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**INVESTIGATION INTO THE ROLE OF WOMEN DURING EARLY CHRISTIANITY:
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN ZIMBABWE.**

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**SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR (Ph.D)**

**DEPARTMENT OF NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES AND RELATED LITERATURE
FACULTY OF THEOLOGY AND RELIGION, UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA**

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NOVEMBER 29, 2024

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to all Seventh-day Adventists around the world and all peoples who are on a quest for a perspicacity of gender and sexuality issues in the bible, analysed from an African perspective, and their role in influencing biblical interpretation on the roles of men and women in church. The study also appeals to all who seek to know more about the Seventh-day Adventist church's women's ordination debates and their trajectories to-date as well as the reasons behind their present stalemate.

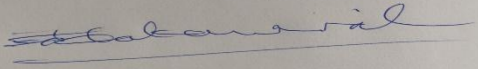
ETHICS STATEMENT

I declare that this research obtained the requisite ethical clearance in conformity with the University of Pretoria's prescribed ethical standards for literature-based doctoral research.

DECLARATION

I declare that **INVESTIGATION INTO THE ROLE OF WOMEN DURING EARLY CHRISTIANITY: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN ZIMBABWE** is my own work and that all sources I have used and cited in this work have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete reference list.

Signed:



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My deepest appreciation goes to my supervisor and promoter, Dr. Mphumezi Hombana, whose professional touch ignited my quest and motivation to pursue this study. His expert guidance and deep knowledge of the study of the New Testament greatly aided my comprehension of the technical issues related to the work. His ability to command a strict work ethic while at the same time allowing me autonomy to express my independent thinking as a scholar is really appreciated.

Great appreciation goes to Professor Dirk Human, the Dean for Department of New Testament and Related Literature for his help in the allocation of research supervisors (promoters) at all the phases of my study program. Furthermore, the services of Mrs Cathy Sandis, (head University of Pretoria student administration), and Mrs Doris Mokgokolo (senior University of Pretoria student administration officer) for helping me with crucial administrative information on all aspect of the study from admission, enrolment, right up to graduation are highly appreciated. Also, the University of Pretoria's post-graduate information specialist, Christine Nel's expert guidance on library sources (both on-line and print), trainings on PhD thesis writing, and all the technical issues needed in studies of this nature, level, and scope is greatly appreciated. The English language editors, Ms Mandisa Dyantyi and David van Groeningen, are highly thanked for their dynamic expertise on proof-reading and fine-tuning the language aspect of the work.

It would be a dis-service to myself to fail to recognise the crucial ground-laying work done by my initial supervisor, Prof Zorodzai Dube, who painstakingly guided me from the formative stages of this project, which I began in a very difficult era, namely the post covid-19 period and the concomitant negative effects it posed on academia.

My employer, the East Zimbabwe Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists' (EZC) administration committees (ADCOMS), through the leadership of pastors Joshua Muzira, Alexander Chinoshava and Tendai Timuri respectively as presidents who were at the helm of the EZC leadership during the time I was pursuing this study program are thanked for giving me the conducive and flexible work environments which made me able to focus on studies while also not affecting the work. I thank them for

approving my study leaves. Their exhibiting a professional leadership style which sees staff development as an urgent and pressing need for our century is much appreciated.

My family provided the much-needed support which went a long way to enhance the successful completion of this program. Special mention goes to my wife, Zadzisai, for her sacrifice which makes the old adage 'behind a successful man is a thoughtful, and hard-working woman' true to my professional and academic undertaking.

A big thank you goes to private sponsors who provided all my funding needs for the initial two years (2022 - 2023). This guaranteed the much-needed uninterrupted study progress. Marieka Schoeman, the senior University of Pretoria's Postgraduate Bursaries is thanked for helping me apply and be awarded the UP Postgraduate Bursary, which came at a time when my private sponsorship had lapsed. Thus, another bid thank you goes to the University of Pretoria Postgraduate Bursary officers who approved my application to get the much-needed financial assistance which greatly contributed to the completion of this project. Hence, the University of Pretoria leadership deserves a special mention for picking me up at a time when I needed a helping hand most.

Last but not least, I thank God, the Almighty, for His wondrous ways which He demonstrated in my life throughout this academic journey that started in 2022, sustaining me in miraculous ways as the journey meandered through, even guaranteeing my well-being amidst a very unhealthy lifestyle I often adopted, where I would sometimes literally sleep for just an hour for months due to pressure and confusion which almost persuaded me to cherish thoughts of quitting.

ABSTRACT

Employing a hybrid methodological framework which infuse African feminism and social-scientific criticism as research methodology, the study focused on investigating the role played by women during early Christian households' pre-AD 70 milieu, an epoch understood by this research to cover the Hellenistic, Pauline, Synoptic Gospel, and deuterio-Pauline households. The research sought to discover the implication of an African feminist and social-scientific reading of the above-named epochs' texts which speak on the role of women in church as compared with their male counterparts and establish the light that reading cast on the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Zimbabwe's (SDAZ) role assigning praxis between women and men. The findings were used as case study materials to justify reasons for her women's ordination ban, a position that is against her official church policy directives contained in the 20th edition of the SDA church manual's pages 78 and 85 which approves women's ordination for deaconry and eldership roles to elected female church members. It was evinced that she opposes the SDA church manual directives on women's ordination because of their incongruence with her African epistemological, philosophical, and cultural frameworks, which to a greater extent, resembles those of the early church's milieu and thus through cultural borrowings, both the SDAZ and the early church ascribe collaborating-with-men roles to women, while the key authoritative ones are reserved for men. On this regard, she sees her ban on women's ordination as having biblical support since she claims to be continuing with the early church practice. On the other hand, because the SDAZ's epistemological, philosophical and cultural worldviews are diametrically opposed to those of her sister churches in the Euro-American continents, an ambivalent ordination of women practices thus exist in the SDA global church where the Euro-American SDA churches ordain with ease their women for the same roles that the SDAZ women are barred from. However, a deeper study on the SDA church's policy documents discovered that their controlling body, the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists (the GC) has never approved women's ordination for eldership and commissioned pastors' roles even by the date of writing this research (see Chapter 2's points 2.1 to 2.2.3), thereby revealing that the official position in the SDA church as regards women's ordination, is that all Adventist women regardless of the territory they are in, are barred from the ordination rite. This reality shed the light necessary to see that the SDAZ is not violating her church policies

in barring women for ordination. Rather, she is standing by the GC's official position which currently does not approve the ordination rite to be administered to any female church member. As such, it is the Euro-American SDA churches that are opposing the GC position and thus are to face disciplinary action as is stipulated in on the 67th page of the SDA church manual. With this, the study concluded that the ambivalence is unofficial, yet unavoidable. However, the research recommended, as a future work, that there be studies to establish reasons why the universal ordination of women pronouncement carried in the 20th edition of SDA church manual's pages 75 and 85 came about if the GC has not yet endorsed it. Also, that whether it gets approved in the upcoming GC Session to be held from 03 - 12 July 2025, they modify the phrase so that it does not project a universal application since the research foresees that the universal ordination of women is likely to be rejected again at the up-coming 2025 GC Session. The territorial ordination of women practice is thus the most likely outcome according to this study, where each territory/Division is to be allowed to decide on whether or not to ordain women guided by its epistemological, philosophical and cultural frameworks.

The research revealed too that, although SDAZ women are barred from key leadership roles which require ordination, a plethora of other equally key leadership roles are open to all members regardless of sex or gender, ordained or non-ordained, through the GC working policy BA 60 10's non-discriminatory employment practice claim thereby projecting the SDAZ as an inclusive church which offers leadership roles to all qualifying members regardless of gender, sex, race, ethnicity, class, or geographical location, which is enforced by the GC working policy FB 05 - K 05 (see Chapters 2 and 6). These led to the recommendations suggested in Chapter 7, where the SDAZ has been challenged to consider the extent to which the inevitable reality of the non-static nature of culture and the effects of cultural borrowings from her Euro-American SDA churches, and / or other continents of the global village may be allowed to inform her future ordination practices just as the Greco-Roman of the early church, which she claims to be continuing with, also later evolved to partially relinquish its previously rigid

laws¹ of persons, property and family for example, which denied privileges to women and other classes of people who were denigrated on gender, class and sex basis such as women, slaves and plebeians and began to offer them roles and statuses which were previously blocked for them. The SDAZ therefore, ought to stand ready to justify her claim that she is continuing with the early church cultural practises which governed relations between men and women by establishing whether her Zimbabwean/African culture is likely to begin to loosen its rigid patriarchal ethos, like did the Greco-Roman, to allow women to assume roles and rite previously barred for them, which their counterparts in Euro-American SDA churches are currently enjoying.

¹ Spiller (1985:47) has postulated that the Roman State underwent a series of developmental stages which saw modifications of the status and role of previously marginalized classes such as women, children, slaves, and plebeians who later were allowed to assume privileges previously denied them. For example, whereas during the monarchy stage, women were regarded as property, under the Republic stage, they together with the plebeians were given rights to property and also voice in the marriage contract under the marriage with *manus*. Spiller holds that during the Empire stage (27BC – 476 AD), the stage in which the early church rose from, although the patriarchal ethos was still strong, there were varying degrees of lenience on its application as women began to be allowed to assume roles and status they were previously denied during the monarchy stage, for example women were allowed to assume the public role of serving as magistrates in some instances during the Empire stage.

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ABBREVIATIONS

SDA		Seventh-day Adventist
SDAZ		Seventh-day Adventist Church in Zimbabwe
GC	.....	General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists
NAD	.....	North American Division
SID	.....	Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division
EXCOM	.....	Executive Committee
ADCOM	.....	Administrative Committee
EZC	.....	East Zimbabwe Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists
CFO	.....	Chief Finance Officer
PREXAD	.....	President's Executive Administrative Council
BRC/s	.....	Biblical Research Committee/s
TOSC	.....	Theology of Ordination Study Committee
AC	.....	Annual Conference of the GC
AAW	.....	Association of Adventist Women
AWI	.....	Adventist Women's Institute
TEAM	.....	Time for Equality in Adventist Ministry

DEFINITION OF TERMS

GC Working Policy - The GC working policy is an administrative book which contains the Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists worldwide and the Constitution and by-laws of the GC as adopted by GC Sessions in session, the Mission Statement of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Total Commitment to God—A Declaration of Spiritual Accountability in the Family of Faith, the Roadmap to Mission and the Working Policy as adopted by Annual Councils of the GC Executive Committee. It is therefore the authoritative voice of the Church in matters relating to the administration of the work of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination in all parts of the world. It is to be adhered to by all SDA denominational organizations worldwide. It is updated annually to factor in any changes which might get voted in during Annual councils (GC working policy B10). This research utilises the latest edition of year 2022 - 2023.

Motion – is idea/point that a committee member of any administrative organ (local church, conference, union, Division, GC AC, GC EXCOM/ADCOM, GC Session in Session) of the church raises for attention to be discussed in the ongoing meeting for guidance to decisions that the said committee is meant to make at any given time they meet for administrative meetings.

Action – An agreed vote by delegates and other administration officials, such as a church business meeting, ADCOM and EXCOM minutes votes. It is an official position that was agreed upon by the officials who presided and is respected as standard procedure or ruling.

Minutes – These are points taken by any committee's secretary. They show items of the agenda which would have been discussed and voted on by the officials who presided over it. They are very important in the SDA church administrative procedures and can be used by auditors to make decisions on an item that needs their reference.

SDA Church Manual – It is an administrative policy document which encompasses the job descriptions of all lay church officers, as well as church employees such as pastors. It must be adhered to by every SDA church member worldwide. It specifies qualifications and conditions to be met by all church members on the role of lay members elected to assume various church ministry tasks such as deacons, eldership,

treasury, church clerk, Sabbath school teachers, to mention a few, and regarding who needs be ordained or not. It also describes how the church is run and specifies parliamentary procedures on how to convene departmental council committee meetings, church boards, and church business meetings. It also specifies how church elections to nominate new church officers, an activity carried out each year are done. It contains the code of contact which binds all SDA church members around the world and sets out discipline categories to be meted on erring members/churches through censures and/or removal of membership depending of the nature and gravity of the offence an erring member/church might have committed.

The SID 2015-16 working policy BA 15 05 stresses the centrality of the church manual's administrative role in the following words: The standards and practices of the church are based upon the principles set forth in the *SDA Church Manual*, published by the GC. These principles are to be followed in all matters pertaining to the administration of local churches both within the church and in its relationship to higher levels of organization. No attempt should be made by any employee to set up standards of membership or to make, or attempt to enforce, rules or regulations for the church which have not been adopted by the general body of believers and which are not set forth in the church manual. This manual is applied universally to all SDA church members/churches across the globe.

Church Board - It is an administrative committee of a local SDA church in charge of planning and running all church programs and finances, and spiritual nurture of members. It is also the platform which discusses and recommends disciplinary measures to erring church members. It is convened monthly for updates and coordination of programs where it makes decisions which it will recommend for final ratification, acceptance or rejection by that local church through Church Business Meeting. It is chaired by the district pastor unless he is unavailable where the head elder will be delegated to chair on his behalf. It is made up of all departmental directors, the local church EXCOM which comprises the church clerk and the church treasurer and the pastor. Women feature too in this top decision-making body - the local church EXCOM.

Church Business Meeting – It is the highest decision-making body of an SDA local church. Through the representative church governance system, decisions

recommended for adoption by the church from the church board are brought before the church members at a Church Business Meeting where each member is given a platform to vote for or against them so as to facilitate that each member contributes to the voting of doctrinal positions or any aspect of church life. The Church Business Meeting is comprised of every baptized member of a local church and may be held monthly or quarterly depending with the size and needs of the local church. It is again chaired by the district pastor or heard elder when delegated by the pastor.

Representative Constituency-Based Church Governance System – A strategy of administering a complex network of churches in trans-regional and trans-hemisphere localities where the positions that bind them all for uniform piety are achieved by giving each member a platform to speak through the voting processes by delegates elected from every local church of the SDA world church. The process begins from the local church and is epitomised at the GC sessions convened in the USA every *quinquennium* to vote on doctrinal positions and any other administrative issue. Delegates from all SDA churches in the world come for discussions and voting for or against doctrinal positions and other administrative issues of the world church to pass them into binding policy for all SDA church members world-wide. The representative system is thus in operation to govern the day to day running of all SDA world church units from local churches, local conferences, local Unions, Divisions and the GC, where a Business Meeting at each local establishment allows each church member to participate in the decision-making process of the church. This is the same process that happens at the GC Sessions in Session's decision-making process through each member/delegate's participation in the discussions and voting processes. The GC Session in Session is the highest level where key decisions are made and where everything is passed or rejected into law for application and enforcement by each SDA church across the world.

GC Session (in Session) – It is a meeting convened by delegates from all SDA Churches and institutions across the world chosen through the representative system. It is convened in the USA every *quinquennium* for voting to accept or deny proposed doctrinal and administrative issues/positions. What this session votes for or against becomes binding for all SDA membership. It is the only platform where administrative decisions with a bearing to policy change are made. Even though Divisions are

mandated by the GC to carry out administrative decisions for their specific territories, they are not allowed to craft policies that are contrary to the GC policies. Thus, they only act in line with the prevailing GC policy.

Delegate – According to the 2015 -16 SID working policy B 20 05, a delegate is any SDA church member who gets nominated by his/her constituency (local church, local conference, or local union) to attend a constituency meeting or the GC Session where he/she represents his/her constituency and votes on its behalf thereby making each member of the SDA world church's voice heard and respected and thus achieve a democratic state of affairs in the administration and decision-making of the church work. As regards the GC Sessions, the Sessions are made up of delegates duly appointed in harmony with the General Conference Constitution. Such delegates are vested with authority to participate in, and vote on, all questions coming before the General Conference Session, to elect officers and to have voice and vote in all the affairs of the session.

GC – The administrative organ that houses the highest administrative offices of the SDA world church which governs all SDA churches in the world. Its headquarters are in the USA. It is headed by a theologically trained and ordained pastor who is referred to as the GC president. When in this office and role, he is the SDA world church leader. The current GC president is Dr and pastor Ted Wilson. He administers the world church's work through the representative committee system which involves the GC Sessions, the Annual Meetings, the GC EXCOM and ADCOM meetings. These various senior administrative committees naturally see women feature at all their various levels due to the representative church governance system employed by the SDA world church. Thus, Adventist women can not only serve as district pastors, presidents of conferences, unions, Divisions, and the GC but can also serve as top senior church leaders in various GC, Divisions, local unions, local conferences departments as directors of various departments such as health, education, women's ministries, publishing ministries to mention a few (see chapter 6 section 6.9) Technically, the GC is formed by a group of Divisions. Thus, all the 13 SDA Divisions make the GC.

Local Church – It is a group of SDA church members in a given locality who meet for church services each Sabbath. They are led by a theologically trained pastor who is

assisted to run church programs in his absence by the committee system, which comprises elders, an elders' board, local church EXCOM, and ADCOM, PM council, and the church board. All these report to the highest administrative organ known as the Church Business Meetings. These administrative meetings are chaired by the pastor (who is the chief administrator of all local churches in his district). The pastor may delegate this role to the head elder, who must be ordained for this role. Women feature too in the EXCOM, ADCOM, church boards and Personal Ministries councils where they assume key administrative roles as treasurers and Personal Ministries, Sabbath School and family life directors to mention a few.

District – It is a group of churches that a district pastor runs or is in charge of. They range in size depending on where the district is located. Rural districts may comprise around 10 to even 25 local churches while urban districts may range from around 4 to 8 local churches.

District Pastor. Is a male theologically trained person employed by an SDA local Conference, through the approval of Union conferences and the Division which supervises the said conference, to run local churches in a district. One pastor usually runs a minimum of ten (10) local churches if pastoring in rural territories and five (5) churches if pastoring urban areas. Currently only males can be pastors in the Division that runs the SDAZ, namely the SID.

Local Conference – A local conference is a group of SDA churches in a defined territory. It is made up of a group of SDA local churches. Again, like the Union conferences, Divisions, and the GC, the local conference is led by a theologically trained and ordained pastor whose title is 'Conference president' who also administers the work through the representative committee system which takes other directors from church departments which are run by women too, such as health, family life and women ministries for example, as mentioned above. There are six Conferences in Zimbabwe, two covering greater Mashonaland territories, two for Midlands and two in Matebeleland.

Union Conference – A Union Conference or a union is a group of SDA local conferences. It too is led by a theologically trained and ordained pastor whose title is 'Union Conference president', chosen after every five years through a Constituency

meeting (Union Conference Session) voting system. The Union Conferences report to Divisions through their president. Again, like the GC and the Divisions, the Union Conference president administers the work through the representative committee system (Union Conference EXCOM and ADCOM committees) as there is no individual in the SDA church system who has veto powers to decide issues on his or her own. Everything is taken to committees, where they are voted for or against, for them to be regarded as binding policy. According to the sidadventist.org website, the SID is comprised of 9 Unions Conferences (Botswana, Indian Ocean, Malawi, Northern Zambia, Southern Zambia, Zimbabwe Central, Zimbabwe East, and Zimbabwe West Union Conferences), 3 Union Missions (Mozambique, North-East Angola, and Southern-Western Angola Union Missions, and 1 mission station (Sao Tome and Principe) with Zimbabwe having three, one covering Mashonaland territories, one covering Midlands provinces, and one covering the Matebeleland regions.

Division – It is a regional administrative arm of the GC. It is delegated by the GC to carry out the administrative work of Unions in territories demarcated and defined by the GC, where they supervise and control in line with the GC's overall policy guidelines. Its leader is chosen through a Division Session's voting system every five years and must be a theologically trained and ordained pastor whose title the 'Division president'. A division is made up of a group of local Unions. A total of thirteen (13) Divisions make up the GC administrative structure, namely East-Central Africa Division (ECAD), Euro-Africa Division, Euro-Asia Division, Inter-American Division, North American Division (NAD), Northern-Asia Pacific Division, South American Division, South Pacific Division, Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division, Southern Asia Division, Southern-Asia Pacific Division, Trans-European Division, and West-Central Africa Division. Each of the 13 Divisions has its own Division president who works through EXCOM and ADCOM committees to administer the work. The SDAZ is run by the SID. In the GC working policy 2022 - 2023 edition, the SID covers Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, South Africa, Mozambique, Sao Tome & Principe, Lesotho, Swaziland, Namibia, and Botswana. Its headquarters are in South Africa. Each of the 13 Divisions has its own Division president, who works through Division EXCOMs and ADCOMs to administer the work in line with the representative church governance system which advocates for inclusivity of all members. These committees also have women administrators with key decision-making roles such as the ones listed above.

The SID Divisions report to the GC through the Division president, Dr and pastor Harrington Akombwa, a Zambian national who took over from the Zimbabwean Professor and pastor Norman Maphosa.

Adventism – It is a term used to describe a way of life and belief system practised by SDA members worldwide.

SDA World Church – It is a term used in Adventism to refer to all Adventist churches around the world.

ILLUSTRATIVE FIGURES

Figure 1 – The 13 Divisions' Responses' (votes) Outcome on Divisional women's ordination practice.

THESIS CHAPTER SUMMARIES

Chapter 1 is the research proposal. It carries this research's topic 'Investigation into the role of women during early Christianity: Implications for the Seventh-day Adventist church in Zimbabwe (SDAZ)'. The study endeavours to answer five critical questions which form this research's statement of the problem, namely the reasons behind the ban on women's ordination in the SDAZ, which strangely differs with her sister SDA churches in Euro-American territories, a situation that has led to an ambivalent position on the ordination of women in Adventism, the basis for the SDAZ's refusal to implement her church manual's directive of ordaining women for deaconry and eldership roles, the cognitive dissonance scenario in female SDAZ church members who fail to understand why their church refuses to ordain them yet the SDA church manual approves their ordination, the reasons for the lack of punitive measures on the SDAZ's violation of church manual pronouncements by the GC, and whether it is really true that women in the SDAZ are also barred from accessing key leadership positions due to the ordination ban or there exist other equally administrative and decision-making roles for women just as for men. These questions are pursued alongside the hybrid methodological approach, where two methodologies (African feminism and social-scientific criticism) are made to be interlocutors to read the early church documents of Paul, the Synoptic Gospels, and the deuterio-Pauline epistles, and also the SDAZ administrative and theological literature to establish the basis for her position of the ordination of women (whether she is continuing or discontinuing with how women were perceived in these communities/households) and the reasons therefore. A study on the epistemologies, philosophical frameworks, world-views and cultural norms of the three contexts under study, namely the ancient Mediterranean's first century CE early church society era, the SDAZ's African society, and the Euro-American Western society from which the SDAZ is defined, described and administered is undertaken for comparative analysis of the subject matter.

Chapter 2 is a detailed discussion on the two research methodologies, namely African feminism and social-scientific criticism. It also discusses these methodologies in the context of the SDAZ. A discussion of the SDAZ's context is handled in this Chapter 2 for this purpose. It is evinced that the African context, which is also the SDAZ's context, resembles the Ancient Mediterranean context in which Paul, the synoptic writers and

the redactors of Paul (deutero-Pauline) wrote, while the Euro-American context in which the SDAZ also belongs through her church's administrative dynamics, is diametrically opposed to them. For example, while the former contexts are guided by collectivism, kinship, community, group identity, honour and shame paradigms on behaviours, roles, and relations between community members (men and women), the latter is guided by an individualistic praxis, the quest to fulfil personal interests at the expense of the group, competition, and hierarchicalisation of gender roles in terms of superiority.

Interrogating through an African feminist lens on the question of ordination of women, as is taught in the NT texts under study in this work usually show a slightly divergent views, though with some insistences where they agree with the social-scientific in principle. However, Zimbabwean feminists, as well as African Traditional religion scholars' works reviewed in this research, due to their understanding of the Zimbabwean religio-cultural milieus, to a greater extent, agree with the SDAZ's forbidding of women to lead as men and thus support the ordination ban on SDAZ women. Social-scientific scholars engaged in this work too, to a large extent agree with the position held by the Zimbabwean feminist scholars on their readings of the early church texts that the Greco-Roman world was too patriarchal and thus women could have never assumed same roles with their male counterparts in this era. On this basis, the research holds that the SDAZ sees her ban on women's ordination as being in line with the early church practice, which offered complimentary-to-men roles to women while key leadership ones were a preserve of the males, for example the Twelve, (who excluded women) whom Jesus commissioned and entrusted with the administration of gospel ministry.

A study on African epistemology and philosophy is carried out in this chapter too, to situate the SDAZ in her proper context so as to excavate the realities behind her convictions on banning women for ordination. Women in Africa, although on the surface, may be projected as having assumed similar roles to their male counterparts during pre-colonial period as spirit mediums, chiefs, traditional healers, and prophets, liberation war participants, to mention a few, Mapuranga (2013:74 - 91) and Chibango & Silumba (2018:63 - 68) argues that a closer look actually reveals the opposite, that their roles were always subordinate to men's due to the philosophical and

epistemological grids set by their culture. Hence, for Chibango and Silumba, it is no wonder to see the ban on women's ordination in the SDAZ. For this reason, the researcher of this work does not see any possibility of demanding the ordination rite or equal roles with their male counterparts by SDAZ women due to their cultural codifications which dictate the role and place of women in social structures comparison with men. This reality also gave clues to the reasons behind the varied church policy implementation practices between the SDAZ and the Euro-American SDA churches and thus too, the cause of the ambivalence in the two compared SDA contexts (SDAZ and Euro-American sister SDA churches). It also revealed the perspective from which the GC policy is written, namely the Euro-American perspective, a reason again for the SDAZ's refusal to enforce it on her members as she sees some incongruence and incompatibility with her cultural world-views, philosophical frameworks and epistemologies.

A discussion to situate the SDAZ in her proper context is done and explained through her administrative model that although she is in Africa/Zimbabwe, she is controlled by the American based centralised administrative organ, the GC, which controls all SDA churches around the world through a representative church governance system (discussed xiv - xix), a system employed to foster group identity, doctrinal unity, and group harmony. This established that the SDAZ, though it is in Africa, like all other SDA churches operating in their native locations, is not an independent entity but rather acts in conformity with the GC policy guidelines though being administered by the SID, where established policies are supervised for implementation in all churches, while those who refuse to comply with the SDA church manual directives are disciplined by the GC.

The history of the debates on ordination of women in Adventism from the era of the SDA pioneers to the present (2024) revealed that the GC has never approved women's ordination to-date. Thus, the purported church manual directive, which seems on the surface, to be opposed by the SDAZ, is actually a product and brain child of the Euro-American Divisions' proposal since the 1980s that they be allowed to ordain women for eldership and pastoral roles, as well as that they be allowed to commission women to be pastors if the ordination ban persists. According to the findings of Chapter 2, these Euro-American Divisions' proposals were turned down by the GC Sessions in

Session from the 1980s to present. However, these Euro-American Divisions did not give up, but instead, vowed to continue with the push to seek permission from the GC, which has yet to come at the date of writing this research. The next GC Session is scheduled for 03 – 12 July 2025. It is yet to be seen if their request will be approved at this upcoming Session. However, this research sees it as highly unlikely due to the collectivistic outlook of the SDA world church and also from the American history itself, where no record of women assuming top leadership post has ever been recorded to date regardless of the fact that women equality advocacy for both secular and church roles has raged on since the 1960s, in the American territory itself. With the North-American Division's (NAD) request that it alone be allowed to ordain women so as to allow them to be church leaders such as GC, or Division presidents, one observant analyst may see this request as a bit strange especially against the glaring reality that American citizens themselves seem to have not yet demonstrated their acceptance of the leadership of women at national level, for they have never voted for a women state president (by the time of writing this work), while NAD seem to expect itself alone, and other societies to do what their nation is failing, throughout history, to do at national level. The November 2024 American presidential race between Donald Trump and Kamala Harris justifies the above assertion, where American history of rejecting the leadership of women was repeated when Donald Trump won the American presidential race ahead of Kamala Harris, who was the year 2024 American female presidential candidate, despite the heavy advocacies for women leadership since the 1960s feminist/womanist waves of the American history (see Chapter 2). This research looks at this issue as an item for future research that deserves academia attention, namely the reasons why the American society is ahead in making the noisiest noise for women leadership advocacy, yet they themselves do not want and have never wanted their women to take key leadership positions as state presidents for example. Why NAD expects the American history to suddenly be changed in North American Adventist churches only and other states and societies such as Africa, to implement what the generality of Americans have throughout history, been and are still sceptical of themselves? These are critical questions to ponder on in future researches on gender and sexuality issues in church. The above observation is seen by this research as one of the issues informing the GC to also bar women for key church leadership

roles. This may also explain why a woman has never been voted to be GC president in the history of American Adventism, (which NAD is part) to the present as well.

However, in line with its mandate, of demanding obedience and compliance to church procedures and policies as a way of asserting its authority, the GC EXCOM is on record, according to this research findings, of implementing disciplinary hearings to all churches that are violating its standings policies and procedures. Chapter 2 evinced that it voted to descend on all Divisions which were violating church policy on the ordination practice and position of the SDA church. The 2025 GC Session is expected to present the GC EXCOM recommendations as an agenda to bring the erring Divisions to book at the 2025 GC Session business meeting. If it is voted here, the punitive recommendations will be meted against the Euro-American Divisions for violation of church procedures and policy guidelines while exonerating the SDAZ for her complying with church policy.

Thus, the SDAZ is not violating any GC policy by opposing the purported church manual directive since it (the women ordination directive), is not officially from the GC Session in Session. The official position is that all SDA church women remain barred from ordination. This analysis thus answers all four questions, that the ambivalence is not official, since as far as the GC is concerned, there is one ordination practice in the SDA church. The cognitive dissonance is also cleared. And on the issue of disciplining non-compliant churches or Divisions, it was answered that the GC has announced a disciplinary and punitive measure to be meted on all those who are violating the standing GC policy on women's ordination. The last question of whether the SDAZ has other leadership roles for women is answered in Chapter 2. It is here graphically demonstrated that in line with the GC working policy 2022 - 2023 edition number BA 60 10 and in line with the Fundamental belief number 14 of the SDA world church, which controls the SDAZ and the rest of all SDA churches in the world, vindicates the claims of her above-mentioned policies by upholding a non-discrimination employment praxis, which makes every church member access employment in all her administrative ranks (except the ones that require ordination) regardless of gender, sex, race or class. This is seen by the reality that leadership roles are open to women and men where women can be employed to serve as departmental directors and Chief Financial Officers (C.F.Os) at all the administrative levels of the SDA church structures

from the GC, SID, Union conferences, Union missions, Mission stations, and local conferences. Thus, women in the SDA church sit in ADCOMs of the above-mentioned administrative organs of the church with equal standing and status with men in the same offices and roles. In these top leadership roles, women directors' salaries and employment benefits are the same as those of male directors who also serve in capacities these women serve in. This non-discriminatory employment practise was revealed in this section as having been in operation from the time of the Adventist Pioneers, where women served as top leaders in top church administrative levels of the Divisions and the GC alongside males. Although they (women) served in non-ordained ministerial roles, they were key decision-making leaders in top church administrative committees. After all, the SDA church does not have one person who carries a decision on his or her own and thus even the male pastors who serve in ordained ministry roles still do not have *veto* powers to run the church alone. Hence the element of 'supreme authority vested in one person' is not known in the SDA administrative vocabulary, as evinced in the definition of terms section and in Chapter 6. This thus answers the last question of what happens for SDA church women.

Chapter 3 discusses the role played by women in the seven genuine Pauline letters (Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Philippians, Galatians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon). The evidence consulted showed that the environment in which Paul ministered was influenced by the Ancient Mediterranean cultural ethos (discussed on 3.3), which was highly patriarchal. They presented women as assuming the subordinate-to-men roles prescribed by their social and cultural context. This study of the Pauline letters also concluded that women were barred from assuming key leadership roles during Paul's ministry. Instead, they served in the supporting ministry roles such as hospitality (*prostatis*) roles. It was also discovered that Paul never intended to imply that the terms he used to describe people he worked with (who included men and women) such as co-labourers, fellow servants to mention but a few, held the same status and role as him because of his use of father-child metaphors used to emphasis this point. This familial language was in line with Greco-Roman cultural norms which dictated that fathers, as the *paterfamilias* of homes had roles and statuses that were not shared with their children and wives in line with the honour-shame, kinship, patronage and collectivistic models which pervaded their society. Therefore, in this set-up, women

could have never assumed the same leadership roles as Paul or any other male figures.

According to this research, Chapter 4's points 4.2.9, 4.3.3, 4.3.3.1, 4.3.3.2, 4.3.3.2, 4.3.3.3 and 4.3.3.4 also reveal the same trend exhibited in Paul's scenario, as collectivism, honour and shame, and patronage paradigms were still prevalent and exhibited in all the Synoptic Gospels. The paradigms were the cultural operators which continued to guide and dictate behaviour between men and women in the Jesus movement. As was the case in Pauline Christianity, they (women) stood disqualified to assume the same status and role that their male counterparts assumed especially with the Twelve whom Jesus commissioned for the administration role of the Gospel ministry. Although African feminist analysis argues for the view that women appear to be the largest group of people who followed Jesus, this research discovered that they did not act as leaders but as Jesus' clients under the patronage model as they expressed their gratitude to him having brought honour to them through his allowing them to mingle with him, and healing them. The ecclesiastical church leadership role remained in the hands of men.

Chapter 5 is an investigation into how Paul's redactors described the situation in the household communities with regard to the role of women in comparison to men by inquiring from the contents of the household codes of Ephesians (5:21 – 33, 6:1 - 4) and Colossians (3:18 - 25). The study of these revealed too that the Greco-Roman patriarchal ethos still existed and men, as the *paterfamilias* of both the home and the household *ekklesia* spaces, controlled the Greco-Roman society's members, who included women, children and slaves. The collectivism, kinship, and honour shame paradigms led these writers to describe women and children's relationship with the *paterfamilias* in patronage, honour-shame, and collectivist modes. Women, slaves and children are the ones expected to honour the men so that they will be loved and protected for social harmony, just as the men were to love and honour Jesus and God, who were the ultimate *paterfamilias* of the bigger household – the heavenly household, where all were to treat each other as brothers. This was the microcosm of the macrocosm – where the demanded behaviour that was to characterise the relations between earthly household members was done in representation of how it would be when they become heavenly household members under God, the chief

paterfamilias. In this set-up again, the study of Chapter 5 saw men as leaders while women were clients, serving the patrons – the male *paterfamilias*es.

Chapter 6 carried out a synthesis of these realities projected from Chapters 2 - 5 with a view to seeing their implications to the SDAZ's ban on the ordination of women to establish if it is based on a quest to continue with what obtained during the trajectories seen in Pauline, Gospel, and deuterio-Pauline households, or other realities such as African culture, philosophy, epistemology and or world-view. It came out that the SDAZ's ban on women's ordination is informed by her cultural dictates, which are also exhibited in the early Christian era, and hence she claims that her position is justified by biblical proof and also supported by her cultural norms. The study on African Traditional Religious practices, African epistemology and philosophy also supported the view of banning women for leadership roles with men, thereby affirming the findings from Chapters 3 – 5, where women in these household communities also assumed complimentary roles to men. With this, the chapter concluded that the SDAZ is continuing with the practice seen during the early Christian era of offering women supporting ministry roles while reserving the ecclesiastical authoritative leadership roles to males through the ordination rite conferred to qualifying male church members only. Chapter 6 also concluded that although the GC is housed in Euro-American individualistic societies, it is to a large extent, influencing a collectivistic outlook of the SDA world church by its appeal for group harmony, a view which is contrary to her sister SDA churches in the Euro-American territories whose cultural and epistemological orientations justify their approval of women's ordination.

Chapter 7 is the research summary, conclusion and recommendation. Its point 7.1 concluded that the SDAZ is continuing with the Greco-Roman's early church practice, which required women to participate in complementarity to men in ministry roles and recommended that it too, like would do the *paterfamilias*es in the studied early church epochs, descend on Divisions that are violating GC policies so as to defend the organizational identity and culture, a characteristic of the collectivistic nature which it is.

However, the research recommends that African feminists' claims of advocating for an egalitarian church not be ignored, but rather the GC intensifies efforts to teach the

issue of gender and religion in all its seminaries so that pastors, professors and the generality of church members stop looking at feminist methodologies as evil and dangerous but rather that they be studied to establish how they can be used to strengthen the church's own interpretive methodologies in dynamic ways. As is voiced in Chapter 1, this research aims to generate interests in conversations with secular methodologies so as to ask new questions on the area of women's roles in church for continued reflection and a quest for *panacea* on these debates. This becomes this research's major contribution. The answering of the cognitive dissonance question in a comprehensive manner is also a huge contribution at a local church level where ordinary SDAZ members will begin to understand their standing and place in church and the reasons why they are barred for the ordination rite while the same rite is conferred to their counterparts in Euro-American territories.

The researcher of this work believes that this research has also contributed to the settling of the ordination of women debate stalemate outlook by highlighting areas where the misunderstandings are or have been emanating from, namely, the area of epistemologies, philosophical frame-works, world-views and cultural norms. The social-scientific and African feminist analysis of the contexts under study (early church, SDAZ's African, and the Euro-America Divisions' Western cultures) is a huge milestone in strategies to understand the dynamics around the roles of women in church across cultures and societies.

Last but not least, the African feminist insights have enabled a better perspicacity of the subject matter through its critiquing cultural prejudices which, on the surface, appear to suppress women. It has helped this research to see that the round-table leadership concept advocated for by Musimbi Kanyoro and other African feminists is actually already in operation through the representative church governance system of the SDAZ and also through the GC working policy BA 60 10 and FB 05 - K 05. Thus, the employment of the African feminist approach in Adventist studies is a new phenomenon which stands as another contribution made by this research which has proven to be quite helpful for the church in affirming and celebrating its systems which have proved to be a cut above the rest. Most importantly, the African feminists have shown insights into advocating for the un-static nature of culture through its critique of the African culture to be applied in the SDAZ to open her eyes to realize that the

banning of women from ordination is not to be a fixed view but rather it be left with room for flexibility to accommodate new thinking on the subject. The same culture may have to accept women occupying leadership roles equal to men's if time is allowed to bring this about due to the evolving character of culture, a scenario which the Roman state's culture (the culture which the SDAZ claims to share resemblances with) underwent through too, in its phases of development from the monarchy till the Empire stage. At the same time, she (the SDAZ) has to solve the dichotomy seen in the scenario that the society in which her administrative body, the GC, operates in, regardless of it being of a differing epistemological and philosophical framework with hers, which purports to allow women leadership, has not yet demonstrated willingness to accept them (women) as leaders both in wider society and church levels as was said above. Thus, the SDAZ ought to justify the genuineness and reasonableness of women equality advocacy pressure from these Euro-American societies, who seem to be preaching what they do not enforce themselves, to an extent that they are seen going against the dictates of their own epistemological and philosophical grids by refusing to endorse a woman state president for example (which their culture purports to allow), yet castigating those who are aligning to their own cultural configurations such as the SDAZ, whose barring women for ordination is in conformity to what is ascribed by her culture, epistemology and philosophy.

CHAPTER 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of the problem

Using gender roles of women within the early church, the research undertakes a study to investigate and establish the probable causes of the ban on ordination² of women by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Zimbabwe, (hereafter referred to as SDAZ) against her church policy documents' pronouncements reflected in the current updated 20th edition of the SDA church manual³ which approves the conferment of the ordination rite to female members elected to serve as female deacons and also as

² The 2021-2022 GC Working policy's Article number L40 & L45 defines ordination as the setting apart of the employee (of the church) to a sacred calling, not for one local field alone but for the world Church and therefore needs to be done with wide counsel. Workers who are ordained to the gospel ministry are set apart to serve the world Church, primarily as pastors and preachers of the Word, and are subject to the direction of the Church in regard to the type of ministry and their place of service. Ordained pastors officiate over church services which those not ordained are not authorized to do. These include ordaining deacons, elders and pastors, presiding over a wedding, organising churches and officiating at baptisms. It is done by praying and laying of hands by the ones ordaining over the head of the one being ordained in the presence of the church.

³ As mentioned in the definition of terms section of this work, the SDA church manual is the highest authoritative administrative document of the SDA church which must be adhered to by all SDA churches globally. It describes the operation and functions of local churches and their relationship to denominational structures in which they hold membership. It also expresses the Church's understanding of Christian life and church governance and discipline based on biblical principles and the authority of duly assembled General Conference Sessions. This conviction is derived from Ellen White quotation from Testimonies for the church Vol 9 page 261 which reads: "God has ordained that the representatives of His church from all parts of the earth, when assembled in a General Conference, shall have authority.

women elders on pages 78 and 85. Regardless of this church policy approval, SDAZ women who get elected to serve as female deacons (deaconesses) go on to serve without the ordination rite having been administered on them while male elected church members alone fulfil the prerequisite of having to be ordained first before they assume their roles to serve as deacons or elders in line with the above-cited church policy directives. This thus projects a selective ordination practice scenario, a phenomenon which has motivated this research to seek answers to these discrepancies and ambivalent⁴ practices in the SDAZ.

As if this is not enough, the eldership role for SDAZ women, though approved by the SDA church manual, is not conferred on them. The SDAZ does not accept/elect female elders. The church manual's approval for women to be elected as elders and also to be ordained for that role is clearly emphasised by the presence of gender-neutral pronouns used to refer to a person who is referred to as an elder. Earlier SDA church manual versions, for example the 1931 SDA church manual's pages 75 - 76ff, had masculine pronouns (he, his) to describe the persons who were elected to the eldership role, a practice that has been reversed by the current updated 20th edition of the SDA church manual which now has gender-neutral pronouns on pages 77 - 81 to

⁴ Ambivalence is defined by the Oxford dictionary as a scenario in which contradictory ideas about something exists. In this work, the term ambivalent/nce is used in reference to the current state of affairs in Adventism, an international religious organization that is failing to have one unified position on the women's ordination question where the SDAZ do not ordain women yet her other sister SDA churches in Euro-American territories do ordain their women. Hence the existence of an ambivalent ordination of women position this research seeks to investigate to find the factors causing it.

suggest that even women can be ordained to serve as elders too. Yet in the SDAZ, only men can be ordained and subsequently serve as elders. Thus, the ruling that female church members in the SDAZ can also be ordained for both the female deacon and eldership roles is just on paper, far from being reality, and thus a problem deserving answers. As such, the women enter into a state of cognitive dissonance, as what they know through church policy documents does not tally with what is happening on the ground, namely that the church manual approves their ordination yet the church chooses to oppose the church manual directives by barring women from the ordination rite for any role that requires ordination as a prerequisite in the SDAZ. This cognitive dissonance scenario deserves answers too.

Even more confusing is the reality that women in sister SDA churches in the Euro-American territories are being ordained for the same roles that the SDAZ blocks for her women. The North American Division of the Seventh-Day Adventists (hereafter referred to as NAD), among other SDA establishments in First World territories, has long enforced the above cited church policy directive by ordaining her women for the deaconry and eldership roles and have even gone to daring levels of allowing their women to serve as commissioned pastors (though without ordination at the moment, since ordination for pastoral roles for all SDA church women is not yet approved by the GC). As such, women in the SDAZ, and the generality of members which includes men, are living with this dissonance as they fail to understand why the SDAZ leaders refuse to enforce and apply church policy directives that has long been easily enforced by their sister churches in the Euro-American continents. This thus produces an ambivalent scenario which is difficult to understand since they all (all SDA churches in the world regardless of location) are controlled by the same administrative body, the GC, they use same church policy documents and use the same sacred text, the bible yet exhibiting differing ordination practices. The ordination of women for pastoral roles is at a stalemate stage across the SDA World church at the writing of this work with camps having emerged namely the pro and the anti-women's ordination camps.

With these glaring realities, the study seeks to understand the cause of the existence of the ambivalence and the selective ordination practice in the SDAZ, her reasons for daring to oppose the church policy directives, and also establish the reasons behind the GC as the supreme authority body not descending on the SDAZ leadership to

punish them for not complying with policy directives so as to set example for any other church which would oppose church policy as is seen in the history of the Christian church, which reveals that church bishops who opposed theological beliefs and positions of the church then were regarded as heretics, a label which attracted dire consequences such as excommunications and penance. Thus, the study seeks to investigate the reasons behind the GC's lack of administrative control over the SDAZ's violation of church policy through her refusal to ordain women while the church manual approves their ordination.

The five critical question highlighted above, namely the reasons for the existence of an ambivalent position on the ordination of women, the SDAZ's unwillingness to implement the church manual directive of ordaining women for deaconry and eldership roles, the cognitive dissonance scenario in church members, and the lack of punitive measures by the GC to control non-compliant churches/Divisions, and whether there exist other administrative and leadership roles for women since the ordained one is blocked for them form this study's problem statement which seeks to provide answers and suggest recommendations.

In undertaking this colossal task, the study utilises a hybrid methodological framework strategy where it fuses two methodologies in its work of tackling the demands of the research problem. Social-scientific criticism and African feminism are made interlocutors and conversational partners to bring insights from exponents of these theories on how they perceive the role of women in church from their readings of the biblical passages which speak about women in church. Insights from these two methodologies on how they shed light on the NT texts under study in this work will be used to evaluate the basis for the SDAZ's ban on women ordination.

Since this study is focusing on the early church epochs as reflected in the writings which cover this period (pre-AD 70), selected *pericopae* which speak about women's roles from the Hellenistic traditions, Pauline, and deutero-Pauline *corpora* and the three Synoptic Gospels, are brought in as case study materials using the above two named methodologies so as to establish the basis for the SDAZ's ban on ordination of women, to excavate whether it emanates from a quest to continue or discontinue

with the practice exhibited in the above mentioned NT *pericopae* under study, or from other phenomena yet to be discovered by this research and the reasons thereof.

The SDA World church's biblical interpretive methodology will also be studied to establish how congruently it stands in relation to the SDAZ's socio-religio-cultural circumstances against the claims of the two methodologies in use in this study. Furthermore, an enquiry into the SDA policy documents is undertaken to determine the perspective from which they are written from (the NT text's world, the African, or the Western societies' perspectives). This research sees this perspectival issue as a critical component for the understanding of the SDAZ's position on women's ordination since her refusal to implement what her policy directs, which other Euro-American SDA churches have already implemented, may be a sign of incompatible epistemological, philosophical, cultural frameworks and world-views between the West and Africa, the context of SDAZ. Hence, a discussion on these issues will be taken as high priority and specifically in Chapters 2, while it is applied in general in all chapters on the study. This is deliberately done in order to situate the SDAZ in her proper context and thus attempt to understand her reasons for banning her women from what her church manual approves, which other SDA church women are being offered elsewhere.

1.2 Study's rationale

There seems to be a *lacuna* in the current SDAZ's and the global Adventism's literature on religion and gender studies which this study seeks to fill. Furthermore, the women's ordination debates have raged on in Adventism for over 130 years (Duddley 1996:134) with only a stalemate having been the end result, while in the process tensions, fierce battles, and hostilities have ensued over this subject in both the SDA world church and many other church denominations (Bacchiocchi 1987:13; Timm 2014:2; Tucker & Liefeld 2010:400; Edwards 1989:1; Blomberg 2005:123; Vance 1999:192; Perriman 1998:9). This study therefore, claims attention and reception in both the SDAZ, the academia fraternity, and the SDA world church at large, for it can be one of the much awaited *panacea* to bring new tools to 'beef-up' the existing Adventist scholarly 'tool box' to unlock and solve the existing stalemate and in a way contribute to the unlocking of the current SDA church ordination of women debate puzzle.

Again, the study has the potential to claim recognition in the academic world by its unique methodological framework, which is a hybrid approach, an approach that looks

to be new in the African continent and in Zimbabwe in particular. This makes the research a new work in Africa and in Zimbabwe in particular, a reality that gives it credence to formulate a new research direction, especially in the SDA church fraternity. Infusing the two methods as interlocutors is to identify where they meet and where they repulse so as to problematise for answers to this subject that has bothered the church leaders for more than a century. Each approach seeks to correct the limitations of the other, hence, the interplay of these two methods I have given above is germane, where limitations of social-scientific research will be augmented by the strengths of African feminism for a more holistic treatment of the subject matter, as is believed by Mapuranga (2010:27) that there is no methodology that has no weaknesses and no one method can do justice to the study of religion. Thus, the research has potential to stimulate new conversations and dialogues among SDA scholars for answers on the role of women in the mainstream ministry of the church. It challenges the SDAZ and the SDA World church at large to be open for dialogue and listen to the conversations and voices from the secular theorists of religion such as those from African feminist and social scientific scholarly bench and desist from labelling them as problematic or devilish but rather that she listens to their voices for continued research endeavours in the field. The same appeal is made to African feminism and social-scientific scholars to listen to the SDA basis on her theological positions for proffering solutions to this ongoing issue of women ordination.

In this same vein, the research claims relevance in that it will excavate the reasons which make the GC reluctant or powerless to penalise the SDAZ's leadership, or any SDA church establishment which will have violated and disrespected established and voted policy guidelines as stipulated on the 67th and 68th pages of the SDA church manual 20th edition where punitive measures are laid down to be meted against any church which chooses not to enforce the GC directives. Hence, with its quest to address these questions, the researcher of this work believes that its reception by the SDAZ, the nation of Zimbabwe, Africa, and the SDA world church at large is guaranteed.

Most importantly, this research seeks to respect and appreciate the gains made so far by African feminist studies on advocacies for equal opportunities between men and women in wider society and religious spaces. The work therefore takes these efforts and achievements by African feminist biblical scholars and contextualizes them to the

SDAZ's concrete realities to determine areas of synergies and potential conflicts within Adventism's praxis and African culture in which the SDAZ operates for further reflections for solutions on the subject under investigation in this study, a subject that has been at stalemate stage for decades in Adventism, a situation that the researcher of this work refers to as 'the Adventist stalemate of ages'. The researcher of this work (an serving, male ordained minister in the SDA church) rides on the protection offered to scholars through academia where critical and independent theorisations are encouraged, and thus dares to utilise this highly unwelcomed-to-Adventist theological methodology with full awareness of the consequences likely to be faced from his fellow ministers, which range from criticism, labellings, and suspicion, to mention a few, due to the fact that the SDA church does not subscribe to historical-critical methodologies which I have braved to utilise. By daring to embarked on this dreaded and 'dangerous' scholarly exploration, I seek to establish the extent to which these secular theories are 'dangerous' in the discussions on women's roles in church from the biblical view and thus establish if these 'secular' methodologies can really not help the SDA church's theologising enterprise, especially realising that throughout history, debates on the roles of women have been propounded and advocated for by feminists. Thus, these realities justify the centrality of this work and enlist it as one of the probable sources of solutions to the 'Adventist stalemate of ages', as it will generate new questions and probable answers.

The research, however, does not claim that it is the final arbiter to the problem under investigation but simply aims to evoke new reflections and continued conversations with other theories outside the conventional and traditionally relied on methods, such as the historical grammatical and the literary approaches in Adventist theology, so as to gain new insights and ideas which may help in policy change and also the current SDA church as well as the wider African biblical and theological hermeneutics body of knowledge.

1.3 Aim

The research is highlighting the role of women within the pre-AD 70 early church era through a critical study of selected Hellenistic, Pauline, Synoptic Gospels, and deuterio-Pauline texts (which discuss the role of women in their communities) using the African feminist and the social scientific theories. The above stated texts are used

as case study material to illuminate into the SDAZ's ordination criteria and practice, which (on the surface) seem to discriminate against female church members, to establish her basis for the ban on the ordination of women against her church policy directives in the SDA church manual.

1.4 Objectives

The above aim will be achieved through the following objectives;

1.4.1 To explore the role of women within the Hellenistic Pauline households.

1.4.1.2 To explore the role of women in early Christian households and communities – the Gospels of Mark, Matthew, and Luke respectively.

1.4.1.3 To explore the role of women in deuterio-Pauline households as reflected in Ephesians and Colossians.

1.4.1.4 To evaluate the implications of the above-studied epochs within the SDAZ's ban on women's ordination.

1.5 Literature review

This section of the study engages selected scholarly views on social-scientific and African feminist methodologies and how they together with the SDAZ through her theological positions captured in her church constitutions and administrative documents, interpret the NT texts (of the early church era under investigation in this work) which speak on women's roles in comparison to those of their male counterparts. An application to the study's focus is discussed with regard to their appropriateness to this study. As such, these scholarly works on roles of women in the early church period as reflected in documents written during the Hellenistic, Pauline, Gospel traditions, deuterio-Pauline as well as official SDAZ policies and constitutions, which reveal what has been relied upon on the subject of women's leadership and ordination eligibility or the lack of it in church, are reviewed with the objective of identifying the *lacuna* that this study seeks to fill and of seeing how it may shed light on an understanding of the SDAZ's ban on women's ordination. Moreso, insights from scholars on African epistemology, African philosophy and African Traditional religions/culture are reviewed to check for borrowings between them and the SDAZ's stance of banning of women

for the ordination rite to see if it is influenced by her African epistemological, philosophical frameworks and cultural world-view or by the way she understands the early church's texts and piety which she might be continuing or discontinuing with. This literature review section is therefore in four main categories: the first being those from social-scientific research, followed by African feminism, then African epistemology and culture, and lastly Adventist theology scholarly and official church administrative documents. However, a better understanding of the women ordination debates in the SDAZ debates is aided by a brief historical background of western feminism and its trajectories over time. Thus, I intentionally picked two western feminist scholars whose reviews appear at the end of the African feminism section for this purpose, though throughout the paper I revert back to African feminism, the key methodology in use in this work alongside social-scientific criticism as earlier-on highlighted. In all this, cultural aspects in all the contexts studied in this work are consulted to contextualize the study in the concrete existential realities of the studied epochs.

1.5.1 Social-scientific methodology scholarly works' review

This section reviews selected works on social-scientific methodology as well as social-scientific perceptions on NT texts which speak on women roles in the epochs under study in this work. The relevancy to this work is also discussed. Limitations of space allows for only representational discussions and not thorough analysis.

1.5.1.1 Porter, S.E. (ed.)

This edited volume by Porter (1997) carries insights from various social-scientific scholars on women's roles in the NT. According to Porter (1997:277 - 281) the social-scientific criticism of the NT helps to avoid out-of-context interpretations and conclusions by enquiring from the social, political and religious dimensions of the texts for a contextual interpretation. I engage this book to help achieve the goal of this research of achieving contextual interpretation of the passages under study in this work on teachings on women and their roles in comparison with men and on the application of the social-scientific to the SDAZ context.

1.5.1.2 De Wet, C.L.

The journal article *'The Deutero-Pauline And Petrine Haustafein: Early Christian Oikonomia, Pastoral Governmentality And Slave-Management'* gives helpful

discussions on the household codes found in Ephesians and Colossians, another area of focus in the work. According to De Wet (2012:398 - 404), the NT household codes were informed by the social fabric of the Greco-Roman world. It highlights social-scientific paradigms of honour and shame, collectivism, and patron-clientelism which operated across the Greco-Roman world in which the deuterio-Pauline households operated. De Wet concludes that these paradigms were the operators which governed behaviour between women and men and the roles each took in line with the above-mentioned motifs. In that context, shame was to be shunned at all costs. Hence, women in Christian households were to assume roles ascribed to them by their society's norms only, for assuming roles which were ascribed to men (for example during the public space roles) would cause them to attract shame to themselves, their husbands, their father, Paul, (who were *paterfamilias* of the microcosmic household), and their ultimately macrocosmic father and *paterfamilias*, God himself. I engaged this source for its alignment to the social scientific methodological framework tenets in use in this work and also for its help in the interpretation of texts which describe women's roles in comparison with men, such as 1 Corinthians 11, among others. I see this source as useful in my quest to establish how the household codes negatively affected or aided women's participation in the household churches for application lessons in the SDAZ's context in view of her ban on women's ordination.

1.5.1.3 Gutierrez, P.

This source discusses the concrete reality faced by 1st century AD Greco-Roman women. Gutierrez holds that there is no way women would have assumed the same roles as men during this period due to the patriarchal ethos of the era which was fashioned from the family set up and enforced in all strata of the polytheistic Greco-Roman world, where even the emperor was deified and regarded as the ultimate *paterfamilias* of all citizens. As regards the possibility of women to compete with men in the same roles in the polytheistic religious arena of the Greco-Roman world, Gutierrez (2018:5 - 6) does not see women in Christian households as having managed to assume the same status (*caput*) and roles as their male counterparts when even the Vestal Virgins themselves were under the scrutiny of male figures who instituted and controlled parameters to vet their credibility at each phase of their cultic life. According to Gutierrez (2018:2 - 8), these Vestal Virgins would be severely

punished (for example being buried alive) by male figures upon being deemed to have violated the standing expectations of their cultic life set by males. This speaks of the tight patriarchal order that governed Greco-Roman life, which was typically a men's world. It is against this background that the researcher of this work fails to see the possibility of the egalitarian life during the pre-AD 70 early Christianity of the 1st century CE. However, the research findings which will be excavated from Chapters 3 - 5 will touch on these issues.

1.5.1.4 Sawyer, D.F.

Sawyer concurs with Gutierrez and De Wet in seeing the impossibility of early church women, as well as women in Hellenistic world, as having assumed the same status and roles as their male counterparts in that regardless of the fact that the Vestal Virgins' guild being the only window where women's amelioration could have expected to probably come from, they too were still women who stood at the mercy of male community members who were their *paterfamilias*. Sawyer graphically captures this 1st century CE women's state of affairs as follows:

women were excluded from public sphere and confined to a social construction that prohibited their access to political leadership, authority and overall social privileges. The woman, subordinate and secondary to man, was at the helm of domestic obligations and expected to nurture the family, 'bear legitimate children', and care for the home . . . A woman was never to be perceived as 'equal to a man in terms of their worth and state'. Not only was the subordination of women a societal norm to abide by, but it was explicitly embedded in the Roman law. Sovereignty over their entire lives resided in the hands of a male authority figure; so much so that a female child's father held legal rights to '*ius vitae et necis*' or life and death over her. This same legislation forced women to reside under their father's *patria potestas* or 'paternal control', their husband's *manus* if they were married, or a male tutor's supervision if they were unwedded' (Sawyer 2003:30 - 31).

According to Sawyer, 'the enforced system of tutelage operated under the inherent assumption that women were 'incapable of managing their own affairs', which again points to their perceived inferiority, including that of the Vestal Virgins, who on the

surface seemed, to be free, yet their freedom was a partial one and was controlled by male *paterfamilias*. It is against these backgrounds that social-scientific scholars do not believe that women could have assumed the same roles as males during the Greco-Roman world. These convictions are pursued further in Chapters 2 - 5.

1.5.1.5 Bellinger, A.R.

Bellinger (1947:3 - 48) affirms Sawyer's observations on Greco-Roman women's tutelage. He sheds more light by submitting that the tutelage of women during the Greco-Roman society of the Ancient Mediterranean world placed them in the hands of male Philosophers in their philosophical schools, who took charge of them when they were not under the authority of their *paterfamilias*, be they fathers or husbands. Musonias Rufus and Plutarch were such philosophers of the epochs under study in this work. They contributed immensely to the cultural conditioning and codification of gender roles between men and women in the Ancient Mediterranean society in which the Greco-Roman the early church society erupted.

According to Bellinger, Musonias and Plutarch's philosophical schools taught philosophy to women and girls, and the purpose of their teachings was to cement and inculcate virtues that would promote honour to their husbands and fathers without which they would bring shame to themselves, their families, their husbands, and the Roman emperor, and to God himself. The taught virtues were long suffering, self-control, and patience, to mention just but a few. This study believes that these philosophers' insights will help situate the pre-AD 70 NT writers in their proper perspective on what they wrote about women's roles, how the early church women of the epochs under investigation in this study perceived themselves in relation to men on the subject of roles in church. Such an analysis helps to reach an evaluative conclusion on the SDAZ's understanding of these texts in relation to her women's ordination ban and its probable cause.

1.5.1.6 Esler, P. (ed.)

Esler (1995:209, 214 - 215) discusses how household churches' piety was modelled during the Greco-Roman era and holds that the familial patterns which put the father (*pater*) as the ultimate authority (*paterfamilias*) of the family, ruling over his wife, slaves and children was a norm. This structure denigrated women to the lower ranks of

society in the Roman world of the Hellenistic and early church world. For Esler, the *paterfamilias* ideology is the one employed deliberately (and not aimlessly) by Paul in his management of his household churches to achieve his intended goals. It was meant to control his churches in the same authority a Roman family father (*paterfamilias*) would do, where he regarded all his adherents as his children in their household family of the household *ekklesia*. In this scenario, adds Esler, the fate of women was obvious, they stood subjugated under men. This state of affairs projected for early Christian households is applied to the SDAZ's context to establish if it is being continued through her banning women for the ordination rite, which would give them an equal chance to access the same ecclesiastical authority roles as men in Adventism, or if it is that the ban is informed by other aspects of the SDAZ life, such as African culture.

1.5.1.7 Ng, E.Y.

Ng (2020:525), commenting on the role of women in the Pauline letters, submits that women do not assume ecclesiastical, authoritative, and representative leadership roles similar to Paul, and thus using Pauline texts such as Romans 16 as a watershed for women empowerment is a case of building such claims 'on shaky ground' since no one in the list of women listed in Romans 16 ever assumed a leadership role. Ng (2002:363) argues that there is evidence that shows that both Greek and Jewish women were under the constraints of their cultural epistemological frameworks, which forbade them from assuming the same leadership roles as men, though the constraints had varied degrees. Ng insists that the NT shows hierarchical relationships and distinction of roles and status, where the father of the home is superior to the wives, children and slaves. However, the father of the house is under the ultimate control of the father in heaven (microcosm of the macrocosm). With this reality, Ng believes that the purported egalitarianism and the discipleship of equals of the early church and the Jesus movement is fabricated and does not speak of what was obtaining during the early Christian communities. The study utilises this source for the much-needed balanced treatment of the study topic and how it may reflect what is obtaining in the SDAZ in their utilization of the same texts interpreted by Ng in her disapproving women leadership.

1.5.1.8 Hurley, J.B.

According to Hurley's (1973:192 - 193) exegetical analysis of 1 Corinthians 11:2 - 16, Hurley holds that women are not suppressed by the head covering directives because Paul answers the issue of authority pointing it to voluntary submission seen in Genesis 1, where relations between man and woman as they all stand in relation to God is explained. Thus, for Hurley, women are not suppressed, since both man and woman have the same dominion over creation, in which man has no dominion over woman. According to Hurley, Paul in the above-mentioned passage emphasised the complementarity of man and woman as is suggested by the phrase in the text 'woman was created for man, yet the man is born of a woman'. As regards roles between Corinthian men and women, Hurley insists that women could not have led as men in the both the Hellenistic and Greco-Roman Christian households because of the strong tone assumed by Paul in questioning them of the reasons which had led the Corinthian women to depart from the traditions he had instructed them to follow (1 Cor 11:2). Hurley holds that Paul had to descend on them because they had embraced strange piety from the mystery religions, such as the Isis cults, who prophesied with unbound hair against the norms of the Ancient Mediterranean cultural fabric of the era and against what Paul had instructed them before he left them in Corinth. These insights will be followed through to establish how they influence Paul's description of women's roles in his letters and how that understanding can be used to solve the ordination question in the SDAZ.

1.5.1.9 Burke, T.J.

Burke's (2003:54,102 - 103) commentary of 1 Corinthians rejects the view that women assumed the same status and role as Paul or any other male leaders mentioned in Pauline Christianity. He makes this argument by pointing to Paul's use of the father-child metaphor, which for him, finds its expression from the ancient Mediterranean socio-historical context of his day. According to Burke, the father-child metaphor derives its basis from the Aristotelian philosophy, where Philo taught that the authority of the father was second to God's and children are seen as servants together with slaves. This world-view dominated the Greco-Roman era through writings and teachings of philosophers such as Philo and Plutarch to mention a few, adds Burke. Burke (2003:102 - 103) posits that the way of thinking for Greco-Roman society was

that of unequal power relations which relied on the hierarchical structure, where the subjects were obliged to obey their superiors (fathers) and subject themselves under their authority while the fathers were not to be harsh to their children, hence Paul demands obedience from his children, (all his adherents) in line with what was expected of children of in this society. The child was considered 'immature' and thus continually depended on the father for nurturing. The father had lifelong authority over his subjects, as Paul proved to be that to his children, the Corinthians and his other adherents. It ought to be seen how graphically Paul incorporated these aspects in his relations with the Corinthians as I shall show in Chapter 3, thereby proving the claims from social-scientific scholars.

His unshared status and authority, is also stressed by his stern warning that he would discipline all who were opposing him. Burke (2003:112) holds that those whom he promised to descend on were likely to be the household owners (mostly women) who seemed to be challenging him in the household management of their own houses which housed Paul's adherents. They may have thought that since they were in charge of their households, adds Burke, they would assume the leadership of the church housed in their houses too, yet it was not to be so with Paul. To show them that they would never rise to such a status, Paul gave them a strong authoritative warning that he would discipline them even with a rod/*ραβδος* (1 Cor 4:21a), since they were his children, though he also would come in love for them (as his children whom he loved (1 Cor 4:21b) and was ready to spend and get spent for them (2 Cor 12:15a). As his children, he also stressed that he did not want any material support from them but rather he was ready to work to give them an inheritance, as was expected of earthly fathers in the Ancient Mediterranean world. The mention of discipline is meant to quell all divisions so that Paul's household would achieve the collectivist outlook and get aligned to honour instead of shame, thereby proving that Paul as the paterfamilias was a good father who did this work on behalf of the true Father and paterfamilias of the heavenly household, God.

To further show that those leading their own households and offering their houses for worship were not necessarily leaders, Paul raised Timothy to be his emissary to them in times he would not be available himself. Burke opines that the picking of Barnabas, Titus, and other male figures shows that women would not fit the strait jacketed role for leadership of household churches. So, according to Burke, the notion that women

could have assumed the *paterfamilias* role in the same stead as Paul or even the delegated roles given to Timothy and Apollos is really a case of arguing from silence because evidence is awash that wherever Paul wanted an authoritative message to be conveyed, he sent men.

With this strong tone in Paul's control over his adherents, Burke, does not see him use terms such as 'co-labourers', fellow servant, to mention to imply that women or any other male leader during his ministry assumed same status and role as him because of the social codification of the Ancient Mediterranean world which was prevalent in all Greco-Roman life realities. His reference to the Corinthians as his children was meant to stamp his authority as their father over all his adherents. As their *paterfamilias*, his adherents, which included even influential women of means such as Phoebe and also renowned male leaders such as Apollos, could never assume the same status and role as him, since the cultural moulds of the day prescribed that the *paterfamilias* had an unshared status and role with their children. This thought convicts the researcher of this work against holding a view that supports an egalitarian state of affairs in the Hellenistic, Pauline, Synoptic Gospels, and the deuterio-Pauline worlds because they all were under the direct influence of the same culture and society.

1.5.1.10 Freeman J.E. & R.D. Colenberg.

According to Freeman & Colenberg (2018:427), African societies resemble the Ancient Mediterranean cultural mores, to greater extent. For them, the social-scientific models, such as kinship, purity codes, honour-shame, patron-client, and collectivism, are visible throughout Africa as they are too in the Ancient Mediterranean world. This source is consulted for its valuable insights to establish how they fare on the contextual interpretation of the texts under study in this work and its applicability within the SDAZ context, the arena in which this study is applied.

1.5.1.11 Elliott, J.H.

John Elliott, an American philosopher, is regarded as a proponent figure in social-scientific criticism, a methodology in use in this study. According to Elliott (1993:7,34) the social-scientific method helps to find out what an NT author communicated to his/her audiences within their common social context. Thus, social-scientific criticism of the New Testament is an attempt to place the NT text into the socio-cultural context

of the first century CE Mediterranean world, the society in which early Christianity was birthed. This resource's insights are helpful to glean into the NT texts for a contextual interpretation of what they taught on women's roles in religious spaces and evaluate how the SDAZ might have continued or discontinued with the social-scientific understanding of the said texts and the probable cause for such, which will lead to an informed conclusion of the research.

1.5.1.12 Malina, B.J.

In stressing the importance of engaging the NT texts using the social-scientific lens, Malina (1983:2) submits that: 'Not taking the socio-cultural settings of the society (Ancient Mediterranean) that birthed the NT seriously can only lead to a misinterpretation of the texts'. His insights are crucial for guaranteeing a contextual reading of the NT texts on women's leadership as well as evaluating the basis for SDAZ's ban on ordination of women.

1.5.1.13 Neufeld, D. & R.E. DeMaris (eds.)

According to Neufeld & DeMaris (2010:55 - 58), the only way to understand the NT text is to take a deliberate and keen interest in the study of the Ancient Mediterranean society which gestated it. For them, ignoring this reality has led to distortions of many of the NT texts. Neufeld & DeMaris believe that the social behaviours exhibited by both the NT writers and their followers resemble social scientific models of kinship, patronage, collectivism, honour-shame and purity motifs. For them, Jesus and Paul were collectivists in line with the Greco-Roman societal norms in which they ministered. Thus, their teachings are to be evaluated along those lines, for they did not aimlessly teach but rather expected results that they yearned to see in their audiences. It is on this basis that this source is engaged in this research for interrogating and evaluating the extent to which its concepts might be the same as or different from those which influenced the writers of the selected communities under study in this work in the way they perceived women in their ministries. This will be used to evaluate the SDAZ's philosophical underpinnings which inform her role assigning praxis between male and female church members, realising that women are barred from ordination, a rite which makes them stand in the same status and role with their male counterparts.

1.5.1.14 Levine, A. & B. Witherington (eds.)

The book is a commentary of Luke's Gospel. It is a conversation between two NT scholars; one a Jewish feminist scholar (Amy-Jill Levine) and the other, a Methodist evangelical scholar, Ben Witherington. They claim that the objective of co-authoring this volume was not really to provide all the answers around debates on Luke's teachings on women in the Jesus movement but simply to stimulate conversations around the matter. Witherington sees Luke as an advocate for women while Levine does not, instead she sees Luke as limiting the prominence of women by presenting them in ancillary service roles, for example, she holds that the group of women who followed Jesus in Luke-Acts are described as 'having been cured of evil spirits and infirmities' and not described in terms of the work to witness (Levine 2018:2).

This description, according to Levine, separates the women from the Twelve because the men are explicitly with him while the women are grammatically distanced. Levine insists that the women's following of Jesus occurs on basis that he had healed them, while the Twelve follow him on the basis that he commissioned them to be his witnesses. This distinction between women who followed Jesus and the Twelve, in Levine's view, persists throughout Luke's two volumes, highlighting that the men took the leadership positions and women provided ancillary or patronage support. Their views are useful in situating women in the context of Luke's environment for analyses in the epochs under study in this work in comparison with how it is with the SDAZ, whether she also shares the same view cherished by Levine on her ban on ordination of women or not and the reasons thereof.

1.5.1.15 Horsley, R.A. (ed.)

Horsely (1997:1 - 4) mourns over the lack of focus on the political landscape of first century Greco-Roman society and how it affected Jesus and Paul's ministries. For Horsely, it is to be remembered that the imperial cult that venerated the emperors as gods competed with the Christian Gospel intensely and affected its configurations in many ways. The structural forms of the imperial cult influenced the way in which the imperial relations were constituted. Thus, Horsely maintains that 'a re-assessment of the emperor cult as a major factor in the world of Paul's mission is in order. The source thus seeks to reconstruct the imperial history and its contact with Christian origins for

a better understanding of early Christianity. This study utilises this book's insights in locating the role of women in such a heavily contested polytheistic environment which was also deeply patriarchal and determines the possibility of them having assumed the same roles as men for comparative lessons with the SDAZ's role assigning praxis of her male and female church members.

1.5.1.16 Gusha, T.H.

Gusha, a Zimbabwean New Testament scholar, is engaged for his familiarity with the Zimbabwean context, the arena in which this study is applied, as well as for social-scientific acumen for this study's analysis. As someone who grew up in Zimbabwe, and who is conversant with the social-scientific paradigms of the Ancient Mediterranean world of the first century CE Christian era, Gusha stands at a vintage point to help moderate this study through his insights. He analyses the NT world as a world that must inform all modern interpretations of the text for a holistic interpretation. Failure to do this will result in out-of-context interpretations. Gusha (2020:3) postulates that the world of the text hypothesis propounded by Segovia (2002:19) needs to be further categorised into three categories to grant a holistic interpretation of the NT text by modern readers. Segovia's hypothesis, which is further developed by Gusha, suggested the Ancient Mediterranean society, as the world of the NT text. Gusha then added that this world of the text needs to be further categorised into three subgroups for a better perspicacity of the text by the modern readers; the world behind the text, which is the social-historical context in which the text was written in or created; the world in the text, which refers to the world the text creates in the mind of the reader; and lastly the world in front of the text, which is the contemporary world in which the text is read and applied.

For Gusha, readers who read the NT text must be aware of the reality that they are exploring the world of the text terrain and thus must desist from imposing their own world (because readers are in the "world in-front of the text" category) and trying to excavate the world of the text's first category, which for him, is the world behind the text they are reading for a contextual understanding of what the original writer intended to communicate to his or her immediate hearers. After this, they can then engage the other phases, such as the world in the text and the world in front of the text after contextual analysis of the text being read.

Gusha claims that Jesus incorporated the social-scientific paradigms of honour and shame, collectivism, patron-client and kinship models. Miracles, oratory prowess over his critics, the Pharisees, and his resurrection were all meant to gain honour. The women who followed him and were healed by him all aided him to gain honour as they too had ascribed honour. Hence, for Gusha, women in Jesus' movement did not assume the same roles as the Twelve, but rather followed him as supporters of his ministry for reasons of obtaining honour for both Jesus and themselves. I see this thought-line as appealing, seeing that Jesus was followed mainly by the outcasts of the Greco-Roman world all because the honour-shame motif ascribed honour to lower-class people due to their association with someone with honour. Hence, seeing women as leaders in the stead of the Twelve complicates how other people, such as robbers, tax collectors and the crippled, can be classified, as it will also follow that everyone who followed Jesus assumed a leadership role in the stead of the Twelve based on the foregoing argument. The source is engaged for its deep analysis of the social-scientific models and paradigms of honour and shame, purity codes, patronage, and collectivism for its applicability to the epochs and contexts with which this dissertation is concerned.

1.5.1.17 Kolawale, M.E.

According to Kolawale (1997:54), African women are not oppressed, as they have been assuming key leadership roles in society from antiquity from the primitive communalism stage of African life during earliest African states, which got infested with competitive, dominating and greed mind-set which came through colonization and capitalism by Westerns. Kolawale stresses the important role of African women as educators of society's knowledge kit through African folk-tales. For Kolawale, writing from the social-scientific perspective steeped in the Nigerian context, roles in Africa are not as hierarchically stratified as the Western ones. As much as the roles of men and women are different, they don't stand as competitive but complimentary. This source is helpful in evaluating the African and Western epistemological frameworks to see where and how they differ or agree and consequently to establish the reason behind the SDAZ's opposition of church policy based on how Kolawale analyses the two epistemological frameworks (Western and African) and thus justify or condemn her position on women's ordination.

1.5.1.18 Carter, W.

Carter (2006:ix), has postulated that an inherent reality not to be ignored is that the Roman world stands as the world in which the first century Christians lived their lives, and the world too, in which the NT writings were birthed. As such, it is logically correct and imperative, that this world be deliberately studied to see the kind of light it may illuminate for our understanding of the NT Christianity, failure of which attempts to read the NT text becomes futile. Carter declares that Jesus and the NT writings are political realities since they interacted with the highly politicised Roman empire. 'The Roman empire provided and dictated the ever present political, economic, societal, and religious framework and context for the NT's claims (Carter 2006:1). As such the book explores how early Christians in this Roman society negotiated through a world in which imperial politics, economics, culture, and polytheism were bound up together. This source is useful in investigating how women fared in these complex environments, especially in texts that mention women participation alongside their male counterparts.

1.5.2 African Feminist methodology scholarly views' review

Below is a discussion on scholarly works on African feminist methodology as well as African feminist insights' analysis of NT texts on women's roles for application to this study. Due to various terminologies used by African women to describe a theory that can offer equal opportunities between men and women in the church's ministry roles, I use African feminism to describe all these multiple theorisations by African feminists because they advocate for one central issue, namely equal opportunities for men and women in church. Thus, I declare from the onset that my readers need not be confused upon seeing a plethora of other terminologies besides what I have suggested as the methodology for this research, namely African feminism which is an interlocutor with social-scientific approach. Chapter 2 explains the reasons behind this multiplicity of terminologies around African feminism and the reasons behind my choosing to refer of all them as African feminism. All African feminist scholars reviewed here and others not captured due to space limitations, as well as their contributions to the African feminist movement, are discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

1.5.2.1 *Chitando, E.*

Chitando (2019:13) has submitted that the persistence of women's ordination debates across major world religions may be attributed to the fact that gender struggles are a universal phenomenon prevalent in all continents of planet earth, as it is affirmed by the glaring reality that most societies are battling with women equality advocacies in households, governments, wider society and even religious spaces. Chitando blames patriarchy for the universalisation of women's subordination by men in both society and the church. Writing from an African feminist, perspective he claims to recover the silenced voices of women in the biblical narratives and cause a drastic if not radical change (slanted in favour of women) in the church's view of women in leadership. This radical move, adds Chitando, ought to be made through the introduction of gender and religion studies in church-run theological seminaries so that the importance of women's roles is appreciated in academia by church leaders, professors of theology and students themselves. For Chitando, a new direction on the perception of women and their role in church will certainly be wrought. His insights are useful in this study, as they help to see how Chitando's idea can relate to the SDAZ's role-assigning practice as it uncovers the apparatuses believed to have propagated the relegation of women in church to the pews, such as culture through patriarchy and androcentrism⁵.

⁵ Clifford (2001:26) defines androcentrism is an aspect of seeing that which is associated with being male as the norm and what is associated with being female as not norm for it has to derive its meaning from existence in male terms.

1.5.2.2 Oduyoye, M.A.

Oduyoye, the author of many African feminist books and publications, insinuates that African women have suffered a long history of injustices, as they are doubly oppressed by patriarchy in their culture as well as patriarchy in the bible, both of which dictate a subordinate role to that of men in society as well as religious spaces. Oduyoye (1995:5) observes that for African women and girls, culture has socialised them to accept the supremacy of men over them in all aspects of life, religion included. It is against this background, adds Oduyoye, that women's liberation must happen in religious spaces, which according to her, are platforms exhibiting the elements of oppression and marginalisation of women in their piety. Oduyoye castigates the early Church writers' misogyny⁶, like Martin Luther who saw women as objects for use by men to bear children only and to work in the kitchen. Hence, for Oduyoye, the bible ought to be re-read, re-interpreted, and re-engaged in women's perspectives and understood with a view of rejecting the subservient role often assigned to women and impose a women's leadership role instead.

⁶ Chaudhury, Bhat & Sahu (2017:111) defines misogyny as 'men's perpetuation of hatred and contempt towards women. Thus, a misogynist is a person who dislikes, despises, or is strongly prejudiced against women. Misogynistic behaviours and attitudes according to Stalker (2001:291) includes but not limited to oppression, exploitation, and subjugation of women by men and are demonstrated through men's resentment, intimidation and degradation of women. In this work, I employ the term to evaluate whether men in the studied epochs were misogynistic or not in their role assigning praxis, even in the SDAZ too.

Oduyoye's insights are helpful in the continued engagements of the two interpretative frameworks engaged by this study and their applicability to the NT texts as well as the SDAZ on women's role in church alongside their male counterparts.

1.5.2.3 Kanyoro, M R.A.

Kanyoro (2002:9) propounded what she terms 'cultural hermeneutics' and proposes it as a proper methodology for discussions on debates on women's equality in African churches. She describes her theory as 'the choice of combining an affirmation of culture and a critique of it that will have the potential to sustain the modern African women. She also, like Mapuranga, and other African women scholars sees culture as the major hindrance for African women to assume the same leadership roles as African men, though she advocates for an abrogation of all cultural practices which oppress women so as to create an equal space where they too can lead as men. I engage this source for more insights on the subject for an evaluation of their applicability to the studied epochs in this work.

1.5.2.4 Dube, M.W.

Dube (2000:25 - 30) sees the missionary bible as carrying the imperialistic mindset of the missionaries who brought it to Africa. For her, the missionary bible carries an unhealthy mentality of exclusion to African women of the ancient Jewish bible, which was inherited by the androcentric bible writers of the New Testament, and passed on and nurtured by the misogynistic male reformers. It was further propelled by exclusivistic oriented male western missionaries who '*othered*' the Africans and their cultures, leaving African women as the most '*othered*' of Africans.

For this reason, Dube insists that a postcolonial feminist reading of the bible must be sought by the formerly colonised subjects to confront, expose, and arrest the imperialists' strategies and critically interrogate patriarchy and imperialistic nuances persisting after colonisation. Thus, Dube submits that the postcolonial feminist methodology is an appropriate hermeneutic to work out a way for the liberation of women, as it is able to critique oppressive structures in both the missionary Christian churches and African cultural traditions. This thought-line is explored further in Chapter 2 to investigate the extent to which biblical interpretation might have been informed by imperialistic tendencies affecting African women and whether it too speaks of the situation leading to the SDAZ's ban on ordination of women in particular.

1.5.2.5 Priest, R.J. & K. Barine (eds.)

This resource describes the challenges faced by African women in being recognised as equal leadership material alongside African men throughout churches and societies in Africa. Kwaka-Sumba and le Roux in Priest and Barine (2017:137) claim that African women are marginalised and discriminated against on issues of key leadership roles in churches, regardless of the fact that aggressive equality and affirmative action activism has been lobbied across many African countries, with a bid to create leadership spaces that women can also occupy as men do. These scholars thus blame the lack of recognition and acceptance by both the church and societies in Africa which see women church leaders assume a mere ceremonial and subordinate leadership role while the actual decision-making roles are done by male church leaders. As regards ordination, it remains a contentious issue in many African churches. I see this source as helpful in tracing leadership patterns and roles taken by African women in history to evaluate their eligibility for church leadership roles and the application to the NT epochs under investigation, and the SDAZ in particular.

1.5.2.6 Oyewumi, O. (ed.)

This book contains insights from multiple African women scholars who tackle various topics related to women's suffrage. Oyewumi (2005:259 - 261) speaks of the link between gender and women's subjugation by men in Africa. Her insights are useful in dialogues around women's empowerment in the context of Africa to see if women in the SDAZ are oppressed by African culture and African men.

1.5.2.7 Grumm, C.

Grumm (1997:28 - 39), in a voluminous book by authors of various topics on African feminism edited by Musimbi Kanyoro entitled *'In search of a round table gender, theology, and church leadership*, gives a historical background to debates about women's ordination Africa by various African churches. She argues that African churches have erroneously excluded women from the leadership table of churches because they adopted the wrong four-cornered leadership table concept which discriminated against women. For her, African churches must appropriate a round-table leadership concept which welcomes women as leaders in the same way as men in churches. Grumm insists that God intends humanity to have egalitarianism in

communities, where the church has to practice the 'discipleship of equals'. These insights will be explored further in this study to evaluate of the type of leadership table existing in the SDAZ and what it is offering to women in comparison with men.

1.5.2.8 Nadar, S.

Nadar (2012:273 - 75) hails African feminism as able to work out a solution to emancipate African women by its ability to critique entrenched patriarchal prejudices. Nadar proposes what she refers to as the 5 'S' of African feminism, which are suspicion, subjectivity, story, scrutiny, and so-what questions as paradigms that penetrate into the oppressive nature of African cultural traditions and abrogate them for better solutions for women. This source's insights are valuable as they give impetus on how to engage African feminism to unlock the basis of the SDAZ's ordination practise based on how they interpret the biblical passages under study in this work.

1.5.2.9 Kasomo, D. & L.I. Maseno.

The above scholars provide a historical analysis of how African women theologians are handling the issue of searching for an appropriate methodology that speaks of the real needs of the African woman. Kasomo & Maseno (2011:120 - 135) highlight a detailed exploration of theories tabled by African women theologians. Thus, this source becomes an important resource for this study, as it situates African feminism in its proper context and shows how its fares on the interpretation of the New Testament texts as well as that of the SDAZ. It further gives the necessary clues helpful for an evaluation of the SDAZ ban on ordination of women in comparison with the NT communities under study in this work.

1.5.2.10 Amaefula, R.C.

Like Kasomo & Maseno, Amaefula (2021:298 - 305) traces the trajectories of African feminism's theorisations' trajectories proposed by various African feminist scholars. I engage this source for its detailed explanations on the morphing of African feminism into various terminologies and the reasons behind such a phenomenon. It thus gives an understanding on the reasons behind my insistence on using African feminism and not choosing another terminology, such as African womanism for example. I chose the source too for its appreciation of the African context, since Amaefula writes from a Nigerian context. Hence my trust on the essence of African philosophical frameworks

and epistemologies on the subject of understanding women's roles is aided in that regard. As such, it is a fair evaluation of how the SDAZ's treatment of women in churches resembles or differs from that which is deemed as having happened in the early church period and also why the SDAZ holds the ban on ordination of women for informed conclusion of the study.

1.5.2.11 Eboh, M.P.

For Eboh (2000:108 - 109), African women do not define the words 'women oppression', 'women discrimination', 'women subjugation', and 'women liberation' in the same way they are understood by Western women because African epistemologies and philosophical frameworks are diametrically opposed to Western ones. According to Eboh, joining Western women in their lobbying for equal rights and roles in church and society is a sign of madness by African women, for they do not define women's oppression the same way as it is defined and seen by Western women. Rather, African women's roles are ascribed and decided by culture and are not inferior to men's, though they (women) are confined to the home space. Eboh argues that African women must rather fight for the injustices brought to Africa through colonisation instead. These injustices affect not only women but also men. As such, Eboh submits what she terms '*gynist*' philosophy as an appropriate methodology to emancipate African women, for it is aimed at castigating racial and colonial oppression, which only African women can relate to while the white woman cannot since she is sustained by racial discrimination and benefits from colonialism. This source's insights are explored further in Chapter 2 of this study for their relevance to this research's objectives and also their help in deciphering the realities of what African women really do want in terms of roles in church alongside their male counterparts.

1.5.2.12 Mapuranga, T.P.

Tapiwa Praise Mapuranga was a Zimbabwean feminist scholar and a University of Zimbabwe professor of phenomenology of religion, with interests in women and religion, as well as the effects of HIV and AIDS on African women until 2021, the year she passed away. Her insider perspective as an African woman scholar who is familiar with the Zimbabwean and African cultural and religious contexts is important to this study. In her study on the effects of HIV and AIDS on Ndau women of the Chipinge

district in Manicaland province of Zimbabwe, Mapuranga (2010:30 - 35) lamented over the fate of Zimbabwean women, who despite being seen as important leaders alongside men in all aspects of Zimbabwean social, economic, political and religious life, nonetheless stand marginalised in comparison to their male counterparts. Mapuranga (2013:74 - 91) argues that although some Zimbabwean women have taken the nation by surprise within the Pentecostal churches with notable examples including Apostle Eunor Guti, Apostle Petunia Chiriseri, and Dr. Faith Wutawunashe among others, these women are married to charismatic founders of Pentecostal ministries who are at the helm of actual church leadership while their wives assume the subservient role. According to Mapuranga, women in politics and religion in Zimbabwe have always occupied inferior roles to their male counterparts due to cultural codes for example, women spirit mediums (*svikiro*) would only be possessed by the spirit of a male ancestor to an extent that in that state of ecstatic manifestations under the spirit she would be referred to as *sekuru*/grandfather and not grandmother.

As such Mapuranga concludes that 'at the end of the day, the women mediums were and are simply vessels of transmission of male influence and are thus not an end in themselves as their authority and power is galvanised with male signification'. Another example for Mapuranga pertains to the experience of women during the liberation war of Zimbabwe, where women again assumed supporting roles as wives of key liberation fighters who are mentioned in relation to their role of supporting their husbands and families back home as the men were in the actual battle field. Those who participated are said to have been assistants to male fighters through being messengers (*zvimbwido*), and having assumed the cooking and washing roles. Mapuranga even holds that in most cases (though exceptions are there too) women liberation fighters are said to have acted as sex objects for the male liberation fighters. This research takes Mapuranga's claims as affirming the SDAZ's ban of women ordination since they speak of the concrete existential realities affecting the women in the SDAZ. Thus, her insights are important in this work in that regard.

1.5.2.13 *Beya, B.M.*

Echoing Mapuranga, and Amaefula's observations, Beya (2001:183 - 185), holds that women in Africa are under the dilemma of male socialization which stipulates that they are rulers over women, where women are mere objects for use by men as they please.

In Beya's views, any methodology that seeks to fight for women's equal roles with men in religious, economic and political spaces must first of all understand how culture stratifies African women and girls. She thus, submits that the very position a woman carries in society is likely to be the same she carries in church circles which, usually a role of inferiority to men. This is so, adds Beya, because religious spaces in Africa have not yet escaped the temptation of discriminating against women. She concludes that the African woman is a victim of violence from many spheres ranging from the family, marriage, church and wider society.

However, she is quick to assert that through these women's lobby groups, African women are not demanding that they be the same as men or to venture into the complicated arena of asking God's gender. Rather, what African women are simply calling for is dignified lives free from discrimination and domineering by men. This author's insights will be explored further to establish if her claims for women's freedom are the same as those of women in the early Christianity era under study in this work as well as those of the SDAZ women. The analysis of culture is of interest in this research, as it is interrogated to establish the real culprit for women's 'oppression' in Africa by inquiring from African epistemologies, philosophy, and world-views so as to see the extent to which these allegations against African culture are true and thus excavate the real issues around women and their role in the African perspective. The source is helpful too for its African feminist perspectives which resonates well with this study's methodological frameworks.

1.5.2.14 Biri, K.

Like Tapiwa Praise Mapuranga, Kudzai Biri is a University of Zimbabwe professor of phenomenology of Religion with interests in women in religion especially in pentecostalism. She has written works on the Zimbabwean religio-cultural and political environment, studying its impact on Zimbabwean women's lives. As an African feminist, her views are helpful in influencing a contextual discussion on the subject matter pursued by this research. Biri (2020:18 - 25) holds that women in Zimbabwean churches, especially in Zimbabwe Assemblies of God (ZAOGA) Church, are manipulated by cultural practices that are allowed to dominate Christian contact in their church piety, such as the issue of menstruation and child birth rituals, which regard women as ritually unclean to preside over any religious function. These cultural

practices segregate women to the pews as men are given space to dominate the pulpits as leaders.

Biri's observation resonates with Mapuranga, Beya, Chibango & Silumba's, and Amaefula, among other African scholars of religion like John S. Mbiti, where the same conclusion is made that most African churches and churches in Zimbabwe in particular capitalise on the socialisation of women by African culture, which has made them accept men as the natural leaders while they (women) become mere spectators in church. Biri laments over the contact between women in religious spaces whom she castigates for denigrating each other. For her, the biggest enemy for women empowerment to assume equal leadership roles with men in the Zimbabwean context is women themselves who, instead of supporting each other to ascend to the top rungs of the leadership ladder, lampoon any woman who dares venture into the leadership table. According to Biri, any woman who dares challenge men to claim space at the same leadership table they occupy and enjoy alone is shamed by being labelled as a harlot, and/or someone who cannot handle a successful marriage union. As such, many women then come to accept that men are their natural leaders while their place is decided already as mere participants. These thoughts are seen as true in the SDAZ's banning her women for ordination. They are pursued further in this research to help reach the conclusion of this study for informed recommendations.

1.5.2.15 Clifford, A.M.

This source chronicles the historical development of feminist thought by highlighting the trajectories it followed until the theory of feminism was penned down and advocated for from Euro-American territories and the challenges it faced in its applicability in other territories such as American. I engage this source deliberately with the intention to help my readers appreciate the background behind the woman ordination debates in Euro-American SDA church, where it began, and to discover why the same phenomenon was not in felt or pursued in Africa at the same time it was intensified in the American territory. I discuss this issue in Chapters 2 and 6. This experience is helpful when it comes to inferring whether it may be possible for African feminism to be universally applicable to all African women's experiences, so much so that it can provide a one-size-fits-all solution for women across Africa if the same theory fails to be universally applicable in Euro-American territories themselves. Thus,

this source helps shape the women equality debates in Africa and propose workable solutions for African churches and the SDAZ in particular outside what the Euro-American ones may deem appropriate for Africa and Zimbabwe in particular. By this analysis, I firmly believe that readers of this work will be able to see for themselves the reason behind my insistence on engaging a study on African epistemology, philosophy and world-views as windows through which to view the SDAZ's ban on women's ordination, the reason behind its rejection to implement the church manual directives (which are joyfully being implemented in Euro-American SDA churches), and her fate for this violation at the hands of the administrative body, the GC, (if any) as well as the cause for the existing ambivalence.

1.5.2.16 Weems, H.

Like I hinted above, brief insights from writers from the territories which saw the loopholes of classical western feminism to their lived experiences and contexts helps readers of this work understand the dynamics around the question of women's ordination in the SDAZ and her other sister churches under the administration of their American-based administrative body, the GC. Hudson-Weems, a black American woman living in America, is one such writer I have picked for this purpose. Weems (1998:23) narrates how classic Western feminism failed to address African American women's needs for liberation and advocated theorisation from and by African women themselves instead. In this regard, Weems proposes *Africana* womanism as a methodology fit to ameliorate the status and role of African women living in America. However, this research scope is not cued to discuss American black women in detail but rather to use it for reference purposes.

1.5.3 African Traditional Religion and culture scholars' review

This section interrogates insights made by scholars on African traditional religion/s (ATR/s) and culture in line with what the two methodologies (social-scientific and African feminism) in use in this study claim, that African culture is the window through which African Christians make sense of any religious phenomena which presents itself to them. Just as I have insisted on the importance of the early church cultural dynamics in influencing correct meaning of the NT texts, the same is demanded for the SDAZ's evaluation of theological beliefs she is bound to show faith in, such as her ban on

women ordination, to establish the extent to which realities from her socio-cultural milieus makes her reject or accept certain practices in the church, even though they may be practiced by other peoples from other cultures different from hers. Spatial limitations allow for only a few of them to be consulted.

1.5.3.1 Mbiti, J.S.

Mbiti is regarded as the leading scholar of African culture and African theology as well as African traditional religions. He wrote extensively on African culture and religions and the role women play in them. According to Mbiti (1991:63 - 64) the role of women in Africa is special, as they are bearers of life itself and their roles are not inferior to African men's. Mbiti claims that African cultural norms are too strong to break for any African to the extent that even in their 'purported' conversion to Christianity, they still are guided by their cultural norms in their trying to understand the religious phenomena in Christianity. According to Mbiti (2001:108) "African culture is like a shadow; you cannot run away from it" affirms the inability to dismantle the African world-views of African peoples, the SDAZ members included. Thus, guided by their cultural knowledge kits, this may be the reason why the SDAZ women themselves cannot be expected to demand ordination as is the case with their counterparts from Euro-American territories and also, it may be the reason behind the SDAZ's stance of violating the church manual directive which approved women to lead as men through the ordination rite, a situation which is regarded as taboo in Zimbabwe and Africa at large as was discussed above.

The essence of African culture and traditions had been emphasised by Mbiti (1970:10 - 15) who opined that Africans had their religions and worshipped God before the coming of missionaries and had their own way of interpreting the bible text through their African epistemological frameworks. Mbiti's landmark saying 'Africans are notoriously religious,' fits well into the insights spoken of here which show that Africans from antiquity were taught to jealously guard and preserve their traditions and never embrace foreign ones. Mbiti's insights therefore, together with those of other African scholars, are engaged by this research to help in evaluating the way the SDA church in Zimbabwe might be understanding the NT texts under study in this work and the basis for her applying them to enforce her ban on ordination of women so as to justify or condemn that position. As a born and bred Zimbabwean male who has seen culture

at work in the life of Zimbabwean Christians, I insinuate that it is highly likely that the SDAZ insistence on refusing to enforce the church manual directives through her ban on women's ordination is influenced by her church members cultural configurations which she might be regarding as similar to those of the early church environment and thus vow to perpetuate them in her context and choose not to align with that of the Euro-American SDA churches.

1.5.3.2 Shoko, T.

Tabona Shoko is a respected Zimbabwean scholar of African traditional religion/s with vast experience in Zimbabwean cultures. He lectures at the University of Zimbabwe. According to Shoko, the Shona customs which are followed by the majority populations of Zimbabwe domesticates Zimbabwean women and confines them to the home duties such as child rearing, cooking for the husband and family, and offering conjugal duties to the husband. Women in these societies do not aspire to lead in any aspect of life, as they are groomed to accept their roles of domesticity, adds Shoko. This may be the reason why Zimbabwean scholars of religion and gender studies like Chibango & Silumba (2018), Biri (2020), Shoko (2007) Chitando (2019), and Mapuranga (2010; 2013), among others, have concluded that women in Zimbabwe, though a few of them have vowed to compete with men in church leadership roles, have culture as their major hindrance to assuming leadership roles in churches with men. These Zimbabwean scholars' insider perspective as people well-bred in the Zimbabwean context convinces me to conclude that the SDAZ is to a large extent, influenced by African culture, which pervades all African countries, an issue I discuss further in Chapter 2.

1.5.3.3 Mawere, M.

Mawere (2011:37 - 41) highlights the nature of African epistemologies and delineates them from Western ones. Mawere holds that Western countries are individualistic oriented where they value individual recognition at the expense of the group identity while African societies are collectivists who valued group identity while disregarding individual recognition. This source is important in explaining how African thought systems and value systems are decided. Interesting discussions are generated from

Mawere's insights as arguments on the contextual interpretations on women's roles in the texts under study unfold.

1.5.3.4 Chibango, S. & C. Silumba

In their 2018 journal article entitled '*Women And Church Leadership In Mtoko North, Zimbabwe: Are Women Really Suppressed?*', Chibango & Silumba (2018:61 - 73) hold that it is strange to note that most Zimbabwean churches that do not ordain women reject to do so while the constitution⁷ of Zimbabwe as a country has long passed a gender parity policy which is enforced in all government structures, where women assume the same leadership roles as men as government ministers, university professors, military establishments leaders, members of the Zimbabwean parliament, and as governors, to mention but a few. They struggle to understand why churches like the SDAZ, the Roman Catholic church, and the African Initiated churches in

⁷ The Constitution of Zimbabwe (2013) in Section 17 subsection 1 says that the State must promote full gender balance in Zimbabwean society, and in particular; the State must promote the full participation of women in all spheres of Zimbabwean society on the basis of equality with men. In line with this commitment, the country has ratified a number of gender related international and regional instruments. These include the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), the African Charter on the Rights of Women and the Southern African Development Community Protocol on Gender and Development (Zimstat, 2016). Section 17(2) further holds that". The state must take positive measures to rectify gender discrimination and imbalance resulting from past practices and policies".

Zimbabwe are still not implementing the Zimbabwean constitution of gender parity by allowing women the same privileges and roles enjoyed by male congregants alone. On top of these measures to ensure gender parity in Zimbabwe, Chibango & Silumba add that:

the Zimbabwean government 'has put in place several pieces of legislation and policies to actualise these provisions, for instance, the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (ZimASSET) and the National Gender Policy (NGP). Zimbabwe continues to engender its laws through the alignment process to the Constitution. Women are confronted with numerous gender related challenges in the political, economic and social sectors which inhibit them from attaining their full potential (Chibango & Silumba (2018:63).

However, regardless of all these efforts to promote equality of status and opportunities for all Zimbabwean citizens, the church, especially the SDAZ has remained aloof and vowed not to comply even with the highest authority in the land, the national constitution of her own country. One is then left to ask about the source of power and authority that the SDAZ seem to refer to in her refusal to enforce the gender parity policy long passed into law by her own government. The power seems to be in the trend of refusing to enforce the directives of her church policy which has been established again. It is as if refusing to implement her own church policy is not 'noise' that is loud enough to be noticed by any distant observer, when she flexes her muscles again against the highest authority of her land, her nation's gender parity policy as enshrined in the Zimbabwean constitution. These questions still linger, 'what is the basis of her 'arrogance, why are these centres of power (the Zimbabwean government and the GC) so powerless to implicate her and force her to comply?

Attempting to answer these and many other questions, Chibango & Silumba's research has evinced that:

Although some women in Zimbabwean churches have felt so agitated by this gender imbalance in their churches yet the government opened a plethora of ways to ameliorate them, and rose up to grabbed power at all costs by forming their own ministries which they do run and make decisions themselves, these women founders are still not the real leaders in the very churches they started as the

leadership position is prescribed by Zimbabwean and African culture to be a domain of a male figure, their husbands (Chibango & Silumba 2018:64).

Another glaring reality that has allowed the church in Zimbabwe to remain untouched by powers that be according to Chibango & Silumba (2018:64), is that 'the church operates on its own God-given laws. In as much as the country of Zimbabwe is vying for equality through the quota system in the parliament and in the senate and other bodies of political administration, the same cannot be applied with easy in the church which has its own basis for instruction. To that end, the church has remained very patriarchal even though we have the greatest number of women in the church'.

Chibango & Silumba's (2018:68) research found out that the general understanding of leadership in Zimbabwean social fabric is that 'most church congregants are of the idea that males were created to be natural leaders who must rule in all sectors of life beginning from homes, community, religious spaces and even up to the national level where males do call the shots'. Hence, they conclude that in the Zimbabwean cultural norms it seems to be a taboo for a woman to rule over men. For Chibango & Silumba:

The African cultural practices have made an indelible ink in the hearts and minds of many Zimbabwean both in men and women. It explains why men are always on those positions of authority in the church and women on the receiving end. This background cannot be easily erased because if someone becomes a Christian, he/she still maintains his/her culture. That is why women give men the autonomy to lead in the church, despite population that favours women in positions of authority. One cannot be wrong to assume that Zimbabwean Christians are taking their culture into the church (Chibango & Silumba 2018:71 - 72).

This issue of culture⁸, according to Chibango & Silumba, has been accepted by Zimbabwean women⁹. For them, this is why they find it easy for males to rule over them in churches and in all aspects of Zimbabwean life where even Joyce Mujuru, who was once the Zimbabwean vice president, was argued by some political commentators like Ncube (2020:25 - 33) that she did not have the credentials for the vice presidency office serve that she was given on an honorary basis by virtue of the fact that she was a wife of former powerful military general, Solomon Mujuru. Ncube insists that the honourific title claim for Joyce Mujuru stands justified in that soon after

⁸ Culture is defined by Ukpong (2002b:12) as 'the totality of life of a human community. It entails the community's way of viewing reality as well as various activities such as the political, economic, social, leisure activities, the arts, textual productions among others' while Oduyoye defines it as 'a people's world-view, a way of life, values, philosophy of life, the philosophy that governs behaviour, their sociology and social arrangements, all that they have carved and cultured out of their environment to differentiate their style of life from other people'. Oduyoye argues that producers of knowledge in African have been males and accuses them for installing rituals and taboos which oppress women and girls.

⁹ Ikechukwu Orjinta supports this view too by positing that women in African had always had their roles subordinate to African male's even though on the surface it may be seen as similar. For Orjinta, menstruation disqualifies African women to assume same status and roles with their African men as they are regarded as unclean in certain days of the month. This is why in most religious practices, only women on menopause can participate in certain rituals. It is on this basis that many churches in Africa do not allow women to carry out same roles with males. It shall be seen if this is the view held by the SDAZ on her refusal to allow her women to carry out pastoral and eldership roles such as baptising new converts, ordaining deacons, officiating at weddings and organizing churches - roles done allowed for ordained male members only in this church. John Mbiti however specifies that women's roles in African philosophy is clearly defined and distinguished from men's role - they don't compete but rather complement each other. As such women and their roles are not seen as inferior to men in African epistemology. This research takes these thoughts as important in establishing the basis for the SDAZ's ordination position as shall be seen in Chapter 2 and 6.

the death of her husband, she was easily booted out. These sentiments affirm the above assertion by Chibango & Silumba that the Zimbabwean cultural grids seem to prescribe leadership roles in all aspects of the Zimbabwean life, even the political space ones, to men and not women. As such, the SDAZ women, like all other women in other sectors and walks of life, may be asking themselves this question: ‘who are we to ask for more if the one who was at the highest office in the land (Joyce Mujuru) was under the dictates of culture also. In this note, they, like other Zimbabwean women, stand ready to accept the supporting role to men even in church as prescribed by culture. On that same basis, the SDAZ leaders (who are males for obvious reasons) ride on these cultural convictions which convinces even the SDAZ women themselves, to accept their culturally dictated supporting ministry roles and hence maintain their ban on women’s ordination. The researcher of this work chooses not to comment on Joyce Mujuru’s point above, since his interests are on roles of women in religion and not politics, though he uses this view by Ncube on the basis that this research is a literature-based study that relies on what scholars and opinion leaders from all walks of life have commented on as regards women’s roles in Zimbabwe.

1.5.4. SDA scholarly works and official church documents’ reviews

Since this study is a literature-based study, below is a review of selected scholars on Adventist theology and also official SDA church administrative documents to situate the debates on women’s ordination in this church in their proper context and also evaluate them in line with the methodological tenets employed in this work. This will help in arriving at an informed conclusion and recommendation of the study.

1.5.4.1 *Plantak, Z.*

Plantak (1998:78) laments that it is unbelievable that the early Adventist pioneers, such as Ellen White, were allowed to hold powerful leadership roles alongside their male counterparts as preachers and prophets, for example, while 21st century Adventism is opposing this rich pedigree by baring capable and qualifying female church members from assuming the same roles their predecessors held. In this publication, he advocates for what he calls ‘the social gospel’, which allows the church to be cognisant of the social realities of her members and determine to appropriate flexible methodologies that will make worshippers (women in particular) see their

relevance in church. Plantak condemns the blatant paying of a blind eye to a social reality that is calling for attention in the name of women's ordination to the gospel ministry while the early Adventism was fully awake to listen to the existential realities of its milieu, which made it participate in support of the advocacy against slave trading started by William Wilberforce, for example, which Ellen White, the female leader of this church organisation wrote in support of. This source, written from an Adventist background, is congruent with the methodologies used in this study, such as the social-scientific approach, and thus its insights are helpful in revealing the historical progression or retrogression of women's roles in the SDAZ and the SDA world church at large so as to inform the study's conclusions and recommendations.

1.5.4.2 Vyhmeister, N. (ed).

This book is a compilation by some Adventist scholars of diverse fields on biblical studies. In this volume, they tackle topics and issues related to women and their roles in the church, as well as ordination. Wisbey in Vyhmesiter (1998:3) argues that women participated in the church's ministry in leadership roles alongside their male counterparts from the inception of the SDA church in America. Like Plantak, and Wisbey, Watts (1996:6 - 7) opines that Adventist women pioneers held key leadership roles alongside men in this era. For them, the Adventist pioneers in the early 18th century accommodated women and saw them as eligible to handle the same ministerial roles as men and also assumed key leadership roles as preachers, administrators and prophets who guided the church. Views and insights from these Adventist scholars are employed in this study to investigate whether there is continuity or discontinuity in the perception of women's contributions in church from the SDA pioneers' era in comparison with the SDAZ, to establish the basis of her ban on ordination of women. Thus, the source offers an insider perspective which may help achieve a balanced analysis of the topic under discussion in this study, especially with regard to how debates on the ordination of women have been handled in Adventism.

1.5.4.3 Roennfeldt, R.C.W.

Roennfeldt, in Humble & McIver (eds.) (2015:13), an Adventist scholar, writes from a Western feminist perspective and claims that the SDA church's highest decision-making body, the GC, through its 1975 and 1984 Annual Council meetings, voted in favour of female elders' ordination, a position which saw many SDA churches in the

Euro-American territories ordain their women church members as deacons as well as elders. Roennfeldt holds that based on how women fared alongside their male counterparts and Paul himself during Pauline Christianity, they were and are still eligible for all roles that men have in church, including ordination. This source is engaged in this research for its insider perspectives to guide the comparative analysis with the SDAZ on the ordination debates in the SDA world church to establish the reasons for the ambivalent position currently obtaining between the SDAZ and those in the Euro-American contexts, whether it is biblical or sheer cultural differences.

1.5.4.5 Bacchiocchi, S.

Bacchiocchi (1987:14 - 18), an Adventist scholar, argues that although it is true that women were included in the ministry of the early church by both Jesus and Paul, through which the church grew exponentially, women did not assume leadership roles in the stead of apostleship or any ecclesiastical authority role. He lampoons feminist scholars for trying to force the equality-in-ministry agenda in ways which the 1st century CE Christianity did not know. According to Bacchiocchi (1986:23), women SDA pioneers and reformers were content to assume supporting ministry roles because they understood this view that women were not to assume key ecclesiastical authority roles like men. With this, Bacchiocchi concludes that it is no wonder to realise that Ellen White, the voice that guides this church, never wrote about women's ordination to give guidance on how it may be done because she took it for granted that the ordination of women was clearly understood by both the men and women of her era. Bacchiocchi, seeing that the issue failed to attract the attention of such important people in Adventism such as Ellen White yet commented on many other issues the church still relies on today, maintains that the topic was probably not yet a bone of contention among early Adventists, for women were willing to do tasks that did not

require ordination. Bacchiocchi maintains that some of the statements¹⁰ that Ellen White made commenting on what women could do for the ministry of the church seem to point to the supporting-type of ministry and not the authoritative and ecclesiastical leadership role. The source is engaged for a perspicacity of the issue of women's roles in early the Adventist period so as to derive application lessons for the SDAZ.

1.5.4.6 Timm, A.R.

Timm rejects the views of Plantak and Vyhmeister, that SDA women pioneers assumed the same leadership roles as their male counterparts. According to Timm (2014:2), the SDA pioneers such as Uriah Smith (1832 - 1903), H Waggoner (1820 - 1889), and Ellen White (1827 - 1915), to mention a few, did not see women as fit to assume the ecclesiastical authority roles which are given to men through ordination such as baptising new converts, officiating at marriage ceremonies and weddings and organising churches, ordaining deacons or pastors. Timm laments that the issue is further complicated by the fact that Ellen White, who was and still is the prophet whose voice that guides the SDA world church did not specifically write on the women's

¹⁰ Ellen White's 1895 article entitled 'The Duty of the Minister and the People', published in the Review of July 9, 1895 read: 'Women who are willing to consecrate some of their time to the service of the Lord should be appointed to visit the sick, look after the young, and minister to the necessities of the poor. They should be set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands. In some cases, they will need to counsel with the church officers or the minister; but if they are devoted women, maintaining a vital connection with God, they will be a power for good in the church. This is another means of strengthening and building up the church' (White 1895:434).

ordination issue, and thus her voice which guides the SDA world church in all her operations is silent on whether or not women should be ordained.

However, taking Bacchiocchi's observation that the issue of the ordination of women had not yet attracted attention the global attention it has today to demand serious debate among the founders and pioneers during their era who, though living and working in America then, the territory that birthed the SDA church which later grew to be a global entity reaching all countries such as Zimbabwe as a true statement, one then is left to ask about the realities which later triggered this sudden interest and focus after the demise of these reformers who seemed to be content with their supporting ministry roles that did not require ordination. Timm (2014:6) attempts to answer this question by submitting that it was not until the 1960s, that sporadic and sparse interest in the women's ordination debate began to be noticed. This little spark for the discussion of women's ordination during the 1960s, according to Timm, is attributed to a few socio-political environments that were setting in across America. This phenomenon is of interest to this research as it affirms what was excavated in Chapter 2, that the rise of feminist and womanist discourses were seen as having erupted during this same period and in the very territory in question, namely the Euro-American societies.

According to Timm, pressure was further exerted by the American Civil Rights Act of 1964, which enforced Equal Employment Opportunity between white men and women was soon passed into law. The church was not immune to this wave. As women in secular society began to enjoy economic, political and social equality, church women began to demand equal opportunities in church roles and ministry. The church yielded to the government acts of law, and soon church women were employed by the denomination in other roles until the tide was tilted towards demanding equal employment and the concomitant employment packs in roles requiring ordination. Thus, this is how the ordination debate sparked in the 1960s in America.

Another factor which might have contributed to the revived interest in the women's ordination debate during the 1960's in America was the unequal pay between men and women across American society. This ignited, for the first time in history, advocacy for equality of roles in 'sacred' spheres, the church. In church work, ordained ministers

enjoyed more pay than non-ordained clergy. This accelerated the stampede for the ordination bracket as people were attracted by the better salary packs as well as tax exemptions once they were ordained. With this, SDA women in America fought for their place in the ordained ministry to claim the same tax exemptions enjoyed by the male clergy.

Timm concludes that with this pressure from the American legal authorities cited above, among other realities which the SDA church women were using as a stepping stone to propel them to the ordination bracket, the SDA church in America began to ordain women (without having to go through the GC Committee sessions) as the matter was being enforced by government decrees for all workers in America.

It is within the background of these incidents that the GC leadership then had to respond to these 'illegal' ordination practices against GC policy positions by certain churches and Divisions to foster adherents to policy. Adventist archives testify to the fact that the GC intensified efforts to quell this dissident behaviour by the Euro-American Divisions' churches, who had embarked on ordaining women to be elders against church approval, where from the 1990s to the present, a series of meetings to vote for disciplinary measures has endured until the present, with the upcoming GC Session in 2025 expected to enact the disciplinary hearings to all 'dissident' churches and Divisions who are violating the standing church policy pronouncements.

1.5.4.7 Pipim, S.

Pipim, an African scholar from Ghana, in his paper entitled *Must we be silent?* argued that:

It must be clear that ordination of women as elders or pastors is not a cultural issue to be settled according to a person's prejudice or preference or the sociological structures existing in a particular region of the world, be they 'democratic', 'patriarchal', 'authoritarian', or 'otherwise'. Neither is it an equal rights issue to be resolved through such things as civil laws, lawsuits, or some type of affirmative action to ensure gender parity in the pastoral ministry, or to equalize some supposed power structure. The issue is not a financial matter to be dictated by a desire to enjoy United States tax law benefits to ministers or to be decided on the basis of economic might or threat of

economic blackmail. It is not even a political issue to be settled by petition drives, public opinion polls, referenda, surveys, questionable church policy revisions, unilateral ordinations, or some carefully choreographed campaign-style strategies to legitimize women elders or women pastors in our churches, institutions, and publications. The issue is theological. It can only be resolved legitimately on the basis of Scripture (Pipim (1995:14)).

Pipim (1995:14) laments that it is unfortunate that ‘the practice of ordaining women as elders and pastors is an ideological agenda that is seeking a theological justification. But because there is no compelling biblical or historical basis for it, its advocates keep resorting to cultural justification. And in recent times, they are pursuing this un-biblical agenda by means of a carefully choreographed political strategy. Pipim advocated for the upholding of the long-standing Adventist pioneers’ position that women are to be given supporting ministry roles. However, the debate intensified with the pro-women ordination group insisting that the divisive question of women’s ordination is a cultural issue where Divisions were supposed to ordain women as their specific territories’ cultures saw fit.

Writing from a conservative Adventist background, Pipim (1995:15) argues against women taking on leadership roles in the church, citing it as unbiblical and describing it as a true sign of biblical infidelity. He postulates that the bible and God sanctioned males alone to lead in the church due to the priestly function that was a preserve for males only in ancient Judaism. This resource is helpful for a balanced treatment of this study topic and also for detailed tracing of the SDA’s position on women’s roles in the church from the insider perspective.

1.5.4.8 White, E.G.

Ellen White is an undisputed SDA early church pioneer who contributed immensely to the SDA church’s doctrinal development to its final form, a state seen now in this church that has grown to attain global representation. Ellen White is regarded as an authority on doctrinal positions of the entire Adventist church worldwide. She is the inspired voice that speaks in all the administrative and policy documents of this church, which includes the church manual and the working policy of the SDA World church. However, although she wrote several publications on various subjects, research has

it that she did not specifically touch on the issue of the ordination of women, and hence only inferences can be deduced from her other writings and her personal experience on what her views on women's ordination might have been. According to Bacchiocchi (1982:34), the reason for her not directly writing on the issue may be attributed to the fact that the topic was not as urgent an issue in her time as it is now. An analysis of her life and work is pursued in this study for helpful insights into how she might have perceived her own standing alongside male members of her era as well as other capable and qualifying women she worked with despite the fact that she did not write much on the subject of women's ordination for application lessons in the SDAZ.

1.5.4.9 Crisler, C.

According to the SDA encyclopaedia, Clarence Crisler (1877-1936) was a trusted literary assistant to Ellen White and one of her leading private secretaries. On whether Ellen White approved of women's ordination, he wrote in a letter dated June 16, 1916, that he had 'never seen from her pen any statement that would seem to encourage the formal and official ordination of women to the gospel ministry'. It is for this reason that Timm (2014:4) rejects the view by Plantak and other pro-women's ordination writers that although early Adventist women reformers and founders actively participated in key roles of the church ministry such as serving as prophets, preachers, women's ministry conference directors, education directors and treasurers, they were not ordained for eldership or pastoral roles. For Timm, the founding member Ellen White, although she preached on pulpits (at times in the presence of GC presidents), 'was never ordained, nor did she ever perform a wedding, organize a church, or conduct a baptism'.

These observations are evaluated as the analysis of this issue continues in this chapter against other realities which are excavated for answers to this topic in the SDA world church's context. I see this analysis as crucial because it helps locate the probable reasons behind the women's ordination stalemate in the SDA world church between the pro and the anti-women ordination groups, and also the reasons behind the ambivalence and also why the SDAZ opposes her church policy by denying the ordination of women rite while her other sister churches in Euro-American territories confer the same on their women. For this task, I engage scholarly papers, magazines

and official SDA world church literary sources to project the full picture of this research for its readers.

1.5.4.10. Ndlovu, H.

Hebert Ndlovu is a senior lecturer in theology at the only Adventist theological training seminary in Zimbabwe, Solusi University. I engage his insights on the administrative angle of the SDA church manual to determine the fate of non-compliant SDA churches in terms of discipline meted against them to answer the questioned posed by this work on why the GC is not disciplining churches who are violating its standing policies. According to Ndlovu (2018:21 - 23), the SDA world church has principles that govern how members, local churches, Conferences, Unions, and Divisions should behave and see their place in this colossal entity which strives to maintain a unique identity that must be maintained by all her members and entities globally. These aspects are useful in the evaluation of the SDA ordination practice and help in situating the probable causes the ban on ordination of women by the SDAZ, which has created an ambivalent scenario in the SDA world church, thereby affecting its uniformity in practice as is expected by her church governance system.

Ndlovu holds that three main principles govern how the SDA world church asserts its authority; namely the 'conferred status' principle which denotes that membership in any SDA church is always a privilege that is granted by a group (for example no one can baptise himself/herself). Furthermore, under the conferred status principle, membership is not a right because membership can be withdrawn by the same group that granted it, adds Ndlovu. Thus, the GC, through its committees, has power to terminate the membership of an erring church member, or entity of the SDA world church, which includes the SDAZ, or any other SDA establishment for that matter, as such actions violate its standing polices (see also SDA 20th edition church manual

page 67). It will be seen in chapter 2, if the GC has plans to discipline¹¹ churches that are violating its church policies, especially on the women's ordination directive. Malina (2001:20) holds that this disciplining of non-complying members of a group is characteristic of collectivistic societies or groups through the honour and shame paradigm. Thus, the above principle and its purpose, situate the SDA world church in the collectivistic communities. Allusions to the Greco-Roman world of early Christianity can be seen with regard to how the GC asserts its authority across all members in the SDA world church just, as Paul did with his household churches where he asserted his authority over them to control them in line with the collectivism, honour and shame, kinship, and patronage models.

The second principle, according to Ndlovu (2018:23), that SDA church members must be aware of to manage their conduct within the church is known as '*Authority ascends to a group*' principle. The idea behind this principle is that the final authority is always in a group, not in one individual; every elected/appointed leader is accountable to a group. However, no group or committee has greater authority than the group that

¹¹Malina (2001:18-20) submits that one of the key assessment tool used by honour-shame societies is 'boundaries' or what Elliot (1990:425) terms 'lines'. According to these two scholars, 'boundaries' or 'lines' were important apparatuses for gaining or losing honour in the early Greco-Roman era and in all collectivist communities. These boundaries or lines which can be visible or invisible were parameters used to mark social, group or national identity of a person which was supposed to be defended at all cost. Members are obliged to maintain their demarcated lines or boundaries, failure of which punitive measures will be meted against them (usually shameful ones) to force obedience. Thus, the SDA world church's stance to discipline non complying Divisions such as NAD testifies of her collectivist outlook.

appointed it. The church, or Division status, is granted by the GC and thus acting contrary to its policies warrants punishment, as is emphasised by the above principle. This principle helps to assess the pro-and the anti-women ordination groups to see which one is acting against this principle and thus exposing itself to disciplinary measures.

The last principle for Ndlovu is the '*Shared identity*' principle. He regards this principle as profound in the sense that it means a local SDA church or Division is an official church but is not the whole church. This issue is emphasised by the Church manual (2022:29), which states that: "In Seventh-day Adventist Church structure, no organization determines its own status, nor does it function as if it had no obligations to the Church family beyond its boundaries. Thus, each local church or Division must conform to the shared beliefs and policies so as identify itself with the overall identify of the whole system and thus not be a stand-alone".

With these three governing principles¹², it can be insinuated that the SDA world church, to a greater extent, exhibit collectivist tendencies through the GC's interests

¹² The 2015-16 SID working policy B40 05 entitled '*General Conference Constitution Expresses Unity of Church*' clearly declares that the church's policies are meant to bind all SDA churches in the world into common practice, theological and organizational oneness in the following words: "As the Scriptures represent the church of Christ as one body, all the parts members one of another, so our Constitution, adopted by the representatives of the worldwide sisterhood of churches, seeks to express the unity and oneness in mission, purpose, and belief of all organizations that make up the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the one undivided remnant church of God. Hence, this forms the basis of my postulation of the collectivistic outlook of the SDA world church.

in enforcing obedience to official policy guidelines, a quest to behave in a manner that guarantees group harmony, and a high regard to community over individuality". It is against this reality that the GC is housed in the individualistic societies of the Americas, yet still exhibits tendencies alien to its western epistemological and philosophical world-views (see Chapter 2). Maybe, the representative system which takes delegates from all territories such as Africa to America at GC sessions leads to a neutralisation of individualism, as the majority of delegates come mostly from collectivist societies such as Africa, where individualistic ideas and perspectives get crushed by collectivistic-oriented delegates' votes.

1.6 Research gap

The above reviewed scholarly works present the tenets of the social-sciences and African feminism in general and sees their applicability in deciphering the meanings of the texts of the studied epochs (pre-AD 70 early church, the Euro-American SDA church and the SDAZ) which speak on women's roles in church in comparison with those of men. In their (literature review scholars) analysis, I see a research *lacuna* which they have not mentioned, that is, how their researches relate to the SDAZ. This is where my work claims its relevance, as it provides an interface between the Hellenistic, Pauline, Synoptic Gospel traditions, and the deuterio-Pauline corpus with the SDAZ's realities and what it means for the SDAZ in the face of how it was for women in the said studied epochs. Thus, I argue that while the above scholars' insights

in the literature review section of this work end at pointing at and complaining about the discriminative practices of the SDAZ seen in her administering the ordination rite to male church members only while women remain barred for the same rite, this work goes a step further in answering why it is so, through the engagement of its methodological framework's lenses which helps interpret the scenarios under study. The research has explained why there exists an ambivalent ordination of women practise in the SDA world church, why the SDAZ has 'braved the weather' by opposing the administrative injunctions from her supreme organizational body the GC by opposing the women's ordination instruction in the SDA church manual and lastly how the cognitive dissonance in SDAZ women can be solved.

The research therefore makes a bold claim that the ordination ban on SDAZ's women can only be understood by studying the issues of African epistemological, African cultural, and African philosophical¹³ frameworks and their bearing on role assigning

¹³ According to Bewaji in Amanze (2010:457) African philosophy is a term that did not come easily for referral to Africans as being able to think, realising the long history of their being looked down upon and being denigrated to barbaric, savages and uncivilized, backward, primitive, pagans, and dark by Western anthropologists and ethnographers during the genesis of Africa's dark history of slavery and colonialism. Accepted terms to refer to African 'thinking' by these Westerners were 'African Beliefs', African Traditional Thought', or 'African Folk Thought Systems'. However, through the aggressiveness of independent thinking African scholars, the term African philosophy has come and has competences seen in Western philosophy too. Bewaji holds that philosophy, an intellectual discipline, though broad, refers to principles that govern one's actions, beliefs, disposition on the one hand, and the norms of behaviour, actions or activities of an organization, group, association or society, on the other hand. Bewaji's (2003:30) definition of what philosophy is, is derived to Obenga's (2004:31) view, which Bewaji expands. Seen by Obenga as "a systematic reflection on life", Bewaji expands this by adding that Philosophy is "the systematic critical, speculative, reflective,

praxis in Zimbabwean and African churches at large, as is discussed in this Chapter, Chapter 2, and Chapter 6 where I have concluded that it is highly unlikely to hold that the SDAZ women are or can to be clamouring for the ordination rite, neither can they advocate for the same leadership role with their male counterparts. My submission is based on insights from Biri (2020, Gusha 2020, Mapuranga (2013, Mbiti 2001, Chitando 2013, Shoko 2007, and Chibango & Silumba 2018), who have submitted that women in the Zimbabwean society, and Africa at large, are socialized by culture to accept that leadership is for men while theirs is supporting role, a phenomenon in church life too. The research rides on these assertions and present realities which answer why Zimbabwean women demonise any woman who dares to venture into

introspective, retrospective, conscious, and intuitive attempts to explain experiences, events and issues confronted in the process of living, and this will show that it is also the means by which human beings seek to find solutions (answers) to profound life puzzles, be these puzzles ones dealing with natural phenomena or social experiences, be they concerned with health or with economic predicaments, or be they related to explain the eventualities of the inexplicable relations between a divine Supreme Being on the one hand and the forces of suffering, pain, death, and negation on the other hand. Bewaji holds that African philosophy is thus said to be the African way of doing the above said realities. In this study, African philosophy is used to refer to how Africans reflect systematically on life issues regarding the way women and their role in society are perceived in comparison with men. The landmark expression by Mbiti's 1969:108) 'I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am' undergirds this study African philosophical claims where the line of argument is that women in African can not be oppressed by men and have never been oppressed by their men throughout African history since oppressing women militates against the African traditional communalism and collectivism concept which runs like a thread in almost all African societies. It has been argued in this paper that women oppression is rather a Western Phenomenon brought by the Western individualism brought to African through Western capitalism and imperialism's hunger for profit hued out the concept of division of labour which placed men in economic related roles in industries which got venerated over those of women who got allocated non-economic roles in homes. Prior to this, it was not so in Africa. See Chapter 2's point 2.22, where this issue is discussed in perspective of this study's scope.

leadership spaces ascribed to men by presenting a study on African epistemology, philosophy as apparatus to substantiate my submission above as basis for answering the five research questions pursued in this work.

1.7 Research methodology

In choosing a hybrid approach, I have been inspired by Owaugbute, Odo, & Ugwu (2021:1 - 2), who postulated that NT studies, especially in the African context, benefits more from interdisciplinary engagements than utilising monolithic theoretical frameworks. This work has therefore, adopted a hybrid approach which fuses two methodologies as interlocutors, namely African feminism and social-scientific criticism in its treatment of the subject matter under study in this research. This is done to establish how their views on selected NT *pericopae*'s teaching on women's roles under study in this work can illuminate the SDAZ's interpretation of the same texts to inform her theological positions, such as her ban on women's ordination. A study on the methodologies engaged in this research as well as their applicability to the question under study to the SDAZ is carried out in Chapter 2.

1.8 Section summary

This chapter presents dynamics to consider around the environment in which the early Christianity trajectories under study in this work were affected by the Ancient Mediterranean cultural dictates in which the early church operated and what this means for the SDAZ's ban on ordination of women. Mahlangu's (2008:88) claim that there exist huge resemblances between African cultural models and those of the Ancient Mediterranean society the early church lived and operated, to a greater extent explain why the SDAZ bans her women from ordination while granting it to male members only. Thus, these realities allow a smooth comparative study due to the similarities in their epistemological orientations and cultural mores which govern their peoples' behaviour, which dictates roles between men and women, and belief systems such as honour and shame, collectivism, patron-client and kinship models. Furthermore, these realities provide a stable ground for a comparative study on how SDAZ women are perceived as regards their eligibility or lack thereof for the ordination rite, thereby aiding the task of this research of establishing how the NT communities' writers under discussion in this work perceived women's roles in church, interpreted in the lenses of the two methodological frameworks employed by this research for an

evaluative discussion of the SDAZ's theological position decision on the question and ordination of women and to offer recommendations after having attempted to establish the basis of her ban on ordination of women.

1.9 Conclusion

It has been the goal of this chapter to introduce the methodological framework through which this study is undertaken. It was highlighted that the study utilises the hybrid approach by fusing African feminism and social-scientific methodologies as interlocutors in this research to discover how they can augment each other for a holistic treatment of the subject matter where the possible loopholes of one method is mitigated by the strengths in the another. Through this strategy, the research aims at achieving a contextual interpretation of the NT texts under discussion in this study by paying special interest to the religio-cultural and social dynamics of the communities which produced those texts to evade *eisegesis* and out-of-context interpretations. It is out of a conviction that this approach is germane for establishing the basis of the SDAZ's ban on women's ordination and also to provide a *panacea* to the research questions in this work.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY ANALYSIS AND ITS APPLICABILITY TO THE SDAZ'S CONTEXTS.

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is a discussion on the research's methodological framework and the concomitant implications to subject matter. It discusses the implications of the said methodology to the SDAZ context, while the application to other contexts under study (Pauline, Gospel traditions and deuterion-Pauline epistles) is carried out in Chapters 3, 4, and 5 respectively. The primary objective is to advocate for a hybrid methodological approach that integrates two prominent research paradigms, namely social-scientific criticism and African feminism, as instrumental tools for advancing the understanding of perspectives held by these communities under study in this work. The research endeavours to exclusively concentrate on comprehending the thoughts and ideas articulated by these communities and their writers concerning the roles of women and their relevance within the pre-AD 70 era of the Christian movement and also the SDAZ's context.

2.2 Background and rationale of study

In the context of the current study, a fundamental assumption that emerges pertains to the choice of methodology or methodologies to be employed. It becomes evident that this study would greatly benefit from the incorporation of both African feminist and social-scientific approaches as mechanisms to fulfil the research question's objectives. The fusing of the two methodologies is motivated by current trends in scholarship that are encouraging interdisciplinary engagements, especially in the field of NT studies from an African perspective, for a holistic understanding and application of these texts to African world-views (Owagbute, Odo, & Ugwu 2021:1 - 2). However, in this research, the social-scientific method is the primary methodology, while African feminism is used as its attendant to check and critique its treatment of the subject matter so as to excavate the not-so-obvious realities necessary for a fair investigation of the topic. Through this strategy, the study will take points of convergence as well as divergence from the methodologies' tenets as benchmarks to seek ways to ask and answer new questions for a better understanding of how the epochs under study

perceived women and the reasons therefore, for informed conclusion and recommendations from the research.

This research respects and acknowledges the gains made so far by African feminist studies and advocacy for equal opportunities in wider society and religious spaces. It thus takes these efforts and achievements by African feminist biblical scholars and contextualises them into the SDAZ's concrete realities to determine areas of synergies and potential conflicts within Adventism praxis for further reflections for solutions on the subject under investigation.

The other motivation stems from the general belief in academia, which label Pauline teachings on women's roles in the church in his letters as torturous and enigmatic, which this research believes to be linked to a lack of a contextual reading of Paul's letters and other passages which speak on women roles in church. With this, the research therefore draws from Neufeld & DeMaris's (2010:xii - xiii) submission that the only way to have a perspicacity of the New Testament text and its Christianity is to study the ancient Mediterranean culture which birthed the early first-century C.E. Christianity as its text 'is moored in the value systems of the ancient Mediterranean society'. Congenial with this, Davis (1974:205) picks this claim further by positing that in the study of the sacred texts of the bible, 'the fact that revelation is conditioned by the thought forms and world-views of the culture in which it was given, makes mandatory to seek to understand the socio-historical backgrounds which the early NT writers acculturated. The significance of this view is alluded to by Elliot (1993:24 - 35), and Scholer (1987:411 - 419) and echoed too by Neufelf & DeMaris (2010:xii) who posit that 'in interpreting ancient NT writers, especially on matters they wrote about gender, sexuality, role, and status of ancient people, we must remember that they were influenced by their societal prejudices which made them think, feel, and speak out of their social context, just as we do too'.

These insights have convinced this researcher to seek to understand the pre-AD 70 early church cultural environment so as to pick factors which give clues on how women were perceived as regards their role in comparison with men to evaluate whether the SDAZ's ban on ordination of women is a reflection of a continuity or discontinuity of the early church practice on women's roles or other factors such as her traditional culture. It will be seen, however, that there is an extent to which African feminist

scholars accept the cultural world-views of communities of the NT texts as readers and interpreters alike try to make sense of what they teach against their socio-cultural realities. Hence, there is engagement of the two above-named methodologies as interlocutors in this research, which distinguishes which between them accommodates the place and essence of socio-cultural and religio-political landscape of the early Christian context the Greco-Roman world. It will be seen how early Christianity in its Ancient Mediterranean society's epistemological and philosophical frameworks and world-views guided human behaviour which will give modern readers a better appreciation of what the writers of the above-named communities meant to communicate to their original hearers on the issue of women's participation in household community spaces.

This assumption is particularly germane given the specific backdrop against which the research is conducted, namely Southern Africa, and more specifically, Zimbabwe, in which the prevailing societal paradigm is one that upholds patriarchy as the prevailing norm. Patriarchy is an area of interest for this research hence bringing along African feminist approaches for their aggressiveness in challenging it in all aspects of life and exposing realities around women's oppression and proposing the way out for their much yearned-for amelioration. The objective of such an undertaking is to discover the extent to which patriarchy and African culture in particular has affected and is affecting women in the SDAZ. Thus, through feminist discourses, contextualised in this research to African feminism, the research may greatly benefit from the critique of patriarchy by feminist scholars as regards its effects on women's standing in church and society.

Furthermore, it is imperative to underscore the ecclesiastical milieu within which this study is situated - a well-known conservative faith community belonging to the global Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) world church, an international denomination known for her unwillingness to embrace humanistic philosophies, such as African feminism and social-scientific criticism. The research therefore, seeks to unmask what the SDA church fears in engaging these secular theories and also to provide evidence (if any) that proves the importance of engagement of secular theories in the work of interpreting the ancient texts as an apt new paradigm proposed by this research, to inform doctrinal positions of the church without neutralising the conservative standards

so as to encourage the church not to fear and demonise secular interpretive methodologies but to try and figure out how she can benefit from them instead, particularly in the area of the intersection of gender and religion.

The background having been laid bare, the study then continues with comparative analyses of the two, namely African feminism and social-scientific methodologies, so as to show points where they converge or repel for a holistic treatment of subject matter pursued by this research. In so doing, the loopholes of one theory on matters of engaging the research topic at hand are augmented by strengths in the other, thereby guaranteeing a balanced treatment of the research topic.

Through a critical exploration, the research thus seeks to navigate the suitability of these approaches, particularly in light of African epistemologies¹⁴, and world-views¹⁵

¹⁴ According to Manyeli in Amanze (2010:437-38), etymologically, epistemology, though a broad term, a branch of philosophy concerned with a quest for knowledge, is a term derived from the Greek word *episteme*, which means knowledge. Thus, epistemology is a theory of knowledge, a science of knowing where we enquire the nature of knowledge. It holds that knowledge is truth and seeks to justify how truth is obtained and justified. It attempts to distinguish true beliefs from false ones. In this study, epistemology, contextualized to relate with African ways of knowing and justifying truth/belief, is used to discover how it helps the SDAZ to justify her women's ordination ban belief and why she sees it as a correct and truthful knowledge/belief so as to lay hold on her African ways of knowing which she claims are the ones which guide her on how to distinguish correct/true from wrong/false knowledge or belief. In this case if the knowledge/belief is wrong/false, she stands ready to deny and oppose it, as is seen in her refusing to ordain women, though NAD, for example, sees ordaining women as a correct and truthful belief/knowledge.

¹⁵ The Anthropologist Heibert (2008:26-28) defines world-view as 'the foundational cognitive, affective and evaluative assumptions and frameworks a group of people makes about the

that underpin notions of femininity, womanhood and masculinity, and their effects on the roles of women and men in church. The ensuing discussion will delve into the nuances and relevance of these approaches within the specific Southern African/Zimbabwean epistemological frameworks and world-view context, which is permeated by deeply entrenched patriarchal norms. Additionally, it will take into account the unique dynamics within the ecclesiastical sphere of the Seventh-day Adventist community, a denomination renowned for its conservatism. By meticulously evaluating these two approaches, the congruence within African perspectives on African feminism and social-scientific approaches will be critically assessed on their ability to recognise and accommodate the realities at play in the African/Zimbabwean cultural fabric, which dictates how the biblical message is to be acculturated for church piety. This intellectual journey aims to illuminate the most suitable path forward for the research, ensuring that it is both culturally sensitive and academically rigorous. Thus, the research progresses with a rigorous exploration and examination of the social-scientific criticism as the primary interlocutor in dialogue with African feminism,

nature of reality which they use to order their lives. Our world-views determines our values . . . It sorts out what is important and what is not what is of highest value from what is less . . . It thus advises how its adherents ought to conduct themselves in the world'. Sire (2009:22-23) adds that there are worldview questions which help people conform to their world-views such as 'how do we know what is right and wrong', and 'what is the meaning of human history'. In this research, the term is used to help readers understand why the context of SDAZ differs with those from Euro-American territories and why it must be accepted that the context and perception of church members from a certain geographical space and context (such as on their view on whether women must be ordained or not) ought to be distinguished from others who are not of their context, and be accepted in their differentness with others still.

elucidating its significance and pertinence within African context thereby serving as the principal avenue through which the study is propelled forward for a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

As we navigate this scholarly terrain, a critical examination of the synergies and potential tensions between social-scientific criticism of the NT and African feminism will be undertaken. The aim is to discern how these theoretical approaches can both enhance and enrich the discourse surrounding gender dynamics, equity, and empowerment within African societies. Moreover, the discussion will encompass an exploration of the theoretical underpinnings that substantiate the compatibility between social-scientific and African feminism. This strategic alignment of social-scientific and African feminism as conversational partners is anticipated to yield profound insights, enabling the research to navigate complex epistemological terrains on the communities' epochs while contributing to a more holistic cultural resonant comprehension of the subject matter. Through this intellectual synthesis, the study endeavours to advance its quest for academic rigour and cultural relevance, ensuring a robust foundation for subsequent analytical endeavours. As such, a comparative analysis of the above-stated interpretive approaches is carried out for this important task, as shall be seen throughout this chapter. However, as is understood in modern day scholarship, research is progressive and dynamic, so the researcher of this work insists that employing and interfacing the social-scientific criticism with African feminism to the gospel traditions, the Pauline corpus, the deutero-Pauline, and the SDAZ community's understanding of women's roles in church is apt and germane.

Using these research tools, the research investigates texts that speak on women's roles in various households of the above-named communities of early Christianity as its scope of reference to establish the concrete existential realities that might have directed the social codifications of life aspects recorded and taught about in the early household communities where early Christian gatherings occurred. This will be applied to the SDAZ's understanding of these perceptions on women's roles in her church to establish the basis for her ban on ordination of women and also the cause of the ambivalence that has lingered unsolved in this church.

2.3 African feminism

According to Amaefula (2021:301 - 303), African feminism is a derivative of the classic western feminism of the 1960s, which African women scholars contextualise to try to name feminist theory in African terminologies, so that it may craft solutions for African women and their own 'emancipation' needs. African women scholars resorted to this task of describing western feminist theory in African terms after seeing its inapplicability and incompatibility to the American context, where it was referred to by numerous terms such as womanism, *Africana* womanism and inter-sectional feminism, to mention a few. Thus, Africa was bound to see its incompatibilities with her existential realities for women too. Thus, faced with this challenge, African scholars battled with the task of crafting and naming a methodology/theory that would align itself with African epistemologies and philosophical frameworks, as shall be seen in this chapter. The battle still is ongoing on whether to accept the Western feminist or the American womanist theoretical frameworks in crafting an African methodology that shows that the term is contextualised to African realities or to completely reject them and craft new ones. In their early stages of the battle for such an Afro-centric theory, Amaefula postulates that to a greater extent the very theories propounded in Africa for African women exhibited Western ideologies and epistemologies which still posed serious compatibility issues with African women's realities.

2.4 Background behind African feminist theorizations in Africa/Zimbabwe

According to Amaefula (2021:301), the contextualisation task was and still is not easy for African feminists, nor is it complete. The above statement is testified by ceaseless debates that are currently ongoing for the search for a proper methodology for the handling of African women's emancipation needs. Amaefula attributes the cause of these tortuous debates by African feminists to the absence of a considerate understanding of Western feminism and American womanist theories and their impact on African societies, especially in the religio-cultural realm. For Amaefula, African women scholars fear that in the battle for a correct methodology for their continent, they may end up embracing Western epistemologies and world-views and re-theorising them within Eurocentric views, a situation that will likely cause disaster on the African continent. Amaefula maintains that this will make African feminists fall into the same trap of the blind universalisations and generalisations of classic Western

feminism, which was later rejected by American women, as they proposed womanisms instead. A methodology for African women, according to Amaefula, is one that must fittingly capture the socio-cultural beliefs and world-views of the African people for a proper evaluation of what African women's roles in the religious space must really be in comparison with their male counterparts.

Thus, African feminist women scholars have to navigate past 'feminism', 'intersectional feminism', 'womanism', and '*Africana* Womanism' in search of appropriate theories for the interpretation of the biblical text in the African context so as to proffer solutions to the questions emanating from African women as regards their role in church as compared with that of African men. For example, why are they not allowed the ordination rite in SDA churches in Africa and the SDAZ in particular? Amaefula (2021:302) warns African feminist scholars to tread carefully in a bid to contextualise Western feminist theories in African contexts so as for them to achieve a scholarly consensus on whether African women are really demanding freedom from African men, and also on whether the African churches really discriminate against women by their gender-role-assigning praxis.

2.5 A brief history of African feminism

According to Nadar (2004:273) the need for a systematic way for African responses by women scholars led to the formation of the CIRCLE in Accra, Ghana, by Mercy Amba Oduyoye in 1989. It is a professional body and platform, adds Nadar, where African women theologians and scholars are encouraged to research and write papers on women's emancipation in Africa through engagements with the biblical texts which speak on the roles of women in the communities described in the bible. Below is a brief discussion on the contributions and outcomes from these debates.

Kasomo & Maseno (2011:135), however notes a few problems faced by African scholars in this colossal task of naming a methodology that may work for African women. For them, the first problem in naming an African women emancipation methodology is the problem of defining the term 'Africa' itself. For them, the term Africa is an ambiguous term. Agreeing with Kasomo & Maseno, Dube (2001:10) insinuates that the term 'Africa' is a misleading colonial label because those that crafted the term wrongly assumed that the continent had uniform existential realities, yet this cannot

be true considering that Africa has diverse racial, ethnic, religious, cultural, economic, and political dynamics that make it impossible to have a universal label.

However, for Dube, African feminist scholars have generally agreed to understand the term 'African' as referring to a 'category to facilitate discussions that address issues that cut across the continent and command solidarity in the pursuit of liberation'. Mbiti (1987:17) concurs with Dube's argument by asserting that 'even though it is difficult to define an African due to the broadness of Africa's geographical landscape and diversity of African culture/s, Africans to a larger extent share a common world-view; there is always a common thing which unites them as Africans, and that thing is the *Ubuntu* philosophy '*I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am*' (Mbiti 1969:108 - 109). With what has been highlighted in Chapter 1, that African epistemologies and world-views resemble those of the ancient Mediterranean cultures through the honour and shame, patronage, kinship and collectivistic models present in both cultures, it can be seen that Africa's *ubuntu* philosophy encourages community solidarity against the individualism of the West, which is inspired by the individualistic mantra '*I think therefore I am*'. It is to be seen, therefore, whether the early church communities incorporated this understanding in their religio-cultural spaces, since their social orientations resemble Africa and the SDAZ in particular for probable convergences or divergences in their views to inform an evaluative conclusion and recommendations of the topic under discussion in this research, the barring of women for ordination. It will also be pursued whether African feminism is free from Western epistemological frameworks, which are largely individualistic, opposed to the collectivistic nature of their society, and opposed to the *ubuntu* philosophy. This is the understanding which this thesis will have in its treatment of the subject matter at hand in this section.

2.6 What is African feminism/s

Spatial limitations do not allow for a detailed discussion around the debates on the term 'Africa'. With this realisation, it is prudent to now discuss the term feminism so as to come to a complete definition of the term African feminism. The other task will be to

evaluate its applicability for usage by African women. Generally, feminism¹⁶ as a theory, is an object of scholarly debates by African women scholars, with some

¹⁶ Scholars are divided over the definition of feminism and as such there is no monolithic, unified definition of what this very broad 'animal' called feminism really is. Clifford insinuates that feminism is worldwide and has taken diverse forms, mean different things to different people. Tucker's (1992) observation seem to be correct that; 'the definition of feminism depends on whose book one is reading and to some extent the year the book was published' (Tucker 1992:214). This is the context in which this research distinguishes this term between Western feminism and African feminism where this research employs African feminism to appeal to the context it is being applied which is the SDAZ. According to Russell (1996:257) feminism is a global movement of efforts by women and men critical of sexism (defined by Brigham (1991:462) as any action, attitude, or institutional structure which subordinates any person on the basis of gender) to dismantle the cultural hegemony of males over females as well as masculinity over femininity. Etymologically the term is a French derivative of *feminisme* which today is understood as a political position or stance of someone committed to changing the social position of women. In this case, feminism becomes a movement that fights against inequalities based on sex and gender and is applicable to Christianity just as it is also with other religions to assess their role and status in religious spaces (Ruether in Parson 2004:3). It (feminism), adds Ruether, is a movement that questions and seeks to correct injustices brought by the hierarchies of sexes where men are regarded to be on top while women are at the bottom strata of societies. Clifford (2000:13-40) holds that this global movement (feminism) that began in the West morphed into three waves in Europe and the Americas in the 1950s/60s. Clifford holds that it started even earlier through uncoordinated efforts by the French woman Christine de Pizan (1364-1430). Jackson & Jones (2000:12-13) holds that in these three or four cycles in which the feminist theory morphed in, a plethora of other feminisms in the West and the Americas irrupted seeing the feminists divided into various groups ranging from radical, liberal, reformists, and eco-feminists as each phase failed to address the needs of all women globally for example the first wave fought for civil, economic, and civic rights of elite white middle-class women and while leaving the needs of women of colour, a situation which called for another feminisms to address specific needs of women in their unique experience and location. The subject is so broad and even confusing when one realises that in America it assumed different names such as womanism, *Africana* womanism and intersectional feminism while *Latina* and *Chicana* women referred it to as *mujerista*. In is in this context that this research declares that space and scope of this thesis does not allow a detailed discussion of these variants of feminism/s except African feminism for reasons stated below. In African the same struggles are be expected since the inherent reality is that there a

dissociating themselves from it while others view it as a theory, which can be applied to African women's emancipation regardless of the fact that it was started in Europe to appeal to white middle class women. According to Oduyoye (1983:249), some berate Western feminism for being a 'foreign to Africa' concept which cannot be applicable to African women's needs. Hence, Oduyoye expresses her hesitance in using the term feminism in the following words:

. . . in some parts of Africa, feminism is often associated negatively with women who have difficulty relating to men that is difficulty in keeping their marriages intact through thick and thin. . . Although I am using the word feminism, I am still struggling with the effect it has on African 'ears' (Oduyoye 1994:167,169).

For Oduyoye, feminism is inapplicable to African women, since they do not hate men as the white middle-class women who started it in Europe do. They hate men, the bible, their culture, womanhood, childbearing, marriage, and family, yet it is not so with African women, who love their men whom they see as husband and brothers whom they cannot fight because of *ubuntuism* in them. Kasomo & Maseno maintain that African feminism, unlike Western classic feminism which focused on sex as a cause for women's oppression, and unlike American womanism which focused on racism,

universal woman does not exist. Thus, a methodology that addresses women in certain location and experience may not be applicable to other women elsewhere. The issue is articulated in this chapter.

sexism and classism, is preoccupied with intersectional analyses of causes for women's oppression and inequality among African women. According to Aira & Pascua (2020:2 - 10), this inter-sectional analysis picks such issues as colonialism, imperialism, patriarchy, *kyriarchy*¹⁷, ableism, gender, class, location, race, religion, heteronormativity, ethnicity, as well as human rights issues such as poverty reduction, and violence prevention, and health and reproductive rights. However, Kasomo & Maseno postulate that due to the fact that feminist theology is not yet a polished and systematically developed body of knowledge from theological institutions, it is thus inherent that women's actions and reflections on women's emancipation is called by various names to reflect the complexities around their experiences in Africa and the world at large (Kasomo & Maseno 2011:155).

Oduyoye (2001:124) too, like Chioma-Opara (2005:5), Stinton (2004:109), and Eboh (2000:108), defends the proliferation of these varied terminologies by maintaining that they are not to be seen as a weakness on the side of African women theologians but rather as signifying the handicap of the linguistic complexity of the contexts these

¹⁷ *Kyriarchy* is a term coined by Elizaberth Fiorenza to argue against the view that sees patriarchy as the sole source of gender imbalances and as sole source of women's oppression. In its place she placed *kyriarchy* a term she holds refers to other social realities that lead to women discrimination such as race, class, colonialism, etc. Fiorenza holds that the term refers to the rule of the lord/master/father/husband - all of which are privileged people due to their social categorization which make them dominate and subordinate those made subjects by the very systems which venerated them over their subjects such as wives, children, slaves and subjects. *Kyriarchy* thus seeks to interrogate these systems of oppression and bring an amelioration to the subjugated classes of society which are not women alone but men too.

women are from. Rather, for them, African feminism is supposed to be allowed to undergo teething problems as a nascent discipline. Stinton (2004:109), for example, insists that multiple terminologies be proposed and continue to be proposed by African scholars because ‘the diversity of contexts in Africa demands a plurality of theologies’.

I, to a greater extent, concur with African women scholars who support the ‘multiple terminologies’ view as it avoids falling into the same pit that classic Western feminists and American womanists fell into, namely of universally defining women of the entire African continent and their unique and diverse experiences as if they were the same and then claiming to provide a one-size-fits-all remedy to their problems despite their different concrete existential milieus and needs. I, however, begin to question the applicability of a universal ordination practice notion suggested by the SDA world church, which her church manual seems to enforce on all SDA churches around the world regardless of their varied cultures, epistemologies, philosophical frameworks, and world-views dictating how men and women relate in religious spaces such as churches. Riding on this claim for diversity by African feminists, this research can greatly benefit from their (African women scholars) insights in locating the probable reasons and causes behind the SDAZ’s rejection to implement what her church manual directed, namely that women are ordainable for the diaconate and eldership roles, as the same directive has been enforced by Euro-American SDA churches. The issue spoken of above by African feminists is thus noteworthy, that diversity of cultures and world-views should naturally demand diversity of theological positions, since people have to contextualise the biblical text in their lived experiences and cultural norms.

2.7 The battle for an appropriate methodology for women equality advocacies in African by African women theologians

This section traces the contributions by African women theologians in their theoretical submissions of what they thought was the best methodology to describe the causes of African women’s oppression and which term/s to use. With the variedness of these scholars’ views, I will pick only those who comment on NT bible texts in line with the scope of this study, since a number of them are on OT feminist hermeneutics and sociological analysis of gender roles in wider society.

2.8.1 Mercy Mamba Oduyoye

Oduyoye (2001:120) names her theory 'African women's theology'. She sees it as an appropriate theory that reflects the needs and questions of African women as regards their place and role in the church, to be the best term that describes the actions and reflections by African women in pursuit of their liberation, even though she sees some African women as comfortable naming theorisations of the same as 'African feminist theology' while others seem to prefer to use the term and 'African womanist theology' interchangeably. Hence, Oduyoye is of the opinion that African women who are consciously aware of their unique and specific contexts must feel free to interchangeably use the terms 'women's theology' and 'feminist theology' as long as their actions and reflections as African Christian women are to pursue the goal of liberating women from the oppressive and discriminatory tendencies seen in the Christian bible, its culture and African culture. The Christian bible is seen by African feminists as exhibiting tendencies of subtly riding over African cultural practices and thus leaves African women doubly oppressed by their African cultures and that of the Christian bible.

2.8.2 Isabel Phiri

Isabel Phiri, another African woman theologian, used 'African women theologies', a pluralised form of Oduyoye's term (African women's theology) to refer to these actions and reflections by Christian women on causes for unequal opportunities between African men and women. For her, this term accommodates the variedness and diverseness of Africa as a continent and the concomitant diverse experiences of African women. Commenting on her preference for the plural African women's theologies to African women's theology in singular, Phiri (2004:152) holds that it is out of the acknowledgement of the fact that within Africa, there is a diversity of women's experiences due to the differences in race, culture, politics, economic standing, and religions that African women's theologies is preferred instead of Oduyoye's singular form.

2.8.3 Musimbi Kanyoro

Kanyoro (2001:67) calls her theory 'cultural hermeneutics', which she upgraded to 'engendered communal theology'. According to Kanyoro (2001:67), the way of escape

for her fellow African Christian women can only be found by 'employing both African and feminist theologies of liberation and then putting the African-known education and learning method of story-telling' in conveying it to the people which African women are familiar with. For Kanyoro, through story-telling, African women can freely expose dehumanising practices in their cultures and religions. As such, 'cultural hermeneutics', coined by Kanyoro, was brought through as an appropriate hermeneutic to deal with this issue of the complicatedness of African Christian women's experiences and the method to be used to solve them. She recommends this method for its ability to solicit solidarity, community, acceptance, and accountability among the women it seeks to help. By this, according to Kanyoro, oppressive cultural prejudices are used to mark 'ideal African womanhood' constructs, which trap and clip their 'wings' so as not to say anything against dehumanising ritual practices such as genital mutilation. Strangely, Kanyoro adds, in the name of culture, women are made custodians over these rituals and are forced to nurture and sustain them for future generations, all in the name of attaining 'ideal woman' status. Story-telling hermeneutics is thus seen as an appropriate methodology for fishing out the causes for women's oppression because of its ability to pave a systematic way to hear women's stories and effect humane and life-affirming change.

Furthermore, story-telling hermeneutics, adds Kanyoro, takes the poor ordinary reader as its primary focus and subject of the interpretation of biblical texts, thereby fulfilling the goal of protest liberation theologies (of which it is part), which its proponent Gustavo Gutierrez describes as the 'preferential option of the poor', and also its theme that 'the poor are not powerless'.

2.8.4 Sarojini Nadar

Nadar (2004:272) uses the term African feminism to describe what a best methodology to work out liberation for the African woman entails. She gives a good analysis on themes and sources of African feminism which are helpful for this study's discussions. Of interest to this study is her submission that the bible is the major source of African feminist theorisations. As such, her views are in line with the social-scientific claims on the importance of taking the biblical text on face value and apply sociological dynamics for contextual meaning of the text to the environments they get applied.

2.8.5 Other African feminist scholars' submissions

Spatial, study scope and time constraints do not allow for a discussion of all African feminist women scholars' theories except to mention some of them in passing below. As pointed out above, some of their theories are not aligned to the scope of this study so I just mention them in passing to show their existence in the entire body of knowledge in African feminist theorisations. It is to be remembered that some African feminist scholars who writes views congruent to this study like Mapuranga, and Biri, among many others have not chosen to describe their theorizations in specific terms other than African feminism. This is another reason why I see no much need to mention each scholar's theory and what it entails in detail. As will be seen below, this is also the reason why I have chosen to use African feminism in a generic sense so as to represent all the African feminisms, even though at the back of my readers' minds, they ought to infer that I am speaking of those which comment on the NT bible texts' perception of women to guide the research in my area of speciality, namely of New Testament studies.

Musa Dube calls her methodology Postcolonial feminist hermeneutics, where she argues that African women cannot access equal opportunities with their African male counterparts, even in the postcolonial period because coloniality and postcolonial injustices are still prevailing decades after African achieved independence from colonial powers. For her, the bible too carries these postcolonial tendencies, which causes African women to be bar from accessing equal ministry opportunities with men in most African churches.

Masenya Ngwan'a Mphahlele proposed what she refers to as '*Bosadi* womanhood perspective,' which speaks on the Northern Sotho tribes of South Africa and how African South African women stand oppressed by their men through the 'ideal woman' social constructs common in their Sotho proverbial sayings. 'Snail-Sense Feminism' is another theory propounded by Adimora-Ezeigbo. The theory claims that 'African women should behave like the snail which does not confront any obstacle that imposes itself on its way but negotiates its way out'. Obioma Nnaemeka proposes Nego-Feminism, which expresses firstly, feminism of negotiation and secondly urges women not to see virtues they share with the snail such as wisdom, sensitivity, resilience and determination as weaknesses. Rather, they should be seen as a way of strategising

to complement the man and join forces with him to develop society for the benefit of all. The proponent of this theory asserts that Snail-Sense Feminism, is a theory that emphasises the individualism and complementarity of the sexes. Under this theory, the individual must empower herself before she can empower others. She must stand before she can help other people stand. The pursuit of individual success and development is central to Snail-Sense Feminism. The woman should not just accommodate others, but also ensure that she achieves recognition for herself because self-preservation and self-actualisation are crucial to a woman's success in life.

Still another theorist proposes 'Situating feminism,' which was coined by Adimora-Ezeigbo, which in her view would enable women in Africa to survive the harsh patriarchal culture through collaboration, conciliation, cooperation and complementarity. Chikwenye-Ogunyemi calls her methodology 'Black Womanism', and 'African Womanism' while Catherine Acholonu refers to her methodology as *Motherism*, and Chioma Opara's methodology is called *Femalism* (Amaefula 2021:296). However, Ogundipe-Leslie (1994:542) disagrees with the notion that claims that African women have never been under oppression from patriarchy and its prejudices and that therefore they do not need a type of feminism to liberate them. She points to the preference and prioritisation of the boy child for education over the girl child, a practice observed by many cultures and religions in Africa.

Ogundipe-Laslie maintains that African women and girls need a liberative methodology which is contextualised to manoeuvre all contours in African traditions and cultures. For her, feminism, whether contextualised to African feminism or not, must be eschewed by all African women, and in its place, STIWA, an acronym standing for Social Transformation Including Women in Africa, should be installed as a way of escape from the alliance of the Western (racist) feminism which pokes its head into African feminism too. For her, this new acronym dispels the tension generated each time the term feminism is mentioned in African ears while making African men and women naturally accept the inclusion of women in the social transformation agenda of Africa (Ogundipe-Leslie 1994:549). Thus, Ogundipe-Laslie's methodology is termed STIWANISM.

Marie Pauline Eboh calls her theory for African women's liberation *gynist* philosophy. In the theory of *gynism*, the woman in question is viewed as a complex problem, and is beyond feminism. Eboh (2000:108) holds that *gynists* seek liberation not only from male domination, but also from foreign rule and neo-colonialism, where she castigates the so-called post-colonial era as an illusion; it does not exist, because colonialism is an on-going process. The evils of neo-colonialism are as biting as the ills of the colonial period. Eboh holds that the independence purported to have been achieved by African governments is merely 'flag independence'. It is without economic independence. Eboh's theory is in agreement with Musa Dube's postcolonial feminist hermeneutics in its praxis. They both agree that feminism's focus is sexism, yet sexism among African men and women is not a problem, but rather, racial and economic oppression are the urgent issues to be solved for African women. For Eboh, "given an option, the *gynists* would prefer to put on hold sexism to tackle Western hegemony and pick racism first, for so long as Africa remains in bondage, African women's liberation will never be total". According to Eboh, racial oppression is subtle in that, Western women seem to appear as if they want to solicit support of feminism for African women, yet it serves their (white women's) interests alone while leaving African women oppressed by the very white women's feminism on racial grounds. This must be a wake-up call, adds Eboh, for all African women to reject any alliance with western feminisms and American womanisms.

Eboh goes to a greater length in exposing the evils of the feminist agenda on African soil. She claims that "*gynist* philosophy" instead of "feminist philosophy" is the only *panacea* for African women's liberation needs because African women must not be associated with the radicalism and man-hating that characterise Western feminism. Such radicalism in solving issues in Africa is not in line with African *ubuntuism*. More precisely for Eboh:

Western women do not suffer from the racism that drains off the African marrow. On the contrary, they join their white men to perpetuate race hatred, class bias, and to exploit and oppress the black race. Thus, African women must unite with their own men in the fight against Western imperialism, capitalism and racism. We, African women, regard sexism and capitalist racism as two sides of the same coin. Head or tail, we lose, whereas our Western counterpart loses in sexism, but

wins in racism and shares the gains of capitalism with their white men. Thus, parity is lacking between African and Western women. The white woman's double stance as both friend and foe, comrade and oppressor also make her feminism unacceptable to the African woman (Eboh 2000:108).

As regards the definition of *gynism* or *gynist*, Eboh (2000:108 - 109) submits that it is a term she coined to refer to an African womanist on the continent of Africa. For her, the black woman activist in the African continent is a *gynist* while the black woman in the African Diaspora is a womanist. According to Eboh, African women who don't travel to the West or nearby South Africa may not even experience racism in its raw form. Eboh's theory does not apply to Zimbabwean women's experience, as she claims that they stand not to benefit from Western feminism's (anti-sexist) advocacies; they are not suffering racial oppression in its raw form, which is the major focus of Eboh's *gynist* theory. Furthermore, it is seen that *gynism* is linked to womanism. This too disqualifies it for application to the SDAZ women, who are not clamouring for lesbianism, a component sought under American womanism.

2.9 Why so many African feminisms

The plethora of names used to refer to a methodology that best describes the situation of African women and their emancipation needs led African women scholars to fail to settle on one unified terminology, just as was the case with the Western and American experience highlighted above. This is the reason why there is a thin line separating Western feminism from African feminism. Thus, the researcher of this work maintains

that all other terms such as womanism¹⁸ (Walker 1992) African womanism, intersectional feminism¹⁹ (Crenshaw 1989), *Africana* womanism (Weems 1998), to

¹⁸ According to Clifford (2001:25) womanism is term that was coined by Afro-American women who had embraced the 1950s/60s European/Western first wave feminist concept of advocacy for women rights yet they found that the concept was not applicable to their concrete socio-historical milieus of the Americas. They thus sought to contextualize feminist ideas to their needs and contexts as women of colour. They capitalized on the loopholes of the European/Western feminism and broadened it to embrace all aspects of Afro-American women which needed emancipation such as race, and class oppression. The term 'womanism', adds Modupe-Kalowole, is derived from the writing of Alice Walker's *In Search of our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose*. The term describes the experiences and perspectives of African American women, primarily based from their 'despised' colour. Both *Africana* Womanism and African Womanism are theories that have at heart the experiences of black women. Ebundita (2009:228-229) submits that womanism as an African American variant of feminism, was birthed out of the inadequacies/deficiencies of the first wave elitistic and racialistic classic feminism of the 1950-60s. Its goal is purported by its proponents to be that of interpreting black female experiences globally. It arose from the Americas after recognising the triple oppression of black American women as racial, classist and sexist oppression, aspects that were not focus points for European first wave feminism. The underlying assumption of womanism is that the needs of black and women of colour in the Americas are different from their white counterparts and they recognise and accept male participation in the struggle for emancipation while the European feminism saw their men as culprits for their oppression and thus regard them as their enemies. Unlike Western feminism, womanism is rooted in black culture, recognising the centrality of the African ethos of family, motherhood and community in its discourse.

¹⁹ According to Aira & Pascua (2020:8) intersectionality is a term coined in 1989 by the African-American lawyer Kimberle W. Crenshaw, who collected and systematized black feminist critiques of feminist theory which focused on women as an undifferentiated social category, something which in reality represented the interests and needs of white, middle-class women. Feeling relegated by white feminists' lack of sensitivity to their specific oppression, the African-American feminist group Combahee River Collective drew attention early on to the need to address the differences between women. There being no universal woman, what until then had been the political subject of feminism – the figure of the women – was brought under spotlight. In their famous manifesto, the group defined intersectionality as a political position committed to the liberation of black women, defining it as the aim of their struggle. Aira &

mention a few, are mere semantic cases, yet the contextualised-to-African-realities, namely Western feminism, is what is being discussed. In this research therefore, it can be seen that what African women theologians are trying to do in proposing various terminologies to describe the situation of women in Africa is the same scenario that led Western feminists to also propose womanism, *Africana* womanism and intersectionality in America in the 1960s, when they too failed to find a terminology that described the universal situation of women across the globe. Thus, this research expects these realities to make readers of this work appreciate the employment of

Pascua (2020:6) thus maintain that a feminist movement that seeks to combat the root cause of inequalities cannot establish hierarchies of oppression, but instead must explore the dynamic relationship between coexisting identities (for example women, black) and interconnected systems of oppression (for example white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, etc). Thus, aspects of racism, and classism and gender discrimination intertwined with racism are to be interrogated and not to be blinded by the universalisations of classic feminism that focused on sexism alone as a universal category for women analysis of oppression. In respect of the issue of gender inequality, Aira & Pascua (2020:5) holds that it is impacted by racism, class, homophobia, transphobia, discrimination against disability (ableism) and other issues. It is for this reason that the punch-line for intersectional feminists is 'Intersectionality inequalities are connected'. Intersectional feminism is thus critiquing the classic traditional feminist theories propounded by the West for their failures to address racial and gender analysis and how these two shape social classifications, an area of deliberate focus by black and decolonial feminists through this intersectionality theory of feminism. The Western feminist theories addressed 'the universal woman' whom the black American and decolonial feminists could not find because a universal woman cannot and does not exist. As such, with the unavailability of the universal woman whom feminism aimed to address their theory (feminism) could therefore not provide the much awaited for responses to the specific oppressions the black women suffered from. Hence the intersectional feminism is coming to bridge this void.

African feminism/s instead of any other terminology, such as African womanism for example, because all that is being described is the theory that was started in the West (feminism) for which African scholars are battling to see how it can be used to relate to African realities, even though it is known that feminism itself left European and American women divided, as evidenced by various terminologies which were proposed in these Euro-American territories after feminism failed to stand for the needs of all women in Europe and the Americas.

However, it is Oduyoye who insists that the varied names 'must not be seen as an imitation of a methodology by women in other contexts but it is merely a reflection of the complexities among women and their varied needs which require them to name their actions and reflections in terms they see best for their situations (Oduyoye 2001:124). Amaefula (2021:290) agrees with Oduyoye and other scholars who support the multiple-naming view by positing that the plethora of terminologies exist in African societies to provide a contextualised methodology that describes the specific needs of African women's diverse experiences. Thus, for Amaefula, it is inevitable that African feminisms appear in numerous and diverse forms.

Amaefula (2021:299) justifies this long list of African women and male feminist theologians by asserting that 'it is possible that several women writers and critics are still working on more theories to properly conceptualize African feminisms'. This comment suggests that the varied terminologies are a mere semantics game, yet what is spoken of is feminist theory (feminism) which started and was practised in the Euro-American territories which is also being applied and practised in Africa by African women and men conscious of contributing to the emancipation of African women.

It is against this background, therefore, and the above cited reasons, that this study adopts the term African feminism to refer to all the actions and reflections by African women and male scholars in their quest to discover areas where African women are 'doubly' oppressed by the bible and their varied African cultures to the effect that they are discriminated against in African churches and the SDAZ in particular, on the issue of roles and privileges they assume in church in comparison with those assumed by their male counterparts. Gaidzanwa (2010:5) concurs with this view that African theorisations on women's empowerment are to be understood in plural form (African feminisms), though its discussion may be in singular form (African feminism). This is

the context in which this research proposes a hybrid approach of fusing African feminism/s and social-scientific criticism to be interlocutors in this task of discovering those cultural prejudices in African culture and / or the culture of the Christian bible which might perpetuate inequality among men and women of the communities and epochs under study in this research, namely the Gospel traditions, Pauline, deuteropauline *corpora* and the SDAZ.

2.10 Features of African feminism

According to Nadar (2012:273 - 5), African feminism's theologising is moulded on five features which she refers to as the 5S's of feminist theology in Africa, namely, suspicion, subjectivity, story, scrutiny and the 'so-what?' question.

Under the first feature (suspicion), African feminists reject the purported 'objectivity' and 'universalisations' of the Christian bible and thus read it or approach its study with suspicion, since they accuse some the biblical texts of oppressing and segregating women. Thus, the hermeneutics of suspicion charges African feminists to see the Christian bible as promoting Western world-views, which it forces all to accept as normative for all despite not favouring the needs of women, and particularly African women. Thus, through the hermeneutic of suspicion, every biblical text is viewed and studied with suspicion and a great desire to reverse and reject what they say about women in church, especially if they reveal the suppression of women. They share the same sentiments as Western feminists in that male theologians and historians are the ones who wrote the biblical history and also that the bible itself describes God as a male God, a male Jesus, and has many more masculine terminologies than feminine ones. With this, both Western and African feminists see the bible as gender blind, and thus women conclude that it does not speak for them (Clifford 2001:29). In this scenario, women thus call for a re-interpretation, a re-writing, and a re-analysis of the bible.

Concerning the second feature, namely subjectivity, African feminists aim at stressing the importance of personal experience in their theologising on women's needs for a corrective yet liberative re-interpretation of the text, citing that everything written in the bible concerning women's experiences is subjective, as it only talks of the misogynistic writers and their biased views on women. Thus, they argue for African women's real

and unique experiences to be revealed and to inform specific theologisings relevant to their specific women's experiences. According to Nadar (2012:273), this has resulted in culturally specific theological and hermeneutical methodologies for women's emancipation in their specific cultural locations, such as *Bosadi* (Masenya 1996, 1997), *Imbokodo* (Nzimande 2008), and *Semoya* (Dube 1996). According to Maluleka (1997:10), African feminists are running away from the generalisations of the European imperialists, historians, explorers, ethnographers and missionaries who made Western norms to be standard and normative for all. African feminisms are letting African cultures, ethnicities, race, religion, class, and gender aspects of specific women in their localities dictate a methodology for their freedom needs as demonstrated by the three examples above.

The third feature of African feminism is known as 'story'. According to Nadar (2012:274), 'long before the term narrative theology (Hauerwas & Jones 1989), became popular in the academy, African schools of thought and philosophy embraced and celebrated the power of stories'. For Nadar, African feminist theologies have been no different. Asserting the above view, Landmann (1996:100) submits that the work of feminist theologians in Africa bears testimony to this respect for story as a legitimate method and source of theology, and African women's theologies have therefore been aptly named 'narrative theologies.' Oduyoye's story in her 1995 publication, *Daughters of Anowa* where an analogue of Africa is referred to as 'the daughter of Anowa, who is suffering oppression of globalization', adds Nadar, remains as a typical demonstration of the centrality of storytelling in Africa.

Thus, story-telling has been made a hermeneutical tool for African feminist theology where the collection of essays in the book *'Other ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible'*, edited by Musa Dube, bears testimony (Nadar 2012:274). Oduyoye asserts that African women accept story as a source of theology and tell their stories as well as study the experiences of other women, including those outside their own continent, but especially those in Africa whose stories remain unwritten. Of interest in what Kanyoro (2004:164) mentions is that the stories must not come from theologically trained African women but from ordinary women to whom Gerald West (1996:117) refers as the 'ordinary reader'.

The fourth feature of African feminist theology is called 'scrutiny'. Here African feminists argue that there is a need not just to get right answers but rather to have the right questions asked. Nadar (2012:275) argues that while it is true that African women have been inspired by the *Talitha Qum* 'Daughter Arise' theology of hope for African women, there has been a need to critically analyse the biblical text to identify oppressive aspects in the bible where scholars such as Musa Dube has observed imperial and colonial tendencies in the biblical text and thus suggested the postcolonial feminist hermeneutics to the bible so as to fight all injustices to women caused by the colonial project. Thus, African feminists seek to ask the right questions for the source of their oppression by interrogating the bible as well as the world-view it came wrapped in to expose all prejudices of culture, economy, politics, religion, race, and class that stand as the real source of women's suffrage in Africa.

The last feature of African feminism is the 'so-what' question. Nadar (2012:275) extrapolates that the 'so-what' question is the most important question that African feminists ask themselves. For Newton and Rosenfelt (1985:xv), this 'so-what' question is what distinguishes African feminists from Western ones. According to them, this question inspires them to launch the activism gear and thus assume the 'see, judge, and act' paradigm. Hence, there is a distinct focus to act in the work of African feminist theologians, adds Newton and Rosenfelt. They seek to change the world and life of every woman through scholarship. This is the reason why, adds Nadar, African women feminists are engaged in various community bible studies and other engagements. They are driven by a deep quest for activism so as to change their lives and the lives of their sisters across the continent of Africa and beyond.

2.11 Themes in African feminism

According to Kasomo & Maseno (2011:157), African feminism's key theme is community, which according to Draper (2015:15), resonates well with African epistemological and world-view axioms of relationality, practicality, ethicality and is linked to values. John S. Mbiti's statement '*I am because we are and since we are therefore I am*' (Mbiti 1969:108 - 110) continues to be referred to in this work for its emphasis on the interconnectedness of African philosophical frameworks, which some generally refer to as *ubuntuism*. Mbiti's proverbial utterance is believed to mean that 'a person's individuality is best fulfilled in relation to the good of others in the kin-group'.

This view resonates too with the Nigerian *Igbo* culture's proverb '*Oran a azu nwa*', 'it takes a village to raise a child', which is understood to mean that a child belongs to the community and not its individual parents. Kanyoro laments over the current state of affairs of the African church, which she says has abandoned the sense of community in favour of domineering others is its norm. Kanyoro (1996:155) holds that 'the needs of society and church today yearn for a community response which rejects domination over one another'.

Hospitality is another theme in African feminism which is explored alongside other themes, such as ecology, missiology and sacrifice (Oduyoye 2001:20). However, the issue of hospitality's emphasis to be regarded as a virtue to be loved and practised by African women raises eyebrows for me. The feminist discourses which Nadar (2004:272) are inseparable from Western philosophies are challenging the same hospitality role performed by women in the NT such as the popular example of the story of Martha and Mary in Luke 10:38 - 41 in which the one who did the hospitality task is seen as being suppressed while extolling Mary, who refused to help her sister Martha to offer hospitality to Jesus and other guests in their home. They rather speak highly of Mary's bravery to oppose her societal norms by daring to speak with the rabbi Jesus, which was taboo for women in this society.

Furthermore, feminist scholars castigate the Greco-Roman culture of the early church era for its demarcating private space roles for women instead of the private space ones they yearn for. Thus, a self-contradiction in feminist goals is observed where Oduyoye, Kanyoro and others seem to encourage African women to accept the private space (household) roles of hospitality yet their goal as global feminists is fighting for the public space ones. Hence, this claim of encouraging women to be hospitable stands contrary to their advocacy for women to dare to shun private space roles of hospitality and rather step into the male-dominated public space domain.

Empowerment and liberation are the other themes of African feminism. Oduyoye adds that liberation as a theme grants a voice to the voiceless and motivates for social change and helps develop a new sense of responsibility and solidarity. While empowering African women, feminists seek to understand power in a new way, where it is enabling power, power that is collective so that all who participate in it are affirmed

and strengthened. For Oduyoye (2001:20), this new power dynamic is opposed to the traditional view of power in many African institutions of family, education and church, which denotes 'power over' women. Thus, they seek to give women power so that they share the same power as their husbands/African men.

2.12 Sources of African feminism

Okure (1993:82) and Kasomo & Maseno (2011:157) hold that although the hermeneutics of suspicion advocates for a rejection of certain biblical texts, generally, all being equal, African feminism takes the bible as its major source of theologising. In its reliance on the bible, however, it applies it from the perspective of women and stands ready to oppose any texts that seem to advocate for a subservient role for women. Okure describes the stages done in African feminist theologisations as follows:

First, identify a woman's situation in African culture and society, describe it and critically analyse it, then look at the gospel to see how Jesus handled such situations by using other socio-cultural sources in combination with the bible. Second, adopt the predominantly theological works like starting by reading a particular portion of the bible. Thirdly, use the experience of women in the church and then look to the gospel for more insight (Okure 1993:77 - 82).

However, inspired by feminist praxis, Oduyoye is quick to specify the parameters which govern bible usage in African feminist theologisations by positing that 'the bible cannot be the only norm, since any interpretation of the bible is unacceptable to feminists if it does harm to women, the vulnerable and the voiceless (Oduyoye 2001:12). As such, Oduyoye (2001:10) proposes folk talks, African myths, wisdom literature and legends as other credible sources of theology for African feminists. These form narrative theology which exists in both written and oral form and resonates well with what African culture is, oral culture. Kanyoro (2001:169) postulates that there must be a hermeneutical tool that appreciates and recognises orality in Africa and she proposes that such a hermeneutic be termed 'story telling hermeneutics' and 'mother-tongue hermeneutics', which is done by ordinary women and not just the theologically trained. Kasomo & Maseno (2011:157) maintain that through ordinary women's narrations of their stories, 'African women theologians seek to investigate the cultural

conditioning of African women's thinking in order to establish the belief systems which they subscribe to, and then destroy oppressive prejudices in these cultural practices which discriminates against women on roles between them and their male counterparts'.

Kanyoro declares that the Christian feminist movement of the West serves as another source from which African feminists draw their theologisations. According to Kanyoro (2001:168), Western feminist methodology is used because it challenges cultural socialisation and rejects the assumption that the roles of men have already been fixed, either by the creator or by culture. This stands as a weakness for African theology, since it gets a biased assessment of African realities by its reliance on Western epistemologies with their incongruence and incompatibility with African ones, and this has been graphically displayed in previous sections of this paper.

Women's individuality and experience is another source of African feminist theology according to Kasomo & Maseno (2011:158). They value the unique individual experiences of African women in their daily life settings, since in Africa much if not all of women's theology is not written.

Lastly, Phiri (2004:168) and Oduyoye (2001:16; 1995:80 - 81) regard African culture/s²⁰ and traditions as other important sources of African feminist theologisation.

²⁰ Oduyoye defines culture as 'a people's world-view, a way of life, values, philosophy of life, the philosophy that governs behaviour, their sociology and social arrangements, all that they have carved and cultured out of their environment to differentiate their style of life from other people'. Culture is defined by Ukpong (2002b:12) as 'the totality of life of a human community.

They berate Western Christianity through its practitioners, the white missionaries, who demanded that our fore-fathers to throw away their culture for them to be Christians. That Africans were forced to jettison their culture and made to embrace Western culture awash in the Christian bible is seen as one of the biggest contributors which led them to fail to understand God and his message to them. Thus, a study and analysis of African cultures is believed to lead to a better understanding of the status and role of women in church by this research.

2.13 Strengths of African feminism

Its claim that it relies on African cultures and religions as its source of theologising makes African feminism appeal to the world of the text's world behind the text. This, ideally, if maintained in their interpretation work, will aid to achieve a contextual meaning portrayed in the sacred text.

Furthermore, its ability to challenge traditional views and prejudices in African cultures which may be suppressive to other classes of people is commendable to evoke new ways of doing theology in Africa. Its claim too, that they use the bible as a source of their theologisations, makes their theologising biblical.

It entails the community's way of viewing reality as well as various activities such as the political, economic, social, leisure activities, the arts, textual productions among others'.

In collaboration with other liberation theologies, such as African theology, African feminism has advocated for the recovery of African traditional cultures and religions which have been trodden underfoot by Western ethnocentrism. Kanyoro (2004:17) praises the work of cultural nationalism through the use of inculturation hermeneutics (Ukpong 2002) by African male theologians by citing that 'the recovered traditional religions and cultures are the backbone for African women's identity, *ubuntuism*, and an important source of theology through which Africans had used to vet and accept Christianity which they later on spread till it reached global status'. The essence of African culture and traditions has been emphasised by Mbiti (1970:10 - 15), who opines that Africans had their religions and worshipped God before the coming of missionaries. Ramantswana (2016:1) refers to the South African proverbial saying '*i shavha i sia muinga i ya fhi?*' ('Running away from your own path, where are you heading?') to show that Africans from antiquity were taught to jealously guard and preserve their traditions and never embrace foreign ones. Thus, African feminism's contribution to the recovery of African culture and traditions and the denial of Western epistemologies on African life is a major milestone for the continent at large.

African feminism, though it borrows from a foreign concept, seems to be slightly aligned to the African value systems of cherishing family values and African traditions, accepting men, accepting the bible, respecting the demarcated private space of women and their roles and not seeing them as oppression or inferior to those of men (Dove 1998:31). However, it carries revolutionary tones that are not present in African indigenous knowledge systems, where African women do not resort to revolutions to get themselves heard, as is attested to by Aboh (2000:103 - 4) and (Mbiti 1970:10 - 12).

Mwale (2002:45) celebrates the strides made by African feminism in its bid to seek cooperation and interdependency between men and women. For Mwale, gender studies have made tremendous advocacies in conscientising women about their plight, *vis-a-vis* male dominance and have influenced new views, such as labour, economic and social theories, which have resulted in a greatly ameliorated state of the African woman in many communities.

Lastly, but not least, the strong drive to repudiate the Western feminist thought that had been imposed on African women to accept fulfils what theology is all about, namely a battle to contextualise the text to the contemporary world of the readers and communities it gets applied to over time.

2.14 Weaknesses of African feminism

According to Nadar (2004:272), African feminism's reliance on Western feminist praxis stands as its major weakness, as it is at risk of incorporating Western epistemological and philosophical frameworks, as well as world-views that are inapplicable to the African context. However, I see this as a manageable phenomenon if they appropriate the *ubuntuism* philosophy which sees women and men in Africa as collaborating in their distinct roles for the common good of the community.

Furthermore, the African feminist theory's feature of 'suspicion' leads feminists to reject the biblical message from texts they see as suspects for male dominance. This thus leaves one wondering how they claim their theologising to be real theologisation, since according to Mbiti (1979:10), any theology must be bible based. Rejecting the bible on the basis that African women do not see women spoken of in ways they see as affirmative to women, leads them to create and write their own canon, which they claim to be within the already existing (the canon within a canon). Thus, one wonders whether their approach can be a qualified hermeneutical tool that enhances this study which is investigating the New Testament biblical text as regards its teaching on women and their roles in the very texts they are rejecting.

Again, self-contradiction in Oduyoye and Kanyoro's claims on their belief in culture as a critical background needed for women's theologisations in African is seen. On paper, they venerate African culture as very important in their African feminism, yet on the application of this claim, they are found wanting. Oduyoye and Kanyoro fight and castigate some of the African norms of life and selectively accept only those rituals and practices they endorse as 'life-affirming' to women practices only while criticising those which benefit the community at the expense of the individual woman. For example, Oduyoye (1993:341 - 365) blames the practice of African culture that condemns childless marriages and homosexual practices. She refuses to accept her cultural norm that insists that sex is for procreation only. Oduyoye wants people to

experience who they are and want by daring homosexuality and to be allowed to choose whether or not to have a child in marriage. Thus, one questions such a theological premise that stands contrary to African world-views while still claiming African culture as its primary and respected source of theology. In advocating for the recovery of African culture and traditions, Oduyoye seems to self-contradict her point by castigating the traditions of the very culture she hopes to recover by blaming its core beliefs as cited above.

Oduyoye and other feminists acknowledge the goodness of hospitality done mainly by African women in welcoming visitors, yet it is the very role they say is demeaning and denigratory if done by women in the bible because it is a private sphere role, yet still in an African context it is again a private domain role, but they claim to acknowledge it and encourage women to assume, celebrate, and honour it, which is another self-contradictory tendency of African feminism's goals.

Another weakness that has enveloped African feminisms, according to Amaefula (2021:302), is the wrong assumption that men are the source of women's oppression, yet it is the system of patriarchy that every man naturally faces upon entering this world at birth that creates the system that oppresses women. Hence, for Amaefula, African feminism ignores the important players who must be involved in discussions about their liberation, namely men. Thus, they see men as their enemy and wrongly blame the African men for being their enemy, which they seek to eradicate from the face of the earth because he is the 'culprit' for their oppression. However, patriarchy was brought by Westerners through capitalism and imperialism, not by African men it is unfortunate that African men are seen as responsible for patriarchy, its prejudices and abuses.

2.15 Social-scientific criticism

Having discussed African feminism/s (and the background which birthed it), it is now time to bring social-scientific analysis into view, and to see where their loopholes are augmented by the strengths in the other for a robust treatment of the study.

2.16 Definition of social-scientific criticism

Elliott (1993:7, 34), the proponent of this theory, postulates that social scientific criticism of the New Testament is an attempt to place the New Testament text into the socio-cultural context of the first-century Mediterranean world²¹, the world from which it sprang.

Elliott (2011:1) describes the role of social science based on his observation; 'Biblical texts, like all texts, embed, encoded and presumed elements of social and cultural system in which they are produced, which means that the genre, content, structure, and meaning of these texts are socially and culturally determined'. Thus, according to Elliott, 'social-scientific criticism is an analysis of 'the social and cultural dimensions of the texts and its environmental context through the utilization of perspectives, theories, models and research of social sciences (sociology, cultural anthropology and social psychology)'. Uwaegbute, Odo, & Ugwu (2021:3) maintain that the method is used as

²¹ Segovia (2002:19) holds that the early church's 1st century CE society is regarded as the world of the text, which modern scholars see as the world behind the text. For Segovia, this society comprises the Ancient Near East, the ancient Mediterranean and the 1st century CE early church society where he used 'the world behind the text' phrase which refers to the social historical context in which this text was written/created/birthed by the original writers. Gusha (2022:3) further delineates this aspect by holding that 'the world in the text' refers to the world the text creates in the reader's mind, while the 'world in-front of the text' refers to the contemporary world of the reader reading the text in which the text is to be applied. These aspects are helpful in evaluating how the SDAZ as well as the SDA world church is interpreting the *pericopae* under study to inform her ordination of women position.

a 'method of biblical interpretation or what is commonly called exegesis in biblical studies. Its uniqueness lies in the fact that it studies New Testament texts through models, theories, and perspectives of social sciences'.

According to Barton (1995:61 - 70), social-scientific criticism, a development of the historical criticism, 'is part of the overall task of interpreting the New Testament texts in the context of the first-century Mediterranean world from which they come'. For Barton, the social-scientific method, however, differs with the historical method in that it 'asks questions that have to do more with the typical social patterns and taken-for-granted cultural conditions most likely to have characterized the New Testament world'. Garrett (1992:82 - 90) largely agrees with this view and add that the social-scientific method makes a bold claim that, 'by asking a different set of questions, aspects of the text often left hidden from view by traditional methods are allowed to come to the surface'.

Adding further insights for a proper understanding of the social scientific method and its essence to today's hermeneutical task is Elliott again with the dynamic explanation below:

The social scientific criticism of the New Testament has two distinct foci; the first focus is on social and cultural conditions, features and contours of early Christianity and its social environment, where social sciences are used to interpret data to describe salient features of the first-century Mediterranean society including 'the imperial social system and the interdependence of ecological, economic, social, political, and cultural domains' while the second focus is 'exegetical in nature and directs primary attention to the interpretation of biblical texts' where issues such as the structure, content, strategy, and intended rhetorical effect of the text within its social context are considered. These two foci according to Elliott, operate by complementarity and not in opposition of each other (Elliott 1993:32 - 33).

The social-scientific method utilises models such as patron-client relations, honour/shame models, purity and pollution, kinship/family, collectivism, social status, gender divide and sexuality, social and traditional memory to investigate how women are treated in contexts being studied depending on the roles their society ascribes for

them, as well as accompanying status or lack of it (Aune 2010:188). The honour/shame, purity and pollution and the gender models, according to Westfall (2016:105), act as operators that dictate the status, role and place of community members of a given society depending on how they are gaining or losing honour. This is a function of the comparative analysis used by evaluators of that community's norms and expectations, which too is a function of the social description of the community or society in question.

The description of the social-scientific method has aspects of interest as regards investigating the contexts under study in this research. Issues of world-views of people under study, as well as their societal philosophical frameworks that govern behaviour as important informants of the paths through which the decipherment of meaning of their text can be achieved are important. It will be demonstrated in this section how these factors ramify into a world of meaning in all epochs under study in this work.

However, the social-scientific method is often confused with the social-historical method. Van Staden & Van Aarde (1991:58 - 64) thus warn that there is a need to distinguish the social-historical approach from the social-scientific approach. According to them, these terms, as well as their approaches, are very different yet greatly misunderstood by many readers and scholars. For Van Staden & Van Aarde, the distinction lies in this, that the terms 'social description', 'social analysis', 'socio-historical', and 'social history', are used interchangeably to mean one thing, while sociological analysis is used interchangeably or refers to social-scientific analysis where the difference lies in the description that 'a social description (social analysis, socio-historical, and social historical) approach accumulates data that it regards as relevant in order to contribute to the historical understanding of the background of the New Testament text or text-segments, while sociological (social-scientific) analysis refer to something completely different. The sociological (social-scientific) approach/analysis refers to the implementation of methods of analysis and research based on epistemologies relevant to the social sciences (sociology, anthropology, and psychology), hence the term sociological (from sociology) then refer to social science. Unlike the social description which is aimed only at accumulating data, sociological analysis aims to comprehend and explain data where it abstracts data in the sense of

unearthing, making explicit what is buried and implicit in the narrative discourse (van Staden & van Aarde 1991:60).

Elliott (1990b:11) helps us with the sort of questions each discipline asks: 'Historians inquire as to who, what, whence, where, and when information. Social scientists investigate the how, whys, and wherefores while the social sciences are based upon models of how the world of human interaction works and why it works that way'. The role of history in this case, according to Manila (1983a:15), is to explain events in terms of the distinctiveness of agents and agencies in the whole process in terms of particularities and differences.

Differentiating social description and sociological analysis, Osiek (1984:4) opines that the distinction is between, on the one hand, a 'social description and analysis, using the findings of archaeology (excavations, art, inscriptions, coins), history, and literature contemporary to the texts' and, on the other hand, 'the application of social science theory to New Testament texts'.

Craffert (1991:134) submits that social historians merely describe, without the use of models, while the social-scientific approach explains using social science models. Elliott (1990b:5) observes that the social-scientific approach, has two foci, the one focusing on the 'social conditions, features, and contours of early Christianity and its social environment', and the other directed primarily at the interpretation of texts.

2.17 Assumptions of the social-scientific method

According to Elliott (1990b:1), and Malina (1986b:150), the social-scientific approach to the New Testament claims that theological ideas are socially and culturally determined. It reacted to failure of theologically oriented research to realise this. Furthermore, Elliott makes eight assumptions about the social-scientific method. It assumes that knowledge is socially conditioned and thus any analytical method worth its salt must provide a means to distinguish social locations, models that are means of finding meaning, models must be based on *cir-cum*-Mediterranean and Ancient Near-Eastern emic data, linguistic presuppositions regarding the text should be included, the social-scientific approach is both distinct and complimentary to the historical approach, the study of social structure is the basis for the study of religion in the bible, and a recognition of the aggregated meaning of biblical documents.

Dvorak (2007:257) agrees with Elliott and Malina on the assumption that all knowledge is culturally conditioned and perspectival in nature, and adds that the knowledge includes that of the author, the groups under investigation, and the interpreters. These participants' perspectives are likely to be biased towards their cultural philosophical world-views and what their cultures define as the norm. This means that the authors' expressions are constrained by personal and social experience, as well as communicative frameworks of the day or milieu in which he or she is writing the text, where the challenge for the interpreter is to understand as clearly as possible the social location (all the factors that might influence a person or group) of the ancient authors to achieve the clearest interpretation of the text in question (Elliott 1993:37 - 38).

Malina (1986b:1) insinuates that, 'to understand any sort of communication, both sender and receiver of the message must share some social scenario; otherwise, the result is noise, or putting words into the mouth of the sender: in other words, the result is a distorted message'. Holmberg (1990:3) describes the activity of interpreting the early Christian documents using social-scientific by this phrase: 'sociology of early Christianity wants to put body and soul together again'. For Holmberg, 'if we want to understand the 'soul' of early Christianity, 'we must find the 'body' it lived as'. These aspects of the method (social-scientific) will be investigated in the communities under study (including the SDAZ) to see whether they are also visible in their interpretation of the texts under study on the roles of women in the church.

Furthermore, Craffert (1991:123 - 26), Malina (1983a:12), and Elliott (1990b:9) holds that there is a scholarly consensus by New Testament scholars who are practitioners of social-scientific criticism that it is their basic assumption that 'any communication can only be understood properly within the social and cultural codes from which it originated'. Since it is accepted that the texts presuppose and encode information from the social system in which they emerged, the meanings communicated in them can only be ascertained with the help of information from those social and cultural systems. Hence, Malina (1983:2) argues that 'not taking these settings seriously can only lead to a misinterpretation of the texts'. Meeks (1983:2) maintains that 'If we do not see their world, we cannot claim to understand early Christianity'. These assertions convince the researcher of this work to engage the two mentioned methodologies for a holistic treatment of the work under investigation.

As regards the biblical text, Malina & Rohrbaugh (1992:2) hold that it is not enough to dig up only the history behind the ancient texts but to also measure them socially to decipher the meaning intended for the original hearers of these texts, since implied readers of today are separated by vast social, historical, economic, political, religious, environmental and time gaps which distort the meaning meant for the intended hearers who were addressed by these early biblical writers for our application.

This research aims to interpret the New Testament biblical texts which speak about women's roles in the household churches of first-century CE Christianity in light of the Ancient Mediterranean culture that produced them and apply them to the SDAZ for a contextual evaluation of whether she has continued or discontinued with the practice of the household churches. There is also an aim to evaluate the methodologies used in this study, namely African feminism and the social-scientific, to determine which among them is aligned to how the first-century CE biblical writers of texts under study, in this research perceived the subject of women's roles in churches. And lastly, the study seeks to understand why the SDAZ bans women for ordination as deacons and elders.

2.18 Goals and aims of the social-scientific method

According to Pilch (2002:3 - 4), the social-scientific method is intended to provide the NT texts' readers with 'basic Mediterranean cultural concepts with which to create appropriate scenarios for imagining what one is reading'. Esler (1994:2) submits that social-scientific models attempt to establish the relationship between belief and behaviour, to critically examine what defines a given culture, what it values, how it communicates, how its economic, social, and family structures are created and maintained, its history, and other defining characteristics which distinguish it from other cultures. This is so because,

New Testament documents speak to us from particular social worlds and need to be investigated using disciplines developed, especially to comprehend the social dimensions of the human experience. Without this, our understanding of the texts will be unnecessarily impaired (Esler 1994:2).

For Van Eck (1995:78), the primary goal of such a social-scientific analysis of the NT texts is to serve as a vehicle of socio-religious interaction, that is, focusing especially

on the question of why and how the text was designed to function, and what its impact upon the life and activity of its recipients was intended to be. Furthermore, Van Eck (2009:6) maintains that the goal of social-scientific criticism of the NT is to interpret the events and its message according to the social systems from which they arise.

According to Craffert (1991:124), social-scientific analysis of texts aims to reduce anachronistic interpretations. Furthermore, as is informed by Theissen (1978:1) functionalism analysis, social-scientific exegesis aims to discover how roles, factors that govern behaviour, and functions of participants in a certain given cultural locale are determined and managed, and why this is so. According to Theissen (1978:2), this is possible because by nature the functionalism hypothesis as a methodological concept is involved in two critical issues, namely 'the production of order through the integration of members of a given society and the control and overcoming of conflict through change'. This aspect will be investigated alongside the Corinthian letters of Paul in the coming chapters.

The use of social science theories and models by social-scientific studies of the NT is meant to achieve the goal of enabling a better understanding of behaviours, people, culture, politics, and teachings encountered across the New Testament texts (Uwaegbute, Odo & Ugwu 2021:4). Social-scientific analysis also necessitates a comparative study of various and varied societal matters and hence is fit for use in this work, where early communities' life aspects are being compared with the SDAZ environments to see how they agree or repel and also the reasons behind the outcomes.

Thus, these aims will be measured against the situation obtained in the pre-AD 70 early church communities under study in this work and that of the SDAZ on how participants in these communities function and the guiding principles thereof for application and comparative lessons to help the conclusion of this study.

2.19 Social-Scientific paradigms

According to Mathews (2013:31), to achieve its goals, the social scientific method examines the social institutions which comprise the social system of the NT world. A brief highlight of the models and social institutions of the ancient Mediterranean world is given below, where an analysis of four of the models/paradigms that this study

regards as related to the subject matter, namely, honour and shame, collectivism, kinship, and patronage are discussed.

2.19.1 Honour-shame paradigm

According to Mathews (2013:31), the primary social institution of the early Mediterranean world is honour and shame. Munyao (2019:1) holds that the entire bible is replete with honour and shame language, and thus for that reason, 'it is critical whenever biblical studies are in engagement, that honour and shame are surfaced for a fair interpretation of the texts under study and their application in present-day readers'. Munyao, concurring with Jerome Neyrey, emphasises that 'understanding the social system of an ancient culture is vital for interpreting its literature'. This is because, adds Munyao, honour and shame, being pivotal cultural values of the Ancient Mediterranean world where the bible was written, are also present in most African societies today. Unfortunately, current theological discourse does not engage honour-shame as a cultural and theological component to biblical studies. These observations by Munyao convince the researcher of this work to seriously consider social-scientific methodology in this research.

Mathews defines honour as a social currency which can be gained or lost in one's relationships with others. Honour is the community's recognition of one's place within the larger community. Georges (2014:20) defines it as 'a person's social worth, one's value in the eyes of the community. Honour is when other people think well of you resulting in harmonious social bonds in the community'. For Munyao (2019:2), honour almost always carries with it a communal aspect. Malina (1993:27) holds that, honour is 'worth or value of a person in his or her own eyes as well as in the eyes of his or her social group'. In this sense, honour carries with it the connotation of one's view of self within the group, village, neighbourhood, tribe, or society. Malina (1991:26) further adds that honour is 'a register of social rating which entitles a person to interact in specific ways with equals, superiors, and subordinates, according to the prescribed cultural cues of his/her society'.

According to Neyrey (1991:28), there are two kinds of honour in the early Mediterranean societies, namely ascribed and acquired honour. 'Ascribed honour is given by authority figures such as kings and deities (whose sanction of honour to a

person is recognised by others on the basis of the rank or power of the one bestowing the honour), while acquired honour was received from birth because the family is the repository of honour of past illustrious ancestors and their accumulated or acquired honour'. Neyrey (1991:20 - 30) holds that 'the acquisition and retention of honour was a driving force in nearly every social interaction which occurred outside the family unit in the ancient Mediterranean world'.

These aspects will be contrasted with how behaviour is codified in the contexts under investigation to see how women responded (for the case of the early church environment) and are responding (for the case of the SDAZ) in their quest to gain or lose honour on their quest for equal roles with men in church. Agreeing with Neyrey and Malina, Mahlangu (2009:88 - 89) adds that 'the pivotal values of the ancient Mediterranean world, the world of Jesus and Paul, were honour and shame'. Behaviours and social codification of roles and the domain to do those roles for all community members were operated by the honour-shame of the social-scientific approach, as shall be seen throughout this chapter.

According to Malina, Jourbert & van der Watts (1996:8), honour and shame are antithetical terms in that the description of one naturally describes the other. Elliott (1993:130) defines honour as 'the socially approved and expected attitudes and behaviours in the areas where power, sexual status, and religion intersect. It is the public claim to worth and status along with the social acknowledgement of such status and reputation'. For Peristiany (1994:10), honour is 'the apex of the pyramid of temporal social values and it conditions their hierarchical order. Cutting across all other social classifications it divides social beings into two fundamental categories, those endowed with honour and those deprived of it'.

As regards shame, Peristiany (1994:10 - 12) defines it as 'contempt, loss of face, defeat, and loss of honour'. As such, every community member lives to achieve honour as ascribed by their societal philosophical dictates while shunning the attraction of shame at all costs. These might have been reasons behind the lack of a revolutionary mentality by the women in Paul's era, for example who are described by today's feminist scholars as having been under oppression by men. They might have known how to govern their behaviours in a culturally acceptable manner.

Georges (2014:20) sees shame as ‘a negative public rating: a community thinks lowly of you’, where in the event of shame, one gets severed from the community. Brown (2012:109) describes a shameful state as an intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging’.

Wu (2016:12) links the honour and shame paradigms to biblical practice and postulates that as much as cultural or social shame measures one’s worth about social expectations, theological (sacred) shame is ascribed to those who lack honour before God’. These concepts will be applied in this research to evaluate the restraints at play which make the SDAZ fear to implement an approved policy of women’s ordination for elders and deacons’ roles yet other First world SDA churches have gone ahead to implement that same policy.

Contextualising this study’s focus, Munyao (2019:3) affirms that African cultures are inherently based on the honour-shame paradigm. For Munyao, recent studies have revealed that African cultural values have similarities with the Ancient Mediterranean value system of honour and shame, where indigenous African languages are used to talk about honour and shame, such as African proverbs in their varied dialects across Africa. Mahlangu (2001:85) has submitted that ‘research has proven that the African interacts and transacts with the NT text with his/her own value system (modelled under honour and shame paradigms) in which these values are also encountered’.

This study seeks to establish the extent to which women’s roles were determined by the fear of losing honour by women in the epochs under study or other factors yet to be discovered by the research.

2.19.2 Collectivist paradigm

According to Pilch & Malina (1998:58),

the first-century Mediterranean individuals were described by *dyadism*, a view that describes a person by their relationship to their community at large for example by their location (Paul of Tarsus), by their nationality (Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons), by their clan (Paul is a Benjamite, Mary is of the house of David), by family relationships (James and John are the sons of Zebedee), or by

one's school of thought (Paul a student of Gamaliel; Apollos received only the baptism of John).

Pilch & Malina further assert that;

Individual people are not known or valued because of their uniqueness, but in terms of their *dyad*, that is some other person or thing. *Dyadism*, therefore is a means by which one's honour can be continually checked, affirmed or challenged. . . Personal identity and knowledge of this sort belong in a cultural world that is highly ordered and carefully classified, so that there is a place for everyone and everyone in his/her place. It follows that such people tend to think of themselves and others in stereotypes that tell of their role and status: as fishermen and carpenters, as scribes and lawyers, as governors and kings (Pilch & Malina 1998:54).

As can be seen, this view stands in stark contrast to the Western-inspired feminist praxis which is tied to individualism, personal achievement, and competition, to mention a few, while at the same time showing a great alignment to the African epistemological praxis of community, complementarity, and values-driven ethos. It is evident that the social-scientific paradigms are aligned to the African world-views, the context of the SDAZ, which also is aligned to the ancient Mediterranean society which gave birth to the New Testament text being studied by this research. Neyrey (1991:72) also lampoons and berates Western individualism as follows:

The individualistic, self-centred focus typical of the contemporary American experience was simply not of concern to first-century Mediterraneans. Given their cultural experience, such self-concerned individualism would appear quite boring and inconsequential. For group survival would be dysfunctional (Neyrey 1991:72).

Neyrey postulated that:

Dyadic persons find their sense of identity in the context of several dyads, or 'others', which determine who their equals are and the social norms by which they may be judged. Social harmony is derived from knowing one's place in the world, and remaining within it (Neyrey 1991:73).

Tennent (2007:95) adds that ‘in a *dyadistic* culture, there is a powerful social mechanism whereby you are dependent on others for your psychological existence and feel shame if the image of yourself does not agree with the image shared and believed by others’.

According to Elliott (1993a:85), the social-scientific methodology, apart from utilising the honour-shame paradigms as operators to govern societal harmony and behaviours, has collectivism as its other feature. For Elliott, members of communities with collectivistic outlook exhibit group goals where they sacrifice and forego personal privileges to personally and individually contribute to the common good of the group. Detailed discussion on this phenomenon will be carried out in detail in Chapters 3 to 5, to bring the backgrounds in which the early church communities lived and also evaluate the realities that may have led to the perception of women by members and writers in these communities.

2.19.2.1 Basic description of collectivistic societies

According to Oyserman & Lee (2008:311 - 42), collectivist societies are those built on a foundational unit of a group of individuals, as contrasted with individualistic ones where the foundational unit is the individual. Furthermore, Zhang et al (2007:131 - 44) describe a collectivistic society as one that views the world as essentially connected to others, while Bhugra (2013:221 - 22), McCarthy (2005:108 - 17), and Lee et al. (2010:311 - 42) postulate that the ‘collectivistic societies ingrain the need to provide tight, interconnected groups in which sharing of responsibilities, emotional interdependence, group harmony, and respect for authority are valued’. For McCarthy, these tendencies can be seen in mostly African families, churches, and schools to mention but a few of these social institutions.

According to Suh, Diener, Oishi & Triandis (1998:483 - 93), this oneness mentality and drive in collectivistic societies may be attributed to a deep sense of duty to the greater common good of the group which supersedes the duty to self, an aspect that cannot be found in individualistic ones. Oyserman & Lee (2008:311 - 48), and Vandello & Cohen (1999:277 - 92) have observed that collectivist individuals adhere to the group norms to foster and experience relational ties. Thus, McCarthy (2005:108 - 17), Lee et al (2010:882 - 93), and Agishtein & Brumbaugh (2013:384 - 405) conclude that

'collectivist individuals rank cooperative aims and objectives of the group to which they belong over their own goals. For Bhugra (2013:221), Agishtein & Brumbaugh (2013:384), and Triandis et al (1998: 275) 'this creates a loyalty that protects those of a strong and cohesive in-group with social harmony which is further preserved by the minimization and covert handling of conflict'.

I regard this point as highly important to the analysis of the dynamics around the issue of the SDA policy adherence debate between the SDAZ and her sister Euro-American churches. My opinion is that the SDAZ's insistence to violate the purported church manual decree to ordain women is her true sign of allegiance to official church policy directives in line with who she is, a church that is in a collectivistic African context, and in particular, a Zimbabwean context as will be proven in this chapter and Chapter 6.

2.19.2.2 Basic description of individualistic societies

Concerning individualistic cultures, Bhugra (2013:221 - 22), Oyserman & Lee (2008:311 - 42), Vandello & Cohen (1999:270 - 92), and Zhang, Norvilitis & Ingersoll (2007:131 - 44) hold that individualism promotes self-sufficiency, care, and distinction of self-ruling or autonomy and nuclear family, all of which are highly valued in individualistic cultures. According to McCarthy (2005:108 - 17), Gelfand, Triandis & Chan (1996:397 - 410), and Zhang et al. (2007:131 - 44) individualistic societies are found in in the Euro-American industrialised countries, such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Great Britain, and the United States of America.

Individualists prioritise personal goals and self over the group's collective goals (Lee et al., 2010:882 – 93; Agishtein & Brumbaugh 2013:384 - 405). For Bhugra (2013:221 - 22) and Oyserman & Lee (2008:311 - 42), groups in individualistic societies are fluid, separate, and very loose from each other. They have very loose relationships between the members which form them. Triandis et al. (1998:323 - 38) submit that because of these loose relations, conflicts in individualistic cultures are handled openly without paying regard to the impact they may have on the group's unity.

This point is important, as it may help the research to locate the possible reasons for the ambivalence in the ordination practice of women deacons and women elders in the SDAZ and her counterparts in the Euro-American continents. It is thus no wonder to see that the open violation of the GC policy is done in territories which are

individualistically oriented, who are persisting to request that their individualised request be approved without paying regard to the effects it will have on the entire world church body. I am excited in seeing that the description of who individualistic countries are best fits what is actually obtaining in the Euro-American SDA churches.

2.19.2.3 Collectivism/individualism and gender roles

Oyserman (2011:164 - 214), Triandis & Suh (2002:133 - 160), and Goldston et al. (2008:14 - 31) think that 'cultures, world-views, and value systems from which a person creates meaning in their world during a specific time period guide gender behaviours, expectation and the concomitant gender roles'. Hence Trim (2016:6) submits that to a greater extent, both the collectivistic and individualistic mind-frame dictate or restrain the SDA world church members from entering into certain roles, and this distinguishes them by the selection of roles each group chooses to assume in their specific societies. This point is cherished by this research, as it helps shed light on the reasons behind the ambivalence currently happening in the SDA world church's subsidiary regional administrative units, namely the Divisions, (see Chapter 2's table 1 on 2.24.2), where African Divisions seem to be opposing the SDA church manual's ruling to ordain women for female deacons and women elders while the Divisions in Western and the American territories have long ordained women for those roles, and now even fighting for the ordination of women to the pastoral roles which stand barred by the GC for all women members in the SDA world church.

Munyao (2019:11) gives crucial insights into how African societies resemble the Ancient Mediterranean society in which first-century CE Christianity operated. For him, if African societies are collectivistic, shame-based cultures, and the ancient bible cultures were collectivistic and steeped in honour-shame, then the bible is already contextualised for African readers. This may speak volumes in giving clues on the basis for the SDAZ's 'arrogance of opposing her church manual and rather chose to stand by what her culture dictates which she also sees in the early Christianity piety's texts'. Thus, for the SDAZ, her position is justified because it is supported by the NT texts in question.

2.19.3 Kinship paradigm

Hellerman (2009:16) submits that the honour-shame and *dyadism* paradigms merged and revolved around the family institution. For Hellerman, 'every person in the ancient Mediterranean society regarded the family as his or her primary *dyad*. The family was therefore the primary source of honour, for honour was assumed within the family, and the family honour was/is defended at all costs'. As regards the parameters that governed the pursuit and assumption of honour by people of the ancient Mediterranean world of New Testament Christianity, Hellerman provides insightful guidelines:

The pursuit of honour, however, was not an individual endeavour in the New Testament world. Mediterranean antiquity was a strong group culture. The groups to which individuals belonged contributed significantly to the development of personal identity and, most importantly, they determined the basic contours of social relations. Cultural values and social codes related to honour-shame inevitably intersected this fundamental aspect of ancient society in some decisive ways, with the result that (a) social groups served as repositories of honour and (b) the family - the most important group of all - took pride of place, in this regard (Hellerman 2009:16).

According to Osiek (2011:1), the early Christian life and social groupings were all modelled around kinship and familial structures where the father was the head and had life-long authority over his family which he modelled collectively with other communities' ideals of Ancient Mediterranean society which had to be maintained so as to gain honour. The head of the family was the teacher and transmitter of cultural lessons as determined by the cultural kit, where old women were also teaching practitioners to the children and young women. Freeman (2017:64) holds that African historiographies have never been in written form but oral. Elders and elderly women are entrusted with oral knowledge transmission in most African societies, where they pass it from generation to generation. According to Freeman, children are forbidden from asking the 'why' question as it is seen as being disrespectful to the elders, a behaviour that attracts shame. Thus, children are taught what is allowed by the 'cultural kit' per each phase of their lives through rights of passage rituals, where instead of asking questions, they patiently wait to know the worrisome matters at a

future stage allowed by the 'cultural kit' which will be taught at other phases in their initiation curricula.

According to Freeman (2017:63 - 70), these orality factors impact African life, including aspects of spiritual dynamics in the church, for example, African church members value what they hear and not what they are reading so as to get knowledge. What is spoken is valued more than what might be read. This seems to resemble the African way of life as has been outlined above.

2.19.4 Patronage

Judge (1960:8) insinuates that the Greco-Roman life was punctuated with political overtones enshrouded in the patronage system which pervaded its society. For him, this issue requires attention in so far as finding out how it crept into the Christian piety of the early church, which led Christianity to be regarded as 'a movement that was sponsored by local patrons to their social dependents'. Social-scientific scholars hold that studies in patron-client (patron-clientelism) relations can help clarify 'the interplay that existed between a patron and his or her clients in the social organization, networking and expansion of early Christian movement', and how those relations provided early Christians with the model for conceptualising this aspect in the household systems in relation to how they view God, Jesus, and other community members (Elliott 1996:152).

According to Elliott (1996:152), the study of the Roman political systems during the first century C.E era is important as it has been discovered that 'the Roman imperial patronage system formed one of the most powerful and determinative conditions of the Pauline mission'. Elliott pens this below to emphasise this point;

Recent studies of the early Roman empire and particularly studies of the imperial cult emphasize that concrete patron-client networks with their summits in the local urban elite and even in the imperial family constituted the very hierarchical structure of power through which imperial society operated. With Roman expansion eastwards and the emperor's adoption of patronage as a mode of political administration, the institution, assumed ever-increasing significance as a model for ordering social relations of dependency (Elliott 1996:153).

Horsley (1997:7) claims that the study of the political dynamics of early Christianity is crucial because 'the religious dimensions of ancient life and institutions were usually inseparable from others such as political, economic and ethnic'. Chow (1997:121) submits that a householder was a patron to his subjects, children, wives, and slaves. There were laws to protect patrons from subjects' revolts, for example, a client was not allowed to send his patron to court even if there was tangible evidence that the patron had made injustices against the client. This point is buttressed by Crook (1967:51 - 55), who opines that there were laws which made the client continue to serve the patron, for example, as a slave who might have been made a freeman by his patron. The slave was obliged to always remember that he owed his freedom to his patron. Thus, he was free in name only just as a son was always under the patronage of his father, though a freeman. This point has allusions to Paul's admonition in his advice to Onesimus that he was to remain faithful to his master and also in the deuterio-Pauline codes where slaves are admonished to continue serving their masters. As is believed by Horsley, that the patronage system illuminates the NT texts, the study seeks to rely on this system for a better understanding of how Pauline households treated women.

According to Chow (1997:124-5), the patronage system was woven into all aspects of life from the Roman gods, the emperor, the honourable men in high positions in the state to the households, and also the church spaces. Jupiter was the patron god and regarded as the father of all gods. This resonated with the Greco-Roman life, where patronal relations were understood to transcend beyond the realm of human relations into that of human-divine relations, for example, at the household level human patrons such as the rich householders who were patrons of many were themselves obliged to be under the protection of a patron god while at the national level, the emperor was the patron of all citizens who were supposed to praise and honour him while in turn they would receive protection and favours from him as his clients. In this case, it can be observed that the chief role of a patron was to provide protection and favours to his clients which might not have been accessible through other channels.

It is for this reason that Chow believes that the patronage system can provide a vital background for understanding the relational ties in the Pauline household churches and some of the problems he discussed in 1 Corinthians. With this, Chow (1997:125)

maintains that if patronage formed such an important part of life in Roman Corinth, it would be most unrealistic to expect the Christians there to be wholly untouched by its influence and to behave in a completely new way immediately after their conversion. This study believes that these insights will help investigate how the patronage system, collectivism, honour and shame, and kinship paradigms that controlled the entire Mediterranean society, affected the behaviour of community members of the early church's pre-AD 70 epochs, as well as the SDAZ under study in this research.

Boissevain (1977:81) defines a patron-client system as follows:

... is an asymmetrical, quasi-moral relation between a person (the patron) who directly provides protection and assistance (patronage), and/or who influences persons (clients) who depend on him for such assistance. Clients, in turn, provide loyalty and support when called on to do so.

According to Boissevain this system has four features namely reciprocity, asymmetry, personal and voluntary. It also appears in two forms namely personal and public patronage.

2.20 Strengths of social-scientific criticism

Elliott (1998:87) holds that the method has the ability to co-exist in partnership and interface with the majority of traditional methods of biblical exegesis and this gives the social-scientific significance, especially in African biblical scholarship. Furthermore, it is taking of the context of the community or readers under study as critical guarantees a fair and contextual interpretation of the phenomena under study.

Freeman & Colenberg (2005:436) affirm that the honour-shame model stands as the best description of the early church society and thus is a window through which we can peep through to understand how the early church communities behaved and participated in roles done by each member where a comparison is possible between women and men's participation. Thus, this methodology's models and paradigms highlighted above will aid the sought-after understanding of the early church's era documents and texts listed above on roles of women in comparison with men for a cross examination and evaluation of how the SDAZ might be understanding and applying it in her debates on ordination of women.

2.21 Weakness of social-scientific method

Elliott (1988:79) holds that all sociological methods (a group in which social scientific belongs) are limited when it comes to exegesis of ancient-world documents, including the biblical text, because of their proneness to cause *eisegesis* rather than exegesis.

Witherington (1997:103) castigates the social-scientific criticism for its bias of tempting the researcher using it to 'fish' for facts that suit his or her theory. In Elliott's (1988:78) view, the method has a danger of over-interpreting the text. Dvorak (2007:260) holds that proponents of the method and their followers seem to suffer from methodological egoism, where they over-believe that their method alone has all the answers to the biblical interpretation problems. This is observed by Dvorak as an anachronistic fallacy, as no single method is sufficient to fulfil the interpretive task and get all meaning faithful to what the ancient authors intended to communicate to their immediate hearers, where a better understating is best achieved by blending two or more interpretive approaches.

For Freeman & Colenberg (2005:436), there is a tendency to have honour as ascribed by individuals as dictated by the prevailing cultural norms rather than having it prescribed by God's standards or right or wrong as noted by Mbuvi (2002:279 - 81), who penned that, 'The church in Africa must teach and model God's displeasure at what is shameful and his pleasure at what is honourable in his eyes'. In such a scenario, Freeman & Colenberg (2005:436) propose a remedial option to ensure that Christians pursue true honour and shun defaulting to cultural norms of honour-shame instead of conforming to dictates by God.

However, the researcher of this work insists on using this method for its strengths to which its weaknesses will be augmented by the strengths of the African feminist method, as was earlier on presented that this is the driving motivation for engaging a hybrid methodology in this work.

2.22 The question of gender and gender roles in African epistemology and philosophy.

Since this study is focusing on the gender roles of the early church, I see the relevance of a comparative analysis of other epistemological and philosophical frameworks

under-girding other contexts outside the early church communities under study in this research regarding the same issue, namely the Euro-American societies from which the SDAZ is administered and the African/Zimbabwean society (where the SDAZ operates in) to discover the kind of lessons which may be drawn from such an investigation for a better treatment of the subject matter under study by this work. Beginning with the African/Zimbabwean context, insights from Shuttle (2001), Gusha (2022), Mbiti (1969;1990), Mahlangu (1999), Marimba (2010), Kambudzi (1998), Mawere (2011), Gordon (1997) and Ramose (1999) (Chitando 2012), Adamo (2015) Kanyoro (1997) and Sumkange (1980), among other scholars, are important to consider to shape this chapter's discussion.

According to Oyserman (2011:164-214); Triandis & Suh (2002:133-160); Goldston et al (2008:14-31), 'the cultures, world-views, and value systems from which a person creates meaning in their world during a specific time period guides gender behaviours, gender expectation and the concomitant gender roles'. Hence Trim (2016:6) submits that to a greater extent, both the collectivistic and individualistic mind-frame dictates or restrains its members from entering into certain roles. The taking and recognizing of culture as key in their (social-scientific and African feminism) theological analyses is parnegyriized by Bauer (2015:175) as she blames what she observes as the flaw by the SDA world church which has made the ordination of women debates to take a labyrinthine form, a situation she claims could have been avoided and would have long led to the settlement of the issue had they taken the role of culture in the whole issue. Bauer insists that the church choosing to ignore the issue of culture in preference of a rigid theological approach alone has led to this age-long stalemate (the unsettlement of the ordination of women question). The early church must stand as an example to be emulated by the SDA world church, adds Bauer, since the SDA church is a multi-cultured and multi-racial, and multi ethnic religious organization just was the case with the Ancient Mediterranean society of the early church era. Bauer adds that it is important to realize that although the SDA church was birthed in North America from its pre-denomination years which spanned from the 1830's to the 1860's, till its formal organization in 1863, has grown to become an international church and has embraced complex cultural realities of Asia, Africa, the Americas, and Europe. As such, contextualization of the bible text must be a constant enterprise by today's church to

allow members of the church to read and understand the text through what their cultures directs for meaning inference (Bauer 2015:175).

Bauer insists that the ancients from all religions in the past, the ancient patriarchs of Judaism like Adam, Enoch, Abel, and Abraham to mention a few from Judaism, for example, understood God's revelation which he communicated to them because it was packaged in their cultural symbols and thus was able appeal to their specific epistemological frameworks and thought systems in their specific and concrete existential realities which they could relate with for 'human beings have a tendency of relating meaningfully to that which is consistent with their world-view and culture (Bauer 2015:176). David (1974:208) concurs with this view by adding that every conceivable doctrine or principle (and interpretation thereof) is culturally conditioned simply by virtue of its mediation through human agents. I see the applicability of this crucial point to African and Zimbabwean realities in particular, where the ancients in all African societies must have understood God's revelation in their African cultural grids in order to understand what he (God), meant to communicate to them, for example in the Shona culture such as Mbuya Nehanda and Sekuru Kaguvi.

Emphasizing the importance of this issue, (Pilch 1991:159), posits that 'the fact that God chose to reveal himself to Israel in the Ancient Near Eastern cultural context points to the important fact that 'God demonstrates his respect and appreciation for human culture by working through it rather than above or outside it'. To add to this Rogers postulates the following;

God interacted with Abraham, Israel, and the Prophets, with Jesus, with apostles, and with every one of us (including you and me) not in some otherworldly or heavenly context, but in the context of this material world, a world of human culture. . . . God uses human culture as a vehicle for interaction and communication with humans because human culture is the only context in which humans can communicate. This is not because God is limited. It is because humans are limited. Human culture is the only frame of reference humans have. If God wants to communicate with humans, it must be within the framework of human culture (Rogers 2004:27-28).

Bauer laments over some Adventists who demonize cultural affiliated approaches to biblical study and holds that it is the reason why the church has spent many years battling to answer how the issue of women ordination can be resolved because they have been relying on one method or two; namely the historical grammatical and the theological approach. This is so because for Bauer, biblical principles such as whether women are to be leaders or not in church are interpreted differently in different cultures.

Thus, it can be safely said that the major leading cause for the tortuous debates on women's ordination and their role in church may be stemming from the interpretation of the 1st century CE NT texts in contexts and epistemological schemas of our post-modern realities of the aftermath of the Enlightenment against what Gusha (2022:2) and Segovia (2002:19) submit that those texts must be studied in their context 'world of the text's context' – the context of the Ancient Mediterranean and Greco-Roman cultures and they see that as standard for applying them (the texts) in any other context.

It is with this understanding that I insist on the need to bring what the contexts under study's cultural, philosophical and epistemological realities dictates on how gender roles ought to be understood today. As for the Shona culture, the culture in which the SDAZ operates, Shuttle (2001:84) tells us how this issue is understood. For Shuttle, in the Shona and Ndebele traditional societies, women and men are perceived as equal but different human beings, and they complement each other and never have to compete. Gusha (2022:162 - 3) supports this view by submitting that gender equality is honoured in Africa's *ubuntu/unhu* philosophy, which teaches gender oppression as shameful, a label every African shuns to attract at all costs. Concurring with this notion, Eriksen (1995:122) posits that:

Through *ubuntu/unhu* philosophy the opposite gender is an important community member, and it is through a relation with the other community member that an individual is moulded and finds meaning in life. Gender injustice is not only immoral, but it dehumanizes the other community member, and it damages any conceptualisation of wholeness advocated for in African philosophy, for the good of the community.

In such a set-up, Shuttle (1991:87) sees gender equality debates which advocate for equal roles between men and women as alien to African society's vocabulary because through *ubuntu/unhu* philosophy, roles in Africa are well defined and equally important in their distinctness, and there is no role that is inferior to the other. This is so because in African philosophy roles don't stand in hierarchical manner so as to show their superiority over others, as is the case under western philosophy and epistemology) since all roles are regarded as important as each member's effort contributes to the good of the community as a whole. The stratification and hierarchicalisation of roles between men and women came through the influence of Western imperialists through capitalism where tasks that had economic benefit to their agenda, namely industries, were regarded as superior over those which guaranteed home stability, such as cooking, child rearing and washing, to mention but a few, adds Shuttle. Yet in Africa, all roles are important, and they don't compete for supremacy over others. Thus, for Shuttle, the colonial project imposed Western epistemological and philosophical notions of gender and gender roles which are sadly radically altering cherished African value systems leaving Africa emulating the hierarchicalisation, elitist, and classist conceptions of roles between men and women, an foreign phenomena which was not known in Africa ever since the emergence of her ancient states of the primitive communalism and hunter gatherers stages, which were highly egalitarian in nature. These got altered by the competitive, elitistic, classist, exclusionary, domineering, self-centred ones which succeeded them, namely, the slave, feudal, capitalist, and neo-capitalist societies respectively, all which to a greater extent are western in origin.

In African world-view, the home roles usually done by women are valued rather than denigrated upon in comparison with those done by men, which are usually in the public spaces. Shuttle (1991:87) adds that 'in *Ubuntu/unhu* frame of reference, women are so pivotal in African life as they are the centre of the society assuming the crucial role of being 'the first educators' as attested to by the fact that the first language of any African is referred to as 'mother language/tongue'. With this glaring reality of how women stand exalted in African societies, Shuttle wonders where descriptions such as 'African culture oppresses women' come from. Shuttle laments that just as the Europeans blamed Africans for being religionless and purported worship of idols through their misunderstanding of African culture, it may be the case again on the issue of gender inequality being levied on Africa's many 'sins' in the eyes of

Westerners. Shuttle insists that, on the contrary, liberation of women is part and parcel of the African social order and thus 'inequality is really a disgrace', because oppressing another community member is oppressing yourself in line with the '*I am because you are*' philosophy. Shuttle therefore submits that there is no way Africans can celebrate the oppression of their women and girls, since they are valuable community members and the men stand incomplete outside their wellness and well-being as community members.

Mbiti's (1969:108) landmark African philosophical saying "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am" has situated African societies in their proper contexts where, he claimed that Africans are guided by *ubuntuism/unhuism*, which compels them to celebrate cooperation/colaboration/community and shun individualism, a Western philosophical and epistemological notion which is shunned at all costs in the Zimbabwean cultural fabric through describing it in denigratory terms so as to discourage its use among the people by referring it (individualism) to as *humbimbindoga* in Shona culture. In the Zimbabwean context, according to Gusha (2022:159), the essence of the communal nature of *unhuism* is expressed and emphasised through African proverbs. For Gusha (2022:158 - 160), *humbimbindonga* is discouraged through Shona proverbs such as '*zano ndega akasiya jira mumasese* (relying on your own ideas without consulting others leads to destruction), *chara chimwe hachitswanye inda* (one's efforts are not more effective than cooperation with others), *kutsvakwendebvu varume tinodzimurana* (men naturally team up to help the other who is in trouble because of their masculine nature symbolised by them having beards), *mambo makurukota* (a king does not rule on or by his own ideas, rather his council of advisors help him rule). These proverbs discourage autocracy, selfishness, and domineering others, while encouraging cooperation with other community members as a better way of efficient management of all life issues.

Mahlangu (1999:27) has indicated that Shona people encourage the spirit of solidarity where any fulfilment outside the group context is discouraged. Problems are solved collectively by the family and thus success is, too, celebrated as a group, for example, with the saying that 'it takes a community to raise a child', weddings in Africa are celebrated by the entire clan, and so is child birth. To this Marimba (2010:103) submits that 'the notion of competition and celebrating individual success belongs to European

cultures and not *Unhu* oriented African cultures. Marimba concurring with Mawere (2011:40 - 41) opines that European cultures thrive on competition, individual achievement, and the craving to be outstanding over others.

In this same train of thought, Kambudzi (1998:64) has indicated that in *Unhu* philosophy, the reality of the community's world takes precedence over the reality of the world of individuals. For him, this emphasis on community against the individual is meant to apply not only to the ontological but also to the epistemological view of being human. Gordon (1997:46) is quick to answer the question, 'does it mean that Africans do not live as individuals in their daily lives'? by positing that 'while it is true that in African societal life, individuals have a separate life detached from that of the community, they always are obliged to meet for the common good and goals of the larger community'. Gordon holds that this aspect is expressed by the *Gikuyu* proverb: *Ciethananga ikigwa ikuumbukanitiri ndungu* (Birds look for one another to land together, but they fly individually). The message in this proverb, according to Gordon, is that although it is inevitable that people may differ in the way they do things, the goal should be the same, that of benefiting the group. Thus, knowing that the SDAZ is controlled by an administrative body that is global in its outlook became apparent to the researcher of this work that the epistemological and philosophical frameworks of the two contexts being investigated (Zimbabwean and Euro-America) be compared so as to establish the informants to both the SDA church manual policy on women's ordination, which seem to be written from a Euro-American context versus the African epistemologies and philosophies which govern and dictate how it can be applied in the SDAZ context. These thoughts are pursued to discover the extent to which they may have a link to the ban on ordination of women of the SDAZ, whether it is motivated by the fear of doing things without the cooperation of others in conformity with her African epistemological schema or not.

Ramose (1999:50) brings an interesting and insightful observation in his attempt to understand the Shona term '*Unhu*' with its link to expected behaviour of human beings as ascribed by their society, failure of which shame is their portion. According to African epistemology, shame is collectively shared, a very serious consequence every African ought to avoid. Ramose holds that the Shona word *Unhu* has both an epistemological as well as an ontological view to it, which helps in its proper definition and

understanding. According to Ramose, the prefix 'U' is ontological while the suffix '*nhu*' is epistemological. From an ontological point of view, adds Ramose, it denotes that 'by virtue of natural existence, every person is a 'human being/*munhu*'. However, from the epistemological view, 'existence' is not enough to categorise someone as a 'human being/*munhu*', rather, one's behaviour or character also matters in affirming a person as a '*munhu*', as the opposite also becomes true. The status of being 'human/*munhu*' is not granted by mere natural existence, rather, adds Ramose, it is a combination of natural existence (ontological) as well as confirmation by the society using their epistemological grids to vet the person's behaviour and conduct in roles he or she constantly assumes in the African way of life. Thus, exhibiting behaviours regarded as shameful such as denigrating women and seeing their role as insignificant in comparison with men's, is a shun act in Africa. Hence, women in Africa and in Zimbabwe in particular, according to the above scholars should not face gender discrimination in churches, as men should fear to lose the *unhu* tag.

2.23 The role of African epistemology, philosophy, and culture in African/Zimbabwean biblical interpretation

Having explored African philosophy of *Ubuntuism/Unhuism*, cultural and epistemological frameworks and their central role in shaping the behaviour of African people, and Zimbabwean people in particular, in society and religious spaces, it is now time to engage those realities with regard to how they shape the understanding of biblical texts in the African mind. This issue is crucial in that both African feminist and social-scientific scholars seem to concur that one's world-view fashions the way he or she reads and understands the biblical text. For them, one's cultural and philosophical perspectives, epistemologies and world-views are consciously or unconsciously engaged in the process of trying to make sense of the world behind the text against the lens of his/her contemporary realities. For example, Gusha's (2022:142) assessment is that Western missionaries imposed their cultural epistemologies and world-views on Africa people, thereby influencing a twisted understanding of gender roles in African, a situation which is foreign to Africa. It is in this context that this research sees the need for an investigation into these issues to assess the impact of Western philosophies and epistemologies in the SDA church manual's policies and establish the extent to which the African epistemologies are allowed and accepted to dictate how the ordination of women directive as mentioned in the SDA church manual

ought to be interpreted through the African lens, the lens known by the SDAZ members.

According to Adamo (2015:14), appreciating and accepting the influence of the African epistemological framework in interpreting the biblical text is critical because it makes the bible to be not only a faith document but also to be meaningful to the African people and Zimbabwean SDAZ members in particular. It also aids in knowing how Africans respond to doctrinal teachings through their cultural interpretive lenses, where they stand as unique in their identity from other people, for example, Westerners.

Furthermore, as opined by Mbiti (1969:101) and Kanyoro (1997:168), culture has and will always be the avenue through which the biblical texts are interpreted and understood. Mbiti insists that Christianity was actually aided by African culture as it was propagated in the continent for its reception by African people, a scenario which made it attain the world religion status it enjoys today.

According to Gusha (2022:154 - 55), and Samkange (1980:38), there is no way of separating the Zimbabwean individual and his /her culture. This is so, adds Gusha, because Zimbabwe is dominated by African Indigenous Religion (AIR) and Christianity and those who belong to the AIR are the same people who were converted to Christianity and vice versa for most people. Echoing these sentiments, Mbiti (1969:101) asserts that 'Africans are notoriously religious'. Thus, in Mbiti's view, religion permeates into all aspects of life so fully that it is impossible to isolate. Mbiti (2001:108) postulates that 'African culture is like a shadow; you cannot run away from it'. Gusha (2022:6) affirms this by holding that as much as the Zimbabwean population claim to be largely Christians, where more than 80 percent of Zimbabweans profess to be Christians (Chitando 2012:25), the fact remains that they are also Africans. For Gusha, the Africanness of Zimbabwean Christians has a bearing on how (including the SDAZ Christians), besides their claim that their lives are guided by Christian (or Adventist) principles, they are also influenced by African cultural ethos through African epistemologies, philosophy and world-views in their interpretation of religious phenomena they encounter with through church teachings.

Bertolt (2018) and Kalu (1996) have observed a very important reality that if understood, will move the gender imbalance debates in African in another direction. They postulate that:

Before the arrival of missionaries and colonialists in Africa, wives, mothers, aunts, sisters and grandmothers were valued and respected. They not only played major and relevant roles to the community life, but they were also at the centre of the community's existence. They were at the centre of production, household management and agriculture as well as playing vital religious roles such as prophetess, diviners and priestesses. Women's submission and control have thus been traced to missionary Christianity and colonial rule (Bertolt 2018:10 - 14) and Kalu 1996:269 - 288).

In this regard, the above scholars posit that missionaries are accused of introducing a different concept of priesthood, which disapproved of African primal religious cultures that shared priesthood between men and women.

Hence, other African scholars above seem to be correct in their assertion that the missionaries through their 3Cs (Christianity, Commerce and Capitalism) deprecated African cultural life and imposed lethal western philosophical and epistemological perspectives, with which Africa is still battling even now and will continue to suffer future generations.

Kalu (1996: 269 - 288), Bertolt (2018:10 - 140), Montgomery (2017:227), and Olaleye-Oruene (2010:132 - 136) have berated the West for the current gender imbalance 'sin' that Africa is reeling under, as they note that 'Colonialism, through commerce, Christianity and education, not only diluted the matrilineal system, which upheld the status and autonomy of women, but also fortified indigenous male dominance and denied women and girls access to education, employment and political power'. This resulted in their (women) economic dependency, exploitation and oppression by the white regime and not African one. Thus, this alien-to-Africa practice by western missionaries and colonialists, of the oppression and control of women, was bequeathed to and accepted by the African church. So, according to the above scholars, the current exclusion and denigration of women's roles is not African in origin but Western, for Mbiti (1991:63 - 64) has established that African women were never

competed against by their men or became oppressed because the *Ubuntu/unhu* philosophy guarded against such practice, which it saw as shameful, a label every African community member is careful not to be labelled.

Thus, blaming African cultures and religions as the cause for African women's oppression by men through patriarchy, as is held by some scholars according to Agbaje (2021:1 - 20), is unfortunate because it has been chronicled elsewhere that the western missionaries are the culprits for gender inequality in Africa. Before their coming to Africa with their competition over fame, and influence (which is their way of life anyway through their epistemological framework which favours individualism) crafted industrialisation and hierarchically stratified roles between men and women, and thereby shifted African epistemologies, which saw roles as collaborating each other and never competing in importance. In Agbaje's words 'it is clear that cultural and religious beliefs, customs and practices as well as faulty biblical interpretation have always conveyed major obstacles to the success of women's ascent into prime leadership positions both in church and society'.

It is with these convictions that I insist on interrogating components of the SDAZ's culture, to establish where they meet or repel with the culture of the early church communities (the Ancient Mediterranean) under study to whom the text was written so as to discover what light it casts on the SDAZ's quest to apply the same early church texts in solving her ordination question, which on the surface, seems to discriminate against women. The status which African/Zimbabwean women were found in by missionaries ought to be established to check their influence over the SDAZ women's perspective on their place and role in church in comparison with men. This analysis gives clues on who is responsible for the current status assumed by these women. Below I delve into the dynamics of the SDAZ to evaluate the assertions levied above from both from African, the Euro-American epistemological and philosophical viewpoints, since she is administered from America while she operates in Zimbabwe, which is under African realities too

2.24 The SDAZ in context and background to her ban on ordination of women

This section traces the realities which might have led the SDAZ to ban women for ordination against her 20th edition SDA church manual directives to establish how the issues of epistemological, philosophical and cultural world-views discussed above

might have had a role in her settling for such a position as I am suggesting through the above-stated claims which I apply in all the contexts under study in this work, which is done through the methodological framework in use in this study. The nature of this church ought to be briefly discussed so as to guide my readers into a better understanding of how the SDAZ is linked to the Euro-American SDAZ churches through the GC and its administrative policy guidelines. Such an analysis is crucial in establishing how such a scenario informs how the ambivalent views on women's ordination are seen as a problem to be explained by this research and also why the issue of disciplining churches that are opposing the church manual directives is of importance to this research's claims as presented in this chapter and chapter 1.

As regards the nature of the SDAZ, the 2018 - 19 SID Working policy page 60 and the 2022 - 2023 GC Working policy B 05, any SDA church in the world has both local (for example the SDAZ) and global (SDA world church) identity. As such, the SDAZ, the SDA church in Botswana, the SDA church in South Africa, for example, among others cannot be fully described in isolation from their relationship with other SDA churches (the SDA world church) due to the fact that both local churches and the global SDA world church are bound by same administrative policies contained in the SDA church manual and the GC working policy documents, which is meant to guarantee group harmony, uniform piety and identity, as well as common belief systems, denominational structures, relationships and operational procedures. This issue is emphasised by the SDA church manual (2022:29) which states that: 'In Seventh-day Adventist Church structure, no organization determines its own status, nor does it function as if it had no obligations to the Church family beyond its boundaries'.

However, the GC, realising the complexities of running such a colossal network of churches, offers delegated authority to regional administrative structures known as

Divisions²² for contextually relevant decisions. As was explained in the definition of terms section of this study, the SDAZ is administered by the Division that is conversant with African realities, the SID, which controls the entirety of southern Africa, a territory that shares the same cultural, epistemological, philosophical frameworks and world-views as Zimbabwe, the territory in which the SDAZ is located. This reality is of great importance to the objective of this research in that it situates the SDAZ in her existential realities and thus helps in evaluating the reasons behind her ban on women's ordination.

With such complex realities of managing such a colossal and dynamic organisation, it became pertinent that rules and regulations which govern behaviour and conduct in this church be enacted. This is the context in which the above-mentioned administrative documents (the SDA church manual and the GC/SID Working policies) and their role are to be appreciated. Page 17 of the 20th edition of the church manual holds that it (the church manual) came into being as a natural response to the rapid worldwide growth she experienced in the early twentieth century when issues of order,

²² The administrative work of Divisions is affirmed by the GC 2021-2022 working page 13's section 3 which states that the GC conducts much of its work through its *Divisions*, which in turn are composed of Unions in specific areas of the world. Each *Division* of the GC is authorized to carry out administrative responsibilities in the territory assigned to it. It shall act in full harmony with the GC constitution and by-laws, the GC Working policy, and actions of the GC Executive Committee. In order to carry the authority of the GC, the actions of *Division* committees shall, of necessity, be in harmony with and complementary to the decisions of the GC in *Session* and the GC delegates, and the actions of the GC Executive Committee between *Sessions*.

peace, unity within the global SDA establishments, uniformity and harmony in denominational practices and policies become points which the church had to enforce. Hence a document which contains rule and regulations was inevitably needed. Hence, the church manual has been in use since 1931. The maintenance of some checks and balances on churches and members' behaviours, where disciplinary actions have to be passed against erring ones, stands as the major work of the church manual and as the only way the church can achieve her intended goal of preserving order and unity in line with the SDA world church self-understanding that she derives from 1 Corinthians 14:40, a claim reiterated by her prominent prophet Ellen White in her publication entitled *'Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 3'* cited below. "God is a God of order as evidenced in His works of creation and redemption. Consequently, order belongs to the essence of His church. Order is achieved through principles and regulations that guide the Church in its internal operations and in the fulfilment of its mission to the world". Apart from the need for order, the SDA church manual claims its reliance on the church manual on the basis of what Ellen White states:

Another pressing need developed in the rapidly growing – and thereby essentially the need for governance because unity (and order) must be "preserved". "If there were no church discipline and government, the church would go to fragments; it could not hold together as a body". (*Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 3, p. 428*).

The above extracts from the SDA church manual stand as my major convictions on the reason behind my insistence on the need to trace the historical realities behind the women's ordination debates in the SDAZ on the global level, since she can only act in line with the GC world policies, just as is expected for all other SDA churches in the world. Thus, the fate of each church's position on women's ordination (for example the SDAZ's and the Euro-American churches' approval) is to be naturally decided based on the policies which guide all of these churches on women's ordination. Below I thus present the church meeting outcomes which culminated into policy statements enshrined in the church manual for our evaluation of which church is violating the policy and thus deserving disciplinary hearing in line with the epistemological, philosophical claims presented throughout this work.

2.24.1 Brief Background to the SDA church's positions on women's ordination from the 1900s to present

My next line of argument rests on the GC council meetings outcomes in the above name period which I believe can greatly help in tracing this subject and evaluate the reasons behind the ambivalence, namely the issues of discipline of non-complying churches who are opposing church manual directives/GC policies. This will lead to the answering of part of five of the research questions posed in Chapter 1 while evidence needed for answering other questions will be discussed in Chapter 3 - 6.

Timm (2014:10) has submitted that the women's ordination issue was not an issue of concern among the SDA pioneers because they lived in an environment where such discussions had not yet been topical. I presented this issue in the chapter's literature review of Adventist scholars and theological/administrative documents. Here I now just briefly reiterate some significant points. It is Timm and Bacchiocchi who hold that the 1960's, an era when most of them had died, witnessed a sudden and gradual rise of women's equality with men in economic, civil and religious spaces. Timm is quick to point to the rise of the western feminist waves in Europe and the Americas as the reasons for this. This view is proven true by my discussion of African feminism above, that the feminist/womanist waves erupted in the 1960s. Thus, to see the events being affirmed for the SDA church in America makes this study relevant to the scope of this research, as will be seen below.

In the SDA church in America, women began to demand the same roles as male clergy because of tax exemptions enjoyed by these clergymen. The heat was exasperated by the enactment of legal instruments by the American government of that time, such as the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which made equal employment opportunities between women and men mandatory for all institutional establishments in America including churches.

By this time, just as was in the case of the SDA pioneers' era, the SDA church leadership had to respond to the new direction that had come, which was quite different from the one that existed with the SDA women pioneers who accepted the 'subordinate to men' supporting ministry roles. The women of this era had joined the advocacy by secular women and began to demand that they also do pastoral work

which according to the SDA church manual, is a role that is done by ordained members only.

Hence the World church had to convene a series of meetings to discuss whether the practice could be supported biblically. Below I present the GC council meeting outcomes and resolutions on the matter to the present to situate the context in which the SDAZ finds itself, as well as her sister SDA churches in the Euro-American territories.

Timm (2014:14 - 18) narrates that the Euro-American Divisions went ahead to amend their working policies to shift from the GC standing position of 'a-no-to-women's-ordination position, and from there on, they began to ordain and commission women for eldership and pastoral roles respectively, against GC approval. Through this dissident behaviour, on 23 September 1995, the Sligo church, a church under the administration of NAD, went a step further to commission her women for pastoral roles where they serve as commissioned pastors to date, again in violation of the GC policy. This point is affirmed by Gungmei (2011:9) and Koch (2013:32 - 33), who submit that the Sligo church ordained three women members in violation of denominational rules, a practice which she still stands by, and the church went even to the extent of commissioning women pastors to serve as commissioned pastors, again against GC approval.

It was against this background that the NAD had persistently tabled their request to be allowed by the GC to begin to ordain their women for eldership role as well as pastoral ones, requests which were rejected at the GC Sessions of 1990, and 1995 respectively. Timm submits that the NAD requests continued to be rejected at all GC Sessions which followed until the present, where they continue to expect a win in the upcoming 2025 GC Session.

However, Timm holds that, feeling the pressure from other churches which began questioning the authority of the GC when other Divisions had violated their standing policies openly, the church leaders led by the then GC president Jan Paulsen in 2012, through the GC President's Executive Administrative Council (PREXAD), sought to make calculated moves to hear what really was the general thinking on the matter across the vast GC territory. Elder Jan Paulsen proposed a strategy to get feedback from all the 13 *Divisions* (see the definition of terms section) by having them carry out

a survey in their own territories on whether women's ordination was accepted or not. The 13 Divisions were made to respond to two basic questions:

Question #1: To what extent does the Church in your division endorse and encourage women in various roles of leadership, ministry and service? How does the Church in your division practice the consecration or ordination of women to such positions? Would the ordination of women to ministry be an option for your division? Question #2: In what ways might the mission of the Church in your division be negatively impacted if provision was made for other areas of the world to ordain women to ministry in situations where this is believed to advance the mission of the Church in those areas? (Jan Paulsen to 'Dear Colleagues', Jan. 19, 2010).

Timm chronicles that the Divisions thus went ahead to carry out the surveys as instructed by the then GC president. Below is an analysis of the responses from the 13 Divisions to the two central questions posed by the then GC president, Jan Paulsen spoken of above. Of interest to this research is the response outcome from the Division that administers and controls the SDAZ.

2.24.2 Table 1 - The 13 Divisions' Responses' (votes) Outcome on Divisional women's ordination practice vote.

Yes	Lean Yes	Not yet Clear	Lean No	No
Inter-European	Inter-American	East-Central Africa	Euro-Asia	South American
North-American	Southern Asia			SID
Northern-Asia-Pacific	South Pacific			Southern-Asia-Pacific
Trans-European				West-Central Africa

The above analysis is helpful in establishing why the SDAZ and other churches under SID, such as those in nearby South Africa are not ordaining women even as female deacons and eldership roles because they voted to actually rescind the NAD proposal

for women elders. It is very likely too that those Divisions who expressed a 'lean yes, lean no, and not yet clear' position will side with the 'No' vote to women ordination based on their geographical locations which gives clues to their world-views and epistemological assumptions. In this case, it can be correctly guessed that women's ordination for pastoral roles and even commissioning is a non-starter in SID and the SDAZ in particular. With this reality, Timm seems to be correct in insinuating that 'if there may be any church under SID which may surprisingly want to join forces with NAD and the Trans-European Division, the furthest step they may attain towards winning the debate of whether or not they can ordaining their women for the eldership and pastoral role is the commissioning stage only, which the NAD and Trans-European Division have reached so far' (though they have done it through unofficial channels which will be challenged at the soon approaching 2025 GC Session), since the GC official position still stands, that all women in the SDA world church are barred for pastoral and eldership ordination.

The table, at the same time, reflects the varying epistemological, philosophical and world-views of the world church members, as it shows a more natural inclination to women's ordination by the Euro-American Divisions than it does with all other Divisions, a constant theme that has been discussed throughout this chapter. This attests to my seeing the pivotal role of epistemological and philosophical world-views of the epochs under study. Hence, it has been evinced that the Euro-American societies, because they are individualist societies choose to oppose authority structures and see no harm in allowing women to compete with men in roles which need ordination to satisfy their individualistic orientations while the SID instructs all churches under her control not to oppose the authority structures of the church and that they dare not allow women to assume the same roles as men to satisfy her collectivistic orientations and configurations (see 2.19.2.1 above).

It can be insinuated too, that the issue is on varying epistemological, philosophical and cultural world-views between the SDAZ and her sister Euro-American SDA churches which is the root cause for the ambivalence. This is causing the differing practices of ordination of women as each Division sides with what is congruent with its own context. With this, the ambivalence question gets answered as well as reasons for opposing the church manual by the SDAZ as well as reasons as to why the Euro-American SDA

churches find it easy to insist on pursuing their own agenda outside the GC standing policy which the SDAZ vows not to oppose instead. It is yet to be seen if the SDAZ's banning women for ordination so that they assume subordinate roles to men while preserving those which can be done by ordained persons to her male church members only is a practice also seen in the early church's households under study in the work, so that the research can locate the basis for her position.

2.24.3 Further evidence from the GC committees' resolutions

According to Koch (2013:32 - 35) the basis for the 'no to women's ordination' position by the GC, a position being upheld by the SDAZ in compliance with her church authority structures as stipulated by the GC policy guidelines is based on the outcomes of the two GC Sessions of 1990 and 1995 respectively which all voted that women's ordination for eldership positions not be approved by the GC. This is believed to have triggered serious agitations in the Euro-American Divisions, especially the NAD who later vowed to persistently present their request to the GC Sessions which followed that their Division alone, be allowed to ordain their women. NAD requested that their request be presented as an agenda item for discussion in the GC Sessions which were to follow every five years. The GC Executive Committees did just that, adds Koch, and tabled NAD's request at the 1990 and 1995 GC Session, which was, however, voted down by the 1995 GC Session in Session delegates of 1990 and 1995. Timm (2014:15 – 121) presents a clear deliberation of the 1995 GC Session which was convened in Utrecht. According to Timm, the request read:

The General Conference vests in each division the right to authorize the ordination of individuals within its territory in harmony with established policies. In addition, where circumstances do not render it inadvisable, a division may authorize the ordination of qualified individuals without regard to gender. In divisions where the division executive committees take specific actions approving the ordination of women to the gospel ministry, women may be ordained to serve in those divisions (Timm 2014:18).

Timm (2014:19 - 22) holds that despite the insistence by NAD in presenting their request to ordain their women for eldership roles, (and another which they later

submitted before the first one was approved), which requested that their Division alone be allowed to commission qualifying women to serve as commissioned women pastors, the GC Session in Session delegates continued to vote their request down citing disharmony and the negative Adventist identity that was likely to come about if one Division was allowed to engage in a practice which was not approved by the GC. The next GC Sessions which were convened after every five years from 1995 (namely the 2000, 2005, 2010, 2015, 2020) to the present, all voted down NAD's requests. They thus place their hope on the upcoming 2025 GC Session. Thus, this is the official position as regards the SDA church's women's ordination position: that the GC has never approved it. As such, any SDA church which is ordaining women for eldership roles or commissioning them for women pastoral roles is doing so in direct violation of the GC's standing policy. It is therefore logical to conclude that the ambivalent ordination position is unofficial because according to the GC, the SDA church has one ordination practice, namely that only men are to be conferred this rite while all women, regardless of their location in the Adventism, are barred from the ordination rite. It therefore follows too, that the SDAZ is thus the church which is complying with GC policy guidelines while it is the Euro-American churches who are violating the standing church policies and are the ones deserving disciplinary action by the disciplining authority, the GC.

However, seeing that the GC administrative structures have never approved the ordination of women for eldership and pastoral roles from the 1980s to the present, a question looms which asks how it came about to have the 20th edition of the SDA church manual carry a universal ordination of women directive, yet it contains the GC Sessions' voted actions only. So, if it never voted for women's ordination or accepted NAD and the Trans-European Divisions' request that they be allowed to ordain their women (after they came to know that other Divisions had no such intentions) how then did the Church manual manage to carry a phrase which appear as if the GC endorsed a universal women's ordination? How did such an unofficial statement find its way into an official and key SDA world church's policy document, the church manual? This is a critical question to be pursued in future researches, since it is out of the scope of this present work.

2.25 The fate of non-compliant churches

In line with the SDA church policy guidelines stipulated in the SDA church manual, the GC did not sit and fold its hands while watching the Euro-American Divisions violate church policies. It went on to enforce what the church manual directs as punishment²³ for such behaviour. Concerning the disciplinary measures by the GC over the revolting Divisions, Timm (2014:32) submits that the GC leadership responded to these rebellious Divisions in 2019. On 16 October 2019, the Annual Council sat and voted for the motion to discipline dissident churches and their Divisions. The motion read as follows:

All illegal decisions to be withdrawn by the guilty entities and the non-compliant entity to come into harmony again with the structure of the Church, or a) The entity shall receive a public (symbolic) warning as a Union; b) The president of Unions that are deemed 'in persistent non-compliance' shall receive a public (symbolic)

²³ The church 20th edition of the SDA manual page 67-68 specifies fourteen conditions warranting disciplinary measures to church members, churches or Divisions who violate church policies. The 9th, 10th and 11th reasons point to disloyal contact and persistent refusal by a church or church member to recognize properly constituted church authority. This is the principles being violated by Euro-American churches and thus to be meted against Sligo church and her NAD for their insistence in implementing unauthorized ordination practices against the standing GC policy on women ordination which bars all SDA women from being conferred the ordination rite.

reprimand; c) The Union or Division president of the revolting entity will no longer be a delegate to the meetings of the GC EXCOM and Sessions.

This motion was voted and agreed upon (carried) and was to be ratified at GC 2020 Session' business meeting. However, the 2020 GC Session was postponed to 2022, which also did not discuss these motions around women's ordination wrangles, preferring to address other more pressing issues brought about by the aftermath of the COVID19 pandemic. Thus, the motion will likely be tabled in the 2025 GC Session business meeting, where if 'voted', 'accepted' and 'carried', the 'dissident' Divisions will finally be disciplined, thereby ending the over-prolonged schisms over the subject.

2.26 What then for SDAZ women?

This is another question posed in Chapter 1, that with such a strong, and rigid stance against women's ordination for pastoral employment opportunities in the SDAZ through the GC policy pronouncement highlighted above, which she is religiously enforcing, one is left to wonder and ask questions such as, what then for women in the SDAZ? Are they just spectators in the strictest sense of the word? Are there any other leadership roles left for them outside those which require ordination which they are barred from accessing? This section attempts to answer these questions.

According to Wilcox (1895:3), there are offices that women can hold, such as church clerk, treasurer (CFO), and women ministries director at all levels of the church administrative organs, namely conference, union conferences, Divisions and the GC, as is stipulated in the GC working policy FB 05 - K 05. This confirms Bacchiocchi's observation that this was the situation during the formative stages of early Adventism, where the women pioneers participated in supporting ministry roles (with which they were content), not as ordained pastors, yet they worked in roles in which men also worked, such as being preachers and conference, Union, Division or GC directors. The practice has also been maintained in today's SDA world church as women are serving in various key decision-making roles as directors in all four administrative levels of the church (Conferences, Unions, Divisions and the GC) and CFOs to mention a few (see footnote 24 below), including the 5th level, which is done by lay people who are not remunerated, namely the local church level.

African feminists, however, do not take the absence of women in the pastoral work of the church lightly, as they think that men want to benefit alone from the remuneration

and other benefits which accompany such office. As such, the SDAZ's ban on ordination of women is seen as misogynous through androcentrism by the church, and these are issues they feel must be dethroned completely in church ranks, for example, Grumm in Kanyoro (1997:28 - 39), submits that African feminists insists that the 21st century church must remove the restrictive, narrow and four-cornered leadership table currently existing in most churches, especially in Africa, and in its place enthrone a round-table ²⁴ one which offers inclusive, non-intimidatory-equal-leadership opportunities to women. They challenge churches, especially those in Africa, to repudiate the patriarchal bias and misogyny that relegates women to be mere passive spectators (in the pews) and begin welcoming them in key decision-making roles (enjoyed by men) of the church's ministry.

However, this chapter seems to have demonstrated that these fears, admonitions, proposals and clarion calls by the African feminists, to a greater extent, are already addressed by the SDA church's policy BA 60 10's (see footnote in the chapters summaries section) declaration that the SDA church has an equal and non-discriminatory employment praxis, where every qualifying church member regardless

²⁴ The round-table leadership concept is a model that is believed by Kanyoro (1997:28-39) to be an ideal model for church leadership which she claims is a concept derived from a poem by Chuck Lathrop entitled '*In search of a round table*'. Under this concept, Grumm holds that the four-cornered church leadership table that has been existing throughout antiquity for most churches must be reformed, re-crafted and finally get replaced by a round-shaped leadership table. For her, the round-table welcomes all community members and grants them place and equal roles for men and women for the well-being of very community member. She berates the four-cornered table for relegating women to the pews while men alone have reserved seats as leaders.

of gender, sex, race, or class has opportunity to serve. The GC Working policy BA 60 10 and FB 05-K 05 attests to the presence of numerous women who are currently employed as directors of various departments²⁵ at conferences, Unions, Divisions, and the GC. Furthermore, historical analysis from the Pioneers' days testified too that the practise which began with them is still being continued by the present-day SDA church due to the GC church leadership's consistent adherence to and implementation

²⁵ According to the women.adventist.org website accessed on 25/03/24 the current 2024 women ministries and children ministries directors from the GC to local conferences are as follows (recorded in order starting from GC to the Divisions. Space limitations may not allow the listing of all conferences and Union women directors). Heather-Dawn Small (GC), Debbie Maloba (East-Central Africa Division), Akeseniya Liberanskyaya (Euro-Asia Division), Edith Ruiz-Espinoza (Inter-American Division), Dagmar Dorn (Inter-European Divisions), Deen-Ann Bragaw (North American Division - NAD), Raquel Arrais (Northern Asia-Pacific Division), Jeanete Lima de Souza Pinto (South American Division), Margery Herinirina (SID), Premila Masih (Southern Asia Division), Virginia Baloyo (Southern Asia-Pacific Division), Karen Holford (Trans-European Division), Omobonike Adeola Sessou (West-Central Africa Division), Nickey Shum (Chinese Union Mission), Amal Fawzy (Middle East and North Africa Union Mission), Irina Begas (Ukrainian Union Conference), Ross Ann Krisher (Israel Fiel). Tsidi Nyama (South Africa Union conference), Pastor Tataiso Mafora-Malakalaka (Trans-Orange Conference South Africa), Mrs B Sithole (Central Zimbabwe Union Conference), Mrs K Katsvairo (Zimbabwe East Union Conference), Mrs Makiwa (East Zimbabwe Conference EZC), Mrs Charumbira (Central Zimbabwe Union conference).

NB. Regardless other conferences and unions being in deeply patriarchal territories of Africa and Zimbabwe, they currently have or once had women CFOs (a very powerful administrative role in Adventism) for example the EZC had Vimbayi Sinjoke from 2018-2022, Mrs L Mhako the current 2024 North-West Zimbabwe conference CFO, and Mrs B Sithole the Central Zimbabwe Union conference CFO. Space constraints could not allow to the listing of other unions and conferences from Zambia, Mozambique, Malawi, Madagascar etc. Yet these that have been listed serve as representative proof that women indeed are employed in top church leadership posts alongside the ordained men with equal employment benefits in line with the GC working policy BA 60 10 declarations.

of this above-mentioned GC working policy that guided them and is still being adhered to in the current SDA world church, which she commands to be the norm for all her churches, the Euro-American ones and SDAZ included.

The representative constituency-based church governance system of the SDA world church, as discussed in this chapter, testifies that the 'round-table' decision-making leadership concept proposed by African feminists is typically what is practised by the SDAZ, where all members (men and women) are welcome and their views are recognised, respected and heard regardless of sex and gender. This round-table concept and the welcoming of all church members for the running of key decisions of the church is already the state of affairs obtaining in present-day Adventist circles, where at every administrative level of the church, women feature in key leadership committees namely ADCOMS, EXCOMS, of local churches, local conferences, Union conferences and Divisions as shown above. They feature too at the highest decision-making committees of the GC EXCOMs, GC ADCOMs, GC Annual Meetings and finally the biggest of them all, the GC Sessions by virtue of them (the women) being church members with equal voting power and right as well as by virtue of the fact that they hold key decision-making offices and roles as directors in the various church administrative bodies highlighted above. Thus, the SDA church's administrative system vindicates her as a democratic and women-welcoming church to all lines of church leadership ranks except just one, the presidential role which is assumed by elected ordained pastors (see GC working policy BA 60), yet all other numerous roles (see GC working policy FB 05 - K05) are open to women, just as they are open to men. Qualifying women are eligible to be elected to serve be employed by the church as CFOs, a powerful administrative post, which together with the president of a conference, Union, Division or GC, form the top administrative committees of the EXCOM, ADCOM and other key administrative committees in all five administrative levels of the church.

It can thus be seen that African feminists' insights are helpful in the discussion of women's participation in church debates in Adventist churches, as they help to expose the true nature of the SDA church and in the process vindicate her against her critics, who wrongly label her as discriminating against women by their confusing their ban from ordination for pastoral roles to mean (to them the critics) that SDA church women are barred from all other supportive-to-the ministry leadership roles, even though there

are numerous key decision-making roles in which women from the Pioneers eras to the present-day SDA world church were/are gainfully employed by the church alongside the ordained pastors, with equal salaries and other conditions of service. After all, the eldership role (which the Euro-American Divisions are critiquing the SDAZ about) is a lay-member role, which means it is not a role one does under the employment of the church but as a voluntary service, according to the SDA church manual.

This research therefore suggests that the ordination question in the SDA church needs to be treated differently from the way it is treated in other denominations, as the notion that 'women are discriminated against for equal employment opportunities and decision-making roles in the church does not seem to apply to the SDAZ women, as proven by the GC working policy BA 60 10 and the FB 05 - K05. This chapter has clearly shown that the above stated policies are being applied on her employment practice as well as the representative church governance system which welcomes every member of the church at the round-table (proposed by African feminists) decision-making leadership platforms at every administrative level of the Adventist church, up-to the highest level of the GC Session in Session as highlighted above.

2.27 The SDA World church's biblical interpretive methodology

This section seeks to establish points of convergence or divergence between the claims of the two methodologies in use in this study and the SDA world church's biblical interpretive methodology so as to identify the basis for their insistence on barring ordination for women.

According to Vyhmeister (2000:1), the SDA world church is a strictly conservative entity through its biblical interpretive methodology and statements of beliefs which cause it to create a unique organisational culture which distinguishes it from the rest of other denominations in the world. Davidson (2023:10 - 14) holds that the *gramatico-historical* (historical-biblical) approach is the biblical interpretive methodology used in Adventist theology. By definition, according to Davidson (2023:11), the methodology attempts to understand the meaning of biblical data by means of methodological considerations arising from Scripture alone, with the sole objective of attempting to arrive at the correct meaning of Scripture, which is what God intended to communicate, whether or not it is fully known by the human author or his

contemporaries (1 Peter 1:10 - 12). Davidson further asserts that Adventists shun all humanist-inspired theories that have roots in the Enlightenment, such as the historical-critical method and all other postcolonial and liberation methodologies such as the feminist (whether African or Western variants) and social-scientific approaches. Hence, by choosing to use such approaches in this work, the researcher of this work being a serving and ordained minister in this church, has really taken big risk. However, I have been carried into taking this risk by my belief in inter-disciplinary scholarly engagements. Again, the strong quest seeking open dialogue platforms with scholars of various academic interests has seen embark on such a radical decision with the intention to enrich scholarly debates on controversial subjects such as the one I am pursuing in this work for the benefit of the global readers and also for seeking new answers to perennial problems in churches such as the one that this research has provided over a topic that has demanded answers for decades in Adventism.

As can be seen, the biblical interpretive methodologies in use in Adventist theology are the cause for the variances seen in theological positions in most denominations for example, the Methodist church, which was previously opposed to women's ordination but have since changed her views, all because of their embracing the methodologies which the SDA world church shun at all cost.

2.28 Methodological analysis

This section seeks to bring a brief discussion on the two methodologies to evaluate areas of possible synergy and conflicts between social scientific method and African feminism in the contexts of the contexts they are applied to this study, including the SDAZ, for a better treatment of the subject matter.

Commenting on the compatibility of the social-scientific method to the contexts under study in this research, namely the ancient Mediterranean, the early church's Greco-Roman, and the SDAZ communities, Stewart (2015:181) posits that 'to a large extent, the Ancient Mediterranean (the society in which the early church rose from) cultural expressions of honour-shame resembles that of many societies especially African societies'. Congenial with this view, Freeman & Colenberg (2018:426 - 427) further assert that 'there is a growing body of research (including African researchers) which

assert that Sub-Saharan cultures are labelled as fear-power cultures and with this, honour-shame dynamics permeate every facet of African life'. Freedman & Colenberg maintains that honour-shame dynamics are evident in Sub-Saharan cultures, with similarities in social categorisations in many societies, especially African ones, visible also in the Ancient Mediterranean, the culture and society in which the early church writers under study in this work wrote from. They posit that the ancient Mediterranean society was modelled along honour-shame, patron-client, collectivism, purity models, to mention a few, all these being models embedded in the social scientific methodology that is being pursued by this study.

Of interest to this study is the fact claimed by Freeman & Colenberg (2018:427) that 'honour-shame and patron-client motifs are present in every society/culture though manifested/manifesting at varying degrees'. They hold that the honour-shame paradigm is regarded as more prominent in African societies than in the Western ones. In African societies, adds Freeman & Colenberg, human behaviour is modelled in such a way as to avoid anything that makes one attract shame because, through the collectivistic view of life, the shame of an individual also comes to the entire community, while the opposite is true of honour. Hence people live to gain honour for themselves and for their community. To emphasise the significance of honour in Africa, Freeman & Colenberg penned these words; 'honour-shame is the primary thread that weaves through the fabric of African culture and society . . . honour-shame is the web that holds Africa together'.

Another scholar of African history and customs, John Lliffe, in his book *Honour in African History* of 2005, affirms Freeman & Colenberg's views on the centrality of honour in Africa by submitting that the problem with post-modern scholars is that they have neglected the inherent need of recognising honour-shame models as critical and important motifs that guide in understanding behaviour and social codifications among African Christians. Thus, for Lliffe (2005:62), a proper understanding of human behaviour in African churches (such as their right to ordination or lack thereof) is only possible if scholars pay attention and respect the honour-shame dynamics and how they guide and dictate piety in church spaces. According to Lliffe, the underlying power that drives Africans is the pursuit of honour while shunning any contact that causes them to attract shame in their daily interactions with diverse aspects of their life. Lliffe

maintains that it is with this conviction that a renowned African scholar, Kwame Bediako remarked that Africa can be categorized as a 'shame culture'. Colenberg narrates how he concluded that honour-shame, patron-client paradigms are present in both the public and church/religious spheres in his analysis of the Nigerian '*big-man*' culture that he observes as being present even in the church (Freeman & Colenberg 2018:428).

Another phenomenon that describes African behaviour is collectivism. According to Freeman & Colenberg, quoting the renowned Kenyan theologian and philosopher John S Mbiti's landmark saying about African epistemological framework and world-view, in his 1970 book, *African Religions and Philosophies*, '*I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am*' praises Mbiti for succinctly providing the best description of who Africans are. For them, Africans are communal, they are inter-dependant, and they value relationships. However, Westerners on the other hand are the exact opposite of Africans. Their philosophical world-view is derived from the '*I think therefore I am*'. They are individualistic, experimental, and competitive.

Unlike Westerners, adds Freeman & Colenberg (2005:430) in the collectivism and interdependence societal classifications evident in African cultures, an individual's honour is derived from the honour of the group and thus received from others in a group. According to Freeman & Colenberg, Western societies are modelled along individualistic praxis, where sacrifice is given for the honour of an individual, whereas in Africa, an individual sacrifices for the good of the entire community. In Africa 'there is always village cultural pressure to do what is good for the tribe and not for oneself. Freeman & Colenberg's (2005:430) view captures the force on collectivism in African societal fabric when they remarked that "Tribal identity is what provides individual identity and gives a sense of value, significance, and worth. Separation from others is seen as a condition less than human. It is death".

Freeman & Colenberg give two scenarios which emphasise the issue of communality and interdependence in African peoples, which lead them to conclude that Africans view sin as done against people and not really against God because when the wrongdoing affects people it brings shame on the perpetrator of the wrong act as well as his or her tribe.

To emphasise this point Kasomo has this to say pertaining to how sin and wrongdoing is viewed in Africa:

The essence of the sin lies in the violation of the solidarity of the community. The role of shame has a very important significance in the African religious psychology of wrongdoing. For the Africans, sin is 'sin' when it occurs and . . . it is sin because it injures the community or fellow members of the community (Kasomo 2012:186).

In line with this thought Munyao (2017:140) adds that 'The community dictates the moral standards relationally, not by universal rules of right and wrong'. For Munyao, this means that what is best for group cohesion and harmony in the community is right, and what causes community disharmony is wrong and shameful.

As is seen from the above analysis of Western and African epistemological frameworks on ways of knowing right or wrong, the forces compelling one to shun wrong doing (which is doing things not sanctioned by the entire group) force group solidarity. These aspects are investigated further to establish the extent to which they may be reflected in the SDAZ's role-assigning praxis.

As regards possible synergies between the two methodologies, Mathews (2013:38) declares that hope for the African feminist theories in the study of the NT text is found in that African feminism may be greatly aided by the social scientific paradigms, as they enable the feminist interpreter's goals by their (social-scientific criticism) ability to elucidate those aspects of the text which point at the paternalistic and patriarchal society which gave rise to the text, since social science does not throw away cultural descriptions of societies it seeks to investigate. In this case, therefore, adds Mathews, African feminist interpretation can make synergies with social-scientific criticism and greatly benefit from its usage to achieve its goals. Thus, for this study, the two methodologies can enhance each other in their quest to seek the meaning of New Testament texts on what they mean regarding the role of women.

Another area where the two methodologies can blend is in the reality of the hybridity of life realities for African people, which dictate that religion is always intertwined with social, political, and economic realities. Kanyoro (2001:159) holds that the African religious system, culture, and religion are not distinct from each other. Both African

feminist and social-scientific methods agree on the importance of world-views in the better decipherment of realities of the communities to be studied. It is against this background that the White missionaries dethroned all indigenous cultural practices of Africans, demonised them and in their place enthroned their western traditions. As such, African Christians plunged into a dilemma of having on one hand, to listen western cultural world-views enshrouded in the missionary bible, and on the other hand, battle with how to apply the western traditions to the African thought systems. The two methodologies' (African feminism and social-scientific) claim, goal, and tenets, therefore, namely that of advocating for the need to read the biblical texts in cultural lenses of the people under study, becomes priority and they both agree to this, which is an area of possible synergy between them. Hence, they can augment each other in this research's quest to attempt a fair interpretation of the NT text on roles assumed by women in the early church and how the SDAZ applies these texts in her present-day church piety. There is thus a synergy in the way both African feminism and social-scientific approaches appreciate and accept the central role played by African traditional cultures, world-views and epistemologies in informing how men and women ought to relate in religious spaces.

Kanyoro (2004:168) and Oduyoye (2001:16) posit that African feminism recognises African cultural traditions as a source for its theologisations. Thus, this research is convinced in engaging the two methodologies to strengthen each other's weaknesses by using the strengths in the other so that a better appreciation of the subject of women roles in the NT communities under study is realised to inform the basis of the SDAZ's current position on women in church. It is in this vein of thought that the social-scientific approach and African feminism are brought in as interlocutors in this study to factor in the cultural aspects of the texts under study, since both of them take cultural traditions as informants to their interpretative work.

The study can benefit from insights obtained using African feminism, for example its critique on oppressive practices in the cultures of African people especially the dilemma faced by African women of being made the custodians of the African cultures where they are expected to preserve ritual practices that are oppressive to them. Kanyoro's complaint that African culture renders women powerless to question oppressive ritual practices they are made custodians over for fear of breaking taboos

and also for them to fit in the 'ideal woman' construct seem genuine. Indeed, the dilemma of perpetuating cultural practices that are harmful to women, for example female genital mutilation (Efua 1994:132) and the early marriage practice tends to militate against the full humanity and dignity of the African women yet for Kanyoro, it is the women themselves who sustain and preserve these harmful practices. Hence these cultural prescriptions need to be questioned using methodologies proposed by African feminists.

Contextualising this discussion in the African context, and Zimbabwe in particular, where the SDA church women are located, the social scientific analytical tools seem to be apt for determining the extent to which women are controlled by the honour-shame model in the role they assume in the SDAZ, since it has already been pointed out that those in the early Christian communities were under the ancient Mediterranean cultural codes, which are similar and comparable to their (SDAZ women) lived realities. This important motif which guided Ancient Mediterranean society, which birthed the early church, is studied and applied in each chapter of this study to evaluate the extent to which the two methodologies relate to the dictates laid out as conditions for enabling a contextual meaning of the NT texts and communities under study.

However, conflicts and incompatibilities are inevitable. Disparities are seen on the issue of culture, as it is evident that Western culture is the one that has been imposed on African societies and which is reflected in the Christian bible, which the social-scientific method insists on reading as is. African feminist scholars are advocating for a dethronement of African culture, as they see it as the source of women's oppression

through patriarchy²⁶ and androcentrism²⁷. Yet the social-scientific method takes the culture of communities it gets applied to at face value without throwing away any aspect of it. This is an area of conflict between the two methodologies which this research must work past. The tricky part for African feminism, as has been seen in the descriptions of their goals and features, is that it seems to be a merely on-paper strategy, since the theory of these goals appears to be opposite of what is it is on application stages. For example, while seeking to recover African culture and world-views, African feminists crush the very cultural practices and rituals that they blame as source the of oppression of women.

Another example is the selective acceptance of the biblical texts by the African feminists, which does not occur with social-scientific methods. Feminists are willing to

²⁶ Chitando in Kugler et al. (2019:14) patriarchy's heinous sin in that it classifies which sex is accorded privilege and status over the other there by propagating the ordering of society in sexist lines. Jones (2000:77) posits that the term patriarchy is derived from Latin term *patriarchia*, which means 'rule of the father', though it often gets referred in feminist discourses as 'the rule of men over women'. For Jones, the term is also broadly referred to the enormous web of economic, political, social, and religious regulations that enforced the domination of women by men throughout the ages. Jones disagrees with Clifford who sees patriarchy as the root cause of women oppression citing that other issues outside patriarchy are actually the cause of women oppression such as sexism, racism, ethnic prejudice, colonialism, and economic classism, all which were, for Jones, instituted by the colonial project. Lerner (1986:4) defines patriarchy as the institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and, by extension, in society in general.

²⁷ Clifford (2001:26) defines androcentrism is an aspect of seeing that which is associated with being male as the norm and what is associated with being female as not norm for it has to derive its meaning from existence in male terms.

accept texts which project women as in charge, as they suspect that early church fathers were misogynists²⁸ and thus describe women in the bible in roles subservient to those of men, a scenario they do not accept. Hence, they seek to write their own canon. This is where conflicts develop with social-scientific methods that takes biblical texts at face value.

2.29 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has delved into the critical domain of the methodology and methodological considerations of this research, emphasising the imperative of a hybrid approach that merges socio-scientific analysis and African feminism as capable instruments to propel this research's endeavours forward. The chapter has brought the SDAZ in her context against the methodological tenets which helped to excavate to the fore the realities which are leading to the scenarios which this research sees as critical research questions deserving answers. A discussion of the background to the SDAZ's ban on women's ordination has exonerated her as a complying church while the same has exposed the Euro-American churches as the culprits causing the ambivalence, the cognitive dissonance in the SDAZ members, and as the ones deserving discipline by the GC, which is actually going to be decided by the upcoming

²⁸ Chaudhury, Bhat & Sahu (2017:111) defines misogyny as 'men's perpetuation of hatred and contempt towards women. Thus, a misogynist is a person who dislikes, despises, or is strongly prejudiced against women. Misogynistic behaviours and attitudes according to Stalker (2001:291) include but not limited to oppression, exploitation, and subjugation of women by men and are demonstrated through men's resentment, intimidation and degradation of women.

2025 GC Session. The reason for this outlook has come to be that the SDAZ diametrically differs with her sister Euro-American SDA churches on their epistemological and philosophical frameworks and world-views. The same approach is going to be applied to the remaining contexts, (Pauline, Gospel Traditions, and deuterio-Pauline households) on their perception of women through the social-scientific and African feminism lens, to evaluate the SDAZ's position of the same. This will inform the study's findings, conclusions and recommendations. The engagement of the hybrid methodological approach has seen the results obtained from this chapter's findings. African feminism's claim for a round-tabled church leadership table has been affirmed as already existent in the SDAZ, as a plethora of key administrative roles are as accessible to women as men. These findings answered some of the research questions tabled in Chapter 1, with only one still to be answered, namely whether the SDAZ's offering supporting ministry roles to women is also the practice that could have been done by the early church communities under study. This is discussed in chapters 3 – 5, where this question is expected to be answered.

CHAPTER 3

WOMEN IN HELLENISTIC AND PAULINE CHRISTIAN HOUSEHOLDS

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is a discussion on the role played by women in Paul's seven undisputed letters, which according to Vasanthakumar (1997:46), are Romans, Galatians, Philippians, 1 & 2 Corinthians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon. The letters are discussed randomly and not in their dating order. Paul's world is briefly explored to establish the influence of the environment he ministered so as to try discover its effect on his theology on women and their role in the household churches while applying the two interpretive methodologies in use in this study. The purpose is to establish the light they illuminate for application purposes to the SDAZ's ban on ordination of women. The chapter ends with an application of African feminist and social-scientific conversations on discussed *pericopae* of Paul's letters, a chapter summary and conclusion. However, I wish to guide my readers so that they escape a common misconception held by many readers of NT work like this one, where they expect it to be punctuated with extensive Greek word-plays and lexical analyses. This work, although steeped in NT exegesis, is delimited to strictly utilise the two methodologies mentioned in Chapter 1 only, namely social-scientific and African feminism. Thus, readers of this work must not expect any deep grammatical considerations of Greek words. Whenever necessary, I however, very sparingly and shallowly, engage a bit of grammatical and syntax analysis of Greek words for the above-mentioned reasons. I hold to this view out of my own personal conviction that words have no meaning in themselves unless they are analysed and interpreted through the symbols, idioms, thought systems and lens of culture which produced them. Hence, the choice of the two methodologies in use in this study which all appreciates the role of culture in biblical interpretation. As such, all chapters of this work which focuses of NT texts will deliberately ignore the lexical and syntax engagements of Greek texts for the above stated reasons. In any case, exegesis simply means a critical interpretation of a text, especially biblical text, and I have chosen other methods to interpret the texts under study in this work, though not the grammatical method.

3.2 Background

This section seeks to discover Paul's teaching on women in selected narratives from his seven genuine letters (Romans, Galatians, Philippians, 1 & 2 Corinthians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon) which speak on the subject of women's roles in the households Paul wrote and ministered to, to establish what his perception of women in relation to men is in so far as their roles in household worship spaces was concerned.

It is against a background where Paul is berated by NT scholars such as Shaw (1972:299), Mitchell (1971:112), Mollenkott (1976:26) and Richardson (1970:37) for misogynistic tendencies while others go to the other extreme of seeing him as male *chauvinist*, while still others like Schüssler-Fiorenza (1983) and Scroggs (1972:283 - 84) regard him as a liberator of women. Hence, I warn my readers to tread carefully as they read this study on Paul and women which is already regarded as a difficult one according to the above scholars.

However, for my case, I regard the observation by Neufeld & DeMaris (2010:xii - xiii) as worth nothing so that Paul's writings are looked at objectively to derive what he intended to communicate to his original hearers. I thus agree with Neufeld & DeMaris who blames Paul's critics for jettisoning the Ancient Mediterranean socio-cultural contexts which birthed his theology and early Christianity. For this reason, they fail to understand him. It is with this realization that the choice of the two methodologies was arrived at, so that succumbing to the same trap is avoided in this work. The methodologies engaged in this research appreciate the influence of socio-cultural dynamics as windows through which textual meaning can be effectively deciphered. Neufeld & DeMaris thus insists that the Ancient Mediterranean cultural ethos ought to be studied for a better understanding of Paul's theology on women since, the early Christian text 'is moored in the value systems of the ancient Mediterranean society'. Davis (1974:205) maintains that it is mandatory to seek to understand the socio-cultural backgrounds in which the early NT writers were acculturated, since revelation is conditioned by the thought forms of the culture in which it is given. The significance of this view is further alluded to by Theissen (1982:9), Elliott (1993:24 - 35), and Scholer (1987:411 - 419), who accede that in interpreting ancient NT writers, especially on matters such as gender, sexuality, role, and the status of ancient people,

modern interpreters must remember that they were influenced by their societal prejudices which made them think, feel, and speak out of their social context, just as we do. This is the motivation I have in daring this research with my hybrid methodology hypothesis, which accommodates cultural aspects of a given context under study in their work of interpreting the biblical text. As such, the religio-social, economic and political landscape of the environment Paul ministered is undertaken below for the above cited reasons.

3.3 The socio-political, economic and religious landscape of the first-century C.E. era

I deliberately interrogate the environments in which Paul ministered so as to lead my readers into a fuller view of how it would have been for Christian women in so far as their role in comparison with their male counterparts might have been for an informed and evaluative comparison with the SDAZ experience. Thus, a discussion on the socio-cultural and religio-political and economic aspects of the Greco-Roman world's milieu in which early Christians mingled during Pauline Christianity in this polytheistic environment demands attention.

Elliott (1997:183) shares similar views by positing that the historical, religious, social and political contexts in which Paul wrote his letters ought to be studied so as to discover how women participated as compared with their male counterparts in the Pauline Christianity of the first century C.E. Horsley (1997:7) further claims that the study of the political dynamics of early Christianity is crucial because 'the religious dimensions of ancient life were usually inseparable from other facets of life such as economic, political, and social'.

3.3.1 The socio-political environment

Naphtali (1955:52ff) holds that Augustus under imperial Rome was regarded as the *pater patrum*, (the supreme Father) of the entire Roman world, to whom all citizens had to pay homage and total allegiance. Augustus himself claimed the *patria potestas* (the power of the father over the life and death of the members of the household) over all his subjects in the empire. Ng (2002:93), who concurs with this view that Augustus consolidated the Roman empire's *paterfamilias* and patriarchal ethos by his making

marriage and family a highly politically interested area of his empire through his marriage reforms, states:

Apart from the temporary chastity known in mystery cults, and the thirty years' in-service chastity required of Vestal Virgins in Rome, ordinary women were supposed to be in wedlock, as the rate of birth and the number of children were of great political concern to the patriarchal establishment of the empire. In order to strengthen the traditional Roman family, Augustus introduced various marriage laws. In terms of incentives to marry and bear children, he granted free born women with three children and freed-women with four children emancipation from patriarchal tutelage; to discourage celibacy, he levied sanctions and taxes upon bachelors. Widows, widowers and divorcees of both sexes were expected to remarry after designated periods. Only those over fifty years of age were allowed to remain unmarried (Ng 2002:93 - 4).

In a set-up such as the one projected above, it can be construed that women did not have equal opportunities with men in the public sphere due to the dominant patriarchal ethos, which began with the emperor himself as the chief *paterfamilias*, who was the patron to be honoured by all citizens and cascaded to the family structure, where fathers and husbands ruled over their women, wives, children and slaves. It goes without saying that it is obvious that Augustus' imperial rule which brought many social changes across the Mediterranean further confined women to private home spaces, where they were expected to bear children so as to get the promised incentives. In this scenario therefore, women remained suppressed in the Greco-Roman state era, in all phases its development, from the monarchy till the Empire stage, a stage which stretched up-to the 5th and 6th century CE, a time period out of scope of this research.

Furthermore, Judge (1960:8) postulates that the other aspect of Greco-Roman life that had political overtones is the patronage system. For him, this issue requires attention in-so-far as finding out how it crept into the Christian piety of the early church, which led Christianity to be regarded as 'a movement that was sponsored by local patrons to their social dependants'. This is the reason why Levine (2018:156) concludes that women in such a structure, participated as clients only and physical

and material supporters of the gospel and had no share in ecclesiastical leadership due to the dominant patriarchal ethos of the Greco-Roman world.

According to Chow (1997:124 - 5) the patronage system was woven into all aspects of life from the gods, the emperor, the honourable men in high positions in the state till the households and also the church spaces. Jupiter was the patron god the father of all gods. It is in this context that Chow maintains that patronal relations in the Greco-Roman world were seen as transcending beyond the realm of human relations into that of human-divine relations. This research believes that the patronage system which was in operation in the Greco-Roman era can provide a vital background for understanding the relational ties which ordered early Christian households under study in this work.

3.3.2 The religious landscape

Koester (1982:366-71) holds that the Roman world was a highly polytheistic world where the emperor cult competed for the same religious space with other oriental and mystic religions as well as the nascent Christianity. The emperor was regarded as a god during the first century AD. Rice (1984:n.p) adds that this thought is evidenced by the historical and archaeological evidence testifying of emperor festivals which are characteristic of Greco-Roman society, which commemorated the emperors during Paul's mission.

Hendrix (1984:253) submits that Roman benefactors also competed with other gods which were being worshipped in the city, such as the goddess Roma. Hendrix adds that another phenomenon that stood in conflict with Paul's mission was the existence of a temple of Caesar that was built in Thessalonica during the reign of Augustus. It had its own priestly functionaries. According to Hendrix (1984:108), the Thessalonians acclaimed Julius Caesar as a god and his head was on Roman coins, 'where Julius was explicitly designated as 'god'. Augustus was thus referred with the title 'son of god' (*theou huio*s) and his head was made to displace the head of Zeus on the coins of the city. For Hendrix (1984:299 - 308), 'this unequivocal numismatic designation of a Roman ruler as divine was 'an extension of Thessalonica's earlier policies of monumental recognition for distinguished Roman whose benefactions were important

to the city because of his status as sole ruler and his supreme responsibility in ensuring Thessalonica's well-being'.

Van Eck (2013:2 - 9) traces how Temple theology and imperial rule were intertwined in forcing people into poverty through their oppressive taxes. Horsley (1997:242) argues that the context in which Paul is writing is one of the dominance of Roman imperial religion, which he opposes for its oppressive taxes and tyranny, and proposes an alternative society for his adherents.

Ng (2002:93) sheds light to what this scenario meant for women as regards their access to opportunities similar to their male counterparts. She holds that the patriarchal ethos infringed the religious autonomy of the wives. Thus, wives and slaves were obliged to practise the religion of the husband/*paterfamilias* of the household. They had no autonomy to choose their preferred religion. This was against the background of a plethora of mystery religions which were seen as posing threats to the stability of the religion of the home and demeaning the *paterfamilias* authority. Thus, not practising the religion of the home was seen as a potential revolution to subvert the state because the family was the nucleus of the state. Its instability would threaten the peace of the state. Agreeing with Ng's views, Schüssler-Fiorenza (1983:259, 264) adds that protest tendencies, namely refusal to yield to the authority of the household's *paterfamilias*, were never tolerated in the Roman empire for the said reasons. The Isis cult was seen as a threat to Roman civil life, as it had the potential to water down the patriarchal ethos of Roman life just as Hellenistic Judaism was blamed for watering down strict Jewish patriarchal customs by its embracing of foreigners and pagans in its worship life. They saw the Isis cult as reversing proper relationships between men and women as dictated by customs handed down for generations through the patriarchal ethos. Schüssler-Fiorenza holds that these are the same conflicts Christianity brought as it was blamed for disturbing the household peace and order by reversing the order of the *paterfamilias* and instituting women as leaders.

Thus, in such a hostile and rigid environment, women stood as participants and spectators in so far as leadership roles were concerned, though a little bit of freedom was seen in cultic worship and voluntary associations, where they exercised

leadership roles, yet when in wider society, they assumed subservient ones ascribed by the dominant culture of the day.

3.3.3 The economic outlook

Carter (2006:3) holds that the Roman empire was a vast regime that dominated and ruled the entire ancient Mediterranean world and its people. During the first century C.E., the Mediterranean world stretched from Britain, through present day France and Spain, across entirety of Europe to Turkey and Syria and up-to North Africa. The empire was aristocratic, hierarchically stratified, lassis and elitist as demonstrated by the fact that only two to three percent of the population ruled. There was no middle class. So, the ruling elites oppressed the over 80 percent poor populations, who were mostly farmers, since their society was largely agrarian and relied on slave labour. According to Carter, the emperors presided over the empire and all the thirteen emperors who reigned from the first-century era were males. The emperor carried the title 'Father of the Fatherland' (*pater patriae*). Carter holds that the title presupposes that he embodied the empire's male-dominated and male centred structure, although to a lesser degree, women from imperial households exercised considerable authority. Wealthy women participated in business and civic leadership, but the empire nevertheless remained a male dominated world, just as was the monarchy era (Carter 2001:4). Thus, the majority of women reeled under oppression and domination by men, even those women regarded as wealthy. Ng (2002:98) holds that wealthy women of this era held honorific titles derived from their husbands, not their own.

3.4 Paul and his background

The above socio-political and economic landscapes of Greco-Roman society are critical in inferring the basis of Paul's teaching on women and how women might have been understood by their societies. The environments, as seen above, contributed to the shaping of behaviour and ascribed roles between men and women in Ancient Mediterranean society, in which the early church operated and in which Paul ministered, where an argument was raised that he ministered in conformity to the related well with them. This research believes that a brief background discussion on the man Paul is important to give readers some earmarks to factors that might have influenced his theology on women's participation in household churches.

According to Okland (2004:3), Paul had a hybrid (Judaism and Hellenistic) upbringing. Under Judaism, as a Pharisee and Rabbi, he would have been in an environment punctuated by a huge phallogocentric bias that described women in terms of men and relegated them to the bottom of the strata of society and regarded them as less human. Ekpendu, Folorunsho, & Nnaemeka (2017:5) also hold that Paul might have stood ready to support the androcentric elements of his former religion, Judaism, as seen in the narration of his profile in Philippians 3:1 – 6, which is in the superlative form to prove that he was more qualified than others in terms of his Jewish pedigree. He prides himself as a Hebrew of the Hebrews, circumcised on the eighth day as per Jewish tradition, a Pharisee and a Hebrew of the stock of Benjamin, a learned rabbi under Gamaliel, a staunch follower of the traditions of his ancestors (Gal 1:14). This strict Jewish mindset might have made Paul to view women in the way they were viewed in Judaism and thus Paul would have not expressed his independent teachings on women but rather conformed to what his Jewishness dictated.

As regards his Hellenistic background, Fitzmyer (1989:801 - 802) holds that the city where Paul grew up and went to school, Tarsus, might have exerted a heavy Hellenistic influence which he might have never escaped and which caused him to view women in the way they were viewed in the Hellenised societies in which he mingled. Fitzmyer insists that Paul's use of the literary technique common for that era known as '*diatribe*' and his use of dualism, which he displays in his epistle to the Romans, testifies of his gentile background, since the techniques used in this epistle were also commonly used by stoics, Gnostics and cultic temples, where women were again in subservient roles, though a few, such as those in the Isis cult, assumed leadership roles as women prophets. Thus, Paul might have been influenced by these, which informed how he treated women in the various phases of his ministry.

According to Esler (1995:211) Paul's hybrid background of being Jewish as well as Roman allowed him to determine norms for his followers in accordance with the cultural dictates of his day. Of importance is how Paul fashioned his apostleship defence in a purely ancient Roman philosophical understanding of households, where the father (*paterfamilias*) had lifelong authority over his children. Esler (1995:212) opines that Paul clearly claims his superiority over all Corinthians because of his meeting Christ on the Damascus road, where he was supernaturally given his

apostleship which he was given supernaturally which made him perform miracles, and was made the broker and patron of God's household. By this, Paul proves that he was 'father' to them all and they were mere children, as was the case in Roman society, which dictated that children stood at the mercy of their father while their role was simply to pay homage and obedience to the father. His use of terminologies of the Roman way of life was meant to stamp his authority to his audience as their father (*paterfamilias*) since they would relate with it easily, as it was how they were groomed to act according to their societal norms in reference to honour-shame, kinship, patron-client and collectivistic philosophical thinking as determinants for one's place and role in society. This points to his Roman orientation. Thus, the possibility to rely on these lines of thinking in his dealings with women and all his other adherents might be highly probable.

Martin (1990:122) concurs with Esler, Ng and other scholars above on Paul unshared status and supreme authority that he claimed over his adherents throughout his ministry. According to Martin, Paul's referral to himself as father situated him above his converts in any of the churches he founded, where he does not see himself as their brother or co-labourer but father, of which it was to be stressed and distinguished from all other fathers because children whom he begot through the Gospel (1 Cor 4:14 - 15) can only have one father, who was him alone, and not Apollos and any other rival father.

In agreement with this view, Burke (2003:108) opines that this superiority over all his adherents is proof that the Christianity in Pauline churches could never have assumed the egalitarian posture. Burke insists that the strong words Paul writes to his children (the Corinthians and all his adherents) in 1 Corinthians 4:14 - 18 reveals that he regarded his converts as belonging to him personally and regarded that he had lifelong authority over them (as was the case when it came to fathers in ancient Mediterranean culture), where he would not entertain any rival father to claim ownership and control of over them (Burke 2003:109). The texts above show that Paul wanted them to understand his role fully by using paternal and kinship imagery language they used in their society. However, Paul was clever to use his authoritarian control in a softer way, in that he not spends all his time bragging about his status or apostolic authority over them but rather chose to encourage them to imitate Christ, whom he served.

3.5 The Greco-Roman patriarchal household and the role of women

According to Osieki & Pouya (2010:44), within the context of the pre-AD 70 Greco-Roman society, individuals were hierarchically organised according to familial kinship models, encompassing considerations of household, social status, sex, and even geographical location. It is on this basis that Osieki and other scholars cited above convince the researcher of this work to hold that Paul exhibits these honour and shame protocols throughout his letters. This might have informed Paul's restrictive codes in Corinth and also the reasons behind suppression of women's participation in the NT or the admonishment to women to be quiet in the household churches, which many interpret as having been suppressed by men.

Another way to decipher the meaning intended by Paul in 1 Cor 11 and 14 is suggested by Barker (2013:76 - 77). He holds that Paul had adopted the household (*oikos*) management system prevalent in Greco-Roman society of his day and applied it to the control of the household churches. For Esler (1995:213), this was proof that Paul could not have escaped the influences of the philosophical and epistemological frameworks of the society that birthed his Christianity as he could not help but incorporate the social models prevalent in the society he ministered in for a better contextualisation of his message, which he presented in the thought systems and symbols known to his audiences. Congenial with this thought, Floyd (1939:109 - 112) and Gehring (2004:96) have submitted that the household social model stood as a basic building block in some Pauline communities as is seen by Paul's extensive use of (fictive) kinship terms in his letters. Hence, Banks (1994:32) and Malina & Neyrey (1996:160 - 164) think that private households were also the locus for much philosophical teaching and even some philosophical schools. See Bellinger (1947:3 - 48) in the literature review section of this work.

In these familial orderings, Paul's adherents were members of a new family, the household of God where he is their superior and *paterfamilias* and they are his children. As such, Paul develops this household thought in his churches to appeal to the family structures prevalent in the territory he ministered, a society that met in houses (*oikos*) for fellowship (1 Cor 6:19; Rom 16:5). As a result, in the book of Acts, for example, Luke describes Paul's ministry as occurring in household churches,

where many were converted as families (Acts 18:8; Acts 16:15; 17:6,7; 18:1 - 5) as would reflect the general culture of the day.

Hamerton-Kelly (1979:88) supports this view by highlighting that aided Paul in controlling his adherents wherever they were in existence throughout the vast Roman Empire. This Corinthian situation is a typical example of how this concept helped Paul, where the domain set for women in this society competed with the Christian movement's worship services, which were held in houses. Thus, it can be seen that women were bound to be confused about their roles and the space in which to exercise said roles when the church came to occupy their domain, the home. This is the context of Paul's message in 1 Corinthians 11 and 14, adds Hamerton-Kelly. Paul's message was thus that the women who were household owners or who were in charge of their household management as ascribed by their social codes, were not to think that they would be the ones to lead in worship services when their very same house hosted a church worship service. As a result, his message seems to be directed to women more than men for the reason that it was women who were likely to have been confused on their roles in a worship service conducted in their home.

Hence, conflicts described in the house churches of Corinthian households, for example, can be understood in this regard. Conflicts thus erupted as women could not understand why they would be relegated to the 'pews' in the area of domain demarcated for them by their cultural codes while males claimed that they were the ones expected to lead in the house worship when a house changed its function from being an ordinary home to assume an *ecclesial* function.

In such a scenario where the nascent Christian movement was clashing with established social norms in houses, Esler, submits that Paul (in his capacity as their *paterfamilias*) had to launch his new re-ordering of social roles for women in the new household, the household of God, which would govern their behaviour in the *oikos* churches. This is the context in which the admonitions bellowed by Paul to his adherents must be understood; this is a context in which they seem to target women because the church was competing for dominion in their domain - the home.

Paul thus would assume the management authority in the household of God and call for the members to exhibit and practice the virtues (understanding, self-control, justice

and courage) that they had been taught in the philosophical schools and in the homes by their fathers. Hence, he expected them to have order in all the various households, who were all his family members – his children according to 1 Corinthians 4:14 - 15 (Burke (2003:107). As he stresses his fatherly role, he highlights that he begot them through the gospel, and thus he is entitled to take on all the roles of fathers in their society – teaching, loving and admonishing them. Thus, as their *paterfamilias*, he stands superior to all of them, a claim he shows throughout his epistles as a source of his qualification to really boast about. Paul even stresses that he was superior to all other self-styled apostles such as Apollos, who masqueraded as apostles, yet were inferior to him since they were not called in a unique way as he was, and they therefore had no basis to claim audience from his children (the Corinthians or any of his adherents elsewhere).

With the above background, it can be inferred that the yearning to gain honour by women (which was gained by being invisible in the public space, the domain for males) is the reality that made them invisible in public spaces as a way of showing their honour. Thus, contrary to what has been interpreted as women's suppression in the early church, based on what has been highlighted above, it may actually be the opposite of how women who shunned speaking in public were perceived in the early church, namely as honourable women and not oppressed ones. This, stands affirmed by what Augustus' family reforms dictated, namely that 'a virtual woman was one who was obedient, a good mother, and one who would manage the household space and not encroach the public one'. This made such a woman gain honour for herself as well as for her husband. A virtuous woman was someone who skilfully managed the household, which included slaves and other non-biological family members (Osieki & Pouya 2010:47).

Although Saller (1988:86) argues that the wife as the matron (*matrona*) of the household had authority (free from her husband), where all members of her household would refer her to as *kyria* in Greek or *domina* in Latin, a term by which she was addressed by her husband as a sign of respect, Osieki & Pouya (2010:47) maintain for that the matron (wife), the Greco-Roman societal mores dictated that her authority was limited and derived from the *paterfamilias* (the husband) of the family since the *paterfamilias* had final lifelong authority over his family, in which the wife was part.

According to Swancutt (2004:54 - 55), the honour and shame portfolios operated to govern all sexes. The female sex was regarded as weak and posed threats to the peace of the family. She was defined as the empty and penetrated vessel that her husband filled, while the male citizen was legally free and expected to penetrate inferior sex partners, namely his wife, prostitutes, actors and dancers. Dixon (1988:87) notes that the woman's state was taken from the account of Eve, where Philo's *Questions in Genesis* 1.33 penned down that; 'the serpent speaks to the woman rather than the man because woman is more susceptible to deceit than man, whose judgement is softer and more easily given to falsehood'. Thus, women were expected to be physically weak, and irrational rather than rational, easily susceptible to flattery and deception.

The situation was different for male citizens. It was a daily enterprise to prove that he was a man, for it was one thing to have biological masculine features and yet another to be a man. Swancutt (2004:44) submits that maleness was not a 'given' but an 'achieved' state. Gender was never a stable characteristic. It oscillated in relation to how the male person daily and actively overcame situations that evaluated him, to attain honour or shame. People were categorised according to their sexual roles as either the penetrator or the penetrated. The penetrated attracted shame and the penetrator attracted honour. However, although men had to prove manliness through the ability to penetrate others, the excessive quest to penetrate others attracted shame since manliness was proven by the ability to subdue emotions.

3.6 Selected Pauline *pericopae* analysis

In this section, I carry out an analysis of selected texts which speak on women's roles through the lens of the methodologies in use in this study. As forewarned in this chapter's introduction section, that the temptation is to expect textual/grammatical/lexical studies of these texts, a temptation I help my readers not to fall into, since this study follows a clearly defined hybrid methodological framework of making social-scientific and African feminism interlocutors. These are the interpretive lenses engaged for meaning in this study. Hence, deep Greek parsing and declension of nouns and words is really out of scope for this work. However, readers may bump into very limited and shallowly presented Greek word analyses as this chapter and the entire research unfolds for the above stated reasons.

3.6.1 1 Thessalonians

Paul praises Timothy and Silvanus their good behaviour toward the Christian community in Thessalonica where they were 'righteous and blameless' (1 Thess 2:9 - 12). In 1 Thessalonians 4:13 – 18, Paul assures the community that those who have died will not be forgotten and that those who are alive at the *parousia* will not have precedence. In this letter, Paul mentions all male names when referring to people as his 'fellow workers' who are approved by God and admonishes his hearers to accept their teaching as authoritative and further appeals to them that they respect 'workers among them' (1 Thess 4:4,8; 5:13).

Witherington (1990:183 - 84), using the feminist lens holds that the admonitions that the Thessalonians take heed to look over those who lead them appear to mean that the audience consisted mainly of women who held the *prostatis* (protector) role of offering hospitality to male missionaries in their houses. Women's involvement as missionaries with authority as approved by God like these men is not mentioned. The reference to prophecy in 1 Thessalonians 5:20 has allusions to women prophets mentioned elsewhere, and in Paul's letters such as the ones analysed below, such as 1 Corinthians 11:2 - 16; 14:33b - 36, Anna, the daughters of Philip and Elizabeth, to mention a few who are said to have held the prophesying office, makes it a possibility that in Thessalonica women prophets might have existed and that they may also be the ones mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 5:20. The omission of the terms 'prophetess' may be a result of conformity to patriarchal injunctions by the writer, not that women suddenly disappeared from the office, yet the evidence is there testifying to their existence in antiquity in Jewish culture, adds Witherington.

Social-scientific scholars, however, maintain that the absence of the term 'prophetess' despite there being women prophets shows that Paul was conforming to the ancient Mediterranean cultural norms of his era, just as the philosophers, such as his contemporaries Musonias Rufus and Plutarch. Thus, Paul was deliberate as he conformed to Greco-Roman cultural expectations with which his hearers were familiar which excluded women in public authoritative roles since it was regarded shameful for women to do that role.

However, Paul in this epistle is not discussing leadership issues but rather works of service, which is very inclusive of all believers, as even in that Patriarchal world both women and men were involved and very supportive of the works of the ministry. Based on this fact, collectivism as opposed to the individualistic ministry approach was the main significant issue observed in Paul's ministry in Thessalonica.

3.6.2. Galatians 3:28

According to Witherington (1990:169) and Esler (1995:217), Galatians 3:28 is believed to have been a pre-Pauline baptismal formula that even goes back to Jesus and not Paul's invention and thus some say it has nothing to do with gender roles in Galatia.

African feminists such as Kanyoro, Dube, Oduyoye, Masenya, agree that Galatians 3:28 as a pre-Pauline baptismal formula where the expression 'neither male nor female', 'implies that patriarchal marriage is no longer determinative because the baptismal confession urges the relinquishment and abolition of legal-societal and cultural-religious male privileges'. As such, women were enabled to exercise leadership functions within the missionary movement without being required to become man or abandon her own sexual nature. Thus, the significance of the baptismal confession of Galatians 3:28, according to African feminists, implied that in the early missionary movement, Christians can assume authoritative and ecclesiastical leadership roles irrespective of their sex or gender, as they interpret Galatians 3:28 to mean that members of the Christian community were deemed equal and a new creation because they all received the spirit at baptism.

However, the majority of those who converted were slave women who expected that their freedom (*ελευθερία*) was to be facilitated by the church (Horsley 1997:225) because they truly believed that they were set free by Christ. For slaves, this was a sweet message indeed, which seem to have acted as a magnet to draw the outcasts of Paul's society in anticipation of new life in Jesus after baptism. Horsley adds that the message was magnetic to slaves because it spoke of the phenomena they experienced daily. Thus, for Crouch (1972:127), 'to argue that Christian slaves who understood their call to freedom had only a superficial understanding of the Gospel' is to minimise the impact of the language in a world where slavery was a commonly accepted institution'. Horsley opines that 'therefore, a slave woman who became a

Christian in the first century heard this baptismal pronouncement as a ritual, 'a performative utterance' which not only had the power to shape the 'symbolic universe' of the Christian community but also to determine the social interrelationships and structures of the church.

Baptism therefore carried with it a great enthusiasm to those baptised as they were bound to assume new social status and equality. 'In baptism Christians entered into a kinship relationship with people coming from very different racial, cultural, and national backgrounds, these differences were not to determine the social structures of the community, nor were those of family and clan. Therefore, both Jewish and Gentile women's status and role were drastically changed, since family and kinship did not determine the social structures of the Christian movement' (Schüssler-Fiorenza 1997:227).

However, Burke is of the opinion that the 'there is no male or female' pronouncement was and still is misunderstood by feminists in their claim that it not only suggests a difference between man and woman in terms of their social roles but rather that it also meant that their biological configurations were changed in the process. For Burke, such thinking was a pervasion from gnostic influences, which must not be seen as the norm, as seen by Paul's consistent rebukes in 1 Corinthians 12:13, as he had special problems in Corinth and Galactica where he would ask the question 'who have bewitched you' (Gal 3:1) to ward off the misunderstanding of Galatians 3:26 - 28. Hence, Esler (1995:213) posits that Paul had to give a 'freedom with restraint' so as to curb the hedonistic influences of the Greek cults from being embraced by his adherents and ultimately finding their way into his household churches.

Witherington (1981:559) concurs with Burke by opining that Galatians 3:28 'does not assert that there was no longer men and women in Christ but that patriarchal marriage hierarchies and the concomitant relationships between male and female is no longer constitutive in the new community in Christ'. For Witherington (1981:601), Paul does not want to change women into men but is simply castigating the abusive patriarchal hierarchies. Thus, he rejects their abuse and not their proper use (Witherington 1981:601).

The message in Galatians 3:26 – 28, therefore, is that, adds Witherington (1981:601), ‘irrespective of their procreative capacities and the social roles connected with them’, persons will be full members of the Christian movement in and through baptism only. It proclaims that in the Christian community all distinctions of religion, race, class, nationality, and gender are insignificant. All the baptised are equal - they are one in Christ. Thus, taken at face value, the baptismal declaration of Galatians 3:28 does not express ‘excessive enthusiasm’ or ‘gnosticising’ devaluation of procreative capacities (Schüssler-Fiorenza 1997:228).

In addition, Kesich (1977:42), argues that Paul did not mean to abrogate the cultural codifications which existed through the baptismal formula which he modified, for this would cause a social revolution (Cartlidge 1975:220,234) with the authorities of the Greco-Roman society, who would not take lightly the alterations of their power structures as dictated by the *paterfamilias*es who began in the family right up-to the emperor himself (Cartlidge 1975:220,234). Thus, Paul maintained that all societal codes that governed behaviour and roles between men and women were to be conformed to when one was interacting with normal life in society, hence he admonished slaves to continue respecting their masters (see Philemon). Kesich posits that Galatians 3:28 is to be understood in this context that it was not abrogating natural order between men and women and also the social codes of their era. It is said that at Corinth, and Ephesus, even in Galatica, that ‘some women were overreacting to the new freedom found ‘in Christ’. They considered themselves, adds Kesich, ‘free from any practice that had existed prior to their baptism’.

However, African feminists like Grand (1997:24) claim that Galatians 3:28 is actually a confirmation by Paul that women are ordainable to assume the priestly role and lead churches because it abrogated all boundaries of culture, ethnicity, race and religion and ushered in a new dispensation for women outside patriarchal prejudices and other oppressive traditions which had excluded women from leadership. This view is the one advocated for by African feminists, that today’s African churches must ordain women to be pastors based on their understanding of the passage. Vasanthakumar (1997:45 - 46) is of the same opinion as Grand, as she claims that Paul advocated for the equal partnership of men and women in the ministry by his declaration of Galatians 3:28. Thus, they call for a re-reading and re-interpretation of the Pauline texts using

the hermeneutics of suspicion to demand the equal partnership of men and women in today's African Christianity. The social-scientific scholars like Ng, Malina, and Neyrey, however, argue that such an interpretation reflects *eisegesis* and not what the texts really say.

Concerning the message of Galatians 3:28, Kartzow (2010:375) holds that Paul's message was that although the new believers assumed a new status 'in Christ' through baptism, they were not to think that they were no longer under obligation to conform to their established hierarchical social ordering as ascribed by their societal norms on male-female, slave-master relations. Kartzow observes that Paul did not abrogate the ancient Mediterranean society's established hierarchies but rather used them to create his new spiritual world order.

Paul admonishes new converts to remain in the states in which the Gospel found them in (1 Cor 7:20). According to Ng (2002:365), Paul encourages people who have converted to remain in the state in which they were before conversion, meaning that females were not to think that they were now males, or slaves think that they were now masters or free. For Ng, the NT shows hierarchical relationships and this distinction of roles and statuses, where the father of the home is on top the wives and children then slaves, but the father of the house is under the supreme father in heaven, who was the *paterfamilias* of them all (microcosm of the macrocosm).

Commenting on Galatians 3:28, Davis (1974:202) holds that the 'all believers are one in Christ' statement might have triggered thoughts in some to think that the ontological distinctions which differentiated men and women, as well as the hierarchical authority systems operating in their Greco-Roman society, were suddenly abrogated by the 'in Christ' phrase and that a new life of egalitarian and non-hierarchical authority systems in church, as well as their larger social life, had now come. This thought of equality between sexes' conflicts seems to be the key focus of Paul's letters, adds Davis. Paul was focusing on justification by faith against the Judaizers party, who insisted on circumcision as the only entry point for acceptance in the new covenant. Paul then admonishes the Galatians to refuse the circumcision gospel and embrace his teaching of faith in Jesus through baptism which would make them 'put on Christ' for entry into new life. Davis postulates that Paul's teaching might have brought confusion to the

Galatians' conception of their authority driven hierarchies which governed the household ordering of sex and roles. In Galatians 3:28, Paul's aim is to teach a *soteriological* point and not to establish proper social relations between men and women in the Galatian church (Davis 1974:202). Hence Davis holds that Gal 3:28 has nothing to do with gender and gender roles but rather is simply talking about salvific issues granted or open to all men and women, bound or free, male or female, who are in Christ through baptism.

Davis, however, warns that the claim by some scholars that debates on equality between men and women can be done using passages such as the one above are not really sustainable, since for him the early New Testament documents do not reflect that they understood equality in the sight of God as implying a change in gender roles or egalitarian authority systems against the hierarchical Greco-Roman patterns the NT was weaved in. Agreeing with this notion is Ng (2002:363), who also berates and lampoons feminist scholars, such as Schüssler-Fiorenza, whom she blames for her claims for women leadership in the NT, as out of context of the environment which gave birth to early Christianity. Ng blames Schüssler-Fiorenza for misinterpreting the pre-Pauline baptismal formula of Gal 3:28 and try to force it to say what it does not say: that women occupied identical roles to men in early Christian communities. Rather, adds Ng, there is evidence that shows that both Greek and Jewish women were under the constraints of their cultural epistemological frameworks, though the constraints had varying degrees. To this, Ng concludes that Schüssler-Fiorenza's egalitarian and democratic mode for early Christianity's milieu is fabricated and does not speak of what it was for early Christian communities, the milieu it could have never escaped at all. Ng (2002:365) further notes that the egalitarian-imagined experience of Schüssler-Fiorenza, which she claims existed in the Jesus movement, lacks support as it gets compared with realities in contemporary religions with Christianity, such as Montanism, which appear to have given space for women, yet it is very doubtful if complete egalitarianism existed even in Montanism itself, where women featured prominently.

With these glaring realities of how it was with the Ancient Mediterranean society of the early church, Ng castigates Schüssler-Fiorenza's claim of the egalitarian NT world, yet there is evidence that with these hierarchical orderings of people, such a view of

egalitarianism becomes a facile opinion to be avoided. Ng (2002:367) writes argues that 'with such considerations in mind (of these hierarchies), we must not assume facilely with Schüssler-Fiorenza, that complete egalitarianism between men and women and absolute democracy (as opposed to equality in the sense of the NT world of the Ancient Mediterranean societal mores) are the ideals of liberation necessitated by the gospel, for the NT understanding of equality of value and dignity is comparable with a proper kind of hierarchical relationship and distinction of roles, hence Paul advised those converting to Christianity to remain in the status they were in and not to think that they had been elevated to higher classes'. For Ng, this notion is repeatedly shown in the entire NT. Thus, Ng states that 'the labelling of patriarchy/kyriarchy as structural sins needs further investigations, that are cued to the NT teaching as a whole', otherwise the allegations for Ng, are fabricated and not a true reflection of what it was for the early church communities who were addressed by Paul.

3.6.3 1 & 2 Corinthians

Space limitations do not allow a discussion of passages from 2 Corinthian. The study will use three passages from 1 Corinthians - 1 Corinthians 11:2 - 16; 14:33 - 35; and 15:3 - 10.

3.6.3.1 1 Corinthians 11:2-16

According Hurley (1973:192), verses 2 and 3 set the plot for his passage and what triggered its message, *'I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I have delivered them to you. 3. But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God (1 Cor 11:2 - 3)'*. For Hurley (1973:192), in verses 2 and 3 it is clear that Paul is correcting the church for having departed from the traditions (*παράδοσεις*) he had handed over to them. That he praises them in verse 1 suggests that there was an element of effort to follow the traditions, yet they cease to follow the traditions due to confusion and embrace the wrong piety which Paul is not pleased to hear, adds Hurley. Richards (1997:316) alludes to this view too. According to Richards, Paul is not necessarily talking about roles in this passage but is reproofing them of having embraced gnostic thinking from his competitors the gnostic teachers whom he saw as dangerous heretics and false teachers. The Corinthian women had

embraced gnostic ideologies which taught against the gender distinctions of Genesis 1 and 2, which Paul later makes reference to as he corrects them that God created men and women equal yet with distinct roles set at creation, and conversion into Christianity did not abrogate them. Gnostic women did not see themselves as different from gnostic men. Witherington (1990:167) is also of this view, stating that the reproof in verse 3 was influenced by their having departed from the traditions is in reference to the mystery religious cultic practices which they had embraced, for example the female prophets from the Isis cult prophesying with their hair loosed down against Paul's tradition referenced in 1 Corinthians 11:2. Hence, Paul concludes the *pericope* by saying that the traditions he had handed to them had not changed and neither had the churches (1 Cor 11:16).

According to Hurley, Paul has a basis for judging them as having departed from the traditions he has handed to them. 1 Corinthians 3:10 is proof, '*According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and another man is building upon it. Let each man take care how he builds upon it*'. Therefore, Hurley seems to be correct in pointing out that the Corinthian household had built on the wrong foundation. I now outline what they had embraced and that Paul interpreted as a sign of them having drifted away from the traditions he had given them before he left.

According to Hurley (1973:193), 1 Corinthians 11:3 brings a *modus operandi* of how they would reconnect the correct foundation he had laid for them before. Verse 3 has a hierarchical ordering of roles, beginning with the subordinate ones, who must accept authority from the superior in the order – woman-man, man-Christ, Christ-God. Richards (1997:320) share the same view, that Paul emphasised hierarchy between men, with Christ too subjected under God as their example of subordination. Paul goes on throughout the passage to explain what this structure symbolically means in so far as relations between the Corinthian men and women are to be enacted amongst themselves, their earthly *paterfamilias* (Paul), and ultimately their *true paterfamilias* God, in order to acquire honour instead of shame, in line with the collectivistic orientation of their world-view, as well as the microcosm-macrocosm dynamics explained above and throughout this paper.

Osieki & Pouya (2010:49) agree with Hurley in pointing out that in verses 4 - 6, Paul is again on honour and shame protocols, which regulate decorum in the Corinthian household, in accord with Roman and Mediterranean societal values, and caused the household to live according to collectivistic models for community cohesion. Thus, Paul's hybrid orientation (which was exposed to Mediterranean society) seems to naturally cause him to bring the hierarchical ordering of decorum in the Corinthian household, which he defends by citing that it was divinely inspired since it touches on the macrocosm realm of the household, where God and Christ are involved with God as the head of Christ, while Christ is the head of man, and man the head of the woman (Collins 1999:401). Factoring in the Roman orientation of households, Paul stamps his role as their *paterfamilias* of his 'children' the Corinthians from whom he mediates God's authority over them as his broker and matron. With this, Osieki & Pouya claim that Paul vindicates himself to demand 'collective' cooperation from the Corinthian community in the manner he is addressing so that they get honour as he also gets it from the surrounding cultures whom they target to evangelise and convert.

For me, this hierarchical ordering and its concomitant gendered roles imply that all the Corinthians, as Paul's children, were not to behave in ways that would bring shame to their *paterfamilias*, who is Paul. Paul was supposed to succeed in his duty of commanding his family (the Corinthian community), as was expected of Greco-Roman *paterfamilias*, as this would prove his manliness and thus gain him honour. In the household management system of Paul, women were not to behave in ways that would bring shame to their heads (*paterfamilias*), who are their home *paterfamilias*, and Paul, and men were not also to behave in ways which would bring shame to their head (*paterfamilias*) Christ, because Christ had already given honour to God.

Verses 3 - 6 bring in the issue at stake:- ' . . . with her head covered'. Hurley proposes a reference to Mediterranean head covering customs for a good inference of what Paul is saying to his households. For Hurley, Paul is not referring to head coverings, since in his Jewish orientation men were discouraged from wearing the Tallith while the priests were not to wear headgear. For Jewish women, it can be inferred that they would not wear veils when outside the home from Genesis 24:65, where Rebecca only has to wear her shawl when she sees a strange man approaching them. The Greek women too would not wear a head covering since they had a bit of freedom as

compared to other women in Ancient Near Eastern Mediterranean society. Thus, this means that women in the Mediterranean society then would have times when they were allowed not to cover their heads, and this will help us analyse 1 Corinthians 11:2 - 16 fairly. Hurley then insinuates that the issue at stake is not the physical head covering but the hairstyle of men and women in worship, as is suggested by the phrases *κατακαλύπτω* and *κατά κεφαλῆς ἔχον*. Taking Hurley's word, this stands as true, as it becomes applicable to women from all cultures represented, since neither Jewish or the Greek women were required to veil their heads in their normal lives.

Witherington (1990:168) agrees with Hurley, by positing that Paul is referring to hair, not a veil, which was not to be loosed in worship service since loosening it was the same as the symbolic meaning conveyed by a shaved woman's head, which speaks of a shameful act of adultery, and loosing hair while prophesying by women was also a heretic practice by gnostics. Hurley (1973:198) submits that in Paul's era, loosed long hair symbolised that one has been convicted of the crime of adultery, which was punishable by death, but in the NT period, the Jewish practice of inflicting capital punishment to adulteresses had been abolished. Thus, the only symbol to mark an accused and convicted adulteress was loosing her hair in public. Hurley further holds that loose hair on a woman was a sign of uncleanness.

This view seems to be correct, as it references the *pericope* of the woman caught in adultery in John 8, which reveals that she was set in public, where they loosed her hair to show her shameful act. The other practice to show the crime of adultery was the shaving or shearing of the accused woman's head. In this background, adds Hurley, the phrase *ἀκατακαλύπτως* will refer to loosed hair, and this rendering will give a good flow of the passage. Hence, Hurley maintains that in 1 Corinthians 11:2 - 16, Paul is referring to hairstyle and not shawls. Verse 5 proves that Paul is not referring to a shawl (veil), as he uses a word which refers to shawl only once in verse 5 *ἡ κόμη περιβολιού δεδοται* 'the long hair is given instead of a shawl', yet the proper rendering of the verse is 'the long hair is given for a covering'. Analysis of the verb *καλύπτω*, used for head coverings, helps us unlock the meaning of this text.

Van Beeck (1974:n.p.) holds that the Corinthians had adopted strange cultic practices from the Isis cult, where women priestesses would prophesy with their hair unbound

as a sign of ecstatic manifestation. Thus, Paul had to admonish them to conform to the Greco-Roman cultural codes and not the Isis ones. According to Van Beeck, this was in line with the honour and shame codes of the Greco-Roman codifications, and thus where a woman who was seen in public with her hair un-bound attracted shame, which was collectively shared with her husband, community as well as Paul and God as their paterfamilias in the microcosm of the macrocosm realms. For this reason, Paul had to charge them against such a shameful practice. Concurring with Van Beeck, Scanzoni & Hardesty (1974:65) add that Paul, in teaching against the loosening of hair in the household worship set up, 'did not want Christian women to act in such a manner that people would confuse them with either the pagan orgiastic cults where women loosened their hair in ecstatic frenzy or gnostics who degraded the body and marriage'. A Jewish woman seen in public without a veil, adds Scanzoni & Hardesty, was considered to be flouting her marriage vows, and the Talmud commanded her husband to divorce her. In this sense, Brooten seems to be correct in stating that Paul did not abandon his rabbinical orientation when he was serving in Christianity, for he seems to be influenced by his culture in directing behaviour which he deemed appropriate in assemblies.

In line with Van Beeck, Scanzoni and Hardesty, Hurley maintains that by letting her hair loose, the woman is making a public statement that the proper authority of her husband has been disregarded by the fact that the one who should be under him alone has been given to another. Hence, Paul depicts a posture that such a woman stands in the posture of the accused adulteress who has shaved her head – a shameful act. Hurley opines that Verse 6 is a natural follow-up of verse 5 which reads: 'For if a woman will not veil herself, then she should cut off her hair; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to be shaven, let her wear a veil'. In line with, the argument set forth in this section against a view that the issue discussed is the issue of the veil (though the RSV has actual words of 'veil', Yet it is not veiling which is discussed but hairstyle). Hurley provides his paraphrase of verse 6 as follows 'if a woman publicly disavows the honour of her husband's authority and places upon herself the sign of the adulteress, let her accusation stand and let her have her hair cut off or shaven. If she sees it as shameful, then let her bind up her hair (and not loosen it)'.

It can be construed that the hairstyle issue points to the central issue of authority and the need to maintain the authority structures which is the issue emphasised by Paul. The veiling issue lacks biblical support, as has been seen above, and lacks the vital connection of the issue Paul is talking about, which lies congruent to the way the authority issue was viewed in the Mediterranean society and its links to the micro-macrocosm dynamics as well as the collectivist drive inculcated through honour and shame motifs. Witherington (1990:168) affirms this point too by highlighting that women were and are allowed to pray and prophesy in worship, but they had to do it in a manner which gave glory to the creation order which put man as her authority. As also hinted by Kugler (2019), who submits that Paul aimed at demasculinising women who thought because they were 'in Christ', they were to exhibit masculine virtues, yet as is opined by Witherington, their new state of being 'in Christ' did not obliterate the created order of sense distinctions and roles.

For Hurley, many scholars rush to conclude that Paul was battling to explain whether women should pray or prophesy in this chapter, yet it is given that women are to perform those roles: hence Paul does not give a large explanation of the issue because it is not what is being asked. Paul's worry and emphasis is the issue of authority relations: that they be observed seriously in the women's prophesying and praying roles for honour to come to themselves and to the microcosm household, which is linked to the more important macrocosm household headed by the true *paterfamilias*, who is God through Christ, the head of the church and men. Thus, the fact that the women prophets had to report to the *paterfamilias* means that women did not assume key leadership roles in the time of Paul. Also, the leadership issue is not even in view in this *pericope*. The woman's glory which is the man's uncovered head ought not to be covered in worship as it reveals God's glory, a condition that authorises the women to prophecy and pray in conformity with the creation-order hierarchy and sex distinctions known and practised in their society.

According to Hurley (1973:204 - 206), Paul bases his arguments on scripture and nature, pointing to the creation stories, where man is the image and glory of God while the woman is the glory of man. Again, Hurley points out that the issue of authority relations is pursued where proper piety is important as men and women participate in the household spaces in worship. Following the traditions they were given by Paul,

man will glorify his head, God, and woman her head, man, and the ultimate glory will collectively be given to the *paterfamilias*, God. Failure to do this will cause chaos to reign, and they will be dishonoured as the macrocosm *paterfamilias* is also dishonoured. Joubert (1995:225) also agrees with this view that Paul picks the creation accounts to emphasise his hierarchical authority structure, which he expects to see in his household.

Thus, it can be concluded that authority relations are what the passage is about. Paul reproves them with a tone that shows that he is their *paterfamilias* in charge of them as his children on behalf of the macrocosm *paterfamilias*, whom they have to honour by confining themselves to the set traditions of the church, where women are the focus since they represent the realm which shows man's authority just as God's authority was reflected in their relations in the worship spaces. As they pray and prophesy, women are to do it in symbols that recognised the authority patterns which point to God as the one with the final authority of the church as stipulated by church traditions. Hence, verse 16 contains a strong stance to any who would complain that there was no such practice in the church tradition and Paul was not willing to shift from his principles. This he does to command his household community at Corinth to exhibit first-century traditions so as to distinguish themselves as honourable 'children' worthy to gain the public honour that Paul greatly desired (Osieki & Pouya 2010:49).

Hillyer (1970:1065 - 1066) and Williams (1962:960) argue that the view that women with unveiled heads in 1 Corinthians 11:10 cannot prophesy or pray is 'informed by a misinterpretation of the phrase *ἐξουσίαν* ¹ *ἔχειν* (to have authority)'. The phrase was previously read as a symbol of authority through women's veiling, which also implied their inferiority. According to Hillyer (1970:1065 - 1066) and Williams (1962:960), in the New Testament, the phrase means having the right to do something or having ability, might or power to accomplish a task or to those with authority to do what they do. As such, interpreting the phrase as a symbol of authority lacks textual support because it substitutes *ἐξουσίαν* ¹ *ἔχειν* (to have authority) with *κάλυμμα* (veil), a word that is not mentioned in the text. For them, such an interpretation is weak because it only seeks to harmonise the assertion of verses 5 - 6, which ostensibly compel women to veil (wa Gatumu 2020:79,87 - 89), Stuckenbruck (2017: 265), Schreiner (2011:43) & Shipley (2010:7 - 11,224). Be that as it may, wa Gatumu (2020:79 - 105),

Rooijakkers (2018:26-42), Roetze (2015:187), Montague (2011:187), Shipley (2010:7 - 11,224), Martin (2004:76), Soards (1999:221,224), and Furnish (1999:77) argue that the veiling has been used by today's church leaders to obscure women's role in church, a reality which they see as unfortunate.

While veiling in the text's socio-cultural context defines women's status as inferior, the text does not give superiority and authority to men. Rather, it inspires women to wisely exercise their right to veil their heads so as to avert dissuading people from worship and to avoid defying Roman law. There is no exegetical justification that allows the text to be used as a basis to establish hierarchical relationships between men and women, argue African feminist scholars.

Kesich (1977:42) has observed that strange influences were creeping into the Corinthian church from the mystery cults, such as Isis, which tempted them (the Corinthian women) to adopt as normal Isis-cultic practices in Pauline households, thereby attracting stern rebuke from Paul, their *paterfamilias*. With this over-expectation, the Corinthian women thought of going into the worship set-up with unbound hair, which was a deviation from the tradition that Paul, their *paterfamilias*, had handed to them (1 Cor 11:2; 3:10). Kesich submits that the women had begun embracing practices of pagan cults, there were women who exercised leadership roles. Thus, the claim that women exercised leadership roles during Paul's time is misguided, since it was a phenomenon common in pagan cults and not the Christian movement. Women's leadership was a heretical outcome from influences of pagan cultic life, which Paul had to condemn in his household churches, adds Kesich. According to Kesich, women's leadership was a pagan cultic practice, mostly in the Isis and other voluntary associations, and not in the early Christian movement of Pauline Christianity.

However, as has been emphasised, that Paul's background matters in understanding what he means in his writings, so I insist on having periodic references to that aspect. According to Hurley (1973:200), Paul's traditions had taught that women were to wear their hair up by folding it or their braids on the top of their heads or at the back and not covering their heads with shawls/veils. The strong reason for taking this view, according to Hurley, is that it would foster collectivism and group cohesion as it would

not offend Jews because they were not to cover their heads (as demonstrated above through Rebecca and the priests' example), and Greeks because Greek women had no practice of covering their heads.

Hurley opines that the Corinthians might have failed to understand their new state in Christ as taught by such texts as 1 Corinthians 4:8, which say that they will judge angels and reign with Christ, which they interpreted as present yet still future. They could have thought that since they were new in Christ, the old hierarchies and differentiations had been abrogated. Hence, women thought of letting their hair down to proclaim their new status in Christ, thinking that the old restrictions had been done away with. In doing this, they stood in stark contrast with the universal traditions of the church, which Paul had handed over to them. Paul's praising them in verse 2 seems to suggest that there were a few women who might have adhered to the traditions and thus these might have been offended by others. Hence it points out that there were serious schisms in this household. Thus, Hurley hypothesises that there would have existed three parties in this household; those who followed the traditions (the hair-up party), those who had left the traditions (the loosed hair party), and the extremist party (those who had hair-up and still added the shawl or veil – the pro-shawl party). This is the confusion that racked the Corinthian household addressed in 1 Corinthians 11:2 - 16. The question to Paul was 'is it proper that a woman should prophesy or pray (*προσευχόμενος ἢ προφητεύων*)?.

According to Hurley, Paul as a responsible father of these Corinthians had to answer all three parties adequately yet without attacking any group. The goal was rather to win them all to his side in line with his collectivistic world-view. In his response in verse 3, Paul points out the hierarchy which begins at the macrocosm (God) to the microcosm (man and woman), relations where he stamps Christ as the head of every man. He points to man-woman relationships in verse 4, where he says that in prophesying with his hair up like a woman (the tradition they had departed from), a man dishonours his head (Christ). According to Hurley, Paul's response has a double meaning which is his well-calculated move to project the core of his thought. Hurley explains the double meaning as follows:

On one hand the man who dresses his head like a woman dishonours himself as his action would symbolically mean that he is under the authority of another man. On the other hand, he dishonours the one who is His true head and whom he should reflect in his relation with his own wife, for Christ is dishonoured when one who should be under no one's authority save for Himself and God publicly proclaims that a man is over him (Hurley 1973:202).

According to Hurley, Paul proceeds to touch on women in verse 5 (RSV), where a double meaning is put again: 'every woman who prays or prophesies with her loosened dishonours her head, it is the same as if her head was shaven'. First, the husband (the woman's head) is dishonoured at the wife's rejection of his authority. Second, the woman is dishonoured if she loosens her hair. This points out that what is at stake in this passage or what had caused schisms is the hairstyle issue (both the microcosm and macrocosm aspects). Recall that Paul's thought is on the Jewish purity, honour and shame models of Leviticus 13:45.

3.6.3.2 1 Corinthians 14:33 - 36

While the text may be seen as an interpolation by some scholars, Hurley (1973:203,216), Kugler (2019:239), Witherington (1990:172) hold that the text is not glossed and that there is nothing detached in the *pericope* from Pauline teaching from other passages. The researcher of this work supports the view that the text is not an interpolation, because it is in line with what Paul consistently teaches his adherents in all the communities with which he has interacted, as shall be seen in this chapter.

Hurley (1973:217) sees 1 Corinthians 14:33b - 36 as a *pericope* to be discussed in view of what verses 29 - 33a are talking about for a fair and contextual interpretation. For him, verse 29 is on principles which governed the exercise of the prophetic gift of the spirit, which according to Acts 2:17 and Joel 2:26 - 28 was given to women too, principles which when factored into the interpretation of the passages will make its understanding easy. Witherington (1990:172) concurs with Hurley that Paul is discussing 'the issue of prophesy and the judging of prophecies in chapter 14, as well as the larger context being addressed of the abuses in Corinth also in chapter 14'.

Bacchiocchi (1987:54) accedes to this view by submitting that the passage is not forbidding women from speaking, since they have already participated as prophets and in prayer ministry as seen in 1 Corinthians 14:31 'you can all prophesy'. After all, asks Bacchiocchi, how can one lead in prophesying and prayer ministry without having to be talking? However, Bacchiocchi construes that there is no link to suggest that all who prophesied, including men (since everyone was eligible to prophesy), assumed a representative and authoritative leadership role because more is required of a leader than mere prophesying. It certainly would make no sense to have a church with everyone having authoritative leadership role by mere virtue that they could prophesy. Actually, Paul defines prophesy by implying that he wished everyone to prophesy instead of speaking in tongues because for him prophecy edified the church, as is suggested by 1 Corinthians 14:3 - 4), (Witherington 1990:172 and Bacchiocchi 1987:54) and not that he desires all Corinthian congregants to be leaders like him.

The view by Bacchiocchi that not everyone seems to be addressed as prophets and thus given the manner in which they had to exercise their gift of prophecy in church is echoed by Semenye (2016:98), who holds that it is clear that 'all' in verse 31 refers to women and men, who had ability to prophesy and regulate prophecy because the Corinthian church was comprised of both men and women, who had the ability (*δύνασθε*) to prophesy for the benefit of all church members. Thus, women are not singled out here even if the text might suggest that it is them alone who are being addressed.

As regards the issue of silence of women in church Semenye, (2016:98) submits that 'the ruling in 1 Corinthians 14:33 - 35 that women should ask their husbands what they desired to learn at home does not directly say all women must to keep silent in church'. Lioy (2020:112 - 113,118,121 - 122), Ademiluka (2017:76 - 96), and Witherington (1988:102 - 103) have all postulated that this is so because women prophets existed in the New Testament church, in which the two Corinthian texts sought to bring order. Thus, for them, the texts do not bar women from serving the church through leading out in prayer and prophesying ministries. Following the Mediterranean world's honour and shame motif, the aim of 1 Corinthians 11:2 - 16 and 14:33 - 35 was to restrain believers from bringing shame to the church. Both texts were addressing contextual issues and not ordering a shared practice, which was not straightforwardly related to

any other context. As such, the above-mentioned scholars opine that both males and females had equal and limitless access to vocal and executive leadership roles in the church.

Owanikin (1992:216) and Kanyoro (2002:9 - 11) also concurs with the above scholars by submitting that Paul generally 'affirms the equality of all people under God and in Christ as is seen in Gal 3:28'. She thus warns interpreters not to misinterpret 1 Corinthians 14:33 - 36 as prohibiting women from performing public-space roles such as preaching and leading the church. For her, it is unfortunate that the passage has been misinterpreted by today's African church leaders to bar women from ordination and thus ultimately forbid them from assuming key leadership roles, such as pastoring. This view is also shared by Vasanthakumar (1997:45 - 46), who argues that Paul's declaration that all believers (male and female) are endowed with the *charismata* regardless of gender and sex (1 Cor 12, 14, and Rom 12) is a message strong enough to give clues pointing to the fact that a silent believer in church would not have existed, since each one is to exercise the *charismata* he or she was given freely as Christ willed. Thus, for her, 1 Corinthians 14:33 - 36 cannot be understood as advocating for women's silence in church. Rather, in 1 Corinthians 11:5 - 6, Paul allows them to prophesy publicly in church assemblies. Vasanthakumar argues that if 1 Corinthians 14:33 - 36 is seen as calling for women to be silent in church, then Paul contradicts himself in 1 Corinthians 11:2 - 16. For Vasanthakumar, this self-contradiction between the passages has made some scholars think that they are not written by Paul. And if this argument of interpolation is accepted, adds Vasanthakumar, the jettisoning of contradictory passages to Paul's consistent praxis of liberation to women is defended successfully and Paul emerges as a true feminist. Thus, for Vasanthakumar and other African feminist scholars like Oduyoye (1995), Mapuranga (2013), Biri (2020), Kanyoro (2002), and Dube (2001), to mention a few, Paul exhibits a liberation of women motif that supersedes other cultural restrictions, for example in 1 Corinthians 11:2 - 16, which were mere cultural issues of his day which cannot be applied to our day, where he advocates for decorum in the church by insisting that women cover their head while men were to cut their hair in conformity with their culture, not to any theological motif worthy universal application. African feminists such as Kanyoro and others, argue as to why the women are the focus of the issue. For them, these sentiments carry unhealthy socialisation castes which must not be allowed to continue in a context in

which such behaviour is not happening, such as Africa and Zimbabwe in particular. These idealised social constructs, which are awash in both the Hebrew as well as the Christian bible, discriminates against women because women were forced to fit into the ideal womanhood concepts for them to be deemed real women, failure of which they would be demonised as seen in the story of Ruth in the book of Ruth and Mary in Luke 10. According to Nyanyoro, African churches must not continue to perpetuate these cultural practices since modern African women are no longer living in in subjection to the culture in which Ruth and Mary, and all women in the bible stories for that matter, lived. Hence for her, 1 Corinthians 14 does not warrant universal application.

However, Towes (1980:30 - 31) maintains that silencing women was necessary and continues to be necessary in our day and this is the practice which Paul meant to uphold even in African churches today. For example, Towers holds that the silence referred to by Paul referred to the practice where women were not allowed to sit in judgement (arguing with their husbands), since all men and women assumed the praying and prophesying roles, though women were forbidden to judge prophets in verse 26. Witherington highlights that some women had seen themselves as too 'spiritual' and went on to judge the prophecies against the standing traditions (given them in 1 Cor 11:2 - 3). This practice, according to Witherington (1990:193), had been adopted and adapted from the mystery cults which were prevalent in the Roman empire and was distorting the expected piety. According to Hurley, it looks like the women had gone into judgement of the prophets, so Paul sought to remind women not to speak in such a way as to judge men during worship, for it violated the authority structures specified above under 1 Corinthians 11:2-16. It is not that women prophets were likely to have caused noise through their charismatic utterances because already in Chapter 11 the charismatic gift of the spirit had been exercised by women in worship without any violation. However, it would be a violation if the women would sit in judgement over men (Hurley 1973:217).

Richards (1997:223 - 325) also supports this view that the reprove is still necessary in today's churches if it also disturbs what Paul insists that it not disturb. However, for Richards, differing with Hurley and the above mentioned African feminists, who see the reproof being targeted to women only, argues that the keeping-silence command

does not single out women but rather was meant for the rest of the Corinthian assembly because of what it meant to safeguard namely the building-up (edification) of the spiritual person and the spiritual congregation which was built-up (edified) by prophesying (I Cor 14:4), an activity which was not done by women alone but by men too. This is the context to understand the meaning of this command, according to Richards, because the edification of the saints was the issue Paul was worried about, which Richards agrees with Hurley and others on pointing out: that it (the edification) was affected negatively by the disorder through strange behaviours in the church which had been embraced from the gnostic cults. Furthermore, Richards does not rule out the issue of disorderly contact in the church based on the sitting arrangement in the synagogues during this period, when men and women sat on separate sides, a practice likely to have been done in house *ekklesia* too. Under such a scenario, based on speech from all the people from either sides of the gathered assembly, it can certainly be seen that Paul's intervention was in order, and that if such disorder happens in today's church being caused by all members of the church, the silence command still applies, thereby justifying the universal application of this command, for Paul and all the churches need order, as per injunctions seen in 1 Corinthians 14:40, which, however, for the case of the Corinthian assembly, was enhanced by women having covered their hair, adds Richards.

Hurley adds that the notion that women were admonished not to sit in judgement of men, a sign of exercising authority over men, is best understood by an analysis of how worship was done in the synagogues because for him it is very likely that the same pattern was followed in the new church at Corinth. In the synagogues, adds Hurley, women were separated from men. Women would sit in the women's quarters where they would not even see the preacher, who would be a man, let alone be allowed to read the Torah. In that case it will be thus difficult for women to try to walk to reach where their husbands will be seated to ask or to judge the prophesying prophet (male or female). Apart from the confusion it would bring, the practicality of it was a challenge. Concerning unmarried women, Hurley argues that Greco-Roman values gave status to married women who would be matrons of their husbands' households while the unmarried were further restricted by their father's control, which made the unmarried stand unqualified to feature in public roles. He also sees married women

as the ones being referred to by the 'let women not speak in churches' admonition in 1 Corinthians 12.10.

This view is also supported by Witherington, who opines that 1 Corinthians 14.33b - 36 is focusing on neither prayer nor prophesying and the eligibility or lack of it, as women are already allowed to exercise these gifts in worship. However, it was not proper and allowed for them to exercise these gifts in violation of the authority hierarchy dictated by the creation order by daring to critique and interrogate men in worship (since judging the prophecies denotes debating and arguing). Thus, Paul foresaw the unpleasant scenario where the worship environment would be turned into a debate or a question-and-answer affair, a scenario with the potential to get out of hand (Witherington 1990:176).

3.6.3.3 1 Corinthians 15:3 - 10

It is worrisome to African feminists to note how Paul's resurrection narrative excludes key women like Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus, who were the first witnesses of the resurrection and its message. 1 Corinthians 15:3 - 10 rather goes on to list other people: Cephas, the twelve, 500 brothers, James, and all the Apostles who are all witnesses of Jesus' resurrection and are all male. According to Levine (2018:647 - 648), Paul mentions resurrection appearances to numerous disciples but offers no reference to either the women or the empty tomb (1 Cor 15:3-7). Thus, Levine conclude that Paul limits the role of women in his theology hence in 1 Corinthians 15:3 – 7, he does not mention women as having been active.

Kraemer (1992:129-130) too laments that Paul omitted women totally, despite the fact that the Gospel writers had attested to their part as first witnesses of the resurrected Jesus. In 1 Corinthians 15:4 – 8, Mary Magdalene and those women whom she led to the tomb are not mentioned. Rose Kraemer, a Jewish feminist scholar, tries to justify Paul by explaining that since he is the first to have written almost a decade before the Gospels, he might have not known about the episode and the involvement of women, which the Gospel writers later on wrote about.

Again, Kraemer insinuates that Paul as a former Pharisee did not believe in the resurrection, and hence, he might have doubted the narratives and chose not to

mention even the involvement of women. Paul's belief of resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:12 - 57, adds Kraemer, was not congruent with what seems to be spoken of in the Gospel writers' narratives. He believed in a glorious bodily resurrection and not the corruptible one, coupled with the fact that Paul knew not of the traditions of the Gospel writers, who wrote about the resurrection of incorruptible bodies, and also his unbelief in the incorruptible resurrection. Kraemer (1992:130) concludes that Paul might have doubted the account and chose not to record it in his account. The absence of these stories may be due to the fact that the women who witnessed it might have told men who then disbelieved them (due to patriarchal prejudice), and thus the stories got concealed. Kraemer adds that the concealment of women's accounts in Jesus' ministry happened in the context that after his death, the early church had serious conflicts over the role of women. And thus, what had been recorded in Jesus' life and encounters with women was removed from the Christian memory, and thus the only reliable sources which can help reconstruct women's experiences in early Christianity are not literary sources but non-literary ones such as burial artefacts, and inscriptions because they do not carry Rabbinical bias.

However, the fact remains that the internal evidence of 1 Corinthians 15:3 - 10 does not mention women as having had an active role as compared to the men who were mentioned in the narrative, thereby inferring that they might have not exercised the same roles as men in that regard. Also, as has been pointed out from the literature review section and above sections of this chapter, Paul had to conform to the cultural grids of the society of his day, which had no place for women leaders.

3.6.4 Philippians

Donfried (1997:222 - 3) holds that the internal evidence in the letter to the Philippians reveals that in the city of Philippi, Paul's first converts were two Greek women, Euodia and Synctiche who are said to have aided Paul in his ministry in line with what the term *prostatis* was thought to mean (offering hospitality to Paul). Paul appeals to them that they be of one mind and strive for unity (Phil 1:27; 2:5; 3:15). However, these women are said to be in conflict with one another. As a remedy to their schisms, Paul is said to have intervened by entrusting them under the support and guidance of a male companion (Phil 4:2 - 3). I see this point as in tandem with the theme that seems

to be woven throughout the chapter, that women were under male *paterfamilias* as dictated by the cultural fabric of this era.

However, arguing from an African feminist perspective, Belleville (2005:120) argues that there is no indication that these two ladies or any women in this church were to assume leadership roles, since Paul does not seem to hesitate to give limits to how women should work in churches elsewhere in his letters. Thus, Belleville thinks that these two ladies were official leaders of this church. On the same point, Witherington disagrees with Belleville, citing that it is true that women toiled with Paul by offering shelter and hospitality to him in their houses which they were made to control by their ancient Mediterranean culture, and not when that same house assumed a worship set-up of holding a worship service. This is affirmed by the fact that Paul applied some restrictions in houses which held worship services and not in normal household set-ups (Witherington 1990:189).

That the two women are said to be in conflict with each other and were handed over to a male figure to oversee them so that they strive to achieve unity testifies to the constant theme spoken of in this chapter, that women did not assume the same key ecclesiastical leadership roles as men of this era. The two women are presented as potential threats to the unity of the church due to their tensions. The men mentioned in the passage are given the stature of church leaders since they are the ones entrusted with the role to solve the tensions between the two women, as evidenced by the reference to key leaders: Epaphroditus, Timothy and Clement. Thus, the Philippian women are presented in a subordinate role to men's authority to conform to the hierarchy that Paul is very consistent within his teachings, that women are to operate as they are directed by male authority. The *prostatis* role is not to be seen as a new and high rank, since women in Greco-Roman society were in charge of their households as matrons yet subordinate to the *paterfamilias*, their husbands.

3.6.5 Philemon

According to Jourbet in Esler (1995:213) Paul's salvific message which advocated for a new life in a new household of God promised new status and titles as well as privileges to those who were inferior to their masters (if they were slaves) and to the inferior to the *paterfamilias* in the home set up (wives and children), for example,

slaves who were genderless in the Greco-Roman life (Osieki & Pouya 2010:47-48) were promised that they would assume same status with their masters who were now going to be their brothers and sisters. In that new status they would be eligible to receive an inheritance from the *paterfamilias* God yet in their present life they were not eligible. However, this fictive family (Esler 1995:156-158) structure was still future since Paul reminded them (all the subordinated classes) to be loyal to their earthly masters who however were to exercise 'love patriarchy²⁹' on their subjects.

Hence, for Esler, Paul writes this short letter to the wealthy Philemon admonishing him about the slave Onesimus that he factors in the new life's social order by accepting Onesimus as a brother and not a slave. The mention of the phrase 'the church thy house' shows Paul's insistence on portraying his message in kinship household authority models, which continued to legitimise his demands for allegiance from his adherents, a consistent theme that put women under the subordination of men in the household churches.

In Philemon 2, Apphia, a woman mentioned in that list of prominent men like Archippus, a fellow soldier, and Epaphras, Mark, Aristarchus, Demos, and Luke is referred to as 'the sister' ('ἡ ἀδελφή'), a title given to Phoebe too in Romans 16, which is rendered minister, deacon, patron/*προστάτις* (prostasis), a title which Ng (2020:525) postulates was an ordinary title given to women of influence who were caregivers to

²⁹ A scenario in which men believe that their acts of domination are basically good and to demonize women who in word or deed challenge their authority.

Paul and others who transmitted the Gospel in these communities, not necessarily that they assumed key leadership roles. Thus, Apphia cannot be said to have assumed a leadership role in her household (Ng 2020:525). The issue is reminiscenced by Crouch (1972:126 - 29) that even factoring in the manumission³⁰ of slaves practice to inform what Paul meant to communicate to Philemon over Onesimus and its effect on Apphia, still the message does not point to the ecclesiastical and authoritative leadership role by Apphia in her household church with Archippus.

Chow (1997:265) has postulated that the purported 'freedom' of manumitted slaves was in name only, since the patron consistently had to be honoured as payment of the client's (slave) freedom. For Chow, just as a son was under the control of the *paterfamilias*, the freed slave too was to continue under his patron's authority. Furthermore, the laws which existed forced slaves to remain under their patron's control. With the dominant patriarchal ethos of the Greco-Roman era, the new Pauline society group was too small to effect changes in the dominant society - hence some scholars like Okland believe that Paul only encouraged the baptised to be one in Christ and to be sons in the assembly set-up only and be ready to conform to the standards set by the dominant society when outside the worship environment.

³⁰ Manumission of slaves was a Jewish practice of setting slaves free by their slave-masters with the consent of the synagogue which made the slave to gain complete freedom except for the requirement to attend the synagogue.

3.6.6 Romans 16

This section discusses the most disputed-by-scholars *pericope* on the role of women, namely Romans 16, a chapter which Ng (2020:517) insinuates needs special and careful treatment, as it carries terms and titles which are greatly misunderstood today. Ng laments that it is a pity that Romans 16 has been wrongly interpreted to advance equality between men and women in church and trans-gendering of roles against what Paul really intended to communicate to his first hearers. Concurring with Ng, Burke (2003:108) and Esler (1995:220) posit that titles such as ‘co-labourers,’ ‘fellow workers’, to mention but a few, ought to be analysed against the background of what Paul went at length in some of his epistles such as Galatians and 1 & 2 Corinthians to say, where he distinguished himself as superior over his adherents, whom he could not allow to have the same status as him, in line with the Greco-Roman cultural norms and state laws also. Failure to factor in these glaring realities, for Burke and Esler, leads to a serious misunderstanding of Paul’s teaching on women in his ministry.

According to Esler, Paul’s adherents are fully aware of his superiority over them, which he explained to them in images and language symbols steeped in their society’s philosophical world-view, which was taught in philosophical schools by philosophers such as Musonias Rufus and Plutarch, who were contemporaries of Paul (Bellinger 1947:3 - 48). As emphasised in above sections Paul had unshared roles and status with his adherents, who included men and women whom he saw as his inferiors and children. Therefore, I warn my readers to have this view in mind as they read along this greatly misunderstood passage, as well as other Pauline letters which are regarded as enigmatic and tortuous.

3.6.6.2 *Romans 16:2 and the role of Phoebe*

According to Bacchiocchi (1987:51 - 52) the term *diakonos* used to refer to Phoebe in its masculine form was used for both male and female deacons, since the feminine form *diakonissa* was not yet in use. Bacchiocchi holds that the service of female deacons was needed in early Christianity, as they served as care givers, and assistants at baptisms, to mention a few. However, Bacchiocchi argues that these female deacons did not assume leadership roles, such as administering church affairs, like Paul did. As such, Bacchiocchi maintains that the claim that Pheobe might have

assumed a leadership role similar to that of Paul is a case of an argument from silence. For him, Romans 16:2 explicitly says Phoebe offered help (care-giving) to many, including Paul, denoting that she was in a role performed by deacons, namely of care giving, which is a supporting ministry role. For Bacchiocchi the term *diakonos* simply means 'servant' or one who ministers to another, where factoring in the context in which Paul ministered, that of a heavily patriarchalised state, leads to the correct understanding of this term, that it did not give credence to women leadership.

In agreement with Bacchiocchi, Witherington (1990:183) posits that the Greek word for *prostatis* does not designate an official office but rather a patron, helper or presiding officer. In line with this is Hurley (1973:16) who opines that the function of Phoebe was like those deacons mentioned in 1 Timothy 3:11, who were never authoritative leaders. Furthermore, Witherington holds that mostly high-profile, rich and educated women held a higher status in civil life, and when they joined the missionary movement, it was natural for them to have the same high status since they had means, such as houses in which Paul would seek help for holding worship meetings. Since they were leaders of these houses already, the temptation is to see them as also assuming that same role she naturally had, as per culture in her house now offering a worship service was inevitable. However, Hurley submits that it would not follow that if a woman offered her house for worship, that would see her being the leader of the church in that very house.

The claim that Phoebe was sent with the letter to the Romans in this regard is interpreted to mean that Paul might have made her receive a reciprocal treatment with other women in Rome who were to receive her and offer the hospitality she had been offering to him and other people in the work they all were doing in the region, since they were fellow Jews with Paul who were simply separated by edicts which led to their expulsion from Rome (Ng 2020:12). Thus Ng, like Bacchiocchi and others above, may be correct in maintaining that Phoebe did not have ecclesiastical authority similar to Paul's, since Romans 16:2 - 4 says she was a helper to many and Paul suggests that she offer basic assistance as matron in her house since it looks like she was a woman of means. To this, Ng (2020:13) maintains that 'it is best to view Phoebe as having provided hospitality to Paul and many others as a deacon of the church of Cenchreae (where she ministered to needy people) and not in any other authoritative leadership role, since she had no such role'.

Another strong argument against the leadership possibility of Phoebe is what (Ng 2020:5) holds that she was a *prostatis* to individuals and not even a church, a situation which might have suggested an official office and role. This view is buttressed by Levine (2018:225), who insists that Phoebe's role was merely that of social capital meant to open doors for ministry advancement. According to her, this view is more likely since patronage was a well-known phenomenon in the pre-AD 70 era of the Christian movement.

3.6.6.4 *Romans 16:3 - 4 and the role of Priscilla and Aquila*

According to Bacchiocchi (1987:56) Priscilla and Aquila were Paul's Jewish fellow countrymen, whom he said had been imprisoned as they toiled for the Gospel together with him. However, on whether Priscilla assumed the teaching and leadership role in the public sphere as dictated by the nature of the role, especially as is mentioned that she might have taught Apollos, Ng (2020:518) argues that it is unlikely that such a seasoned scholar like Apollos could receive teaching from her while it was the Rabbis and male philosophers, like Rufus and Plutarch who were entrusted with the teaching role. Also, women in their society were denied the privilege of learning the Torah. In this regard, Ng holds that such a claim may be regarded as a case of arguing from silence.

Witherington (1990:219) also insists that Priscilla did not teach official church doctrine or tradition to Apollos; rather, she might have exhibited in her dealings with Apollos a pious conduct in her home (the demarcated space for women in this society in question) and not an intellectual activity of teaching, since Apollos was a seasoned and polished teacher himself. Furthermore, the text says that the teaching of Apollos was influenced by both Priscilla and her husband Aquilla, denoting a demonstration of pious Christian conduct and decorum instead and not a scholarly presentation.

Furthermore, from the evidence seen in philosophical schools (see literature review section on Bellinger), women were not allowed to teach men. It may be the case that Priscilla might have exhibited some virtues which were taught by the philosophers (Rufus and Plutarch) of their era, who were Paul's contemporaries, in teaching their society, which led Apollos to emulate and acknowledge them. Thus, Ng believes that

Priscilla might have imparted some Christian virtues to Apollos through her conduct in the household and society.

Bellinger (1947:3 - 48) holds that Plutarch and Rufus' philosophical schools' curricula was meant to condition women to develop virtues which would make them manage their demarcated space (the home space) well and in honourable ways as was prescribed by the ancient Mediterranean and Greco-Roman societal norms of this era. The virtues taught were prudence, to be just, to have self-control, and to have courage in the home set-up. These would make them honourable women.

These virtues were to be demonstrated in the home space, particularly in hospitality to guests. This is believed by Ng to be what Priscilla exhibited to Apollos, and thus demonstrates the beauty of a Christian woman's conduct as a practical lesson. This view is congruent with the Ancient Mediterranean cultural norms, that women were taught how to practically apply the virtues they were taught in philosophical schools so that they would be best the managers of their households. Thus, Ng might be correct in noting that Priscilla's astuteness in the home while staying or interrelating with Apollos made him learn that she was a virtuous woman indeed. It may also be that Paul had to reciprocate their benevolence to him by recognising these influential Christians like her and Phoebe.

The above submissions on the history of ancient Greco-Roman values convinces the researcher of this work to see Priscilla's purported claim of having taught Apollos and assumed an ecclesiastical leadership role in Paul's ministry as very unlikely. The position that she merely supported Paul's ministry materially as a well-to-do business person, just like what other wealthy women in Paul's era like Phoebe did, is the safe position to take since it is congruent with the Ancient Mediterranean norms in which Paul ministered.

3.6.6.3 *Romans 16:7 and the role played by Junia/s*

The text reads; *'Greet Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners; they are men of note among the apostles, and they were in Christ before me'*.

Scholarly debates on this text range from whether Junia(s) was a female or a male and whether the person was 'popular among the apostles' (inclusive approach) or 'was

well-known to the apostles' (exclusive approach), and whether the person assumed an apostolic role.

According to Ng (2020:519), textual-critical studies point out that the challenge of early Greek manuscripts is that they did not accent Greek nouns and verbs to determine their declension and conjugation forms, an affair which makes it difficult to infer the term Junia/s' gender based on the grammatical or lexical method. Bacchiocchi (1987:55) seem to be correct in concluding that the grammatical method cannot lead us to distinguish the gender of the word or the person.

On the debates on inclusive or exclusive views, Bacchiocchi, like Ng, supports the exclusive view (well-known to the apostles). Burer & Wallace (2001:76 - 91) expound on the extra-biblical linguistic parallels of the *pericope* of Junia and conclude that the exclusive view is correct. Bacchiocchi and Ng, hold that Junia was well-known to the apostles but not an apostle herself, since nowhere does she reflect what an apostle was in her recorded activities, although they acknowledge that indeed Junia was a female person.

However, Thorley (1996:27 - 29) supports the inclusive approach, which holds that Junia was a woman and also well-known among the apostles. African feminist scholars like Kanyoro, Oduyoye and Dube also see Junia as well-known among the apostles, an inclusive view which asserts the apostolic role of Junia alongside other male apostles such as Paul.

Commenting on Romans 16:7, Ng (2020:517) rejects the view that the text in question confirms the equality of women in ministry opportunities. For her, it is inadvisable to appeal to Romans 16:7 as a historical precedent to advance for equal ministry opportunities for men and women, or to charge various Christian leaders and institutions for the alleged 'sex-change' of the female Junia to a male named Junias to androcentric bias.

Ng argues that if such an illustrious record was held by Junia, then she would have featured in that role in other phases of the Christian movement, especially on the vacancy that was created among the Twelve by the demise of Judas. Rather, the replacement of Judas was a male person. Yet if Junia or other female apostles were

there, they would have been an easier option than casting of lots used to choose Judas' replacement in Acts 1:21 - 26. One therefore wonders why it was not considered to elevate this already-serving apostle (Junia) to join the Twelve as a replacement for Judas.

Picking up the argument, Levine (2002:2 - 10) argues that the grammatical construction of the name Junia is referenced to as a derivative of the Latin equivalent of 'Joanna'. Thus, if this was the case that Junia was a noteworthy apostle and that it was a feminine name then it was not supposed to have been difficult for Luke to include such a name to be a person to replace Judas since the record will have affirmed that there was a woman already serving as an apostle, yet it was not so. Luke records of a totally new person, a man who replaced Judas instead.

In this context, the possibility of women having exercised authoritative leadership roles during the pre-AD 70 Christianity epoch captured by Pauline traditions under study in this research becomes highly questionable. This view has led the researcher of this work to doubt the presence of female leaders in the ministry of Paul.

3.7 Chapter findings and methodological analysis

This section seeks to take the insights from this chapter's engagements and apply them to the two methodologies to establish answers to such questions as this: how would a typical African feminist or a typical social-scientific reader understand Pauline teaching on women upon studying the above Pauline pericopae? I will start with African feminism then followed with the social-scientific application.

Wa Gatumu (2020:79,87 - 89), Ademiluka (2017:76 - 96), Owanikin (1992:216), Kanyoro (2002), Mapuranga (2013) and Biri (2020) posit that it is unfortunate that Pauline passages on women roles have been misinterpreted by today African's church leaders to bar women from ordination and thus ultimately forbid them from assuming key leadership roles such as pastoring, yet a closer look at them evinces that Paul generally 'affirms the equality of all people under God and in Christ, as is seen in his equality mantra of Galatians 3:28. As a typical example, these African feminist scholars thus warn modern interpreters not to misinterpret 1 Corinthians 14:33 - 36

and other such passages as prohibiting women from performing public space roles, such as preaching and leading the church.

The other basis they table was presented above, that the letters of Paul are not meant for universal application because the culture which birthed them is far removed from that of modern African women, and Zimbabwean culture in particular, and as such the SDAZ's ban on the ordination of women is unfortunate. Furthermore, inspired by Kanyoro's claim (see literature review section and Chapter 1), that African feminist theory is meant to challenge and repudiate cultural practises which oppress women such as genital mutilation and child marriages, among other denigratory and dehumanising practices African women are forced to endure all in the quest to fulfil the 'ideal woman' social construct, and these must be rejected, for they are out of touch with the modern existential realities of the modern African woman.

Furthermore, Vasanthakumar (1997:45 - 46) questions the purported Pauline authority during the early church era by arguing that it ought to be known that Paul is not the only authoritative and sole leader in the Church during this period. According to her, this thought should govern the way Pauline literature is to be read and adhered to. After all, Romans 16 reveals that it is a letter written to a congregation that Paul had not visited. Thus, his authority over them (Roman Christians) as their father (*paterfamilias*) is baseless beyond description. For Kittredge, the obvious questions as to who might have started this church, who its leaders were and how authority structures would have operated in this church if Paul's influence as 'the sole leader was never felt there deserve answers.

Furthermore, Kittredge lampoons at Paul's purported control over persons listed in Romans due to the glaring interdependence they had outside him. The passage mentions Phoebe and numerous other persons described as Paul's co-workers Prisca and Aquila who endangered their lives on his behalf, and also Epaenetus and Mary, Andronicus and Junia, who are said to be 'prominent among the apostles. The most surprising observation which stands as their (African feminists) stronger point is that these people are said to have already been in Christ before Paul himself (Rom 16:7). Thus, if they were Christians before him, and if they were already exercising

independent administration of the Gospel before him, what then is the basis and claim for his dominance and sole leadership authority, (asks Kittredge 2012:121)?

On 1 Corinthians 14:1 - 33, the feminist analysis reconstructs the story by arguing against the veneration of some gifts over others, for the spirit gave them to all members generously and without discrimination based on gender since women are also given the gifts. It is thus important to note that members of the early church communities participated in various activities of the *ekklesia* pieties on the basis of them having been commissioned and empowered by the spirit through gifts necessary for them to do ministry in various ways such as healing, teaching, prophesying, tongues, to mention a few. After all, for Kanyoro (1997:158) the spirit gives these gifts to all members of the *ekklesia* regardless of sex and gender as he wills, as is attested to by 1 Corinthians 12:11. Thus, in doing these varied tasks, it also speaks of the presence of multiple sources within early Christian communities, where it was not Paul alone who was the driving force of missions. Kittredge insists that authority was decentralised in early Christian communities, as attested by the pre-Pauline formulae of ritual, prayer and song by communities where no single authorship can be traced. Thus, the existence of these independent-from-Paul communities affirms that he (Paul) was not the only founder and source of authority for early Christianity as some of his co-workers converted to Christianity, before him. According to Kittredge Kittredge 2003:219, the songs and other liturgies the early Christian communities recited and proclaimed were not authored or owned by a single person but rather were collectively owned by the 'whole body of Christ'. Kittredge gives 1 Corinthians 15:3 - 5 (a primitive outline of the gospel), Philippians 2:6 - 11 (the song of Christ), and Galatians 3:28 (a primitive fragment of prayer used at baptism) as typical examples of the liturgies that are not Pauline in origin and could not have been under his authority and administration. According to Kittredge (2003:218 - 233), these independent-of-Paul liturgies 'provide access to women's authorship and speak of their active participation as agents in the formation of early Christian creeds and ground of belief in the ritual life of the early assemblies'.

According to Kittredge (2003:125), the reconstruction of early Christian history demands a feminist reading of Paul to bring other evidence against his seeming authoritativeness. Hence Kittredge maintains that the passivity of women as objects

of instruction in assemblies does not reflect the true reality since 'women shared in the communal authorship of various liturgies'. The feminist reconstructions of Romans 16, 1 Corinthians 11. and 1 Corinthians 14, adds Kittredge, highlight the corporate missionary movement rather than Paul's churches. Through the bestowal of gifts by the spirit these communities were empowered to do deeds of power through various gifts to men and women and through baptism, the spirit-transformed Jew-Greek, slave-master, and male-female relationships, as is advocated by Galatians 3:28.

It is evinced throughout his letters that Paul had active partnerships with his co-workers, who comprised both men and women. For Kittredge (2003:126), the shaping of the gospel was aided by the active participation of women, who regardless of their social status, free, slave, Jewish, or gentile 'all received the gospel and interpreted it for themselves and their communities'. 'These women - (Junia the apostle, Phoebe the deacon, Prisca, head of a house assembly, and others) provide models for contemporary Christian women who hear and tell this history', adds Kittredge. Hence, African feminists maintain that by adapting feminist practices and putting women at the centre of the analysis and reading against the grain of the androcentric texts of the Greco-Roman world, the task of historical reconstruction creates a new 'story' for modern Christian women (Kittredge in Marchal 2012:125). It can be construed that this new 'story' is yearned for by African feminists who wish to change the religious landscape of many African churches, including the SDAZ, by including women in the same ecclesiastical authoritative leadership roles as African men, just as Paul assumed the same with his female co-workers during his ministry.

On the other hand, social-scientific scholars have argued against these claims by African feminists, as discussed above, although there are potential areas where their views merge. This section seeks to inquire into the assumption which a typical social-scientific reader may carry in his/her mind when reading the above-studied Pauline texts.

Ng (2002:34) sees as dubious the African feminists' claims that women who are reported to be serving in the household tables (in their own homes) such as Martha, are to be seen as doing an official church deacon service, a service which was common in the early church as reported in Acts 6. For her, the home was the domain

of women in the Greco-Roman era and thus spiritualising every act of serving at the tables by a woman in her own home (in a woman's private home space as did Martha) is really forcing the text to say what it did not say for the audiences it was written for. Ng further argues that it is also dubious to refer to the 'table' as meaning the Eucharist because the term *diakonia* is often used to refer to charitable care for the needy, and practical administration of church assets as is seen in Acts 6, for example. Thus, the proper view is not to see the widows, who were meant to be assisted by the 'tables' job, as the agents to convey the very aid they were meant to receive instead of seeing them as mere recipients. How can the widows of Acts 6 be said to have assumed the deaconry role while they are the ones who were to receive the aid after men (not women), filled by the spirit had been elected? asks Ng. Marshall (1980:126) sides with Ng by noting that Acts 6 describes the situation of Greek widows who had come from the Dispersion to end their days in Jerusalem. These widows were in great need of food and were mere recipients who did not serve as deacons and thus claiming that the serving at the tables done by Martha resembles a practise which was common in early Christianity lacks biblical proof.

As regards seeing women who were heads of households to have been obliged to assume leadership roles in churches on the pretext of them having headed the same houses in a common household set-up, this is a baseless argument, because the Greco-Roman patriarchal ethos denied public role to women, argues Chow (1992:91 - 92). Furthermore, on Chloe's debate on the grammatical constitution of the phrase 'people of Chloe' as meaning that she had disciples whom she led as did Paul on Apollos is also a baseless argument, since lexical analysis is not enough to give the social aspects around the text, adds Chow. Concurring with Chow, Fatuma (1995:50ff) proposes that instead of claiming that Chloe had disciples, it is better to see those people as slaves and freed-people of her household who informally brought to Paul's attention the divisions in the church, a picture not suggested by the Corinthian letter to Paul. Furthermore, it is not clear whether Chloe was a Christian herself or if her people were Christians, so it is not necessarily the case that she can be regarded as having assumed leadership in the Christian church or the cults which offered ready leadership roles for women. Clarke (1993:126) concurs with the point that it was not always given that the women mentioned assumed the leadership roles ahead of men. Clarke (1993:127) argues that 'while Chloe's name only appears in connection with

reports from her people (with her Christian status and her relationship unspecified in 1 Corinthians 1:11), Paul commends Stephanus and other men (1 Cor 16:15 - 18) for their service to the saints'. Ng (2002:155) concludes that those who table the argument that women assumed key ecclesiastical leadership roles during early Christianity 'have not done full justice to the biblical text in their attempt to reconstruct women as powerful leaders independent of men during early Christianity'.

On Romans 16 and Philippians 4:2 - 3, Ng argues that taking the term 'sister' to designate a woman missionary and a co-worker is debatable because the term may simply refer to a biological member of a family. In reference to Phoebe and Apphia (Rom 16:1 - 2 and Phlm 2), the term 'our sister', refers to a female member of the Christian family while the term 'his sister', mentioned in conjunction with Nereus (Rom 16:15), probably refers to his biological sister and not his wife as his missionary partner. Meeks (1983:234) and Levine (1994:28) do not see the phrases, brother (*αδελφος*) and sister (*αδελφη*) in 1 Corinthians 9:5 as suggesting anything other than a female Christian. They see the phrase 'our sister' also as not meaning anything other than a 'fellow Christian', certainly not a leader of the *ekklesia*.

More so, Martin (1994:108) denies that women mentioned in Romans 16 for example, (Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Persis, and Prisca) are to be regarded as women missionaries on the basis of them having been said to have laboured (*κοπιαω/κοπιαν οι κοπιωντες*) with Paul. Martin sees this view as unconvincing due to its imposition of terminologies foreign to Paul. Martin (1994:108) holds that the verb for labour in connection with a broad range of activities and the corresponding noun (*κοπος*) is used with reference to the labour of the Corinthians (1 Cor 15:58; 1 Thess 1:3) in general, not just a few women. Similarly, Euodia, and Syntyche in Philippians 4:2 - 3 should not be seen as official missionaries on merely the rendering of the word *συνεργος* in connection to them, since Paul may be referring to all the Christians in 2 Corinthians 1:24, and 2:1 as his co-workers, and it is thus possible for a co-worker to engage in activities other than missionary preaching (Martin 1994:106). Ng (2001:156) concludes that Greco-Roman women could not have participated on the same role and level as men due to the patriarchal ethos which restricted them in all aspects of life (economic, social, legal, and religious aspects).

Social-scientific scholars, such as Neufeld & DeMaris (2010), Ng (2002; 2020) and Hurley (1973), therefore argue that Paul was not a misogynist but rather he simply presented his teachings in symbols and thought systems of his era, which would make his audiences relate, instead of presenting a new alien teaching (equality of men and women for example), for that would not be accepted even by the women themselves during this era. Hurley holds that the equality stance is a 19th century phenomenon (which came through the Enlightenment) which was not known in the time of Paul. Hence, Hurley warns that Paul's passages must be studied in their proper context rather than with the application of our 21st-century world-view to them. For example, Cartlidge (1975:220 - 234) postulates that the practical reason why Paul did not attempt to implement the insight implied by the 'in Christ' phrase to suggest equality of women and proclaim a new teaching which opposed dominant and fundamental structures of the Hellenistic society such as stating that slavery and male domination were abolished 'in Christ', is that it would have brought about nothing less than a social revolution.

Clark & Richardson (1977:32 - 34, 279) seem to be correct in arguing against the view of feminists such as Scroggs' (1972:283) who claim that Paul ushered in an egalitarian status for women during the Greco-Roman era. Clark and Richardson, as do Hurley and Ng, observe that there was no way Paul could have opposed the dominant patriarchal ethos of this period by putting women in equal standing with men. Clark & Richardson (1977:32 - 34, 279) express this reality by these words: 'whatever theoretical ideas Paul may have had about women's equality, he did nothing, as far as we know, to change the social structures which have contributed to their subordination'. This thought conflicts with the African feminists' claim that Paul ushered in an egalitarian outlook of ministry where women occupied the same roles as men, as the social-scientific paradigms of Greco-Roman culture did not allow such. For them, modern scholars ought to deliberately strive to have a contextual interpretation of what Paul meant rather than try to interpret Paul using their own world-views and philosophical grids, as this leads to a misunderstanding of what Paul intended to communicate to his original audiences.

According to Burke (2003:108), this superiority over all his adherents is proof that the Christianity in Pauline churches could never have assumed the egalitarian posture but

could only 'degenerate into patriarchal structures which got to be the case after his death when his redactors tried to interpret his theology', a view also held by Ng above.

With the context and understanding highlighted above, the research supports Burke (2003:112) and Ng's (2020:519) observation that Paul is wrongly blamed for misogyny and removing women from leadership roles in early Christianity when it was his societal norms which dictated the roles between men and women. The ancient Mediterranean societal ordering to a great extent influenced the NT writers to describe women and their roles in the way they did as they battled with the need to package their messages in language, idioms and symbols which were known and accepted by their audiences.

3.8 Conclusion

The evidence submitted in this chapter evinced that although Paul referred to both women and men as his colleagues and co-workers in the ministry, he did not regard them as equal with him or as having the same status and role as him, or to have assumed the ecclesiastical authority which he had. Thus, the terms 'fellow-workers' and 'co-labourers' seem to have been used loosely by Paul. The use of ancient Mediterranean familial terms, which were adopted by the Roman imperial system to be the norm for the entire Roman empire, did not put a father on the same status and role as other members of the household. Hence, he describes his adherents as 'his children', whom he begot through the Gospel (1 Cor 3:10), which legitimises his demand for allegiance from them. This thus speaks volumes against the notion that Paul elevated those he worked with to assume the same status as him. The strong tone of language and admonitions to his adherents shows his elevated status over them. Furthermore, he goes to great lengths to show them their inferiority to him by claiming his paterfamilias title and explaining his unique call, which made him superior to everyone. His readiness to discipline (with the rod) those women who were leading in family household worship, who might have mistakenly thought that they were to lead household churches by virtue of their homes having been made shelters to house the church, is clearly opposed by Paul, who refuses to accept their authority. To a greater extent, Paul's urge to correct others shows that he had no one he deemed his equal in ministry.

This view has been rejected by African feminists, who question his authority during early Christianity based on the fact that the women had been administering the gospel before him, since he was converted much later than they were. The evidence seems to show that the letter to the Romans was written to people who did not know, and as such, he had no basis for imposing his control over them.

It was demonstrated that the honour and shame model ordered behaviour and made women subordinate to men in Pauline Christianity. In the case of women's leadership, the chapter evinced that where authoritative leadership was needed, Paul chose men, for example Timothy. A few influential women mentioned as co-labourers and deacons performed that role as mere supporters of Paul's ministry as matrons, just as they were matrons to many other people in their private households. The purpose was for the honour of the macro-cosmic household of God, against which they were not to attract shame. It was a collectivistic mindset which made each individual conform to the general peace of the Corinthian household to whom Paul was the *paterfamilias*. Thus, if properly interpreted in its context, the Pauline Christianity being fashioned in the ancient Greco-Roman kinship model and creation headship principle denied women the space to lead alongside men, although they stood at the same level in that they all had equal dominion over creation. However, as Ng (2020:525) and Kugler (2019:239) posit, this must not make scholars label Paul a misogynist, since he was simply contextualising his message in ways which were accepted by his society, while African feminists hold that the 'ideal woman' social constructs which confined women to the home sphere no longer hold for the modern African women, and they must therefore be rejected in African churches, the SDAZ included, so that women are allowed to access all previously dominated roles and privileges of the church, such as the ordination rite. These insights will be engaged for the conclusion and recommendation section of this work in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER 4

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter investigates how the writers of the three Synoptic Gospels (Mark, Matthew and Luke), describe women's participation in Jesus' movement as reflected in their narratives. Social-scientific and African feminist readings of the selected *pericopae* from these gospels which describe women's participation in the ministry of Jesus are applied to selected texts, which mention the roles of women in comparison with their male counterparts, especially the Twelve. The findings are used as case study material to evaluate the SDAZ's context to determine the basis of her ban on ordination of women and thus establish whether she is continuing or has discontinued with the practice presented in the Synoptic Gospels, and the reasons for her doing so. Realising that the study of women in the early Christianity of the first-century C.E. Greco-Roman world is a colossal task that requires an entire book to be written on the issue, space constraints and the study scope of this chapter can only allow for brief backgrounds and treatments of the subject matter. Again, as was declared in chapter 3 point 3.1, readers of this chapter must not expect any other exegetical approach (such as grammatical and lexical analysis) engagements besides the one presented as being in use in this research. Whenever Greek word-plays are seen in this chapter, it is for emphasis of certain aspects only, and not an indication of attempting an extensive grammatical exegesis of texts.

4.2 The Synoptic Gospels in their world

According to Edwards (1989:13), Jesus ministered in a Jewish, Hellenised, as well as Romanised era. Thus, Palestine during the era of Jesus had adopted Greek as well as Roman values and thought systems. It is also to be noted, that Christianity had not yet weaned itself from Judaism, and thus people would associate themselves as members of Israel while also seeing themselves as members of the Jesus renewal movement. Hence, the epistemological frameworks which codified ancient Israelite/Jewish life were adhered to by people of this era as they tried to make sense of their changing religio-cultural environments in the face of the nascent Christian movement.

This chapter rides on the same convictions laid in Chapters 1 and 2, which relies on the significance of considering socio-cultural realities of the Ancient Mediterranean society so as to get a better understanding of the in early Christianity's piety as advocated for by scholars such as Osieki (2011:1), Theissen (1982:9), Elliot (1993:24 - 35), Neufeld & DeMaris (2010:xii - xiii), Kanyoro (2002), West (1996:117) to mention but a few. This thought is in line with my theoretical framework which seeks to interrogate elements in culture, which silently influence and govern human behaviour in any society, such as epistemology, philosophy and world-views and determine the extent to which this claim is true to the contexts under study in this chapter, namely the Synoptic Gospels. As such, the Ancient Mediterranean cultural ethos, epistemologies, philosophical frameworks, and world-views are consulted in this chapter, just as was done in Chapter 3, to assess how they informed the way the Jesus movement went about their daily dealings and the spaces and roles it allotted to women in comparison to men. A brief discussion of women in Palestinian, Hellenistic, and Greco-Roman Judaism/Christianity is necessary so as to trace the trajectories which unfolded during the early Christian movements and the role women played there-in. However, African feminism and social-scientific lenses will be engaged to contextualise the message of the three gospels to the SDAZ's context in line with the theoretical underpinnings of this work.

4.2.1 Women in Palestinian Judaism

According to Vasanthakumar (1997:45 - 46), women in Judaism were considered inferior to men, and their role was limited to the home spheres. They were not allowed to read the Torah. In the synagogues, they were not allowed to sit where men sat, but they were confined to women's quarters, which barred them from accessing general leadership roles.

Swidler (1976:72 - 82), opines that the Jesus movement sprang up from Jewish roots, where Jesus' early followers were Jewish men and women. The socio-economic and religio-political landscape of Palestinian society during the early Jesus movement had strong Jewish militancy in support of an envisioned era where God would come to overthrow the Romans. Isenberge (1974:26 - 46) has postulated that the first century CE's common ethos for Israel, which was the driving force for all seven Jewish sects (Sadducees, Essenes, Zealots, Pharisees, apocalyptic prophets, apocalyptic scribes

and wisdom teachers), in the Greco-Roman Palestine was 'kingdom of priests and holy nation'. An active participation in these sects/groups categorised women alone in strict holiness codes, for example, the Sadducees and the priestly aristocracy defined the role of women according to the written law of Moses, the Torah, which had no place for women in leadership ranks, because they had purity codes which discriminated against women.

The militant priestly groups aimed to overthrow the Romans, thus women stood excluded again. Perrin (1967:57ff) adds that their religious rites and liturgies excluded pagans, as they viewed their land as holy, 'a kingdom of priests', in which women and other relegated groups such as lepers would not officiate. The Romans in this case stood as their greatest enemies, whom they wished extinguished soon by their God. Thus, according to Perrin, Jesus and his movement were also inspired by these convictions. Hence, they anticipated this Kingdom of God/heaven to come soon, as seen in the Lord's prayer captures by all the gospel writers. Sandmel (1969:42) captured this great anticipation that gripped the Greco-Roman Palestinians during the Jesus movement by capturing that 'the burning question for every Jew - 'What must I do to enter the kingdom of God/heaven?' was being answered differently by the seven sects and also by the Jesus movement, a nascent sect that had emerged in this society.

Sandmel adds that in answering the question 'what must I do to enter the kingdom of God/heaven?', the priestly establishment and their aristocracy sought to maintain the holiness motif of Israel, which they did in collaboration with the Roman authorities for the enforcement of the collection of tithes. Those who failed to bring tithes were regarded as unclean - a shameful and terrible label to be associated with at this time in line with their honour-shame, client-patron, kinship and collectivistic models, which constantly guided behaviour of people. The consistency in tithe payment was set as a condition for people to enter the kingdom. Van Eck's (2002:5) observation seems to be correct, that the priests swindled poor peasants of their resources, while the Roman authorities also fleeced them through poll tax collection by the marauding tax collectors. Van Eck holds that this hostile environment pushed the secluded classes of people, such as women, children, the poor, slaves, the sick, and prostitutes to even poorer states, where poor land owners such as widows would have their land

confiscated by the rapacious urban elites who bombarded the villages for trade. This set-up led many poor groups into debt, slavery and poverty. It can be seen that it was a hostile environment for women and children, which again closed their equal participation opportunities.

It is said that the Essenes chose the strict interpretation of the Torah and adhered to ritualistic purification rites as their way of being prepared to enter the kingdom of God/heaven, where some of the Qumran community lived a desert life which they saw as the holy way of living, away from adulterations of their society and their Temple, which they saw as defiled and corrupt through the hostile tithe collection drive by the priestly elites.

The Pharisees, also on strict ritualistic life emphasis, saw adherence to the Law, paying of their Levitical and priestly tithes, and strict adherence to Sabbath keeping as sure ways of being counted in the kingdom. This group did not accommodate women in their ranks.

However, the apocalyptic prophets and wisdom teachers were an exception to the above sects. According to Reese (1970:57) and Kloppenborg (1982:57 - 84), women in wisdom literature are allowed a leadership status, as they are often described as being at the table and feeding from Divine Wisdom, which is seen by African feminists as clues that these women might have been involved daily in the study of the Torah and in the communal worship of the community. However, it may be very unlikely that they remained untouched by the patriarchal ethos so strong during this era.

The Sadducees were another significant Jewish group. These, according to recollections of Greco-Roman religiosity, were, according to Sandmel (1969:42), 'the most influential among the upper classes, the landholders, and merchants'. They rejected all forms of revelatory authority, which they saw as a deception of the original Torah. Hence, they insisted on strict adherence to the written Torah as the only authority. They saw this as the only sure way of being counted in the kingdom. With this analysis, the question that lingers is 'what was the role and status of women in such a scenario?'

In attempting to answer the question, Schurer (1971:91 - 93) has submitted that 'women's actual social-religious status must be determined by the degree of their economic autonomy and social roles rather than by ideological or prescriptive statements'. With such a background as the one highlighted above, Schurer concludes that the pre-AD70 era was an extremely patriarchal society which offered no room at all for women in their religious-piety leadership ranks.

4.2.2 First-century Hellenistic Judaism and the role of women

This section seeks to establish whether Hellenistic Judaism offered women leadership roles after seeing that such roles were not offered in Palestinian Judaism.

It is believed that the Hellenists in Jerusalem by the time of Jesus were Greco-Palestinians who had left the Diaspora (either as families or as individuals) and settled in Jerusalem. According to Kraemer (1986:183 - 200), women in this era played a role in the missionary efforts, where they attracted gentile women to their synagogues. Prominent women are mentioned in connection with synagogue life but in non-itinerant roles. Also, adds Kraemer (1986:94 - 96), Jewish women in the Hellenistic Jewish period had legal rights to own property and to administer it. For Kraemer, diaspora Christianity accommodated women, especially those who were wealthy and had an honourable social standing. They were allowed to contribute to the missionary movement, since Jewish-Hellenistic custom permitted women to own and administer their own property and even build synagogues with their own resources. However, the aspect of women having assumed titles such as *archisynagogos*, *archigissa*, *presbytera*, and *mater synagogoges* in many parts of the Greco-Roman world is beyond the scope of this work, since it is a second century phenomena.

Vasanthakumar (1997:45 - 46) concurs that women in the Hellenistic period had general freedom compared to women in Judaism. They were allowed to be involved in public life, though they were to be accompanied by their husbands and other *paterfamilias* of their home when they went to public spaces. This guiding principle dominated every aspect of a woman's life and is the benchmark on which to determine the extent to which each epoch might have deemed to offer women the same status and role as men. Otherwise, even influential women were said to have had derived

statuses, which were honorific based on the influence of their paterfamilies or dyadic origins, a feature discussed in Chapter 2.

Brooten (1981:59), concurring with Kraemer on the purported ameliorated status of women in the Hellenistic Judaism era, holds that women in Asia minor had freedom to own houses, build synagogues (those who were rich), to run and officiate the synagogue service and preach as they assumed the mater *synagogae*, *presbyteres*, and *archisynagogos* offices. However, Brooten differs with Kraemer on the issue of the above titles for women, as Kraemer insists that women of means during this time assumed honorary titles from their husbands (honorific titles) and not that they actually performed the said roles.

4.2.3 Women in the Greco-Roman environment

Cantarella (1987:165) holds that the fact that women, like slaves, had no voting rights, could not witness in courts, and could not stand as administrators in the Greco-Roman era means that they did not have the same status as men in the public roles of the Greco-Roman world. Although some argue that there is inscriptional evidence which attests that women in the Greco-Roman period held public offices as public priestesses and other public office roles such as magistrates independently of their husbands, the reality is that they did that as honorary roles (since they had to come from well-to-do families) as attested by the fact that they never chaired a board of meetings but rather merely gave provisions, for example oil for the athletes. Also, there is no reference to them as having been *grammateus*. Clark (1989:29) sees these offices as honorific recognitions of social prominence and inherited wealth of women donors in a system of *euergetism*, where public offices were offered to those who paid for them in beneficent donations.

Furthermore, the fact these women in honorific titles were referred to by feminine virtues like 'mother of the community' testifies to the quest to preserve the patriarchal ethos, which reminded women (regardless of their elevated economic status) of their societally scribed roles and statuses. Ng (2002:107) therefore concludes that in the face of these evidences, it becomes clear that the priesthood and civic offices were available to women in aristocratic families only, where it was an honorary affair, and

this is perfectly in keeping with Roman society, which was highly stratified hierarchically.

4.2.4 Women in Synagogue life

Ng (2001:51) argues against Schüssler-Fiorenza and others' opinions that women were heads of synagogues, such as *archsynagogos* (Rajak & Noy 1993:85 - 87), *presbytera*, *archegissa*, *mater synagogue*, by stating that it is highly likely that they received these titles as honorary titles derived from their husbands (Cohen (1980:23-29). Thus, for women, the titles were not functional titles in the capacity depicted by the said office. Through the patronage system, the women may have derived honour from their patrons (the husbands or other male members) of the families they came from. Rajak & Noy (1993:75 - 93) affirm the view that women assumed these titles as honorary in line with the patronage system which was in operation throughout the ancient Mediterranean, in which early Christianity operated, by castigating Brooten's argument that women assumed these offices on their individual capacity where they functioned in those roles. Rajak & Noy write:

Brooten vastly overestimates the amount of administrative activity that would have surrounded an ancient institution (namely, the synagogue), and her picture of dedicated female rabbis of progressive persuasion, concerned with everything from liturgy to repairs, introduces an anachronistic note (Rajak & Noy 1993:75 - 93).

The above observation exposes Brooten's observations and makes reliance on her work suspicious, since she is found wanting in her recollections of early Christian data, though her insights are needed in the study of early church women's religious practice.

4.2.5 Women in Greece

Edwards (1989:14 - 15) holds that Athens gave freedom and democracy to its people in the Greco-Roman era. However, the freedom was enjoyed by male citizens only, as women and slaves had a number of restrictions in the social divide, where women were put under the guardianship of their husbands or a male relative known as *kyrios*, a Greek term for lord or master (in the case of the unmarried women), and were

confined to the home space with no public space rights, such as voting, ownership of property and education.

As regards marriage, girls had no rights when it came to choosing whom to marry but rather they were forced into arranged marriages with men usually double their age, and this would happen at an early age, as early as 12 years. They would be divorced against their will too. Marriage for women was for one primary purpose, namely producing and teaching children and to manage house chores. According to Edwards (1989:15 - 16), even wealthy women who had money to own slaves would be kept in the home space, since they would be required to supervise slaves working in their households. The honour and shame model stipulated that women would be honoured by their absence from the public space and also by not talking among males 'either praising or blaming them'. Edwards holds that these convictions were derived from the creation accounts, where God is deemed to have made Adam for outdoor work while Eve was for indoor work. Shopping, for the Greeks, was for males. Women were forbidden from intellectual discussions in market halls, oratory was a man's role.

As has been seen in Chapter 1's literature review section, Greek philosophers cemented this socialisation of women by their teachings, for example Aristotle in his publication entitled *Politics* 1.2.12 saw women as inferior to men and as subjects to be ruled by men, where men were the only true humans. This is the situation which prevailed in the Greco-Roman period of the first century AD, though things changed especially for women in Sparta from the fourth century AD onwards (Carter 2001:4-10). This research however is delimited to focus on pre-AD 70 era and thus renders the fourth century as out of its scope.

Clark (1989:31 - 2) observed that in Greece, Greek women required a guardian for them to transact a contractual obligation concerning persons or property. In Greece's other territories, such as Asia Minor, women could own land and slaves, and could negotiate for loans with the assistance of a guardian, who would be a male family member. Cantarella (1987:142), concurring with Ng, submits that even though women later received opportunities to work outside the home, it did not result in them being freed from the grip of the *paterfamilias* and patriarchy, a dominant ethos that pervaded

the entire ancient Mediterranean, which dictated the Greco-Roman society in which the early lived.

4.2.6 Women in Rome

Concerning Roman women, Edwards (1989:18), submits that by the time of Jesus, Greco-Roman attitudes on women were exerting their influence due to cultural borrowings from the Greek society. Edwards observes that Roman women generally had more freedom than Greek women, though this was during the time of the Republic, not the imperial era under Augustus. Edwards (1989:20 - 21) postulates that in the time of the empire, Augustus instituted some radical reforms which once again infringed on women and confined them to the private space. Though some Roman women were free to be educated and to have honorific titles in the religious arena, as well as the political sphere, key leadership titles were a preserve for males only. Women mostly participated in the magical rites, mystery religions, and the gymnasias shows. Furthermore, the purported freedom to education for women would not guarantee their escape from patriarchal control because learning during this period was in the hands of philosophers, who were all males, and thus, knowledge production for this society, was tilted towards advancing patriarchal hegemony while socialising women and girls for the house duties (Bellinger (1947:3–48).

Edwards adds that it can be safely concluded that women in both Greece and Rome were generally considered subordinate to men. This was also the situation with women in the neighbouring nations of Egypt, Israel, Palestine, Assyria, Babylon, and the Hittites because they shared the same existential realities of the Ancient Mediterranean society and its culture.

4.2.7 Mystery cults and women's status/role

According to Schüssler-Fiorenza (1983:90), women were attracted to mystery cults because they were accepted into full membership, as these cults initiated both men and women regardless of family, class, gender or social status. Slaves and foreigners were all welcome. These cults, for Schüssler-Fiorenza, were a place for empowerment for high-status women, who suffered status inadequacy after the Christian movement of the Hellenistic Greco-Roman era failed to give them the same status in synagogues and house churches. In these cults, women would claim their lost religious influence

and power back. Thus, according to Schüssler-Fiorenza (1983:176 - 77), a number of wealthy women opened their houses for mystery and ecstatic worship celebrations and assumed leadership roles therein.

However, Schüssler-Fiorenza (1983:176, 183), observes that Christianity also appealed to these women, as it offered emancipatory options by the fact that it was convened in the area of domain demarcated for women (the houses), where they were leaders already in daily management of the household, it became easy for these women to assume leadership roles for the household church too. Among the foreign cults, Isis, well-known in this era as the Lord and Queen of the universe, equated the power of women to the power of men. Slaves and women were given full membership, active participation and status equal to that of men. It is from this intermingling with mystery cults that the Corinthian women incorporated a strange practice into the household Christian movement, which Paul struggled to weed out. For example, Schüssler-Fiorenza (1983:227) holds that in the Isis cult, women prophesied with their hair unbound as a sign of their ecstatic endorsement with Spirit-Sophia and as a mark of their prophetic behaviour, since Corinth was a major centre of the Isis cult. Unbound hair was seen as an effective magical incantation (as discussed in Chapter 3's 3.5.3.1 and 3.5.3.2).

Schüssler-Fiorenza (1983:227) also mentions the state of affairs in the private associations/clubs, which she refers to by the term *collegia*, which also included, for her, philosophical schools. However, Ng (2002:90) rejects the view that women assumed leadership roles in voluntary associations by submitting that the actual reality show that they were mere patrons who, however, because of the patron-client relationship that existed between them and their members, sometimes exerted much power over male leaders simply because they gave their economic means to the members who then became the clients of these rich women while in turn the clients would offer the rich women patron protection and reputation in the public-life arena. Ng warns that the influence and power of these rich women must not be confused with real administrative and outreach leadership roles, available in Christian communities such as *episkopos* roles.

4.2.8 Jesus in face of the Greco-Roman patriarchal ethos

This section seeks to evaluate the extent to which the claim by African feminist scholars that Jesus might have gone against his cultural norms to emancipate the women of his era from patriarchal suppression holds water.

Kanyoro (2009:51) holds that the *βασιλεια* of God motif, which Jesus came to proclaim, conflicted with the dominant patriarchal ethos of Greco-Roman society. Jesus' kingdom of God theme demanded the abrogation and relinquishing of patriarchal power from the fathers, for everyone was to be a citizen in this kingdom of God, where no one was to call anyone 'teacher', for they now had one teacher and all were disciples. In this new kingdom, no one was to call anyone father, for they now had only one father in heaven, where all were siblings with equal status, as per African feminists' claim. In this kingdom, all are children (*παιδια*) under one true father, God himself.

However, the Jewish feminist scholar Judith Plaskow, speaking from an insider perspective as a Jew just as was Jesus, rejects the claim by African feminists that Jesus radically opposed his cultural norms and revolutionised the society of his day so as to emancipate women. Plaskow (1980:11 - 17), in her publication entitled *'Blaming Jews for inventing patriarchy' and 'Feminists and Faith'*, adduces that as much as Jesus is regarded as having overthrown the entrenched Jewish patriarchal codes which segregated women, he did nothing too radical to overthrow patriarchy during his era. Lawrence (2003:293) supports this notion by voicing that the dominant Greco-Roman patriarchal ethos remained intact despite being challenged in some ways by Jesus' welcome of previously segregated classes of people, such as women. For him, though individuality would be tolerated, the actions one did independently were at the end of the day put to the public scrutiny of the prevailing societal codes in line with honour and shame, collectivist, kinship, and patronage paradigms. Hence as one reads the NT passages which speak of the segregated people, the inherent reality that they remained under the authority of the *paterfamilias* is obvious because they were not free to do their own will, which was outside parameters of the social codes. Thus, for Lawrence, as much as women might have appeared to be independent, they

had to conform to patriarchal norms at the end of it all, especially where it mattered most.

For Lawrence, examples can be cited of the situation of the women at the tomb though they were the first to get there and receive instruction to tell the Twelve disciples, they still had to confine this task to what patriarchy allowed, namely telling the Twelve since women were not allowed to witness and also to talk to strange men, a task they presumably did in conflict with their society's ethos if they went to evangelise all over Galilee, Judea and Samaria, as per the expectation of the resurrection and general evangelisation message's task.

Plaskow thus warns Christian feminists to avoid the urge they often exhibit to impose their own post-modern philosophical frameworks and world-views on the relations between Jesus and his culture, where most of the time they over-criticize Judaism by labelling it as what it was certainly not. In the same publication cited above, Plaskow observes that Christian feminists have an extremely negative depiction of the Jewish background, where they then project Jewish traditions in an extremely negative light so as to contrast Jesus' deeds with the negative (to their society's epistemologies) Jewish practices. In this way, their ill-inspired goal of wanting the world to accept that Jesus was a radical feminist gets achieved. Plaskow berates this practise as militating against the early church's teaching on women's roles in church.

4.3 Women in the Synoptic Gospels

This section is a brief discussion of selected texts from the Synoptic Gospels which speak on women's roles in the Jesus' movement alongside the Twelve male disciples to evaluate how the evangelists describe women's participation in comparison with theirs. The findings will be used to determine points of synergy repulsion between them and the SDAZ's perception of women in church in comparison with their male counterparts on issues regarding leadership roles. The study is not steeped in the Greek grammatical word studies, this chapter will continue to focus on the approaches detailed in Chapter 1.

4.3.1 The commissioning of the apostles (Mat 10:1 - 4, Mk 3:13 - 19, Lk 6:12 - 16)

The above texts are often cited by the groups against the ordination of women to substantiate their claim that women are not permitted to lead in today's churches because they were never included in the list of apostles chosen and commissioned by Jesus to be leaders of churches. Levine (2002:1 - 2) holds that although Luke relegates women to inferior roles and statuses, a constant theme is observed in all Synoptic Gospels, do not assume the same leadership roles as the Twelve or any notable male who assumes a leadership role.

Levine (2018:170) also argues against women's authoritative and ecclesiastical leadership by postulating that the Gospel writers classify the disciples' group into two groups: the general disciples and the real disciples (leaders/apostles), who were the commissioned Twelve. Witherington (1990:232), accedes to this view by voicing that there were two groups of disciples, the general ones, which consisted of everyone who followed Jesus, and the Twelve, who were the official and authoritative custodians of the ministry. According to Levine (2018:222 - 231), Jesus' proclamations of the Gospel of the kingdom with the Twelve, whom he named apostles, also saw him attain other followers outside the Twelve, and it was in this group of general disciples where women belonged.

While both Matthew 10:1-4 and Mark 3 : 13-19a capture the commissioning of the apostles by Jesus' account, Levine (2002:1 - 2) submit that 'only Luke establishes the formal division between disciples and apostles - where Luke appears to point that the cause of the division is steeped in *ecclesial* administration', which Jesus did not offer to women. Witherington (1989:229) hence concludes that there is a bias in favour of male leadership in the Synoptic Gospels, for this can be construed by the fact that Matthew mentions that Peter, not Mary Magdalene or Mary mother of Jesus or any other woman for that matter, is said to be the foundation of the church. Matthew says the church is founded on Peter.

Secondly, in Matthew, the mother of John and James approaches Jesus to beg him to install them as leaders in his kingdom (Mat 20:20 - 22). She might have realised that as a woman and their mother, she could not claim that privilege for herself, as was dictated by their societal dictates. Mark's account of this issue records the disciples as

having requested it themselves from Jesus (see Mark 10:35 – 40). That these two writers coincidentally chose not to record that their mother, a woman, requested to be installed in his kingdom as a leader speaks to their consciousness of their cultural expectations in which they contextualised their messages to be in line with the thought systems of their hearers.

Furthermore, the ten virgins are projected in a negative and subjugated way, as they are based on their readiness to serve the male groom for their evaluation of whether they were clever or foolish, not on what they individually thought and described themselves as (their self-concept).

4.3.2 The Resurrection event and the role played by women (Mat 27:62 - 28:15), Mk (16:1 - 20), Lk (24:1 - 16)

According to Witherington (1989:229), women were given the temporary task of witnessing to the resurrection, yet the permanent part of the witnessing task was to be assumed by the Twelve, (now eleven with the exclusion of Judas). Hence, the women were not given permanent authority to spread the message, as their cultural norms dictated that they would not have been listened to. Thus, it was not possible that Jesus would have let the women whom he met first after his resurrection be witnesses in a society which did not qualify them to be witnesses, a role that was prescribed to males by both Jesus' commissioning them and also the societal norms of the Greco-Roman world.

The fact that the three women at the tomb are commanded by the angels to go tell the Twelve (where Mary was among them too) crushes Schüssler-Fiorenza's (1983:320) claim of an egalitarian Jesus movement, for women were instructed to give that task to the males in line with the prevailing patriarchal ethos. Furthermore, the mention of Peter first by the angels, regardless of his blame of having failed to measure up to true discipleship by deserting Jesus at the Passion, is seen by Witherington (1991:164) as a further reaffirmation by divine command of male patriarchal leadership, especially that of Peter. If Schüssler-Fiorenza's notion stands, the women would have been told to go and evangelise all communities and not to report to the male disciples as if subscribing to their authority.

Concerning the Markan resurrection narrative, Witherington argues that Mark (16:9 - 20), which records the narrative of women having gone to tell the disciples about the resurrection was not originally part of Mark's gospel. They hold that Mark 16 originally ended at verse 8, which says the women did not tell anyone for they were afraid. This view resonates with the traditional role of women in the Greco-Roman era in that they were not allowed to speak to men, neither were they to be witnesses in court or any event.

4.3.3 Women who followed Jesus (Mat 27:55 - 57, Mk 15:40 - 42, Lk 8:1 - 3)

The question posed in the exploration of the above texts is 'did the women who followed Jesus assume leadership roles similar to that of the Twelve?' Levine (2002:1 - 2) gives clues for answering this question. For Levine, Luke 8:1 - 3 depicts women in ancillary capacities where they serve as mere clients to Jesus their patron, while ecclesiastical leadership is restricted to the Twelve.

Levine (2002:1 - 2) claims that women who followed Jesus did so to merely fulfil the patron-client relationship (and not as people who assumed any leadership role in that ministry) that was common during the Greco-Roman era of the first century CE. This is supported by the internal evidence in the texts themselves such as the description of this group of women as 'having been cured of evil spirits and infirmities' and not as described in terms of the work to witness. The women, because they were healed, felt obliged to pay him by offering him gratitude and sustaining his honour in the community and also by serving Jesus as their patron.

Levine writes:

Luke 8:1-3 locates the women as Jesus' clients while he is their patron. They are in a system of reciprocity. He healed them and they served him in response. In this configuration Jesus is the patron and they are clients: their job, as clients is to praise the patron. Conversely, the women stand as patrons to the ministry where they support Jesus with their means while Luke, in turn, praises them by recording their names. This praising them and recording their names shifts the focus on the demon possession label they had to a better status as followers of Jesus (Levine 2002:1 - 2).

This description, according to Levine, separates the women from the Twelve because the men are explicitly with him while the women are grammatically distanced. From the texts, the women follow Jesus on the basis that he had healed them while the Twelve follow him on the basis that he had commissioned them to be his witnesses. This distinction between women who followed Jesus and the Twelve, in Levine's view, is continued in other Gospel writers and throughout the two volumes of Luke, who highlights that the men take the leadership positions while women provide ancillary services to support Jesus as they follow him as ordinary disciples.

Furthermore, the referral of the three women in Mark 15:40 - 41 with Greek verbs *ακολουθειν* and *διακονειν* is simply meant to portray them as faithful general followers of Jesus, just as many other people, including slaves, prostitutes, republicans, and tax collectors, who were also among those who followed him. Thus, Levine argues that taking women only as having assumed elevated leadership statuses and leaving others like republicans and slaves is suspicious. Witherington (1990:232) thus insists that women belonged to the general group of disciples, which included everyone else who followed Jesus and who were not entrusted with the leadership and gospel proclamation role.

More so, implying that the word used in connection with the women who ministered to Jesus, namely *διακονειν* (to minister), means that they assume a key leadership role in the Jesus movement is regarded by Stegemann (1991:383 - 95), Kee (1977:91) and Aquino & McLemore (1995:400) as dubious, as there is nothing in the terminology of the text that shows the purported leadership role so imposed for these women. Kee writes 'It cannot be inferred from the passages Mark (1:31), (15:41) and other passages in the Gospels which mention women as Jesus' followers that women occupied the leading offices in these communities, but rather that the menial tasks they performed were regarded as praiseworthy and as fully compatible with God's purpose for his people'.

Furthermore, regarding the other verb in Mark 15:40 – 41, *σθναβαβαινειν* (to come up), that is often mistaken as referring to the leadership of the women who came with Jesus as they followed him to Jerusalem, Ng (2002:168) argues that the term is not used in reference to the three named women only but rather to all the other women

who followed him from Jerusalem, where this large group is not mentioned in connection with the resurrection story. Thus, according to Ng, 'Mark's use of the verb *σθναναβαινειν* in Mark 15:40 - 41 has nothing to do with people being witnesses of Jesus, a role that depicted an authoritative leadership state'.

Again, Schüssler-Fiorenza (1983:320), and Anderson's (1983:20 - 21) view that sees Jesus' women followers explicitly fulfilling the *μαφηται* role is rejected by Aquino & McLemore. For them, the women followers did not measure up to fit in the *μαφηται* group, neither were they included in the circle of the disciples. Also, their absence from the Lord's Supper (Mk 14:17) speaks against such a claim that they were disciples in the stead of the Twelve, for only the Twelve were at the table with him.

4.3.3.1 The Patron-client motif and the honour-shame paradigm in Jesus' movement

This section seeks to highlight what has been suggested in the above passage, that the general group of disciples who followed Jesus as he ministered with the help of the Twelve (who were the actual leaders in his ministry) did it as an act of paying allegiance and reciprocating what Jesus had done for them. Jesus had helped them to attain ascribed honour, while by the same act Jesus himself claimed achieved honour by proving that he was exceptional over his critics. Thus, those whom Jesus helped were obliged to serve him and help him gain a higher reputation, as was the norm during this era. Hence, the argument made by the above scholars that women and the rest of the other general disciples followed him as mere clients and not as leaders seems justified, as the below discussion will show.

According to Lewis (1983:104), one thing that drove people in the first-century CE Greco-Roman world, was honour and shame. These values influenced Greco-Roman society to the extent that everyone aimed to be honoured and not to be shamed. An example is a situation where slaves gained great exploits for their masters to honour them so that they could be manumitted (see Chapter 3). Manumitted slaves would continue to receive honour by brushing shoulders with men of honour, such as their former masters or Jesus, a reality believed to be the reason behind the majority of Jesus' followers being mainly those regarded as low-class and / or outcasts in Greco-Roman society.

Turner (1969:133) extrapolates that the meaning of honour in the context of the Greco-Roman era could be 'prestige', where people would strive to do honourable deeds for prestige purposes. With the collectivistic, patronage and kinship paradigms (see Chapters 1, 2 and 3) which pervaded Ancient Mediterranean society, one's honour or prestige would also mean that of his or her family, clan, community and empire's honour, in line with the collectivist, kinship, patron-client philosophical and epistemological orientations of this society. It was a big thing to bring honour to the oneself, family, nation and the empire at large. Hence Cicero (*Ant. 2.10.187*) seems to be correct when he writes:

The engine that propels the empire, the family, and the city was love for honour . . . Nature has made us . . . passionate pursuers after honour, and when we have held . . . some preview of its vivacity, there is nothing we are not ready to stand and go over in order to get it'.

Beyer (1962:78) holds that public events in the Greco-Roman world were not just convened for that sake of convening. They were opportunities to gain or lose honour. That is why the debates between Jesus and the Pharisees were done in public so that either Jesus or them gained or lost honour. The Pharisees lost honour whenever they engaged in public debates with Jesus. By gaining honour, the individual's power, influence, or reputation was ascertained.

Gower's (1993:215) analysis of Matthew's Gospel and its honour-shame, patron-client, kinship and collectivist features is picked by this researcher as a perfect description of the first century Greco-Roman world of the early Christian movement. As such, due to space limitations, this chapter uses this as an analysis that stands for all the other trajectories of the early Christianity epochs under study in this chapter. According to Gower, honour and shame paradigms punctuate Matthew's gospel, where his aim is to show Jesus' honour, power, and authority as contrasted to the authority and honour of his opponents, the Pharisees. Neyrey (1998:46) also alludes to this by highlighting that Matthew aimed at proving Jesus to be more honourable than his challengers, and also that the pursuit of honour led many in this community to engage in violent acts towards others for them to gain honour.

4.3.3.2 Honour and shame in Jesus' ministry

Neyrey (1998:17) and Lawrence (2003:43) have submitted that honour and shame values dominated the areas in which Jesus ministers, especially Galilee. In this regard, Jesus also participates in the honour-shame game, in conformity with his societal norms and way of life. He re-calibrates the honour-shame paradigms into paradigms opposed to those set by the Pharisees, for example, Jesus introduces servant leadership as a leadership style that brings honour and not leadership of coercion as done by the Pharisees. In direct opposition to the Pharisaic injunctions, the Matthean Jesus does not restrict women to the home spaces but rather allows them to venture into the public spaces, as noted by Lawrence:

Whilst much ancient literature reflects the concerns of dominant male, leaving women and the socially marginalized muted and largely unrepresented, Matthew specially presents selected women expressing their views. In the end, it is shown that the pre-eminent stratification patterns in Matthew, including moral and faith divisions, are equally applicable to both men and women, suggesting that status is not always tied to sex or gender (Lawrence 2003:293).

However, Lawrence is quick to point out that the collectivist framework that characterised the entirety of Greco-Roman society was very much at play in the Matthean community. However, Lawrence holds that although room for individual expressions was allowed, the group's accepted ethics were to judge deeds which would have been done independently by individuals. Hence, the dominant ethical code was defined by men, where women might have appeared free to act independently despite the patriarchal code having the final say.

4.3.3.3 Jesus' honour claim

According to Malina (1993:34), Matthew proves Jesus' ascribed as well as achieved honour, where the genealogy points to his ascribed honour while the miraculous narratives prove his achieved honour. As said above, this is to prove Jesus' prestige and reputation over his critics. Hence, as highlighted above, the outcasts would gain honour through their associations with the patron. Hence Jesus' followers, who were mainly groups of the segregated, attained honour by brushing shoulders with him while he defended them as an exchange transaction of that honour. This explains why

Levine and others claim that women who followed Jesus were not really leaders but followed him as a gratitude expression gesture, as they also strived to gain their new status and honour by being in the company of an honourable person, Jesus.

Furthermore, Danker (1982:188) and Neyrey (1998:46) hold that through miracles and exorcisms, Jesus claims so much power, and authority ahead of his contemporaries, and makes him patron to those he helps. According to Lewis (1983:93), miracles and exorcism were opportunities for Jesus to gain achieved honour. Achieved honour, adds Lewis, in the Ancient Mediterranean world was mainly shown through military prowess, athletic excellence, and aesthetic ability. Hence Jesus is described as the chief warrior who prevails over the forces of the devil (Mat 12:24). The war imagery for Jesus is not a physical war but a spiritual one in which he battles with Satan, where Jesus always emerges as the winner, thereby gaining honour for himself and his clients/ followers (who were mainly women).

Thus, by exorcism, Jesus engages in a war with the devil and always wins. This gives him honour. All miracles are a war against the forces of the devil, where he overcomes them and gains honour. All types of disease, deformities, raising the dead, providing food to the hungry, were regarded as warfare, and Jesus, as chief warrior, emerges victorious in all cases. In healing women, he assumes the warrior status and frees them as they honour him and spread news of his victorious acts so as to defend his reputation, prestige and power. As a way of appreciating their ameliorated statuses, the women serve him (by following him wherever he goes) as his clients in line with the honour and shame, patron-client models of their society. In return for these deeds, Malina (1988:16) opines that those healed would see Jesus as their benefactor to whom they owed praise, honour, and protection. Certain actions such as the actions by Peter in defending Jesus when the Roman soldiers seek to apprehend him in Luke 22:47 - 53, Matthew 26:47 - 56, and Mark 14:43 - 50, and the insistence by the demoniac healed by Jesus in Luke 8:26 - 39, that he be allowed to serve him, all point to the obligation of the people whom Jesus helps to reciprocate what he has done for them in line with the client-patron system and its role in honour or shame attainment that exists in this society of their day. This was a common practice in the Greco-Roman moral fabric, that clients were obliged to serve their patrons.

4.3.3.4 *Jesus' teachings and honour gaining*

Malina (1988:50) holds that one of the things which made Jesus gain honour was his teachings to the disciples and those who followed him. Matthew praises Jesus' intellectual prowess by referring to him as 'great teacher', thereby making a distinction from other false teachers as well as philosophical teachers such as Plutarch. In Matthew 7:28-29, Jesus is said to be different from the scribes and Pharisees because they did not teach with authority as he did. This way Jesus assumed honour for himself, and his clients would serve him through various ways, including following him and offering him material support for the success of his ministry, as was the custom of their day that clients would give their patrons allegiance and defending them in public.

With this authority, Jesus drew new codes for honour. Malina & Rohrbaugh (2003:43) hold that through the beatitudes in Matthew 5, the Matthean Jesus grants the marginalised classes ascribed honour, where their previously shameful state is regarded as blessed. His disciples and those who follow him are not to seek societal affirmations but God's only, because their status is no longer vetted by the Pharisees but by God (ascribed honour of Jesus). Malina & Rohrbaugh (2003:43) claim that Jesus' changing the honour codes of his entire society also made his honour and influence increase even more. By answering difficult questions from the Pharisees, Jesus increased his power, authority and honour. That is why he would do public debates.

Furthermore, Rijenveld (2004:18) holds that Jesus' death increased his fame and honour, hence the women were not ashamed to be with him at the cross. His resurrection as a war imagery even increased his honour as well as the honour of his followers. Thus, it seems to be true that the actions of following Jesus and serving him either by providing shelter for the Lord's supper and offering their financial support do not denote a leadership role but a mere client service. With this analysis, it can be concluded that it is no wonder that it is the same state that women are in in the Pauline and deuterio-Pauline communities, as cogently evinced in Chapters 3 and 5, because these communities lived under one societal influence, namely the Ancient Mediterranean culture which pervaded the first-century Greco-Roman early Christianity.

4.3.4 The anointing episode and its significance on women's leadership role (Mat 26:6 - 13), Mk 14:3 - 9), Lk 7:36 - 50)

As regards the woman who anointed Jesus being elevated as a true disciple in the same class and role assumed by the Twelve, in contrast with Judas Iscariot, who was just worried by the wastage of resources, Munro (1982:230 - 34) and Malbon (1983:41) hold that the anointing by the woman had no messianic overtones at all. Furthermore, with regard to the claim that the anointing served a prophetic role of predicting Jesus' death and burial, Levine (2018:640) argues against the fact that Mary's acts of 'anointing' Jesus' feet/head had any spiritual significance whatsoever. On this issue, Levine's comments are noteworthy:

The woman's actions are not necessarily Christological. The word for her action, 'anoint' is *aleipho*, not *chriseo* with its Christ-like resonances. While *aleipho* is a term used in Mark 16:1 to describe the lament of the women who go to the tomb, there is no reason to import the context. The woman is simply anointing Jesus' feet. . . Luke's focus is on the exaggerated actions of the woman, with the exorbitant generosity for her behaviour signalling the extent of her gratitude for the forgiveness granted her (Levine 2018:212).

It can be seen that the story features the Ancient Mediterranean social-scientific models of patron-client and benefactor relationships, where the woman is serving her patron and benefactor, Jesus, as Jesus' actions gain him honour against the Pharisee Simon, who could not offer what Jesus offered her. Thus, social-scientific methodology struggles to see the links that point to the fact that such acts of gratitude, as were demanded by their society, can be interpreted as pointing to a spiritual act of such magnitude and significance. Hence, the accepted interpretation, which is in context of the passage and its cultural environment, suggests that Luke is simply locating the woman in a client-patron capacity as is the case in Luke 8:1 - 3, where these women have no say on the authoritative role of overseeing how Jesus' ministry functions (Levine 2018:594).

To drive her point further home in arguing that the anointing *pericope* is not talking about the prophecy of Jesus' death, Luke goes on to ignore the anointing of Jesus' body for burial at the cross, which is captured by the other Gospel writers. He rather

chooses to record how Joseph of Armathia takes down the body and wraps it for burial in a new tomb. This makes Luke consistent with his view to silence women, as the anointing story which seemed to have significance is ignored by Luke despite being recorded by the other evangelists. Thus, in Luke, Jesus' body is un-anointed.

Furthermore, adds Levine, the acts of women who came to re-anoint Jesus' body for burial also exposes the women as failed disciples for dead bodies were anointed once before burial according to their customs then. Thus, the narrative that women who came for re-anointing the body on Sunday morning exposes them as failed disciples since there was no need to re-anoint it as the tradition dictated that bodies were expected to be anointed before burial and not after. For Levine, writing from a Jewish perspective, the women's re-anointing plan exposes their disbelief in Jesus because it shows that they did not believe that Jesus would resurrect despite his repeated teachings that he would rise on the third day. This is so, adds Levine, in that:

That the women prepare spices (in Matthew and Luke), . . . indicates that no one involved expected Jesus to rise from the dead. The myrrh and the spices function to keep the corpse from putrefying. At this point in the Gospel, no one is expecting a resurrection, despite Jesus' teachings to the contrary in Luke 9:22. Since the first part of the prediction he taught, of him being nailed to the cross has come to pass, readers can be confident in the second, but alas, the women got blinded to realise this (Levine 2018:641).

However, Trucker & Liefeld (1987:28) insist that the anointing of Jesus by Mary has significance in determining the discipleship qualification of the people Jesus mingled with in his ministry. There are variant readings about the story as captured by the Synoptic Gospel writers. The writer of Luke reports that Mary anointed Jesus' feet, while Mark and Matthew report that she anointed his head. Tucker & Liefeld posit that the anointing (whether on the head or feet) has great significance to the ministry of Jesus and what it symbolically meant for the salvation of humanity that no one knew of, except Jesus who commented that the woman who had anointed her while Judas Iscariot saw a wastage of resources and a misplaced priority in the act. However, Jesus commented the act to refer to his death and burial by saying, 'It was meant that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial'. Jesus responded to the fuming

disciples who had picked the anointing as a waste of resources. Matthew seems more specific: 'She did it to prepare me for burial' (Mat 26:12; Mk 14:8).

Tucker & Liefeld (1987:29) wonder why such a deep significance of the anointing of Jesus and his death was not comprehended by the venerated Twelve, who had received acceptance as the only ones suitable to be 'the' disciples of Jesus. Yet they were now surpassed in knowing what entailed discipleship by women, who were looked down upon by the traditions and customs of patriarchalism. Tucker & Liefeld (1987:29), Jesus affirms the significance of Mary's anointing work by his words, 'I tell you the truth, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her' (Mat 26:13; Mk 14:9), implying that, one may infer, as much as the focus of the cross was to be on Jesus, it also has to put Mary on a focal stage. Yet what Jesus instructed, that what Mary did was to be kept in memory, has been erased until now, mainly because of the patriarchal bias of Jesus' era. Thus, for Tucker & Liefeld (1987:29), Mary, the woman who anointed Jesus' feet or head must have qualified to be in the class of 'the' disciples too.

However, Witherington (2018:630) rejects Levine's view by insisting that the re-anointing was necessary, since funerals would usually take a week before burial, and thus dead bodies would require re-anointing to slow the decomposition process. It is in this context that Jesus' mutilated body is seen by Levine as having to be re-anointed. Thus, for Witherington, the women do not stand as failed disciples but as committed ones who knew the practices of their culture of re-anointing dead bodies.

The women who had dismally failed to be committed disciples by their bringing spices to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body, however, managed to do one good thing, according to Levine. They remembered Jesus' words (Lk 24:8). Their memory was reinforced by the men's (angels) words to them, since they (the women) had not yet believed due to their bringing spices. The aspect of remembering is explained by Levine as follows:

To remember is not only to call to memory something gone from consciousness, it is to reinforce what had been heard but not believed. Had Jesus been explicit on the details of his death, the crucifixion would have been less of a shock. Had Jesus been explicit on the details of his resurrection, or spent more time preparing

his followers for the resurrection moment, the women would not have prepared the spices (Levine 2018:652).

On another note, adds Levine, although the verb used for ‘remember’ seems to classify these women as disciples of Jesus, not just the travelling hospitality and patronage brigade due to the fact that they heard and remembered Jesus’ teaching the argument does not hold water, since the women returned to the tomb (Lk 24:9) and reported what they had seen and heard to the eleven male disciples and these were the ones to proclaim the message to their communities, as prescribed by their social norms. Their reporting to the male disciples shows that they knew that they were not authorised to go and preach to the communities around them and beyond.

Thus, it shows that the women were not commissioned either by the men they met at the tomb or by Jesus in Matthew 28:10. Levine (2018:652) maintains that the women in Luke receive no instruction about proclaiming the resurrection, nor does Mary Magdalene from Jesus himself. For Levine, this lack of both direct commission and resurrection appearance is consistent with Luke’s overall treatment of women: their task is to support the ministry where males are the active practitioners. The women are not the primary bearers of the teaching or preaching roles.

4.3.5 Martha, Mary and leadership role in the Jesus movement (Lk (10:28 - 42), Jn (11:1 - 12:8))

Among the Synoptic Gospels, only Luke captures the story of Mary and Martha. Although John also includes it, the scope of this work delimits the study to the Synoptic Gospels only and thus this section will ignore John’s account of the story.

The passage depicts Mary at the feet of Jesus, a figure of speech popular during the early church, which according to Edwards (1989:43), meant a student-teacher or disciple/rabbi relationship, which suggests that Mary was taught the Torah by Jesus as his disciple. However, Edwards argues that there is need to investigate whether Jesus taught women during his ministry. Lohfink (1985:31 - 33) and Hegel (1981:61 - 63) claim that the etymological meaning of the Greek word from which the term disciple is derived, namely *mathetai* / learners, of a rabbi or master in preparation for being sent out by him in mission, sheds light on how the role was regarded as having been

assumed by Mary. With this reality at play, Edwards concurs with Levine that there were two groups of people who are deemed to have followed Jesus. The first group was those who did not leave their homes and family possessions but patiently waited for the reign of God, which was being preached by Jesus, while the second included those who left all to follow him.

According to Edwards (1989:43), the Twelve were in the second group, while women were mostly in the first group. Thus, for Edwards the Twelve were the *mathetai*. Jeremias (1971:224) sees an impossibility of Mary having fulfilled this status considering that Jesus had a highly itinerant ministry, which was involving to the extent that the married males who decided to follow him would have their wives and children return to the woman's parents, since they could not manage to be with their families while doing this ministry. This has allusions to Peter's remark to Jesus when he retorts that he has left his wife, children, and lands to follow him. Women would face even more constraints in choosing to follow Jesus, as it was more difficult for them to leave their husbands according to the Greco-Roman patriarchal ethos. Hence, it is unlikely that Mary could have been a disciple in the class of the Twelve. The acceptable explanation then becomes that of her being in the general-disciples group.

However, Kraemer (1994:93) insists that Luke (10:38 - 42) proves that Mary assumed an official role as described by the rendering of the word disciple – a learner of Torah under a knowledgeable master. This learner-master relationship is seen between Jesus and Mary, who sat at Jesus' feet receiving instruction in typical Rabbinical style as did Paul under Gamaliel, testifying that Mary was an active disciple just as the Twelve. However, Levine (2018:225) argues that Luke 10:38 - 42 does not say that Mary did any leadership role by her seating at Jesus' feet (being taught the Torah by Jesus).

Kanyoro (2001:67) argues that Martha is described in a such way as to fit an 'ideal woman construct' of Luke's epistemological grid, where she is confined to the home set up for the intention of exposing Mary to public shame as she dares venture the space demarcated for men. Kanyoro (2001:105 - 11) castigates the 'ideal womanhood constructs' in the stories of Mary and Martha, of whom many comment only when these women conform to the expected norm of real cultural woman and shame them

when they vow to enter the public arena demarcated for men by culture. Hence, the submission against Luke of demeaning and downplaying women in his narratives may seem to be true. The views of African feminist scholars will be evaluated against the situation in the SDAZ to see if they, like Luke, are downplaying women too.

Regarding Martha and her purported *diakonia* role, Levine 2018:225), holds that her welcoming visitors and serving of Jesus is merely reflective of the common practice of the day. Householders greeted disciples, as reflected in Luke 10:8. Luke has an interest in women patrons, adds, Levine, but his interest is more in their putting together resources for the church and the men subsequently determining the allocation criteria.

However, Witherington (1990:100 - 103) is of the opinion that Mary's commendation by Jesus as having chosen the good and best option 'of choosing that which no one else would take away from her' is proof that Luke does not see women as merely patrons but seeks to project women as positive learners of Jesus' teachings.

As for the issue of Mary having forsaken the known space and duty for women and left her elder sister to manage the house chores alone, Levine (2018:295) holds that it was merely a common behaviour seen in Jewish families, known as 'women's or sibling rivalry motifs', as testified in the Hebrew Scriptures. The children or women in one roof would always quarrel and oppose each other. From the Hebrew Scriptures, adds Levine, 'women in same household are often at odds with each other over a man's attention; Sarah and Hagah, Abraham's co-wives, Leah and Rachel over Jacob's attention, Peninah and Hannah are co-wives in competition over childbearing. On sibling rivalry, Cain and Abel, Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob, Zerah and Perez, Joseph and his brothers, David and his brothers are examples'. So, for Levine, Mary did not show any peculiar leadership role by sitting at Jesus' feet for that one day when he visited them.

Tannehil (1996:182) picks up the argument by suggesting despite the Greek word studies suggesting that Martha was engaged in *diakonia*, the context of the passage does not suggest an established ministry. Rather, adds Tannehil (1996:182), the verb *diakoeo* in Luke's gospel can refer to domestic services such as providing food and

welcoming guests (to mention but a few) something that women or slaves were expected to do.

However, Witherington argues that the context of the chapter is in line with what was obtaining then, that there were house churches. Therefore, Martha can be seen as doing the official *diakonia* service, since the book of Luke was written when this service had been established in churches. In this context therefore, adds, Witherington, Martha is exonerated as being fully involved in the acts of ministry. Hence, her complaint defends her tone and attitude towards serious ministry, where she realises that she has been left all alone to do the ministry (the disciples are in the communities two by two, the seventy-two are also away in the communities, Mary is seated doing nothing at Jesus feet). Martha challenges Jesus to solve the problem. Therefore, for Witherington, the context is a house church where the sisters Martha and Mary are in twin ministry, yet Martha sees the non-involvement of the other disciple as detrimental to the ministry goals. In this context, Witherington maintains that Martha is therefore the one who is actually active, as she is concerned about the progress of the work while Mary is seated on Jesus' feet (not even asking questions as was expected of disciples to their teachers). So, Martha is actually a dangerous and docile disciple who entangles herself with the unimportant duties of cleaning the house and cooking, according to Witherington. Mary is the one in the correct posture of a disciple, dares to ask Jesus questions and challenge him. A disciple was not just to sit at his/her teacher's feet but was meant to also ask questions, for asking questions was the key feature and task of a disciple, concludes Witherington.

Commenting on Luke 10:41a, where a repetition of the name Martha is given by Jesus, Cater (1996:264 - 268) holds that Jesus is not belittling Martha's ministry. It is a huge task to see to it that guests are fed and that they have somewhere to sleep, but Jesus' rebuke to Martha is simply establishing priorities. The emphasis is therefore that Jesus wants Martha to know that 'one cannot do ministry until one is catechized (taught) for hearing come before doing, learning comes before action, and instruction in the word is required before running a house church' Cater (1996:264 - 268), just as emphasised in Luke 4:4, where an injunction is made that 'a person does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from his mouth'. Thus, according to Cater, Jesus was often in houses as an invited guest, and he would rebuke the householders for

prioritising the little aspects of life yet leaving what mattered for example the rebuke to Simon in Luke 7. Also, adds Carter (1996:279), even in Mary's seemingly good comment, there is danger too in prioritizing listening to the word and then forgetting the practical part of going into the communities imparting the knowledge learnt.

Hence, Jesus does not seem to judge (posing himself as a mediator of the two sisters) whether he too had been wrong but leaves readers to discover if the two sisters reconcile (Bock 2003:1041), though John 11:39-44 reveals that they went along well. Hence, it must be seen that Jesus' rebuke to Martha is on her misplaced priorities between hearing the teachings versus distractions of ministry and not on sex or gender.

4.4 Methodological considerations

This section attempts to put the two methodologies (social scientific and African feminism) in conversation with each other to hear how the scholars from each camp understand the picture of women presented in the synoptic traditions.

African feminists advance the notion that the Jesus movement was egalitarian, as men and women had equal status and assumed equal leadership roles. Among many reference points, they pick the interchange between Jesus and the Phoenician in the Gospel of Mark as their point of argument for this claim. Jesus gives the woman the radical label of an unworthy outsider who is not going to be permitted to eat the food of his children, yet the insistence of the woman for his attention, which he finally yields to, it is demonstrated that at God's table there are no barriers of race, sex, ethnicity, gender, able-bodied, and any other privileged rights granted to only a few by social or religious systems. According to Schüssler-Fiorenza (1997:1), Jesus' yielding to the persistence for recognition and attention of the foreigner woman demonstrates that indeed women are included in his ministry and that the ministry has no room gender discrimination.

It is against this background that Kanyoro (1997:vii) holds that the inclusivity mantra is feared by African men, since for them equality with women makes them feel threatened. For Kanyoro, it is normal for African men to feel threatened at talk of equality with women because it is the nature of privileged groups to fear that equality

means in practice loss of power, authority and long-cherished privilege. Hence, with this fear that grips mostly the African men, adds Kanyoro, they resist vehemently all attempts by women to come to the same status as them in religious spaces. They choose to be conservative and chauvinistic. In such a scenario, Kanyoro challenges African women not to wait passively in anticipation that things will turn in their favour one day but rather to fight for their equal share of the cake in the daily administration of church and find their way to the round leadership table so envisaged of the church, which they must initiate, for there is no one to grant them access to it because for Kanyoro, the men are not qualified to do that either.

Kanyoro (1997:viii) challenges the notion that women were absent in Jesus' ministry by posing a question to the male disciples, 'were you there when they crucified my Lord?' She answers this question by referring to the Passion narrative, where she posits that 'It was women who were there at the Tomb while the male disciples had gone into hiding'. Kanyoro holds that 'had it not been the prompting of Christ's women disciples, the male apostles would not have dared visit the empty tomb'. Thus, the answer to the question above, according to Kanyoro, is 'yes women were there while men were vividly absent, yet through the institutionalisation of the church by the misogynistic church fathers, women have been made invisible while making visible the undeserving males'.

However, social-scientific scholars argue against the feminist reading of the bible texts citing that some feminists are not qualified theologians but simply sociologists who may not really know the approaches needed to interpret the Scriptures. Bacchiocchi is one such scholar who posits that it is a well-known fact that Jesus opposed his cultural norms and ushered a liberative-to-women ministry, where he accepted them as his followers and even taught them the Torah against established norms. But Bacchiocchi argues that Jesus' acts were just acts which spoke of the fact that everyone is acceptable to and by him as a disciple as per what he had commissioned his Twelve disciples, that they were to go and make many disciples. For Bacchiocchi (1987:40), discipleship is an act of determination to accept and follow the teachings of Jesus and not really an act that denotes that any of the persons who followed Jesus are automatically supposed to assume the authoritative ecclesiastical leadership role denoted by the apostleship title which was assumed by the Twelve. For him, God

established the sex role distinctions at creation, and to determine role distinctions between men and women in the home and church, he chose the headship principle, which places men as head and leader of both the home and church, as is succinctly demonstrated in the early church, where women only led in the household ordinary life set up and not the household worship life.

Furthermore, the egalitarian outlook of the Jesus movement which is claimed by African feminists, meets resistance from social-scientific scholars such as Ng (2002:365), Horsley (1993:232), and Van Aarde (2000:226), who reject the view of an egalitarian Jesus as cherished by Van Eck (2013:10 - 11), who claims that 'the Markan Jesus' attitude towards women is inclusive, non-sexist, and egalitarian since for Van Eck, women are typified as true participants of the Kingdom of God'. Van Eck appeals to passages where Jesus accommodates women (Mk 15:40 - 41) by allowing them to touch him as he heals them (Mk 5:21 - 4, Mk 7:24 - 30), and also appeals to narratives in Mark 5:34, 7:24 - 30, and 14:41 - 44, which project women as having demonstrated truer discipleship to Jesus than their male counterparts by their following him until the crucifixion while the male disciples hid and ran for their lives. Furthermore, he appeals to Mark 16:1 - 2, which describes women as the ones who first visit the grave, as male disciples doubt. This for van Eck, marks out Mark 16:1 - 2 as proof of equal status between the men and women in Jesus' ministry. Ng, Horsley and van Aarde, argues above scholars argue that the tight measures installed by the Roman imperial orders, which modelled the Greco-Roman life on kinship and familial models, where emperors were even deified, ordered life under strict patriarchal lines and it may be a fallacy to think that women escaped such scrutiny. Hence, for Ng (2002:365), the egalitarian state purported to have existed in the Jesus movement and the Pauline traditions remains questionable. Ng insists that based on the fact that Jesus' authority was never accepted by the leaders of this era until his crucifixion, it becomes a challenge to imagine how he would have managed to stamp new lines of life when his authority was always questioned as he ministered just three years, which were full of schism after schism.

Arguing against headship theology in a bid to establish women as having same ecclesiastical authority roles on the basis that there were women who followed in Jesus' ministry, for Bacchiocchi, is a view that is weak in the extreme because it can

just as well be questioned why all the men who also followed Jesus (who could be difficult to number in most cases) did not also claim a role equal to that of the Twelve, as claimed by African feminist scholars.

Swidler (1976:118 - 9) has suggested that the fact that the early Christian missionaries travelled as husband-and-wife pairs, a view affirmed by characters mentioned in Romans 16 among other passages, nullifies the claim that women had itinerant ministerial roles, since it contradicted the patriarchal ethos of the time, which restricted women movement without their husbands or permission from their fathers. For Swidler, women in Greco-Roman society of early Christianity would only move alone in public spaces in the company of their husbands or a male family member, even for grown-up unmarried girls, who were under their fathers' authority and thus were not independent. Thus, Swidler's observation resonates too with other social-scientific scholars, such as Malina, who maintain that all women in the early Christianity before AD 70 were under one dominant patriarchal culture of the entire Ancient Mediterranean society, where they were confined to household duties under paterfamilias.

Again, the notion that many women joined Jesus as itinerant travellers, does not fit well with the socio-economic description of the Greco-Roman societies under Roman imperialism, where the poor (who mostly included women) were swindled of their merger resources. Van Eck has described how people in this society were being fleeced of their resources by the temple, imperial and the priestly taxes. This led to many having their land confiscated for lack of resources. In this case, adds Van Eck (2013:2 - 8), it was highly unlikely that women would find resources to join the itinerant life of Jesus, which needed funding by those who followed him as attested to by Luke 8:1 - 3. For Van Eck, what gave Jesus his large following was that he opposed the temple and imperial economies, which fleeced them of their resources, and thus Jesus' focus on the outcasts and the poor attracted a large number of followers, who followed not as leaders but as mere followers, including women.

Hence, only a few women of means are recorded as having followed Jesus, on the patron basis and not on the leadership role basis. According to Ng (2001:83), the above submissions on the unsuitability of women during this period to freely join Jesus'

ministry is also supported by the Mishnah and also spelt out in the Talmud (*Ketubot 47b*), that their society then offered no options for women to support themselves, with the result that 'they would have to marry (or else got charged for adultery) for a divorced wife makes no sense'. The poor women therefore had to be married to receive support from her husband. Ng argues that as much as the gospels reveal that a number of women followed Jesus as disciples (in a loose sense of the word), it does not mean that they were itinerant preachers, as Schüssler-Fiorenza (1983:173) and African feminist scholars want to suggest.

To graphically show the impossibility of women in the Jesus movement to have assumed itinerant preaching roles which would include preaching to men, a point affirmed by Plutarch (AD 46 – AD 120), the philosopher of this era, who holds that women could not teach men, Ng (2002:62 - 63) notes the following restrictions which women had to meander with little success:

Great obstacles surrounded women who would attempt to converse with male strangers and win them to the Jesus movement: among other constraints imposed on women in those days. Jewish men did not customarily talk to strange women; men and women were probably segregated in synagogues meetings as well as in social gatherings; and the witnesses of women were deemed unreliable. Thus, whether the women disciples of Jesus travelled with women, or with men (in a big group or as husband-and-wife teams), it stands to reason that, if they did any preaching, they preached to women folk alone, or else risk their credibility as descent women (in line with honour and shame codes of their era emphasis mine). Even this is not without difficulties, for we have to assume that the women were educated enough to be able to do this. In a predominantly patriarchal society where girls married as young as 12 years, and women's role was in the home, women who could preach the good news of the Kingdom of God must have been very exceptional indeed. Perhaps, therefore the Gospel picture of itinerant women serving Jesus and his male disciples (Mk 15:41) was historically more plausible than the role assigned to them (Ng 2001:62 - 63).

Furthermore, while there is the supposed a-familial ethos deemed to be present in the Jesus movement by Schüssler-Fiorenza and other feminists, where Jesus' admonition

to his adherents seemed to prioritise discipleship at the expense of family, Ng submits that the authentic Jesus' sayings which prohibited divorce and demanded the honouring of parents (Mk 7:9 - 13; Mt 15:3 - 9; Mk 10:19; Mt 19:19; Lk 18:20) by children exposes Schüssler-Fiorenza and African feminists' far-fetched assertions. Thus, to claim that the Jesus movement had an a-familial and role-revolt outlook for women's emancipation is a mere argument from silence because Jesus aimed at strengthening family relations by his teachings against divorce and admonished children to obey their parents (Mk 10:2 - 9; 12:18 - 27).

As shall be seen in Chapter 5, the custom of honouring parents was modelled under the honour and shame and patron client models, where children as lower-class members of a family were supposed to obey the paterfamilias of the home, namely their father, who had supreme authority over them as payment for their protection by him as his clients. Thus, the admonition by Jesus is consistent with his societal dictates. Thus, it stands out that Jesus was not modifying an ancient practice in his early Jesus movement.

Rutoro (2012:163) argues that the passion narratives exonerate women as committed disciples over the Twelve, who went on to deny, abandon and doubt Jesus, while the women exhibited immense faith and commitment to him and his sayings. Mary, being the first to see Jesus, was commissioned with the gospel message, 'He is risen', but she was to proclaim it to the male disciples, thereby fulfilling the apostleship role which was assumed by the male disciples too. This graphically proves that Jesus assigned his women disciples the same roles he assigned the male disciples. Rutoro (2012:166) advocates for the continuation of the gender-inclusivity approach to ministry, which for her was propounded by Jesus himself and also enforced as well as practised by those who came after him, like Paul through his Galatians 3:26 - 28 mantra. Rutoro holds that churches are supposed to be transformed into gender-responsive institutions where women's empowerment is high priority on their daily piety for them to be a continuation of the ministry of Jesus.

However, Ng (2002:256) argues against the rigid lexical meanings of terms *dianonia* and *diakonein*, regarding them as technical terms which strictly refer to ecclesiastical leadership as problematic because 'it is not the case that these terms are inevitably

technical terms for leadership in the New Testament. Rather, *diaconia* in the NT is used in reference to ‘service at the tables’ and not ecclesiastical leadership. Hence, it is proper to understand the *diakonia* service of the women in Mark and Luke as ‘caring for the physical needs, especially serving of meals’, and hence the women who followed Jesus from Galilee cared for Jesus’ physical needs on the journey from Galilee (Ng 2002:292). Thus, in Martha’s case, there is no way she can be seen as having assumed an ecclesiastical leadership role by her being engaged with the worries of attending to the guests who had come to mourn Lazarus in her home or even *diakonia* service in a church setting.

Witherington (1995:181-85) opines that the reason why Jewish women followed Jesus was not that he offered them leadership roles but that he was seen as having fulfilled the OT prophecies of him being the promised messiah who was to offer them liberation from Roman occupation and thus end their suffering under high taxes, which relegated most poor women to landlessness and even slavery. Van Eck (2013:2 - 9) has described how women suffered under the exploitative Roman regimes, which incorporated the Jewish leaders and assigned the power to swindle their own kinsmen’s resources and life. According to Ng (2002:85 - 86), the early Christianity era of the first century C.E offered no emancipatory options for women because such an impetus contradicted the patriarchal ethos of both Judaism and Greco-Roman Hellenism. Such a society, adds van Eck, had generally no room for women’s participation in leadership ranks.

Malina (1988:62), and Ng (2002:98 - 111) have concluded that the claim by feminist scholars that women in the Greco Roman period enjoyed more freedoms is exaggerated, as evidence is awash showing that the patriarchal ethos was still very alive and dictated how men and women related to each other, as well as regulated the spaces they were to access. For example, Augustus expected women to be housewives through the rewards he gave to child bearing. These realities removed women’s autonomy in both private and public arenas. For Ng, rich propertied women (patrons and benefactors) were still expected to be accompanied by their husbands or male slaves when in public spaces, such as dinners and gymnasiums. Thus, Ng and other social-historical and social-scientific scholars warn that feminists’ assertions must not be taken at face value but must rather be studied deeper to understand the

basis for their claims against the concrete historical and social milieus of phenomena they seek to investigate, such as the one under discussion in this research.

As regards other associations and clubs, Ng agrees with Schüssler-Fiorenza's view that women assumed key roles as patrons in many Greek associations and clubs, but Fisher (1988:1191 - 195), Judge (1960:40ff) and Countryman (1977:35 - 43) argue that in these associations it was not always the case that slaves and women were easily accepted for the social stratifications grouped people with the same status or homogeneous groups, and thus poor women and slaves remained with restricted access to public arena. Clubs were run by patrons, women of means not ordinary people or slaves.

Ng (2002:1) has voiced that, Christian feminists especially those writing from First World societies' world-views, are imposing their philosophical frameworks and making them standards through which all other phenomena of women's experiences are to be discussed. For Ng, there is a need for feminists from specific territories to describe women's experiences through their own societal epistemologies and world-views so as to establish if women were truly suppressed in Judaism, Greco-Roman societies and also the specific territories feminism gets applied to, such as China and Africa, for example. This, adds Ng, will help in a faithful contextualisation task of the early church's message on the role of women in various specific territories, not using Western world-views, epistemologies and philosophical frameworks as standards for all women.

The same fear is seen by some African feminists, such as Nadar (2004:271 - 272), Amaefula (2021:289 -292), Kasomo & Maseno (2011:155,157), (Oduyoye 1983:249), Kanyoro (2001:168) and Nadar in Bongmba (2012:275), who warn that African feminists must craft solutions to guard against Western feminist Apartheid so that the bible text is evaluated using the African lens on the subject of women and their role in church alongside men. For them, the task of establishing what gospel message on how women fared in the bible by Africans must be interpreted through African epistemologies, philosophical grids and world-views, not the Western ones, since the temptation is to use Western feminism's tenets on African realities, a phenomenon which leads to biased conclusions.

However, Schüssler-Fiorenza, writing from the First world's Western perspective and world-view, is adamant on maintaining that the early Christian movement might have been influenced by Judaism in its oppressive-to-women stance, and that's why Jesus, the radical feminist, had to champion and radically oppose that culture to bring an amelioration to women. For her, such a stance is to be continued so as to crush patriarchy and *kyriarchy* in all societies of the world, especially in Africa. Schüssler-Fiorenza (1983:106) retorts that 'Christian feminists must not take feminist Jewish scholars like Plaskow's warning seriously because it puts them in a serious quandary'. This is the context in which this research is advocating for a contextualised reading of the NT to solve these inconsistencies and thus propose other ways of interpreting the meaning of Jesus' dealings with women in his ministry for application lessons to the SDAZ's ordination question.

Clark (1989:38 - 40) posits that the egalitarian outlook so imagined as having been created by the self-imposition of women patrons on themselves, was not the same status and outlook for the house churches because 'early Christian communities were modelled under the Greco-Roman familial model which were hierarchical and patriarchal and never egalitarian'. In support of this view, Ng (2002:123 - 125) holds that there is virtually no reason for these women to have sought another social association in Christianity for the base reason of fulfilling their status inadequacy and prestige which they had lost in Christian house churches when such was offered again in associations, clubs and mystery cults, certainly there would be no convincing reason for them to join Christianity for social reasons. Thus, the assertion that people joined Christianity because it offered something which all these mystery religions could not offer holds water, as what that something was to be established.

Furthermore, the egalitarian outlook of Jesus' ministry amidst the imperial patriarchal dominance of the Greco-Roman society is questioned by social-scientific scholars, who seek a justification of such a possibility. For them, the question 'how could egalitarianism ever really have been practised in such a society of *paterfamilias* from the state/imperial religions to family set-up?' is a question that continues to deserve answers.

Again, for the social-scientific scholars, the feminists' claim that Christianity appealed to its prospective adherences by its offer of egalitarian structures appears to be incongruent with the reality they project of mystery cults, voluntary associations, and clubs, which offered far more freedom to women. Why would they bother joining another religious sect (Christianity) when the same egalitarianism was already offered in their religions. Thus, these inconsistencies are seen by social-scientific scholars as militating against feminists' claims about the real standing of Christianity in the Greco-Roman period and the role women played. Also, the claim that Christianity moulded itself imitating the egalitarian structures of the clubs and mystery cults lacks evidence, since the household structures did not have the office of the priest yet priestly offices were present in the Isis cult, for example.

Edwards (1989:49) insists that although Jesus did not include women in his list of Twelve disciples, his radical teaching, which was contrary to his customs, and his acceptance to teach them is assurance that he never affirmed the male-headship principle, which advocates for the exclusion of women in ministry.

Levine (2001:1) maintains that Jesus' hesitance in referring women to as apostles and the failure for there to be a woman replacement of Judas is a loud statement against the eligibility of women for an apostleship rank similar to that of the Twelve. Witherington (1990:232) insists that although women were allowed to venture into spaces they were previously barred from by culture, all four gospels maintain that the authoritative witnessing-for-Jesus role was to be done by the male disciples only.

Shin (2007:412 - 413) insists that women assumed leadership roles, as confirmed by the fact that the resurrection episode happens to have disqualified the male disciples while exonerating women as the actual witnesses of Jesus to the communities. Although the disciples caught wind of the resurrection event, adds Shin, they fled and hid in their homes for fear and disbelief. Only the women became the true witnesses. They were given instruction by Jesus to go and proclaim the message to the Twelve, thereby fulfilling what is meant by the term 'witness' in its truest sense (Mattila 1999:158). Thus, the word *mathetes* is symbolic and includes women disciples whom Matthew could not accurately mention because of his cultural dictates, yet evidence

proves that their role was similar to the Twelve, proving that Jesus viewed women and their role as similar to the male disciples.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has evinced varying views studied Synoptic Gospels *pericopae* which talks about women's roles. The social-scientific interpretive lens does not see women as having assumed equal ecclesiastical leadership authority, nor were they regarded as having the same roles as the Twelve in the Jesus movement of the first century CE. African feminists interpret the said *pericopae* with suspicion and deduce that Jesus opposed his societal prejudices to bring women to the same roles as men. However, evidence submitted in this chapter from the early Palestinian, Hellenistic, and Greco-Roman periods in which Jesus' ministry operated revealed that Greco-Roman society adopted the Ancient Jewish patriarchal ethos. Though Jesus might be seen (on the surface) as supporting women and other segregated classes, a closer analysis of the ancient Mediterranean culture in which Jesus ministered, revealed that he was actually operating under the confines of his cultural dictates of honour and shame and patronage. He also operated under collectivistic paradigms, where miracles, healings, and allowing the segregated classes of people such as women was meant to gain honour for himself and for his clients, the women - and not make them leaders in his ministry. These classes of segregated people followed Jesus in such determined ways to pay homage and honour as their patron, who had proved to be powerful over earthly patrons, and *paterfamilias*, namely the men and leaders of that society such as Pharisees. Thus, women, slaves, gentiles, lepers, the sick all strove to follow him not as leaders in his movement, but as his clients while he was their patron who stood for the real patron of the bigger family, the kingdom of heaven, who was none other than God himself, in line with the microcosm of the macrocosm motif of Greco-Roman society (see Chapter 3). Hence, his failure to abrogate the established customs of his era also demonstrated his collectivistic epistemological convictions, as all of his followers' actions were at the end of the day evaluated on the dominant societal ethos. Though they might have been allowed to be with Jesus on individual levels, they nevertheless had to conform to what their social codes dictated. Atypical example used the story of the women at the tomb after the resurrection, who were not instructed by the angel to go preach to Judea, Samaria and other places,

though they had independently followed and supported Jesus, but were told to conform to what their society ascribed as the norm, namely of telling the male disciples, who were the official apostles to all territories.

CHAPTER 5

WOMEN IN DEUTERO-PAULINE LETTERS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter traces how the genuine deuterio-Pauline letters of Ephesians and Colossians (Vasanthakumar (1997:46) describe women's participation in these said Christian households in comparison with their male counterparts. Again, the social-scientific as well as the African feminist interpretive lens in use in this study is applied in selected *pericopae* which speak on women's roles in these above-named letters for an evaluative analysis of what that means for the SDAZ's ban on women's ordination against her church manual pronouncements. Again, syntactical, lexical, and grammatical word studies are not attempted in this chapter for the reasons cited in Chapter 3's point 3.1 and Chapter 4's point 4.1.

5.2 Background

According to Lührmann (1980:83 - 97), deuterio-Pauline writings are letters that are believed to have been written by Paul's redactors, as they do not seem to display characteristics of authentic Pauline authorship, although they bear the name of Paul and show much continuity with the Pauline theology seen in the authentic Pauline epistles.

Ephesians and Colossians are regarded as household codes which offer a glimpse into how life in early Christian households was modelled. This issue of household management is an area of interest for this research, as seen in Chapter 3, for its ability to study the role and place of women in the religious spaces which competed for space with the normal household life of families. The focus on these household codes for de Wet (2012:398) seems to be directed towards the Christian *paterfamilias* in relation to those falling within his sphere of domination, who are either a husband, father or slaveholder. Reumann (1967:147 - 167) opines that the household codes from the New Testament bear a remarkable resemblance with each other, and it gives a glimpse into early Christian understandings of *oikonomia* (the art of household management). This chapter seeks to discover the influence of these issues in the *ekklesia* setting.

According to de Wet (2012:398), Ephesians and Colossians are regarded as letters that exhibit the household codes (*haustafeln*) of the Greco-Roman communities, which were microcosmic social contracts. Lührmann (1980:83 - 97) concurs with this view by positing that the *haustafeln* of the New Testament are grouped within the documents known as Deutero-Pauline writings. They reflect how *oikonomia* was done, and the writers of these epistles appropriated them to management of the Christian contact and behaviour between men, women, children, slaves and their standing to and with God. This affirms the social-scientific aspect spoken of by Malina, Jourbet and Van Der Watt (1996:xi), who hold that interpreters are not innocent, as they are vulnerable to social cultural contexts in which they produce their language and symbols in their quests to describe and make sense of reality around them. Hence, the *haustafeln* concept was incorporated into the Christian household life system. This thought affirms why this research believes in the social-scientific models as keys to unlock the NT texts to understand how women were perceived in their proper context of the society they lived in for the purposes of application to a context far removed from the NT world such as the SDAZ.

Informed by Foucault's (1977:2010) hypothesis of discipline and the governmentality of human bodies, de Wet (2012:398) observes that it can be inferred that the ancient households were viewed as the central disciplinary institution in early Christianity. Governmentality can be understood as those technologies of and attitudes towards governance in which bodies are monitored, regulated and educated within society (Foucault 2010). According to de Wet (2012:398), the developments of early Christianity can be traced alongside the concept of governmentality, which may also be understood as pastoralism to understand how this concept was shaped within the institution of the household with specific reference to the problem of slave-management. This line of thought is applied in this chapter for a broader analysis of how roles were codified in household churches, though it has been proven in previous chapters that the honour and shame model is the one that shaped the behaviour of people in Ancient Mediterranean society.

According to de Wet (2012:401), the household codes depict a hierarchical structure of authority in which God is at the top, followed by Christ, Paul, husband, wife, children and slaves. The husband is to love the wife as his own body and keep her pure as he

must also keep his body pure. The writers of Ephesians and Colossians, like Paul, are also conforming to Ancient Mediterranean cultural norms, where purity codes were taken very seriously, as they determined the status and role of a person. Also, they reflect the shame-honour dynamics which helped to keep virtues that would grant honour and not shame to the person, his or her microcosmic household that also would result in causing the other superior *paterfamilias* to attract shame. Thus, the body of the woman who represented the church was to be kept pure so that the body of Christ, the church, would be pure. As is attested in Chapter 2, there is no innocent writing where a writer's independent opinion is expressed, rather they contextualise their message in the cultural lenses of the communities they write to. De Wet (2012:403) submits that the writers of Ephesians and Colossians aligned their messages to the stoic and Platonic epistemologies that were in operation and governing their communities. Commenting on slave-master relations and the household codes, the Christian slave-holders were admonished to treat their slaves kindly and not with threats, since the slave-holders too are ruled by a heavenly slave-holder, to whom they belonged. Again, the microcosm of the macrocosm analysis is at play. Christ is portrayed as the typical just and fair *paterfamilias*. This aligns with the philosophical lessons each person in the ancient Mediterranean society was groomed in, where women, as well as men, were taught virtues that would make them attain honour and not shame. In this context of the exhibition of good virtues by the earthly *paterfamilias*, slaves need to fear their masters in the same way as they fear God.

MacDonald (2010:30) has opined that etymologically, the term household is derived from the Greek word for house, *oikos/oikia*, and the Latin term *dumus*, which refers not only to a physical dwelling but also to the household property involving material goods, slaves, and nuclear family members such as wives and children (see also Moxnes 1997:20 – 21, Osiek & Balch 1997:6). For the purposes of the focus of this study, it ought to be emphasised that the mention of the household property and its description of what and who constitutes it needs to be taken seriously, as it hinges the fulcrum of this chapter. The household system in Ephesians and Colossians resembles those of the Ancient Mediterranean collectivist society, as has been highlighted in Chapter 2.

The household (with all its concomitant membership forms) was under the management of a male head who was referred to as the *paterfamilias*. This Mediterranean household management (*oikonomia*) concept is key to understanding the NT household codes of Ephissians 5:21 - 6:9 and Colossians 3:18 - 4:1. Its emphasis on the *familia* (a Latin term referring to more than a nucleus family³¹) is typical of a collectivistic outlook. The *paterfamilias* had legal power and authority (*pater protestas*) over all his households and was legally allowed by Roman laws to put them to slavery or death as he wishes. Osiek and MacDonald postulate that the *paterfamilias* had so much power that he would even oversee a household that was owned by a woman, or a widow (Osiek and MacDonal 2006:154-5). (See also Chapter 2 of this work).

According to Kartzow (2010:378), the household codes in Colossians 3:18 - 4:1 are meant to strengthen the patriarchal hierarchy for social cohesion in the household churches. The subordinates were to remain in their social class even in the new life of being in the 'house of God', since the immediate households represented the microcosm of the macrocosm, where God will have final authority as the *paterfamilias* of everyone. Behaviours that attract shame will consequently bring shame to the microcosm household, which will bring shame to their earthly *paterfamilias* (Paul) and ultimately to the master *paterfamilias* (God). The collectivist mentality can easily be

³¹ The term has striking allusions to the NT households as has been seen in chapter 2 where Paul also modelled his theology around household codes with their emphasis on strict adherence to hierarchy and collective interests.

seen in how the honour and shame model dictated the pace across all households of the early Christian era under study in this work.

It can be observed that three groups are required to obey or subject themselves under the authority of their superiors: wives to husbands, slaves to earthly masters and children to parents, while the superiors are instructed to treat their subordinates with concern (husbands to love their wives and never treat them harshly, masters to treat their slaves 'justly and fairly', while fathers, not mothers, are not to provoke their children). The focus on fathers and not mothers reflect the Ancient Mediterranean kinship model, as has been highlighted above and in previous chapters.

5.3 Dynamics of the household codes

Harrill (2006:113 - 114) submits that the codes of Ephesians and Colossians, as well as other 'codes', are meant to bind the Christians together in one collective family in compliance with the kinship rhetoric of the wider Greco-Roman world. For Harrill, the section in Ephesians 5:15 - 20 is therefore a virtue discourse in which the basic assumption was that after baptism, the believers are unified into one family, assuming a fictive kinship structure (Eph. 4:22 - 24) which was supposed to be maintained by the virtue dynamics operated by honour and shame and collectivistic models. According to de Wet (2012:399), the *haustafeln* are very patriarchal and androcentric. God is depicted as the absentee *paterfamilias*, who is at the top of the hierarchy. Power is then designated to other the participants of the microcosm household, namely Christ, father, husband, and slave master. De Wet (2012:400) seems to be correct in extrapolating that in the Ephesian *haustafeln*, we see a typical early Christian attempt to implement ideas and practices of governmentality, as well as a negotiation of this form of governance within the wider context of ancient Mediterranean society and culture. Hence Harrill (2006:113) argues that the *haustafeln* in both Ephesians and Colossians (and even to a greater degree, the entire epistles themselves), represent primitive Christian 'handbooks' of *oikonomia*. This is in line with what is highlighted in Chapters 2 and 3, that the early Christian writers ministered in a highly collectivist society. De Wet (2012:400) accedes to this view by adding that the social theorists of the NT highlight the fact that societies from the New Testament times are quite collectivistic. Malina (2001:58 - 80) affirms that group-oriented collective personalities are one of the defining characteristics of the historical anthropology of the New

Testament. According to MacDonald (2010:31), the household codes are crafted in such a way that they focus on the microcosm level of the societal organisational structure (the physical family) and subject it to an even higher authority (the higher *paterfamilias*) in the macrocosm realm of God and the heavens, where all members in the microcosm are to relinquish their status because in the macrocosm realm where God alone is in charge, they all are brothers. For MacDonald, the household codes had a tendency to form fictive/symbolic kinships where the Christian adherents were incorporated to a new symbolic family unit with God as their new *paterfamilias* to whom all earthly *paterfamilias* had to submit. Of interest, adds MacDonald, is that the hierarchical structure is still maintained in these symbolic and fictive households, which reveals the writers' orientation to the Ancient Mediterranean concept of family in which the earthly *paterfamilias* as leader was mandated to give orders which saw to the common and collective good of the primary group, as was done by Paul in Corinth (which is explained in detail in Chapter 3).

The Ephesian and Colossian codes are steeped in kinship, purity codes, patron-client, collectivist and honour-shame models which pervaded the early Christianity piety. To show its patriarchal bias, these honour-and-shame-inspired admonitions are aimed at women and daughters, who are urged to cherish faithfulness, purity, and virginity (in the case of the unmarried and widows). These are emphasised, as they stood as determinants for the pedigree and heritage of their society, in which was a duty of all to preserve the ultimate collective common good of the primary group (in line with the collectivistic model). Hence the codes in Ephesians and Colossians have a deliberate emphasis on virtues linked to the preservation of family relations between wives and husbands, children and parents and masters and slaves.

5.4 The nature of the household codes

MacDonald (2010:31) observes that the codes follow a certain pattern of two pairings: firstly, the pairings which emphasise family unity (microcosm), and secondly, family relational pairs linked to wider social realities (macrocosm). For example, in Ephesians 5:20 - 33, the familial relations are metaphorically intertwined with Christ's relationship with the church, so as to emphasise relations between the human and the divine. The reasons for this have been explained in the above paragraphs.

For MacDonald, the codes reveal that they begin with direct address to subordinate members (wives, slaves, children), which is then followed by the address to the family members in positions of authority (husbands, masters, and parents). This is followed by (adds MacDonald) an addition of a motivational clause ‘for this is your acceptable duty in the Lord’. More so, the codes are contextualised to appeal to their immediate hearers. For example, they are contextualized to the slaves, for example, as Colossians 3:24 promises ‘inheritance’ to the slaves, an unheard-of reality in Greco-Roman family structure – where slaves were not entitled to any inheritance or social recognition. According to MacDonald, the household codes gave slaves a new social order where they were to stand equal with those regarded as legitimate members (Col 3:1 - 4). This new reality seemed to disturb the social structures and thus seemed likely to pose tensions with the established family structure power systems, as they liberated and exonerated the subordinate members to the level of the *paterfamilias* and vice versa (MacDonald 2010:34).

5.4.1 Slaves and masters

As earlier stated, the new relations in the new life of the new household of God posed tensions in the established norms of the early Christian era. Against known norms, the slaves were worthy to receive an inheritance and worthy to be brothers to their masters. The phrase ‘in the Lord’ gave slaves a new status, yet they were still expected to continue to be subordinate to their masters and not to run away or revolt (See Chapter 2 discussion of Philemon). The matter becomes complicated when discussed outside church circles, where slaves were sex objects for their masters. Now in the new status it may have meant that they were free from such sexual exploits of their masters and regarded as brothers and sisters under the new *paterfamilias* of the heavenly household (God himself). MacDonald (2010:38) suspects that the practice of sexual exploitation by slave masters might have been there in Christian households by the presence of the admonition in Colossians 3:11 ‘stripping off the old self with its practices, which might have been targeted to masters to stop the practice and regard their slaves as their sisters in the Lord’. In Colossians 3:22 – 24, slaves are admonished to fear the new master (the Lord), more than the earthly master, emphasising the macrocosm’s superiority over the microcosm, where fearing the Lord was the ultimate priority for slaves. Masters were reminded that they were under the *kyrios* of heaven, who had authority over all earthly household structures because he

was able to give inheritance to all, slave or free (Col 3:17). This new status of slaves to their masters is also seen and emphasised by Paul, in his letter to Philemon, where his run-away slave Onesimus is sent back by Paul, this time not as a slave but a fellow believer with Philemon (Philemon 16). Paul instructs Philemon to free Onesimus because of their new symbolic family in which a true God is now in charge of all, master and slave. As highlighted by MacDonald, this superiority of symbolic fictive family over the earthly established structures posed as a potential spot for breeding conflicts with the established norms of their society.

5.4.2 Parents and children

According to MacDonald (2010:40), the codes in Ephesians 6:1 - 4 and Colossians 3:20 - 21 appear to be directed to children young enough to be under parental control, though some scholars hold that they were aimed at the grown-ups also, since the admonition borrows from the Jewish tradition which called children to honour their parents until and during old age.

MacDonald submits that just as the teachings concerning new slave-master relations 'in the Lord' were to be discussed in realisation of the complex realities the slaves were in, the discussion of children and parents had to be discussed in view of multiple realities which defined the identity of community members in this era. Examples include some parents who were slaves, including their children. After divorce, some children would not stay with their original parents. Some children might have non-believing parents. Parents were admonished against harsh reproofs to their children (Col 3:20 - 21; 6:1 - 4) parents were to educate their children in the instruction of the Lord (MacDonald 2010:41). The superiority of the parents, just as the superiority of the slave master, would thus sink into thin oblivion when it came to submitting to a higher power, the *paterfamilias* of the heavenly family – God. Again, MacDonald warns of the tensions this might have caused in the established norms of this society, where children were given a new *paterfamilias* while the earthly one got relegated yet he was the one responsible for all their welfare in the present life. For some scholars, this teaching was countered by Christianity's critics such as Celsus, who castigated early Christianity for inciting children to rebel against their parental authority and allowing married women to seek independence away from their husbands control, against standing cultural norms.

However, Tucker and Liefeld (1987:83) submits that the admonition to obey is directed to slaves and children while women are admonished to submit to their husbands. The submission of women to their husbands, adds Tucker and Liefeld, was meant for the purpose of luring the husbands to get converted only after which the submission would cease just as was the case of slaves who were to obey their masters for a temporary period since the slavery was deemed to end by a new status. The masters were reminded to forgive their slaves and regard them as brothers 'in the Lord' as also seen in the Paul-Philemon-Onesimus talk.

5.4.3 Husbands and wives

According to MacDonald (2010:37), marriage was vital in Jewish life and Christian chastity. It set them apart from other cultures, who were highly immoral, such as the hedonistic Greeks. Hence Paul's apologetic stance to Christianity in the face of creeping immoral influences from the Isis cult is discussed in Chapter 2, he also stood against Celsus's polemic statements against Christianity, where he admonished his adherents to conform to the codes of behaviour he presented to them, which governed sexual relations among them so that they would be distinguished as pure before the communities and God in line with the collectivistic model they were groomed in.

As such, the Ephesian codes are steeped in advocating for chastity in marriage by advocating for separation from worldly practices (Eph 4:17 - 5:20). For this reason, divorce was prohibited, though not explicitly mentioned in Ephesians; it is inferred by its mentioning of the permanency of the marriage institution (Eph 5:22 - 33). Of importance is how the writers bring out the theme of microcosm and macrocosm relations to emphasise the links between earthly marriage relations to Christ and the church, where the permanency aspect comes out: that Christ, because of the love he has for the church, died for it as a lesson for earthly husbands to shun divorce and permanently love their wives to the extent of dying for them rather than quitting the union (MacDonald 2010:37).

5.5 Dichotomies around household codes

In line with a popular adage that holds that there is more to the unsaid story, one is tempted to argue whether these codes spoke of all the dynamics around the intricateness of families in the imperial Roman period. MacDonald (2010:36) argues

that as much as the husband was the sole arbiter of decision making and authority in the family set up during the Greco-Roman era, there are instances where married women wielded authority independently from their husbands to the commendation of these very husbands when they were away. In the case of widowed women, the widows were allowed the freedom to attend public meetings, as is seen in the pastoral letters, where widows were esteemed highly to be given church office roles. Thus, the codes which gave the male *paterfamilias* authority would meet tensions in face of a widow outside his family lineage.

Secondly, the codes demanded the submission of slaves to their masters. However, one asks whether this applied to non-Christian masters. Third, family units during this era were complex. When children are demanded to obey their parents in all things in the Lord, one questions the practicality of it in a situation of slave children, who were symbolically in the home of their master yet not part of his children. One asks whether they too would be bound by this command?

It is in this background that MacDonald (2010:36) submits that 'when one reads the NT codes, he or she should be aware of the unspoken expectations and conventions that might not be immediately apparent to the modern reader'. For example, I have just mentioned the informal authority that was exercised by widows and other women of means, who were referred to as matrons.

5.6 The Colossians code

Schüssler-Fiorenza's (1997:235) submission that Colossians was written by a disciple of Paul after his death differs with that of Witherington (1990:148) who thinks that Paul is the author of both Colossians and Ephesians. According to Meeks (1977:209), the letter to the Colossians makes use of the baptismal liturgy of the Asian churches, though it is not focused on the excitement of the restoration of human equality in the new community but is rather focused on the eschatological stage where 'the opposing elements of the universe will be reconciled to each other'. Lohse (1971:153 - 82) agrees with this view too.

According to Schüssler-Fiorenza, the writer of Colossians quotes the Syrian Hellenistic baptismal formula which is modified by the writer of Colossians by to make it applicable to the household code of patriarchal submission. Witherington (1990:148) is of the

view that the writer of Colossians might have adopted the Hellenistic household management codes and Christianised them. Schüssler-Fiorenza holds that by the time of the writing of Colossians, the separation of Jews and Greeks had already taken place and thus was no longer the focus of the writer of Colossians. According to Lohse (1971:142 - 147), the writer of Colossians modifies Paul's Greek/gentile mould with refining descriptions about the gentile by adding 'barbarian' and 'Scythian' in order to stress that national and cultural differences and inequalities are overcome in the new humanity of Christ. Furthermore, Schüssler-Fiorenza also observes another interesting reality: the male/female pair is not mentioned at all in Colossians. Moreover, the writer of Colossians in Colossians 3:11 dissolves the slave/free polarisations that defined the social-political stratifications of institutional slavery. Schüssler-Fiorenza explains that the reason for the lack of focus and categorisation of the slave/free in Colossians is that 'the writer of Colossians 3:11 no longer juxtaposed slave/free as opposite alternatives but adds them to the enumeration and elaboration of those who are uncircumcised, namely the ones termed barbarians, Scythians, slave, freeborn.

According to Schüssler-Fiorenza, the new community, which she refers to as 'angelic religion', was to remember that the high moral standards to which they were admonished to adhere to were actually not to be realised by ascetic and ritual practice but seen in ethical behaviour and communal life. Again, this confirms the strong social-scientific models which pervaded the NT writers' thought systems and found their way into their writings. Since they have been raised with Christ (through baptism), they are to 'seek the things that are above' and to 'set their minds on the things that are above'. They do so 'by putting away' anger, wrath, malice, slander, and pursuing meekness, and patience, forbearing one another and forgiving each other. Above all, they should 'put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony' (Col 3:5-17). They should behave wisely to outsiders and be able to answer everyone (Col 4:5f). The source and conviction of these virtue emphasis' efforts were explained in Chapter 2, with the reason for such thinking to be cherished in early Christian communities being highlighted.

Schüssler-Fiorenza (1997:236) observes that the Colossian household code, namely Colossians 3:18 - 4:1, is the first and most precise form of the domestic code in the NT. According to Lohse (1971:156 - 60), 'the basic form of this code consists of three

parts of reciprocal exhortations addressing the relationship between wife and husband, children and father, and slaves and masters'. In each case, the socially subordinate first member of the pair is exhorted to obedience to the superordinate second. The formal structure of such a household code, then, consists of address (wives), exhortation (submit to your husbands), and motivation (as is fitting in the Lord).

For Lohse, the only Christian element in the Colossian code is the addition 'in the Lord' otherwise the rest is a Greco-Roman ethic of the patriarchal household code in line with honour-shame and collectivistic models. 'In taking over the Greco-Roman ethic of the patriarchal household code, Colossians not only 'spiritualizes' and moralizes the baptismal community understanding expressed in Galatians 3:28 but also makes this Greco-Roman household ethic a part of Christian social ethic' (Lohse 1971:156 – 60). However, Schüssler-Fiorenza (1979:237) submits that the reinterpretation of this Christian baptismal vision only happened in the late third of the first century, and thus it is only found in the post-Pauline traditions, which suggests that it must have had no effect on the Jesus traditions (since the Jesus movement did not know of its existence).

The writer of Colossians is said to have quoted the code out of concern not of the behaviour of wives but that of slaves. Hence, Crouch (1972:150 - 159) adds that the expansion of the code's third pair, slave-master, indicates that the obedience and acceptance of servitude by Christian slaves are of utmost concern. Colossians ask slaves to fulfil their task with single-mindedness of heart and dedication 'as serving the Lord and not men' (Col 3:23). It not only promises eschatological reward for such behaviour but also threatens eschatological judgement and punishment for misbehaviour (Col 3:24ff). The injunction to masters is very short and has no Christian component except the reminder that they too have a Master in heaven.

Slave behaviour is likened here to the Christian service of the Lord, while the 'masters' are likened to the 'Master' in heaven. It is obvious that the good behaviour of the slaves, according to the author of Colossians, is the concrete realisation of Galatians 3:28, insofar as both slaves and freeborn have one Lord in heaven, Jesus Christ, and they belong to the new humanity, now 'hid with Christ in God' (Col 3:3). For Judge

(1960:60, 71), the injunction to the masters presupposes that they still have slaves who might or might not have been Christians.

With this glaring reality, that the writer of Colossians adopted an already-in-use Greco-Roman patriarchal household code by inserting the phrase 'in the Lord'. Schüssler-Fiorenza holds that the domestic code as used by Christians is indeed a later Christian adaptation of a Greco-Roman or Jewish-Hellenistic philosophical-theological code.

Judge (1960:71) observes that 'the treatises on economics and politics that reflect a form already codified by Aristotle and at home in the philosophical schools and morals of the first century C.E are likely to be the origins of this code'. The moralists of the early empire sought to formulate an ethic that would find a balance between the absolute traditional demands of subordination and obedience to the *paterfamilias* and the ideals of equality formulated in the Hellenistic age. Thus, what comes to the fore in the household codes of the NT is the desire for 'an ethically softened or humanized notion of domination and rule', concludes Judge (1960:77).

Horsley (1979:5) submits that the right order of the house and economics are intertwined because in antiquity the household was economically independent, self-sufficient, and hierarchically ordered, and as such the basis of the state. In this case, as was reinforced by Augustus, the three *topoi*, namely 'concerning the state', 'concerning household management', and 'concerning marriage' were closely intertwined. Thus, it is apparent that in antiquity, the rules of the household are part of economics and politics, as are religious rites and ancestral customs. For Horsley, the well-being of the state and the religious observance of the laws and customs of the patriarchal family are intertwined. Slaves and wives who do not worship the gods of the *paterfamilias* violate not only their household duties but also the laws of the state.

In conclusion, the praxis of coequal discipleship between slaves and masters, women and men, Jews and Greeks, Romans and barbarians, rich and poor, young and old, brought the Christian community into tension with its socio-political environment. This tension engendered by the alternative Christian vision of Galatians 3:28, not by 'enthusiastic excesses', became the occasion for introducing the Greco-Roman patriarchal order into the house church. Colossians and Ephesians testify that realised eschatology, rooted in the dualism between this world and the world above, is

responsible for developing a theological justification of the patriarchal order (Horsley 1997:241).

5.7 Analysis of the Colossian and Ephesian household codes

Vasanthakumar (1997:45 - 46) holds that the household codes of Ephesians and Colossians advocate for the subjugation of women to men. As such, they are used by African male church leaders to justify the continued exclusion of women from the leadership, as they claim that African culture is similar to the culture in which Paul wrote and conformed to.

Wa Gatumu (2019:24 - 25) laments over the reading of Ephesians 5:21 - 33 through patriarchal lenses to exclude and alienate women from church leadership, which has been happening since antiquity and sadly continues to this day. For her, the feminist lens has to be engaged to bring the much-needed amelioration of women, for the said text does not patronise men's superiority and authority or encourage women's inferiority and submission. Oduyoye (2019:35 - 36) refers to Ephesians 5:21 - 33 as one of the 'the texts of terror' which African feminists ought to re-read through African women's eyes to grant them emancipation from the patriarchal grip. Oduyoye holds that this will empower the African woman to say no to questionable sermons and counselling that conditions the African woman to subscribe to fixed marriage dictates where she stands as a spectator in her own home. Such a marriage set up poses serious threats to the well-being of the woman, as the husband is let loose to venture into polygamy and other adulterous acts, all of which is done without the consent of the wife. In such a scenario, the woman is vulnerable to life-threatening diseases such as HIV/AIDS, and thus African feminists call for rejection of biblical sermonisations which quote passages such as Ephesians 5:21 - 33 as the blueprint for marriage and behaviour between husband and wives.

Congenial with Wa Gatumu, Girard (2000:125 - 129; 136 - 141) proposes that rather than taking the text to require demanding and coercive submission of women to men, its re-reading through a feminist lens reveals that it was actually meant to challenge the social structures that permitted and enforced control and subjugation of women, and it thus calls for the transformation of Greco-Roman and Jewish household management. In this regard, adds Girard, what the text advocates for is mutual

submission between husband and wife based on love and respect. Building up this argument, Coontz (2005:77) and Burns (1986:286) asserts that the text sought to encourage men to love their wives, as opposed to the prevailing Greco-Roman cultural practice that cultured men to deprive their wives of love emotions. Thus, the main issue being addressed in the text is on the issue of submission of wives to their husbands, but rather husband's sacrificial love for the wife, to which she would willingly respond in a positive manner. All parties were to mutually submit reciprocally.

Furthermore, Wa Gatumu (2019:29 - 32) and Reynolds (2016:63) have reiterated on the same issue of mutual submission through the lexical and grammatical construction of certain verbs in the passage in question. For them, the presence of the Greek present middle voice verb *ὑποτασσόμενοι* is to emphasise the action the subject of the verb does, and that the action is done continuously, willingly and freely for personal benefit. These scholars' views thus resonate with those of Coontz (2005:77) and Burns (1986:286) that mutual and willing submission in Ephesians (5:21 - 33) thus radically differs from the normalised coercive submission of women in Greco-Roman households.

De Wet (2012:401) sees the Colossian household codes as resembling the Ephesian ones and even those of the pastoral letters. De Wet insists that just as in Ephesians, the Colossian *haustafeln* are also preceded by a detailed virtue-discourse. An important observation by De Wet resonates with what this researcher proposes in Chapter 2, that Paul may be wrongly blamed by some scholars as having shown male chauvinism and misogyny while in actual fact it was a case of him having to contextualise his message in the thought forms and epistemologies of the world he ministered in, otherwise his message would be viewed as incongruent with the life systems of his audiences.

In De Wet's (2012:403) opinion, 'some scholars assert that the *haustafeln* Christianise the subordination of women, children and slaves (for instance, D'Angelo 1994:313 - 324), while others, rightly in my opinion, assert that these codes are very much derived from similar social and cultural codes from the Ancient Mediterranean and not exactly a form of Christianisation' (see for instance, Osiek & Balch 1997:189). De Wet (2012:403) further observes similarities between the Ephesian and Colossian

household codes by asserting that ‘as in Ephesians, the Christian *oikonomia* is discussed in the context of virtue discourse in Colossians’. However, for de Wet, the writer of Colossians presents a much simpler *haustafeln* in Colossians than in Ephesians when it comes to the relationship between husband and wife, but an equally elaborative code or contract when it comes to slaves. de Wet holds that It should also be noted that these household codes are somewhat exceptional in that they:

address slaves directly, something not very common in ancient literary sources. They also seem to assume that slaves’ roles need more explanation than those of slave-holders, since the codes for the behaviour of slaves are much longer than those directed at the masters in both Ephesians and Colossians (De Wet 2012:404).

Again, the hierarchical structure is present in the Colossian code, where the microcosm of the macrocosm is maintained to instil discipline, avoid shame, and maintain group peace. Hence, Lincoln (1999:93 - 112) asserts that slaves are again reminded that Christ, their heavenly slave-holder, is watching them. For me, this is in line with the cultural mores of the ancient Mediterranean society in which these writers wrote, hence the *haustafeln* are located within the context of virtue discourse, where the virtuous slave was supposed to be the disciplined slave, one who exhibited known norms taught by the *paterfamilias* of each household and philosophers of this society, such Rufus and others, as seen in Chapter 2. The honour of the macrocosmic *paterfamilias*, which is gained by fair treatment of all members of the microcosm household, is emphasised by the admonition to slave-holders in Colossian 4:1: ‘Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a master in heaven.’ De Wet (2012:404) holds that ‘the slave-holder is reminded that he also has a master and he is also under the gaze of the superior *paterfamilias* who expects him to treat slaves kindly’. The slaves are also reminded of their rewards and possible punishments (honour-shame) the slave-holders are reminded that they should provide fairness and justice to slaves. Thus, the emphasis is that the measure accorded to slaves should be fairness and justice. De Wet concludes that the Ephesian code focuses on husband-and-wife relations while the Colossian one seems to place more emphasis on slave-master relations and their obligations to the household of God as its *paterfamilias*.

As highlighted in Chapter 2, that Paul stood as the *paterfamilias* of his church members demanding their allegiance, it can be seen that his followers who wrote the deuter-Pauline letters maintained that stance of restrictions and honour-and-shame models to order new behaviours of their hearers in the complex households which had slaves, slave children, slave families, and family members of divorced people, alongside legitimate families. According to Kartzow (2010:379), the collectivistic outlook of the Greco-Roman period seen in the NT writers, such as the writer of Colossians, seems to be consistently taught in the Colossian codes in that the writer changes terminology when referring to parents in 3:20. Realising that slaves had no rights to marry or legally own children, the writer (also knowing that slaves would informally or by chance beget children) uses an inclusive term 'parents' to cater for slave mothers who might have begotten children to be included in the codes because the community as a collective body was linked to the macrocosm realm of God's authority in his household, where all were worthy to receive what slaves were not granted under earthly masters' authority, namely inheritance. Verse 21 uses the word *πατήρ*, which refers to a male begetter, and is inclusive of anyone who might have begotten a child so as to include slaves. In that case, children of slaves would be included in this inclusive and collectivist system, since all will have parents. Ultimately, each social group becomes linked to the microcosm *paterfamilias*, Paul, who is under the authority of the macro *paterfamilias*, God (Kartzow 2010:383). In this case, the notion that Paul strengthened the established social order of Greco-Roman society to craft his new spiritual ordering of roles becomes true and consistent with the teaching seen in the deuter-Pauline household codes.

Kartzow (2010:383), stamps this view of the collectivistic nature of the codes, suggesting that the writers of the Ephesian and Colossian codes do not use gendered terms as is done in the genuine Pauline corpus, where Paul specifically mentions male-female differentiations, because the deuter-Pauline authors want to show that even slaves are included. If they had used male-female descriptions, slaves would be excluded, since slaves were regarded as genderless in Greco-Roman life (Osieki & Pouya 2010:47 - 48) (see Chapter 3's point 33.5.5). Slaves were seen as things with no gender, since they had no identity markers on which the honour-shame apparatus would be engaged to stratify their status. This point is further strengthened by observing that the codes of the Colossians do not mention ethnicity, religion or

nationality, as does Galatians 3:28 (Gentile, Greek or Jew), so is again used to include slaves and their children.

According to Horrell in Esler (1995:226 - 227), the Ephesian and Colossian *haustafeln* follow the household kinship models of hierarchical authority legitimization of roles. Although the subordinated slaves, women/wives and children are promised a new life under a better *paterfamilias*, God, they are reminded to continue offering willing submission and allegiance to their earthly *paterfamilias*, for this has a bearing on their relationship with God and the promise that he shall give those who are obedient to their earthly masters. Hence, Paul's hierarchical authority based on the creation narrative is consistently presented and emphasised by his disciples, namely the writers of the deuterio-Pauline epistles, where women still acted in willing submission to their husbands as did other subordinated classes. Horrell terms the willing submission as 'love-patriarchalism', a patriarchal hegemony that was reminded to put limits on its demand of allegiance by knowing that it was also responsible to God, the chief *paterfamilias* of everyone. Hence, women are not independent in the Colossian and Ephesian households.

Commenting on the Colossian household codes, Martin suggests that the context that gestated the codes was the problems of order of worship in the *ekklesia* spaces. Witherington (1990:149) buttresses this view by pointing out that:

A closer examination draws from the fact that the early church met in homes and so there was an overlap between members of the house and the house church, and between behaviour in the house and behaviour in the house church. Since the house was the context for both daily life and worship, it is natural to address proper household behaviour in general in the context of discussing worship in particular (Witherington 1990:149).

With this, Witherington holds that this is what the writer of Colossians chose to do, informed by the reality that schisms in the household would affect the worship life of the members in the *ecclesia* space (Schüssler-Fiorenza 1983:186). According to Schüssler-Fiorenza, while there are debates over the gender of the name Nymphas, which she argues was changed to have masculine endings, (*Acc, masculine, singular*), it is likely the name of a woman, Nympha. She writes:

Nympha was the leader of the house church, and the masculine forms of the genitive (*αυτου, αυτων*) in some manuscripts can easily be explained as a correction of the feminine name on the part of scribes who considered it improbable or undesirable that a woman has such a leadership position (Schüssler-Fiorenza 1983:51;247).

5.8 Methodological implications in the deutero-Pauline letters

This section is an application of the two methodologies and establishes their implications to the study matter. Each methodological tenet is mirrored against the chapter's claims laid above to see their congruence or lack thereof. This will inform the recommendations and insights that may be helpful for future studies.

5.8.1 The social scientific view and application

As has been highlighted above concerning the context of the two deutero-Pauline letters, it can be seen that to a large extent they resemble aspects and models of the social-scientific method, which when applied to the understanding of how women fared in these communities, a fair interpretation of how they were perceived by both the writers of Ephesians and Colossians, as well as their communities, is achieved. The question is this: how would a typical social-scientifically informed mind read and understand the household codes in relation to how women and their roles are projected in the two deuteron-Pauline letters? This question deserves to be answered.

It can be construed that the writer of the household codes in both letters has a deliberate focus on most of the aspects found in social scientific-models such as the admonition on good virtues, protection of the marriage union, and group cohesion, where these are supervised and inculcated in each community member through honour-shame, collectivism, patron-client relationships and kinship dynamics (see Chapter 2 and 3). For example, women, children and slaves are reminded to be loyal to the leaders of their households because it is honourable to do so. At the same time, they are warned of the consequences of disrespecting the household *paterfamilias*, a scenario which attracts shame on them as well as shame to the earthly *paterfamilias* (husbands, slave-owners, and Paul). This too will result in the ultimate *paterfamilias* of the heavenly household, God himself, being shamed in line with the microcosm-macrocosm dynamics of this era. The local *paterfamilias* is the patron of

the subjugated classes who stands as clients (children, women and slaves) to whom he offers rewards just as the macro paterfamilias is the patron of all (the subjugator and the subjugated) because he (God) rewards everyone justly. Thus, a contextual reading of the two deuterio-Pauline letters under discussion will reveal that women are not denied positions and roles of importance in these communities' spaces, but rather they are simply obliged to assume roles dictated by their cultural norms and philosophical frameworks. Thus, a present-day reader of the Ephesian and Colossian household codes ought to disengage his or her own epistemological and philosophical orientation and engage with the ancient Mediterranean ones for a proper understanding of how women are perceived in these letters. In this way, views from African feminist readers that women are oppressed in the deuterio-Pauline literature because the writers were misogynists will be seen to be a bit misplaced.

5.8.2 The African feminist view and application

As has been discussed at length in Chapter 2, that African feminism borrows heavily from western epistemologies and philosophical world-views, it goes without mention that readers inspired by feminist notions are bound to misinterpret the message of Colossians and Ephesians in so-far-as women are perceived. The husband's seemingly elevated position over the household (which includes material goods, women, children and slaves) is seen as a violation of basic human rights for women, children and slaves (and even animals in these households). This idea is obviously propagated by the imposition of western feminist norms on ancient Mediterranean ones, which to me is inappropriate. However, when contextually understood, it will be seen that the Mediterranean cultural norms, which (in any case) were understood by the writers of these letters, are the ones visible, for they could only write in the symbols and thought systems of their communities for their messages to be understood by their immediate readers and audiences, who were not European nor African.

5.9 Chapter summary and conclusion

This chapter has explored the conversations around the Ephesian and Colossian household codes and their implication on women roles, which were applied to the two methodologies guiding this research. The claim made in Chapter 2, that the early church period operated under kinship models such as honour-shame and collectivism, was confirmed in this chapter's analysis of the Ephesian and Colossian household

codes, which evinced that the household codes operated under the collectivist paradigm, where the microcosm of the macrocosm concept was at play. The view was asserted by De Wet (2012:399) that the fashioning of the codes indicated a type of delegated authority, where those who ruled over their subjects (such as children, wives, and slaves) as earthly *paterfamilias* were to remember that they too were ruled by the macrocosm *paterfamilias*, who was God. This was to make them exercise lenience in the control of their subjects just as they were to be ruled graciously by God, the *paterfamilias* of the bigger household under which all belonged (slave, master, king, commoner, gentile, Jew, men and women). Thus, the analysis finally concluded that the deuterio-Pauline corpus projects women as subjected to a more restrictive system of women subordination by men which put them under male control (Okland 2009:22), hence to a greater extent, hierarchical, sexist, and elitist stratifications are seen in household codes under the constant supervision of the dominant cultural ethos that pervaded the entire Greco-Roman society the early church operated.

CHAPTER 6

SYNTHESIS OF THE STUDY

This chapter integrates and synthesises all the previous chapters' findings and applies them to the SDAZ's ordination practice for the proffering of recommendations in Chapter 7. The research's major thrust was on investigating the reason behind the SDAZ's opposing her church administrative document, the SDA church manual's directive, which instructs all SDA churches in the world to ordain women as women deacons and women elders. This scenario leads to the eruption of other inconsistencies for which the research had to find the causes, such as the reason behind other SDA churches outside Zimbabwe (the Euro-American SDA churches represented by NAD) finding it easy to enforce the very directive she rejects herself, the reason behind the ambivalence, (whether it is official or not), and also whether the SDAZ women are really barred from assuming any church leadership role. The work studied the pre-AD 70 era, in which early Christianity operated, as case study materials through which an evaluative comparative analysis was made between them and the SDAZ on the issue of women roles in church.

The summary of the analysis is that women, while integral to all the piety of the epochs under study namely the early church and the SDAZ, were often positioned in roles that reflected the patriarchal norms of their cultural context. This was particularly evident in their roles as patrons, providers of hospitality, and supporters of the ministry, rather than as leaders or authoritative figures.

The purpose of this chapter is to synthesise these findings, integrating the cultural, theological, African feminist and social-scientific perspectives explored in the previous chapters. This synthesis will provide a comprehensive understanding of how women's roles in the Synoptic Gospels and early Christian communities were shaped by their historical context and how these roles have been interpreted in contemporary scholarship, and how they can be applied to understand the SDAZ's ban on women's ordination. By synthesising these various strands of analysis, this chapter aims to highlight the continuity between the cultural norms of the Ancient Mediterranean world and the roles assigned to women in early Christian texts. This synthesis is crucial for understanding the broader implications of these roles within the context of both ancient and modern Christian practices.

The chapter will begin by a reflection on the methodological frameworks discussed in Chapter 2, followed by a synthesis of the roles of women in the Pauline corpus, Synoptic Gospels and the deuterio-Pauline epistles as analysed in Chapters 3 - 5. A reflection on the relevance of these findings for contemporary discussions on gender roles in the church will end the chapter.

6.1 Research Methodology synthesis

As was discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, African culture is and must be the window through which Africans and Zimbabweans to be precise, makes sense of any religious phenomenon subjected to them for their comprehension. Both methodologies in use in this study affirm the central role of culture and epistemological frameworks in conditioning the way Africans, and Zimbabweans in particular interpret the bible texts and the way they understand what those texts suggest for role differentiation between women and men in the church.

African culture was presented as similar in many aspects to the culture in which early church communities lived (Hellenistic, Pauline, Gospel traditions and deuterio-Pauline). Dynamics such as honour and shame, collectivism and patronage were exposed as prevalent in SDAZ and thus are the reason behind her granting supporting ministry roles to women. They are too, the reasons why the SDAZ women are not advocating for the same leadership roles with men which is actuated by the ordination rite administered on them. Hence, they are not clamouring for the ordination rite as is done by women in the Euro-American SDA churches.

6.1.1 Synthesis of the Pauline and deuterio-Pauline corpora

The study of Chapter 3 proved that the SDAZ is continuing with the Pauline tradition which was highly patriarchal and thus assigned supporting ministry roles to women. The reason behind these cultural borrowings was mentioned by Mahlangu (2001:85), who posits that Ancient Mediterranean society, to a greater extent, resembles African society's cultural dynamics. As such, just as women in the SDAZ's are seen as fit for supporting ministry roles, in the Pauline and deuterio-Pauline traditions, women are assuming the same supporting ministry roles due to the strong patriarchal ethos present in both contexts, coupled with the same cultural underpinnings such as honour and shame, prevalent in both.

Due to the same cultural dictates shared by the early church epochs studied in this work and the SDAZ's which are diametrically opposite of the situation of her sister SDA churches in the Euro-American territories, the global face the SDAZ, it can be concluded that it is no wonder that the schisms over enforcement of the church manual directives between the SDAZ and her sister Euro-American SDA churches have ensued for decades with a stalemate having been the only inherent outcome. That the SDAZ has vehemently rejected to enforce the church manual directives while they have been easily enforced by the Euro-American SDA sister churches can be safely attributed to the differing epistemological, philosophical, cultural frameworks with those of Africa and Zimbabwe in particular as highlighted above.

In line with Chapter 2's insights in points 2.20.2.1 - 2.20.2.2, that individualistic societies are found in the Euro-American industrialised countries, such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Great Britain, and the United States of America, where it was shown that these individualistic societies exhibit such tendencies as the quest to self-rule at the expense of group harmony, to the extent of even opposing authority structures, the reasons behind the SDAZ and the Euro-American SDA churches' conflicting women's ordination positions on women's ordination can now be understood. The reasons behind the Euro-American SDA churches' insistence on an unofficial practice of ordaining women elders and commissioning women pastors can too be seen as typical of the nature of these societies, individualistic in nature, societies who seek self-independence outside a group and opposing authority structures as their outstanding characteristic. The opposite is true for the SDAZ, a church guided by the African ethos of *ubuntuism*, and also the collectivistic nature of African societies who stand ready to adhere to authority structures and have an inert urge for group harmony.

Furthermore, the SDAZ's basis for giving women only supporting ministry roles can be easily seen in what is affirmed by Mahlangu (2001:85), who holds that the NT's early church texts are already contextualised to appeal to Africans more than people from any other continent because of the similarities between their epistemological and philosophical world-views. Hence, the researcher has concluded that this is the reason that the SDAZ draws her basis for banning women from the ordination rite to confine them to the supporting ministry roles approved by her cultural knowledge kit. For her,

therefore, the practice has biblical backing, and thus vows to continue with it. Her position is justified in that regard.

Evidences from that African feminist scholars' reviews presented in Chapter 1 points 1.5.2.12 - 1.5.3.4, revealed that African women, and Zimbabwean women in particular, want men to appreciate them. This is perhaps an aspect that SDAZ men ought to be mindful of, though I have shown that it may not be the case that the SDAZ does not acknowledge the crucial role women play in the ministry and life of the church, since her GC (General Conference - see definition of terms section) working FB 05 - K05 on its pages 315 – 471 (explained in Chapter 2's footnote number 24 on point 2.27) already offers equal administrative roles to all members regardless of sex. Thus, the SDAZ fulfils the round-tabled church leadership concept advocated for by African feminists. With this analysis, Chapter 7's research conclusions and the concomitant recommendations on point 7.2 stand quite clear as shall be seen in next chapter.

As regards the issue of disciplinary measures to be meted against non-compliant churches and the identification of the non-compliant churches, figure 1 of chapter 2 provided a graphic answer. It showed that the SID³² has refused to ordain women for deaconry and eldership roles despite the fact that the Euro-American Divisions gladly ordained them against GC standing policy, which still bans all SDA women from

³² The regional administrative body of the GC which manages the SDAZ in behalf of the supreme SDA church's governing body. It is well explained in the definition of terms section and also in Chapter 2, where it was emphasized that the SDAZ is has an international face which is enforced by these administrative systems because the SDA church is an international denomination.

ordination for eldership and pastoral roles. This, to a greater extent, is attributed to her collectivistic world-view and African epistemological framework where, as was said in Chapter 2 (points 2.20.2.1 - 2.20.2.2), collectivistic societies subscribe to authority structures to adhere to all policy directives. Oyserman (2011:164-214), Triandis & Suh (2002:133 - 160), and Goldston et al's (2008:14 - 31) postulations that 'the cultures, world-views, and value systems from which a person creates meaning in their world during a specific time period, guides gender behaviours, gender expectation and the concomitant gender roles'. Trim (2016:6) concurs with too in his submission that to a greater extent, both the collectivistic and individualistic mind-frame dictate or restrain its members from entering into certain roles, which is proven to be true for the SDA church context. Thus, the behaviours exhibited by SDAZ and her world church's GC leadership reveal that they have a collectivistic outlook while the Euro-American SDA churches have individualistic orientations, for example, the shaming of the dissident Divisions and their looming reprimand in the presence of the world church as a way of asserting that the GC's authority is a typical collectivistic characteristic. This too is in line with the honour-and-shame, kinship and patronage paradigms of the social-scientific methodology.

Based on this evidence, this research therefore holds that the SDAZ should maintain her ban on women's ordination because of her cultural grids which cause her to read the early Christianity texts through her Zimbabwean eyes, a view supported by social-scientific as well as African feminists, that culture had been an avenue through which meaning-creation has been done in the NT texts and must continue to be so for African readers of the bible. That is why the Zimbabwean scholars mentioned above (on 1.5.2.12 - 1.5.3.4) submitted that Zimbabwean women are cultured to accept men as the authoritative leaders while women assume the subordinate roles. Examples were given of Zimbabwean women church founders who, regardless of them having been inspired by African feminists' equal opportunities mantra in church ministerial roles between men and women, have nonetheless left their husbands to assume the actual control and authoritative leadership role. Biri's (2020:18 - 25) view that the socialisation of Zimbabwean women through honour and shame, and purity codes in their cultural configurations which resembles the early church society, as seen in Zimbabwean taboos and cultural sayings such as '*dare ndere varume*' (leadership is for men)', *baba ndivo musoro* (men/fathers are the natural heads of families and society), to

mention a few of these, causes women to a large extent, to collectively attack other women who dare oppose these taboos in fear of attracting individual shame which naturally goes to her family, community and the country at large, in line with the epistemological and philosophical underpinnings of the African and Zimbabwean people.

This shame is attracted by women's venturing in spaces not approved for them by their culture. These examples, according to this research, graphically show that women in the SDAZ can only assume supporting ministry roles. In this context, as is emphasised by African scholars cited in Chapter 1 and 2, roles ascribed by African cultural dictates are not hierarchically stratified to show the inferiority of some roles to others. Neither too, is the role differentiation between SDAZ members a means to express suppression or oppression of women, but rather to demonstrate the central role of women and their roles as complimentary to men's for the ultimate good of the whole society or church. Hence, this cultural sensitivity motif in role assignment praxis is not viewed in African epistemology, philosophy and culture as a means to support the evils of patriarchalism and so must it be understood in this vein by the Euro-American societies so as for them to understand why they cannot expect the same piety on roles between men and women in church in their churches and African or Zimbabwean ones because of the varied epistemological, cultural and philosophical frameworks.

6.1.2 Synoptic Gospels' synthesis

Evidences presented from the application of a social-scientific lens on the Synoptic Gospels texts studied in chapter 4 evinced the same outlook: that women still could assume complimentary and supporting ministry roles as patrons and givers of hospitality, working along with Jesus during his movement. The chief reason is that the early church operated under the Ancient Mediterranean cultural realities, epistemologies and philosophical grids and as such Christian women in household communities were made to assume the same roles which were assumed by those in the Synoptic Gospel and deuterio-Pauline households due to the dominant patriarchal ethos which placed women alongside their male counterparts.

However, an important observation presented by African feminist scholars' evidences is worth consideration in this work. This crucial observation is the mention of culture

as a non-static reality which ought not be used to make a rigid and blanket statement, such as 'women are barred indefinitely from assuming the same authoritative and ecclesiastical leadership roles as men due to cultural dictates'. African feminists argue that since culture is never static in any people's lives, the absolute statements of banning women from the ordination rite conferment is problematic and inconsistent with the realities of life. Hence, I suggest that the SDAZ ought to be open to future dialogues around the acceptance of this inherent reality in her church piety. She ought to make this an object of her future research, though at the time of writing this work, her cultural dynamics might have not shifted to accept Jesus' method of radically opposing her cultural codes to accommodate women in his era, yet still, it may be that at such a time in the future, her studies ought to be cued towards an open understanding of the need to adjust cultural convictions so as to see the extent to which they may welcome SDAZ women for ordination, the rite that empowers them, just as men, to assume key authoritative ecclesiastical leadership roles of pastoring and eldership.

6.2 Conclusion

It was cogently shown in Chapters 2 - 5 that the SDAZ church is continuing with the early church's practice of allowing women to assume complimentary ministry roles with men while reserving the mainstream ministry for the male ordained pastors. The social-scientific paradigms of honour and shame, patronage, kinship and collectivism of the early church's Ancient Mediterranean society, which are also prevalent in African societies, where this research is applied, were shown as the causes for her position of confining women to supporting ministry roles and barring them from ordination, a rite that qualifies them to compete for equal roles with men in this church's context. Furthermore, the chapter described the SDAZ as well as her global face, SDA world church, as largely exhibiting a collectivistic outlook. As deliberations from the GC Session delegates from the 1970s - 2024 highlighted, the fear of ordaining women for pastoral roles is based on envisaged group disharmony that it is likely to arise, among other fears. However, the behaviours of the Euro-American Divisions contrasted with the African ones, especially the Division that administers the SDAZ, namely the SID, which showed that there are incompatible epistemologies, philosophical frameworks and world-views between Africa and the West and that these glaring realities are the

reasons for the ambivalent scenario currently obtaining (though not approved by the GC leaders). It was seen too, that the Euro-American Divisions' insistence on enforcing their not-yet-approved proposal (of requesting the GC to allow them alone to ordain women elders and commissioned women pastors) is largely in line with who they are as individualistically oriented people due to their Western cultural dictates. However, although the GC is head-quartered in First World territories which cherish individualistic epistemologies, it has distanced itself from the Euro-American Divisions' behaviour due to the fact that the GC delegates are composed of members from other territories, such as Africa, through the representative church governance system of the SDA world church. As such, this causes a dilution of the individualistic outlook of those territories which house the GC headquarters and transform them into collectivistically oriented groups. With this, it came out that the allegation that the SDAZ is violating church manual directives is false, as the Euro-American Divisions are the ones violating the original GC policy, which bars all SDA church women across the globe from the ordination rite for eldership and pastoral roles. This is the reason behind the ambivalence, which according to the GC, is both unfortunate and unofficial. Hence, these Euro-American Divisions and their respective churches are due to meet their disciplinary measure at the 2025 GC Session. With this, the fear that the GC was not exerting its authority was answered. The African feminist call for the round-table leadership concept was proved to be already practised by the SDA world church, as it was demonstrated that women in the SDAZ as well as the world church, are not blocked from accessing the leadership table, but rather, their policy offers them numerous key decision-making roles at higher administrative organs of the church together with their male counterparts. Thus, the question of whether there are leadership roles for women in the SDAZ has been answered.

Lastly, it was evinced that differing cultural world-views, epistemologies and philosophical frameworks are the cause of the ambivalence. The African feminist's critique of culture, however, was seen as having the probability of leading to a culturally based *panacea* to the ordination question, an option that is seen to have a high probability of contributing to solving the issue along cultural lines and thus put the SDA's debate on the ordination of women to an end in the future. Even in the presently rigid African/Zimbabwean cultures, which ban women for the above-said roles, they may have to do what NAD is advocating for, allow Divisional ordination practices,

where women in SDAZ churches with cultural practices which do not allow same leadership roles and status as their male counterparts can continue banning them, while those from the Euro-American cultures, where women's same leadership role and status as their male counterparts is accepted, can be allowed by the GC to let women in those territories be ordained.

The researcher believes that this is likely to be accorded in the next GC Session in July 2025 to the already ready-Divisions, namely the Euro-American Divisions, where those cultures which are still evolving to accept it (since no culture is static) such as the Zimbabwean/African ones are allowed to conform to their present cultural dictates. However, the researcher of this work does not see the Euro-American SDA churches being granted their request which has persisted since the 1980s, as was evinced in Chapter 2 due to glaring realities which questions the basis for such an urge to grant the request especially realizing that the American history itself, from antiquity, in so far as key leadership roles both in church and secular establishments has never endorsed a woman for leadership. The just ended American presidential elections of 05 November 2024 affirmed this outlook where Donald Trump emerged as the voted new American president and not Tamara Harris. Questions such as: What is causing the American people to oppose their cultural, epistemological and philosophical frameworks which see men and women as equal leadership material? Why have they failed to implement what has been advocated for by gender pressure groups (which emanated from their territory mostly) which was epitomized by feminist and womanist waves from the 1960 to the present: Why then do they want societies which have a differing cultural, epistemological and philosophical frameworks such as Zimbabwe, to endorse what they have failed to endorse themselves, namely putting women at same key leadership positions in society? are to be answered by the GC as it seeks to end the 'stalemate of ages'. These questions are however seen by this researcher as work for future research.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1. Summary

It has become apparent throughout the research that the environments which birthed a certain form Christianity ought to be consulted in order to gain an understanding of the behaviours and issues behind the reasons for their behaviours, faith, and beliefs. This reality has been observed in the hybrid cultural configurations of the pre-AD 70 early church in the Greco-Roman era, in which the Jesus movement as well Pauline and deutero-Pauline communities operated, where Greeks, Jews, and Gentiles co-existed yet were controlled by one dominant culture of Ancient Mediterranean society. The study established that this Ancient-Mediterranean cultural ethos fashioned the way the communities in this society understood the nascent and pristine Christian religious phenomena amidst their socio-cultural, economic and political realities. This saw women from all races and nationalities being accorded similar roles, notably roles subservient to those held by men.

This practice was seen as being continued in the multi-racial, multi-ethnic and multi-national SDAZ, which also grants a blanket position that all women, regardless of who they are, can only assume supporting ministry roles while the key authoritative ones are reserved for male members. The reason for this uniform behaviour between the SDAZ and the early church communities studied in this work's chapters was the similarities in their cultural dynamics. Hence, it was shown that the SDAZ's SID's refusal to ordain her women even for the deaconry role is in line with the collectivistic outlook she exhibits as she chooses to subscribe to authority of the GC and not join the Euro-American Divisions' insistence to ordain women for eldership roles while commissioning women for pastoral roles, a position which is unofficial.

Chapter 2 revealed that the SDAZ and its global face, the SDA world church, is collectivistic in nature and operation, and as a collectivist group, like the early church, is choosing to align with the dominant culture to preserve group harmony and never to follow the Euro-American Divisions' interests and goals, such as those of NAD and the Trans-European Division. It further pointed out that the view that the SDAZ discriminates against women in key decision-making roles in the church is not true, as

they serve in other top administrative roles alongside men through policy provisions (GC working FB 05 - K05) explained above, that offer these equal employment opportunities to both men and women.

7.2 Conclusion and recommendations

The study has answered all the five critical questions forming the research's statement of the problem contained in section 1.1, the basis for the SDAZ women's ordination ban, the reason for the ambivalence, the reason for the SDAZ's unwillingness to enforce the church manual directive of ordaining women for eldership roles, the cognitive dissonance scenario, and the lack of punitive measures by the GC to non-compliant churches, and whether there exist other key decision-making leadership roles for women.

It was evinced that the SDAZ's ban on women ordination is informed by her belief that she is continuing with the early church practice where women, according to them, assume collaborating with men or supporting ministry roles. This conviction is said to stem from the belief that she shares same cultural aspects with the society that in which the early church operated, which Paul, and all the writers of the studied early church epochs lived. The study thus held that the SDAZ regards her women's ordination ban as having a firm biblical support which ought to be continued. This belief is affirmed by her epistemological and philosophical orientations which see her position as the correct, and right one while that of the Euro-American SDA churches is regarded as false and wrong.

The historical survey on how debates on the ordination of women have been handled in Adventism from the 1960s, the era the SDA church was started and got organized in the USA, (See Chapter 2's point 2.24. 1 – 2.24-3) to the present (2024), has revealed that the SDAZ is not violating her church manual and Working policy guidelines and directives by her banning women from ordination for deacons, elders, and pastoral roles. Rather, she is acting in conformity with the currently approved policies, which have not yet allowed the ordination rite to be conferred to female church members by the church's highest decision-making body, the GC Session in Session. Rather, the NAD and the Trans-European Division are the ones violating church policies and are bound for disciplinary measures in the upcoming GC Session of 2025.

These two questions having been answered, they too answer the reason for the existence of the ambivalence, that it is the result of a few Divisions that are violating the GC policies, and thus the official position is that the ambivalence is not official because the GC Session did not vote or approve it. For the GC, there is just one position on the position of women's ordination for eldership and pastoral roles, that all SDA women stand banned from ordination. Thus, the cognitive dissonance question is cleared in this regard.

Furthermore, the question of whether women assume leadership roles in the SDA church was answered by proof from the GC working policy FA 05 - K 05, which pointed out that numerous departmental roles are open to all SDA church members regardless of gender or sex. At the time of writing this research, the www.adventist.org website affirmed this view by presenting a list of women directors in various top administrative levels of the church as proof that women are not discriminated against and that they assume top leadership roles as men.

The African feminist methodology helped to give a balanced treatment of the discussion through its tenets, which critique the cultural prejudices of contexts to which it gets applied. It does this on the basis that the rigidity seen in many African cultures, and Zimbabwe in particular, ought to be abrogated to allow flexibility, since no culture is static. This view is important to future discussions on this subject in African and in Zimbabwe in particular, as it will move them in new and progressive directions where both men and women are equal practitioners in the gospel ministry. This has shown the usefulness of the two methodologies in their interlocutor task. This is the beauty of this hybrid research methodology framework, deliberately chosen and applied by this research for a holistic treatment of this topic that has raged on for ages in Adventism.

7.3 Recommendations

Having answered all the research questions, the research makes the following recommendations:

- That the SDA world church explain the issue of the unofficial (yet unavoidable) ambivalence on ordination of women practices between the Euro-American and African churches so as to make the world church align with its collectivistic outlook where group harmony and collective identity is highly cherished.

However, I am foreseeing the upcoming 03 – 12 July 2025 GC Session rejecting the ordination of women for pastoral roles. However, approving Divisional ordination of women in territories which see such a practise as congruent with their cultural norms may be an option if delegates fail to agree on the universal ordination of women practice. Thus, it may still be difficult to dissolve the ambivalence. As such the punitive measures against erring divisions falls away.

- The GC to rescind the 20th edition SDA church manual's universal ordination of women directive it carries because it does not have the GC vote to approve it. Even if the GC goes on to approve the NAD and Trans-European Divisions' request that they alone be allowed to ordain women for eldership and pastoral roles, still the church manual may not be allowed to imply a universal application of the practise since each territory is to be guided by its epistemological, philosophical and cultural orientations on the issue of women leadership in church. Thus, I foresee a Divisional/Territorial ordination practise being the most sensible option and which aligns to what this research has established.
- The GC to approve the teaching of gender and religion courses in all its theological seminaries, so that the dynamics around women in religion are made known and appreciated by both theology students and their professors. This will make them come into contact with the secular theories so dreaded by Adventist theology, such as feminism and social-scientific study, where they become acquainted with them instead of fearing them and labelling them as satanic and evil. If this is done, ministers will stand ready to answer questions from lay members who might be schooled in these theories as part of their work and life, yet they might not be aware of the consequences in their church situation. This research has made a clarion call that it is high time that interdisciplinary methodologies be co-opted in theological and biblical studies in Adventist theologisation which should not label them as evil. There is now an urgent need to open conversations with these secular theories and hear scholarly voices from these camps so as to be informed of current trends in theology, since theology by its nature is a game of responding to questions from members as they battle to answer phenomena on which they are questioned,

not only from church, but also from secular life, where they work, live, and have their being. In this way, theologisation becomes appealing to the people as they see what they expect to be answered being answered by church's teachings. Hence, this research insists that secular theories, such as African feminism, social-scientific criticism, postcolonial theories, and liberation theories, be incorporated in the Adventist theological and biblical studies curricula.

- The 2025 GC Session to make NAD's request of allowing Divisional/Territorial ordination of women practices high priority, so that it gets discussed to establish what light the feminist camp can shed on gender discourses in the SDA world church instead of blocking them and labelling them as evil and satanic. Such a work as this one may give further insights on dynamics around the topic. This work, as was highlighted in Chapter 1, seeks to encourage dialogues and conversations with both secular and traditional Adventist theological methodologies to see where they agree and repel. This will help to craft a theology that speaks of and to the times of our era through reflections of the past era's treatment of women in church. These are expounded in this work by the social-scientific and African feminist hybrid methodology in their analysis of the Pauline, Synoptic Gospels, deuterio-Pauline epistles, and the early to present-day Adventism perceptions of women in church as shown throughout this study. The beauty of the hybrid methodological framework (social-scientific and African feminist lenses) of this work is affirmed and celebrated, as its complementarity is convincingly demonstrated in this work.
- The Euro-American Divisions' epistemological and philosophical frameworks should be allowed to guide in the question of the ordination of women just as is the case with the SDAZ, which has allowed the same to inform her position of barring women from the ordination rite. Thus, for fairness, the Euro-American Divisions must be allowed to ordain women, since their culture approves it. Thus, this research regards the regional or Divisional ordination practice as a *panacea* for solving the tensions between the Euro-American Divisions and the GC. Divisional ordination practice is also in line with what the two methodologies in use in this research stipulate, that since people understand

the world around them through their cultural interpretive grids, the Euro-American territories can go ahead as they are allowed by their culture while the African Divisions continue with their ban on women's ordination in line with what their dominant culture dictates. Hence, in this case, the GC will not be seen as a task master but rather an enabling authority who recognises the diversity of her world church, where unity will rather be achieved through diversity and not uniformity.

- The GC Session delegates to take the discussions around the issue of the non-static nature of culture and its concomitant influence on gender roles in church. This realisation will help them project the possibility or lack thereof, of lifting the ban on women's ordination by the African/Zimbabwean cultures in the future to emulate or copy the Euro-American Divisions' quest for the ordination of women as pastors. This will shape an understanding of the effects of culture on the comprehension of theological positions by people of varied cultural backgrounds yet under one denomination like the case of the SDA world church and consequently help the church leaders in deciding whether the women's ordination can really be a universally accepted phenomenon, whether it can be justified for them to live in fear they currently have that ordaining women to the pastoral work will divide the church yet evidence has been presented in this research that it will not divide the church since its territory is bound to be guided by its epistemological, philosophical and cultural frameworks on how roles between men and women are defined.

7.4 Contribution of this study

This work has gone a step further from mere complaining about the absence of women in the key leadership ranks of the SDAZ and explained this phenomenon through a study on African epistemology, philosophy and culture where it presented that these frameworks are the ones empowering the SDAZ leadership to insist on opposing the SDA church manual pronouncements regardless of the fact that the same directives are being implemented elsewhere in the Euro-American SDA churches. Furthermore, these frameworks are the ones which cause the SDAZ's women themselves not to advocate for equal leadership roles with their men but rather to accept their culture prescribed roles of supporting ministry duties.

The study's call for engagement of modern and post-modern biblical interpretive methodologies, such as the use of social-scientific criticism and African feminist methodology in biblical interpretation to answer the 21st century theological questions, is new to Adventist theology. Furthermore, the hybrid methodology used by this research has managed to package the debates on the ordination of women in new wrapping than had been known in the past, and thus gave new and fresh perspectives to look at the subject differently.

The Divisional Biblical Study Committees On Women's Ordination mandate, where the 13 Divisions were made to study the applicability of the issue in their own contexts (Timm 2014:28ff), was seen by this research as having an implication of making the matter a cultural and not a theological one since the Divisions are to consult from their cultural kits to determine the extent to which their epistemologies, cultural norms and philosophical grids accept or condemn the leadership of women in the same roles as men. Thus, this move leads to a falling into the pit which was being avoided for all these years, namely making the women's ordination debate a cultural issue instead of a deeply biblical and theological one.

At the local church level, the research has provided answers to issues which seemed to have bothered ordinary church members for a long time due to the ceaseless debates on women's ordination, namely the cause of the ambivalence, the blaming of the SDAZ for purported violation of church policy, and the reasons why the GC appears powerless to punish churches/Divisions who are not complying to the SDA church manual. This seems to be the biggest contribution of this research, since the cognitive dissonance in members has been solved in an easy-to-understand yet comprehensive manner.

Insights from African feminism and the social-scientific method have proven to be of great help to the discussion of this research topic through packaging the debate in the symbols and thought systems of all the contexts investigated by the study (early church, African, and the Euro-American's Western cultures). This has brought about a holistic treatment of the subject matter, as all realms and dynamics were brought to the fore so that the issue is understood by comparisons between these contexts.

The study has answered the desperate calls for a deeper contextualised study of the topic by the GC leaders from 1995 until 2012, as it has done so from the Zimbabwean and African perspective while also touching on dynamics of Western culture in the process. Thus, this contributes to the much-needed contextualised *panacea*.

The study's feminist critique has contributed to the investigation and understanding of the true nature of the SDA church, and the status and standing of women members in that it has established that the round-table leadership concept propounded by African feminists is actually applicable and helpful in the SDA church. It has revealed that her church policies BA 60 10 and the FB 05 - K05 actually attest to this African feminist concept in her offering non-discriminatory employment practice, yet the church was not aware of its existence and applicability. Thus, the study has demonstrated that secular interpretive methodologies may aid in the understanding of theological phenomena. It thus challenges the church to be ready to accept these theories and not to demonise them. It is at this point that the research's new contribution to the current SDA world church's current body of knowledge is seen, namely in its fusion of a hybrid methodology, in which the two complement each other to craft new possibilities and conclusions.

It has been seen above that cultural fibres of Greco-Roman society are similar to those of the SDAZ, most significantly with regard to patriarchy. African feminist methodology taps into this and critiques the very culture by exposing the detrimental prejudices of that culture and challenges that there be repudiations on certain practices which oppress other classes and render them unfit for certain roles.

Furthermore, the research's unique hybrid methodological framework is new in Africa and in Zimbabwe in particular, in that it is likely to be the first research of this magnitude and scope (the pre-AD 70 early church) to be applied in the Zimbabwean context. Its ability to inspire new thinking and new questioning about the subject of women's ordination makes it an important study. Above all, its clarion call to the church, as was highlighted in Chapter 1, is that there be deliberate efforts to enquire from both groups (the SDA conservative group as well as the liberal group) through open dialogue instead of labelling others. Productive discussion cannot rely on pronouncing one side as heretical while the other is labelled as backward and archaic, for example. This

research challenges such thinking and encourages both camps to engage in open conversation to learn from Thus, the daring to challenge (a person who is privileged in African society, particularly Zimbabwean society, due to being a male, who benefits from patriarchal norms) such a conservative church is itself a new phenomenon in Africa since the natural inclination is to defend the place from where one's peace is derived.

In this way, this new research has helped to bridge the disciplinary rift between the 'un-African-African feminist thought' and traditional Adventist hermeneutical method/s for new insights. The courage to face criticism from fellow ministers in using the heavily distrusted method (feminism) by the researcher of this work is a new phenomenon and great contribution to Adventist thinking. The researcher of this work, who is a serving and ordained minister of the Gospel in the SDAZ yet has braved to use the lampooned and berated methodology, in Adventist theology, is to be celebrated as a new sign of scholarship.

Regardless of its criticisms of imposing Western philosophies on non-Western contexts, as observed by Plaskow's (1980:11) warning that 'feminist theologisations have a tendency of imposing their Western world-views on non-Western cultures, a scenario which leads its exponents to have wrong conclusions for the native populations their foreign concept gets applied to. For example, concluding that 'women in Africa are oppressed by men', may actually be a surprise to the very local women who might not be seeing their status and role in church and wider society as inferior to their men, due to how their cultural orientations and epistemologies have taught them. It is in this context that the researcher of this work has dared to defy the odds and status *quo*, by employing the method still. This adds to the significance of this work in academic circles, as it demonstrates professional work etiquette to be emulated by all scholars as it discourages denominational biased reflections.

To a greater extent, African feminist thought is aligned to African epistemologies and philosophical frameworks, though the Western theorisation praxis ought to be continually checked by contextualising it to the African context, thereby allowing the African feminism to benefit the SDA world church's decisions on the roles of female and male members. Be that as it may, it can be concluded that the research has

demonstrated that African feminist thought can contribute in significant ways to align African epistemological frameworks on gender and gender roles with the church's theological praxis by addressing some of its weak points. For example, it should avoid universalising the experiences of all women based on a universal patriarchal ethos which other territories which were and are under patriarchy have since challenged the very patriarchy and offered women an equal share with men at the leadership table. African feminism therefore helps to expose the limitations of African philosophy of gender and gender roles, as noted by (Oyowe & Yurkivska 2014:85), who observes that what African philosophers of the past centuries who were all male 'achieved is to conceptualize what it means to be an African man while ignoring what it means to be an African woman'. Hence, through engagement with African feminism, the church is challenged to re-think ways in which her theologisation can be crafted to reflect inclusivity in church piety. This avoids the pitfall of doing theology from an entirely male point of view to the exclusion of women's perspectives.

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