tradition. This is visible in the synoptic gospels, for example, where Mark, Matthew and Luke address many of the same events with some different approaches and contexts. It should be noted, however, that the main source of course lies within Scripture and not theoretical sources (Brown, 2015).

3.10.5.5. *Form criticism*

Form criticism involves classifying parts of Scripture by patterns from a literary approach, addressing the fact that there are differences in the way we approach genres. For example, this approach addresses whether Scripture is a separate genre or similar to other literary art forms, as each genre will have its own traits. Embedded in form criticism is a detailed understanding of genres such as prophecies or apocalyptic anecdotes, regulations regarding life within communities, or axioms, etc. Form criticism does not address historical issues,

for example, whether or not a supernatural event took place, hence these limitations need to be addressed when applying this analytic method. This limitation reflects the need to apply multiple methods to achieve the true meaning (Brown, 2015).

3.10.5.6. Redaction criticism

The focus of redaction criticism is to investigate how the writer or redactor contributed to shape and mold the story to articulate the theological content. The approach addresses the total process, from the composition of the original writings to the last edited version in its complete form. This further involves addressing concerns regarding the contribution of each single story to Scripture as a whole. Embedded in this is author criticism, recognising the fact that the writer is influenced by the previous contributions to Scripture, and aiming to uncover the true meaning of the final work. In this respect, it should be noted that there is risk connected to more speculative approaches when the source of a text is unclear, again supporting the need to approach any text with multiple methods (West, 2017; Brown, 2015).

3.10.5.7. Canonical criticism

Canonical criticism focuses on Scripture as such and could be seen as an addition to redaction criticism. This approach recognises that while each scriptural book holds its own integrity, its existence as an integrated part of the collective Scripture grants the book its sacred position, in addition to giving the book refreshed meaning when viewed as part of the canonical collection of books. Unlike source, form, and redaction criticism, which focus on what is “behind” the text, canonical criticism interprets the text “as Scripture”. Within the context of faith, canonical criticism interprets the whole text in its complete form, acknowledging the authority it has for the community which uses it, and recognising authority in the text itself, not necessarily the events or people addressed (Sanders, 2000; Brown, 2015).

3.10.5.8. Biblical structuralism

Biblical Structuralism or semiotics focuses on the end form via a highly technical approach with similarities to mathematics, not focusing on what meets the eyes

but rather the deeper structures generating the text. This rather complicated approach may be questioned, as some would claim that the result might be the same by applying sound exegesis, due to its primary focus on showing how any interpretation may be regarded as the pertinent way of reading the text (Barton, 1988; Brown, 2015).

3.10.5.9. Narrative criticism

Narrative criticism is an approach whereby the Gospels are viewed as stories, focusing on the narrative in order to support the exegetical process. Part of this method may involve identifying the real author as opposed to the implied author and the real reader as opposed to the implied reader (Barton, 1988; Brown, 2015). Narrative criticism opposes a vast body of historical investigations, and helps to identify the author's core objective; it is also one of the methods used to interpret other texts. Fisher (1987) addresses narrative criticism as an approach focusing on significant action-words or series of actions representing meaning for author and reader. In short, this approach includes investigation of a mixture of form, genre structure, description, and displayed perspective, relevant when interpreting any document.

3.10.5.10. Rhetorical criticism

Rhetorical criticism focuses on the strategies used by the author to share his/her message, anticipating that both the author and the reader are revealed in the text. The method not only focuses on the writer's aims and methods, but also the current reader's emotions, values and interests, whether he/she is past or present. A commonality between narrative criticism and rhetorical criticism is the view of Scripture as literature (Brown, 2015). As with other criticisms, rhetorical criticism is relevant in all parts of life. Foss (2017) points out the vast number of symbols surrounding us in today's world, and the need to decipher the true meaning to interpret the intended message.

3.10.5.11. Social criticism

Social criticism responds to the text reflecting the cultural and social environment from when the text was created, including political, economic and

religious conditions, also recognising that no interpretation should take place in a vacuum (Brown, 2015).

3.10.5.12. Advocacy criticism

Advocacy criticism reflects the view that the scriptural authors had their own justifications, for example texts written by church leaders with a patriarchal point of view. As a consequence, the reader may on the surface get an altered message that requires identifying clues to diminish the effects of these conscious or unconscious effects. On the other hand, this needs to be balanced with the reader's quest for his/her advocacy, requiring a balanced approach to enlighten the key messages of Scripture (Brown, 2015).

3.10.6. Scriptural assumptions

3.10.6.1. Starting point

As a starting point for my interpretations, I will apply the following approach when examining scriptural sources:

- Scripture in the Old Testament and the New Testament represent God's true words, stating the one and only rule of faith in obedience to God.
- God is the transcendent power inspiring the authors to share what He intended them to write.
- In the reading of Scripture, the truth is transferred into our hearts.
- God should be seen as the principal author; therefore, Scripture can be viewed as coherent, comprehensible, and constant, meaning that passages or parts are justified through their contextual connection to the whole document.

3.10.6.2. Normative character of Scripture

According to the Reformed paradigm, Scripture is normative, thereby influencing our current need to be purposeful. From this basis, my stance is that many parts of the Bible are relevant and applicable to us today. This includes, for example, topics of eschatological and soteriological significance, the family's

place in society, etcetera. However, there are parts of Scripture that today lack the normative influence, for example, passages in the Old Testament addressing agricultural practices, ceremonial sacrifice and rules of hygiene.

When determining the scope of today's normativity, the application of methods of criticism will guide the interpretation of Scripture, thus revealing God's true word. In this respect, I would like to add that even though some passages are not normative, they are still to be viewed as the revelation from God via Scripture, meaning that automatic dismissal is not the solution.

In line with the above and combined with the application of relevant criticisms, the following foundations may be stated:

- Acceptance that some scriptural passages were not to be binding, and therefore should be seen primarily as poetic and/or hyperbolic.
- Changes throughout history may have impacted God's expectations for humans, potentially requiring alteration to grasp the relevant context.
- Social and cultural elements within Scripture also need to be investigated. One simple example is hairstyle: whereas Leviticus 19:27 deems short hair to be shameful, 2 Samuel 10:4-5 states that long hair is degrading.
- Adjustments may also be required because of cultural changes over time; for example, actions that came across as morally acceptable previously may not be so today. This includes divine instructions given to some people but not universally applicable, one example being 1 Corinthians 14:34-36, requiring that women should be silent.
- Accepting that within Reformed hermeneutics the difference between a principle and its application is very clear; for example, even if the principle states God's will for our lives, the application may be changed over time and may vary depending on the circumstance.

3.10.6.3. Scriptural analogy

Reformed hermeneutics recognise the Scripture's use of analogical logic, meaning that texts describing the same situation or theme are altered and

modified even though sharing the same message explaining the will of God. The overall message addressing one theme depends on how the various texts jointly strengthen one true message. When applying scriptural analogies, two forms are accepted:

- Positive analogy is relevant when several texts describe the same theme, one example being the providence of God.
- General analogy is relevant when deducing common themes that are not clearly addressed in Scripture but are detected from interpretations of the message from Scripture. One example in this respect is slavery, which obviously is contrary to the principal message in Scripture, even though not condemned in Scripture.

3.10.6.4. Textual weight

The texts within Scripture have different relative weight, a topic highly relevant when seeking to determine one true message from several texts. Guidelines in this aspect include the following:

- Statements in several passages will have a greater weight than a statement found in one single scriptural passage.
- A doctrine will be seen as stronger if recognised as consistent in several texts, than if inferred from sheer analogies in the texts.
- The allure of unclear and inconclusive passages is less certain than the allure of those with a clear meaning.
- An extensive biblical distribution of a message improves its value when compared to a message that is described in one book only.
- When a doctrine is supported by an analogy of faith, the doctrine cannot be contradicted by an unclear or antagonistic passage.
- Doctrines supported by several explicit texts have greater weight than doctrines supported by merely one clear single textual passage.

- If a doctrine is only supported by a single unclear passage, it should only be acknowledged with ample reservation.
- Scripture should be trusted to resolve the apparent contradictions when interpretation results in conflicting doctrines, though both (or all) are acknowledged as scriptural.

All the above guidelines and principles are relevant to interpretation of biblical texts to clarify the ethical position of recruitment policies within corporate life today. I will now move on to summarise how the above will be relevant for my further research.

3.11. Summary

Alongside the development of Western philosophy, epistemological principles have progressed. Our joint understanding of how we know, interpret and accept reality is embedded in these developments, parallel to the dualistic strain in secular philosophy, shifting from Plato to the Enlightenment and partly back again with the postmodernists. The latter group of thinkers have demonstrated an increased willingness to accept implied meaning in facts they observe, also interpreting the edges of reality.

Western philosophy has been influenced by Christian thinkers, as have non-Christian thinkers set their mark on Christian philosophy. The link between Western philosophies' quest for truth both with respect to the physical and spiritual world, and the principles of hermeneutics presented by Barth and Berkhof, is essential in this respect.

Biblical criticism, such as textual, source and form criticism, supports the quest for meaning, aimed at carefully analysing the sources to gain true understanding of Scripture.

In my dissertation, where the aim is to deduce Christian ethical principles from Scripture, and to apply these principles to Western corporate recruitment practices focusing on gender equality at C-suite level, scriptural interpretation in line with Reformed hermeneutics cannot completely illuminate the central questions. I will use hermeneutical principles for guidance and inspiration while interpreting relevant sources, even though some sources may be limited in their

applicability. I will also take inspiration from postmodern deconstructive interpretation, as this will be expected to have some relevance, especially when focusing on truths relevant to my topic. By applying these methods, I expect to uncover the underlying aspects of beneficial or non-beneficial recruitment policies within the corporates.

As the hermeneutics of the Reformed paradigm will not fully assist me in all steps of my work, I will apply the full scope of our common epistemological heritage. Both the understanding and the use of a nominalist ontology and postmodern constructivist epistemology will influence the scriptural exegesis required to complete the theses in my dissertation.

In my next chapter I will move in to amplify different ethical philosophies relevant to gender equality in C-suite within corporations.

CHAPTER 4: PERTINENT ETHICAL PHILOSOPHIES

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will focus on the central philosophical ethical schools of thought, relevant to the questions of this dissertation. The philosophies addressed will have different foundational underpinnings, dependent on their emphases on virtue, outcomes of actions, or the actions themselves as guidelines for moral choices. This will include addressing the consequentialist theories such as utilitarianism, and ethical thinking based on virtues, including deontological philosophies anchored in Scripture. I will not give detailed attention to theories focusing on pragmatism or secular virtue ethics in its modern shape because of their limited influence and relevance on the topic of this dissertation.

I will argue that neutrality or value-free ethical principles are non-existing, and that my focus must include and illustrate value aspects. It should already from the outset be mentioned that although the different philosophical schools may seem to be in apparent conflict, and/or based on different religious or secular foundations, to understand the main tenets of the different strands of thought may be useful, as none of them exists or has been developed in a philosophical vacuum.

Ethics and morality are often addressed when attempting to describe the differences between good and bad or right and wrong, or when seeking guidance to determine what one ought to do or the way we ought to live our lives. My core objective will be to stay focused on gender equality whilst aligning with Reformed Christian-ethical values originating in scriptural principles. For this, I will need to elaborate on different ethical philosophies spanning a vast period, to illustrate divergent views on which moral choices should be made. A central dividing line here will be to delineate between whether it is the actions themselves that are to be considered ethical or whether it is the outcome of the actions that will decide their ethicality. Focusing on the outcome of one's actions falls within the concept of utilitarianism (or consequentialism), whilst the focus on the action itself is termed normative ethics. One of the normative ethical directions is virtue ethics, emphasising the virtues of our mind and character,

thus the discussion of human nature, including the scope of virtues, combined with interlinked topics, will be the typical mode of cognition within this variant (Wells and Quash, 2017). Another normative direction is pragmatic ethics, to some extent arguing that ethical thinking develops in the same way as science, relying on inquiry as a method to improve moral guidelines and criteria (Fesmire, 2003). For this dissertation, the third normative ethical direction, the so-called deontological, which relies on duties or rules, will have particular relevance.

As Reformed Christian ethics has emerged as a discipline influenced also by historical developments and philosophy, I will in the following outline three main schools of ethical thought: those based on virtue, consequences and the actions themselves. As mentioned above, a key to any ethical discussion is whether the focus should be on the outcome of an action sought by the person facing an ethical dilemma or whether the action itself is the essential matter.

For ethical choices to be relevant in an eschatological setting there must be the possibility of free choice. In other words, if an ethical choice is not free, there can be no judgement in the Eschaton. This means that Chapter 4 presupposes the possibility of free choice, with regard to the consequentialist and deontological paradigms.

4.2. Virtue-Oriented Philosophies

4.2.1. Virtue ethics – developments through history

Virtue ethics is a normative approach emphasising virtues of mind and character as guidance to moral problems. Views regarding virtues have developed over time, essentially focusing on character traits rather than single actions or attitudes, recognising that a virtue may reflect a positive trait, often habitual, that causes its holder to be perceived as a good human being.

The historical developments can be traced back to antiquity. Plato and especially Aristotle are recognised as the founders of virtue ethics, both trusting that people's character traits guide their decisions on how to conduct their practical lives. Possessing traits further refers to a person's complex mind-set,

such that a unique list of deliberations is the foundation for an action (Bennett, 2010).

Plato recognised four cardinal virtues as the main tools to fight evil actions: courage, prudence, temperance, and justice. He viewed justice as immensely important within government and political life. Aristotle added virtues such as truthfulness and modesty to Plato's list, also arguing that virtue contributes to shaping the human life by enabling the ability to recognise one's materiality. Aristotle went on to grade the virtues, advocating that the virtues associated with spirituality are the most valuable. The important role ethics plays in politics was evident to Aristotle, as he also argued that the true role of the state is being the moral guardian of the wellbeing of its people (Wells and Quash, 2017).

Both Plato and Aristotle saw natural law as a source of ethical thinking, whereby, for example, Aristotle linked living in line with nature to living a virtuous life as a happy human being (Gill, 2012). One might argue that Aristotle's focus contradicts the Christian view of heavenly splendour, because of his ethical approach supporting a happy life on earth. This argument is documented in Martin Luther's antagonism against Aristotle, implying that Aristotle's explicit influence on modern Christian ethics may have a limited effect (Westberg, 2017).

Augustine of Hippo addresses virtues in *City of God*, advocating that pagans, because of their lack of knowledge and love of God, could not demonstrate true virtues, only vices. For Augustine all Christian virtues are founded on one quality only, the Christian love founded on knowledge (Augustine, 2003; Gill, 2012).

Thomas Aquinas shared Augustine's view that by virtue, all living things are good, bringing his belief in God to a philosophical ethical stand, and stating that the best approach to the use of human powers is to obtain a good life by allowing the right reasons to conquer the lower bodily and sense capacities. To some extent, one could argue that Aquinas, when reading Aristotle, saw that God was missing, and recognised that Christianity offers the source for all laws ruling our world. In addition to the virtues and human powers, Aquinas argued four types of laws for moral guidance: natural, divine, human and eternal law,

demonstrating his teleological ethical approach (Jones, Cardinal and Hayward, 2006; Wells and Quash, 2017). As part of Aquinas' critical approach to Aristotle, he redefined nature as natural moral law as a counterpart to the supernatural, also linking all being to eternity. Though laying significant trust in natural law, Aquinas recognised some actions as violations, for example lying, self-love, etcetera (Gill, 2012).

4.2.2. Virtue ethics in the contemporary world

Even with the deep rooting in classical philosophy, virtue ethics is often seen as a new field within moral philosophy, partly responding to moral debates in the English-speaking world in the second half of the twentieth century, thus revitalising Aristotelian thinking (Bennett, 2010).

Several attempts have been made to reclaim the concept of virtue for Christian theology. Bernard Häring advocates that Christian duties are embedded in spiritual practices not merely for those on a quest for higher perfection; therefore, moral problems cannot depend on moral laws only. Aquinas' influence is easy to recognise as Häring states the importance of theological virtues for activating grace (Gill, 2012).

Based on Nietzsche, Swanton (2014) applies a concept of creativity and expression to demonstrate how various forms of acknowledgement affect virtues, also distinguishing between true virtues and related vices. Nietzsche brought a critical approach to ethical philosophy, attacking the churches in what he claimed as failure to represent the life of Christ. He introduced transvaluation as a process for recognising the higher context, and rejected the existence of objective values and the use of reason for the purpose of justifying moral truths (Norman, 2009). His ethical position can be described as merging consequential perfection, relying on the theory of good, with his concept of human perfection, arguing two types of morality: the master version represented by the noble men and the slave morality represented by the weak men, captured in his theory of the *Übermensch*. Nietzsche's two moralities derive from separate value systems, whereby master morality is identified by actions scaled between good or bad consequences, while slave morality actions are

scaled between good and evil intentions (Nietzsche, 2007). With his focus on the *Übermensch* distinct similarities to virtue ethics can be argued.

MacIntyre (2013) addressed the need to revitalise virtues in *After Virtue*, seen as one of the most significant works addressing Anglophone ethics and political philosophy in the twentieth century. In his book, MacIntyre, sets out to find an alternative to Nietzsche's approach, landing on Aristotle's virtue ethical views. Others have followed, often addressing the characteristics of Christian life, and exploring how virtue ethics may serve as the foundation for experiencing God's grace (Gill, 2012).

When arguing the importance of a person's virtues, this is typically connected to dispositions that are rather resistant and persuasive versus the ones that easily disappear and lack influence on the person's actions. For example, if a person is generous, his or her behaviour will reflect generosity even when proven hard or expensive, in contrast to a person's behaviour where self-indulgence overcomes generous inclinations. In contrast to earlier thinkers who saw, for example, intelligence and wit as virtues, in our time virtues are normally recognised as commendable traits of character (Gill, 2012).

As mentioned above, for an action to be morally right, it needs to be performed from virtue, according to the ethical approach. Whatever ethical problems one may encounter, our actions should reflect traits like courage, honesty or justice, so that the chosen action demonstrates the applicable virtue, and hence demonstrate the preferred character (Bennett, 2010). Criticism of virtue ethics comes from different angles, one being that the foundation is based on promoting a form of utopianism lacking sustainability and foundation in real life.

Identifying one set of virtues applicable to all is immensely difficult in our diverse world with contemporary secularised societies, cultural differences, varied political and religious motivations, etcetera. Trusting in the moral character of persons and dispensing moral problems from guidance through rules adds to the challenge. Despite this, with all forms of virtue ethics we approach one major problem, which is to define what virtues are, and not least, on what are they founded. Because of these problems, I find that this brand of ethical philosophy (virtue ethics) will not be useful for establishing an ethical foundation

acceptable under the Reformed paradigm, for the purposes touched upon in this dissertation.

4.3. Consequence-Oriented Philosophies

4.3.1. Utilitarianism – Bentham

The term “consequentialism” is used when the ethical view is centred round the outcome of an act, thereby falling within the category of end-centric (teleological) moral thinking. Utilitarianism is a version of consequentialism focusing on the outcome of an action when faced with a moral dilemma. In short, utilitarianism recognises actions as morally right or wrong depending on their results. Contrary to other forms of consequentialism, such as egoism, merely focusing on the outcome of the one individual, utilitarianism focuses on the outcome for all humans equally.

Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) was the first to argue utilitarianism as an attempt to reform the criminal justice system, merging morality and law in line with quasi-science, and with clear logical judgement moving away from the somewhat mysterious will of God (Bentham, 1996). The key component in utilitarianism is opting for the solution that at the end of the day benefits the greatest number of people. Though early thinkers worked with the concepts later known as utilitarianism, Jeremy Bentham, drawing on these ancient hedonistic views, is recognised as its founder (Geisler, 2010).

Bentham’s foundation for his stand is illustrated by his metaphor of the two sovereign “masters”, pain and pleasure, thereby stating that morally accepted actions support happiness, or pleasure, while actions promoting unhappiness or pain are disapproved. According to Bentham, both masters are subject to one method of calculation (hedonic calculus) therefore are not focused on self-interest, even though measuring pleasure indicating ethical egoism (Bentham, 1996).

While Bentham embarked on his ambitious quest applying ethical principles to bring the world to order through international jurisprudence, including revised civil, criminal, constitutional and procedural law, John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) who was influenced by utilitarianism, argued for economic social liberalism and

the human obligation to strive for happiness, joy and safety as moral guidelines (Postema, 2018; Mill, 2016; Mill, 1871).

After Bentham, utilitarianism has undergone refinements from classical utilitarianism to the so-called ideal utilitarianism, the latter supported by Georg Edward Moore (1873–1958), who aimed to move utilitarianism away from the hedonistic foundation by which we should promote the good, to a stance recognising a greater good that includes much more than pure pleasure (Moore, 1958).

4.3.2. Utilitarianism in the contemporary world

The introduction of act and rule utilitarianism was a further step taken to respond to criticism raised. During the 1950s and 1960s, Smart and McCloskey argued that act utilitarianism supports the rightness of an action when it amplifies utility, and on the other hand, rule utilitarianism supports the rightness of an action when it aligns to the rule amplifying utility (Smart, 1956; McCloskey, 1957).

The commonality between act utilitarianism and rule utilitarianism is the overarching guideline to choose the action creating the best result possible. Where these approaches differ is the method by which the best results are obtained. An act utilitarian advocates that the overall greatest net utility is decisive when choosing the right action. Utility in this respect is referring to the best overall outcome, something that needs to be addressed individually, case by case. A rule utilitarian refers to a two-step plan, underlining the significance of moral rules. This entails that actions are morally justified when aligned to moral rules, and a moral rule is recognised when supporting a higher utility than other potential rules, including the lack of rules. This approach means that all actions need to be judged in light of moral rules that are recognised within our moral code to support more well-being than other possible rules (Bennett, 2010).

Some argue that act and rule utilitarianisms are hard to distinguish, partly because of rules being expanded by sub-rules (Barrow, 2015). Hare's approach was to increase the general scope of rules by limiting their specificity, thus opening up for more interpretation and flexibility, also supporting his two-level

utilitarianism (Hare, 1978). He went on to argue that an “archangel” embodies the supreme knowledge of any given situation totally lacking weaknesses and biases, thereby being able to apply critical thinking for solving any moral issue, while the “prole” is the opposite, totally lacking critical thinking and basing all moral decisions on intuition. According to Hare, all humans have a mixture of both, with the need for rules and further guidance (Hare, 1981). The focus on human traits draws some resemblance to virtue ethics, whereby moral dilemmas can be solved through applying a set of specific traits of character that is seen as morally honourable (Gill, 2012).

Even though further variations of utilitarianism exist, I will not address these here, instead I will focus on the criticism of utilitarianism. As shown above, utilitarianism covers a spectrum of connected theories developed during the last two hundred years, and not one single ethical doctrine, and therefore, criticisms are raised from different angles. The basic challenge with utilitarianism, however, is that the end justifies the means, implying that even an otherwise morally unacceptable action can be accepted as long as the result brings happiness or pleasure to a wider group of humans. For example, if killing one person saves the life of one hundred people, the act of killing may be ethically defensible for a utilitarian.

Another key objection to utilitarianism is the lack of quantifiable values, whereby comparisons and measurement of wellbeing or happiness are impossible. Moreover, there are the essential questions of whose wellbeing or happiness counts, and how much weight should be attributed to the different measured goods? Even though it is commendable that for the utilitarian the interests of all people should be counted equally, also the interest of a possible offender should be measured and considered according to this paradigm. Linked to this is what might be seen as an excessive trust in human capabilities, disregarding the fact that humans do not always calculate outcomes, as habits and patterns tend to influence our behaviour (Bennett, 2015).

Another challenge with utilitarianism is the impossibility of estimating or calculating consequences; this challenge is described by Daniel Dennett as the Three Mile Island effect. Dennett alludes to the fact that not only is it impossible to assess the utility value, but it is also impossible to recognise whether such a

major security incident as the near-meltdown at Three Mile Island in 1979 was positive or negative, as he points out the importance of the learning that the plant engineers gained from the experience as a positive effect (Dennett, 1986).

Adding an interesting critical aspect is Hofstadter, when he introduces reverberant doubt as part of the so-called “Wolf’s dilemma”. In short, he says that even when all potential consequences are positive, there may be a flickering doubt with respect to the outcome. He exemplifies this through the following scenario: what if a group of students is gathered for an experience, sitting in their cubicles in front on their computers, being told that any student pushing a key on their computer would receive \$100; however, if no one pushes any keys all would win \$1000 each. The obvious choice is not hitting any keys, as that will benefit the whole group. However, one student might start wondering if all have received the same information or starting to doubt the group’s alignment and motivation. As stated by Hofstadter, this flicker of doubt may cause an avalanche of doubt, convincing one student that pushing the key is the only solution (Hofstadter, 1983).

When it comes to act utilitarianism, in addition to requiring everyone to maximise utility, the added aspect is the quest for doing so as impartially as possible. Merging these demands is debated as unreasonable because the well-being of a total stranger should be as important as that of our loved ones. With the mindboggling number of strangers in need of help, this may come across as a huge ask of any person. Hooker (2000), a defender of rule utilitarianism in the 21st century, approaches this from two vantage points, first highlighting the huge sacrifices that are required by act utilitarianism, and secondly stating that no ethical ask can go beyond the call for duty. He goes on to state that unless the sum of happiness increases, any sacrifice that does not increase happiness should be considered as wasted.

Rule utilitarianism can be criticised for not succeeding in explaining the foundation for moral rules, and therefore failing to support its two-step approach (Bennett, 2015).

The dilemmas arising from focusing on the potential outcome of any situation may also be visualised through the following non-dramatic everyday example,

which I would call the armrest dilemma. Many airplanes are fitted with three-seaters with one seat at the aisle, one at the window and one between these two. The seats are divided with armrests, four in total, two dividing the three seats, while the additional two are by the aisle and by the window. As there are not two armrests for all three passengers, the question arising is, how should these armrests be divided among the three seated passengers? The dilemma has several aspects, and it is possible to argue that the passenger sitting on the aisle will have the advantage of more space to lean out to the aisle, and that the passenger at the window may have the advantage of having the wall to lean on as extra rest. Following this logic, the argument would be that to create the most happiness, the passenger in the middle is given both the middle armrests, so as to offset the advantages of the two others (aisle room and wall leaning). With this solution, all of the passengers will have some advantages and disadvantages, and they are all semi-happy with the situation, and no one is completely satisfied or completely unsatisfied. An alternative solution would be to let the window and aisle seat occupants use both of the middle armrests, leaving the middle passenger with none, thus leaving the aisle and window passengers completely satisfied and happy, while leaving the person in the middle unsatisfied and unhappy. The answer cannot really be given, as in the first solution no one is either fully satisfied nor fully unsatisfied as measured against the maximum potential offered by the situation, and in the second solution, the majority (two) are fully satisfied, and one is completely unsatisfied. The example should fully illustrate the poverty of consequentialism as a model for making ethical choices, not least as it shows the challenges connected to defining and measuring happiness, both on an individual and collective level.

With all forms of consequentialist ethics, we approach one major problem, being how to define what may be the acceptable consequences under the different circumstances, and not least, on what are they founded. As elucidated in the above, primarily highlighting that all moral dilemmas should be solved via the focus on the outcome, utilitarianism cannot be applied from a Christian ethical point of view. I will therefore move on to other options. Because of the above problems, I find that this brand of ethical philosophy (utilitarianism) will not be useful for establishing an ethical foundation acceptable under the Reformed paradigm, for the purposes touched upon in this dissertation.

4.4. Duty-Oriented Philosophies

4.4.1. Introduction and the concept of free choice

Deontology is the term used for the ethical approach based on duty. It relies on moral rules, and in a Christian-ethical perspective, this strand of thought is sometimes termed divine command theory. While utilitarianism, as addressed above, advocates that an action's ethical value depends on its consequences, the deontological approach maintains that a consideration of the action itself is essential when establishing whether it is morally acceptable or not.

The connection between moral duty and the concept of free will is primarily visible when focusing on the responsibility for choosing one's actions. In addition, free will may be linked to accomplishments, authority, and to some degree the dignity of human beings, including values linked to love and friendship. Distinguishing between freedom of action and freedom of will refers not only to our ability to choose, but also to whether the relevant factors are beyond our control, and to the external restrictions balancing the options present when facing an ethical problem. Some might argue that external factors may override our judgement, forcing us to take actions that remove our ability to choose freely. The individuals' freedom to choose is seen by many as a private personal domain, whereby what is not illegal is viewed as automatically permitted (Scanlon, 2010).

From a Christian point of view, the freedom to make an ethical choice is essential, as there can be no judgement in the Eschaton without it (2 Peter 3:9). Upon judgment day, all truth will be revealed and all, living and dead, will be judged (2 Timothy 4:1), something that presupposes the ability to exert choices based upon free will.

4.4.2. Historical influence

4.4.2.1. Antiquity and onwards

As it is widely accepted that the early foundation for Western moral thinking and subsequently Christian ethics took place around the fifth and fourth century BC, in other words, the classical Greek era, I would start by addressing ethics from

the perspective of the Old Testament (Wells and Quash, 2017). As stated above, Christian ethics has not developed in a vacuum, as historical movements and philosophical approaches have contributed to the various waves and developments of moral theory within Christian thinking, including that of the Reformed approach.

The Old Testament, the Hebrew Bible, is often misinterpreted from a moral point of view, as its content—especially its descriptions of accepted social and moral practices—seen through today’s lenses, can come across as quite offensive. Examples are hitting babies’ heads against stone (Psalm 137:9), requesting “an eye for an eye” (Exodus 21:24), accepting more than one wife (Genesis 29:21-30) or the killing of a whole town after it has been conquered to honour God through *herem* (Joshua 6:21; Collins, 2014). In addition, some of the laws applied in the Hebrew Bible would be illegal and subject to criminal prosecution in today’s modern society, as in some of the previous examples. Another example in total disharmony with modern societal norms is the use of capital punishment for several “sins”, like the use of the death penalty for hitting one’s parents (Exodus 21:15) or adultery (Leviticus 20:10). Further, the Hebrew Bible, and especially Genesis, makes room for human free choice, as God did not prescribe from which of the approved trees fruit could be eaten (Genesis 2:16–17) or what specific names had to be given to the animals (Genesis 2:19).

Although some of the solutions of the Old Testament may seem outdated today, its foundational value for the formation of Christian ethics is formidable, and the use of the Hebrew Bible in today’s ethics will be further addressed below.

One of the early ethical stands that preceded the deontological paradigms is antinomianism, which implies that no binding ethical rules exist. Forerunners of antinomianism were scepticism, hedonism and processism, the last captured by Heraclitus (c 535–c.475 BC), an ancient Greek philosopher arguing the constant state of flux. Hedonism, stating that happiness is the absolute for humans, may be seen as paving the way for modern generalism (Geisler, 2010).

As addressed above, Augustine of Hippo set his mark on virtue ethics, arguing that love is essential for moral decisions, and stating that love completes the

virtues without absorbing them. His approach, however, is also argued from a duty-oriented ethical stand. This is visible, for example, through Augustine's view on lying, whereby he interpreted God's praise of the Hebrew midwives (Exodus 1:20) as praising them for showing mercy to people and their display of kindness, and not an acceptance of lying to the Pharaoh. Augustine's views may be seen as the foundation for graded absolutism, which accepts that some sins are more severe, thus recognising a hierarchy of sins (Geisler, 2010). This view will be elaborated in more detail below.

Even with the substantial influence of Christianity in medieval times, counter movements still argued for antinomianism via intentionalism, exemplified by Peter Abelard (1079–1142) stating that right acts are those done with good intentions while the wrong acts are based on bad intentions (Geisler, 2010). Another example of antinomianism in medieval times is represented by William of Ockham (1285–1347), who supported voluntarism, maintaining that God's will is the source for all moral principles (Geisler, 2010).

4.4.2.2. Reformation and onwards

Through the Reformation, Martin Luther (1483–1546) brought ethical thinking to the next level, by aligning it to the overarching doctrine of salvation. For Luther, one natural outcome of faith was lovingly and gratefully achieving the true result of the law, combined with thankfulness to God. The combination of faith and forgiveness paves the way for liberation, thus motivating Christians to serve their neighbours. Luther's gospel ethics are consequently based on God's love rather than divine laws (Wells and Quash, 2017).

John Calvin (1509–1564) agreed with Luther with respect to moral actions being an answer to grace rather than the effort of the human will independent of divine sovereignty. His *Institutes of the Christian Religion* is immensely important as part of the foundation for the Reformation, addressing theological subjects ranging from doctrines of the Church and sacraments to Christian liberty and faith, while criticising the teachings by the heterodox, including those of the Roman Catholic Church.

Calvin's doctrine of election forms the basis for his ethical approach, stating that a successful life is lived in accordance with God's commandments. His views on

work ethics merges theology, sociology, economics and history, emphasising that discipline, hard work, and moderation are all in line with values embraced by the Church. Calvin's work directly influenced the Industrial Revolution, in addition to setting his mark on multiple European countries in their development as commercial nations with subsequent powers (Tawney, 2014). When compared to Luther, Calvin demonstrates a greater acceptance for pursuing instructions within a Christian way of life, instead of having Christian ethics evolve around indications of grace. His legacy includes what later is referred to as the Five Points of Calvinism (TULIP = total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saints) (Wells and Quash, 2017:100).

Within the Reformed paradigm, both constructive and negation-based perspectives are applied in the quest for guidance via revelation. According to Calvin, human lives need revitalisation through the words of God, covering all aspects of everyday life, also recognising that God exists on behalf of humans who live in God's presence. Consequently, Calvin did not recognise that Christians' lives were dependent on strict ethical assumptions, as human freedom is the purpose of God's work, thus also clearly signalling the true Christian existence.

Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531) advocated a more practical ethical approach than did Calvin and Luther, which led him to focus on the positive objectives shared through God's law, seen by him as gifts of God's grace, as affecting Christian life. This laid out the foundation for Reformed ethics. Embedded in this approach is the essence of the Ten Commandments as fundamentals also supported by nature and thereby known to all. Zwingli (2015) accepted that the law to some extent made life hard for any Christian, being well aware of inner conflicts like the tension between happiness and sadness, battles and enjoyment, strife and truce in the life of a Christian (e.g., Romans 7:14-21).

The link to virtue ethics is visible, as Zwingli listed Christian virtues, laying particular emphasis on discipline, self-resistance, abstinence, typical traits associated with the internal spiritual battles.

After Zwingli, Reformed ethics has developed further, one fundamental change being the dismissal of his approach with regard to salvation as founded on natural law, while continuing his insistence that pleasing God requires the grace of God through Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit aligning to God's moral law.

Guidance for making moral decisions may be found in specific scriptural revelations. The Reformed approach entails the belief that moral character may be found within the hearts of people and within nature, as Scripture captures the divine truth of God. This is expressed, for example, in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work". Even though linked, general and special revelation are not the same. General revelation is known to all independent of their religious beliefs, ethnic heritage or nationality (Rom 2:15), thereby subject to judgment by God "without excuse" (Rom 1:20). Special revelation, as opposed to natural law, is only accessed in writing in the Bible as "God-breathed" (2 Tim 3:16). While general revelation and natural law may be set aside, special revelation being the "word of God" (Matt 15:6) "cannot be set aside" (John 10:35) as it is explicit and infallible in its form.

Though it is tempting to say that Reformed ethics is simply an ethics of law, this would be oversimplifying the approach, as further ethical aspects are integrated with the legal ones. Reformed ethics can be misunderstood as situational ethics as the actions are to be focused on a future overarching goal, being the Kingdom of God, therefore requiring focus on the situation at hand, also reflecting the strain between the current and the future status. However, what clearly deviates from situational ethics is God's will spoken through Scripture, and seeing faith and love as essential conditions for the good deeds, therefore also seeing the morally sound action not only as an external positive but also contributing to an internal purification of our souls (Zwingli, 2015).

Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) was a devoted Christian and moral absolutist. He stated that our moral obligations are unconditional, whereby the outcomes or the consequences are subordinate to our duties. His deontological approach included declaring lying and killing as universal wrongdoings, the ethical

essence being the good will. Embedded within the Kantian approach is the so-called categorical imperative, referring to the motivation for any action taken in a moral dilemma, separating us from other living beings, as all obligations and duties derive from the ultimate commandment of reason. His quest for an overarching principle of ethics led him to the categorical imperative, whereby he advocated that all actions should be conducted in a manner aiming to make them universal laws (Kant, 1993; Geisler, 2010).

Søren Aabye Kierkegaard (1813–1855) founded existentialism by to some extent merging Christian thinking with antinomianism. Positing that social norms cannot be justified by duties, Kierkegaard used Abraham's potential sacrifice of his son Isaac (Genesis 22) to announce his stance, stating that Abraham by following God's command recognised a duty elevated from both his duty not to kill and his duty to love his son (Kierkegaard, 2013).

The backdrop of the stark consequentialist totalitarianism displayed by the Nazis in the 1930s heavily influenced Karl Barth's (1886–1968) ethical views. He advocated the legacy from Calvin, also affecting ecclesial ethics, trusting that moral decisions based on the divine commands are good. Barth considered the link between Church and theology as inseparable, recognising that the main task for the Church should be to share the will of God, while relying on God's humanity (Barth, 1938).

The above shows a broad overview of the emergence of ethical thinking in the Western world, introducing the different waves of philosophical development. Recognising the influences that history and philosophy have had on Christian ethics and vice versa, I will move on to address Christian ethics in more detail, before explicating my stand to be applied in this dissertation, whilst also addressing some of the views that I find hard to accept within a Christian tradition.

4.4.3. Different sources and their stand

In Scripture are embedded fragmented parts spanning from Genesis to Revelation listing principles, commands, counsels, etcetera intended to guide our behaviour and to ensure that we do what is good, right and celebrating God. Paul states that the purpose of Scripture is twofold, both revealing God's way of

salvation and preparing us for a sinless life, being “equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:14–17). When addressing what a person ought to do, Christian ethics emerges, encompassing not only the Bible as a source but also nature, church practices and philosophical vocabulary (Wells and Quash, 2017). Ethical studies can also, as Vorster (2007) states, be viewed as incorporating human attitudes and the outcome of their actions.

Christian ethical thinking may be divided into the following categories: situation ethics, unqualified absolutism, conflicting absolutism, graded absolutism and the constructive model, all responding to the existence of moral laws in a variety of ways that will be outlined below in some detail. Whereas antinomianism states that no moral laws exist, situationism argues the existence of one absolute moral law. In between these there is generalism, holding that many moral laws co-exist, while classes of absolutism address whether moral laws are conflicted (Geisler, 2010).

As Scripture shapes Christianity, biblical or Christian ethics could be viewed as sequences of undertakings to manifest the guidance found within Scripture, for example, the second coming of Christ, the Parousia. In short, one could see the Church as the manifestation of Christian ethics (Messer, 2006). What is reflected in Christian ethics is primarily the focus on God’s will, based on God’s revelation, and seen as prescriptive and deontological (Geisler, 2010).

One further question related to Christian ethics is whether this applies to Christians only, or whether this should be perceived as general guidelines with a Christian foundation, thus applicable to all. MacNamara (1998) attempts to solve this question by addressing distinctiveness and specificity: whereas the Christian’s faith underlines one’s commitment to Christian ethics by the distinctiveness of respect, the specificity addresses whether conflicts exist between Christian ethics and ethics applied by non-Christians. God’s creational gifts enable all people to have moral conscience. One example may be the view on abortion, where Christian deontological norms clearly will be restrictive, and give answers under such a paradigm (Messer, 2006). I will argue that Christian ethics is applicable to all, because Christianity plays a vital role in the foundation of our Western world, and its norms may be permeating most, if not all, of our ethical cognition.

The natural starting point when searching for sources for Christian-ethical guidance will be Scripture. As addressed above, the Hebrew Bible is sometimes misrepresented and misused in this respect, to some extent confusing the audience because of its use of archaic imagery pertaining to many aspects of life, and with particular relevance to this dissertation, not least in some of its presentation of gender issues. The current use of the Hebrew Bible as a source for Christian ethics may be divided between the conservative and the liberal approaches. The latter points, for example, to the need for accepting that not all laws applicable in the Hebrew Bible may be applicable in today's world, and also recognises that the Hebrew language and culture is the framework and therefore not necessarily relevant in our current lives (Gill, 2012).

Applying the Hebrew Bible to our current ethical thinking is argued to involve accepting that parts represent historical narratives, entailing that Hebrew law needs to be understood in the historical aspect, and not as directly applicable to our current world. The next step is accepting that neither current nor historical ethical decisions are made in neutral circumstances. Another interesting observation is the moral debates shared in the Hebrew Bible, one example being God's discussion with Abraham, whether ten innocent men in Sodom should stop him from destroying the city, indicating that sparing innocent lives is more important than punishing wrongfully (Genesis 18:12). Further, ethical deliberations are found in Ecclesiastes, highlighting circumstances easily recognisable also today (Gill, 2012). Examples mentioned are, for instance, men accumulating honour and wealth with no ability to appreciate it, or poor wise men sharing valuable insight but then forgotten (Eccl 5:19; Eccl 9:15).

The New Testament plays a significant role in Christian ethics, as Christian ethics derives from Scripture, with moral guidelines, and not least the commandments of love shared by Jesus, which permeate all his teachings (e.g. 1 John 4:7; John 13:34; John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 8:1).

The Gospels cover Jesus' life from his birth, through his life, death and resurrection. These narratives play a significant central role in the understanding of Christian ethics, as they portray Jesus as a definitive, exemplary or divine human. In this regard, views are divided between the illustrative and the normative approach. The illustrative view recognises Jesus

as illustrating truths, hence exemplifying what is good, right and true irrespective of his life, while the normative view recognises Jesus as the founder of norms that would not have existed had it not been for his life (Wells and Quash, 2017).

In addition to the above different approaches, the New Testament includes a considerable diversification of directions and standpoints. The authority of Scripture, as a cornerstone of Reformed theology, involves applying the dialogues within Scripture and extrapolating ethical positions onto current situations and circumstances, though not expecting to find a solution for all issues arising (Wells and Quash, 2017).

The value of biblical ethics as guidance for the ethical dilemmas arising in our modern life may be challenging. There is little doubt that biblical ethics as a concept plays a vital role creating the foundation for norms guiding our current ethical evolution also in modern times, based on God's revelation both in Scripture and in the book of nature (Vorster, 2017).

The link between Scripture and Church is essential, as each can be seen as connecting to the other. Scripture through its collection of texts forms the identity of the Church, and the people within the Church draw their identity from these texts. In addition, the influences from society and cultural developments on the Church are often visible, thus affecting the messages while also affirming shifts of paradigms within Christianity. The social-environmental impact may span from institutionalism, with authoritative church leaders, to spiritualism, where the emphasis is on an inclusive community. As pointed out by Vorster (2007), the Church has the ability to play an active role in society while supporting a Christian attitude as set out in Philippians 2:5-11, whereby actions and beliefs are aligned to the four principles of love, self-denial, stewardship and obedience to God.

Another source for Christian ethics is universal natural law, which may be seen as originating in the ancient Greek civilisation. Examples can be derived from Plato's focus on the benefits of living according to nature, while Aristotle differentiated between natural justice and legal justice. Scripture refers to natural law as embedded in human lives. For example, the Lord declares, "I will

put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts” (Jeremiah 31:33). Paul writes, “For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made” (Romans 1:20). Paul also observes “the law written in their hearts” (Roman 2:15) etcetera.

The Stoic Cicero (106–43 BC) founded his universal, ethical, unchangeable standards on natural law, while Augustine saw natural law as equal to the will of God. Aquinas recognised ethics in a wide context as part of an overarching universe created by God, also distinguishing between eternal law that governs the universe, divine law in the Old and New Law, holding our moral standards, and positive human laws (Aquinas, 2011). The link between natural law and moral thinking is also visible in Kant’s categorical imperative and through the recognition that humans should be treated as the ends not the means (Kant, 1947). The essential role of natural law as above any human laws was recognised by Calvin, who also saw the revelation of God demonstrated through natural law, further acknowledging the bond between God and humans (Calvin, 2:8:12; 4:10:3).

Throughout history, the applicability of natural law has been debated both within Christianity and among non-Christian thinkers. The current view is debated not only amongst Christian theologians, but also amongst the churches, some seeing natural law rooted in different religious traditions, even though the language has a Christian origin (Dierksmeier and Celano, 2012; Gill, 2015).

The debate has also been visible amongst Reformed thinkers. Karl Barth (1886–1968) and Emil Brunner (1889–1966) were engaged in a heated debate on the topic, after Barth renounced the concept, while Brunner accepted the concept and founded his view of the link between God and humans. Barth’s key objection was that humans should not play a role in their own salvation (Brunner and Barth, 2002; Holder, 2001). Essentially this paved the way for a wider acceptance in neo-Calvinist thinking, especially notable under the contemporary two-kingdom doctrinal view aiding modern social thinking (VanDrunen, 2012).

The ranking of natural law and Scripture should reflect that the written word of God is at an epistemologically prior level, thus above natural law. In the

Reformed paradigm, Scripture holds the divine truth that the written laws of God are authoritative and specific, something that is lacking in universal natural law.

4.4.4. Situation ethics

Situation ethics arose in the 1960s with the Christian Episcopal priest Joseph Fletcher (1905–1991) in the space between natural law and divine commands on the one side, and spontaneity and unprincipled actions on the other side, whilst contrasting against absolutism and moral relativism. Fletcher argued that a set of circumstances impacts moral decision-making, stating that a full understanding of the situation is necessary to complete a moral judgment, while letting love act as the overarching principle to minimise discord and maximise harmony (Fletcher, 1966).

Situation ethics, situational ethics or situationism, can be categorised in some respect as a consequentialist view of ethics because of its focus on the outcome of the action in question as opposed to evaluating the action itself as intrinsically good or bad. Because of its focus on consequences, this ethical view is often confused with utilitarianism, as the foundation for the latter is the greatest good for the greatest number, while the focus of situationism is to create as much love as possible originating from different angles. Another way of looking at situationism is linking it to “proportionalism” whereby opposing a principle can be justified only through proportionate reason.

Fletcher’s situationism includes norms, even though the name of this ethical view might indicate something else. Placed between legalism and antinomianism, whereby laws exist for either anything or nothing, situationism relies on one law, the law of love. Fletcher’s approach takes a stand against extremes at either side, laying the foundation for one absolute norm applicable without exception to all ethical dilemmas. Applying love as the solution underlines the belief in love as the only norm that unconditionally reflects what is good (Fletcher, 1966; Geisler, 2010).

Two principles can be applied to anchor this approach. First, underived norms cannot be derived, as only one universal is given. Secondly, the number of different situations whereby ethical dilemmas may arise are numerous, meaning that having one ethical law (for example) per situation is close to impossible.

The wide concept of love can be applied to any situation or context, thus solving any challenge that may be set forth. For Fletcher, love is not an attribute but an attitude, consequently something that humans give and receive. A further aspect of Fletcher's concept of love is that he sees the opposite as indifference and not hate, stating that hate at least involves strong feelings about a person, whereby indifference views the person as an object. A natural consequence of applying love as the one universal law is that love abolishes conflicting laws, meaning, for example, that it is a Christian's responsibility to elevate love over any law, as love equals justice (Geisler, 2010).

Within Fletcher's approach is also pragmatism, relativism, positivism and personalism, as additional principles, making situationism an ethical approach based on a pragmatic strategy, using tactics based on relativism, all the time relying on a positive view of life centred on a personal value centre (Fletcher, 1966; Geisler, 2010).

Even though there are many positive aspects of situationism, one of the main challenges is the lack of content prior to any given situation, whereby the situation in itself determines the approach, ironically implying that the concept of one moral law results in no moral law. In this respect, one may say that the approach is self-contradictory, because a belief in the overarching rule of love may be challenged when love is not the appropriate basis for an action, thus questioning the standard defending this mandate (Geisler, 2010).

Another criticism raised is the risk of love being subjective, something also visible in Fletcher's work where the term "love" is defined in many different ways, allowing the situationist to define love in any given circumstance. The consequence of this is that God is dethroned as the moral ascendant in our universe and thereby these decisions are delegated to humans.

Situationism is also based on the assumption that one can always easily decide the correct action based on love, and thus actions like lying, murder, adultery, etcetera, could be acceptable as long as they are performed in the context of love.

As mentioned above, one of Fletcher's aims was to have a more practical and simple approach than the forerunner, utilitarianism, and so he proposed love as

the sole principle in situationism. His further steps, however, confuse the approach, whereby he seeks to define love by establishing numerous principles, making it even less practical and even more complicated than utilitarianism (Fletcher, 1966).

Though one could argue that situational ethics gives the individual the responsibility to make his or her own decision, the individualistic approach may easily provide people with excuses potentially to follow their selfish needs and wishes. This subjective angle to situational ethics is fully visible as the individual makes his or her choice based on their sole perception of the situation and their interpretation of love. The reliability of that choice may be questioned. One may say that situational ethics is ready to support any action as morally defensible even though many people would see the action itself as unjustified.

A final relevant criticism is that the essence of situation ethics, being that the preferred ethical solution equals the most loving choice, comes across as vague and circular instead of giving reliable guidance to any ethical dilemma (Miller, 1988).

4.4.5. Unqualified absolutism

A Christian ethical approach that contrasts with situationism advocates that moral absolutes exist. Unqualified absolutism recognises no ethical dilemmas, as all perceived conflicts are not proven real, and thus unacceptable sins can always be prevented. The basis for this stand is the assumption that any moral law is absolute and is never in real conflict with another moral law (Geisler, 2010).

There are many approaches to unqualified absolutism, but, from a Christian point of view, the conclusion will always be that God is constant, with ethical laws streaming from his unchangeable character. According to this view, God would never send contradicting messages, ensuring that no moral laws conflict nor can they be broken (Geisler, 2010).

Augustine was an unqualified absolutist, though sometimes mistaken for a situationist. His approach to lying exemplifies the position of unqualified absolutism: telling the truth, even though exposing others or oneself to great

danger, is an unbreakable absolute, the only caveat being the liar's intention, meaning that intentions are decisive for whether or not speaking the truth should be viewed as a sin. As lying breaks down all certainty, this, even temporary evil, can never be accepted.

The unqualified absolutist school of thought contributes many positive views, including the emphasis on God's unchangeable position, and the adjuring duty to obey God and have faith in him. However, unqualified absolutism is full of contradictions, and consequently it is hard to practice and rely upon. Even Immanuel Kant, as an agnostic unqualified absolutist, pointed out that exceptions to rules prove that the rules are not truly universal. Inevitably, unqualified absolutists are also prone to add qualifications that reduce the absolutes by maintaining the foundation for God's will versus nature, by recognising some laws based on the assumption of equality, or by qualifying laws as not binding from a moral standpoint because of their civil or ceremonial character; all such qualifications result in the system overthrowing itself (Geisler, 2010).

There are evidently both positive and negative aspects of unqualified absolutism. The positives, all noble attempts to create guidance, include, for example, reliance on God's unchanging nature, emphasis on the need to apply rules and not merely to focus on results, and prevention of sinful actions. The criticisms of unqualified absolutism may be summarised through some key issues. First, the approach is seen as unrealistic, and secondly, so far not successful in solving ethical dilemmas, partly because of the lack of solutions offered to genuinely conflicting moral situations. In a real and far from ideal world, conflicts that need to be addressed and solved will arise with the need for sound answers reflecting the world we live in (Geisler, 2010).

4.4.6. Conflicting absolutism

A further approach to handle ethical dilemmas is to accept their existence and to approach solving them directly. In short, this is the position of a conflicting absolutist, also called ideal absolutism or the lesser-evil view. This approach recognises that ideally the laws of God do not conflict, but within our fallen world

it is impossible to avoid moral conflicts, including conflicts that are due to our lack of clarity (Geisler, 2010).

The position of a conflicted absolutist can be explained through the following example. When the midwives were confronted with the ethical dilemma of lying to protect the children from being killed (Exodus 1:15-16), they chose the lesser of the two evils available to them. In other words, the conflicted absolutist sees lying as a lesser sin than not being able to protect the life of a child, thus accepting that what has been chosen is wrong, but repenting and asking for God's forgiveness. This was also seen as the outcome, as God praised the women for their faith and not for their lying. Helmut Thielicke (1908–1986) was a twentieth-century proponent of conflicted absolutism. He acknowledged that conflicts are often unavoidable, and hard to solve, and consequently there needs to be an acceptance of sin as an outcome in any borderline situation. Thielicke links our sinful, fallen world to the Fall, thereby stating that had it not been for the Fall, our world would not have been sinful, and neither would there be any ethical dilemmas (Geisler, 2010; Thielicke, 2016).

The strengths of conflicted absolutism are primarily advocating absolutes and, secondarily, facing ethical dilemmas head on, while retaining a realistic view on dilemmas. The obvious weakness of this approach is the weakening of the chosen absolutes when linking them to a fallen world. In addition, this approach implies that Jesus was also a sinner, on the basis of the assumption that even Jesus may have been forced to choose between two sins. The conflicted absolutists also believe that God will grant forgiveness when asked, assuming that the sin will not repeat itself; this is a challenging circular argument because the core of this stand is that dilemmas are real and that we should choose the lesser evil, hence, allow ourselves to sin repeatedly (Geisler, 2010).

These weaknesses mean that further investigations are needed, and I will therefore move on to graded absolutism.

4.4.7. Graded absolutism

Graded absolutism is the third approach within absolutism. This approach is also described as contextual absolutism or “the greater good” view. According to this view, some actions to solve moral dilemmas are right while others are

wrong, regardless of the consequences of the actions, and basically regardless of the intentions behind the actions.

Like the other absolutisms, this approach confirms that there is an absolute principle of ethics, revealing God's commandments to us. Breaking God's law equals committing a sin, though some moral obligations are greater than others. A graded absolutist will, for example, state that "You shall not murder" (Ex 20:13) is a greater moral absolute than "You shall not give false testimony" (Ex 20:16), implying that murder is a greater sin than lying. This view accepts that there may be situations where the options to solve an ethical problem contradict, so that the person's obligation will be to choose the greater good. In doing so, even though the person is violating one of God's commandments, by choosing the lesser sin, he/she is not committing a sin (Geisler, 2010).

By applying the aforementioned commandments, the graded absolutist will acknowledge that saving life is more important than telling the truth. In short, a graded absolutist may have an ethical duty to tell a lie, for example, if he/she is threatened by a gunman to reveal the whereabouts of a person whom the gunman is planning to kill. In this situation, graded absolutism advocates that not lying would in fact be a sin. This does not imply that evil is good, merely that when conflicted the lesser evil should be chosen. Allowing people to sin has been one of the root causes for criticising graded absolutism, which is therefore referred to by some as unbiblical and more reliant on obeying people than obeying God (Geisler, 2010).

The real moral dilemma is not that we are faced with opposites, in other words good versus evil, as the obligation is to focus on the greater good, but that we are constrained from performing the two conflicting absolutes simultaneously. The situation as such, or the context, determines the conflicting absolutes, and for this reason some argue that this approach in fact should be viewed as situational ethics. However, as the greater absolute guides the resolution of the conflict, there should not be similarities between graded absolutism and consequential ethical views.

4.4.8. Constructive ethical attitude

Approaching the ethical dilemmas by focusing on the don'ts instead of the does is seen by some as the appropriate thinking. Geisler (2010) is one example, targeting activities that Scripture forbids, leaving the followers with a sense that doing nothing may be the safer moral option.

Vorster, on the other hand, embraces a constructive ethical vantage point, whereby Scripture's guidance to solve contemporary ethical dilemmas is identified, and argues another approach, which is firmly embedded in the Reformed paradigm. The foundation for this approach can be seen through what Vorster refers to as the Christian attitude reflecting *the attitude of an obedient servant to God* (Vorster, 2007:133).

Vorster (2004, 2007) promotes a proactive approach to solve ethical problems within the Christian heritage, exemplified by his stance on post-apartheid South Africa, supporting the rebuilding of his country into a liberal democracy. He writes that it is essential for any Christian to have a constructive outlook on the individual and society, thus laying the foundation for a practicable Christian ethical approach (Vorster, 2007).

On the basis of the strong statement of Christian attitude in Philippians 2:6-11, Vorster (2007) has developed a productive ethical position, highlighting the constructive Christian-ethical perspective. His position can be explained through four key cornerstones: *love, stewardship, self-denial and obedience to God*. Love in this respect is the all-inclusive love, demonstrated by being both compassionate and humane in addition to supporting others through comfort, dignity and respect. Stewardship involves imitating Christ by stepping into the servant role, supporting the community while striving for peace and social moral order. Self-denial is a further imitation of Christ demonstrating the ability to sacrifice personal interest. Obedience to God, as the fourth and last principle, characterises the life of a Christian aligned to the will of God, thereby seeking moral social order together with a pure life.

This constructive ethical position, founded on the above four principles, can be seen as a set of guidelines complementing other hermeneutical principles

relevant to ethics, and is broadly relevant in today's societies for guiding any ethical dilemma (Bøsterud and Vorster, 2017).

Bøsterud and Vorster (2017) use Jesus' and Confucius' explanations regarding the golden rule of reciprocity to illustrate these different approaches. Jesus encourages a proactive path urging to action (Matt 7:17), while Confucius opts for a passive attitude applying negation. From my perspective, supporting a positive versus a negative approach comes across as closely aligned to the Christian attitude referred to above, which will be expected to inform matters of gender equality from a Christian ethical vantage point.

I find that the constructive deontological approach to Christian ethics as outlined above will be applicable to solving the problems pertaining to this dissertation, and not least because it is founded on Scripture. Therefore, I find that this brand of ethical philosophy will be useful for establishing an ethical foundation acceptable under the Reformed paradigm for the purposes touched upon in this dissertation.

4.4.9. Gender and ethics

Ethical cognition at times addresses the gender balance or lack thereof in society. Relevant topics in this respect are, for example, characteristics based on whether a person is male or female, and behaviour or social roles attributed to males or females. As pointed out in Chapter 2, perceptions and gender biases are often linked to the thinking that males and females have different roles and abilities, thus explaining lack of equality with a causation based on etiologically biased observation only. This is where gender becomes an ethical topic. More precisely, even though the main differences can be said to be within the reproductive area, a very natural outcome of sexual dimorphism, essential to this dissertation is the much-debated question of how far gender differences should apply in life. In this respect, and as exemplification, it should be noted that most corporations and organisations are deemed to recruit new top management leaders when the previous ones leave for some reason or another. Temporary solutions during the recruitment period are frequently possible, but the organisation will be faced with the need to replace the previous leader, hence my focus below will be set to acknowledge these deemed

activities in all companies. Postponing the replacement of leaders may negatively influence both internal and external stakeholders such as employees, owners, investors, stock market, banks, lending facilities, customers, suppliers, etcetera. (Nthoesane and Kruger, 2014). Embedded in this scenario will also be the perception that females are more likely to be recruited to leadership positions when companies are in distress (Kulich *et al.*, 2015). Whether the recruitment or appointment of the new leader is timely or not from an ethical point of view, falls outside the scope of this dissertation.

For a significant part of Christian history, women's roles have been linked to their childbearing capacity, which has generally been interpreted as a subordinate role at home and in society. Men, on the other hand, were considered natural leaders not only in society but also within the four walls of the home, hence supporting a patriarchal system. Some Christian men even view the subordinate role of women within the household as a moral duty bestowed upon them (Gill, 2012).

These gender differences throughout history are reflected in Christianity's four first centuries, upholding females as the weaker sex with respect to both intellect and judgment. On the other hand, women were regarded as equal when it came to serve in the early religious societies, not only when escaping patriarchal life and vowing virginity—something many did to avoid marriage and family life by joining institutions where gender inequality was especially visible. The inequality implied, for example, that young girls were forced to marry without concession and that the *paterfamilias* had full control over family life. The Reformation brought new light on gender and ethics, adding, for example, the importance of partnership and companionship within family life, opening the way for more balance, while not abandoning the patriarchal stand (Gill, 2012).

In contemporary society, both genders are set to tackle feminism and masculinism in an ever-changing economic, political and global environment while balancing family and professional life in ever-changing new practical settings. Feminist theologies often address oppression rooted within the concept of patriarchy, whereby men exert power while women take on a subordinate role, even within Western societies where Christianity has prospered. The lack of balance in power has several ramifications, one being

that men predominantly hold power positions. Another is that in a male-powered society most problems are addressed from a male point of view, thereby lacking the female outlook and knowledge, which could have added different perspectives and knowledge. This somewhat wry perception of the world tends to “justify” the lack of power balance between the genders, even in some situations perceiving women as not complete humans and blaming women for many of the challenges within society. Some may even say that our world needs a radical restructuring (Messer, 2006).

Feminists have accused the Church for taking an active part in the oppression of women, putting Christianity amid these challenges. Parsons (1996) addresses this through what she presents as a framework of Christian feminist theologies, applying the foundations of philosophy such as liberal, social constructionist and naturalist concepts as a taxonomy of paradigms, thereby strengthening the relationship between feminism and Christianity. Her approach adds to those of other Christian feminists in striving to remove patriarchal elements from within the Church (Parsons, 1996).

The liberal paradigm highlights equality and independence as fundamental moral values, imperative for the preservation of our human virtue, also reflecting personal sovereignty and human rights. With this backdrop, the liberal view eradicates the importance of gender, and acknowledges that all people have equal rights to education, jobs, and equal pay, as there are no inherent reasons for treating men and women differently in any aspect of life (Parsons, 1996). This paradigm is supported by Paul’s statement: “*There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus*” (Galatians 3:28).

The social constructionist paradigm highlights the fact that many current values are founded on the way things are, without daring to question the status quo supported by the establishment. To overcome this, it is essential to seek new identities for both genders, breaking the historic patterns of relationship. According to Parsons (1996), Christian ethical principles support these views and obtain support in the Bible; for example, Christ’s treatment of women countered contemporaneous views on the female sex (e.g. Luke 8:1-3; John 4:4-30).

The third paradigm, naturalist feminism, focuses on the differences between the sexes, while stressing the need to reassess potential intrinsic human characteristics. One example is psychological differences, illustrated by males' tendency to focus on justice, while females display a tendency to focus on relationship (Messer, 2006). Embedded in this paradigm is the perception that society is organised to favour the male way of performance, thus advocating the need to ensure that the female approach does not harm social constructions, including work life. Christians pursuing this line of naturalist feminism may see our two sexes as explained via creation, and supported by modern science's demonstration of biological differences in all animals, thus explaining the doctrine of creation (Gill, 2012). This paradigm is challenging because of the risk of semiotically echoing current stereotypes by way of perpetuating the status quo, one example being healthcare, where the ethics of care has been essential, thus allowing nurses (often females) to be the caring profession while reporting to the superior doctor (often males). The level and extent of differences between males and females are also debated (Messer, 2006).

Though differences with respect to experience of life and values may apply on both individual and cultural levels, these should not be disruptive within Christian ethical theory or practice or used as justification for structures accepting exclusion or oppression. The Christian doctrines of reconciliation and redemption should be used for the support of an inclusive and liberating view of gender balance within Christian ethics (Gill, 2012).

Interestingly, Parsons (1996) does not select one of the three paradigms as preferable to the others, instead she sets out to merge communalities from all three to support gender-balanced ethical discussions. The approach starts with a universal moral standard offering the foundation for equal treatment, adding a "redemptive community" taking us beyond individualism, and then embedding a fresh approach to human nature where both sexes are recognised as created in the image of God (Messer, 2006).

Vorster (2007), who argues that the traditional sentiment is based on a very narrow biblical understanding not reflecting the overarching attitude, also addresses the overall message and advocates Christianity's important role in the liberation of women not only within the Church but in society.

4.4.10. Work, business and equality in an ethical perspective

It is illustrated above how gender issues are central to any ethical discourse. To further set the stage for the ethical elaboration of gender as connected to scriptural norms as will be disused in Chapter 5, I will now outline some typical aspects connected to gender, as they will provide clarification for the topics treated in this dissertation.

4.4.10.1. Work life

Work life, when viewed as social reality, is a key part of human relationships and shared responsibility, allowing people a life, especially in more complex societies holding a more sophisticated segmentation of labour. In a Christian ethical setting, already from Genesis we learn how humans were given tasks and obligations (e.g., Genesis 2:15), and the perception of work as an important task for humans is reflected throughout Scripture (e.g., Psalm 90:17; Proverbs 12:11; 2 Timothy 2:6; Colossians 3:23).

Concerns about business and financial ethical issues can also be found in early attempts to address human rights, like the theologians of the School of Salamanca in Latin America, who addressed human rights during the sixteenth century as a response to the Spanish conquest, requesting rights for the workforce, also including Christian ethical business conduct (Carozza, 2003; Hoffmann-Holland 2009). A key source was Thomas Aquinas' natural law approach that viewed virtues as foundational for ethics, and these principles were applied to issues such as entering into contracts, fair pricing, market ethics, and the conduct of transactions (Dierksmeier and Celano, 2012).

When it comes to management, Scripture may offer support to universal theories, irrespective of the manager's religious belief. Recognisable topics include management's requirements for justice (Prov 14:34; Mic 6:8), diligence (Prov 10:4), fairness (Amos 8:5-6), and faithfulness (1 Cor 4:2). The art of management is debated within Christian ethics, ranging from the behavioural traits expected to be displayed by a Christian manager to the need to recognise that efficiency surpasses the aim for excellence. The quest for profit may further influence management's freedom to serve any master (Wells and Quash, 2017).

In essence, the ethical dilemmas within work life and the corporate world all revolve around social relations and the social network. The essence of Christian ethics offers valuable guidance with respect to the relationship between employer and employee, including the employer's responsibilities to their employees, therefore of essential relevance to this dissertation.

4.4.10.2. Business and commerce

Even though business and trading have been evident throughout known human history, ambiguity towards this human realm is visible within Scripture, as for example: *"No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money"* (Matthew 6:24). *"Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten minas, and said to them, 'Engage in business until I come'"* (Luke 19:13).

The above is not necessarily indicating a negative approach to business, but more an approach to place the focus on business and economic activity where it belongs, and to stress that wealth is merely a tool to serve human ends. Christian ethical principles can be applied in many parts of the business environment, covering ethical guidelines for business, encouraging virtues, inspiring leadership, and viewing financial commodities as vehicles to achieve higher non-material ends (Melé and Fontrodona, 2017).

Vorster (2007) points out that, through work, humans participate in God's renewal. He also stresses the importance of stewardship as an integrated part of Christian attitudes and highlights the importance of work being rewarded through adequate compensation.

The concept of stewardship plays an important part within business ethics. In Scripture, for example, *"The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it"* (Genesis 2:15). Scripture includes several passages referring to the concept of leading other people, for example, Matthew 20:27–28, stating that *"whoever wishes to be the great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve"*. Servant leadership as a theory of leadership is rooted in this statement. Robert Greenleaf (1997)

accentuates the importance of developing and empowering members within an organisation. While Greenleaf (1997) developed his concept of the leader as a servant from Hesse's novel *Journey to the East*, using the behaviour of the character Leo, many recognise Jesus' role to his disciples as the perfect role model of servant leadership (e.g., Sendjaya and Sarros, 2002).

The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17) gives a list of moral obligations, in which are embedded human rights, and thus is relevant within business ethics. A further imperative, advocated by many within business ethics, is "Do to others as you would have them do to you" (Luke 6:27), often referred to as the "Golden Rule", contrasting with the "Silver Rule" ("do unto others as they do unto you"), where the main objective is reciprocity which aims for a constant balance. Within a corporate world, some claim that the Golden Rule may indicate hypocrisy, reducing the basis for trust, as the walk does not always align to the talk, thus working against cooperative ethics (Tullberg, 2012). In the context of this dissertation, this means that corporate statements or policies supporting gender equality are worthless unless these are demonstrated through actions. Advocating gender balance within the corporate world will not be sufficient unless actions prove the commitment to said statements or policies.

Traditionally, any attempt to take advantage of scarcity or impose higher prices without a valued contribution has been deemed wrong from a Christian point of view. Contemporary debates often address this kind of practice, stressing truthfulness and fairness, and dismissing pure self-interest, especially on the part of management, and thereby introduce ethical aspects into a commercially driven world, where the focus is on financial output via profitable activities. This debate is visible when cost-benefit analyses are done to determine potential environmental effects, one example being considerations regarding wildlife as part of planning processes. However, these approaches often have other considerations than a Christian ethical approach; for example, should the future life of the planet be priority number one, without considering the different kinds of good, interests and similar benefits? Within today's business world the ethical deliberation often boils down to merging the expected financial growth with sustainability, thus addressing the impact of a business on people and nature, responding to financial development, avoiding injustice through equity, and

protecting the environment (Wells and Quash, 2017). Perceptions with respect to women in leadership, in regard to both performance and priorities, may impact recruitment and retention policies, hence they may directly influence the essence addressed in this dissertation.

An increased global business in our time is dependent on practices that reach across boundaries with respect to countries, societies and cultures, with individuals requiring trust and common guidelines. Even though globalisation contributes to economic growth and creates opportunities for many people, there is a flipside with ethical challenges, where the corporates' care of their responsibilities both with respect to their people and with respect to the environment plays a decisive role (Vorster, 2007).

4.4.10.3. Human rights and equality

In 539 BC, Cyrus the Great or Cyrus II of Persia (600–530 BC) conquered Babylon. His next line of action, however, involved a significant step for humanity. He freed slaves and declared that all humans had the right to choose their religion, thus establishing racial and religious equality. These steps were all noted down on a cylinder, and this ancient document is today recognised as the first charter addressing general human rights. The document has been translated into all six UN languages and is parallel to the first four articles in the Declaration of Human Rights (Hoffman, 2006).

In between the authoring of the Cyrus Cylinder and the UN's adaptation of Cyrus' principles, various documents addressing the rights of individuals were issued. Examples are the issuing of King John of England's *Magna Carta* in 1215, followed by the English Bill of Rights in 1689, the French Declaration in 1789 addressing the rights of citizens, and the American Constitution and Bill of Rights in 1791. Though many of these documents are frontrunners to our current human rights, making significant steps in the protection of individuals, when translated into policy many of these documents excluded women, coloured people and sometimes members of minority groups because of religion, politics, or economics (Ishay, 2008).

With optimism and energy, the UN was formed after World War II, and was aiming to put an end to all wars, committing to “*save succeeding generations*

from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind” as stated in the Preamble of the United Nations’ Charter (UN, n.d.). In the same Preamble, it is clearly stated that its purpose is “to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women”. The Declaration of Human Rights Article 1 goes on to capture the key message: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” This message opens up both theoretical and practical implications. The latter, within a business environment, may refer to the role the business should play when promoting and protecting these universal rights with corresponding obligations (Melé and Sánchez-Runde, 2013).

4.5. Summary

In this chapter I have elaborated different philosophies pertaining to ethics that I see as relevant to the topics of this dissertation, and my main findings are:

- The most important division between different schools of thought within the realm of ethics is whether the focus should be on the outcome of an action sought by the person facing an ethical problem or whether it is the action itself that determines whether it is acceptable or not.
- Focusing on the outcome of actions falls within the concept of utilitarianism (or consequentialism), whilst the focus on the action itself is normative ethics.
- Focusing on the action without regard to possible outcomes falls within the concept of deontological ethics.
- Utilitarianism requires that all moral dilemmas should be solved via the focus on the outcome, irrespective of the actions involved.
- Situationism or situation ethics is based on the assumption that one always can decide the correct action based on love, implying that actions like lying, murder, adultery, etcetera could be acceptable as long as they are performed in the context of love.

- Christian ethics has emerged as a discipline based on God's revelation seen as prescriptive and deontological, primarily focusing on God's will but also influenced by history.
- Absolutism, which advocates that moral absolutes exist, can be divided into unqualified absolutism, conflicted absolutism and graded absolutism, regardless of the consequences of the actions, and in most situations regardless of the intentions behind the actions.
- Unqualified absolutism recognises no ethical dilemmas, as conflicts are not proven to be real, because unacceptable sin can always be prevented. The basis for this stand is the assumption that any law is absolute and laws are never in real conflict.
- Conflicting absolutism, also called ideal absolutism or the lesser-evil view, recognises that ideally the laws of God do not conflict; however, within our fallen world it is impossible to avoid conflicts in addition to conflicts arising because of our lack of clarity.
- Reformed ethics, built on the foundation of Luther and Calvin, also further developed by Zwingli, focuses on the positive objectives shared through God's law, through God's grace, and the effects on Christian life.
- Deontological philosophies presuppose the possibility of free choice, as there may be no judgement in the Eschaton without it.
- The constructive ethical approach is based on the Christian's attitude as an obedient servant to God, and is explained through four key cornerstones: love, stewardship, self-denial and obedience to God, an approach that is highly relevant in today's world.
- The ethical influence on gender, work, business and management is essential in our world today, contributing to the formation of a global foundation for support and guidance when encountering moral dilemmas.
- Commitments to support gender equality within the corporate world need to be demonstrated, not merely advocated.

I will now move on to address the women in Scripture and the roles they play in Scripture.

CHAPTER 5: APPLICABLE BIBLICAL-ETHICAL NORMS

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter I will address the Christian-ethical norms forming the scriptural basis for this dissertation, focusing on scriptural expressions connected to gender balance within leadership roles and positions, as relevant in the Western world of today, also aiming to lay the foundation for the subsequent chapters, where practical recruitment and retention considerations and morality will be further explored.

My aim here is to explicate the sources in Scripture, clarifying the potential correlation with current-day policies and practices supporting gender balance at the top management level, and evaluating their ethical standards. I will address topics typically influencing stakeholders within the corporate realm in the Western world, focusing on topics frequently discussed within Christian and secular spheres, elaborating insights relevant to the ethical position aligned to the Reformed paradigm, leading to useful scripturally based policies connected to gender balance within corporate top management. Relevant questions in this respect is how the Bible has influenced gender balance in leadership roles throughout history up until the present day, and how the Bible could contribute to shape and further gender balance. Pre-Reformation and historical sources will not be addressed in detail, as they are deemed not to contribute contextually to this dissertation.

In the previous chapter, I addressed the scriptural foundations of general Christian-ethical norms, but in this chapter, I will be focusing on the specific Christian-ethical truths to be deduced from Scripture. My focus will be on the scriptural guidance I deem of direct and specific relevance to the recruitment practices at corporate leadership level in the contemporary Western world, in line with the constructive Christian-ethical approach elaborated in Chapter 4. Under this wider interpretation I will be guided by shepherding principles as described by Oden (1983) and further elaborated by Vorster (2007; 2017) in the constructive ethical paradigm founded on social stewardship, self-denial and obedience to God. This context-driven approach will be expected to include a flexibility well fitted for use in current corporate life in the Western world.

In several parts of the Bible, women are portrayed as marginal shadows with subordinate roles, especially in the Hebrew Bible. However, there are some outstanding exceptions like Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Miriam, Deborah, Ruth and Esther, all of whom are significant role models, although with very different tasks to fulfil in the different narratives in which they appear. An interesting general observation is that all of them come across as honestly portrayed and proving faithful and useful to humanity. To some extent, one may say that women were given a “bad press” after the casting out of Eden (Gen 3:23), the fall of the kingdom of Judah (2 Kings 25:3) and the prostitute of Babylon (Rev 17, 18). From Eve to Jezebel, they are regularly blamed for the challenges presented to the people of Israel and their ancestors. More likely, the roles women play in the Old Testament may be seen as a direct consequence of the increasing patriarchal influence on society and religion. As we shall see, God created Eve as Adam’s equal (Gen 1:27) and the early Israelite women held important positions equal to men, as prophets, leaders and judges (e.g., Judg 4:4; Esther 2:17). Some women even became heroes in their nations, as did Deborah, Esther and Judith. Although these may not be recognised in secular historical accounts, their portrayal in the Bible signals the importance of their roles and participation in the history of salvation (Baldock, 2018).

Patriarchalism is a historic development after the Fall. It infected ancient Eastern and Hellenistic society. Over against this reality the Christian faith brought forth the idea of equality, based on the *imago Dei*. It was actually a revolutionary contribution, as we can also see in the equal treatment of men and women in the process of redemption and the gifts of the Spirit. Equality is a creational gift about which ancient cultures erred but which was restored by Christ. The Bible continues to shape the life of people, cultures and communities in the Western world, but one noticeable challenge when addressing women and gender balance is the fact that the Bible is believed to be written by men, thus representing the male authors’ perspectives in a time when authority was vested primarily in men and men’s experience of power. As addressed in Chapter 3, biblical interpretation needs to consider these facts while distinguishing between historical impact and the word of God, ensuring that the Bible is read through the lens of liberation of our hearts. One could argue that what can be seen as unjust treatment of women of today has always

been wrong; therefore, continuing to seek support in the Bible for such practices and sustaining these wrongs will only continue and perpetuate the harm done (Newsom, Ringe and Lapsley, 2012).

Before moving on to the various women we meet in the Bible, I will briefly address the biblical approach to leadership as a concept.

5.2. Leadership as a concept in the Bible

As leadership is a key topic in this dissertation, I will briefly address leadership as a concept in the Bible, in concert with accepted Reformed pastoral theology, where the shepherd leading his or her flock is a recognised and widely used metaphor, with numerous scriptural expressions, as shall be shown. This shepherding metaphor refers to the core Christian belief in guiding others to experience the love of God while caring for them—in other words, leading the people to the path of salvation. Genesis 48:15 is the first encounter with the shepherd in the Hebrew Bible, where Jacob refers to God's leadership through generations, as being "my shepherd all my life to this day". Another passage where the word "shepherd" is used directly is found in Genesis 49:24, and the motif is especially emphasised in Psalm 23:1, "The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing."

Leadership is also demonstrated by several key characters in the Bible, for example, Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt (Ex 20), acting as a prophet (Deut 18:15) and conveying the Ten Commandments from God (Deut 5). An interesting leadership trait of Moses is his guidance through teaching and not dictating, reflected in Deuteronomy 30:19 among other passages, and inspiring people to make their own choices while guiding them by revealing the consequences of options available to them. This predominantly didactic manner of empowerment and delegation of decision from leaders is also often recognised as an important leadership trait in modern leadership theory (e.g., Chhotray, Sivertsson and Tell, 2018; Akinola, Martin and Phillips, 2018).

Adjacent to the shepherding metaphor is the concept of stewardship (John 13:12-17), also aligned to a constructive ethical theology (Vorster 2007; 2017). These principles are to some degree echoed in contemporary secular management theory highlighting inclusiveness and collaboration (Raelin, 2003;

2011). Several other passages pertaining to leadership in concert with the Old Testament teachings as explained above are found in the New Testament, for example, within Matthew's Gospel, when addressing leadership in the early church by merging leadership, teaching, learning and faith (e.g., Matt 5-7; 10:5-42).

Leadership at different levels is also recognised in Scripture, one example being Paul, who in the Bible is supposed to have written twelve letters both to individuals and churches, displaying engagement, sharing and correction to his recipients. His letters also include his experience when visiting the individuals or the early emerging churches, telling how he is welcomed and greeted (1 Thess 1:9), how he gives directions for the sharing of his messages to the public (Col 4:16), and how he arranges support for the Christians in Jerusalem (1 Cor 16:3). He is clear in his directions to people when instructing them to carry out tasks (1 Cor 4:17), requesting support for him and his followers (1 Cor 16:6; Phil 4:15; 2 Tim 4:11–13), and cautioning his readers to alter their behaviour (1 Cor 4:14, 5:3, 6:5), as well as assigning them leadership roles (Eph 4:11).

With respect to identifying and appointing leaders, at this level, there are few signs of formal processes in churches of the early centuries. On the other hand, pastoral ministry was regarded as a charism, indicating that the congregation may have played a role in identifying leadership candidates (Giles, 2017).

Though in brief, the above shows how leadership as a role, as tasks, and through recognition and identification, is addressed in selected scriptural sources. Summing up, the biblical concept of leadership is focused on pastoral shepherding qualities, and there are no traces in any scriptural passages that would indicate that one gender is better suited to exert such leadership than the other, nor that any one gender is preferred by God to exert such societal care. On the contrary, what has been demonstrated above illustrates how the scriptural concept of leadership is not particularly assigned to one gender, nor to qualities typically represented in one gender.

I will now move to the natural start for gender equality in the Bible, the *Imago Dei* doctrine.

5.3. Equality under the Creation (Imago Dei doctrine)

5.3.1. Imago Dei as general doctrine

The creation narratives as found in Genesis 1:26-27 and 2:18-24 highlight a special place in creation for the human family. This appears from the fact that humans are likened to God in that he created them in his own image, as it appears in 1:27, “So God created mankind in his own image”. This imagery is the basis for the doctrine termed *imago Dei*, which has been interpreted from different philosophical perspectives. The aim here is not to elaborate the *imago Dei* doctrine in any deep detail, as my aim is to assess the scriptural stance on gender equality, and in particular with regards to leadership positions in society. Notwithstanding the particular gender focus here, it may be useful to relate a few of the vantage points that have been espoused when assessing the above-mentioned scriptural passages as the foundation for the *imago Dei* doctrine.

The outlook of pre-Christian thinkers and Hebrew philosophers is that the *imago Dei* pertains to a *functional* understanding of what it means to be humans and to express the human experience, as opposed to what we as humans are or represent in the physical life that we lead. From this vantage point, we as humans are expected to acquire sovereignty over nature, and be God’s representatives in the physical life on earth. As such, it is via our actions that we most directly express God as his worldly operatives, and this is the main rationale behind the creation of the human family (Middleton, 2006)

The vantage point of Augustine was that of a *representative* likening with God, where we as humans are bearers of a nature that is designed to represent God, and have been instilled with abilities and traits which support this goal. Thus, humans will carry traits and abilities of both spirit and cognition, which renders humans in resemblance to God (Augustine, 2018; Clark, 2001).

For Barth, it is the *relation* that humans have with God that is the determinant of how we are created in the image of God. To Barth, we as humans will mirror God more than other creatures in how we relate to God and in which abilities we are instilled with in this capacity (Feinberg, 1972).

Grudem (2013) posits that we as humans are not able to comprehend the *imago Dei* perception, because this would entail a full insight to God's true nature and being. In his view, it is only God who can have such knowledge, and further, even in our post-Eden fallen state we humans still persist in the image of God, whether at any age, any state of physical health or mental faculties, born or unborn. Through this he maintains that we are all under God's protection and that we, in all states of being, manifest the image of God as expressed in the *imago Dei* concept. Grudem's stance is in full alignment with Calvin's views, as he confirmed that even in the fallen and morally bankrupt state of post-fall humanity, we continue to dwell in God's image, and that even in this state, we carry God's dignity which has endured the strains of the Eden eviction (Calvin, 2012, 1:15:4). Consequently, it would be a responsible interpretation of Scripture to establish that we as humans have a special yet obligated place in the creation as awarded by God (Gen 1:26-28, 2:15).

Calvin was concerned with the doctrine of *imago Dei*, and when elaborating on the different aspects of possible resemblance between God and the human family, he wrote:

Accordingly, by this term ['image of God'] is denoted the integrity with which Adam was endued when his intellect was clear, his affections subordinated to reason, all his senses duly regulated, and when he truly ascribed all his excellence to the admirable gifts of his Maker. And though the primary seat of the divine image was in the mind and the heart, or in the soul and its powers, there was no part even of the body in which some rays of glory did not shine (Calvin, 2012, 1:15).

The above position as expressed by Calvin may leave no doubt that, for him, it is the spiritual elements of the human person which are the essential aspects of the *imago Dei*, and thus, that these spiritual traits of humans are to be focused on when considering the creation of humans in the image of God. All of us then, in all possible states and regardless of gender, will mirror the glory of God, and we are to be accountable to him for fulfilling the attendant responsibilities (Ps 8).

Following from the above, the Reformed position regarding the *imago Dei* is that our relationship with God as humans is one of uniqueness, and is expressed to

us in the *imago Dei* concept, regardless of our gender or mental or physical state (Lazenby, 1987). Although the above elaboration of *imago Dei* will not fully illuminate all aspects of our relationship with God, it will be evident that God has not created different “classes” of humans, no matter how we are viewed. Consequently, it will be of interest to investigate what scriptural sources can reveal about how we as humans can express our worldly experience in the form of gender. In the following sections, this will be my starting point.

5.3.2. Imago Dei and gender

When referring to the *imago Dei*, two essential topics surface: first, God’s way of actualising himself through humans; and second, God’s love for humans. Stating that human beings are created in the image of God entails that natural human qualities enable God to be manifested within human beings. Consequently, humans are the tools God uses to communicate and demonstrate his plans and purposes, thus recognising the role humans play as co-creators with God. An essential ethical implication of the doctrine of *imago Dei* is love—our love for God, our love for other humans, and God’s love for us. As mentioned above, the *imago Dei* doctrine includes all humans, irrespective of gender. Thus, pertaining to the creation of the woman, Scripture does not only support her as a full human being but also differentiates her as superior to other creatures alongside with her counterpart, the male human (Gen 1:26-27; 2:18-24). In her relationship to the man, the woman is described as his counterpart and equal partner, holding an intimate relationship as a collective team.

In Scripture, the word for “mankind” is used to address both sexes: “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule” (Gen 1:26). “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Gen 1:27). The phrase “male and female he created them” gives no indication of rank or value with respect to gender, merely indicating that humans come in two types, the male and the female, both in the image of God (Gen 1:26).

The second creation narrative, found in Genesis 2, has, however, given room for interpretation, whereby the woman is created from the rib of the man after

the creation of the man (Gen 2:21-24). Both the method of creation and its timing have been argued to support male superiority in relation to women, although, under such argumentation, there will be a need to disregard how both were created “in his image” (Gen 1:26). Others argue that this imagery does not support viewing the female as inferior; on the contrary, perfection and completion is reached only when she is created. The Talmud even supports going further, implying that God created Eve with greater mental capabilities than Adam (Newsom, Ringe and Lapsley, 2012).

A further approach may very well be to see the creation in Genesis 2 as emphasising the unity between the two sexes, underlining the fellowship of the two sexes. Being created out of a rib supports equality between the sexes, as the rib may be seen as a neutral part of the body, whereto no specific folkloric or semiotic human traits are typically assigned. If she had been made either from his head or from his feet, this could have indicated that she would either rule over him or be ruled by him. The female being created out of the rib of the male (Gen 2:23-24) can be argued to underline the closeness between the sexes, as men and women are one. The relationship is further described as harmonious, lacking any focus on sexual differences, as they “were both naked, and they felt no shame” (Gen 2:25). The difference at this stage was in sex and not in nature. One can easily argue that the male’s time-priority in creation does not entail superiority, as both were blessed with equality and interrelationship. If time-priority were to be considered as a decisive argument for male gender superiority, or even an argument at all, then the second creation narrative itself could be considered a lesser creation explanation, as it is presented second in order to the first narrative, where clearly, both sexes are created in “his image” (Gen 1:26). To argue, then, against equality among the sexes in creation would also go against core trinitarian doctrinal positions, where all the persons (hypostases) of God are equal, and such argumentation would disfigure the oneness and divine unity that is God (Riches, 2016). Also, for this reason, the argumentation that the creation narratives assign one gender an inferior order cannot be accepted. The equality of the sexes in creation, as a combined expression of God’s creative grace, is summed up in Genesis 1:27, where it is clearly and plainly stated that “God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them”. This

unequivocally establishes that humankind is created as male and female in God's image (*imago Dei*), granting both genders the same level of dignity and stewardship (Ps 8).

What differentiates humans from other creatures is a further aspect of humans being created in the image of God, where the animals lack self-consciousness and the ability for rational cognition, and our ability as humans for ethical and spiritual reflection and development is evident. Our rational structure of cognition with capacity to deliberate and make decisions as humans separates us from other creatures, grants humans the freedom of centeredness and fullness, allowing ability for self-actualisation and a blessed existence. In addition, this freedom is the same freedom that is demonstrated in the Fall narrative (Gen 3). In line with this account, humans received the freedom of choice to deny or accept God within their moral consciousness. Our capabilities and longing for love, either for oneself, others or God, can be deformed and even averted. The quest for wholeness or the essential self may be seen as part of the journey to accept the *imago Dei* visualised in the life of Christ and his teachings. While Genesis 3 may be read as a punishment of females, introducing her to the challenge of childbirth, due to her disobedience leading to the Fall, another angle may be added, introducing the female as the protagonist. She is portrayed as forward leaning, hungry for knowledge while testing borders, hence, being human, demonstrating the traits found in mythical and real-life heroes, opening the door to birth and death. To some, the Fall is an enchanting story of a woman deceived by a snake with a rather comical, passive bystander of a man. To others, Eve is far from victimised by a snake, as she consciously chooses knowledge, while Adam's action can be seen as passive disobedience, even blaming Eve for his actions (Gen 3:12). The sequences in Genesis 2 and 3, leading to the Fall, also raise interesting questions. For example, who told Eve about the tree? Eve was created (Gen 2:22) after God told Adam not to eat the fruit from the tree (Gen 2:17). Moreover, Eve was also led to believe that touching the tree would kill her, not only eating from it (Gen 3:3). It is tempting to state that something is missing from the picture; was she mislead by Adam, for example? Was that the reason why he acted so passively during the whole event (Newsom, Ringe and

Lapsley, 2012)? Also, if Eve alone was responsible for the Fall, why was Adam also punished (Gen 3:17-19)?

Whether Adam or Eve alone is to blame is further argued in the New Testament. In 1 Timothy 2:13-14 Eve is seen as the perpetrator, while Romans 5 shifts to Adam and him alone: *“just a sin came into the world through one man ... so death spread to all because all have sinned”* (Rom 5:12). Even though many have blamed Eve for our fractured position, even as the gateway to the abyss, not all portray her this way. An important aspect with respect to equality is Eve’s role as “mother of all the living” (Gen 3:20), further emphasised in Adam and Eve’s joint responsibility for the Fall. In this respect, Eve may indeed be claimed as a powerful protagonist of the story, displaying both intellect and intrusiveness, created in the image of God as she was (Baldock, 2018; Newsom, Ringe and Lapsley, 2012).

An interesting angle from which to assess equality perceptions of Scripture could be to seek inspiration through the interpretation of the Jewish Talmud, which some claim indicates that Eve was Adam’s second wife, as Lilith, his first wife, left because Adam denied her demands for equality. According to this legend, she would rather disappear into the night than accept being his subordinate (Baldock, 2018).

Some scriptural passages are at the first glance not addressing topics relevant to gender, one example being the book of Job, where the first woman who appears is called “foolish” (Job 2:10). Important to note here is that one should distinguish in the Bible between descriptive passages, where a situation or custom is described, and prescriptive parts, where a command of God is given. The description of the relation between Job and his wife is not presented as an ethical principle valid for all times. However, the relevance in this respect is that Job and his counterparts address topics relevant in many aspects, for example, the importance of personal experience to gain further religious insight, both the challenges with and the benefits of solidarity among the oppressed, including the link between our existence as humans and the creation (e.g., Job 5). In addition, Job’s own daughters are portrayed as women with more powers within the family than would be customary in ancient Israel (e.g., Job 1:13; 42:15). Job’s wife, however, is the most intriguing female, addressing her husband in a

way that may be seen as both provocative and radical: “Are you still maintaining your integrity? Curse God and die!” (Job 2:9). Her character is heavily debated, some arguing that she reflects concern when she chooses these harsh words, while others suggest that her words are meant to be sarcastic, thus meaning “bless God” and not “curse God” (Newsom, Ringe and Lapsley, 2012). However, this is interpreted, it is clear that between Job and his wife there seems to be a balance of power, where neither of them is presented as superior to the other. That Job considers his own problems to be an equal continuation of those of his wife is also clear from Job 31:9-10, where it is bluntly stated that “If my heart has been enticed by a woman, or if I have lurked at my neighbour’s door, then may my wife grind another man’s grain, and may other men sleep with her.”

Unity within diversity may summarise the overall gender balance expressed in Scripture, whereby man and woman are united through human nature, that is, body and soul, as well as intellect and will. As humankind is both female and male, no inherent rivalry nor competition between the sexes should exist. Equal dignity and respect are also reflected in Exodus 20:12, where we are instructed to “Honour your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.” This instruction is also reflected in Deuteronomy 5:16. No gender differences are further displayed in the Ten Commandments, as all are either gender neutral or encompass both options, hence both sexes play an equal role in the history of salvation. Dividing responsibilities does not imply a hierarchy of importance, and having various duties shared between the genders does not imply that one is superior to the other. Motherhood and fatherhood, for example, are seen as equal, and adultery is seen as sinful irrespective of whether the transgressing party is the husband or the wife (Exodus 20:14; Deut 5:18).

It is evident, then, that according to Scripture both genders are presented as equal to God under Creation, and that both genders are created in the image of God. Further, there are no scriptural passages that support a view that women and men are considered of different value to God, nor that they are assigned societal tasks differing in importance. On the contrary, it has been shown through scriptural sources that women occupy a full and equal place in the

Creation, and that there are no grounds found in the Bible for assigning difference in value based on gender.

I will now focus on biblical women and the roles they have played in the Bible and, foremost, in society.

5.4. Women in family and society

5.4.1. Family life

Even though Genesis may be read as demonstrating that women in general lack power within the public and political realms, it is clear even there that women hold considerable powers within the family. Many of the traits are easily recognised today: love for their spouse and children (e.g., 3:16), the fights with siblings (e.g., 4:9-10), and the attempt to establish the purpose of human existence (Gen 1:26-28). A common message throughout Genesis is the recognition of women as wives and mothers (e.g., Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel) whereby the essential task of creating and caring for life is fully identified with her, and to her position in society. Her lack of ability to fulfil her role is made visible through various characters who are introduced, for example, Dinah who was raped (Gen 32:2), Hagar who was abandoned (Gen 21:8-21), Tamar as the childless widow (Gen 38:1-11), and Leah whom no one loved (Gen 29:31). With this backdrop it comes across as clear that the (most likely) male authors of the Hebrew Bible identified the women as either virgins living in their fathers' house, or child-producing wives faithfully looking after their husbands and family (Newsom, Ringe and Lapsley, 2012).

A woman's position in the Hebrew Bible's societies is, as addressed above, often connected to her ability to have children. This is visible in the story of Hannah in Samuel 1-7, who was married to Elkanah but childless, as God had "closed her womb" (1 Sam 1:5). Elkanah's second wife, Penninnah, tormented Hannah, as she herself had several children, a treatment Hannah seems to accept, presumably as she herself saw this as a personal failure. Hannah asks God for a son and promises in return to give the son back to God to serve the Lord, thus reflecting that a male son would empower her in society. She gives

birth to both sons and daughters, also granting her a role as a prophetess, expressed in her prayer of thanksgiving (1 Sam 2:1-10).

As mentioned in Chapter 2, women's right to inherit has shifted throughout time. The five sisters, Mahlah, Noah, Milcah, Hoglah and Tirzah challenged this, when their father died without a male heir. They took the courage to address Moses, who again sought God's advice (Num 27:1-4). It may of course be questioned whether the story is kept to assure women of their rights, or whether its main purpose is to assure men that their names will live on (Newsom, Ringe and Lapsley, 2012). Nevertheless, this story would not have been preserved had it not been for the five courageous women challenging the status quo of the day.

Ruth is one of two women with a book named after her (the Book of Ruth) in the canonical Bible, and is one of the descendants of David (Matt 1:5). Ruth's story has captivated and to some extent challenged many throughout history, because of the strong female protagonist the story includes. Being a widow who originated in an enemy nation, Ruth had very few prospects for her life. Even so, God's guidance has made her story encouraging to many, as it reveals how trust in—and loyalty to—God and her family is rewarded, and serves as an example to be followed. At the start of the book, she lives in Moab, a city frowned upon by the Judeans (1:19). Her pain after losing her husband in a hostile environment must have been immense. However, she did not allow her own past to hold her back, thus demonstrating strong belief in the support from God. Faith in God supported her actions, her bravery and her obedience to God.

The Book of Ruth also presents Orpah, also a Moabite woman, who married the brother of Ruth's husband. Their husbands were Judeans, both sons of Elimelech and Naomi, who had escaped to Moab from the famine in Judah. Elimelech and both sons die, leaving their wives as widows in a challenging environment. After the men die, leaving all women widows, the mother-in-law, Naomi, urges Ruth and Orpah to go back to their families while she plans to return to Bethlehem. While Orpah follows her advice (Ruth 1:15), Ruth refuses, declaring:

Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me (Ruth 1:16–17).

Ruth follows Naomi to Bethlehem, where they meet a wealthy relative of Naomi, Boaz (Ruth 2:1-8), who lets them glean among the harvesters on his land (Ruth 2:8-9). The fact that Ruth is humble and satisfied with merely gleaning, even though the relative is wealthy, is an excellent showcase for female humility and endurance. Ruth is eventually rewarded for her thrift, humility and loyalty to kin, as at the end of the story she marries Boaz. Although the story may be somewhat romantic, it clearly depicts how Ruth as a strong woman was able to care for herself, and that she could do this despite being widowed and left in a position of societal weakness. However, by allowing herself the help of family, she may be seen as a token of devotion and loyalty, following her widowed mother-in-law after both of them had lost their husbands (Newsom, Ringe and Lapsley, 2012).

We first encounter Rebekah in the Bible as the daughter of Bethuel (Gen 22:20-24). As her birth is shared just before the death of Sarah is described (Gen 23:1-2), it becomes clear that Rebekah was to step into Sarah's role as the matriarch of the Israelites, by becoming the wife of Isaac, and we learn that "Isaac was comforted after his mother's death" (Gen 24:67). As it would appear, the continuation of Israel was dependant on Sarah's legacy being carried onwards by a new matriarch, Rebekah. The necessity of female leadership is here expressed in the union that is the marriage to Isaac, the new patriarch of the Israelites.

The role of the mother and her influence in family life in the Hebrew Bible is very visible in numerous examples. The importance of motherhood is expressed through examples of barren women (e.g., Gen 11:30; 25:21; 29:31; 30:22), and mothers who had strong influence on their children, especially their sons (e.g., Prov 1:8-9; Prov 10:1). From the New Testament, an example may be found in Second Timothy, where the author attributes Timothy's faith primarily to influences of his grandmother Lois in addition to his mother Eunice (2 Tim. 1:5).

This statement may reflect the social expectations from this time, and could indicate the total absence of a father figure in religious matters; it also points to women's ability to turn to God and pray without the support and guidance of their husbands (Newsom, Ringe and Lapsley, 2012). From the New Testament, another interesting aspect connected to women and their place in the organisation of society is found in Titus 2:3-5, where it appears that the educational influence is not only restricted to family members, as the passage refers to older women being instructed to teach young women, so as to urge them to love their husbands and children (2:4).

5.4.2. Tasks

In the era in which the Bible was authored, women had to master multiple tasks, one example being grinding grain and baking bread (Deut 24:6; Job 41:24; Prov 31:15; Matt 24:41, see Judg 9:53). In this era, the grinding was seen as the work of a woman, so that a man would see it as humiliation to do the grinding (Judg 16:21; Lam 5:13). Domestic tasks such as churning butter, preparing meals, and receiving guests were other tasks covered by the women (Gen 18:6; 2 Sam 13:8; John 12:2, Judg 4:18; 1 Sam 25:18; 2 Kings 4:8-10).

Not only were the physically light domestic tasks, such as we would expect today, assigned to women, but also the heavy and sometimes challenging, though important, tasks were added to her chores, like seeing to water for the whole household as well as guests and animals (Gen 24:11, 15-20; 1 Sam 9:11; John 4:7). Women were also responsible for providing clothing, from the spinning of the wool to the making of clothes for the whole family (Exod 35:26; 1 Samuel 2:19; Prov 31:19). Part of these tasks including adding income to the family's economic situation, for example, by weaving and needlework sold to third parties (Prov 31:14, 24). The women are also recognised as the sex engaged in charity work and caring for others (e.g., Acts 9:39).

Though nameless, women are reported to have contributed to the construction of the tabernacle, spinning yarn and linen (Exod 35:25-26) and ensuring that God could rest comfortably among his people (40:34-38).

Thus, it is clear that, in the family and extended household, the women in the Bible had a central role in managing nearly all aspects of the different tasks

needed for a family to function, and Scripture abounds with examples as to how women assured the physical foundation for society's most important social infrastructure then as now: the family. Related to the depiction of women's roles in the family in Scripture, it is worth noting that the societies that are portrayed are set in a pre-corporate state of the economy. In fact, the family in antiquity was a central location for economic activity, and the scope and size of the economic activity that took place within the family organisation, the household, could be substantial. The place of the household as the economic core location in society was maintained in antiquity also after the creation of the cities (polis), whilst the family household was run by both the husband (patriarch) and the wife (matrona), and in ancient Greek, the household was termed the *oikos*, which was concerned with *oikonomia*, in other words the economy of the household. In the household, both the husband and wife were considered as the aristocratic rulers of all the constituents and their activities (Milbank, 2017; Hylen, 2018). If we were to compare this to today's economic and political conditions, such a co-rule of the family household could be likened to the joint participation in the top management of an economic enterprise, as of a corporation, sometimes of a substantial magnitude. Suffice it to say, the women we encounter in scriptural family situations are far removed in relative power and influence as compared to that of their sisters in the twentieth and twenty-first century Western nuclear family structures. In the modern and postmodern Western world, the family and household have lost their standing in many respects, also as a place of economic importance for society. Thus, it would be doing the scriptural message a great disservice if we view the women of the Bible to be in such a weak position of influence in society as it would appear if we interpret their roles on the basis of the relatively low importance that has been assigned to family and household matters in the industrial and post-industrial era.

5.4.3. The matriarchs

Even though many of the women mentioned in Scripture are nameless, the first example being Cain's wife, who had the courage to marry a convict (Gen 4:17), and even though many of the named characters' stories are closely linked to the men around them, they are often portrayed as central characters in the narratives. Examples here could be Sarah, Rebekah, Hagar, Tamar, Rachel

and Leah, to mention but a few, who are all described as women with great powers and crucial assignments in their relationships with men. These Old Testament matriarchs have made their noticeable mark on history on multiple levels (Newsom, Ringe and Lapsley, 2012).

In Isaiah 51:1-2, we are reminded of the inherent equality between the sexes, setting the scene for some of the greatest matriarchs like Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel:

*“Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness
and who seek the Lord:
Look to the rock from which you were cut
and to the quarry from which you were hewn;
look to Abraham, your father,
and to Sarah, who gave you birth.”*

An interesting observation in this respect is that even though God promised the matriarchs sons with great nations (e.g., Gen 17:16), all three struggled to bear children and when they eventually did so, their children are recognised as acts of the divine, rather than results of human actions. The importance of the matriarchs does, however, diminish as soon as the nations are established (Baldock, 2018).

Sarah, who was married to Abraham, plays a visible role in events that may be seen as quite enigmatic, like giving birth at the age of 95 years after arranging that her husband had a child with her servant Hagar (Gen 17:16). She also reflects courage and independence, when she was eavesdropping during Abraham's talk to God and laughing at God's statement that she would become pregnant (Gen 16:12-15). Another notable part of this is the fact that Hagar was Sarah's property (Gen 16:1-6), implying that during these times women still had the ability to own and dispose of property (see Chapter 2).

Though somewhat confusing, the stories about Sarah reveal an energetic person with an activity level making her overshadow her husband (e.g., Gen 16:6), a somewhat surprising position within an apparently patriarchal environment. Some claim that her role needs to be viewed from a matriarchal angle, as would be common in Mesopotamia for women carrying the role of a

priestess. Women holding these positions did not only retain a highly privileged position within society but also vis-à-vis her husband (Teubal, 1984). Sarah can therefore be seen as a representative for an isolated nonpatriarchal system within a patriarchal environment, which may have been hard for Sarah to come to terms with. Some claim that when both sons of Sarah and Rebekah married women from their old country, these choices had partly to do with their quest to continue the old tradition against the overwhelming patriarchal Canaan (Teubal, 1984).

One last observation relevant to this dissertation with respect to Sarah is what may be seen as God's empowerment of Sarah when she chose Isaac and turned away Hagar and Ishmael (Gen 21:10). This action was accepted by God, who watched over Hagar and Ishmael (Gen 21:14-20). This may be seen as God letting Sarah decide, also drawing his conclusion from her decision, by caring for the two. Hagar, Sarah's maid and slave, turned on Sarah after she conceived, therefore also creating the situation between husband and wife, leading to Hagar and Ishmael's being forced to leave the household (Gen 16:4). Even though surrogate parenthood is controversial in our times, it was not uncommon in Abraham's and Sarah's birthplace, Mesopotamia, whereby ancient laws gave an infertile married woman the right to offer her maid to her husband, ensuring the continuation of the family name (Baldock, 2018).

Rebekah, the wife of Isaac and the mother of Jacob and Esau, is portrayed as a woman in full control over the men in her life, moving them around as puppets in a show (e.g., Gen 24:1-67; 25:19-28; 26:1-11). Her wisdom is easily recognised through her ability to listen and pull the needed strings to meet her goals, always working behind the scenes. Her power may not be the empowerment sought by women of today, as it lacks formal authority. However, she is portrayed with many of the traits associated with heroines, such as being smart, strong and self-confident, as well as superior to the men around her when it comes to wisdom and political dealings (e.g., Gen 27:5-14), thus displaying women's powers in a male-dominated world by applying playfulness, comedy and trickery (Newsom, Ringe and Lapsley, 2012).

Tamar (Gen 38:6-30) is portrayed as a smart woman taking on the role of a trickster after she had been deceived by her father-in-law following her wicked

husband's death (38:14). When she is forced to return to her own family, she is at the bottom of society, a widow without any children (38:11). Recognising her own challenges, she hides her own identity and takes on the role of a prostitute, thereby seducing her father-in-law (Gen 38:18) and forcing him to take care of her (Gen 38:25). Tamar bears two sons to Judah, and in the poetic imagery of their twin births we may see traces of Tamar's resourcefulness in Perez her son, who is not the firstborn according to the midwife, but who breaks out before his brother Zerah (38:29). Yet again the rule of primogeniture is not followed among the fathers of Israel, and as with Isaac, Jacob, and Judah, who were all not firstborn, the covenant is carried through Perez. Tamar's son Perez is one of the forefathers of Boaz, who married Ruth, thus both women are matriarchs with bloodlines leading to David, the greatest hero of Israel (Ruth 4:18).

The story of Rachel (Gen 29) is a captivating story of love conquering lies. Jacob fell in love with her and worked for her father for seven years before being allowed to marry her (29:18). During the marriage ceremony, Jacob was tricked by his father-in-law, as Rachel's less appealing older sister Leah was substituted for Rachel, and her father required Jacob to work for another seven years to earn his right to marry Rachel, but Rachel stood by Jacob even through her father's betrayal (29:27-29). Rachel is another of the great scriptural matriarchs who struggled to conceive children and believed, in line with local culture, that Jacob's love depended on her ability to bear children (29:31). She eventually gave birth to Joseph (30:22), who later saved Israel during famine, thus being one of the most important characters in the Hebrew Bible. Her second son, Benjamin, also turned out to be one of the twelve progenitors of Israel (35:16-18). Another interesting story related to Rachel and Leah is their loyalty to their husband and not to their father who effectively sold them. This may be the reason why Rachel, upon leaving the family household, stole goods from her father, and to avoid him discovering them, lied about her monthly condition (31:19, 31:35). One may ask if this is rebelling against a despiteful father or if this is reflecting Rachel's independent and strong character, or a combination of both. There is no doubt that Rachel displays a woman's power by acting as she does, also reducing her father's overt authority through her resourcefulness (Newsom, Ringe and Lapsley, 2012).

It has been made clear above that women in the Bible have been awarded important and essential roles in family and society. Scriptural exegetical argumentation lends no support to the exclusion of women from top-level leadership in other parts of society. On the contrary, it has been shown that women can manage the complexities of family and household, and through this, may be expected to partake in all levels of leadership, in any societal activity.

I will now move on to address some of the women recognised in the Bible through wars and other crises. It should be noted that many of these women not only demonstrate courage and other traits needed in crises, but also clearly demonstrate leadership in the purest form and at the highest level. I have nevertheless chosen to include them in this section as the circumstances forcing them to act are events categorised as crises and wars.

5.5. Women in crises and war

5.5.1. Introduction

Women have throughout time played an active role in times of crises and war, as mentioned in Chapter 2. The Hebrew Bible holds many stories of nameless women as victims of war, one example being women killed during holy war (1 Sam 15:3), or the killing of women alongside men in war or attack (1 Sam 15:33; 1 Sam 22:19). Disposing of witnesses to crime (1 Sam 27:9, 11) and women as captive hostages (1 Sam 30) are other examples.

Shiphrah and Puah, who colloquially are only known as the Hebrew midwives, were instructed by the Pharaoh to kill all Hebrew boys at birth, during the politically unstable situation affecting Egypt. By disobeying this order, the midwives exerted crucial leadership that allowed the population of Israel to grow while displaying both bravery and resistance in an effective though dangerous way (Exod 1:15-21). That the leadership and bravery was acknowledged favourably by God is reflected in that the midwives themselves were given “families of their own” (Exod 1:21) by God.

Courage, leadership and love during a critical situation is also demonstrated by the other women from Moses’ childhood, first his mother shielding him for three months before she let him sail down the river, demonstrating both immense love

for her son and faith in God (Exod 2:2-3), secondly his sister who followed him down the river to ensure his safe journey (2:4), and, thirdly the daughter of the Pharaoh, who found him, recognised that he most likely was the son of a Hebrew, disobeyed her father's orders, saved the child and unknowingly hired his birth mother to care for him in her household (2:8). All three displayed heroic actions and independent leadership, saving Moses in the middle of the great oppression, and thus securing the continuation of Israel.

Another interesting character is Rahab the Canaanite, who is referred to as a prostitute (Josh 2:2). However, she is seen by some as an innkeeper, while yet others see her as the prostitute with a heart of gold (Frymer-Kensky, 2004; Newsom, Ringe and Lapsley, 2012). Her faith in God makes her courageously ignore the king's order and hide the Hebrew spies as well as plotting their escape, while, with her own life at risk, distracting the pursuers (Josh 2:1, Josh 2:3, James 2:25). She is portrayed as a strong and brave woman compared to the spies, who promise to save her and her family's lives when they return in armour (Josh 6:17-25). Her smartness and proactive approach are easy to detect, and the reason for her actions is her prophetic recognition that God already had awarded the land to the Hebrews. Her speech to the spies offers the confidence they need together with the military strategy required to successfully conquer the Canaanites. Her belief in God saves her life (Heb 11:31), highlighting that her alliance with God and Israel acknowledge her as one of Israel's initial protectors. Rahab later marries Salmon from one of the leading families of Israel, thereby becoming a foremother to Jesus (Matt 1:5), something which may point to the universalistic nature of Christianity, for Rahab, as a gentile woman, is allowed into the most important genealogy of all.

Like most women in ancient cultures, Rizpah had few formal rights and very little power. Her courage, however, gave meaning to the execution of her two sons, thereby guiding the nation to handle the sin of their leader. Though her faith and story are deeply tragic, her response is memorable; she refused to bury her grief until her two sons were buried, publicly sharing her grief and openly forcing people to consider the cost of sin (2 Sam 21:8-14).

During war time, women and children were often captured by the conquerors. There are many examples of cruel and severe treatment of the captives, as

under the Assyrians (Isa 10:24; Nahum 3:10). A type of degradation mentioned is that of humiliating female prisoners by “lifting their skirts to see the shame of nakedness” (Nahum 3:5). The despair of captured women is recognised in ancient bas-reliefs displaying female prisoners tearing their hair, and otherwise visualising their agony (Newsom, Ringe and Lapsley, 2012). There is no doubt that women have suffered, shed their tears, and felt anguish and indignities through the centuries often from the brutality and actions of men.

5.5.2. Esther

A strong female protagonist who handles conflict and the political games of power is Esther. She is the second woman to be dedicated a book in the Hebrew Bible taking its name from the leading female Jewish heroine. She is portrayed as a remarkable woman of principle, willing to risk her life to save her people. Esther’s book was heavily debated during the early centuries of Christendom, which did not easily receive its canonical status, and the story of Esther could be challenging to interpret also today (Frymer-Kensky, 2004; Newsom, Ringe and Lapsley, 2012). There are several reasons for this. First, God is completely absent in the narrative, and second, no laws or covenants are mentioned, neither are there any signs of prayer. Irrespective of this, Esther’s book is seen by some as the most worldly in the whole Hebrew Bible (Newsom, Ringe and Lapsley, 2012).

One might argue that the book of Esther more resembles a novella of fiction than a divine book, lacking historical accuracy and written to be read and not recited to a congregation. The signs of religion are, however, not totally absent, one example being Esther calling for a fast before her confrontation with the king, thus referring to the Jewish practice (5:2).

Esther’s role as a heroine takes her via the harem of the king to become his queen. Through her Jewish guardian Mordecai, she is made aware of a plot to kill the king, and by reporting the plot she successfully saves the king’s life (2:22-23). During the next step of the story, Esther uses her political skills to save the Jews in the Persian Empire from a plot to annihilate them, by averting the deadly plot, ensuring the destruction of the enemies of the Jewish nation, and positioning Mordecai as the next in line to the king (10:3).

An intriguing part of Esther's book is the use of humour and irony to address both existing and absent power, in addition to the ethical challenges and the peril of genocide, as well as the sin of arrogance with subsequent consequences. For example, there is irony in the fact that the protagonist is a Jewish female orphan, presumably as low-ranked as any because of her gender, nationality and her lack of parents. As the story is read, Esther must be assumed to be a person completely lacking power within the Persian Empire. Nevertheless, she climbs to the very top, while the assumed powerful man attempting to kill her and her people ends up dead.

Esther is not the only strong female in the book. Her predecessor, Vashti, rebels against the king, when refusing to be called to display her beauty (1: 11). She demonstrates calmness and strength while the king and his crowd appear as clowns, eventually leading to Vashti losing her position—again, ironically achieving what she wanted, no longer having to perform in front of the king (1:12).

The story of Esther can also be found in the apocryphal Greek Book of Esther, where the storyline is similar to the Hebrew Bible's Book of Esther. There are, however, two very visible differences. First and foremost, the Greek version addresses God more than fifty times, while God is not mentioned at all in the Hebrew version. Second, a notable difference is that the Greek Esther holds six narrative sections, the so-called Additions, further amplifying the story and its message. Apart from these differences, Esther is still portrayed as a strong and courageous woman, who during the story is transformed from a submissive participant of the king's harem to a self-confident, powerful queen able to save her people from annihilation.

In the context here, it is clear that Esther is a female leader of her people, who is placed at the highest position of all of the Jews in exile, and that she uses her position of relative power to lead her people to safety, in a self-motivated manner, without drawing on any significant male character for her leadership in decision-making.

5.5.3. Judith

Judith is the fourth woman to have a biblical book named after her, though this book is in the Apocrypha. Among the judges of Israel mentioned, all identified as charismatic leaders, Judith is the only female. She is portrayed as a beautiful, rich and pious widow who takes on a leadership role when the male members of her community are ready to surrender their town, Bethulia, to the Assyrian king Nebuchadnezzar (Jud 8:11). Single handed, Judith then designs a plan to deceive and kill the enemy's general, Holofernes, who has terrorised Judea (8:32-34). Judith's plan involves pretending to be a spy against her own people, something that is believed by the Assyrians, and which leads her to the tent of Holofernes himself (10:20). Her plan is then to dupe Holofernes with her seductive powers, and, when he sets out to seduce what he sees as the helpless Judith, she is able to make him dead drunk, and in his drunken sleep, she beheads him (13:8). Subsequently, Judith brings the head of Holofernes back to the Judeans, and by showing the decapitated head to the townspeople she is lauded as the heroine she is, with the words "May God grant this to be a perpetual honour to you, and may he reward you with blessings, because you risked your own life when our nation was brought low, and you averted our ruin, walking in the straight path before our God" (13:20). When the Assyrians learn of the death of Holofernes, panic strikes them and the Israelites cut them down in great numbers, and thereafter regain their properties and possessions from the Assyrian capture (15:5-7). The story ends by Judith being hailed by all of her country, but she remains a widow in honour of her husband, despite many wanting to marry her (16:21-22).

Judith's story resembles a much shorter narrative found in the canonical Scriptures, in Judges 4 and 5, where the Kenite woman Jael kills the fleeing enemy general Sisera whilst hiding him in her tent. Jael kills Sisera with a tent peg she hammers through his temple while he believes he is safe in her tent, where she has lured him to fall asleep under a cover (4:21). The narrative is mentioned both in Judges 4 as a story, and in Judges 5 as part of Deborah's song (24-27), something that lends significant importance to the story, and which gives the more detailed story in Judith stronger interpretative relevance,

despite its apocryphal position. The story of Jael will be further elaborated below in section 5.8, in connection to women in other leadership positions.

Judith's story also bears a strong resemblance to that of Esther, as she acts when men cannot. To protect her people, she demonstrates courage and to some extent one may say that she embodies the tensions of ancient Jewish life, reflected both at the personal and national level. With respect to the latter, her story includes God's test of people, God's response to prayer and sacrifice, and God's response to people of faith, albeit with Judith as the facilitating actor. The stories of Judith and Esther thus bear strong resemblance to each other as female protagonists in a man's world. Both chose extraordinary methods in times of crisis, lifting them out of the rigid patriarchal environment of their times that guided the relationships between males and females (Newsom, Ringe and Lapsley, 2012).

An interesting aspect of the story of Judith is that men play the key roles in the early chapters and Judith first appears in the eighth chapter. When the frightened Jews prepare for Holofernes' invasion, the vulnerability of women and children during the war is envisioned (e.g., 4:12; 7:22; 7:32), as the outcome, if conquered by Holofernes, most likely would be capture, rape and killing of the women by the conquerors. This backdrop makes Judith's actions even more radical when we appreciate that she lives the life of a wealthy widow bathing in water while children and women are fainting in the streets because of thirst. Nevertheless, she takes on the unselfish leadership task to save her people, speaking to the elders with authority, claiming power and wisdom, being truly upset that her fellow Jews do not trust that God will save them. Through the use of her wits and cunning Judith is able to act as the saviour of Israel from the ruthless invader. To many, Judith is seen as a role model for women of today, displaying beauty, wisdom and control over her own life and destiny (Newsom, Ringe and Lapsley, 2012). The reference to judges being charismatic leaders is also quite interesting in modern leadership theory, further to be addressed in Chapter 6, where charisma is one of the traits recognised as important within the theories on transformational leadership style (Frymer-Kensky, 2004).

What is particularly noteworthy in the stories about Esther, Judith and Jael is that to reach their goals they not only utilise political cunning, which at times may be a quality attributed to women, but also that they display acts of extreme violence (Jael and Judith), which typically would be connected to men, and seen as an archetypical male trait. Furthermore, in Jael's case, her killing of Sisera was not even necessary in the plot, as Sisera's army had already fled, and, even more, as a Kenite, it would not be expected of her to step up and save Israel. Thus, all three women mentioned here are given roles that in no way can be seen as subsidiary to those of men, neither in importance nor in execution, as the narratives clearly show women able to act independently of their male societal counterparts in all stages of the stories as they unfold, as well as being capable of performing acts of crucial importance to the continuation of Israel. The three stories eloquently portray women as equally important as men in securing the Covenant.

It is evident from the above discussion that women in the Bible have been given pivotal and critical roles in society in times of crises and war. Scriptural exegetical argumentation lends no support to the exclusion of women from this part of societal life or from top-level leadership in other parts of society. On the contrary, it has been shown that women can manage the strenuous horrors of war and crisis, and through this, may be expected to partake in all levels of leadership, in any societal activity.

I will now move on the women in the early Church, especially the roles they play in the New Testament.

5.6. Women in the New Testament and early church

5.6.1. Introduction

With Jesus, a new era for womanhood arose. Not only was he born from a woman, his followers included numerous women. Through Jesus' teachings in the New Testament, women's roles are further enhanced, as Jesus recognised the importance of women, as shown by his inclusion of women in his teachings and in women's devotion to him (Matt 5:27-32; Luke 10:38, 42). Jesus' high opinion and respect for women is visible in the way women were added to his

group of followers, and Jesus' interplay with women is an essential part of any theological debate addressing Christianity and women. Women are very visible in Jesus' life: being born of a woman, meeting women at all stages of his life, and also having a woman being the first he encounters after his resurrection (Mark 16:9; John 20:14). He further commissioned women to share the story of his resurrection with the disciples, probably one of the most important messages of Christianity (John 20:17). All these events will be addressed in further detail below.

The essential part of the role women played in Jesus' life and teachings is the mere fact that they are included in most stories. The gospels share a consistent story to include women as part of Jesus' followers, and his commitment to include them in his teachings could be seen as breaking with tradition in the Judaism of his time. His teachings did not include explicit words delineating women as a separate class, hence they support the interpretation that every female should be viewed as an equal person in her own right. It is easy to argue from all three Synoptic Gospels that Jesus does not accept a hierarchy in Christian relationships, something which by pure logic would also be applicable to gender: "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you" Mark 10:42 (par: Matt 20:26-26; Luke 22:25).

The stories of Jesus and his position with respect to women clearly indicate the prominent role women play in the early Church. Among the first followers, women were included (e.g., Acts 16:13-15), the apostles showed high respect to the women, praising them as part of the Church (e.g., 1 Timothy 3:11; Titus 2:3-5; 1 Peter 3:1-6), and women also held official positions influencing the Church spiritually (Romans 16:1).

5.6.2. Mary, mother of Christ

Mary of Nazareth is the most iconic female in the Bible and in Christianity, appearing in countless texts, and as a multifaceted, complex character embodying contradictions, she may be hard to capture, by being both recognised as virgin and the mother of Jesus, enduring confusion, fear and

darkness as her life unfolded. Ironically, despite her central role in Christianity, her role in the New Testament is relatively minor.

Mary's scriptural story starts when giving her unqualified acceptance to God's plan for her life, including both personal risk, public disgrace (Matt 1:19; Luke 1:26-38) and unavoidable suffering (John 19:25).

Paul does not refer to Mary by name, but simply states that Jesus was "born of a woman" (Gal 4:4). The authors of the Gospels are the only ones addressing her in more detail, but only sparsely so. We meet Mary briefly in Mark 3:31-35 and she resurfaces in 6:3 together with others of Jesus' family members. Similar brief meetings are shared by Matthew and Luke (e.g., Matt 12:46-50; Luke 8:19-21). None of the encounters introduces us to the person Mary; in other words, she is portrayed only via her role as the mother of Jesus, until Mary's song in Luke gives us some information about her point of view (Luke 1:44-55).

Although she may be scarcely described in Scripture, Mary has been assigned the most important role of all in raising and educating Jesus, and it is here of importance to note that from a perspective of ontological Christology, we do not know whether Jesus himself even knew that he was God, or of his part in the Trinity (Sanders, 1995). As Christ in Trinity is fully human, the worldly tasks of Mary in being his mother, also fully human, cannot be overstated (O'Collins, 2009). By accepting his full humanity—as, for example, when he snaps at her at the wedding of Canaan (John 2:4)—we realise that Mary's tasks in giving birth and raising Jesus is a crucially necessary chore, and Mary accepted this great challenge with grace (Luke 1:38). From this it may be inferred that the most important "senior" leadership role which is described anywhere in Scripture will have been awarded to a female actor, Mary. For the purposes of this dissertation, the above will suffice in describing the leadership tasks connected to Mary, although her loyalty to Jesus is unsurpassed in Scripture, as she was there to give birth to him (Luke 2:7), and was present by the cross in his last hours (John 19:25).

I will now move on to another important Mary in Jesus' life, Mary Magdalene.

5.6.3. Mary Magdalene

Another very important women in the life of Jesus is Mary Magdalene. Numerous females bearing the name Mary are met in the Gospels (e.g., John 11:1) but there is only one Magdalene, and when she appears together with other females, she is always singled out or we find her name mentioned first (e.g., Matt 27:56; Luke 24:10), clearly indicating the significant role she plays in the Gospels. She is especially visible during Jesus' crucifixion, his burial and his resurrection. During the crucifixion, Mary Magdalene is present together with other women, according to both Mark and Matthew (Mark 15:40-41; Matt 27:55-56). Her presence during the crucifixion and burial is also implied by Luke (Luke 23:49, 55-56), who also recognises her as one of Jesus' followers together with the twelve disciples (Luke 8:1-3).

According to the synoptic gospels, Mary Magdalene is the one who discovers the empty tomb, together with other women, and they are instructed to share the joyful news (Mark 16:1-8; Matt 28:1-10; cf. Luke 24:1-12). An interesting deviation from these stories is found in John, who singles her out not only as a witness to the crucifixion (John 19:25), but also names her as the first person Jesus reveals himself to after the resurrection (John 20:11-18). Through this she is also empowered to be among those to share this important news with his followers (Luke 24:10), indicating not only her central position but also that it is natural and acceptable to have a woman share vital soteriological information like this. This is also emphasised in Mark 16:9, stating that Jesus showed himself to Mary before others, even his closest disciples Peter and John. She is also the one sharing the greatest and most important news in Christian theology, that Jesus had risen from death, whereby she is sent by God to share this joyful message to the apostles (John 20:17).

The role Mary Magdalene plays in Christianity is also made visible in later non-canonical texts, two of the most significant sources being the fragmented gospel in her name, *The Gospel of Mary*, and *The Gospel of Philip*. Both texts are heavily debated, as the content suggests sexual relationship and also marriage between her and Jesus and neither is accepted as canonical among the major churches. In these texts, she is called Jesus' companion and Jesus is said to have loved her and kissed her (*Gospel of Philip* 59:6-11; 63:30 - 64:9). Many

will correctly argue that these statements do not prove that she was his wife or that her relationship with Jesus was of a sexual character, but they indicate the importance attributed to Mary Magdalene, and the acceptance of female leadership and role models in the early centuries of Christianity (Newsom, Ringe and Lapsley, 2012).

5.6.4. Women as leaders of the early churches

According to the New Testament, women played significant roles as leaders of the early churches. One example is Nympha, who is named as an independent leader of a church in her house (Col. 4:15). Similar stories mention the house of Mary (Acts 12:12-17) and the house of Lydia (Acts 16:14-15, 40). Priscilla is one of the most influential women in Paul's letters, as she led a house church together with her husband (1 Cor 16:19 and Rom 16:3-5). These house churches are believed to have combined an arena for worship and meetings among the members of the early church, with dwellings for the inhabitants. Priscilla's ministerial and leadership skills are believed to have contributed to the foundation for congregations to grow and prosper in her house churches in different locations (Frymer-Kensky, 2004).

Lydia is also associated with leadership of house churches, combining worship with trade of purple cloth (Acts 16:11-15, 40). Her story is interesting from several aspects; it is clear that she, even though a woman, owns real property, is involved in trade, and combines this with hosting church meetings. In Romans 16:6 we also learn about Mary, who is commended for having "worked very hard for you".

It may be argued that the female spiritual leaders with titles like apostle or deacon were real leaders, their titles being much more than honorary titles (e.g., Rom. 16:7; Rom. 16:1). Similarly, these females received their titles because of their own capabilities and skills, not through marriage or by way of any other male derivation. As there is no evidence to the contrary, it is easy to argue that the females with these roles were equal to their male peers (Frymer-Kensky, 2004; Newsom, Ringe and Lapsley, 2012; Hylén, 2018). Even though women have not always been invited into the formal realms of leadership roles within

the church, they have been instrumental when it comes to providing services to the communities of faith.

In the early centuries, the importance of gender equality in missionary activities and pastoral tasks was recognised on the basis of Scripture. In 1 Corinthians 11:5 it is reflected in the statement that women may pray or prophesy, and equality is addressed in 1 Timothy 3:1, whereby “the women are to be worthy of respect”, a statement that may indicate that the early churches had female deacons. We find further expressions of gender equality among the early Christian congregations in Galatians 3:28, where we learn that there is no “male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus”, and this passage should be emphasised because it is the theological *locus classicus* of all the new relations in Christ under the New Covenant. In 1 Corinthians 11:11-12 we read, “Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman”. Among the early Christians, women became more and more visible not only within the spiritual realm, but even with respect to ecclesiastical matters, as Christian ministry was considered and practiced as an activity for both genders, and this was demonstrated through the significant part women played in pastoral and missionary life (Heitink, 1999).

Despite the clear instruction of equality given in Galatians 3:28, the patriarchal church has used verses like 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12 as foundation for both the cultural and ecclesial oppression of women, while Christian feminism has maintained Galatians 3:28 as support for an overriding principle of equality. The seemingly contradictory messages in these Pauline texts should be interpreted in their historical context, and as Paul may have perceived a need to ensure peace and order within the Corinth congregation, he instructed the female part of the congregation to stop gossiping and activity that may have contributed to the disturbances within this early Church. The instruction of Galatians 3:28 is the general and universal one, which may also be interpreted as a support to abolish slavery (Betz, 1979). Interpretation of texts such as 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12 separately as pure theological norms or ideas with general and universal value is too narrow. My stand is that in a responsible interpretation, these specific Pauline texts should

be seen as responses to faith communities within concrete historical circumstances of oppression during the early Christian era of the Roman empire (Fiorenza, 2013).

It has been shown above that women mentioned in the New Testament have been given roles of seminal and utmost importance in the life of Jesus and in subsequent church formation and missionary activity. Scriptural exegetical argumentation lends no support to the exclusion of women from this part of societal life or from top-level leadership in other parts of society. On the contrary, it has been shown that women are given the most important tasks in the life of Jesus and in church organisation, and through this, may be expected to partake in all levels of leadership, in any societal activity.

I will now address the roles women have played in the Bible through learning, apprenticeship and teaching, also discussing more of Jesus' female followers and the roles they have played.

5.7. Women in learning, apprenticeship and teaching

5.7.1. Women of wisdom

"Wisdom literature" includes the books of Proverbs, Job, Psalms, Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes, in addition to the apocryphal Book of Sirach and the Wisdom of Solomon, and is named so because of the focus of these books on the basic human qualities and our connection to the divine (Coogan *et al.*, 2010; Frymer-Kensky, 2004; Newsom, Ringe and Lapsley, 2012). What is of particular interest in this dissertation is found in the Proverbs and the Wisdom of Solomon, where the concept of wisdom is presented through personification as a woman, here referred to as Woman Wisdom. The depiction of wisdom personified as a woman, "Woman Wisdom", was used by wisdom teachers such as the authors of Proverbs as a didactic tool to facilitate the teaching of all manner of wisdom to their mostly young male pupils (Erickson, n.p.).

Even though Woman Wisdom is not a woman like Ruth or Esther, but rather a female personification of wisdom, there are phrases that convey her closeness to God. One example is Proverbs 8:22-31, where Woman Wisdom states that she was present during God's creation of the world. Woman Wisdom also

addresses her own origin and birth somewhat enigmatically by stating: “I was formed long ages ago, at the very beginning, when the world came to be” (Prov 8:23) and “When there were no watery depths, I was given birth, when there were no springs overflowing with water, before the mountains were settled in place, before the hills, I was given birth (Prov 8:24, 25). Even though not directly addressed, she alludes to the fact that God was directly involved in her creation, emphasising that “The Lord brought me forth as the first of his works, before his deeds of old” (Prov 8:22). Here we are presented with a cosmology which places the female in a seminal position. Wisdom, then, as a concept, is seen as a feminine entity, addressing how we speak, think, act and live, hence, capturing the ability to make wise judgement (Frymer-Kensky, 2004).

Female wisdom characteristics are found in both the Hebrew Bible and the Apocrypha (e.g., Prov 1, 4, 8, 9; Job 28; Sir 24; Bar 3-4). Associated with God, she offers counsel and teaches righteousness, and humans are urged to seek her. Though abstract, there is no doubt that in the deuterocanonical Wisdom of Solomon she is female, the “fashioner of all things”, holding a “spirit that is intelligent, holy, unique, manifold” (7:22), “a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty” (7:25). Woman Wisdom is explained as “mother” of all that is good (7:12) and the “bride” (8:2). Wisdom as a concept is personified as a woman in the second part of the Wisdom of Solomon (Wisd 6:12-10:14), where the fictitious “I person” of King Solomon states about the female concept of wisdom that he “will trace her course from the beginning of creation, and make knowledge of her clear” (Wisd 6:22).

God as the source and guide of Woman Wisdom is stated numerous times (e.g., Wisd 7:7, 15, 25; 8:21; 9:4, 10, 17). The link between God and Woman Wisdom can best be described as a symbiosis evident as both are sought by people (Wisd 1:1-2; 6:12-16), and made available to those seeking sincerely, thus embedded in creation (Wisd 1:14; 7:22; 8:6; 9:2, 9; 11:17), granting immortality (Wisd 5:15-16; 6:18 8:13), while offering protection and rescue (Wisd 4:15; 9:18-10:21; 11:1-19:22). The author of the Wisdom of Solomon is not known, but the reigning theory is that it was authored by an exiled Jew living in Alexandria maybe as early as the first century BC. The purpose of the text would have been to strengthen the religious resolve of the Jews of the

Diaspora, and to withstand the Hellenistic anti-Jewish polemic of the time, as well to as stave off the temptations of Greek cultural practice, which was appealing for the Diaspora Jewish population (Purdue, 1994; Coogan *et al.*, 2010). Although this book was not included in the reformed canon, it was meant to bolster correct practice according to the Hebrew Bible and its laws, and the statements contained in the Wisdom of Solomon would lend valuable interpretative inputs when extrapolating how women are to be viewed in the canonical Old Testament texts.

Although not included in the Wisdom Literature as defined above, there are also passages in Scripture where women are attributed superior levels of wisdom. An example may be found in the “wise woman” of Abel (2 Sam 20:15-20), one of the nameless women in the Bible. The fact that she remains nameless could mean that she was far from the only wise woman in Israel. Through well-founded words and wisdom, she is able to talk the enemy out of a battle. Instead of passively trusting that someone may save the city, she has the courage and wisdom to act when the opportunity arises. She sees herself as the peacemaker, solving discussions, guiding decisions and answering questions. The story reveals that she was greatly respected as a wise woman, even by political powers, whereby people sought her guidance and advice when complexity and danger stopped the local authorities from making their decisions. Interestingly, she is not called a prophet, hence her ruling would be based on her political and judicial powers in contrast to divine revelations (Frymer-Kensky, 2004).

5.7.2. Female prophets

Huldah is one of the four female prophets mentioned in the Hebrew Bible with a formal role. The others are Miriam, Deborah and Isaiah’s wife. Through her formal role, she was trusted by the king with serious matters, one of her prophecies ignited significant religious changes (2 Kings 22:14-20; 2 Chronicles 34:22-33).

A further significant prophet is Anna, who was a prophetess and one of the first to foresee Jesus’ divine greatness, hence easily seen as one of the most significant prophetesses in the whole Bible. After being widowed following a

short marriage, Anna had abandoned herself fully to God, fasting and praying in the temple. As a woman she was not granted access to the most holy place, but was spending her time in the women's court (Baldock, 2018). Anna's prophecy took place when Mary and Joseph visited this part of the temple with infant Jesus, to fulfil ancient law whereby the first-born son should be dedicated to God (Luke 2:22). When seeing the infant Jesus, Anna felt God's presence and "gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem" (Luke 2:38). This event not only transforms the women's court into the holiest part of the temple, but also reveals gender equality, as God chose to share the news with a woman (Baldock, 2018).

5.7.3. Pupils of Jesus

In addition to Mary the mother of Christ and Mary Magdalene, several women followed Jesus, one being Mary of Bethany (Matt 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; Luke 10:38-42; John 11:1-12:3). She is portrayed as an unmarried woman, fully devoted to following Jesus. Though she was a woman of few words, her prophetic gesture anointing his head with expensive perfume, reflecting his coming burial, close to Jesus' triumphal return to Jerusalem, offended Judas, who later came to betray Jesus (John 12:4-7). Her sister Martha also followed Jesus, being more active and pragmatic than Mary. Though her worries and concern for the smallest things was addressed by Jesus, she faithfully followed him as a friend and apprentice (Luke 10:38; John 11:1-12:3). The brother of Martha and Mary, Lazarus, was also a follower. An interesting observation is that whereas the sisters are active and vocal, there are no dialogues between Jesus and Lazarus, even though Jesus raised him from the dead (John 11:43).

Another female follower of Jesus was Joanna, who experienced how Jesus healed her, and chose to abandon her high-ranking role with Herod's court to support Jesus' ministry and join his flock of followers (Luke 8:1-3; 24:10). Salome joined Jesus after her two sons had left their father and his fishery. She chose to leave behind her comfortable home to follow Jesus, who she truly believed to be the Messiah (Matt 20:20-24; 37:56; Mark 15:40-41; 16:1-2). Though with different histories and backgrounds, all these women who followed Jesus not only shared love for Christ, but can also be seen as in his spiritual apprenticeship, laying the foundation for the first ministries.

All of the Gospels report that the majority of those disciples who were present and gave their support when Jesus was crucified and died were women; as for the male disciples, already at his arrest “everyone deserted him and fled” (Mark 14:50). Furthermore, as predicted by Jesus, Peter expressly denounced him even the same night, as when asked about his connection to Jesus, he angrily swore to them, “I don’t know this man you’re talking about” (Mark 14:71). All four Gospels also attest that women, like Mary Magdalene, were the first to discover his empty tomb and thus the first to share the news of his resurrection (e.g., John 20:18; Mark 16:4). Another noteworthy event is the presence of “the women” (Acts 1:14) when the Holy Spirit appeared upon the twelve apostles during Jewish Pentecost, indicating the same level of equality as the men.

Like the women of history addressed in Chapter 2, the women of the Bible demonstrate that gender does not determine the chosen path, any more than colour of hair, height or weight. It is clear from the above discussion that women in the Bible have been awarded seminal and crucial roles in education, learning, apprenticeship, and teaching. Scriptural exegetical argumentation lends no support to the exclusion of women from this part of societal life or from top-level leadership in other parts of society. On the contrary, it is evident that women may carry their full weight on all levels of leadership in this part of societal activity.

With the above, it is now natural to move on to the women recognised in the Bible as leaders, both formal and informal.

5.8. Women in other leadership positions

Throughout the Bible (both Old and New Testaments) men tend to have the public positions of formal power. This is visible, for example, in the Books of Samuel, whereby the Israelite society is described as centralised and hierarchical, run by men for men. This is not so visible in the book of Judges, where charismatic leadership demonstrated through Deborah and Jael is suited to a more decentralised society (Judg 4-5).

Some may argue that women’s first step of leadership is recognised in the Fall (Gen 2:17), whereby Eve is described as the protagonist, demonstrating curiosity, hunger for knowledge and willingness to test limits, traits that are

human and often recognised in heroes and heroines in many cultures (Newsom, Ringe and Lapsley, 2012). One may also say that she ate the fruit out of hunger for wisdom, as the serpent had stated that eating the fruit would open her eyes to good and evil. Wisdom is a trait often favourably associated with leadership (Baldock, 2018).

Another interesting character is Zipporah, Moses' wife, who in fact is the third woman to save the life of Moses, by performing a ritual (Exod 4:24-26) not normally associated with women, thus indicating that she may have held a leadership position within the priesthood, even though the book of Exodus claims that these roles are reserved for males (Exod 28-29).

Miriam, believed to be Moses' sister, demonstrates both courage and loyalty when she guards her brother sailing down the river (Exod 2:4-8). She is further portrayed as a prophet, leading the women with her dance and playing on the tambourine (Exod 15:20-21), being one of the very few women in the Hebrew Bible recognised as a prophet, even named by the Talmud as one of the seven significant women Israelite prophets (Newsom, Ringe and Lapsley, 2012). Miriam's leadership is further hinted at in her and Aaron's dispute with Moses (Exod 12:1-2), resulting in Miriam being punished by God (Num 12:10). After this event she disappears, only to be heard of again when she dies (Num 20:1). Fragmented non-canonical manuscripts suggest that Miriam played an important role in worshipping, pointing to the possibility of hymns that we no longer have access to, celebrating women (Newsom, Ringe and Lapsley, 2012).

The parallel in the roles of Miriam and Mary are obvious, as both are pointing to the redemption through the activities and lives of Moses and Jesus, the latter who also may be described as a new Moses, and both in praising God for his mighty deeds through their songs (Exod 15:21, Luke 1:46-55).

A story of two powerful women is further found in Judges 4-5, where the prophet and judge Deborah is portrayed together with Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite. While Deborah commanded troops to war, Jael ended the suffering in a somewhat brutal manner, as described above (Frymer-Kensky, 2004).

Deborah is portrayed as an outstanding leader within Israel (Judg 4:4), not only advising the military leader Barak but in fact leading the troops, in addition to

being recognised publicly for her success in her guidance of armies of warriors (Judg 4:6). Barak, her general, seeks to trust in God when going to battle but simultaneously insists that Deborah joins him in the battle (4:8). The story states that Deborah “was leading” Israel (Judg 4:4), which traditionally has been translated as “judging,” a phrase used when referring to the charismatic leaders with political powers recognised in Israel prior to the introduction of monarchy. These leaders normally gained their powers and were bestowed these positions after saving Israel in battle. It is uncertain whether this is how Deborah got her political powers and public recognition. Her leadership and role in public life starts before the narrative where her story is captured, hence her true road to leadership is not recorded and therefore part of her life is somewhat mysterious. Included in her powers is her ability to foresee the future by reading the stars and their alignment to guide Israel into winning battles, an ability making her one of the few prophet women (Frymer-Kensky, 2004; Newsom, Ringe and Lapsley, 2012).

The story of Jael, who kills the enemy, offers few explanations of her brutal actions, hence leaving room for moral ambiguity (Jud. 4:18-21). At first Jael comes across as any other woman, being at home, far from the battlefield. Sisera, the commander of Israel's enemy army, is welcomed by her into her home (tent) to hide, as his soldiers have fled the battle in panic; she lures him to lie down to sleep under a cover inside her tent. Jael sneaks up on him and kills him during his sleep by hammering a tent peg into his temple, all by her own planning and design. Jael is depicted as a heroine in the story, blessed by women and praised by Deborah (Judg 5:24-27). Though her actions are condemned by some, for example the feminist Elizabeth Cady Stanton (see Chapter 2), the scriptural narrative does not advise punishment for her actions, but rather depicts her as a self-motivated heroine who afforded Sisera a gruesome and deserved fate. The Talmud uses the case of Jael to argue good intentions as righteous, hence praising her as one of the matriarchs of Israel (Newsom, Ringe and Lapsley, 2012).

The story of Jael bears strong resemblance to the story of Judith, both killing the enemy generals. There are, however, some interesting differences: while Judith's physical appearance is her weapon that ultimately saves Israel, Jael's

appearance is not a subject, nor is Sisera reported to seek anything but her help.

Both Deborah and Jael's positions as leaders in the religious and political sphere have been debated heavily throughout time. While some have tried to diminish their actions, others, like Elisabeth Candy Stanton (also mentioned in Chapter 2), have praised their heroic actions, arguing the need to see the inspiration this brings to women in general. In any case, Judges 4-5 offers the stories of two powerful, forceful female protagonists exerting leadership at crucial times, and these are hard to brush aside (Newsom, Ringe and Lapsley, 2012).

The Queen of Sheba is an example of a female leader with a more formal appointment. She demonstrates wisdom above power, as she is portrayed as a woman with a good head, which she used within both business and political life (1 Kings 10:1.13; Matthew 12:42). To some extent one may say that her knowledge was so great as even to include knowing what she did not know. Her travels, despite danger, to broaden her wisdom is therefore relevant, making her story not only a story of her own intelligence but also a story of independence in a time when women might not have been granted the same freedom as men.

Not all the female leaders in the Bible are remembered for their good deeds. Athaliah (2 Kings 11 and 1 Chronicles 22–23) was blinded by ambition, treating other humans with lack of respect while totally lacking loyalty to family and her own faith. She is portrayed as a woman corrupted by power, demonstrating both evil deeds and manipulation of others, thus far from a role model for any leader, irrespective of gender. That the character of Athaliah is pictured in this very human way could indicate that woman did have real powers, and that they were not only to be lifted up in certain select scriptural narratives as beautiful, pious and heroic. With such a human depiction of Athaliah, I would argue this to be a sign of real gender equality as valid scriptural ethos, also when power positions are assessed.

Women's participation in high level leadership in the Bible is closely linked to choices and risk. Recent sources advocate that the appointment of female

Christian deacons was as real as the appointment of males (MacCulloch, 2010). The women did not get these titles merely because they were married to male leaders; on the contrary, they are believed to have deserved these appointments. Linked to this are also clear indications that women in the early Christian era enjoyed personal flexibility and social freedom. Being part of the early churches did, however, often involve a personal choice. As an example, Paul addresses the “virgins” in 1 Corinthians 7 indicating that the women are holy in spirit and body (1 Cor 7:34). An important aspect of this is that the concept of purity and the link to divinity is not invented by the early Christians, as the Roman world already had embraced this within their view on society (MacCulloch, 2010).

The above discussion demonstrates women’s participation in leadership roles as described in the Bible. It is evident that women in the Bible have been awarded important and crucial roles related to many, if not all societal realms. Scriptural exegetical argumentation lends no support to the exclusion of women from any part of societal life or from top-level leadership in other parts of society. On the contrary, it has been shown that women carry their full weight, in all levels of leadership, in all parts of societal activity.

Being paid wages for work and being fairly compensated is the next topic to address.

5.9. Principle of fair wages

Whereas work as a concept is already mentioned in Genesis 2:15, the concept of wages and especially fair wages is patchily addressed in various parts of the Bible. In this section I will seek to address this concept from a gender equality perspective.

According to the Fair Wage Network (FWN, 2018) the modern concept of fair wages refers to:

Wage levels and wage-fixing mechanisms that provide a living wage floor for workers, while complying with national wage regulations (such as the minimum wage, payment of wages, overtime payments, provision of paid holidays and social insurance payments), ensure proper wage

adjustments and lead to balanced wage developments in the company (with regard to wage disparity, skills, individual and collective performance and adequate internal communication and collective bargaining on wage issues).

In this dissertation, the scriptural view on the above is relevant, adding on the concept of equal pay for equal work, hence not accepting different payments based on gender or other factors.

Wages is mentioned as a concept already in Genesis. In the heated discussion between Laban and Jacob, Jacob states: "It was like this for the twenty years I was in your household. I worked for you fourteen years for your two daughters and six years for your flocks, and you changed my wages ten times" (Gen 31:41).

According to Romans 4:4, "Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation." This statement clearly indicates that any worker has the right to be paid. This is further included in Leviticus 19:13, "Do not defraud or rob your neighbour. Do not hold back the wages of a hired worker overnight." Holding back wages may be interpreted as equal to robbery, in other words, an act of crime, thus also referring to the worker's right to demand payment. In 1 Timothy 5:18 we learn that "the worker deserves his wages", which cannot be said any clearer, and in Jeremiah 22:13 we learn that it represents an act of "unrighteousness" to be making "people work for nothing, not paying them for their labour". Finally, in Malachi 3:5 we are informed that God will put on trial "those who defraud labourers of their wages". Noticeably the wording in the above passages is gender-neutral throughout, hence no indications that there are differences between the sexes may be detected in Scripture.

The above quotes do not create any uncertainty when it comes to the firmly expressed gender neutrality of scriptural payment norms, but to make it clear that men and women may hold similar positions, on the same level as colleagues, Philippians 4:3 clearly states that women may be co-workers: "Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have

contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.”

The biblical position should be clear, then, that both genders are to receive the same pay for the same work, as gender balance with respect to roles and responsibilities goes hand in hand with equal pay and fair compensation irrespective of gender.

It is evident that women in the Bible have been seen as equal to men when in professional situations, with no societal realms being excluded, and that scriptural exegetical argumentation does not exclude women from equal pay with men. On the contrary, it has been shown that women are to be fairly and equally remunerated for their work, just as are men.

5.10. Promise of change / liberation perspective

A historical perspective is central when dealing with the core tenets of Christian theology, not only via the New Testament, but also through the developments over time. An important aspect in this respect is the fact that Jesus himself, as an Aramaic-speaking Jewish inhabitant in the provinces of the Roman Empire, belonged to a suppressed group in society, and this could play a role in scriptural interpretation when addressing societies of today, including social structures based on gender aspects and other forms of social division found in our Western societies (Bottero, 2005).

A core message within Christianity is identified in the nativity narratives, referring to how Jesus is located in the historical time and place in which Rome is growing its powers in the era of the emergent Principate, when the Roman Republic has fallen (Bowersock, 1993). Luke 2:1 shares with us how Emperor Augustus (Octavian) called a census, and how he, as the first Roman emperor, bolstered the political changes that had led to the fall of the Roman Republic. His need to list all his subjects may be seen as natural in this environment, maybe to assess the potential of taxing his subjects, or to identify subjects for forced labour or military duty. At this time in history Jesus makes his entry as “King of the Jews” (Matt 2:2). With this historical backdrop including significant political movements, major changes take place, with two rulers head to head: one secular emperor in his safe environment in Rome, and the new King in an

unsafe environment in Bethlehem of Judea (Luke 2:12). If mirrored to our modern time, the powerful imagery of political powers being challenged by what at first glance appears to be a minor growing force from the midst of the people should be considered by all overly self-confident stakeholders, public and private, examining our own cultural and social destiny. It is in this respect fitting to use one quotation from the 1962 film, *Lawrence of Arabia*: “Big things have small beginnings” (Lean, 1962). Where else could this be a more fitting quote?

Without delving deeply into aspects of liberation theology and other schools of theological thought, suffice it to say that the above nativity scene with its juxtaposition of the two rulers in itself represents a harbinger of all of Jesus’ works and teachings. Through the narrative’s mirroring of the Moses birth narrative, there can be no doubt that at the core of any Christian theology and scriptural moral norms we find an ethos where the strong are to defend the weak, and not to participate in perpetuating their state of being downtrodden. On this basis, it will have to be concluded that, when such liberation perspectives are applied to the relative discrimination of women as described in Chapter 2 above, women like any other group discriminated against must be seen as equal to men in professional situations, with no societal or professional realms being excluded. Further, there are no areas within societal life that can be argued to exclude women from being lifted up to the level of their male counterparts. On the contrary, it has been shown that women who are currently in a weaker position than men in the workplace can expect to be fairly and equally treated in society, on par with men.

As it has been explained above, liberation aspects as grounded in Scripture unequivocally support the downtrodden in their expectation to be raised up in society, including women’s quest for equal treatment in society in all arenas, and it has been revealed that gender discrimination and inequality cannot be supported by way of sound scriptural exegetical argumentation.

5.11. Social stratification (gender-based)

As addressed in Chapter 2, men have historically occupied a more elevated status in society than women, and have generally enjoyed the possession of more power, better remuneration, and better access to freedom and personal

self-expression. Social stratification, referring to social ranking between the individuals or groups in society, including that based on gender, is visible in the Bible. One example is Mark 5:21-43, with two different though connected stories—one concerning, Jairus, a father of high social standing and his twelve-year-old daughter, and one a grown woman ranked at the bottom of her society.

The grown woman had suffered from haemorrhaging for twelve years (5:25) and was poor after having spent what she had on doctors unable to cure her (5:26). She came looking for Jesus and through the mere touch of his clothing was instantly healed (5:28-29). The miraculous strength of Jesus' healing powers was such that it came through his garment, even though Jesus did not know who touched him (5:30). An important aspect of this part of the story is that her unpleasant but not lethal condition made her unable to enter the temple, as she was considered religiously impure, and thus low on the social ranking both because of her poverty and her illness (O'Collins, 2010).

The second part of this story is Jesus' response to Jairus, one of the synagogue leaders, whose daughter was severely sick and even dead upon Jesus' arrival. When Jesus entered her room, he took her hand and spoke, "Talitha kum!" which means "Little girl, I say to you, get up!" (5:41), whereby she was raised from the dead. What links this story to the above, is not only the fact that Jesus was on his way to see the little girl, when the woman touched his clothing. The important aspect here is that Jesus' healing powers did not discriminate between the prayer of a low-ranked woman and the prayer of a synagogue leader (O'Collins, 2010). To some extent one may say that his healing powers were "blind" to any social stratification, as the healing of the grown woman took place even without him knowing who touched him, as he asked "Who touched my clothes?" (Mark 5:30). What is more, the above story of a dual healing may not only be read as equalising the social stratification of the two female protagonists, but also as the levelling of division among the genders. This is so because, when Jesus arrives at Jairus' house, the daughter is already dead (5:35), and then Jesus is not alleviating the suffering of the daughter, who was already dead, but the suffering of Jairus, her father. In this interpretation, we see that Jesus also levels the social difference between a man of high social standing and a woman of low social standing.

Other examples that support the Christian core ethos of alleviating social ranking and stratification may be found in Luke 7, where healing and forgiveness are linked. First, Jesus' grants salvation to the slave of Capernaum (Luke 7:1-10) and raises the dead son of the widow in Nain (Luke 7:11-17). Second, the tax collector and other people confess their sins and are baptised by John (Luke 7:18-35). Third, an unnamed sinful woman bathed Jesus' feet with her tears and dried them with her hair, while Jesus responded:

"Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown." (Luke 7:44-47)

Galatians 3:28 also holds a very strong message pertaining to gender, full inclusion and a blessing, where it is stated: "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus". The scope of this passage and its relevance with respect to gender equality is heavily debated, with some advocating that there are no in-betweens and that Paul's message primarily insists that the church is open to everyone equally when it comes to salvation (e.g., Groothuis 1996; Potter, 1986; Hove, 1999). It may be argued that Paul did not advocate removal of gender distinctions, for it is recognised that some roles need to be gender-dependent (for example, giving birth), but rather, he was promoting a spirit in which race, social class and gender would be demolished as guidelines for ranking within a religious society (Groothuis, 1996). This line of arguing does not draw a line between unity and unlimited equality, and it is difficult not to see how the passage in 3:28 represents a clear promotion of gender equality, in a near unlimited fashion. How can universalistic perspectives even be held as valid argumentation against societal gender equality? The question answers itself, and it would be an odd representation of the message of Christ if systemic gender inequality is an aspect which is allowed to divide the human family, and not understood as the maiming of the Christian message it in reality is. Following from this, when both genders are let to enjoy the same level of

spiritual equality under the new Covenant, exclusively male-led societies, companies or churches will be contradicting the will of God.

In light of the above, it is evident that, according to the Bible, women have been given equal access to receive the grace of God and to partake in the miracles of Christ. Scriptural passages pertaining to division along gender lines have revealed that gender discrimination and inequality cannot be supported by way of exegetical argumentation. On the contrary, it has been shown that, in Christ, it is the principle of universality that reigns over all others, and that there is no place in the Christian message to allow for any form of inequality, including inequality based on gender.

5.12. Summary

This chapter demonstrates that the Bible should not be used to justify inequality between genders, even though women throughout the ages have been subject to inequality socially, societally, culturally and economically. Even though some women remain nameless in the Bible, the named women are often historically important individuals with informal or formal powers. My overall findings in this chapter may be summarised thus:

- The biblical concept of leadership is focused on pastoral shepherding qualities, and there are no traces in any scriptural passages that would indicate that one gender is better suited to exert such leadership than the other, nor that any one gender is preferred by God to exert such societal care.
- Both genders are presented as equal to God under Creation, and in Scripture both are deemed as created in the image of God.
- Women in the Bible have been awarded important and essential roles in family and society, and scriptural exegetical argumentation lends no support to the exclusion of women from this part of societal life or from top-level leadership in other parts of society.
- Women in the Bible have been given pivotal and critical roles in society in times of crises and war, and scriptural exegetical argumentation lends no support to the exclusion of women from this part of societal life or from top-level leadership in other parts of society.

- Women mentioned in the New Testament have been given roles of seminal and utmost importance in the life of Jesus and in subsequent church formation and missionary activity, and scriptural exegetical argumentation lends no support to the exclusion of women from this part of societal life or from top-level leadership in other parts of society.
- Women in the Bible have been awarded seminal and crucial roles in education, learning, apprenticeship, and teaching, and scriptural exegetical argumentation lends no support to the exclusion of women from this part of societal life or from top-level leadership in other parts of society.
- Women in the Bible have been awarded important and crucial roles related to many, if not all societal realms, and scriptural exegetical argumentation lends no support to the exclusion of women from this part of societal life or from top-level leadership in any part of society.
- Women in the Bible have been seen as equal to men when in professional situations, with no societal realms being excluded, and there are no areas within societal life that can be argued from Scripture to exclude women from equal pay with men.
- Liberation aspects as grounded in Scripture unequivocally support the downtrodden in their expectation to be raised up in society, including women's quest for equal treatment in society in all arenas.
- Women in the Bible have been given equal access to receive the grace of God, and to partake in the miracles of Christ.
- In Christ, it is the principle of universality that informs our treatment of all societal constituents, and there is no place in the Christian message to allow for any form of inequality, including inequality on the basis of gender.

I will now go on to examine unhealthy and unsuitable practices relevant to this dissertation, in addition to giving a status update on the current gender balance at C level within the Western world.

CHAPTER 6: HARMFUL RECRUITMENT PRACTICES

6.1. Introduction

In Chapter 6 I will address the current status with respect to gender balance at C-suite level while focusing on harmful recruitment practices stopping women from reaching top management positions. To capture this, I will examine a wide range of the use of the term “recruitment”, addressing the journey towards leadership roles, starting with formal educational, via internal organisational training and other activities available to people seeking leadership roles, from a gender balance perspective. In other words, “recruitment” will encompass any activities that may influence whether a woman may reach the C-suite level, whether such activities involve the legal climate, professional or corporate practice, or influence by organisational and extra-organisational stakeholders. I will further address the corporate internal focus on gender balance, before moving on to internal and external development programs where the focus is to groom the future leaders. Finally, I will address the recruitment processes, both external and internal; embedded in these are the decision-takers and other stakeholders relevant to processes linked to hiring people to the top management positions in private corporates within the Western world.

It should be added that lack of gender equality within top management is not only troubling to the 51% of society that women represent, but it should also be seen as immoral, and a significant economic, ethical and social loss for the corporate world and society. It can be argued that increased diversity also drives knowledge development, added professional skills, and enhanced abilities to solve problems; thus, avoiding closure of the gap adds to the losses of society and the corporate world (Nielsen and Huse, 2010; Northouse, 2018; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995).

Before addressing these issues, I will include a general overview of leadership theory, focusing on both traits and methods, as found within the realm of contemporary management research.

6.2. Contemporary leadership theories

6.2.1. Introduction and definition

During the last decades, around 65 different systems of classifying organisational leadership, aiming to explain the concept and practice, have been proposed by various management theorists (Northouse, 2018). Leadership theories may be focused on one of the following aspects, or a combination of such: leadership as a relationship, leadership as a merger of personal traits or characteristics, or leadership based on behavioural aspects and skills. In most theories, leadership is recognised as a process influencing groups of people to accomplish predestined targets (Berry and Bunning, 2006).

The group of people affected by leaders, thus being led, are often referred to as followers, as all studies of leadership explicitly or implicitly are based on followership. The term “followers” is somewhat debated, as through the use of this term the recipients of leadership are often reduced to a blended, faceless group of employees or other relevant stakeholders, while others argue, correctly in my view, the indisputable link between the leader and the followers. Research with respect to categorising followers has shown different approaches, for example, dividing the group into interactive, independent and shifting followers. Others have described the relationship between leader and follower as either the leader being the hero (the hierarchical traditional approach) or the constant shift between people inhabiting the roles of leader and follower (Berry and Bunning, 2006; Ford and Harding, 2018). As leadership is hard to accomplish without followership, the research focusing on the latter has increased during recent years as an embedded part of researching leadership. To some extent one may say that followership is the flip-side to leadership. A commonly accepted definition sees followership as a process where the followers accept the authority of the leader to deliver common goals. A significant part of any followership study is the “dark side”, where followers can step into damaging roles, thus being partly responsible for destructive, flawed leadership. These damaging approaches are often linked to the followers’ need for safety or the need to feel respected in the eyes of the leader (Northouse, 2018).

The definition of leadership is debated in line with the different classifications; however, a more recent approach supported by many is accepting leadership as a process during which the leader influences a group of people aiming to achieve a joint goal. The focus on process implies that leadership is the string of events taking place between leaders and followers, whereby the characteristics or traits of the individual leader play a subordinate role, if any. The historical view that leaders are elitist because of their power and importance has been replaced by that of perceived balance between leaders and followers, thus weakening the previously elevated position of the leader, whilst also highlighting a leader's ethical responsibility to include the overall wellbeing and needs of their followers on their agenda (Northouse, 2018). Whereas the preferred leader historically has been identified as a man, this view is shifting. Recent Gallup results show that men in the age group 50 and above are the only remaining reference group that would still prefer to see a male leader instead of a female. This result is disturbing, as this group represents the majority of existing CEOs today, thus influencing decisions and sharing their biases when replacing members at senior leadership level (Powell, 2018).

It is typical to think about leadership as an assigned role, with a formal rank or title within an organisation. An important part of leadership is that the process as such is not limited to the formal positions and settings. If perceived by others that one individual is more influential than the rest, irrespectively of title, this individual is demonstrating emergent leadership, which is often recognised over time through communication. Emergent leadership is further impacted by the individual's personality: some research shows that dominance, intellect and confidence are traits often recognised in emerging leadership candidates. From a gender perspective, however, it is uncertain whether this approach will apply to the female leader candidates, as some research indicates that even though they may be as influential as their male counterparts, the females are perceived as ranking significantly below the comparable men within a group (Northouse, 2018).

An important aspect of leadership is the concept of power, which may be described as capacity or potential to influence other people's actions, attitudes and beliefs. Power may derive either from a formal rank or office, or it may be

personal, referring to how the leader is perceived by followers, who may view the leader as more or less knowledgeable or more or less likeable.

Current theory emphasises that leadership includes influence and refers to events taking place within groups with the focus on mutual goals. The difference between leadership and management is often drawn, as management implies the focus on stability and order within the organisation whereas leadership focuses on change, both adaptive and constructive (Northouse, 2018).

6.2.2. Historical aspects and theoretical developments

6.2.2.1 Philosophical perspectives

Early attempts to capture leadership theories can be traced back to Aristotle in antiquity (see 6.2.2.7 below) and Machiavelli in the Renaissance. In *The Prince*, Machiavelli (2014) shares his advice, stating that leadership involves choosing dominance over popularity, hence arguing that a leader cannot be effective when popular, and this work may be seen as a quintessential lesson in how leaders may manipulate others. At his level of theorising about leadership, it is of importance to note that such thoughts evolved in a pre-corporate and pre-democratic era, yet they are still rendering valuable overarching perspectives on the leadership challenges faced in today's society.

6.2.2.2 Trait-oriented theory

During the mid-19th century, one of the first researched theories emerged, the so-called *Great Man* theory. As the name suggests, this indicated that only men could hold the skills needed to become a great leader. The theory assumes that leadership traits are intrinsic, meaning that any great leader is born as such, not developed, and thus destined by birth to step into leadership roles when confronted with situations requiring leadership. *The Great Man* theory was captured by Carlyle (1993), and based on his studies of historical heroes.

This theory may be seen as a frontrunner to trait theories, introduced during the 1930s and 1940s, whereby it was argued that people are either born as leaders or not. This approach implies that some people are born with qualities that predispose them to be successful leaders, so that inherent qualities, including the individual's personality and cognitive capabilities, constitute effective leadership. Contrary to other leadership theories, this approach leaves out the

followers, focusing merely on the person leading. Central in this theory is the belief that certain traits are essential to the process of leading, such as being extrovert, holding a certain level of intelligence (including emotional intelligence), having integrity and the passion to lead. External attributes like height, weight, voice and attractiveness are also included in trait theories as impacting leadership efficiently. Though heavily debated, research has shown that both physical traits and personality can have a positive impact on leadership effectiveness. In other words, some researchers will argue that tall, handsome men are more prone to succeed as leaders than others who are lacking such physical traits (Berry and Bunning, 2006).

6.2.2.3. Behavioural theory

A further step was taken during the 1960s when behavioural aspects were elevated, thus focusing on the behaviour of leaders. From this point a notable shift was introduced, whereby leaders were no longer viewed as born but made, implying that leadership can be learned via focusing on what the leader does and not his/her traits. An early research into the use of light in factories could imply that behavioural theory was developed by accident; as what later became known as the Hawthorne studies established that additional attention from leadership may impact productivity in a positive way. This further moved to identifying behavioural leadership either via tasks or via relationships, implying that leaders could focus on tasks, or people, or preferably a combination of both (Berry and Bunning, 2006).

An aspect of so-called behavioural leadership is that the required behaviour from the leader may differ depending on the situation, thus raising the possibilities of situational leadership theory.

6.2.2.4. Situational theory

Situational theory suggests the need for different styles of leadership in different practical situations. An essential part is the leader's ability to adjust the style to suit the current situation. The key factors determining the need for adaptation are the competence and commitment levels of the leader's followers, advising whether the leader should apply a supportive or directive leadership style. In its purest form, situational theory evolves from task-orientation as opposed to other theories being more people-oriented, though it advocates the necessity of

treating individuals according to the motion of the specific situation, while focusing on the development of skills and confidence (Thompson and Glasø, 2015).

The theory was originally introduced as the “life cycle of leadership” by Hersey and Blanchard (1969), portraying task-oriented leaders as people giving instructions and developing organisational patterns while applying formal lines of communication. The approach covers a taxonomy of leadership styles extending from directing to delegating, with an added framework to match the different styles relevant to the specific situations, and has been subject to further developments (e.g., Thompson and Glasø, 2015). The approach may, for example, be divided into directive behaviour, whereby the leader offers guidance and structure relevant to completing a task, and supportive behaviour, which reflects a leadership style where the leader offers support acting with consideration to the followers. Relations with the followers may be described in four different styles: *telling* requires clear directions to be shared with the followers, *selling* involves offering the followers both support and direction, *participating* implies that the followers need some support though equipped with adequate skills, and the last, *delegating*, involves limited direction and support as the followers are believed to have mastered the task at hand (Berry and Bunning, 2006).

The theory has been debated and criticised. One line of argumentation focuses on effects: increased stress on followers, reduced work life quality, and lack of involvement, while another line addresses the positive effects of increased clarity with respect to tasks, safety and predictability (McCleskey, 2014). Situational leadership theory has been subjected to numerous tests, all recognising the challenges in terms of content, measurement and design, though also recognising opportunities where relevant (Thompson and Glasø, 2015).

6.2.2.5. Contingency theory

The contingency theory argues that effective leadership is dependent on the leader’s ability to match his/her style to the situation at hand. Whereas the above-mentioned situational theory focuses on adapting to any current situation, contingency theory focuses on the matching of the leader’s style or

quality to the specific context or situation. Fiedler (2005) maintains that effective leadership is influenced by both the favourability of the situation and the leader's ability to control the situation. The latter is directly linked to the leader's control over the followers, extending from the trust between followers and leader (the willingness to support and follow the leader, via the clear definition of tasks, guidelines and directions) to the authority and power displayed by the leader (for example, the power to hire and fire) (Fiedler 2005).

Even though criticised, Fiedler's theory has been supported by research through its ability to match leaders and situations for achieving success, not surprisingly showing that different situations may require different leaders. However, the theory is in need of further development for adjusting to relevant applications (Berry and Bunning, 2006).

6.2.2.6 Teleologic theory

Another theory falling within the leadership style concept is the path-goal theory. The path-goal theory focuses on the leader's ability to motivate followers to deliver upon set objectives or goals, arguing that effective leaders can contribute to motivating followers by removing obstacles and clarifying the road ahead, to obtain the set objectives and ensure high performance. The basis for this theory is the belief that people will deliver high performance if they have an understanding of the goal and the path, and accept that their efforts will give the desired outcome (House, 1971).

The approach is heavily influenced by theories of motivation, in particular the expectancy-valence theory, arguing that there are links between a person's degree of motivation to complete a task, their success in completing the task, and the sense of reward when completing the task. Based on this, the path-goal theory argues that leaders will be successful when choosing the style that renders the most effective influence on the followers' understanding of the goals, including the path aiming to reach the goal (House and Mitchell, 1975). The leader's ability to motivate followers is linked to his or her ability to clearly identify the goal and make the path look easy, while feeling adequately rewarded upon completion of the task. Part of the criticism raised against the path-goal theory is the risk of making the followers too dependent on their

leaders, also reducing their own ability to develop and grow within their profession (Berry and Bunning, 2006).

6.2.2.7. Transformational and charismatic theory

So far, I have addressed theories where leaders implicitly have authority and powers, consequently expecting compliance and respect. These are, however, not always sufficient tools when leading people. The next theory, transformational theory, not only focuses on the leader and his/her group of followers, but also on the leader's ability to engage hearts and minds.

Transformational leadership theory advocates leadership as a process where the leader, through engagement, is able to increase both motivation and morality among the followers, including other leaders. This approach is normally linked to the charismatic leadership style, including qualities like extroversion, confidence, and the ability to clearly state values and goals while motivating followers. Key here is the leader's ability to show attentiveness to needs, thus motivating followers and supporting them to reach their full potential. Embedded in transformational theory is the leader's ability to take necessary steps to change an organisation (Antonakis and Day, 2017). As this style often includes being both supportive and considerate towards followers, women are often seen as adopting transformational leadership styles, thus supporting feminine behaviours as highly beneficial for effective leadership (Northouse, 2018).

Even though the theory as such surfaced during the 1970s and 1980s, the essence of the charismatic leader is addressed already in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (2004) where leaders are portrayed as people who are able to gain the confidence of followers by the use of rhetorical means such as charisma while stimulating people's emotions, by demonstrating an ethical perspective appealing to the intellect via arguments based on reason.

Transformational leaders are believed to call upon the emotionality of followers, thereby inspiring them to work for higher-order goals, principles and values, while transcending their personal interests (Burns, 1978). Recognizable leadership behaviour within this approach is believed to include the leader's ability to show individual consideration for their followers, the leader's ability to

share intellectual stimulation, the leader's personal charisma, and his or her ability for inspirational motivation (Berry and Bunning, 2006).

Criticisms of transformational leadership theory include concerns about applying the method to female leaders, as the tools applied to measure transformational leadership have been based for many years on male organisational populations. Further, charismatic leadership may be abused and may lack clarity through an overall focus on executives while losing sight of other levels of leadership within an organisation. Another line of argument states that transformational leadership, as a stand-alone approach, lacks the needed transformational aspects (Berry and Bunning, 2006). Bass (1985), when responding to the latter point, captures the most complete approach in his "full-range leadership theory" also named "transformational-transactional leadership theory", where charisma and vision (so-called new leadership) is merged with a focus on transactional roles and tasks (so-called old leadership) (Bass, 1985).

6.2.2.8. Transactional theory

Transformational theory is often addressed in contrast with transactional leadership, though the merged approach has compelling aspects.

Transactional theory, in its pure form, focuses on the transactions taking place between leaders and followers, based on the assumption that the leader's main task is creating structures that make it clear what the expectations of the followers should be, thus helping to ensure that expectations are met. The approach relies on the way leaders may reward and compensate followers within their organisation using their formal leadership role (Bass *et al.*, 2003).

What characterises transactional management theory is that it is typically contrasted against transformational leadership theory, in that the transactional leader will work responsively rather than proactively, will act within the existing culture of the organisation without any ambition to change it, be motivating employees through self-interest-oriented reward and punishment structures, and be promoting the upholding of the status quo by emphasising what would be expected from the employees as correct actions (Odumeru and Ogbonna, 2013).

6.2.2.9. Authentic theory

Authentic leadership is one of the more recent areas focusing on whether the leader is perceived as real or not, addressing both the authenticity of the leader as such and his/her leadership. In our current world there is a demand for real leadership supported by transparency both within the corporate world and within the political world. Well-known corporates like Enron and WorldCom crumbled under poor leadership. The fear of other countries interfering with internal political life, as in the US and the UK, are visible, in addition to the surfacing of “fake news” as a concept, implying that we cannot trust everything we hear or read. The basis for authentic leadership is seen as a moral foundation concerned for people’s needs and values, through transparent, trustworthy and genuine leadership. As the approach is new, no common definition exists and research is so far at an early stage (Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Northouse, 2018).

6.2.2.10. Servant theory

Another new approach to leadership theory is servant leadership, arguing that leaders should first and foremost be seen as servants, thus suggesting that effective leaders place the needs of followers and stakeholders ahead of their own. This approach may come across as a paradox, because of traditional leadership views whereby the followers are supposed to serve the leader. However, it has received increasing popularity during the last decades, even though it is challenging to connect to set guidelines for leaders. In addition to focusing on the wellbeing and cultivation of followers, this leadership theory embeds ethics as an important part, focusing on the greater good of the corporation, the environment and society (Van Dierendonck, 2011).

Central to servant leadership is a group of seven behavioural patterns of leaders: behaving ethically, putting followers first, grooming and developing followers, conceptualising, emotional healing, empowering, and adding value to society. While the approach is showing positive results in some studies, the main criticism is connected primarily with the semantics, hence the somewhat stumbling progress in theoretical discussions on the approach (Northouse, 2018). It will be of interest here to note how the theoretical development may

lead towards a wider acceptance of the core tenets associated with biblical concepts of leadership as described in Chapter 5 above.

6.2.2.11. Adaptive theory

Adaptive leadership addresses the importance of the leaders in supporting followers as they handle changes, challenges and problems. It focuses on the adaptation needed by followers to adjust to new realities often seen in a complex perspective, the leader helping to equip the followers with the tools necessary to change (Stacey, 2011). The aim is to support followers in tackling challenges and encouraging them to thrive in doing so. As with servant leadership, adaptive leadership focuses on the behaviour of the leader, though it also addresses the adaptiveness of followers, stressing the need for the leader to be involved in mobilisation, motivation, organisation, and orientation while focusing on others. Linked to this is the leader's ability to question and, if needed, to change his or her values. Three steps are recognised, starting with situational challenges, adding on the leader's behaviour, and finally being able to adapt the work performed by followers (Northouse, 2018; Lichtenstein *et al.*, 2006)

Adaptive leadership is a branch of Complexity Leadership Theory, which may be seen as a framework of applicable leadership approaches, focusing primarily on information and knowledge as the one commodity in the 21st century contrary to the production and trade with goods in the industrial era (Lichtenstein *et al.*, 2006). In our current environment, with digital disruptions influencing all industries, merged with the increased focus on non-financial values and corporate responsibility, adaptive leadership may prosper.

6.2.2.12. Stakeholder theory

Stakeholder theories are also essential when it comes to leadership roles and the people inhabiting these roles. R.E. Freeman first introduced stakeholder theory in 1984, suggesting that the previous sole focus on shareholders is too narrow, thus stressing that anyone involved or affected by a corporation should be added to the list of stakeholders, for example, banks, employees, the local community, environmental organisations, governmental bodies, and vendors. The theory maintains that real success within a company is measured via the stakeholders' satisfaction, thereby moving away from the sole focus on financial

performance and profit (Freeman, 2010). Corporations in the Western world have increasingly proven responsive to stakeholder demands, though often responding to the most impactful or important requests, involving an internal need for prioritising (Barnett, Henriques and Corregan, 2018).

6.2.3. Gender and leadership theories

An interesting general observation connected to all the above theoretical strands of thought is that none of the current leadership theories lists masculinity as a trait or a behavioural aspect needed to be an effective leader. After focusing on the development of leadership theory through history, I will now move on to address gender as part of leadership.

Until the 1970s gender as an aspect of leadership was ignored. However, the rise of women, within both academia and formal leadership roles in public and private sector organisations, fuelled interest in addressing the role gender plays within leadership. Not surprisingly, some of the first questions addressed by researchers concerned whether or not women are capable of leading. After seeing the advent of female political leaders, for example, Margaret Thatcher (UK), Gro Harlem Brundtland (Norway), Benazir Bhutto (Pakistan) and Indira Gandhi (India), this line of questioning was silenced, leaving researchers to focus on the different leadership styles, their effectiveness, as well as the under-representation of female leaders, as key topics to investigate (Northouse, 2018). However, it should be noted that, because of the lack of female leaders, early research generally disregarded the few there were, and thereby the early research findings could be distorted (Powell, 2018).

Arguments to explain the extant gender gap include, for example, advocating that women are different from men, one branch of thought being that lack of female leaders in elite positions can be explained through differences in style and effectiveness (Northouse, 2018). These schools of thought, however, are being superseded by convincing research showing that gender lacks relationship to style and effectiveness (e.g., Dobbins and Platz, 1986; Kaiser and Wallace, 2016). Contrary to stereotypical perceptions, there are no indications in research to support the view that female leaders are less task-oriented or more interpersonally focused than men. One definite difference,

however, is that female leaders apply democratic or participative leadership styles more frequently than their male peers (Northouse, 2018).

Robust differences show that women tend to have a leadership style trending more towards transformational leadership when compared to their male peers, also showing that women have a tendency to embrace motivation-based reward systems, also called contingent reward systems, more than men (Northouse, 2018). New studies also indicate that values are viewed differently by men and women, one example being that women see the need to promote welfare, thus emphasising this as a social value, more than their male peers, and this is visible at both CEO level and within boards (Schwartz and Rubel, 2005; Adams and Funk, 2012). This may be visible either as part of corporate responsibility ethos or corporate philanthropy (Boulouta, 2012; Williams, 2003).

Regarding leadership effectiveness, analyses show overall gender equality, though some differences may be recognized; whereas men tend to be more effective leaders in a masculine environment, women are more effective as leaders in less masculine environments (Eagly, Karau and Makhijani, 1995).

Research also indicates that there are few differences between the genders' motivation to become leaders and their commitment towards their professional and employment responsibilities (Bielby and Bielby, 1988; Thoits, 1992). One noticeable difference is, however, that women are less eager to promote themselves for potential leadership roles than men are, hence women are more likely to accept more informal roles than official roles of responsibility (Bowles and McGinn, 2005; Fletcher, 2001).

Another relevant angle is also the recognition of goals related to power, as men see these as more important than women do, and thus, men will be more eager to use opportunities to climb the corporate ladder (Gino, Wilmuth and Brooks, 2015). Associated with this is also men's ability to be outspoken when it comes to career goals, a very important trait, as leadership roles are not granted in a vacuum; the journey to the highest organisational echelons includes a mixture of negotiation, experience, opportunities, resources and availability (Babcock and Laschever, 2009; Northouse, 2018). A further important aspect in this respect is that the journey to a leadership role surprisingly often lacks structure,

can be seen as vague, and is laden with gender triggers, thus women tend to be more disadvantaged than men in this regard (Bowles and McGinn, 2005).

To summarise, whereas a woman may be slightly less effective as a leader than a man in roles that have been traditionally masculine, she is recognised for applying styles that are seen as very effective and attractive today. For example, she will exceed him when it comes to democratic and participatory leadership styles, and will be more adept at applying transformational behaviours (Northouse, 2018). There are no differences between the genders when it comes to leadership effectiveness, commitment to their jobs, or motivation for becoming a leader. A couple of important differences on the journey to leadership roles are visible with respect to women's somewhat reduced eagerness to self-promote and negotiate their way to the very top (Northouse, 2018). The latter is somewhat debatable, as research indicates that women and men are equally eager to negotiate promotions; however, men are more successful in their attempts than women (Hunt *et al.*, 2018). This is of course a much wider question than the topic of negotiation as a stand-alone issue. A final noticeable difference is that women have an elevated focus on the well-being of others and the ethical aspects (Northouse, 2018).

6.3. Current representation of women in leadership roles

Leadership as a profession involves a string of tasks, from supporting and guiding followers to focusing on environmental challenges via strategic undertakings, as well as considering the myriad of variations with respect to the different stakeholder interests involved. Mapping elite leadership positions such as at the C-suite level shows that men are significantly over-represented while women remain marginalised. This is often explained through the phrase “the leadership labyrinth,” which encompasses all the barriers women meet on their journey towards top management (Northouse, 2018).

As the above sections will have shown, all leadership approaches come with challenges for women. I will now move on to address the current state of women in leadership roles.

6.3.1. Legal framework and gender gap

Even though it affects not only leadership roles, the overall legal framework for 51% of the human population is relevant. In other words, do women have the same opportunities to participate and contribute in economic activity in the world? The World Bank follows the progress made with respect to legal barriers that reduce the options and possibilities available to women. The fifth edition of the study focuses on the steps taken to improve economic opportunities and empower women, supporting gender equality (World Bank Group, 2018). Even though the latest version shows progress, there is still work to be done. When viewing the global framework for women, 104 countries still prohibit women from taking certain jobs, purely because of their gender; another 59 have no laws preventing sexual harassment, and 18 countries have laws giving the husband legal rights to stop their wives from working. The findings show that, globally, laws prevent 2.7 billion women from having the same freedom of choice as men (World Bank Group, 2018).

To allow for legislation that suppresses and excludes women from any part of societal participation must be seen as a violation of core Christian-ethical principles of equality and justice, as found, for example, in Genesis 1:26-27 and 2:18-24, where the emphasis is on equality in Creation and the God-given partnership between females and males.

6.3.2 Institutionalised gender-based discrimination

In addition to focusing on legal barriers, other organisations focus on closing the gender gap in a broader scope, acknowledging that equality should be a given in all dimensions, including the economic. One such organisation is the World Economic Forum.

The World Economic Forum has issued *The Global Gender Gap Report* since 2006. The latest version in 2017 indicates that another 217 years is needed to ensure gender equality within the economic area globally. Even though many countries are investing in initiatives to reduce the gap, they are far from successful in driving change, an interesting angle being what comes across as lack of agility regarding the future of work due to the changes within technology. Relevant factors impacting the closure of the economic gap are proposed, including encouraging the corporate world to commit to quantifiable goals,

increasing the number of opportunities for women, and offering a suite of actions to support the overall goal (WEF, 2017).

Hunt *et al.* (2018) have also identified the gap while sharing their road map to close it, one action being to highlight the companies' need to rethink how people are promoted or directly hired into leadership roles. Their report shows that in the US only one of five C-suite leaders are female and that there are no differences between gender when it comes to commitment to take career steps and/or to exit from the current employer. They also echo what was stated above: very few males or females state that they are planning to leave the work force to focus on family. When it comes to recruitments into manager-level roles (both internal and external) men are hired into 62% of the positions while the remaining 38% are held by women. If this ratio is held for the next ten years, the total number of females holding manager-level roles will be increased by a meagre 1%, while if applying equality in promotion and hiring, this will mean that 48% of the same jobs are held by women and the remaining 52% by men (Hunt *et al.*, 2018).

The Christian-ethical scriptural findings shared in Chapter 5 explain that discriminating women is against core Christian equality norms and doctrines such as the *imago Dei*. As further addressed in Chapter 5, women introduced in the Bible took on the same tasks as men in all aspects, such as military leadership (e.g., Judg 4:6), prophetic activity (e.g., 2 Kings 22:14-20; 2 Chronicles 34:22-33), and military service (e.g., Jud 13:8). The exclusion of women from jobs, roles or participation in society purely on the basis of their sex is not in line with Christian-ethical principles.

6.3.3. Female representation at C-level

When looking at the CEOs leading Fortune 500 companies, women represent 5.4%, a surprisingly stable number over time (Brown, 2017). In comparison, the number of female board members at the same companies is 20.2% (Catalyst, 2017).

The challenging and unjustified gap in gender representation is not only found in the US, but is recognised globally, thus showing a disproportionately high female representation in positions associated with low authority and low level

(Northouse, 2018). It is difficult to accept that such a substantial gender imbalance at the highest levels of organisational leadership is not a part of the core institutional makeup of organisations and that this determines how their constituents on each different level are recruited. It is disheartening to observe that, despite the different development strands in management theory and practice, and that despite whatever benign and apparently inclusive leadership philosophy may be espoused, the result is still as dire as it is. Whether intentional or not, the result is still that the under-representation of females in top management could be seen as an institutionalisation and perpetuation of gender discrimination against women. As mentioned above, women are recognised as leaders in the Bible, thus accepted as equals to men, even in these types of roles (e.g., 1 Kings 10:1.13; Matthew 12:42), which leads to the conclusion that continuing the current practice will be a contradiction of such biblical principles.

Based on the scripturally-founded Christian-ethical findings described in Chapter 5, a responsible biblical interpretation would be that legal frameworks or institutionalised discrimination that excludes women from attaining top level leadership positions must be considered immoral, and represent a violation of scriptural ethical principles under the Reformed paradigm.

6.4 Auto-organisation and gender

Despite the different modes of structured management strategies that in and by themselves may promote the increase of female participation in C-suite and other leadership levels in the corporate realm, there may be other tacit management styles and organisational phenomena which may hinder females from reaching the highest echelons of the corporate world. For example, it is commonly recognised among leadership research theorists, as part of complexity thinking, that in organisations a form of auto-organising will take place, where the employees between themselves instigate organisational measures in order to solve tasks they are set to perform by their superiors. It is further recognised that such emergent auto-organising forces may occur both to the knowledge of higher management and outside such knowledge and control, and thus it is understood that the complex auto-organisational forces at play in

an organisation may be a risk factor that the top management may have to consider when strategising (McKelvey, 2002; Stacey, 2011).

Such auto-organising forces are at times used by top management in order to allow the employees to organise their tasks in a manner they deem practical and useful on the basis of their real-life expertise that the task demands, and then the terms “self-management” or “co-evolution” may be used as another way of describing the complexity that is auto-organisation. With this use of language, the idea is that the employees are trusted by management to rule themselves, and the idea of peer control rather than hierarchical supervision is then thought to be more acceptable for the employees to adhere to, and is seen as a socially benign alternative to the traditional control and instructional management practice (Barker, 2014; Volberda and Lewin, 2003). Whether one or the other terms is in use, it may be raised as a valid objection to this kind of leadership that they in reality include an abdication of responsibility by the top management, something which may create unforeseen power exertions among the employees, to the extent that a “Lord of the Flies” style social climate may be the result in the organisation (Golding, 1954). This is not as farfetched as it may seem, as according to social identity theory (SIT), a darker side of utilising such self-regulated management technology is that organisational constituents will determine themselves and others by way of group belonging, in “in-groups” and “out-groups”. Such group perceptions may come with attendant social allegiances, typically leading to a “them-and-us” cognition, which may leave individuals in a socially and professionally excluded state (Tajfel, 1974; Augoustinos, Walker and Donaghue, 2006). In such a scenario, the members of an in-group (maybe dominantly male) may harbour increasingly extremist anti-attitudes against the defined out-groups (maybe dominantly female), and this may contribute to women being discriminated against in the workplace (Arnold *et al.*, 2010).

Despite the stark picture drawn above related to group dynamics and possible workplace discrimination of women, SIT research (Social Identity Theory) has shown that it is possible to utilise these group adherences also to promote cooperation across social delineations in an organisation. The use of social identity as a force to promote cooperation may be facilitated if organisational

teams are created containing constituents of different groups, and if so, new perceptions of group may be created allowing for a multi-group membership acceptance, including organisational members who earlier saw themselves as belonging to different groups, now as also belonging to a new collective “in-group” (Heere and James, 2007; Goffman, 1990).

Auto-organisation may be linked to laissez-faire leadership, pointing to a lack of leadership, when the formal leader either delays or refrains from making decisions or forgoes responsibilities. From the followers’ point of view, this style may entail lack of feedback and support, often adding to the challenges for female workers. Some may argue that the absence of leadership can be a choice, thus empowering the followers to solve their tasks and lead themselves in a mode of auto-organisation (Northouse, 2018; Wong and Giessner, 2018). As women may be the losers in situations like these, it may not be surprising that women are rarely seen as leaders adopting laissez-faire leadership (Northouse, 2018). Clearly, such a practice will violate scripturally-based Christian-ethical norms, such as, for example, those found in Colossians 4:15, Acts 12:12-17, and Acts 16:14-15, 40.

Based on the scripturally-founded Christian-ethical norms described in Chapter 5, a responsible biblical interpretation would be that allowing any kind of management strategies which prevent the possibilities for women attaining top level leadership positions must be considered immoral, because they represent a violation of scriptural ethical principles within the Reformed paradigm.

6.5. Education

Women’s lack of human capital investment is sometimes presented as one of the explanations for the gender gap within leadership roles. Another way of stating this is that women invest less in formal and informal training, education and experience. No empirical evidence is presented to support this line of argument when it comes to education (Northouse, 2018).

The impact of primary education in gender attitudes may be relevant to professional opportunities and gender problems later in life, but the scope of this dissertation will not allow for this to be included, and thus the focus in this

section will be higher education and other relevant experience and training that employees receive at work.

6.5.1. Higher education

In the US, women earn 57% of all bachelor's degrees, 60% of all master's degrees, and more than 50% of all doctoral degrees (NCES, 2014). This is echoed in other Western countries; for example, the EU reports that 9.5 percentage points more women than men between the ages of 30 to 34 have graduated from universities or other higher education institutions. When focusing on master's degrees, all of the EU member states report that women make up the majority of the students. In countries like the Baltics, Poland, Cyprus, Slovenia, Slovakia and Croatia, women represent more than 60% of the students (Eurostat Gender Statistics, 2016a).

Within the legal profession, women in law schools earn 47.3% of all legal degrees in the US, but the number of female equity partners with US law firms is only 19%, according to the American Bar Association (2018). In a law firm, being an equity partner may be likened to participating on C-suite level in corporate settings. Similar numbers are evident in other Western countries, with the EU, for example, reporting that the number of female students has risen to 60% during the last decade, female master's degrees is at 62.9% and at doctorate level it varies between 50.5% in 2013 and 44.6% in 2015. When it comes to females reaching the top level within traditional law firms in the EU, the ratio drops with the number of partners; in other words, in a law firm with few partners (1–4) 41.1% of the partners are female, while in the large firms (40+ partners) the ratio drops to 18% females, mainly because of the overwhelming lack of commitment to embrace diversity as a business issue within law firms (European Parliament, 2016).

When comparing gender at business schools, the balance shown above is not fully continued, as women make up 40% of the MBA students at the top 10 schools in the US (Northouse, 2018). This gender gap from the US has been echoed in other countries in the western world (Wallen *et al.*, 2017). However, changes are taking place, for in countries like Denmark and Germany the majority of the MBA students are females (Eurostat Gender Statistics, 2016b).

This section shows that there are few traces of gender gaps within higher education, as women normally make up more than half of the students and graduates. Lack of formal skills is thus not an argument for stopping women on their career journey toward the top level of decision-making and corporate influence.

6.5.2. *Other relevant experience*

Internal learning and development programs within corporations are set to satisfy both the needs of the companies and the needs of their employees. Some research reports that even though women are well represented in lower management, including professional positions, they are offered fewer developmental opportunities, partly because of the prejudice women encounter with respect to leadership. Another factor linked to this experience is that women often have fewer tasks even in the same job compared to their male counterparts (Northouse, 2018). A further issue is that women are more often represented in roles where they are less visible and exposed to less responsibility, thus giving them less exposure and on-the-job experience that might support an upwards leadership journey. This lack of experience is sometimes referred to as “glass walls”, indicating that staff functions like human resources, communication and public relations—often inhabited by females—offer less experience and development opportunities than the more male-dominated roles like development, operations and sales (Powell, 2018). Research also indicates a similar pattern when women within the organisation receive less formal training, less encouragement and less inclusion in relevant networks than their male peers (Northouse, 2018).

The availability of professional mentor relationships is also unevenly distributed; women experience greater barriers when seeking to establish intra-organisational mentoring than their male colleagues do (Ensher and Murphy, 2011; Powell, 2018).

As addressed above, there is limited support for the argument that women are less formally educated than men, or that exit their job roles more frequently than men, or that they prioritise families instead of choosing the leadership journey. On the other hand, solid support in research is found to argue that women are less exposed to job experience and have their careers interrupted more often

than men because of more domestic responsibilities. Finally, research shows that women are exposed to less informal learning and development opportunities than their male colleagues, presumably because of prejudice against women leaders (Northouse, 2018).

The link between knowledge and power is addressed by Foucault (1994; 1995), advocating that knowledge is connected to power to such a degree that to share (or give over) knowledge may be synonymous with handing over power. Hence, keeping women away from knowledge relevant to the organisation would keep women out of power and would be a harmful practice for women aspiring to leadership roles.

In line with the Christian-ethical scriptural norms shared in Chapter 5, equality with respect to learning and experience is reflected in several stories, like the women following Jesus and being subject to his teachings (e.g., Matt 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; Luke 10:38-42; John 11:1–12:3). This clearly shows that discrimination of females on account of their gender in the above-mentioned situations is not in line with Christian-ethical principles and the Reformed paradigm.

Based on the scripturally-founded Christian-ethical findings described in Chapter 5, a responsible biblical interpretation would be that allowing any kind of management strategy with respect to learning and experience which impedes the possibilities for women to attain top level leadership positions must be considered immoral, and represents a violation of scriptural ethical principles within the Reformed paradigm.

6.6. Recruitment processes

6.6.1. General

When filling a leadership position in an organisation, finding the right candidate is essential and the processes often challenging and diverse, as appointing the wrong candidate may have irreversible consequences in any business (Fernández-Aráoz, 2001). Stakeholders responsible for recruitment to top leadership positions, here in the narrower sense of the term “recruitment”, can either find the candidates internally within the organisation or externally in the

wider employment market. Nevertheless, stereotypy and bias may influence any recruitment process, partly depending on the actors involved and the process applied. This will be further addressed in this section.

The term “glass ceiling” has been used to describe the barriers women meet on their journey towards leadership roles, clearly indicating that women meet more obstacles than men (Powell, 2018). Whereas the “glass ceiling” has been used often to explain why women do not reach the higher echelons of leadership, it has become clear that women, when promoted, are more likely than men to be placed on a “glass cliff”, implying that they are appointed to leadership roles correlated to greater risk and exposed to more criticism than their male peers (Northouse, 2018).

An interesting aspect of women’s rise to the top is also the media-created opting-out revolution, claiming that women with higher education prefer to focus on parenthood instead of a fast track to C-suite. This is not supported by research, which shows no difference between genders when it comes to career aspiration and the willingness to climb the ladder (Powell, 2018).

6.6.2. Internal recruitment

The women who take the steps to promote themselves for organisational advancement are often met with biases and social handicaps; a self-promoting woman may, for example, be deemed less likely to be hired because of being recognised as less attractive (Rudman, 1998).

Prejudice and biases from stereotypic behavioural expectations that “men take charge and women take care” are often seen as the prominent excuses to explain the leadership gender gap (Hoyt and Chemers, 2008). There is an abundance of research showing gender biases and the impact this has on our perception of the genders and their impact (Northouse, 2018). An excellent example here is from the music world: during the 1970s and 1980s men dominated the symphony orchestras, and to enhance gender representation auditions were changed so that the candidate played behind a screen, thus hiding the gender of the potential new member. This small change was impactful, contributing to a significant change in the gender balance, allowing more women to be hired in the orchestras (Goldin and Rouse, 2000). This

clearly implies that, in this context, the mere sight of a woman evokes a gender bias that involves perceptions based on stereotypical expectations of the different gender's ability to play their instruments.

Gender stereotypy is seen as severely damaging to female leader candidates and existing female leaders, often originating from the pressures coming from two sides; a leader is expected to be masculine and tough, but women are not allowed to be too manly, resulting in the assumption that men are more qualified than women, and ironically, when female leaders are evaluated their effectiveness is not identified as sufficiently female (Eagly and Karau, 2002; Northouse, 2018). This is a challenging catch-22 for any women who would like to climb the corporate ladder.

When recruiting a top-level leader, gender biases are particularly harmful also given the unstructured processes leading up to these decisions, thus allowing prejudices to influence the final outcome. This lack of accountability on the part of the relevant stakeholders involved in the decision-making process is contributing to the current gender gap. Such lack of accountability is not only damaging to women, aligned with social identity cognition as described above, but it also supports homosocial reproduction, whereby the stakeholders reproduce themselves, copying the current presumptions and biases, thus continuing on the same path as before with male leaders (Kanter, 2008; Hoyt and Simon, 2016; Northouse, 2018). This is further linked to the above-mentioned preference among the group of 50+ males that prefer male leaders, parallel to belonging to the group that currently represents a substantial part of top leaders today (Powell, 2018).

On the basis of the above discussion, it is clear that gender stereotypy heavily impacts perceptions and evaluation of females aspiring to leadership roles, or already inhabiting the elite roles. To some extent one can argue that women meet with double standards; they are expected to merge feminine traits with extreme competence (Eagly and Carli, 2003). Women's responses to these requirements often display friendliness and warmth, easily identifiable as part of transformational leadership qualities (Powell, 2018).

Being less exposed to tasks and experience relevant for top leadership roles will impact any woman's ability to climb the internal career ladder. The same effects are visible when women within organisations are less exposed to senior management and receive less feedback than their male peers. This unhealthy situation can be traced back to the lack of leadership positions offered to females, as research shows that people exposed to senior leadership have a greater opportunity to be promoted. In addition to these damaging practices, women receive less intra-organisational support to master the organisational politics and the skills that are needed to be successful in the somewhat cumbersome processes linked to promotions to the higher echelons, and this represents another disadvantage for women (Hunt *et al.*, 2018).

Differences between sectors and industries may also apply. One example is the technology industry, which represents an essential part of the current digital revolution, significantly impacting both the private and the corporate world, hence sometimes referred to as the fourth industrial revolution. Within this sector gender imbalance is reported, involving gender stereotypes, gendered actions and speech, and a so-called "geek culture." These findings are visible both internally and externally in organisations, contributing to women losing interest in chasing a career within technology, and subsequently making it hard for the sector to demonstrate gender balance (Wynn and Correll, 2018; Schwab, 2017). Similar challenges have been identified within the finance sector (von Hippel, Sekaquaptewa and McFarlane, 2015).

Intra-organisational sponsorship is also a useful tool, as research shows that employees guided by organisational sponsors have 1.5 times higher opportunity to be promoted into top leadership roles. As men are more likely to have such sponsors, this again represents an impactful disadvantage to women (Hunt *et al.*, 2018, 2018).

6.6.3. External recruitment

Though many of the internal barriers are also visible when it comes to external recruitment processes, some are unique and are thus applicable to situations where the aim is to identify candidates outside the organisation, often with the use of professional recruiters or so-called "head-hunters".

Tienari *et al.* (2013) approached head-hunters at executive search firms in Austria, Finland and Sweden, aiming to compare the practices applied when assisting clients in finding leaders. The three countries represent two different society groups, with two of the best countries in the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report 2017 being Finland (ranked 3) and Sweden (ranked 5), both countries recognised as gender-appreciative and egalitarian, versus the far more hierarchical and patriarchal Austria, ranked as number 57. The conclusions shared demonstrate that even though the Finnish and Swedish recruiters added female candidates more regularly than the Austrian, the outcome was the same: promoting few women to the top positions. In Austria gender was a topic guided solely by the client, meaning that clients could say no to adding females to the list of potential leaders, while in both Nordic countries candidates were normally added irrespective of gender, as based on client feedback. The significant finding for all three countries is that the question of gender is raised, and thus plays a role when identifying top leader candidates (WEF, 2017).

A severely negative finding is that both male and female head-hunters viewed female candidates as less competent, and thus partly reflected biases and stereotypical behaviours immensely damaging to the women in professional life. The line of questioning also revealed that women were questioned about their family while their male peers were not scrutinised in the same manner. Married women were reported as choices associated with risk, as the perception was that they would not invest in the job at the same level as their male peers, as the latter group was deemed both loyal and stable. Whether the candidate “fitted” the role or not was a common theme discussed between head-hunter and client, referring to the same vague criteria as described above, thus seeking support for the final decision. Finally, the research found that male-dominated client teams make it harder for the head-hunter to ensure that a woman could be fitting for them, consequently the head-hunters were reluctant to put forward female candidates unless they were seen as exceptional (Tienari *et al.*, 2013). Unfortunately, there is no indication that this is a stand-alone case even though some deviations occur (e.g., Fernandez-Mateo and Fernandez, 2016).

6.6.4. Influencing decision-makers

As with the initial and presentational hiring process, the final decision process depends on the company and the role to be filled. Some privately owned corporations will have the owner(s) involved, while publicly listed companies typically may have committees with all or some of the members of the board and/or the top leadership team as the formal decision-makers. Succession planning at C-suite level is particularly important with respect to the CEO, as the impact of lack of planning can have severely damaging effects on owners and other stakeholders. A succession plan should indicate whether the corporation will have either internal candidates for the role or will line up external options (LeCounte, Prieto and Phipps, 2017).

When it comes to making the final decision about which candidate is to be appointed, the factors influencing decision-makers include personal relationships, the individual's fitness to the role, and stereotypy or biases. One study addresses how perceived riskiness is handled as part of the decision—in other words, how the grade of ambivalence and the gravity of the result of the selection impact the decision-makers' final recommendation to senior leadership positions. The report shows that gender arbitrates the link between qualifications and the perceived risk: highly competent women are perceived as less risky for senior leadership than highly competent men, but when viewing moderately competent women the decision-makers saw these as riskier as candidates for senior leadership than moderately competent men (van Esch *et al.*, 2018).

Gender stereotypy influences processes in a damaging way for female leadership candidates, mainly because of the misperceived fit between the female candidate and the vacant role. This perceived mismatch occurs when the decision-maker applies stereotypical views on women and men and thus on both genders' ability to fit into a leadership position. Consequently, women are more often than men not seen to possess the characteristics required, and thus not properly equipped for the job. Such negative performance assumptions form the basis for the decision-makers' gender biases, which are damaging influences on female candidates' career opportunities (Heilman, Manzi, and Braun, 2015).

To reduce the impact of stereotypy and bias, one would anticipate that a gender-balanced board of directors would be more inclined to hire female CEOs. Norway was the first country to introduce board quota laws in 2003, to ensure that at least 40% of the board members are female on all publicly listed Norwegian companies. At this stage, no further impact can be reported, except the direct changes to females appointed to the boards in direct accordance with the legal requirements (Bertrand, 2014).

6.6.5. *Extra-organisational stakeholders*

In addition to internal decision-makers and owners, the recruitment to top management positions may be influenced by other extra-organisational stakeholders like capital markets actors, suppliers, governmental agencies, vocational organisations, owners/investors, employees' families, and trade unions.

One of the reasons why stakeholder management can impact the hiring of top leadership is the financial valuation of the company. Research shows that the stock value may fluctuate significantly during the hours, days and months after a company hires a new CEO. Another impact may be the C-suite participants and their ability to complement each other (e.g., Whittington, Yakis-Douglas, and Ahn, 2016; Fernández-Aráoz, 2001).

Top management recruitment may also be impacted by legal barriers, such as the need for skills and/or experience required to inhabit the relevant position. This may be linked to regulated businesses, like the finance industry, audit firms and law firms, where the C-suite may be required to handle the relevant authorities to comply with local regulations and expectations. In the US, the Securities and Exchange Commission is the authority controlling the participants involved in the security business, extending from brokers and dealers to investments and funds. The SEC mainly focuses on ensuring that market information is disclosed properly, and that dealing is maintained fairly while protecting against fraud (U.S. SEC, n.d.).

The impact that external stakeholders have on businesses may influence the recruitment processes, hence positive or negative feedback may impact females' opportunities.

Aligned with the Christian-ethical scriptural norms shared in Chapter 5, not offering the same support and opportunities to females as males in the recruitment process comes across as breaching the core foundation for the Reformed paradigm, as found, for example, in Luke 8:1-3; 24:10; Mark 16:1-8; and Matthew 28:1-10.

Based on the scripturally-founded Christian-ethical norms described in Chapter 5, a responsible biblical interpretation would be that allowing any kind of recruitment processes or practices which obstructs the possibilities for women to attain top level leadership positions must be considered immoral, and represents a violation of scriptural ethical principles within the Reformed paradigm.

6.7. Compensation

When women finally reach the top leadership roles, the next challenge they meet is achieving fairness in respect to compensation, in other words wages and additional items in their compensation package.

The gender gap within leadership positions is also reflected in a salary gap, visible in all parts of the world. In the US the female-to-male earnings ratio is 82% for full-time female workers, while the EU reports a gender pay gap averaging 16.2 % for women below men (U.S. Labor Statistics, 2014; Eurostat Gender Gap Pay, 2016).

When it comes to leadership positions, women in the US earn around 75% compared to their male peers (U.S. Labor Statistics, 2014). The salary gap has decreased since 1970, the main reason, however, being the increase in the number of females within male-intensive industries (Powell, 2018). The pay gap is reflected in all countries, though gaps differ because of market and legislative guidelines (Amado, Santos and São José, 2018). Research from Germany shows that the gender gap widens during the individual's professional career, a gap that continues into retirement pay, also adding that salaries are significantly higher in male-dominated industries than in female-dominated industries (Wrohlich, 2017).

Top leadership roles also echo the gender salary gap, one report sharing differences over time, but also an expanding gap that is hard to explain via traditional factors. Overall, the findings indicate increased inequality within the group of top earners in addition to an under-representation of female top earners, all of this slowing down the attempts to achieve equal pay for equal work. The report also addresses potential trickle-down effects related to the increased number of women at board level; however, no such effects with respect to women's share in senior leadership was reported (Fortin, Bell and Böhm, 2017).

One further item with respect to compensation is the link to share value, as research shows that, for example, stock grants to top leadership influence the value positively, while compensation packages within the upper 10% have a negative impact on returns (Cooper, Gulen and Rau, 2016).

According to the biblical findings shared in Chapter 5, equal pay for equal work is a firm norm, represented, for example, in the gender-neutral wording in Malachi 3:5, which supports this fully; here we are informed that God will “put on trial ... those who defraud laborers of their wages.”

Based on the scripturally-founded Christian-ethical norms described Chapter 5, a responsible biblical interpretation would be that allowing any kind of difference in pay based on gender must be considered immoral, representing a violation of scriptural ethical principles within the Reformed paradigm.

6.8. Liberation

Inequality based on gender in the business world is not only a business issue but a extremely important social issue pertaining to perceptions of equality, diversity, and social justice in a wider sense. The World Bank estimates that the lack of gender equality in salaries globally could imply losses in wealth of USD 23,620 per person, the losses being most substantial in the OECD countries as value tends to increase in absolute numbers within developed countries. If we consider the 141 countries involved in the study, the total loss amounts to USD 160 trillion (Wodon and la Brière, 2018). OECD has estimated the loss of USD 12 trillion, equalling 16% of all global income in GDP, due to the gender gap and discrimination women are subject to globally (Ferrant and Kolev, 2016).

In addition to the merely economic result of the existing gender-based discrimination against women, whether that be in the C-suite level or elsewhere in professional life, the result amounts to a perpetuation of social injustice based not on understandable merits or lack thereof, but solely due to the most fundamental of any human quality, sex. There is no doubt that a central message of Scripture is that of equality and justice and the support of the downtrodden in their quest for fairness. As this is an overarching message in many of the biblical narratives, not least as found in the New Testament, passages that support this view are numerous, but to highlight again one narrative of crucial importance, it would be the nativity narrative (Matt 2:2; Luke 2:12), where we learn how the new king arrives to offer promise to all, including those in need and those in an unjustified subservient social position.

All the above addressed items from the corporate world that contribute to the discrimination of women, keeping them outside vital parts of society, and thus not allowing them full access to deserved social and economic goods, must be seen as in conflict with the promise of liberation that permeates the biblical message, and the soteriological ethos which would follow from an inclusive and constructive scripturally based ethical cognition. As discussed in Chapter 5, liberation aspects as grounded in Scripture unequivocally support the downtrodden in their expectation to be raised up in society, including women's quest for equal treatment in society in all arenas, and it has been revealed that gender discrimination and inequality cannot be supported by way of sound scriptural exegetical argumentation.

Based on the scripturally founded Christian-ethical norms described Chapter 5, a responsible biblical interpretation would be that liberation aspects as grounded in Scripture unequivocally support women's quest for equal treatment in society in all arenas, and allowing any kind of difference in participation based on gender must be considered immoral, representing a violation of scriptural ethical principles within the Reformed paradigm.

6.9. Summary

This chapter demonstrates that current discriminatory practices connected to recruitment as performed in the current corporate realm are in conflict with core

scriptural norms as expounded in the former chapters. My findings may be summarised thus:

- Traditional secular theories on leadership have favoured leadership traits typically perceived as male, but recent theory admits to a more gender-neutral view on what is considered efficient organisational leadership.
- There are few differences between the genders' motivation to become leaders and their commitment towards their professional and employment responsibilities.
- Women are recognised for applying democratic and participatory leadership styles that are seen as effective and attractive today, and are likely to apply transformational behaviours.
- Legal frameworks or institutionalised discrimination that exclude women from attaining top level leadership positions must be considered immoral, because they represent a violation of scriptural ethical principles within the Reformed paradigm.
- Allowing any kind of management strategies which prevent women from attaining top level leadership positions must be considered immoral, representing a violation of scriptural ethical principles within the Reformed paradigm.
- Allowing any kind of management strategies with respect to learning and experience which impedes women from attaining top level leadership positions must be considered immoral, and represents a violation of scriptural ethical principles within the Reformed paradigm.
- Allowing any kind of recruitment processes or practices which obstructs women from attaining top level leadership positions must be considered immoral, and represents a violation of scriptural ethical principles within the Reformed paradigm.
- Allowing any kind of difference in pay based on gender must be considered immoral, and represents a violation of scriptural ethical principles within the Reformed paradigm.
- Liberation aspects as grounded in Scripture unequivocally support women's quest for equal treatment in society in all arenas, and allowing any kind of difference in participation based on gender must be

considered immoral, representing a violation of scriptural ethical principles within the Reformed paradigm.

CHAPTER 7: APPRECIATIVE PRACTICES

7.1. Introduction

In this chapter I will outline different types of recruitment practices focusing on gender balance at C-suite level aligned with Christian-ethical norms and principles, aiming to further describe constructive and morally viable policies and actions. My approach will be influenced by Vorster (2007; 2017) and his constructive-ethical stance with respect to societal stewardship, as further outlined in Chapter 4. Embedded in this I will be addressing how corporations, their decision-makers, and other relevant stakeholders can adjust their approaches towards gender balance at C-suite level. This chapter will thus include the internal and external steps needed to ensure equal opportunities for both sexes on the journey towards leadership roles. Removing barriers addressed in Chapter 6 will be essential to support equality, something that will result in increasing access to talent pools while fostering diversity and inclusiveness, all linked to corporate success. Supporting change within organisations is key to ensure that women can have the same professional journey as men on their way to reach top positions. This will involve altering workplace norms and cultures, as well as enhancing career development, including mentoring and sponsorship. These points will all be addressed further in this chapter.

I will apply the same scriptural typologies and theological models as in Chapter 6. Beneficial recruitment practices may be contrasted with harmful practices, but the beneficial practices should not be allowed to become merely dependent or derived from the harmful antithetical approaches. I will show that the key is to illuminate practices which will promote Christian-ethical norms constructively, as merely avoiding the harmful practices will not be acceptable or be viewed as morally neutral. Any sound Christian-ethical recruitment practice should be supported by solid scriptural foundations within the Reformed paradigm.

7.2. Gender-appreciative recruitment practice

As shared in Chapter 6, none of the current leadership theories espoused in contemporary management theory highlights masculinity as an important trait or

quality to be considered an efficient leader. On the contrary, within our society today, merging warmth with agentic characteristics is considered mainstream leadership thinking within management scholarship, and inspirational motivation especially supports the grooming of female leaders on all levels of organisation (Northouse, 2018).

As elaborated in Chapter 6, the dismissal of harmful recruitment practices is based on scriptural norms, as further explained in Chapter 5. However, merely to reject such harmful recruitment practices alone will not be sufficient to adhere to the constructive ethical paradigm that is the basis here, as illuminated in Chapter 4. On the contrary, if sound scriptural interpretations in concert with the Reformed paradigm are to be utilised, a constructive model of recruitment where the promotion of such biblical norms is actively promoted needs to be established. In establishing such a recruitment practice pertaining to gender equality, I will use the term “recruitment” in its widest sense, where all aspects as described in the former chapter will have to be considered, including, of course, recruitment in the narrower sense of the term.

In addition to our obligation to treat women and men equally, according to scriptural norms, modern management research has time and again shown how women have a much-needed and highly deserved place in the highest echelons of corporate leadership. This finding is expected from a consideration of Scripture, as elaborated in Chapter 5. In management research, sex differences have been mapped within transformational and transactional leadership, clearly indicating that women are more transformational in their approach than men, as women are rated above men with respect to charisma, ability to motivate through inspirational and intellectual behaviours, while considering the individual person. Added to this is research advocating that female leaders are rated above male leaders when mapping behavioural aspects supporting effectiveness, while being rated below males when it comes to behaviours distracting them from what makes them effective (Powell, 2018). In order to better reflect the female leadership, there needs to be a model merging leadership trait focusing on teamwork, communication and relationships, while building on a consensus culture. Fostering this kind of environment and building a culture that demonstrates it can be beneficial when recruiting female leaders. I

argue that an alternative leadership theory should abandon the typical male leader, and support a model embracing the leaders who live their lives in balance and therefore demonstrate a different view on being successful. This approach implies that the current leader needs to take on multiple leadership roles, balancing work and private life, in an increasingly more complex world (Cheung and Halpern, 2010).

As shown in the discussion above, biblical norms and secular research findings conclude that when recruiting for organisational leadership positions, it should be recognised that both genders have a given place, and thus a beneficial practice will need to appreciate both genders, each with their valuable traits. In the present situation of contemporary corporate life, with its substantial gender gap in women's disfavour, remediation will for practical purposes entail an over-proportionate appreciation of female traits and leadership modes, as this will be the best way to shorten the time it will take to close the corporate gender gap, and thus bring practice into line with scriptural norms. Therefore, in line with Christian-ethical norms within the Reformed paradigm, management strategies and leadership structures should embed the possibilities for women to attain top level leadership positions, with opportunities and rights equal to those of their male peers. This strategy is supported by scriptural ethical principles, and will help to establish a gender-appreciative recruitment practice. When the gender gap is closed, the gender appreciation embedded in the recruitment practice will focus equally on both genders. In the following section, I will outline some foundational principles to be followed to attain such a scripturally aligned recruitment practice within the Reformed paradigm, and this model will be termed the Gender Appreciative Recruitment Practice (GARP). GARP will include efforts to be instigated on all levels of organisation and education, as this will be assumed necessary to influence the female participation on the corporate C-suite level. For clarity and ease of reading, I will mainly follow the systematic as used in Chapters 5 and 6.

7.3. Current representation of women in leadership roles

7.3.1. Legal framework and gender gap

Initiatives removing the legal barriers that are currently stopping women from reaching their career goals all support gender equality and the subsequent equality initiatives needed, and will be aligned with central scriptural passages, such as Genesis 1:26-27, Genesis 2:18-24, Matthew 2:2 and Luke 2:12. Offering legal support to avoid legislation-based discrimination taking place throughout the journey of any woman's life is essential. Such support will enable women to start with the same right to education as men at all levels, the same opportunities to enter the work life, and the same opportunities to embark on career journeys; these essential rights are thus in line with a gender-appreciative recruitment practice.

GARP will promote the abolition of all forms of legislation that may represent a hindrance for women to participate on an even footing in all parts of societal life, and this will be central to allow women to gain equal possibilities of attaining skills needed to become efficient leaders in corporate settings.

7.3.2 Institutionalised gender balance adds value

In Chapter 6 the disturbingly low number of females within top management was highlighted, an interesting angle being the lack of evidence that female board members contribute to the hiring of females at C-suite level. The "queen bee" metaphor has been offered as an explanation by some, implying that women at the top level do not support lower-level women and rather rise above the glass ceiling instead of making a hole in it to help their sisters. There is, however, evidence for the opposite, as female CEOs are more likely to be recruited if there are women among the board members; in addition, female board members are more likely to be appointed if the company is run by a female CEO. An increase in the number of females at the top level is also known to have a positive effect on the number of females in low-level roles (Powell, 2018). This shows the need for female role models in top management positions and the added value this brings in increasing the number of females all over.

However, just adding a woman is not necessarily the only solution. A viable business case for gender equality will have to be presented. There are clear links between diversity and improved key performance indicators, supporting the view that delivering on diversity echoes delivering on performance. For example, gender-diverse top leadership teams show improvement on both risk and financial performance (Perryman, Fernando and Tripathy, 2016). Another example is the positive impact of gender diversity on creativity and innovation (Rahier, 2017; Hewlett, Marshall, and Sherbin, 2013). Gender diversity also automatically embeds new ideas and solutions, not that easily recognised within homogeneous groups (Phillips, Lijenquist and Neale, 2009).

Female representation at board level has also proven to contribute to the financial performance. Credit Suisse (2012) reported that during a period of six years, companies with at least one female board member outperformed other companies within the same peer group by 26%. Similar results are reported from MCSI Inc. advocating that the “tipping point” with respect to influence affecting financial performance is having three women at board level. In numbers based on 2015 financial reports, MCSI shows that these firms report a return on equity of 10.1% versus 7.4% for firms not having female board representation at that level (Eastman, Rallis and Mazzucchelli, 2016). Gallup reported similar findings in 2014, highlighting both the revenue growth and profitability within gender-diverse companies (Badal, 2014).

When it comes to leadership teams, Hunt *et al.* (2018) report that companies with gender-diverse top management teams demonstrate a consistent positive correlation with increased profitability. Though women are under-represented in line leadership roles, it can also be argued that there is a strong positive link between the number of females in line leadership roles and financial performance (Hunt *et al.*, 2018). Another interesting finding is an increased long-term financial performance due to reduced strategic risk-taking associated with women in the upper corporate echelons (Jeong and Harrison, 2017).

In addition to direct financial outcome, intangible benefits are also improved within diverse teams, such as employer branding, workplace culture and the employee's opportunities for personal growth and further professional development (Morley, 2018). Other positive cultural benefits include the

reduced presence of internal discrimination and the added skill diversity women bring to the company (Noland, Moran and Kotschwar, 2016).

The above shows that adding women to teams within a company, especially leadership teams, adds value. Such steps demonstrate that a gender-appreciative recruitment policy not only adds to the financial performance of a company, it also promotes internal intangible indicators benefiting the branding, work life and culture within the company. Active promotion of women by way of realising the above-mentioned findings will be in alignment with central scripturally based Christian-ethical norms, as found in Judges 4:6, 13:8, 2 Kings 22:14-20, 2 Chronicles 34:22-33 and the prophets.

GARP will promote the participation of women in corporate leadership roles, so as to institutionalise the participation of women in the highest echelons of power, and this will allow women to gain equal possibility to partake and attain skills needed to become efficient leaders in corporate settings.

7.4 Auto-organisation and gender

In Chapter 6 I addressed how auto-organisation can be damaging to women, linking this also to SIT (Social Identity Theory) with subsequent “in-groups” and “out-groups”, which may leave individuals in a socially and professionally excluded state (Tajfel, 1974; Augoustinos, Walker and Donaghue, 2006).

Instead of excluding individuals (for the purpose of this dissertation, females), corporates encouraging auto-organisation can turn this around by ensuring that women are included and supported, thus also ensuring the benefits from having diverse teams, as addressed above. Taking such steps can contribute to the prevention of discrimination in the workplace and will contribute to gender-appreciative recruitment practices. For example, if women are included in teams created by management, and those women in such groups are given roles of power and/or prestige, the forces of social identity and group cognition may be benignly utilised, and this may create new group formations in an organisation, where women are in positions of power (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). This will again contribute to organisational actors becoming accustomed to seeing women in leadership positions, something that may strengthen the motivation to include women in power in new group formations occurring in the realm of the

self-regulated among the organisational constituents (Heere and James, 2007; Goffman, 1990). Such utilisation of the organisational auto-organising forces will be aligned with scripturally based Christian-ethical norms, such as, for example, found in Colossians 4:15 and Acts 12:12-17, 16:14-15, 40.

GARP will utilise organisational auto-organisation forces, so as to strengthen the resolve to include women in power in new group formations occurring in the realm of the self-regulated among the organisational constituents, and this will be central to allow for women to gain equal possibility to partake and attain skills needed to become efficient leaders in corporate settings.

7.5. Education

7.5.1. Higher education

Even though women in the Western world have the same formal rights and opportunities to education as men, the essential start of gender equality is within both private and public education. Continuing to support equality is essential for building the foundation for equal opportunities for females in work life. Additional support to encourage women to join MBA studies may also contribute positively, though research shows that education rarely impacts the hiring of CEOs. One study shows that the education of an existing CEO has no impact, meaning that he or she is replaced if deemed weak, irrespective of their educational attainment, as performance is essential. However, the same study does show that, when replacing the weak CEO, education plays a significant role, and that new CEOs holding MBAs contribute to a short-term performance improvement. Interestingly, however, no link between the MBA degree and long-term performance is reported; consequently, even though the MBA degree impacts the hiring of the CEO, it does not impact the performance of the company long-term (Bhagat, Bolton, and Subramanian, 2010). An interesting observation with respect to the current female CEOs heading up 57 of the companies at FTE 1000 is that 40% of them had a science, technology, engineering or mathematics background and only 19% were educated within business, finance and economics (Stevenson *et al.*, 2017). Whether this is linked to the lack of female leaders or not falls outside the scope of this dissertation.

The continued promotion of women in higher education, whether directly connected to management studies or not, will be in accordance with scripturally based Christian-ethical norms, as found, for example, in Matthew 26:6-13, Mark 14:3-9, Luke 10:38-42 and John 11:1-12.

GARP will continue to promote women in all forms of higher education, as this will be central to allow for women to gain equal possibility to partake and attain skills needed to become efficient leaders in corporate settings.

7.5.2. Other relevant experience

Organisational steps that positively contribute to women's learning on the job and exposure to tasks and responsibilities that contribute to relevant experience is essential, as balance is achieved not only in numbers but also through experience and personal development. These actions include women's exposure to senior leadership via having roles and responsibilities relevant for their journey towards C-suite. Embedded in this is ensuring that females receive the same informal learning opportunities and are offered the same access as their male colleagues to knowledge that empowers them, in addition to benefitting from both formal and informal feedback (Powell, 2018).

The benefit of a mentoring program has proven helpful, as mentoring has been shown to contribute positively to the confidence of women, including their abilities to make career plans and enhance their network (Dashper, 2018). Fostering an environment where women are encouraged to embark on continuous processes of self-monitoring and self-empowerment while taking on leadership roles is equally important to demonstrate benefits and possibilities to other females (Cheung and Halpern, 2010).

The creation and perpetuation of a benign corporate learning environment based on real-life participation and direct actor support that includes women will be in accordance with scripturally based Christian-ethical norms, as found, for example, in Luke 8:1-3; 24:10, Matthew 20:20-24; 37:56 and Mark 15:40-41; 16:1-2.

GARP will create and perpetuate a benign corporate learning environment based on real-life participation and direct actor support that includes women, as

this will be central to allow for women to gain equal possibility to partake and attain skills needed to become efficient leaders in corporate settings.

7.6. Recruitment processes

7.6.1. General

Promoting effective leadership, both internally and when recruiting externally, is key in any corporation, both when assessing recruitment in a wider sense or, as in this section, in the traditional narrower and practical sense of the term. As stated above, no gender-specific qualities are recognisable within leadership theories, but prejudice towards female leaders needs to be diminished, especially within the masculine work environments where prejudice is allowed to prosper, hence an important step is to confront gender prejudice at all levels (Powell, 2018). Typically, linked to this is bias and stereotypy and embedded gender perceptions. Rethinking how women and men are seen is essential; when women are seen as “abrasive”, for example, and men are seen as “forceful” when behaving in the same way, these perceptions need to be addressed and adjusted, ensuring that both genders are viewed through the same lenses (Elias, 2018).

An added value to promoting increased gender diversity is the positive impact on employee attraction and retention within the companies. This means that recruitment to gender-diverse teams is proven easier than recruitment to homogenous teams (Morley, 2018). Hunt *et al.* (2018) argue that having an internal road map to gender equality in all companies contributes positively, starting with daring to set measurable targets that are openly communicated and progress reported. Some global corporates have joined forces to demonstrate their commitment for gender equality, one being The Paradigm for Parity® committing to address the leadership gender gap and to close the gap by having at least 30% females in senior leadership roles by 2030 (Parity, n.d.). A second step is ensuring that internal processes linked to promotions are transparent and applied in a fair gender-neutral manner. The same principles should apply to hiring to ensure that fairness and transparency is demonstrated (Powell and Graves, 2003).

Positive aspects linked to both promotion and recruitment can be set as the “tone from the top”, for example. through Diversity and Inclusive (D&I) champions from the senior leadership team, and through promoting and demonstrating cultural values including inclusiveness and respect (Hunt *et al.*, 2018).

Recognition that female contribution to top level corporate leadership is an overarching positive value that may be extrapolated on a general basis across corporate delineations will be in accordance with scripturally based Christian-ethical norms as found, for example, in Luke 8:1-3; 24:10 and Mark 16:1-8.

GARP will recognise that female contribution to top level corporate leadership is an overarching positive value that may be extrapolated on a general basis across corporate delineations, as this will be central to allow for women to gain equal possibility to partake and attain skills needed to become efficient leaders in corporate settings.

7.6.2. Internal recruitment

Heightening the quality of the recruitment process is vital, an activity that starts internally at a very early stage. Overall, any corporation should have as a basis gender-neutral development programs for all employees, and embedded in this should be the development of leader capabilities via training, exposure and experience. As part of the performance management and development of employees, promotion procedures for leadership roles (and others) should be available to all potential candidates. Embedding career conversations as part of the development of people is a given. A further step is to establish settings that allow leaders of both genders the same chances to succeed in their leadership roles, if they have appropriate via credentials (Powell, 2018).

When the formal process starts, one essential step is to identify the qualifications needed to fill the role and to share this information internally and externally, thus supporting transparency and a solid basis for the coming decision. There will also need to be an increased accountability on all involved in the decisions when hiring at leadership level. When a business is promoting its first female leader, the company should take that as an opportunity to publicly announce that this is the first step to change (Powell, 2018). Branding

plays an important role in both internal and external recruitments, hence playing a supportive role when it comes to retention as well as attraction towards new hires. Key to handling an internal talent pool has proven to be the internal alignment of a company's talent management system, including the values as a foundation for the company, linked to overall strategy and global reach (Stahl *et al.*, 2012).

Taking steps to avoid and reduce anti-female gender bias and the influence of stereotyping could, for example, involve unconscious bias training and other mitigation steps (Wynn and Correll, 2018; Heilmann, 2012). Another action may involve addressing the decision-makers. As stated in Chapter 6, the 50+ male group is more prone to influence a female's road to success negatively, hence removing members of this group from the decision-makers may reduce the biases influencing the process (Powell, 2018).

Ensuring that women have the same access to internal sponsors as their male peers is seen as a useful tool. A sponsor in this respect is a person appropriately placed in the organisation with adequate influence on the process of decision-making. Having an internal sponsor improves the employee's opportunity to be promoted into top leadership roles by 1.5 times. The importance of sponsorship is further addressed in research on women and men in the leadership pipeline, showing that women often fall behind men, hence benefiting even more than men from having a sponsor, and thus more likely to be promoted if being sponsored by top level leaders (McKinsey, 2018; Foust-Cummings, Dinolfo and Kohler, 2011).

A further step that may be needed is the introduction of diversity intelligence (DQ), which involves reflection by the leaders (and others) on how employees are treated, also realising that not all need to be alike. Including DQ within an organisation involves also addressing the enforcement of diversity training within an organisation, thereby helping leaders to translate learning into actions and measurable practices (Hughes, 2018).

Organising the internal recruitment processes as directed toward the intra-organisational talent pool in a manner where pro-female biases are promoted, motivating sponsorship for female candidates and allowing gender-neutral

qualification determinants is in accordance with scripturally based Christian-ethical norms as found, for example, in Esther 2:17, 2:22-23, and Exodus 1:15-21.

GARP will organise the internal recruitment processes as directed toward the intra-organisational talent pool in a manner where pro-female biases are promoted, motivating sponsorship for female candidates and allowing gender-neutral qualification determinants, and this will be central to allow for women to gain equal possibility to partake and attain skills needed to become efficient leaders in corporate settings.

7.6.3. External recruitment

The shortage of suitable candidates in an environment that is competitive is called by some the “war for talent”. The link between a global war for talent and meritocracy has been addressed as a product of neoliberalism, and essentially embracing and promoting inequality, narrowing the market for talent (e.g., Brown and Tannock, 2009). The challenge to fill talent pipelines may be due to various factors, extending from shifting demographics and workforce preferences to the need for developing new capabilities and revitalising organisations in need of transformation (Stahl et al, 2012).

The war for talent is not relevant only in the external market, as the relevance also prevails when companies realise that their female employees leave their employer instead of seeking career opportunities internally (McCracken, 2000). Expanding the talent pools (both internally and externally) may involve different steps affecting also the female candidates, though what works within one organisation may not necessarily work within another organisation (Stahl et al., 2012).

Just adding a woman is not enough. If a woman is added only because of her gender, she easily becomes the gender alibi and will not gain the respect she needs from her colleagues, and she may subsequently be marginalised by the group. Having gender-diverse teams has proven to attract employees and increase their retention, hence the employer’s possibilities of identifying the right person for the job increases when recruiting from a diverse group of candidates, something which will be accommodated through adding the external recruitment

market. When the candidate has been appointed the employee's feeling of being respected and valued is improved in an inclusive environment (Morley, 2018; Powell, 2018). The support offered by professional recruiters, so-called head-hunters, is an essential contributor to identifying potential candidates for top leadership roles, as they may be reaching the widest possible market. Ensuring that they also contribute to expanding the talent pool to include female candidates is essential, partly during the scoping of the service and as part of the expectations, criteria and characteristics shared from the potential employers to the professional recruiters (cf. Tienari *et al.*, 2013).

Ensuring that women are added to all talent pools is in accordance with scripturally based Christian-ethical norms as found, for example, in Judges 4:21-22.

GARP will organise the external recruitment processes so that they are directed toward reaching the widest possible market, ensuring that they also contribute to expanding the talent pool to include female candidates, as this will be central to allow for women to gain equal possibility to partake and attain skills needed to become efficient leaders in corporate settings.

7.6.4. Influencing decision makers

Further actions that lie with the companies and their decision-makers is the need for having succession planning and the development of talent within the organisation as a continuous part of corporate strategising. Incorporated in these programs should be gender equality and diversity, topics that should be reflected in all processes within a company, including strategy, planning at all levels, and the development of talent (Greer and Virick, 2008). As mentioned above, having sponsors within or close to the decision-makers contributes positively to a woman's possibility of being promoted, and ensuring that decision-makers are directly involved will be beneficial to women. These would be expected results of such succession policies.

Overarching the above is ensuring that decision-makers are made accountable for the agenda supporting gender diversity at top level. This diversity will be reflected through succession planning, with decision-makers being directly involved in the grooming of female leadership candidates. This accountability

will be in accordance with scripturally based Christian-ethical norms as found, for example, in John 20:18, Mark 16:4 and Acts 1:14.

GARP will ensure that decision-makers are made accountable for supporting gender diversity at top level, and that succession planning reflects this strategy through the grooming of female leadership candidates, as this will be central to allow for women to gain equal possibility to partake and attain skills needed to become efficient leaders in corporate settings.

7.6.5. Extra-organisational stakeholders

Stakeholders who influence processes for hiring top leaders may very well sit outside the organisation. Such stakeholders may influence the hiring processes in a positive way by either directly or indirectly supporting female candidates. One aspect may be the positive branding effect pursuant to hiring of women, but more significant may be the positive push and support of the organisation's authority or membership, even though benchmarking and peer pressure may occur.

With the positive effect that females at board level and leadership level have on the financial performance and other relevant KPIs, addressed above, banks, insurance companies, and rating companies should be induced to introduce actions that demonstrate the added value these females may bring to the companies, and be motivated to exert their influence benignly so as to promote the added participation of women in corporate leadership positions.

Any positive steps taken by extra-organisational stakeholders to recognise the value women bring to companies, and thus to influence the added participation of women in corporate leadership positions, will be in accordance with scripturally based Christian-ethical norms as found, for example, in Joshua 2:1-3, 6:17-25, James 2:25, Matthew 1:5 and Hebrews 11:31.

GARP will motivate extra-organisational stakeholders to recognise the value women bring to companies, and thus influence the added participation of women in corporate leadership positions, as this will be central to allow for women to gain equal possibility to partake and attain skills needed to become efficient leaders in corporate settings.

7.7. Compensation

The positional gender gap is to some extent supported by both males and females in the issues of payment and compensation, often linked to the above addressed stereotypical behaviours, hence steps to address and diminish both genders' acceptance of different pay due to gender needs to be supported (Koskinen Sandberg, 2017; Auspurg, Hinz, and Sauer, 2017).

Assessing the value of work, and thereby evaluating performance, is recognised as a key way of promoting equal pay. Both the European Commission and the International Labour Organisation recommend job evaluation, including legislation and policies addressing steps to ensure gender equality (Koskinen Sandberg, 2017). Gender-neutral compensation models will support equality, and whether this can happen outside the legal framework may be questioned. Iceland, ranked first in gender equality, became in 2018 the first country to enforce equal pay for both genders, linking this to the ISO "Equal pay management system – requirements and guidance" (Ólafsson, 2017).

The evaluation of leaders within organisations may need to be revisited to support women taking on leadership roles in highly masculine environments, as evaluation based on their performed tasks, promotion of group cohesiveness, in addition to their development and grooming of subordinates, are tasks often associated with female leader effectiveness (Powell, 2018).

Payment and compensation models that are based on the value of work and gender-neutral evaluations will be in accordance with scripturally based Christian-ethical norms as found, for example, in Malachi 3:5.

GARP will motivate payment and compensation models that are based on value of work and gender-neutral evaluations, as this will be central to allow for women to gain equal possibility to partake and attain skills needed to become efficient leaders in corporate settings.

7.8. Liberation

As mentioned in Chapter 6, the liberation aspects as grounded in Scripture unequivocally support women's quest for equal treatment in society in all

arenas, including that of participating in corporate C-suite level on equal terms as men.

Women have during the last decades moved into paid employment in ways their ancestors could only dream of, so that women now make up a significant part of the workforce. Even though women are moving into roles that previously have been occupied only by men, including the top management positions, the journey to full participation is still not completed. Participation at the same level within work life equals participation at the same level in society, consequently allowing women to have the same benefits as men. Applying steps to ensure gender-appreciative recruitment policies will contribute to this.

Change begets change; in other words, taking the first step is essential, having the force to shift direction and celebrating the journey towards gender equality in all aspects. In short, it is the fair moral thing to do. As has been shown above, GARP will lead to the enhancement of equality and fairness for women, and as this will be instigated on all levels of corporate organisation, the result will be to augment female emancipation and liberation, which will be in accordance with scripturally based Christian-ethical norms as found, for example, in Matthew 2:2 and Luke 2:12. This will be central to allow for women to gain equal possibility to partake and attain skills needed to become efficient leaders in corporate settings.

7.9. GARP in practice

It will appear that GARP as presented here is in a general form, and the scope of this dissertation does not allow for any detailed elaboration on possible ways to implement GARP for practical use. However, because GARP is based on general Christian-ethical norms, it will need to be adapted in accordance with real-life situations in the different recruitment and corporate realms to be used, and a set of generalised ready-to-go rules may not be detailed at this early stage of research. Further, as with any theoretical organisational principles that need to be customised for practical operations, GARP will need to be further interpreted and adapted in accordance with the specific corporate and/or societal area where it will be utilised. For example, to influence lawmakers, educators and extra-organisational stakeholders, alignment with GARP will be a

different task than, for example, to oversee the creation and perpetuation of intra-organisational sponsorship or mentor programs.

When practitioners are to utilise GARP in their real-life settings, my recommendation is that they first identify which of the principles as outlined above most closely align to their situation. There may be more than one principle. Then, they should instigate the creation of a specific set of practical rules or a framework for how to proceed, so that a GARP-aligned set of instructions is available to be observed by the actors who will be in contact with the actual area of practice. I also recommend that didactic steps are taken, through the establishment of learning groups, for example, so as to create a wider understanding and acceptance of GARP, including the foundations and the principles GARP expresses. Implementation will be made more fluid with a broad acceptance of what GARP entails, whether the organisational setting is the performance of internal recruitment or attempts to influence outside stakeholders such as politicians, trade unions, governmental agencies, or vocational organisations. If it is possible through such practical steps to generate a general acceptance of GARP and its benefits, my expectation is that more detailed and situation-specific alignment will occur, both within and outside of the corporate realm. Flowing from such an acceptance of GARP, I expect that interest in learning how to practice GARP will grow, and, as with any expression of management theory and social technology, constant practical evaluation will be useful to hone GARP further into an increasingly practicable and generally accepted corporate and societal practice.

7.10. Summary

The elaboration above has framed certain categories of recruitment practice that may be considered beneficial from a Christian-ethical perspective within the Reformed paradigm, and has delineated actions that may form a Gender Appreciative Recruitment Practice (GARP) to ensure gender balance at C-suite level, for the morally concerned companies and their stakeholders to align with. The findings can be summarised as follows:

- Aligned with scriptural norms, modern management research has time and again shown how women have a much-needed and highly deserved place in the highest echelons of corporate leadership.
- GARP will promote the abolition of all forms of legislation that may represent a hindrance for women to participate on an even footing in all parts of societal life.
- GARP will promote the participation of women in corporate leadership roles, so as to institutionalise the participation of women in the highest echelons of power.
- GARP will utilise organisational auto-organisation forces, so as to strengthen the move to include women in power in new group formations occurring in the realm of the self-regulated among the organisational constituents.
- GARP will continue to promote women in all forms of higher education.
- GARP will create and perpetuate a benign corporate learning environment based on real-life participation and direct actor support that includes women.
- GARP will recognise that female contribution to top level corporate leadership is an overarching positive value that may be extrapolated on a general basis across corporate delineations.
- GARP will organise the internal recruitment processes as directed toward the intra-organisational talent pool in a manner where pro-female biases are promoted, motivating sponsorship for female candidates and allowing gender-neutral qualification determinants.
- GARP will organise the external recruitment processes as directed toward reaching the widest possible market, ensuring that they also contribute to expanding the talent pool to include female candidates.
- GARP will ensure that decision-makers are made accountable for supporting gender diversity at top level, and that succession planning reflects this strategy through the grooming of female leadership candidates.
- GARP will motivate extra-organisational stakeholders to recognise the value women bring to companies, and thus influence the added participation of women in corporate leadership positions.

- GARP will motivate payment and compensation models that are based on value of work and gender-neutral evaluations.
- GARP will enhance equality and fairness for women, and as this will be instigated on all levels of corporate organisation, the result will be to augment female emancipation and liberation.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1. Introduction

I will now move on to summarising my conclusions and addressing the research questions listed in Chapter 1, including a focus on how the Gender Appreciative Recruitment Practice (GARP) can be applied and nurtured for future use. I will also propose areas where additional research may support the further progress of GARP, assisting the corporate world in making sound decisions based on a Christian-ethical foundation within the Reformed paradigm. I do not aim to present a ready-to-go step-by-step plan for practitioners, but I will propose aspects that may assist in making GARP operational in the practical corporate world. My stance reflects the view that Western society is built on the solid inheritance of Christianity with its moral values at the core, hence, with Christian-ethical norms as guidance, steps can be taken to safeguard gender balance that will benefit all relevant stakeholders, including the wider society.

8.2. Conclusion

As I have asserted in the previous chapters, taking steps to ensure gender balance at the top leadership level within the corporate world is in line with Christian-ethical norms. Such steps would encourage the whole range of stakeholders involved in internal and external recruitment processes to focus on gender balance, as they are also empowered and made accountable to enforce further gender equality.

In the above chapters, I have aligned my work to the format given by the research questions in Chapter 1, and have answered all these questions within the framework of my dissertation. I have elaborated how the C-suite gender balance in corporate life should be guided in view of a Christian-ethical perspective, and have further proposed the GARP model as a framework for going forward.

I have addressed how gender balance can be observed in different realms of society and different social levels, something that has furthered the elucidation of aspects central to developing an understanding for the underlying moral

values at work when recruiting for contemporary corporate C-suite positions. The historical presentation that has been given further explains how gender equality, or lack thereof, has been closely interconnected with societal developments within legislation, industry, the market, and the wider economy. It has been shown how the development towards increased gender equality has not been linear, as at certain times in history societal developments and phenomena such as war and industrialisation have resulted in setbacks to equality for females. I have illustrated how the current state of recruitment for higher leadership positions results in denying females their equal place in society. Thus, it has been demonstrated that the existing lack of gender balance at corporate C-suite cannot be seen as morally neutral.

I have identified the Christian-ethical principles applicable to gender balance at corporate C-suite level, and have engaged specifically with the main ideas associated with the Reformed paradigm relevant to the issues addressed. I have only focused on the deontological strands of ethical philosophy, as these are deemed to be the sole practical foundation for my investigation into the research questions, and the poverty of consequentialism has been demonstrated. From this point of view, I have identified the scriptural basis forming Christian-ethical norms for a holistic and constructive stewardship mentality when recruiting to C-suite positions in the widest sense, showing how these norms promote central Christian values such as equality and liberation, and will be beneficial to all participants and parts of society. It has been on this basis that I have identified what Christian-ethical principles are applicable to gender balance at corporate C-suite level.

I have addressed recruitment practices that do not utilise Christian-ethical norms, and that are thus deemed damaging to the task of reaching gender balance at corporate C-suite level. Thus, I have outlined some recruitment practices that should be avoided, as these are not aligned to Christian-ethical norms of the Reformed paradigm. I have also connected these practices to Scripture, thus ensuring the biblical foundation for the positions I have taken. Within this category I have also demonstrated that these practices cannot be seen as constructive or beneficial, as these do not increase the number of women in top corporate leadership roles; when recruiting to C-suite level in

corporates, such practices should be avoided, since they frustrate the promotion of Christian-ethical norms.

Simply to avoid harmful recruitment practices cannot be considered prudent adherence to Christian-ethical norms within the Reformed paradigm, as our obligation is to constructively and actively promote practices which align with the said norms. I have addressed recruitment practices that encourage the promotion of Christian-ethical norms. I have explained how the GARP systematic will support gender-balanced recruitment to C-suite level and therefore will be deemed beneficial and useful both from a wider societal point of view and for the individual involved actors. Support for these beneficial practices within Scripture is also demonstrated, thus aligning them to Christian-ethical norms within the Reformed paradigm. Through my elaboration of these beneficial recruitment practices, I have demonstrated what practices should be encouraged when recruiting to C-suite level in corporates as promoting Christian-ethical norms.

Finally, through having introduced GARP, general guidelines for recruitment practices to corporate C-suite corresponding with the formulated Christian-ethical principles have been developed. Applying these practices in real-life scenarios should further be encouraged as advancing Christian-ethical norms, and I have on an overall basis outlined some guidance for making GARP operational for practitioners. Through GARP and the overall framework of principles introduced in this dissertation, guidelines have been established for decision-makers and other relevant stakeholders to support gender balance in top leadership roles in the corporate Western world, as aligned to Christian-ethical principles within the Referred paradigm. Through my presentation of GARP and possible trajectories by which it could be made functional, I have explicated how guidelines for recruitment practices to corporate C-suite can be developed to correspond with the formulated Christian-ethical principles.

In short, considering all aspects of my dissertation, the recruitment of members to top leadership roles should be aided by a Christian-ethical perspective, supporting gender equality.

8.3. Recommendations

For practitioners involved in the recruitment of people to top leadership roles it could be of interest to address how GARP may be deployed in their real-life situations, and thereby be embedding the principles in ongoing corporate strategic planning and talent work. As addressed in Chapter 7, I have shared suggestions to the real-life practitioner aiming to initiate GARP in their situations. Further recommendations are hard to share in an extensive manner within the framework of this dissertation, hence articulating detailed guidelines for GARP falls outside the scope of this project. It should also be noted that GARP in real life will need to embrace the relevant situation and business where recruitment and gender balance need to be addressed. Nevertheless, I urge decision-makers and other relevant stakeholders to investigate their current recruitment practices to determine whether they are in line with applicable Christian-ethical norms, and then to follow up by authorising the relevant actors to align to the GARP guidelines, supporting improvement, sharing accountability, and ensuring that damaging practices be demolished and appreciate initiatives established. Anchoring these steps within the organisation is essential, starting at the existing top level, including other relevant stakeholders, advocating targets and measurements, and demonstrating commitment through concrete actions.

8.4. Future research

I expect there to be substantial room for additional studies to support the opportunities to encourage gender-balanced recruitment based on Christian-ethical norms. My introduction of GARP is new, and therefore I assume that multiple topics within this field could be further explored, ensuring both clarification and development. Additional steps to make GARP operational in a real-life environment would be of further interest. Action research or similar collaborative methods of research could be beneficial approaches to widen the scope of research. I imagine that the scope for further research that supports and extends GARP and its constructive approach may be performed in a wide array of research paradigms, where both qualitative and quantitative methodologies may be of substantial utility (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2012). As GARP involves ongoing corporations where a wide spectrum of interested

stakeholders are touched, I would further assume that the scope for future research based on a multi-disciplinary and/or inter-disciplinary modality involving scholars from various academic domains would be of particular interest (Choi and Anita, 2008).

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