

**The (Sub) Ordination of Women in the Evangelical Church in Zambia : A  
Critical Analysis of the Ecclesiological and Hermeneutical Principles  
Underlying the Refusal of Women's ordination**

By

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## DECLARATION

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters, in the Graduate Programme in Gender and Religion, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. It is being submitted for the degree of Masters in Gender and Religion in the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. None of the present work has been submitted previously for any degree or examination in any other University.

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Date

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to my lovely wife, Maureen and my children- Humphrey, Christine, Nancy, Rebecca, Rachel and Bodson Jnr.

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My sincere and deeply heartfelt gratitude goes to my Father in heaven for his abundant grace at the time I was studying at the University of KwaZulu- Natal.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of the study is to investigate and analyse the theological, hermeneutical and, to a lesser extent, the cultural reasoning behind the prevention of women being ordained in the Evangelical Church in Zambia. The study also seeks to propose a theology that is more inclusive than the one which the church currently propagates.

While the government is trying its best to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, the churches, in particular the Evangelical Church in Zambia (ECZ), are still subordinating women, using some biblical texts to defend their actions. Women in the ECZ are denied ordained ministry or prevented from living out their vocation to its fullest because of the Church's beliefs concerning women's humanity and their beliefs regarding the interpretation of Scripture.

The study analyses the arguments for and against the ordination of women from the stance of Scripture and from the point of view church tradition. The study further looks at the ecclesiological and hermeneutical principles of the ECZ on which the ordained ministry to women is denied.

The study establishes that the refusal of women's ordination is based on the creation story in Genesis and on Pauline teachings which indicate that women may not have authority over men and which demand their submission in life and in the church. The study also established that the arguments against the ordination of women from the church tradition are based on the secular pagan prejudice which considers women as inferior by nature, in a state of punishment and ritually unclean. The ECZ continues to follow this tradition.

The conclusion emphasised the need for the ECZ to research the Scriptures and tradition for imagery of human wholeness.

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## **ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

AEF	Africa Evangelical Fellowship
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CGM	Cape General Mission
CRC	Copperbelt Regional Council
DC	District Council
DCEC	District Council Executive Committee
ECZ	Evangelical Church in Zambia
GC	General Council
GCEC	General Council Executive Committee
PHRC	Permanent Human Rights Commission
RCC	Regional Church Council
SAGM	South African General Mission

# **The (Sub) Ordination of Women in the Evangelical Church in Zambia : A Critical Analysis of the Ecclesiological and Hermeneutical Principles Underlying the Refusal of Women’s ordination**

## **Chapter One**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1 Introduction**

“Zambia ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in June 1985 with no reservations” (Bourke-Martignoni 2002:7). This led the government of Zambia to try its best to integrate women in societal leadership positions. It began to appoint women as government ministers and as heads of government institutions. While the government is trying its best to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, the churches, in particular, the Evangelical Church in Zambia (ECZ) are still subordinating women, using some biblical texts to defend their actions. Women in the ECZ are denied ordained ministry or prevented from living out their vocation to its fullest because of the Church’s beliefs concerning women’s humanity and its beliefs concerning the interpretation of Scripture.

#### **Background and outline of the research**

The ECZ was established in the North-Western province of Zambia (the then Northern Rhodesia) by the South African General Mission (SAGM) in 1910. Since then, it has spread to other provinces. According to statistical reports presented at its 30<sup>th</sup> General Council (GC) in November 2007, the membership of the ECZ stands at 45,000 people, out of which approximately 60% are women (ECZ GC minutes 2007).

Although women constitute a majority in the ECZ, they are not allowed to teach and hold leadership positions. Leadership positions such as deaconship, eldership, and pastoral ministry are reserved for men alone. Women are restricted to the ministry of teaching and training other women to be good wives and mothers, providing hospitality, and caring for the house of the Lord in terms of sweeping and cleaning inside the church and its surrounds (ECZ Constitution

2008:30-31). The Bible, for many Christians all over the world and also for the Christians in the ECZ, is understood as a book of authority which should be obeyed regardless of the culture in which it was originally written. Thus, the Bible has shaped and influenced the lives of the ECZ members. For the ECZ, the denial of ordination to women is based on the creation story in Genesis and on Pauline teachings which indicate that women may not have authority over men and which demand their submission in life and in the church (Genesis 3:16;1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12). This policy is regarded by some churches (including the ECZ) as divinely sanctioned (Phiri 1997:55).

In addition to the biblical texts, the beliefs and practices of the Zambian culture have also shaped and influenced the lives of the ECZ members. Oduyoye states that, “much of African culture is patriarchal” (2001:67), and so too it is with the Zambian culture. Zambia’s culture is a male-dominated. In many instances, women are absent in positions of power in the socio-economic and political spheres. They are always in the background, and decisions concerning their lives with regard to education, access to work, marriage, divorce and inheritance rights are made by men. This is despite Zambia’s ratification of the CEDAW. For example, Phiri (2003), in her article *President Frederick J. T Chiluba: the Christian Nation and Democracy*, shows that there are still constraints to the participation of women in politics (2003:418-421). Using statistics compiled by Chikulo (1996:47) and the National Women’s Lobby Group, Phiri highlights the fact that there has not been much change in the inclusion of women to leadership positions during the period 1988 to 1998 (Phiri 2003:419). This may be seen from tables A and B, below which show women’s participation in leadership positions during this period.

January 1988

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Members of Parliament</b>	<b>Cabinet Ministers</b>	<b>Deputy Cabinet Ministers</b>	<b>Permanent Secretaries</b>
Women	5	2	0	3
Men	120	19	0	31
<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>34</b>

January 1992

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Members of Parliament</b>	<b>Cabinet Ministers</b>	<b>Deputy Cabinet Ministers</b>	<b>Permanent Secretaries</b>
Women	6	0	3	5
Men	144	25	31	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>35</b>

Table A

*Representation in Parliament and High Political office by Gender 1988 and 1992*

Decision Making Positions	1995			1996			1997			1998		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
Cabinet ministers	20	2	22	20	2	22	23	1	24	22	2	24
Deputy ministers	37	1	38	42	1	43	37	4	41	38	2	40
Members of parliament	149	6	155	149	6	155	140	16	156	142	16	158

Table B

*Composition of Cabinet ministers and members of parliament by sex (1995-1998)*

Further, according to Joanna Bourke-Martignoni, the Programme Officer, World Organisation Against Torture, the chairperson of the Permanent Human Rights Commission (PHRC) pointed out to her that “less than 10 per cent of women in Zambia are involved in the process of political decision” (Bourke-Martignon 2002:16). She further stated that there were only 2 women in the 25 member Cabinet, 16 women amongst the 150 members of the national legislature and 9 female permanent secretaries out of the total of 46 (Bourke-Martignon 2002:16). Bourke-Martignon, concluded that, “Zambian society is characterized by deeply-embedded patriarchal cultural values, widespread discrimination against women and a virtual absence of women in positions of power in the socio-economic and political spheres” (2002:10).

Similarly, the relationship between men and women in the ECZ is shaped according to the Zambian culture. Women in the ECZ are absent in decision- making positions at all levels of the church. As a result, they have formed a group called “Women’s Fellowship” in which they exercise their ministry. In addition, the majority of the ECZ members belong to the Kaonde and Mbunda tribes whose cultures do not allow women to become village heads and chiefs. I have had first hand experience with the negative ways in which women are treated in my own tribe, the Kaonde tribe. In the Kaonde tribe, like other tribes in Zambia, women face discrimination as a result of the gendered implementation of customary law (Bourke-Martignoni 2002:17). Women often have very limited decision-making powers regarding family or property law. For example, should the husband dies, it is the family of the deceased, particularly men, who make decisions concerning the sharing of properties and ritual purifications. The widow and her family have no say. The same applies when a girl wants to get married. It is her father and her uncles who usually make the final decision and fix the *lobola* or bride price.

Given the discrimination against women with regard to leadership in both the Zambian culture and the church, the purpose of this study is to investigate and analyse the theological and hermeneutical,<sup>1</sup> and to a lesser extent the cultural reasoning behind women being denied ordination in the ECZ. This study also seeks to propose a theology that is more inclusive than the one which the church currently propagates. Therefore, the key research question of this study is:

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<sup>1</sup> While I will examine some of the texts which are used to argue against the ordination of women, I will do so only as far as a “counter-argument” can be made in terms of evangelical theology against the use of such texts. I am not a biblical scholar and hence will not offer any in-depth exegetical comment on the texts under consideration.

What are the theological and hermeneutical reasons for women being denied ordination in the ECZ and how can a more inclusive theological and hermeneutical model be constructed?

My main hypothesis is that the ecclesiological and hermeneutical principles of the ECZ, which are based on limited anthropological and biblical views of women, prevent women from being ordained in the church and living out their vocation to its fullest.

## **1.2 Preliminary literature study and reasons for choosing topic**

The ordination of women has been a long debated subject in many denominations across the world. *The Encyclopaedia of Christianity* (Brodd 2003:847) provides an overview of this debate. The controversy arises in a context where either the rite of ordination or the role of an ordained person has been traditionally restricted to men because of cultural and theological prohibitions (Brodd 2003:847).

Those who are against the ordination of women to the presbyterate and episcopate base their argument on Jesus' having appointed men only as his apostles (Brodd 2003:847; Wijnaards 2001:91), on the creation story, and on Pauline teachings which bar women from having authority over men and command them to learn in full submission, and to be silent in the church (Parvey 1980:29; Phiri 1997:55).<sup>2</sup> As a result, this norm (perceived to have been set by Jesus Christ) and Paul has been held as a tradition for more than 19 centuries (Brodd 2003:847).

Based on the above reasons, the Roman Catholic Church has stated that it has no authority to break the tradition by ordaining women, a position also strongly held by Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches, most Pentecostal and many evangelical churches (Brodd 2003:847) <sup>3</sup>.

This restriction has triggered off an ecumenical debate and advocacy in the 20<sup>th</sup> century among women in the church. The debate has been focused on four areas, namely Scripture, tradition,

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<sup>2</sup>This view has been challenged by feminist scholars who assert that Jesus did have female disciples such as Mary Magdalene (Rakoczy 2004:41)

<sup>3</sup>Womenpriests, "The Argument from Tradition". Available at [http://www.womenpriest.org/ttd\\_ac.asp](http://www.womenpriest.org/ttd_ac.asp), accessed on 25/07/08.



theology and authority.<sup>4</sup> It came to the fore when the second wave of feminism in North America and Europe, which focused on civil rights, “began to influence religious institutions” (Rakoczy 2004:13). It was during this time that women in religious institutions began to call for the right to fulfil their vocation to the ordained ministry (Rakoczy 2004:13). In the 1970s, after some Protestant churches had been ordaining women for several decades, the Episcopalian church in the United States of America and the world-wide Anglican Communion, including South Africa, also received the call from women for the right to enter ordained ministry (Rakoczy 2004:13). These events were followed by the first meeting of the Women’s Ordination Conference in the Roman Catholic Church which was held in Detroit, Michigan (United States) in 1975 (Rakoczy 2004:13). Other churches that ordained women into ministry were the Lutheran Churches in the USA in 1970 and the British Methodists in 1974 (Clifford 2001:153-154).

The debate continued during the third wave of feminism which developed towards the end of the 1970s (Rakoczy 2004:13). The third wave included women’s voices from Africa, Asia, Latin America and women from indigenous cultures (Rakoczy 2004:13). It was from this third wave of feminism that the three approaches to feminist theology, namely, revolutionary theology, reformist Christian theology and reconstructionist Christian theology were developed (Clifford 2001:33). This will be discussed in detail later on in section 1.5.

The debate has not excluded African women. Many African women theologians and other feminists have been actively involved. Their stance is different from that taken by revolutionary and reformist theologians, as they advocate for a partnership of shared power between women and men in the church (Phiri & Nadar 2005:6). They have not only written extensively on women and the church, but have also examined the biblical texts that have been responsible for the marginalisation of women, as may be seen from the survey of literature which follows.

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<sup>4</sup> Womenpriests, “Why we dare challenge the teaching Authority”. Available at <http://www.womenpriest.org/pauthori.asp>, Accessed on 25/07/08.

### 1.2.1 Literature survey

A book entitled *Women hold up half the sky*, edited by Ackerman, Draper and Mashinini (1991), is a collection of essays on church and women. The book was written at a time when Anglican women were still lobbying for the right to be ordained. Its purpose was twofold. First, it sought to “re-image the feminine aspect of God, where Christians have traditionally only developed theology on the basis of masculine images from the Old Testament and New Testament” (Ackermann *et al* 1991:xiii). Second, “it drew attention to the usually unrecorded role which women have played and continue to play in the history of Southern Africa” (Ackerman *et al* 1991:xiii).

In *On being church: African women’s voices and visions*, Phiri and Nadar (2005) also present a collection of essays on what “being a church” means for women? The essays in this book were written by the women of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians who “focused on women as the Church in Africa while recognising the ways in which the institutionalised Churches have marginalised their experiences, their theological voices and their gifts” (Phiri & Nadar 2005:6).

Oduyoye (2001:85) has also conducted a theological reflection on what it means to be the church for women. For her, a church that is true to its origin is one in which women and men participate in evangelisation on the basis of God-given grace. She regards refusal to ordain women as a deliberate ploy aimed at keeping women one step behind men in the service that all are called to render in God’s household (Oduyoye 2001:85). She quotes Molee Boame of the Democratic Republic of Congo who says, “The Church ought to be a *koinonia*, the sharing of a common life” (2001:85). This common life indicates that gender discrimination is unacceptable and that people need to be working together, using their God given gifts (Boame in Oduyoye 2001:85).

Oduyoye (2004) has also written books on how women have been treated both in the African society and the church. She notes that in African society, women are brought up to accept that a woman is owned by a man, who may be a father, husband, uncle or brother (Oduyoye 2004:69). That means decisions are made for a woman by the man who owns her (Oduyoye 2004:69). For example, an adult woman, if unmarried, will be expected to be available for the pleasure of all

males. Similarly, women are treated as subservient to men in the church. Men in the church define the humanity of women through the patriarchal system (Oduyoye 2004:70). Oduyoye challenges African churches to redeem Christianity from its image as a force that coerces women into accepting roles that hamper the free and full expression of their humanity (Oduyoye 2004:70).

In the collection of edited essays, entitled *In search of a Round Table: Gender, Theology & Church Leadership*, Kanyoro (1997) has written about the image of the church. In this image, a church is seen as a round table that has no sides and no preferred seating. A round table with no first or last place, but a table which has room for all (Grum in Kanyoro 1997:28-29). It is a symbol of inclusiveness.

Schussler-Fiorenza (1997:1) sees a church vision and ministry as a discipleship of equals (1997:1). She writes, "In the discipleship of equals, women and men have equal status, dignity and rights as images of the divine, and equal access to the multifarious gifts of the Spirit, Sophia. Each and every one enriches the discipleship of community of equals with their different experiences, vocations and talents" (Schussler-Fiorenza 1997:2).

In her book *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy* Phiri emphasises how the concept 'woman' is constructed by patriarchy in African church and culture (Phiri 1997:12). She states that, "Patriarchy has defined women as inferior to men, thereby perpetuating the oppression of women by religion and culture" (Phiri 1997:12). She draws this conclusion by studying the way Chewa women in the Nkhoma Synod experience God in the church. She reveals how the Synod has handled women's issues from a cultural and biblical perspective and how the church has misused biblical teachings to construct an oppressing image of and role for African Christian women in religion and culture (Phiri 1997:16).

Kanana (2000:1) also notes the presence of patriarchy in the Bible and the androcentric interpretations of the biblical texts which influence Christianity today. He asserts that "The Hebrew culture from which the Old Testament was produced is a patriarchal culture. In this culture, patriarchs are honoured and remembered as great leaders, figures and heroes of that nation. Furthermore, the majority of the named Christian leaders of the early period were men"

(Kanana 2000:1). He further observes that even the New Testament is influenced by patriarchy, which again portrays and enhances the social, economic, and religious positions taken by the readers of the Bible (Kanana 2000:1).

### **1.2.2 Reasons for choosing the topic**

The current study is an addition to the works already produced by African women theologians such as Oduyoye, Kanyoro, Nadar and Phiri, on what it means to be a church and how women have been denied full participation in church life. While works abound on this issue, little research has been undertaken in Zambia in general and the ECZ in particular. While other denominations have progressed beyond this debate, it remains a pertinent issue for the ECZ, because the non-ordination of women is still a reality and therefore needs more ecclesiological and hermeneutical reflection. This study will deal specifically with this matter, focusing on the ecclesiology of the ECZ. My hypothesis is that the limited ecclesiological and hermeneutical principles regarding the participation of women in the church, are linked directly to the non-ordination of women. In light of this, I would like to conduct an in- depth gendered analysis of the situation in the ECZ, tracing its links back to the church's construction of the concept of a "woman", women's humanity, and the ECZ biblical interpretations concerning the role of women in the church.

According to the ECZ Constitution, the church is the Body of Christ in which each believer is responsible to use his/her Spirit-given gifts within the Body under the direction of the Holy Spirit (ECZ Constitution 2008:9). As a member and leader of the ECZ, I argue that, while this statement is enshrined in the ECZ Constitution, it is not applied in practice. Women in the ECZ have not been given the responsibility to use their Spirit-given gifts within the Body of Christ under the direction of the Holy Spirit. If they had, they would not have been restricted to the ministry of teaching and training women only. They would have been given the same platform as male believers. The role of women in the ECZ is quite subservient to that of men. This is clearly stipulated in the ECZ Constitution. For example, sections 233, 236 and 238 give male believers (Deacons) the right to "have the responsibility of sharing in the ministry of the Local Church with the pastors and elders, and to assist the pastors or Elders in practical matters of conducting baptismal services, Holy Communion service and Sunday service" (ECZ Constitution 2008:29-

30). By contrast, sections 245 and 247 of the ECZ constitution categorically state that, “A Deaconess is a woman who is spiritually mature and who, having demonstrated spiritual gifts, has been given certain responsibilities in the Local Church. A Deaconess serves the Local Church by giving assistance to women in the Church in situations where it is more suitable for a woman to help” (ECZ constitution 2008:30). Further, the responsibilities of Deaconesses found in sections 248 to 252 of the constitution are tailored to suit 1 Timothy 2:11-12 and 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 (ECZ constitution 2008:30). Thus, women are not allowed to live out their vocation to its fullest and are only allowed to participate in the church life where it is “more suitable” for women to participate.

In 2004, the ECZ established a Constitution Reformatting /Review Committee (CRC) to review its 1993 constitution. The issue of allowing women to live out their vocation to its fullest was one of the items debated during the submissions that took place within its six regions. The report of the CRC, which was presented to the 29<sup>th</sup> General Council (13-20) August 2005, showed that the proposal to involve women in the church life as teachers and pastors was not favoured by members throughout all six regions (ECZ GC minutes no. 51 of 2005 ). Their arguments were that Paul does not allow women to teach men, but commands that they remain silent in the church (ECZ GC minutes 2005). It is my contention that the meetings in which this view was submitted and argued were dominated by men. The same reason was given to argue against women teaching in the church during the Copperbelt Regional Council (CRC) held on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2006 (ECZ CRC minutes 2006 No 30).

The current situation concerning the women in the ECZ has been worrying me for a long time because it is oppressive and does not reflect the true picture of what ‘being’ a church means. Herein lies my motivation for choosing the above mentioned topic.

### **1.3 Research problems and objectives: key questions to be asked**

The background of the research problem is that the ecclesiological principles of the ECZ, which have their basis in a limited anthropological and biblical view of women, prevent women from being ordained as ministers in the church or living their vocation out to the fullest.

Therefore, the key research question, (as already stated) is: What are the theological and hermeneutical reasons underlying the ECZ refusal to ordain women and how can a more inclusive theological and hermeneutical model be constructed?

In order to explore in detail the significance of the topic, the study considered the following sub-questions:

- In what ways does the ECZ exclude women from leadership?
- On what theological basis is this exclusion based?
- How can a new, more inclusive theology, which still takes the role of the Bible seriously, be constructed?

This study is designed to achieve the following objectives:

- 1) To point out the ways in which the theology of the ECZ is not inclusive and how this has led to the refusal of ordaining women, and negatively impact on women. For example, it has been observed that many women, especially graduates from the ECZ secondary schools and a nursing school, defect to other denominations which ordain women and treat them with more respect. Oduyoye asserts that the language of the church often suggests that women are not integral to its being (2001:84). Eneme (in Oduyoye 2001:84) observes that women who are supposed to be integrated into the church as living stones are there as decorative objects and therefore dispensable. I agree with her because if the theology is not inclusive, then women would feel they are not an integral part of the church and therefore, they would leave the church and find space somewhere else.
- 2) To trace the theological reasons behind the church's refusal to ordain women and allow them to participate fully within the life of the church.
- 3) To formulate a theology that is inclusive, which still take the church's biblical and theological stance seriously, but shows that the Bible can also be interpreted in liberating ways.

#### **1.4 Research problems and objectives: broader issues to be investigated**

This study examined persisting male dominance in the Zambian culture, which affects women negatively. Thus, its context is the beliefs and practices of the Zambian culture that have shaped and influenced the lives of the ECZ members. It examined the Zambian women's role in family and society and linked it with the role of women in the church (ECZ).

The study also examined the ECZ's interpretation of the Bible in order to discern whether or not the Biblical context is taken into account. It has also helped me to understand the ECZ's understanding of history, culture, and the specific situation of the original Biblical audience.

#### **1.5 Theoretical frame work**

Feminist theology, feminist biblical hermeneutics, and feminist ecclesiology are the principal theories upon which the research project is constructed.

Feminist theology is appropriate for this study because it seeks to oppose sexism wherever it is found, and "to transform old patterns of thought, theological formulation, church practices and social evils , as well as developing new ways of expressing the reality of the creation and reconciliation of humanity in Christ" (Kretzschmar 1991:111). Feminist theology has three aims namely, re-reading both Christian theology and the Bible itself; uncovering the history of Christian women; and identifying the sexism within culture (Kretzschmar 1991:109-111). These aims mirror the objectives of this study, underscores the validity of my using principal theology.

Revolutionary Feminist theology is a post-Christian response. This strand of feminist theology sees Christianity as irredeemably patriarchal and oppressive to women because of its dominant image of God as male (Clifford 2001:32-34; Rakoczy 2003:16). Therefore, its adherents, such as Mary Daly, left the Christian church.

Reformist Christian feminists are women from "both Protestant and Catholic backgrounds who want some change and a greater inclusion of women in the church structures and decision-making, but are basically content with their theological traditions" (Rakoczy 2004:17). The

adherents to this strand of feminist theology thus want to achieve some measure of transformation from within existing structures. Reconstructionist Christian feminists are women who “seek a liberating theological core for women in the Christian tradition, while also envisioning a deeper transformation, a true reconstruction, not only of their church structure but also of civil society” (Clifford 2001:33). These feminists thus want to encourage change and liberation both within and outside the church.

In re-reading both Christian theology and the Bible itself, feminist theology seeks to identify the presence of sexism, androcentrism and patriarchy in the Christian theology and the Bible. Keane, Mollenkott and Jordaan all agree that “traditional views of humanity and the respective roles of men and women center on the superiority and headship of men and the low status, ability and subjection of women” (Kretzschmar 1991:109). They further point out that “such perceptions are based on one-sided interpretations of a few selected texts, and, arguably, are often both derived from and reinforced by, social norms, laws and restrictions” (Kretzschmar 1991:109). They also charge that, “biblical texts that affirm the full personhood of women, the creation of both men and women in God’s image, joint responsibility for the creation mandate are virtually ignored” (Kretzschmar 1991:109). The theory of feminist theology has thus helped me discover how the theology of the ECZ is discriminatory and what reasons lie behind their refusal to ordain women.

Through its second aim of uncovering the history of Christian women, feminist theology seeks to make known to the present and future generations of believers that women have contributed tremendously to the welfare of the church and society (Kretzschmar 1991:109). The aim of uncovering the experiences and the contribution made by women is to erase prejudices against women and expose the ignorance on which the negation of women is based (Kretzschmar 1991:109). In highlighting past achievements of women, feminist theology has provided an impetus for this study and has also recognised the work of women in the church, especially in the ECZ.

The third task of a feminist theologian is to identify the “sexism within culture, which prevents the experience of a full humanity of men and women” (Kretzschmar 1991:110). This refers to gender stereotyping found in many societies which regards men as rational and strong, while women are regarded as irrational and weak (Kretzschmar 1991:110; Ruether 1993:195). This



affects the way children are socialised. Boys are told to behave and do things as men and not as girls. In the church children see that positions of authority are only given to men while jobs like cooking for visitors and teaching children and women are given to women. This aspect of feminist theology has assisted this study in that it shows that attitudes and practices in the church are often a microcosm of those of society. The social construction of gender thus needs to be recognised and critically analysed in order to transform the gendered roles within the church too.

The second theory on which the study is based is that of feminist biblical hermeneutics which seeks to reconstruct the lives of ordinary women in the Bible and expose androcentric domination in and of the text (West 1991:77-80). West observes that, “A feminist reading of any text, biblical or otherwise, begins with a hermeneutic of suspicion” (1991:76). He says this in support of Sakenfeld (1985) who notes, “In studying any biblical text, feminists need to be alert not only for explicit patriarchal bias but also for more subtle androcentrism in the world-view of the biblical authors. Only such frank and often painful assessment of the depth of patriarchal perception in the text, provides an honest starting point” (West 1991:77). Feminist biblical hermeneutics thus seeks to expose the patriarchal structures and values, and male-centred concerns (androcentrism) underlying biblical texts (Deifelt 1997:4-5). For example, the gender-biased ecclesiology of ECZ is regarded as divine because it is based on the creation story and Paul’s teachings, which are slanted to favour male authority and superiority.

The particular approach of feminist biblical hermeneutics that has been applied in this study is ‘behind the text readings’ as developed by Meyers and Sakenfeld (West 1991:77-81). Meyers’ behind the text reading concentrates on reconstructing the historical and sociological background behind the text as well as the life of women in this society (West 1991:77). The Bible as a source, according to Meyers (in West 1991:77), is problematic in its omission of women and in its treatment of women as individuals and as a group because of its androcentrism that prevails in its pages. It has erased the powerful picture of an ordinary Israelite woman. Meyers’ method of “behind the text reading” recovers that picture. In applying Meyers’ theory to the study, I have contributed, as stated in section 1.4, in formulating a theological and hermeneutical model in the ECZ that is inclusive, which still takes the church’s biblical and theological stance seriously, but which shows that the Bible can also be interpreted in a liberating way.

The “behind the text reading” of Sakenfeld aims to reveal “the patriarchal structures and values and male-centred concerns underlying biblical texts” (West 1991:79). This method attempts to identify and “expose the male agenda in and of the text against the reconstruction social situation of women behind the text” (West 1991:79). Sakenfeld’s theory of “behind the text reading” has enabled me both to uncover androcentric processes and their product, the text, and to recover the place of women in the biblical world. The theory will help the ECZ to critically read those selected texts which favour the exclusion of women from ordination. It has also helped in formulating an ecclesiological and hermeneutical model which is inclusive in nature.

The third theory that has been applied to the study is feminist ecclesiology. Feminist ecclesiology calls for the history of the church to be read and rewritten on women’s terms (Watson 2002:1). In feminist ecclesiology, women discover “the need to think about the story of the church as a community of women, men and children, who grapple with the story of God and seek to tell it through their lives” (Watson 2002:1). In feminist ecclesiology, women refuse to accept the picture of the church as described by Church fathers, where they regard “a church as ‘mixed body’, a space where saints and sinners, tares and wheat exist together” (Watson 2002:5). They seek to claim “the power of naming the church and naming themselves, not as tares in the wheat, but rather as life-giving leaven in the lump”(Watson 2002:5). Women are regarded in the church as impure not because of what they have done but because of what they are. Feminist ecclesiology encourages women first, “to claim the right to question the concept of defining some individuals as saints and others as sinners” (Watson 2002:5), and second, “it challenges the structures that define saintliness and sinfulness” (Watson 2002:5). This theory has assisted me to counteract such definitions and structures that define individuals negatively.

In summary, the theories set out above have helped me analyse and challenge the current ecclesiological principles of the ECZ and assisted me in developing a more holistic, liberating way of engaging scripture and theology for the ECZ.

## **1.6 Research methodology**

This is a non-empirical study based on philosophical, theological analysis, literature survey, conceptual analysis, and theory building. Data has been collected from published and unpublished written material on the topic. Material dealing with women's roles in early Christianity as recorded in the biblical narratives has helped me uncover the socio-historical lives of women. The various documents of the ECZ, in particular the Constitution, have shed light on the constraints that women face in the ECZ.

If I were to have conducted an empirical study which would have been based on primary data, collected by interviews, I would have encountered hindrances to my research. Therefore, I decided to do a non-empirical study based on literature survey.

There are four possibilities that would have been a hindrance to my research if I were to conduct an empirical study: First, I would have met resistance from women participants who have internalised the patriarchal messages of the institutional church's definition of what constitutes a 'good woman' or good Christian and who therefore believe that any other conduct is displeasing to God. Second, I would have met resistance from the ECZ men who fear that equality with women practically means loss of power, authority and privilege. Third, the fact that I am a pastor and leader of the ECZ would have hindered the interviewees to openly share what they think about denial of ordination to women. Fourth, I would have also met resistance from the leaders who are theologically trained and who would not want to question evangelical theology.

## **1.7 Structure of dissertation**

The research has been divided into five chapters as follows:

**Chapter one** forms the introduction, in which the purpose of the dissertation is been provided. It has discussed feminist theology, feminist biblical hermeneutics and feminist ecclesiology as the appropriate theoretical frameworks which have guided this research. In addition the methods by which the data have been collected and analysed have been explained.

**Chapter two** presents the arguments for and against the ordination of women from the stance of Scripture. This has been analysed by referring to the academic fields of feminist theology and feminist biblical hermeneutics, in order to challenge the limited ecclesiological principles of the ECZ regarding women and Biblical interpretation.

**Chapter three** presents the arguments for and against the ordination of women from the point of view of church tradition. This has also been analysed by referring to the academic fields of feminist theology and feminist biblical hermeneutics.

**Chapter four** discusses the ecclesiological and hermeneutical principles of the ECZ on which women are denied ordained ministry.

**Chapter five** forms the conclusion and states the way forward for the ECZ. This includes recommendations for an inclusive theology and for allowing women to live their vocation out to the fullest.

## Chapter Two

### **ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN FROM SCRIPTURE**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

In *Feminine in the Church*, Carey (1984) narrates how he was approached by two young women students who were troubled by what they had heard about the ministry of women in the seminar he had just conducted. What they said to him is worth quoting at length.

“I agree that women are not treated as equals in the Church”, said one, “but the Bible seems to say that God has given authority to men”, “Yes”, added the other. “The problem appears to be that if one takes the Bible seriously and honestly we must come to the reluctant conclusion that there is a sexual hierarchy in the Bible. The place of women is in the pew not in the pulpit, at the altar rail, not at the altar. It’s hard- that’s how it is” (Carey 1984:44).

Similarly, the women in the ECZ are not treated as equal to men. Their place is in the pew not in the pulpit, at the altar rail, not at the altar. The pulpit and the altar are places for men. As stated in the previous chapter, the ECZ has enshrined this practice in its constitution and has kept women on the peripherals of the entire church ministry. Women are there to minister only to fellow women and children. They are not there, like male believers (deacons), to share in the ministry of the Local Church with the pastors and elders, and to assist the pastors or elders in practical matters such as conducting baptismal services, Holy Communion service and Sunday service (Constitution 2008:29-30). The ECZ justifies its beliefs by means of the following Scriptures 1 Timothy 2:11-12 and 1 Corinthians 14:34-35. Women’s duties as stipulated by the ECZ Constitution (2008:30-31) are as follows:

- Section 248: “To teach and train other women of the Church to be good wives and mothers (Titus 2:4-5)”

- Section 249: To get involved “in the regular teaching of the Word of God to other women and children”
- Section 250: To provide hospitality
- Section 251: “Caring of the Lord’s house”
- Section 252: To get involved “in the ministry of regular prayer”
- Section 253: “Involved in the leadership of women’s organisation in the local church”

The same arguments against women’s teaching in the church were submitted at the Copperbelt Regional Council (CRC) held on 29<sup>th</sup> April, 2006 (ECZ CRC minutes 2006) which I attended as Bishop for the Copperbelt region. Also in attendance were five Bible school graduates and other lay-leaders. Indignant lay leaders quoted 1 Timothy 2:11, 12 and I Corinthians 14:34-35, and concluded that the Council should not waste time on something which is biblically unsound. They also accused all of us who are theologically trained of confusing the church.

From the above, it is clear that the ECZ neither allows women to teach men nor to have authority over men. In other words, women are not allowed to hold leadership positions such as deaconship, eldership and pastoral ministry. This chapter seeks to analyse the Scriptural arguments for and against the ordination of women in relation to the ECZ.

## **2.1 Arguments against the ordination of women**

Those who are against the ordination of women in the church base their case on what they regard as God’s revealed will and divine sanction that men take precedence over women in the church and at home (Parvey 1980:20; Phiri 1997:55). The dominion of men over women, they argue, “comes to clearest expression in the two New Testament texts (1 Cor 14:34, 35; 1 Tim 2:11-14) where women are forbidden to speak and teach in church” (Hurley 1984:132-133). Women are therefore not allowed to exercise authority over men but must remain in silent submission (Hurley 1984:134-135; Lockwood 2005:32). Furthermore, proponents of this argument state that “these texts, in turn, presuppose male headship (Eph 5:22-24; 1 Cor 11:3) which has its foundation in the creation and fall story of Genesis 2 and 3” (Lockwood 2005:32).

In addition, those who are against women's ordination also argue that Jesus did not include women as his disciples and "that Jesus himself was a man" (Brodd 2003 :847; Smith 2001 :84).

If male headship which is described in Ephesians 5:22-25 has its foundation in the creation and fall narrative of Genesis 2 and 3, then it will be useful for this study to start with these texts in the Old Testament and thereafter discuss the gospels and Pauline letters.

## **2.2 The creation story (Genesis chapter 2).**

Those who are against women taking a leading role by preaching and administering sacraments, mainly cite verses 18, 21 and 22 of chapter 2 of Genesis. These verses read as follows: "Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him a helper as his partner..." (2:18 NRSV). "So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man" (2:21, 22 NRSV).

Four arguments are usually advanced for these texts: "(1) that the woman was made after the man and is therefore secondary to him; (2) that she is derived from the man and is therefore secondary to him; (3) that she is named by the man and is therefore is secondary to him; (4) the woman is created to be the man's helper and is therefore secondary to him" (Evans 1983:14; Naidoo 2001 :38). From these verses, which appear to concern the relationship between husband and wife in marriage, many people, particularly in Christian thought, have often concluded that the texts are a proof for the inferiority and subordinate position of women (Evans 1983:14; Naidoo 2001:38; Van der Walt 1988:6).

These arguments are dealt with one by one below.

### **2.2.1 The woman was created after the man and is therefore secondary to him**

The argument that the woman is inferior and secondary to the man because she was created after the man is self-contradictory. Both Evans (1983:14) and Van der Walt (1988:6) argue that, assuming that being created first implies superiority in any sense must mean that Genesis chapter 1 implies that matter, plants and the animals are superior to man because these things were created before man. A careful exegesis of Genesis 2 does not indicate that temporal priority is of any particular significance. What appears to be of central concern in this chapter is a unit at the beginning and the end (Trible 1973:36-37). Evans (1983) observes that, “The two creatures, male and female, are thus seen as parallel, the order disparaging neither one” (1983:15). Evans (1983) further points out that although Paul in 1 Timothy 2:13 (discussed below in detail) refers to the fact that Adam was created before Eve, Paul himself does not draw out the implication of this (1983:15). In reference to 1 Timothy 2:13, John Calvin also comments, “The reason which Paul assigns, that woman was second in the order of creation appears not to be a very strong argument in favour of her subjection” (1948:70).

We therefore conclude from the above analysis that temporal priority of creation does not mean superiority.

### **2.2.2 The woman was taken from the man and is therefore secondary to him**

Those who oppose the ordination of women raise two objections in terms of this argument: (1) Such as this creation order subordinates women to men (Reumann 1987:82). Augustine’s view (discussed in detail in chapter three) stated that “women were meant by order of creation to be subordinate to men” (Matter 1999:887). Jacob (1958) too convinced of this: “Man by himself is a complete being; the woman who was given to him adds nothing to his nature, whilst the woman drawn forth from man owes all her existence to him” (Jacob 1958:73). Therefore, women cannot be ordained because they are inferior to men (Reumann 1987:82).

What the ECZ and those who promote this view fail to realise is that it can be challenged by using Genesis 1. By re-reading chapters 1 and 2 we discover “that chapter 2 is really a second telling of the creation story, the initial account is in Genesis 1 where the woman is not a subordinate derivative of man, but rather they both are created together by God” (Reumann



1987:83). This can be seen clearly in the phrase "...male and female He created them" in Genesis 1:27 (Rakoczy 2004:42; Reumann 1987:38). Further more, according to Genesis 1:28-30, the man and the woman are together given dominion together over the earth (Rakoczy 2004:42; Reumann 1987:83).

The ECZ men completely reflect Jacob's sentiments regarding the woman in the way that they treat women. By excluding women from ordination and other leadership roles, the ECZ implies that women have nothing to offer to the life of the Church. Eneme (in Oduyoye 2001:84) is right to observe that women are regarded as decorative objects, not as living stones. I contend here that the ECZ needs to reconsider its stance because Genesis 2 clearly indicates that without the woman the man is himself incomplete. Verses 18-20 show that the woman was absolutely essential in God's plan. God observed that it was not good that human being should be alone. He therefore made him a helper suitable for him. In this case, the woman's role in the will of God was to be a helper who was suitable to man in every mental, spiritual, emotional, social and physical need.

Harlow (1968) opposes the idea that 'man by himself is a complete being' by stating that "Adam was not complete without his wife" (Harlow 1968:11). Both Thieliicke and Von Rad support Harlow's argument by drawing two complementary conclusions from Genesis 1:27. First, von Rad concludes that, "the idea of Man... finds its full meaning not in the male alone, but in man and woman" (von Rad 1972:60). Second, Thieliicke states that, "the human personality must be expressed in either male or female form" (1961:89). This means that there is no such thing as a human being apart from a man or a woman. Similarly, Guthrie (1990:87) is of the same view, i.e that "humankind consists of a pair -Adam and Eve".

In addition, there are those who teach that women's subordination of Genesis 2-3 is reversed in Christ: "Does not Genesis 3 teach that the subordination of women to men is the result of the fall? If so, should we not see Christ as undoing the effects of the fall and thereby doing away with inequalities between men and women?" (Hurley 1984:133). Similarly, Reumann (1987:84) states that "it is true that from Genesis 2-3 on, woman has been subordinate to man but with the coming of Christ, there is now a new situation: man and woman have direct equal access to God and salvation through Christ; man and woman enter a new relationship in Christ both by the

same sacrament of baptism. There is a new creation, where man and woman fulfil the intent of God's original creation- in Genesis 1". Crawford and Kinnamon (1983:52) also support this view, as does Paul, who asserts that "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Reumann 1987:84; Carey 1984:46). Therefore, man and woman are all one, emancipated for freedom in Jesus Christ. "The church is the place where man and woman should therefore, be equal before God" (Reumann 1987:84).

In advocating for an anthropology which affirms women's dignity and equality Oduyoye (2001:72) states that "Christian women find it unacceptable that we continue living as if Christ never died".

The second argument against women's ordination concerns the image of God (*imago dei*). Its proponents deny that women received the *imago* as men did at creation, and assert that women received it only in a derived sense, they argue (Reumann 1987:85).

First, this view completely contradicts Genesis 1:27 which clearly shows that both "men and women are created in the image of God (*imago dei*) and are therefore of equal dignity and worth before God" (Crawford & Kinnamon 1983:52; Hurley 1984:133).

Second, it must be noted that the whole emphasis of the latter verses of chapter 2 is not on the difference between male and female but on their relatedness (Evans 1983:15). This can be seen in Adam's acknowledgement of Eve that she is someone like himself, identified with himself, rather than different from or other than himself. Similarly, Vogels (1978:9-35) argues that the idea of the whole of humankind coming from one ancestor establishes both the absolute unity of humanity and the identical substance of both male and female.

### **2.2.3 The woman is described as the man's helper (2:18, 20)**

Those who hold the view that the woman is subordinate to the man in the church and to her husband at home often draw the support from the fact that the woman is depicted as man's helper (Hurley 1984:134). In Zambia, the word 'helper' has a negative connotation. It has always been associated with someone of a low status, particularly in working places. Helpers are workers with little or no education. They are unskilled workers. This was the norm during the colonial days when blacks were helpers to white bosses/masters.

This view finds itself in the Christian church's marriage formulary "which still teaches that, because the woman was biblically seen as the man's helpmate, she has to be his inferior" (Van der Walt 1988:9).

In support of this argument, Knight (1976) writes

"It is simply the proper application of the concept and realities to affirm that if one human being is created to be the helper for another human being, the one who receives such a help has a certain authority over the one who is his helper" (Knight 1976:710).

Similarly, Vriezen (1970) sees "the woman as the helpmate of man, his complement and partner...fundamentally his equal, but secondary, although man, as a social being cannot do without her" (Vriezen 1970:411).

When a careful exegesis, word analysis, and comparison with other passages are done, the above understanding of the word 'helper' becomes contrary to its real meaning. Lockwood (2005) states that "the word 'helper' (*'ezer*) comes from the Hebrew word for protection, barrier or enclosure (*azarah*)" (2005:36). He further states that, "The Hebrew word-group to which *'ezer* belongs suggests a degree of strength, support and protection that is not captured by the English word 'helper'" (2005:37). Both Van der Walt (1988) and Vos (1968) point out that fifteen out of the twenty- one occurrences of 'helper' in the Old Testament are used with reference to God (Van der Walt 1988:9; Vos 1968:16). God as the Creator of heaven and earth, helps in providing justice to the oppressed and food to the hungry (Psalm 46:5-9;). In addition, the words 'help' and 'helper', when used linked to God, carry a military meaning (Lockwood 2005:36). For example, God is the help and the shield of Israel metaphorically. In Exodus 18:4, Eliezer testifies that "the God of his father was his help and delivered him from the sword of pharaoh".

Given the above explanation of the word ‘ezer’ as a metaphor for God and His deeds, it is evident that it cannot imply a secondary or subservient status when applied to women (Lockwood 2005:37). The text states that when God created Adam he created him from the dust (Genesis 2:7). God observed that it was not good for Adam to be alone and therefore, he made him a suitable helper as a partner - a partner to be a companion to Adam (Gen 2:18). If the Hebrew word-grouping to which ‘ezer’ belongs suggests a degree of strength, support and protection, we can therefore conclude that the phrase “suitable helper” refers to the woman as the one who should support the man physically, spiritually and emotionally in all respects (Van der Walt 1988:9).

From the exegesis above, Evans (1983:16) is of the opinion that the word ‘helper’ could therefore conceivably be interpreted as suggesting superiority though he quickly points out that the accompanying phrase ‘fit for him’ removes this possibility. Further more, Evans refutes Augustine’s theory<sup>5</sup> that the woman was to be a helper only in childbearing because another man would be a better help for a man (1983:17).

Both Foh and Famonure (in Naidoo 2001:37) argue that “there is no sense of inferiority between the sexes, even though the woman has been treated as inferior by her male counterpart”(2001:37).

Jewett (1975:126) concludes that, as far as Genesis 2 is concerned, sexual hierarchy is just read into the text because there is nothing in this text that would lead us to assume that woman has the image of God in a different or lesser way than man. He further points that both chapters 1 and 2 show that humankind as a whole consists of two parts, the man and the woman. Each is seen as a complete individual, but what is stressed here is not their individuality or their difference, but rather their unity and the fact that they are indissolubly bound together.

The ECZ leadership structure excludes women from leadership roles at all levels- in the local church, District Council, Regional Council and General Council (ECZ Constitution 2008:21-52). Men in the ECZ have positioned themselves to rule, control and make decisions for women.

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<sup>5</sup> Augustine stated that, “I do not see what way it could be said that woman was made a help for man if the work of childbearing be excluded”. De Genesi and Litteram IX.5 cf VII.3

However, the above expresses that the relationship between man and woman is that of equal partnership.

It also serves as reminder to the ECZ and those who are against women's ordination that:

- i. The Bible never teaches inequality of sexes, but rather their complete equality and mutual fulfilment of each other.
- ii. Eve's creation after Adam from his rib does not make her inferior to Adam in any way.

#### **2.2.4 Naming confirms the man's authority over woman (2:23; 3:20)**

Another argument used against women's ordination relates to the man naming the woman as stated in Genesis 2:23 and 3:20. Proponents argue that naming in the Old Testament times implied dominion, and that the man's naming of the woman is clear evidence of his God-given authority over her (Evans 1983:16). This argument is supported by Bietenard in (Lockwood 2005:43) who says, "By naming the animals (2:19) and the woman (2:23; 3:20), the man is said to establish a relation of dominion over them". He argues further that, "to name a conquered city has been regarded as establishing the right of ownership, subjecting the city to the control of the conquering king or country" (Lockwood 2005:43).

Lockwood (2005:44) discounts the above argument by saying that names are given to capture the essence of a person or object. For example, Jacob received his name because he grabbed the heel of his brother Esau in the womb. Later, Jacob cheated Esau by supplanting him (Lockwood 2005:44). Lockwood also argues that Adam named animals according to "their appearance or some typical aspect of their lifestyle or behaviour" (Lockwood 2005:44). By naming his partner 'Eve', which means 'life' he recognized her as mother of all people living from that time onwards (Bailey 1970:149-150; Okure 1988:51).

Heubert (1997:24) also states that: "In calling her woman and himself man for the first time, he is declaring his recognition of one who is like him. In the woman, he finds the one who is like himself, his equal. And he cries out with joy, 'this is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh'. In other words, "This is one like me". The emphasis is upon the likeness of male and female".

Therefore, the suggestion that man has God-given authority over a woman because “Adam” named Eve is unacceptable. Adam is merely acknowledging Eve as his equal.

### **2.3 The fall account (Genesis 3:1-6, 16)**

Eve has been blamed by male theologians for all the evil and sin that entered the world (Rakoczy 2004:42). It is, therefore, on this basis that the opponents of women’s ordination argue against the ordination of women. They argue that the woman was easily led astray and therefore is more prone to lead others astray (Lockwood 2005:32). Further, they claim that the dominion of the man over the woman is God’s punishment for her mistake (Gen 3:16; Van der Walt 1988:13; Rakoczy 2004:32-33).

#### **2.3.1 The allegedly greater culpability of the woman in the fall account (Gen. 3:1-6).**

As indicated, those who oppose women’s ordination claim that the woman is more easily led astray and therefore, prone to lead others astray if given a position of authority (Lockwood 2005:38). This is in line with Tertullian’s thinking:

Woman, you are the devil’s gateway. You are the unsealer of the forbidden tree. You are the first deserter of the divine Law. You are she who persuaded him whom the Devil was not valiant enough to attack. You destroyed so easily God’s image man. On account of your desert, that is death, even the Son of God had to die (Rakoczy 2004:30-31).

Ambrose also claimed that because Eve led Adam to sin, she should accept him as her lord and master (Lockwood 2005:39).

Evans (1983) refutes this claim. While she agrees that the woman yielded, took the forbidden fruit, ate of it and gave it to the man who also ate it (Evans 1983:18), she sees the woman’s act as part of total communion between the man and the woman described in Genesis 2:24, and as the woman’s first natural reaction to share with the man the fruit she had taken. She argues that the man does not need to be led, he merely assents (Evans 1983:18). This is an event which Westermann (1974:86) describes as “the negative side of their oneness relation”.

The argument that women should not be placed in positions of authority because the woman is more easily led astray is a poor one. In the first place, the woman was not easily led. Genesis 3:1-5 clearly shows that the man is more culpable than the woman because he was silent throughout the conversation without intervening to prevent her from taking the forbidden fruit. In his book, *The silence of Adam*, Crabb (1995:90) also states that Adam was with Eve for the entire conversation but kept silent. Following his analysis of Genesis 3:1-7, Crabb (1995:90) concludes that Eve turned immediately to Adam and gave him the fruit. Verse 6 of Genesis chapter 3 which reads, "...She also gave some to her husband who was with her and he ate it", confirms his conclusion. Crabb further charges that "The Church's interpretation of Genesis has allowed men to blame women for their problems - just as Adam blamed Eve - and not face up to their failures" (1995:90).

Some male theologians have also held the view that the Devil knew that Eve was the weaker person and that is why she was the first person he approached (Van der Walt 1988:12). This is clear in Martin Luther's statement, "The subtlety of Satan showed itself also when he attacked human nature where it was weaker...I believe that had Satan first tempted the man, Adam would have gained victory" (Evans 1983:143). Van der Walt (1988:12) does not agree with Martin Luther on this point. According to him, if Adam was the chief, then the serpent should have started with him, because his fall would then mean Eve's fall. Furthermore, the fall account shows that it is Eve who argues with Satan while Adam falls without a word of protest (1988:12). We can thus- deduce that the serpent started with Eve because he knew that he could expect most opposition from her (Van der Walt 1988:12).

It must be pointed out that the woman's greater culpability is read into the Genesis text by 1 Timothy 2:13, 14, "Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became the transgressor". The problem that arises is that these verses are taken out of context without paying much attention to their historical, theological and pastoral context (Evans 1983:15; Lockwood 2005:40). The context behind the text is that Paul was concerned about the false teachers such as the arch legalists and libertarians, who were making their way into the Ephesians' church. Paul was particularly perturbed that the women in that church were proving to be vulnerable to these false teachers (1 Tim 2:8-15; 5:3-16; 2 Tim

2:6,7; Tit 2:3-5). Therefore, Paul wrote the above-quoted text to address this situation. Lockwood (2005) sheds more light on 1 Timothy 2:13 and 14. He explains that “Just as Adam received instruction from God first hand, so the men of the early church were for the most part better versed in the Scriptures. Just as Eve received her instruction belatedly and second hand, so also the women of Ephesus were not so well grounded in the Torah due to the constraints placed on their sex by tradition and custom” (Lockwood 2005:40). Because the women were poorly instructed, they were an easy target for the false teachers (Lockwood 2005:40). Furthermore, it was observed that it was mainly the women who were seen to be eager to promote the false teachings (Lockwood 2005:40).

Paul’s words in 1 Timothy 2:13 and 14 are “highly situation-specific” (Van der Walt 1988:46), but I will return to 1 Timothy 2 at a later stage. If they are used out of context, and applied generally to the relationship between men and women, they negatively portray women as the more gullible and the more deceitful sex, and distorting Genesis 2 and 3 (Lockwood 2005:40). He further points out that according to Romans 5:12, the Bible does not suggest that Eve is at fault to a greater extent than Adam (Lockwood 2005:40).

Furthermore, John Calvin regarded Paul’s statement “Adam was created first” as a weak argument in favour of woman’s subjection (Calvin 1948:70). Evans (1983) concludes that there is a possibility that Paul is also not using the argument in this way because subordination is not found in the Genesis narratives when interpreted within their historical context (1983:15).

### **2.3.2 Man’s dominion over the woman as God’s punishment.**

Those who oppose the ordination of women argue that God is punishing the woman by subjecting her to the dominion of the man (Lockwood 2004:32-33). The popular and well-known verse used in support of this is Genesis 3:16 “To the woman he said, I will greatly increase your pain in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you”. The catchphrase is, “...and he will rule over you”. This is regarded as a divine sanction for the domination of women.



The above argument is challenged by re-reading Genesis 3:1-24 which explains our human sinful condition in the story of our two original ancestors, Adam and Eve. We see that both the man and the woman share in the rebellion against God. Both Adam and Eve feel guilty and shameful (Gen 3:7-8). Each of them received God's punishment for disobeying God's command (Van der Walt 1988:15).

Westermann (1974) also sees the punishment of the couple as consisting of their expulsion from the garden which "ensured their removal from the sphere of the tree of life and the consequent death of which God had warned" (1974:93). I agree with him because Genesis 3:14-19 only describes the inevitable consequences of human's sin, whereas verses 22-24 clearly describe the actual punishment.

Seeing that both Adam and Eve received punishment for disobedience, Rakoczy is right to state that, "If Eve alone had been guilty, Adam would not have been punished" (2004:43).

Various counter arguments have also been posed. Wijnaards (2001) argues that "If Eve's transgression was part of original sin, which it is not, it would still be wiped out by baptism (Gal 3:27). For baptism (in Christ) forgives all sins, including the original sin" (2001:88). He further argues that, "If some guilt would still cling to women, why would a similar guilt not cling to men? For God is not a respecter of a person and in Christ the distinction between men and women has vanished" (Wijnaards 2001:88).

Cochrane also states that "Our theological response is unambiguous: as Christians we can never read the Old Testament as if Christ never came. Every sentence in the Old Testament must be interpreted in the light of Christ's redemptive activity. And in Christ the curse of the fall and the Law of the Old Covenant have been broken. In Christ we have been freed from the curse as we enter the New Covenant with Him" (Cochrane 1991:25).

Aalders (1960:139) is of the same opinion, stating that male domination is a sin because Christ's redemptive work was meant to redeem the woman from her subservient position.

## **2.4 Paul's exclusion of women from teaching in and presiding over the assembly.**

The strongest argument against the ordination of women is that Paul seems to prohibit it. In Scriptures such as 1 Corinthians 14:33-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-14:

“As in all churches of the saints, the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as even the law says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in the church”.

“Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet woman will be saved through bearing children, if she continues in faith and love and holiness with modesty”.

### **2.4.1 Texts misused to portray women's inferiority**

These passages have been misused to portray women as inferior to men and to claim that they should, as such, be barred from participation in public worship (Baloyi 2008:2; Smith 2001:84-85). Both Baloyi (2008:3-4) and Bennet (1974:182) agree that “The message of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 was based on the Jewish ordinance which stated that women were not permitted to teach in assemblies or even to ask questions”. When Paul says, “They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says” (1 Cor 14:34), he is addressing the recipients on the basis of Jewish customs and not in a universal sense (Baloyi 2008:4). Jewett equally sees 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 as reflecting the influence of Paul's Jewish scruples (1975:246).

De Haan (1970:121) argues in support of Baloyi and Bennet that “1 Corinthians 11:4-5, which speaks about a woman covering her head does not forbid her to teach or teach in public assembly, but allows her to speak, teach or pray on condition that she covers her head” (Baloyi 2008: 4).

According to Carey (1984:51), when Paul urged women to keep silent in the Church, he was “referring to women chattering and disturbing the worship in an unseemly way”, because if he meant to bar women from ministering to the congregation, this would be a direct contradiction of 1 Corinthians 11:5 where Paul refers to the ministry of women prophets (Carey 1984:51).

Barclays (in Morris 1985:196-197), also states that Paul’s concern in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 was the lax moral state of Corinth and the immodesty that was seen in the infant Corinthian Church. Therefore, he wrote to address this situation. Morris also advises that due caution must be exercised in applying Paul’s principle to our own different situations (Morris 1985:197): “In recent discussions this passage is often cited as deciding the question of the ordination of women. But it should be applied to that question only with reserve. Paul is not discussing whether and how qualified women may minister, but how women should learn” (Morris 1985:197).

#### **2.4.2 The text (1 Cor. 14:34-35) is an interpolation into Paul’s original letter**

Many scholars, such as Barrett (1971:332), Conzelmann (1975:246), Klauck (1984), Lang (1986), Harrisville and Stichele (1955) argue that 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 is an interpolation into Paul’s original letter which has been used in the Church tradition to exclude women from ministries in the Church.<sup>6</sup> Some commentators, according to Bruce (1953:1182), also argue that this text “is a later addition and not by Paul”. To support their claim that this text is an interpolation, they present the following three facts:<sup>7</sup>

- Verses 34-35 appear after verse 40 in a number of important manuscripts such as the Claromontanus of Paris, the Boernerianus of Dresden, Minuscule nr 88 and versions of the Old Latin (Itala) translation (2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century). It also shows that the verses were a later gloss written in the margin of the original papyrus which entered the body of the text in the later copies.

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<sup>6</sup> Fuller, D.P. . “Paul and Women’s Ordination” Available at <http://www.document.fuller.edu/ministry/berean/paulgal3.htm>. accessed on 06/01/09

<sup>7</sup> Fuller, D.P. . “Paul and Women’s Ordination” Available at <http://www.document.fuller.edu/ministry/berean/paulgal3.htm>. accessed on 06/01/09

- The rule that women should keep silent in the churches (vs. 34) completely contradicts what Paul says about women prophesying in church in 1 Corinthians 11:5.
- The phrase ‘as even the Law says’ (vs. 34) contradicts Paul’s teaching that we have been liberated from the Law (Gal. 2:16; 5:1, 18; 3:23-28).

Therefore, these commentators argue, that these verses do not teach, as part of the inspired message, that women are subject to men for all time to come and may not assume a role of leadership in the churches.<sup>8</sup>

The above points should be a reminder to the ECZ and other churches which cite 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12 to bar women from teaching and presiding in the assembly that:<sup>9</sup>

- The original prohibition had a limited scope. It was not for all time to come but just applied to that particular time;
- It contradicts Paul’s allowing women to prophesy (1 Corinthians 11:5);
- It argues from Mosaic Law as if that were to bind women for all time to come (vs.34), whereas the Gospel has superseded the Law;
- It also presumes that all women have husbands to whom they can direct questions (vs.35);
- It bases itself on the Jewish prejudice that considered it shameful for a woman to speak in the synagogue;
- With reference to 1 Timothy 2:11-12, it expresses measures taken in some early Christian communities to counteract a specific problem; and
- It goes against the literal sense of the text and against the intended scope of the author to make this an inspired, permanent prohibition against women taking a ministerial function in the church.

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<sup>8</sup> Fuller, D.P. . “Paul and Women’s Ordination” Available at <http://www.document.fuller.edu/miniistry/beran.paulgal3.htm>. Accessed on 06/01/09.

<sup>9</sup> Fuller, D.P. . “Paul and Women’s Ordination” Available at <http://www.document.fuller.edu/miniistry.berean.paulgal3.htm>. Accessed on 06/01/09.

## **2.5 Jesus did not call women to be part of the twelve apostles (Mark 3:13-19)**

Another argument against the ordination of women is that Jesus did not include women amongst his disciples (Smith 2001:84). The proponents of this argument, in particular the Roman Catholics, claim that “by not making a woman a member of the apostolic team, Jesus set a permanent norm, which the Church will never be able to change” (Wijngaards 2001:91). They quote Mark 3:13-13 and John 6:17 and argue that this norm of appointing only men was made in accordance with God’s plan because Jesus chose whom he willed in union with his Father and with much prayer (Wijngaards 2001:91). Therefore, it is argued that “in granting admission to the ministerial priesthood to men alone, the church has always acknowledged as a perennial norm her Lord’s way of acting in choosing twelve men whom he made the foundation of His church (Rev. 21:14)” (Wijngaards 2001:91).

### **2.5.1 Jesus did not set a permanent norm in choosing male apostles only**

Scholer (1992) argues that “the twelve did not constitute or provide the model or framework for leadership or authority in the early church” (Scholer 1992:886). In the early church, leadership was characterized by Jesus’ call to discipleship and its definition in terms of service. Because the call to discipleship is defined in terms of service and following, Jesus included among his disciples and proclaimers both men and women ( Scholer 1992:886). It is noted that Jesus neither appointed any women nor any men to any office (Scholer 1992:886).

Wijngaards (2001: 95-96) also presents three counter-arguments to refute the view that Jesus set a permanent norm in choosing only men for the apostolic team. His first counter-argument is that there are many significant elements in our faith and practice today that the church has changed which were not decided by Jesus. Below are examples of such elements that Jesus did not abolish or transform but about which the church had made decisions and changed.

- Although Jesus followed a liberal interpretation of the Jewish law, as is evident in the way he viewed the Sabbath, he did not actually abolish the Mosaic law as such. However, in AD 51 at the Council of Jerusalem, the early Church leaders “declared

that the Mosaic Law was no longer a matter of obligation to Christians except with regard to some practical pastoral measures” (Wijnaards 2001:95).

- Regarding the structure of the church, Jesus only loosely formed various groups of disciples, “such as 12 apostles, the 72 disciples and the band of women disciples” (Wijnaards 2001:95). It was the Church that gradually gave structure to the sacrament of ordination, including the “establishment of deacons, bishops (Overseers) and (elders) priests” (Wijnaards 2001:95-96).
- Similarly, Jesus never explicitly specified details regarding the sacraments of marriage, confirmation and anointing of the sick (besides perhaps indicating them symbolically in, for example, the miracles at the wedding of Cana, or his healing of the sick). “Does that mean, however, that they do not have a valid place in the practice of the Church, or that the Church had no right to institute them or regulate them as it does today?” (Wijnaards 2001:96).
- In addition, although Jesus did not found religious orders and congregations, nor establish ecclesial structures, ecumenical councils, bishops’ conferences and so on, this does not invalidate these bodies within the present church (Wijnaards 2001:96).

Wijnaards’ second counter-argument is that Jesus had a vision for his church but did not determine in detail all matters of faith and practice. He only presented ideas and laid down principles (in what he did and said) upon which the foundation of the Church’s future faith and life would be based (Wijnaards 2001:96). For example, Jesus did not establish religious orders or congregations. They were established by the community of believers who were led by the Holy Spirit to do so.

This argument can likewise be applied to Jesus’ involvement with women. Jesus’ vision for his Kingdom was that women would be elevated to the same status as men in contrast to the old dispensation where women took the second place to men (Evans 1983:27). This was to be accomplished by baptising everyone (women included) into Christ (Gal. 3:27) so that women would be on the same footing with men (Wilson 1979:74). As we can see, Jesus never explicitly

expressed what the relative position of women and men must be. It was, however, his broad principle concerning women which Paul came to express explicitly in his statement, “There is neither... male or female for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28).

Furthermore, the reason that Jesus did not include women amongst the apostolic team was the limited time and the context in which Jesus ministered (Wijnaards (2001). The society in which Jesus lived was completely patriarchal from both a religious and socio-cultural point of view. In addition, the roles which Jesus’ contemporaries assigned to men and women were totally different from those of today. Therefore, although “Jesus had close women disciples, he could not, without complicating his message enormously, have women in leadership roles that would be totally misunderstood at the time” (Wijnaards 2001:97).

Raming (2004:257-258) agrees with Wijnaards’ (2001) argument that the social structure of the Israel of antiquity was patriarchal. Women were excluded from public teaching in the synagogues as well as from acting as witnesses in court (Raming 2004:258). People would not have agreed to be taught by women, and it would have been problematic for Jesus to include them amongst his twelve disciples (Raming 2004:258).

The limited period of his public ministry which lasted only three years could not allow Jesus to solve and put into practice every implication of his world-changing vision. He spent most of his time in preparing his Galilean compatriots for the completely new religious vision he was preaching (Wijnaards 2001:97). Similarly, because of the limited time Jesus had, he could not abolish slavery, although his vision implied total equality for all (Raming 2004:258; Wijnaards 2001:98). It was again “Paul who saw clearly – Jesus himself did not make an open plea for the abolition of slavery” (Wijnaards 2001:98).

To expect Jesus to do everything within his limited time on earth would be unrealistic. We should bear in mind that “when he was put on the cross he drew to himself the injustices of all time”, including slavery and the oppression of women. Those who oppose the ordination of women, particularly the ECZ, forget the fact that “when Jesus rose from the tomb, he won, in principle, the freedom from every form of unjust domination” (Wijnaards 2001:98).

### **2.5.2 Women were also included as disciples**

Those who are opposed to the ordination of women, including the ECZ, claim that Jesus did not include women amongst his disciples. The proponents of the ordination of women refute this argument because all four Gospels indicate that women were indeed amongst Jesus’ followers (Hurley 1984:). Stanton (1974:151) observes that, “While the Rabbis in general preferred to avoid as much as possible the company of women, Jesus’ attitude, encouraged many women to take this unusual step of following him and ministering to him”. Both Rakoczy and Scholer argue that although Jesus did not include women in that intimate group of twelve, the Gospels are all full of evidence to indicate that women were among His followers or disciples (Rakoczy 2004:203; Scholer1992:882). In support of this, Scholer (1992:882) states that the Greek term *akoloutheo*, which appears more than seventy-five times in the Gospels, is used to designate both men and women following of Jesus, and means following him in the sense of being His disciples (1992:882).

Rakoczy (2004:202) points out that the New Testament criteria to determine apostleship are that “a person must have accompanied Jesus during his life time” (Acts 1:21), “must have seen the risen Jesus” (1 Cor 15:3-9) and been commissioned by him (Gal 1:11-17). We see in the Gospels that women accompanied Jesus during his life and they were the first witnesses to his resurrection.

Van der Walt (1988:26) equally states that disciple meant pupil, follower and servant. When we look in all the four Gospels, we find records of women who were followers of Jesus, pupils of Jesus, servants and proclaimers of Jesus (Rakoczy 2004:202-203; Scholer 1992:883):



### 2.5.2.1 Women who were followers (disciples) of Jesus

In all four Gospels, it is evident that a group of women followed Jesus in Galilee and to Jerusalem and that they were presented as being faithful and active at the crucifixion, burial and resurrection of Jesus (Matt. 27:55-56; 27:61-28:1; Mk 15:40-41; 15:47-16:1; Lk 23:49; 23:55-24:1; Jn 19:25:25-27; 20:1).

As we have noted above (section 2.5.2) the Greek verb *akoloutheo* means following Jesus in the sense of a disciple. We may thus conclude that women who were travelling with Jesus and the Twelve were also disciples of Jesus Christ (see Scholer 1992:882). As Luke 8:1-3 indicates, these women were not only following them, but were also helping to support them out of their own means. The following women are named in the Gospels:

- **Joanna:** Luke mentions Joanna as one of the female disciples of Jesus who followed him in Galilee and to Jerusalem (Lk 8:3; 24:10). She is described as one of the women who first received the message of Jesus' resurrection.
- **Martha:** This sister of Mary and Lazarus lived in Bethany. In the Gospels of Luke and John, Martha is portrayed as the one who prepared the meals for Jesus and hoisted Him at their home (Lk 10:38-42; John 11:1-44 and 12:2). In the Lukan story, Martha objects to Mary's involvement as Jesus' disciple. In the Johannine story she makes a disciple's confession of Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God (Jn 11:27; Scholer 1992:884).
- **Mary Magdalene:** She was a prominent female disciple of Jesus who followed him in Galilee and to Jerusalem. She too was among the first female disciples who received the message of resurrection of Jesus (Mt 27:56, 61; Mk 15:40, 47; 16:1; Lk 8:2; 24:10; Jn 19:25; 20:1, 11, 16, 18).
- **Mary, the mother of James (the younger) and Joseph:** She too is one of the female disciples who received the first message of Jesus' resurrection (Mt 27:56; Mk 15:40, 47; 16:1; Lk 24:10).
- **Mary of Bethany:** She was the sister of Martha and Lazarus and lived in Bethany (Lk 10:38-42; Jn 11:11-45; 12:1-8). Mary assumed the posture of a disciple by sitting at the feet of Jesus and listening to Jesus' word (Scholer 1992:882). Jesus affirmed

Mary's choice of sitting at his feet as "having chosen the better part which will not be taken from her" (Lk 10:42).

- Salome: The account of Salome is mentioned in Mark 15:40 and 16:1 as one of the disciples who were at the cross and the resurrection.
- Susanna: one of the female disciples mentioned in Luke 8:13.

In the book of Acts, Luke presents female disciples who were amongst the one hundred and twenty followers of Jesus who waited in the upper room and received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:14,15). Luke also mentions Tabitha, known as Dorcas, as a disciple (Acts 9:36) who was always doing good and helping the poor (Scholer 1992:882).

### **2.5.2.2 Women who were pupils**

As previously noted, "disciple" meant pupil in the time of Jesus. The Gospels clearly present women as pupils. We see that Jesus did not only associate freely with women, treating them as responsible human beings, and friends whom He permitted to listen to his teaching, but "rather taught them personally, indulging in theological conversation with them, encouraging and expecting a response" (Evans 1983:51). This was in sharp contrast to the practice of the time, according to which, women only came to the synagogue to listen rather than to learn (Van der Walt 1988:26). Jesus saw women not only as capable of learning and understanding, but also engaging in debate as we can see the examples below (Evans 1983:50):

- In Matthew 15:21-28 and Mark 7:24-39, we read an account of the Syro-Phoenician woman who was in need of her daughter's healing. She followed Jesus along the highway until she frustrated Jesus' disciples and they urged Jesus to send her away. Contrary to the attitude of his disciples, He did not send her away. He saw her as an individual needing His help. He spoke with her. By testing her and at first refusing to help her, Jesus was leading her on to faith. His aim was to bring out her capacity of understanding (Evans 1983:52).
- Another incident in which the Gospels portray a woman as Jesus' pupil is found John 4:7-12. The Samaritan woman, who according to the accepted standards of the time was not supposed to talk with the Jew, had a conversation with Jesus. Bultmann brings out a

notable thing about the disciples' attitude when they saw Jesus talking with a Samaritan woman. He points out that, "the disciples were amazed not so much because Jesus talked with a Samaritan, but because he talked with a woman" (Bultmann 1971:193). In His encounter with the Samaritan woman, Jesus treated her seriously and imparted important theological teaching in response to her questions/replies (Evans 1983:52). In other words, Jesus treated her as an individual who is capable of spiritual discernment.

- Another example of Jesus teaching a woman is found in Luke 10:38-42 and John 11:20-33 where Mary sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching- the posture of a Rabbi instructing his pupil (Ellis 1974:154). What is peculiar in this case is that the pupil is a woman (Ellis 1974:154).

This serves to show that Jesus gave private teaching to a wider group than the twelve apostles and that this group included women.

### **2.5.2.3 Women who were "proclaimers"**

The Gospels show three occasions in which women were involved as proclaimers: "the Lukan infancy narrative (Lk 1-2), the story of the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:4-42) and the account of the women at tomb in the resurrection narratives" (Brown 1975:692, Scholer 1992:883). In these occasions we see women as both the interpreters of Jesus' birth and as witnesses to His resurrection.

In the Lukan infancy narrative, three women, namely Elizabeth, Mary (the mother of Jesus), and Anna are among the five people who speak by the power of the Holy Spirit (i.e as prophets) in order to proclaim the meaning of Jesus' birth (Morris 1974:79-85): Elizabeth (Luke 1:41-45), "filled with the Holy Spirit, pronounces a blessing on Mary", calling her "the mother of my Lord" (Scholer 1992:883).

Mary (Lk 1:26-38, 46-56) sings a song (the Magnificat) declaring the "saving work of God in language and structure similar to Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel 2:1-10" (Evans 1983:57).

The other proclaimer of Jesus is the Samaritan woman who went back to her city and told others her experience with him (Jn 4:7-26). It was due to her testimony that many Samaritans believed in Jesus as the Messiah (Jn 4:39).

All four Gospels mention female disciples of Jesus who were the first to receive the angelic news of Jesus' resurrection and were commissioned to go and tell the male disciples (Brown 1975:692). In addition, the Gospels of Matthew, John and the long ending of Mark show that Jesus himself appeared first to women such as Mary Magdalene (Jn 20:14-18; Mk16:9-11; Mt 28:9-10).

The above overview of the gospel accounts of Jesus' interaction with women shows that He gave equal opportunity to both men and women to serve Him. He did not limit his disciples to the well-known twelve men. He called and taught both men and women and expected them to disseminate the Good News about Him.

By re-reading through the Gospels, we discover that Jesus, as a Jewish male, broke the religious and cultural taboos which prohibited public communication with women (Rakoczy 2004:40).

## **2. 6 Conclusion**

Given the above arguments, it is clear that there are no grounds for prohibiting the ordination of women. The problem lies in two factors, namely, the principles of Bible interpretation and the androcentric bias of the Gospel writers. We must appreciate that the principles of interpreting the Bible will always influence the conclusions to which we come.

Milne (1982) asserts that,

“Scripture has come to us out of a period of time spanning several millennia, from the experience of peoples whose culture is unfamiliar. It is written in languages which are not our own. To understand and interpret the Bible correctly, therefore, requires the demanding discipline of bridging these cultural and linguistic gulfs which separate us from the Bible's time and world” (1982:49).

To state that Jesus did not include women as his disciples is an attempt to overshadow the witness of women as faithful disciples, standing in sorrow and compassion with Jesus to the end at the cross, carrying the message of His resurrection. From the discussion in this chapter, those who deny women's ordination on the basis, should remember that the women's involvement in Jesus' ministry was not eliminated despite the androcentric bias of the Gospel writers. Rakoczy (2004) points out that, while Peter had denied that he had ever met Jesus, and while the other male disciples had run away to hide, the Gospels show that the women followed Jesus to the end (2004:107).

Jesus' attitude towards women, as revealed in this study is "a highly original and significant feature of his life and teaching" (Montefiore 1909:377). He treats women as human beings and as such, as having value. The study also shows that the unprecedented role of women in the ministry of Christ continued into the life of the Christian church without debate and remark.

Furthermore, this chapter shows that Genesis 1 and 2 shows that God made both man and woman in His image. Neither man nor woman is made more in the image of God than the other. From the beginning, the Bible places both man and woman at the pinnacle of God's creation. The Bible does not anywhere teach, in spite of acknowledging difference in sex fully, inequality of the sexes, but rather their complete equality and mutual fulfilment of each other.

At this juncture, we go to the next chapter, where we will discuss the reasons given for and against the ordination of women from the point of view of church tradition.

## **Chapter Three**

### **ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN FROM TRADITION**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

While the previous chapter examined the arguments for and against the ordination of women on the basis of Scripture; this chapter discusses these from a church tradition point of view. The main arguments against the ordination of women from this point of view are that (a) women are inferior to men, and (b) women have been excluded from ordination by the Church (Wijnaards 2001:60). Women have been considered inferior creatures by nature and by law throughout Church history<sup>10</sup>. For example, Christians, especially Church Fathers, adopted the Greek philosophy which held women to be inferior to men by nature (Isherwood & McEwan 2001:30). They also accepted the Roman law, which accorded women a low status in society and made the Roman legal system the basis for the Church's laws (Keane 1988:4). As we have seen, some Church Fathers linked women's presumed inferior status to Scriptural texts (Hilkert 1995:192: Ruether 1974:156), asserting that only man was created in the image of God, and that Paul had forbidden women to teach in the church.

This chapter also provides the background information regarding the practice of refusing priestly ordination to women in order to understand the source of the anti-feminine cultural bias. There are several factors which governed the church's traditions of not ordaining women. These can be traced back to the Old Testament, Judaism, and the Greco-Roman world, in which the early church began.

#### **3.1 Women in the Old Testament**

##### **3.1.1 Women in the society and family**

Women in the Old Testament were usually considered, not in their own right but in relation to the man under whose authority they were placed (Evans 1983:24). They were subordinate to

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<sup>10</sup> Womenpriest, "Women were considered inferior creatures". Available at <http://www.womenpriest.org/tradition/inferior>. accessed on 28/08/08.

their husbands and generally of lower status than men. They were also seen as child-bearers and best at home-making, but were sometimes acknowledged as companions and partners (Evans 1983:26). Smith (1923) also confirms that the conception of women in the Old Testament society is determined almost completely by the valuation which was placed upon them by their husbands and sons (1923:48-49). It must be noted here that the key to the way in which the Israelite woman was treated was based on the fact that the father was the legal head of the household (patriarch) and that every woman was always under the authority of some man, first her father and then her husband (Evans 1983:24). Van der Walt (1988) also explains that, under the patriarchal system, the man was the father and master, the ruler and the owner of the women, children, and slaves in his household (1988:17). Married women were given the status of a child or a possession (Smith 1923:48-49; Van der Walt 1988:17). A good example can be seen from the way polygamy was practiced in the Old Testament. A man could own or marry more than one woman. For instance, Abraham had various wives and concubines, Jacob had four wives, Esau had three wives, Gideon had thirty wives, and Solomon had 700 hundred wives and 300 concubines (Van der Walt 1988:17).

### **3.1.2 The woman in the worship of the covenant community**

Regarding the position of a woman in the worship of the covenant community, Evans explains that, “There was a preponderance of male participation in the worship of Israel, as man, being the leader of the household, played the major part in most cultic acts” (Evans 1983:26). While there is much evidence that men led in worship activities, scholars have pointed out that women were also able to participate in the worship activities of ancient Israel. Eichrodt (1961) for example, gives a different picture of a woman’s position. For him, the Congregation of Yahweh includes the family. He further states that neither age nor sex bestows any special privileges (1961:131). Similarly, Jewett agrees with Eichrodt (1961) by stating that women in ancient Israel shared with men in the grace of God as members of the covenant community (1975:86). For example, Israelite women were on the same footing with men in keeping the law and maintaining the purity of the culture ( Deut 31:12-13; Josh 8:35; Neh 8:2). In sanctuary worship, Evans points out that there were no restrictions placed on women (1983:29). A good example is in 1 Samuel 1, where there is no sign of any problem about Hannah approaching the sanctuary, a

sharp contrast to Paul's time and today where women are told to keep silent and cover their heads. Payne observes that "the restrictions on the worship of women and the introduction of a separate, lower court of the women can nowhere be found in the Old Testament, but are an inter-testamental and unbiblical innovation that developed out of [*sic*] corrupted Judaism" (Payne 1962:229).

### **3.1.3 Women leaders in the old dispensation**

Both Payne (1962:229 and Van der Walt (1988:19) point out that women also took office, even in the androcentric Israelite society. Such offices included prophetess (2 Kings 22:14; Nehemiah 6:14) and judge (Judges 4:4). The women who held the function of prophets were Miriam, Deborah and Huldah (Evans 1983:30). We also have a record in 2 Kings 22:11-23:25 of Huldah being used of God to teach his will to the king, the high priest and all the people of the country. Van der Walt notes that female leadership was not restricted to religious leadership, but was also extended to other forms of leadership. For instance, apart from being a prophet, Deborah was also a judge, political leader and strategic commander (Evans 1983:30; Van der Walt 1983:19). It must be noted that the Old Testament does not portray the appearance of prophetesses as an emergency measure (Vos 1968:208). Women were appointed to leadership roles even when there were suitable men. Except in the case of Deborah, who exercised leadership when there were no suitable man at her time, we have Huldah as an example who exercised leadership when both Jeremiah and Zaphaniah were active (2 Kings 22:14). During her time as a prophetess, five men (Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan and Asaiah) consulted her without apparent debate for advice as to the instruction of the Lord concerning the book of the law which Josiah found (Evans 1983:30-31). Vos refers to this as "a strong indication that in this period of Israel's history there was little if any prejudice against a woman uttering a prophecy" (Vos 1968:186). According to Calvin (in Evans 1983:30) "prophetesses arose whenever God wished to brand man with a mark of ignominy". He stated that by raising Deborah and Huldah as prophetesses, God wanted to shame men. He was also of the opinion that Miriam's prophetic ministry was a continuous reproach to her brother (Evans 1983:30).



When we look at the personal relationship of women to God in the Old Testament, we agree with Tribble (1973),

‘I know that the Hebrew literature comes from a male dominated society. I know that biblical religion is patriarchal and I understand the adverse effects of that religion for women. I know also the dangers of exegesis. Nevertheless, I affirm that the intentionality of biblical faith as distinguished from a general description of biblical religion is neither to create nor to perpetuate patriarchy, but rather to function as salvation for both men and women’ (Tribble 1973: 31).

In summary, we find that the Old Testament deals with a male-oriented and male-dominated society. Despite this, women, though secondary, are depicted as members of the covenant community with an important role, not only as wives and mothers but as individuals.

### **3.2 Women in Judaism**

Long before the time of Christ, Judaism replaced the religion of Moses and the prophets (Van der Walt 1988:21). This religion was based on the tradition of the Scribes and the Pharisees, who were often regarded as the opponents of Christ in the Gospels. Although the position of the woman was not as harrowing as in the Eastern world, there was a dramatic decline in the position and status of women in every sphere as compared to the situation as described in the Old Testament (Evans 1983:21). The women were subservient to men in everything: in marriage, the family, religion and social life (Van der Walt 1988:21). The Rabbinic view of women, according to Montefiore and Loewe (1938), was described as half kindly and half oriental because women were repeatedly linked with children and slaves (1938:510). Evans (1983:33) also states that, “There are occasions where women are described as hardworking, compassionate or intelligent, but more often seen as lazy, stupid, garrulous, vain, having a tendency to the occult” (1983:33). The disdainful opinions of women far outweigh those of high esteem (Jeremias 1969:375). The woman’s place was in the house. Women were expected to keep out of the public eye because it was believed that they would, with their innate cunning, seduce the innocent men (Van der Walt 1988:21). Philo (in Evans 1983:34) was of the opinion that “women are best suited to the indoor life which never strays from the house”. Further, Jewish writings reveal that every effort was made to avoid the lustful glance by limiting opportunities to meet with the opposite sex (Forster

1964:129). The reason for this was because men were largely viewed as innocents, being seduced by wicked women (McKeating 1973:85). A statement such as “Do not converse much with women as this will ultimately lead you to unchastity” is repeated several times in the Talmud in various ways and is applied even to a man’s wife (Van der Walt 1988:21; Evans 1983:35). This explains why Jesus’ disciples were surprised when they found Him conversing with the Samaritan woman.

Women were also considered to be liars. For example, in the courts of law, the testimony of women bore very little weight (Evans 1983:35). Josephus stated, “From women let no evidence be accepted because of levity and temerity of their sex” (Evans 1983:35).

In the religious sphere, we find some restrictions on and discriminations against women. In the Temple, for instance, “women could together form the quorum of three necessary for saying grace, but if a man was present, a hundred women are no better than two men” (Evans 1983:22). The common attitude held in both the Temple and synagogue was that “The man came to learn, the women came to hear” (Evans 1983:35). Other discriminatory attitudes were that in the temple, women were allowed only to enter the women’s court and in the synagogue they had to sit separately from men (Van der Walt 1988:22). Further, women did not play any active role in the service. As we indicated above, women were considered, in principle, as lazy, stupid and unteachable (Van der Walt 1988:22).

A similar situation is found in the ECZ. Women sit separately from men. They are allowed to pray, but they play no active part in the church service.

Therefore, it is clear from the above that Judaism presents women as being subordinate and inferior to men in every sphere, with no real place outside the home, though within the home their role was recognized as important.

### **3.3 Woman’s position in the Graeco – Roman world**

The arguments against the ordination of women can be traced back to the Middle Ages, when the ban against the ordination of women became part of church law, with supporting reasons (Wijnaards 2001:59). It is also important to note that the anti-feminine cultural bias which led to the ban on women’s ordination is traced to the ancient Roman law which the Church adopted as

its own (Wijnaards 2001:48). The ancient Roman legal system dominated the Roman Empire for more than one thousand years (Wijnaards 2001:51). It was upon this law that the law codes of most Western countries were based, which subsequently shaped much of the Church law in the Catholic Church (Rakoczy 2004:31; Wijnaards 2001:51).

### **3.3.1 Women in the Greek world**

In the Greek culture, women were regarded as being a little more than possessions (Evans 1983:39) or better than livestock (Van der Walt 1988:22). They were regarded primarily as a means of producing healthy and efficient citizens (Van der Walt 1988:22). That is, women were more a means than an end and treated in a manner consonant with this view. They were viewed as essentially inferior to men, “as belonging by nature to a lower genus than men” (Evans 1983:39).

### **3.3.2 Position of women in the ancient Roman Empire**

In the Roman world, women were slightly more highly regarded than they were in the Greek world (Van der Walt 1988:22). This can be seen from the way they viewed marriage. Marriage in the Roman culture was viewed higher than in the Greek culture (Evans 1983:39). According to both Bailey (1959:3) and Van der Walt (1988:22), the Roman mother enjoyed exceptional dignity, freedom and equality with her husband. However, her essential subservient and dependent status was reflected and defined in the legal doctrine of the ‘patria potestas’ (Bailey 1959:3). That is, she was under the ‘manus’ or authority of her husband. This Roman law became the basis for the Church’s laws and gave women a low status in society (Evans 1983:42). This status of women defined by the law can be understood well by examining both the family and civil laws that stipulated how women were to be treated both in the home and in civic society.

### **3.3.3 Women under Roman family law**

The old Roman family law assumed the paternal authority over the agnate (male descent) family (Ramming 2004:35). The agnate family is formed by blood relationship on the father’s side or is formed on the basis of legal transactions (adoption). The role of women in producing children is

ignored. Moreover, according to Roman family law, the relationship that existed between husband and wife was of that of a father and child. “The husband was the absolute lord and master”<sup>11</sup>. In this sense, the woman was regarded as a sister to her own children (Ramming 2004:35). She had no parental authority over her children. She was regarded as an inferior being. Thus, the law gave absolute authority to the man over the wife and over children. The husband treated the wife in any way he deemed fit. For instance, he could punish her in any way he liked, and could even kill her or sell her as a slave (Ramming 2004:35). In the words of Rakoczy (2004:31), “The man had power of life and death over the family” Concerning family property, the wife herself did not own anything. Everything she or her children inherited belonged to her husband. This included the dowry that she brought with her to her marriage.<sup>12</sup>

### **Roman general civil law**

In addition to her subordinate position in the Roman family, a Roman woman was also disadvantaged under general civil law. She was regarded as a minor and was excluded from all public office and legal proceedings. This meant that she had no right to own any property; she had no right to charge another person; and she had no right to enter into a court case without being represented by a man (Ramming 2004:37;). Among the reasons given for limiting women’s rights to such an extent were ‘the weakness of her sex’ and ‘the stupidity of her sex’.<sup>13</sup> These reasons for restraining women’s rights “did not lie in women’s physical weakness, but in what was perceived as her lack of sound judgement and her inability to think logically (Isherwood & MacEwan 2001 :40; Rakoczy 2004:35). Such perceptions of women led them to be grouped with minors, slaves, convicted criminals and persons who were dumb and mute. In other words, they were grouped with people whose judgment could not be trusted.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Women were considered Inferior Creatures Available at <http://www.womenpriests.org/traditio/inferior.asp>. Accessed 28/08/2008.

<sup>12</sup> Women were considered Inferior Creatures Available at <http://www.womenpriests.org/traditio/inferior.asp>. Accessed on 28/08/2008.

<sup>13</sup> Women were considered Inferior Creatures Available at <http://www.womenpriests.org/traditio/inferior.asp>. Accessed on 28/08/2008.

<sup>14</sup>Women were considered Inferior Creatures Available at <http://www.womenpriests.org/traditio/inferior.asp> . Accessed on 28/08/2008.

### **3.3.5 The position of women according to the theologians and philosophers of ancient Greece and Rome**

Given the above cultural background to the New Testament, we can now better understand what the writers of the New Testament books meant by when writing about women and how their first readers interpreted these messages. The inferior status of women was taken for granted to the extent that it influenced the way Latin-speaking theologians and Church leaders would look on matters concerning women (Rakoczy 2004:30-31). Both Schussler Fiorenza (1983:55) and Wijnaards (2001:50) mention Tertullian (155-245 CE) as having had a particularly significant influence on the Latin Fathers. Tertullian was instrumental in shaping the vocabulary and thought of Western Christianity. He totally opposed any participation of women in church ministries (Wijnaards 2001:50). He asserted, "It is not permitted for a woman to speak in the church; but neither may she teach, baptize, offer, claim for herself a share in any masculine role, certainly not in any priestly office" (Fiorenza 1983:55; Wijnaards 2001: 50). Tertullian's prejudices against women were followed by other Latin Fathers such as Augustine of Hippo, Jerome of Italy and Palestine, and Ambrosiaster of Northern Italy (Wijnaards 2001: 50).

Some examples the Church Fathers' views on women are listed below:

- Ambrosiaster (a fourth century Church Father) stated, "Women must cover their heads because they are not the image of God... How can anyone maintain that woman is the likeness of God when she is demonstrably subject to the dominion of man and has no kind of authority? For she can neither teach nor be a witness in a court nor exercise citizenship nor be a judge - then certainly not exercise dominion" (Wijnaards 2001:53).
- According to Augustine (354-430 CE ), <sup>15</sup> "it is more consonant with the order of nature that men should bear rule over women, than women over men". It is with this principle in mind that the apostle Paul says, "The head of the woman is the man" and "Wives submit yourselves unto your husbands".

This is how the pagan laws of ancient Rome viewed women and such views became the basis for the church's own legislation against women. These laws were accepted by the church leaders as

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<sup>15</sup> Women were considered Inferior Creatures Available at <http://www.womenpriests.org/traditio/inferior.asp>. Accessed on 28/08/2008

the norm for what is right and just (Rakoczy 2004:31). These misogynists' rules found their way into Christian thought, practice and law (Rakoczy 2004:31). The ECZ and those who oppose the ordination of women must note that the so-called 'Christian tradition' that bars women from ministry thus originated from and was based on ancient Roman pagan law regarding the inhumanity of women.

Greek philosophers, including Plato and Aristotle, also considered women inferior to men by nature.<sup>16</sup> Plato (427-347 BCE) held that "women came about through a physical degeneration of the human being".<sup>17</sup> He stated,

It is only males who are created directly by gods and are given souls. Those who live rightly return to the stars, but those who are 'cowards' [or lead unrighteous lives] may with reason be supposed to have changed into the nature of women in the second generation.<sup>18</sup>

For Aristotle (384-322 BCE), women are 'defective' human beings because they are infertile males.<sup>19</sup> This, he argues, is because they are deficient in natural heat and therefore, unable to cook their menstrual fluid to the point of refinement at which it would become semen (a seed) (Ishwerwood & McEwan 2001:30). He further stated that man dominates in the society because of his superior intelligence.

The Latin-speaking countries adopted the Greek culture. In Greek tradition, women were forbidden from receiving Holy Communion during their monthly periods (Wijnaards 2001:54-55). In this culture, menstruating women were not only considered impure at such times, but in danger of communicating their impurity to others (Wijnaards 2001:54). This kind of prejudice became an obstacle to women's ordination because it was enshrined in the Roman civil law. Therefore, the women were considered incapable of holding positions of authority, both in the

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<sup>16</sup> Women were considered Inferior Creatures Available at <http://www.womenpriests.org/traditio/infeior.asp>. Accessed on 28/08/2008.

<sup>17</sup> Women were considered Inferior Creatures Available at <http://www.womenpriests.org/traditio/inferior.asp>. Accessed on 28/08/2008.

<sup>18</sup> Women were considered Inferior Creatures Available at <http://www.womenpriests.org/traditio/inferior.asp>. Accessed on 28/08/2008.

<sup>19</sup> Women were considered Inferior Creatures Available at <http://www.womenpriests.org/traditio/inferior.asp>. Accessed on 28/08/2008.

church and society. Latin Fathers, referring to women's ordination stated, "How could such an inferior creature ever be a priest? And did Scripture not say the same thing?" (Wijnaards 2001: 55).

The notion that women should not receive Holy Communion during their monthly periods is also found in the Christian churches in Africa. Opponents of women's ordination in Africa argue that women are ritually unclean during menstruation, pregnancy, and after childbirth (Rakoczy 2004:237). Therefore, since the church is a holy place and the sacraments are holy, women who are in an 'unclean' state cannot approach such sacraments (Rakoczy 2004:236). Owanikin (1992:211) states that, "Opponents of women's ordination advance the argument that because they are occasionally unclean, women (compared to men who always maintain a constant biological state) cannot be qualified to serve as priests".

Oduyoye (1995b:176) links the idea that women are unclean when menstruating or pregnant with traditional norms. She asserts that "One factor that seems to have prejudiced the tradition against women is the primal role of blood in religious sacrifice. In Africa, a collaboration between the traditions of Hebrew Scripture and aspects of traditional religion has affected the near total exclusion of women from rituals..."(Oduyoye 1995b:176).

I experienced a similar prejudice when I became the Elder at Nchanga Local Church of the ECZ in 1982. The notion that women who are menstruating are impure did not emanate only from the men in the Church but was also internalised by the women. When I became an Elder, I was serving as a junior Elder to the senior Elder. Since I was young and inexperienced, the senior Elder offered to train me and showed me how to handle sacraments such as Holy Communion and baptism. He told me that he never allowed his wife to touch the Holy Communion cups and trays because these things were holy. He did not elaborate what he meant by that, but I learnt later that because women menstruate it was considered a taboo for them to touch Holy Communion vessels. I also learnt that women refrain from either partaking in the Holy Communion or coming to Church during their monthly periods. In the setting of my cultural upbringing, men are not allowed to speak to the women about the subject of menstruation. I therefore asked the missionary's wife to discuss this topic with them, but this did not bear any fruit because the women had accepted and internalized this position. Furthermore, they were also

influenced by the purification laws of Leviticus that view menstruating and child-bearing women as unclean (Lev 15:19-26).

Because such prejudices still prevail in some of the ECZ congregations, it is unthinkable for the ECZ to allow women to take up positions such as eldership, deaconship and pastoral ministry. This was demonstrated during the 2006 Regional Council meeting where it was reported that women were now allowed by General Council to teach men as well. One of the delegates to the 2006 Copperbelt Regional Council angrily stated, “We cannot allow women who are occasionally unclean to stand in front of men and teach”. Crawford and Kinnamon (1983:92) also confirm that “even today, in some societies, menstruating women are considered “unclean” and, hence, are not allowed to go to church, to handle “holy things” or to receive Holy Communion”.

### **3.3 The view of women as inferior to men**

As stated above, the adoption of ancient Roman law, with its institutionalisation of male dominance ensured that men dominated in the socio-economic and political spheres (Wijnaards 2001:68). During the Middle Ages, men also considered themselves superior to women. What was (and is) implied by the statement that women are inferior to men? It implies that “women lack the intelligence and leadership qualities that men possess; they depend on men for guidance and need to be ruled by men; and they cannot hold any position of authority” (Carrol 1975:660-687; Wijnaards 2001:60). As regards the ecclesiastical sphere, this means that women were thought to “lack that degree of pre-eminence that is required in the spiritual leadership of the ordained ministers” (Wijnaards 2001:60).

#### **3.4.1 Women are not created in the image of God**

Among those who saw women as inferior to men, because they were not created in the image of God, were Latin-speaking Fathers such as Tertullian, Augustine of Hippo, and Aquinas (Rakoczy 2004:34-35).



Tertullian (155-245 CE) maintained that it is only the man who was made in the image of God and not the woman (Wijnaards 2001:70). Further, he held women responsible for destroying man by tempting him (Ruether 1974:157; Wijnaards 2001:70).

Augustine (354-430 CE) agreed that it is only the male who was created in the image of God. He stated that the woman is the image of God only if she is joined to her husband (Rakoczy 2004:34). This can be clearly seen in the following statement:

The woman with her husband is the image of God in such way that the whole of that substance is one image but when she is assigned her function of being an assistant, which is her concern alone, she is not the image of God; whereas in what concerns the man alone he is the image of God as fully and completely as when the woman is joined to him in one whole (Rakoczy 2004:34).

For St Thomas Aquinas (1225-74 CE), women were made in God's image but only to a certain extent. The real image of God is the male (Wijnaards 2001:69).

The image of God, in its principal signification, mainly the intellectual nature, is found both in man and woman. Hence after the words, 'in the image of God he created him', it is added, 'male and female he created them' (Gen 1:27). Moreover it is said 'them' in the plural as Augustine remarks, lest it should be thought that both sexes were united in one individual. However, in a secondary sense the image of God is found in the male and not in woman: for the male is the beginning and the end of woman, as God is the beginning and end of every creature. So when the apostle [Paul] had said that 'man is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man', he adds his reason for saying this: for man is not of woman, but woman of man; and man was not created for woman, but woman for man.

### **3.4.2 Women are helpers**

The medieval Church Fathers were also influenced by the second creation story (Gen. 2:20-22) which describes how God drew the woman from man (Wijnaards 2001:72). (This was discussed in detail in the previous chapter). Among them was Augustine (354-430 CE), who is described as one of the major thinkers of the age of the Christian doctrinal development (fourth and fifth

centuries) (Matter 1999:887). Augustine played a major role in developing the role of Christian women.

Genesis 2:20-22 was understood from the rabbinical tradition which downgraded women (Evans 1983:33) by holding that women were completely dependent on men because man was created first and woman came later as his helper (Wijnaards 2001:72). The medieval tradition argued that a woman was a man's rib. Therefore, she is more carnal than a man as is revealed by her abominations (Wijnaards 2001:72). The tradition further argued that a woman is defective because she was made out of a bent rib of the breast which was bent in a contrary direction to man. Therefore, this defect made a woman an imperfect animal that would be a deceiver (Wijnaards 2001:72).

When we examine carefully the interpretation of the text of the rabbinical tradition, we discover that it is contrary to the original Hebrew text. The Hebrew word for rib is *tsela*- which means 'side' (Wijnaards 2001:72). "It stands for the side of the mountain (2 Sam 16:13), the side of the Tabernacle (Ex 26:20-35), the sides of the altar (Ex 27:7), the side wings of the Temple gates (1 Kings 6:34) and the sides or wings of the Temple building (Ezekiel 41:5-26)". He argues further that there is "no other verse of Scripture where the word *tsela* is translated as 'rib'. The original text therefore says God took one side – that is, one half - of the human being and formed it into Eve" (Wijnaards 2001:72).

The position of women as equal to men is confirmed by Paul when he explicitly says, "there is neither male nor female for you are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28).

### **3.3.3 Women are not allowed to teach**

The text of 1 Timothy 2:12 which seems to prohibit women from teaching men in the assembly, has been taken as a permanent norm for all time. In the ECZ, women are not allowed to teach men (ECZ Constitution 2008:31). They are only allowed to teach their fellow women and children (ECZ Constitution 2008:31). In order for us to argue for or against this, we need to get to the roots of this tradition, which lie in the Middle Ages.

During medieval times, teaching was largely the task of the priests because they were the ones who could write and read. They could instruct the faithful through lengthy sermons at Sunday mass. They controlled the source of information because they were the ones who understood Latin, the language of Scripture, of liturgy, of Church law and theology. Preachers were teachers by definition and, therefore, the presumed prohibition against female teaching in 1 Timothy 2:12 became an obstacle to the ordination of women (Wijnaards 2001:77-78).

This presumed prohibition also became part of the church law. This meant that even if a woman was educated and saintly, she still would not be allowed to instruct men in the assembly (Wijnaards 2001:78). In addition, it became the standard argument which medieval theologians would quote one from the other (Wijnaards 2001:78). As a result, the argument was handed down from generation to generation up to the present day. The following texts show how the medieval theologians created and sustained this tradition.

According to Thomas Aquinas (1205-70 CE), “Women cannot receive holy ‘orders’. For it said: I suffer not a woman to teach in the Assembly, nor to use authority over men”.<sup>20</sup>

Durandus a Saint-Pourcain (1270-1334 CE) then quoted Aquinas, saying, “The office of teaching is conjoined to holy orders, but it is not fitting for women or children to teach, as to children because they lack reason and as to women because of the prohibition of the Apostle (Tim 2)”.<sup>21</sup>

Tertullian (c.160-220 CE) (in Schussler Fiorenza 1979:51) states that “No woman is allowed to speak in church, or even to teach, to baptize or discharge man’s function, much less to take upon herself the priestly office”.

Similarly, John Duns Scotus (1266-1308 CE) and Richard of Middleton (13<sup>th</sup> century) reflected the common thinking of the time: “Women cannot become priests because Paul has forbidden them to teach in Church. And Paul’s teaching makes sense because women are emotionally unstable and intellectually not up to the demand of teaching” (Wijnaards 2001:79).

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<sup>20</sup>Medieval Theology and ‘Women Priests’. Available at [http://www.womenpriests.org/traditio/med\\_gen.asp](http://www.womenpriests.org/traditio/med_gen.asp). accessed 30/12/08

<sup>21</sup>Medieval Theology and ‘Women Priests’. Available at [http://www.womenpriests.org/traditio/med\\_asp](http://www.womenpriests.org/traditio/med_asp). accesses on 30/12/08

As indicated above, ( Wijnaards (2001:83-84) argues that the context of the passage restricting women from teaching must be taken into account and that it is not permanently valid for all time to come. The texts were passages of limited scope. He argues further that Scripture is full of statements, assertions, saying, admonitions, and prescriptions that had only a restricted reach (Wijnaards 2001:84). He gives the following biblical statements as an example:

- In Matthew 23:10 Jesus did not forbid titles like “teacher” and “father” for all time to come when he said, “Do not call yourselves “teacher”, for you have one Teacher and you are brothers and sisters. Call no man “father” on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven”.
- Similarly, when Jesus said, “I tell you, do not take any oath... Let what you say be simply “Yes” or “No”” (Mat 5:34-37), he did not ban the taking of sworn statements in court for all time to come. His real intention was to teach speaking the truth.
- In Matthew 5:39, when Jesus said, “Do not offer resistance to violence. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other too”, he did not veto self defence or prohibit a state to have a police force or army for all time to come.

### **3.5 Women in the early Church**

The Catholic Church argues that from the earliest centuries until the present the constant practice of the Church has been not to ordain women to the priesthood.<sup>22</sup> Surprisingly, this is the same argument found in the ECZ. One will attract a frown just for mentioning the ordination of women. It is something that has never been heard of or mentioned since the inception of the ECZ in 1910.

#### **3.5.1 Practice of ordaining women is not Scriptural**

However, the Catholic Church as well as other churches, including the ECZ, should remember that the practice of not ordaining women in the church was not informed by God. It was based on a prejudice prevalent among the church leaders who considered women to be inferior by nature

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<sup>22</sup> The Arguments from Tradition. Available at [http://www.womenpriests.org/trad\\_ac.asp](http://www.womenpriests.org/trad_ac.asp). Accessed on 28/07/2008

and by law; in a state of punishment for sin and ritually unclean (Tetlow 1980:24). Such attitudes towards women are evidenced by the following examples:

- Josephus, a Jewish historian and Paul's contemporary, wrote "the woman is inferior to the man in every way" (Hurley 1984:124).
- In the writing of the *Talmud*, a collection of Jewish wisdom dating from before Christ to the sixth century, women are classified with slaves and the heathen. They are regarded as incapable of learning (Hurley 1984:125).
- Rabbi Jose ben Johanna (c.150) is quoted by Hurley (1984) as saying, "He who talks much with women brings evil on himself... and at last will inherit Gehenna" (1984:125).

These statements are in sharp contrast to Jesus' attitude towards women. In his theology and practice, Jesus was not bound by tradition. As we have seen from the previous chapter, He accepted women in his ministry and gave them dignity. Men and women were treated as persons needing God's grace. This is evidenced by the crowds of men and women which followed Jesus (Mt 12:49-50). The ECZ seems not to take note of the place of women in Jesus' ministry which stands in marked contrast to their place in the Jewish society of his day and before.

### **3.5.2 Evidence from the primitive church**

There is overwhelming evidence that women in the primitive church held at least two offices (Moss 2004:256). They served as deaconesses and prophets. Rakoczy points out that women ministered as priests in the polemics against their priestly ministry (2004:230). She quotes John Chrysostom (349-407 CE) who strongly protested that

The divine law has shut women out from the ministerial office but they used force to get inside... They have invested themselves with such power that they admit and depose men from the priesthood as they choose (Rakoczy 2004).

The Apostolic Constitution (written in Syria around 380) attests to the fact that in the early church, women functioned as teachers and priests, although this was not sanctioned (Rakoczy 2004:230). This is seen from the following statement which prohibited women either to teach or to be priests:

Thus we do not permit women to teach women in the Church, but only to pray and listen to those who teach... How can we assent to their being priests, which is contrary to nature? For this is an error of Gentile atheism to ordain women as priests to the goddesses; it is not the dispensation of Christ (Rakoczy 2004:230).

Other examples of women priests come from the fourth century bishop, Athanasius, who described “the breaking of the bread” as being done by consecrated virgins (Rakoczy 2004:231). Evidence that women functioned as priests and bishops can also be seen on the wall paintings and mosaics in the churches and catacombs of Rome (Rakoczy 2004:231).

### **3.5.3 Partnership and leadership in the early church**

Other evidence of women’s ministry in the early church comes from feminists’ historical reconstruction of the life of the early Christian community, which clearly shows that women had important leadership roles and were involved in various ministries such as the apostolic ministry, prophetic ministry, presiding at the Eucharist, preaching, evangelisation, and deaconship (Rakoczy 2004:202-208).

### **3.5.4 Women as Apostles**

As stated earlier (section 2.5.2), the New Testament criteria to determine one’s apostleship are: “one must have accompanied Jesus during his lifetime, must have seen the risen Jesus and been commissioned by Jesus” (Brown 1975:692; Van der Walt 1988:26). Feminists have reconstructed the lives of women in the early church and discovered that there were women who fulfilled all three criteria. Examples of such women are given below:

- Mary Magdalene: She followed and accompanied Jesus during his ministry (Lk 8:1-3); she saw the risen Christ at the tomb (Jn 20:11-18) and she was commissioned by Jesus to go and find Jesus' brothers and tell them that "He [Jesus] was ascending to His Father..." ( Jn 20:17-18).
- According to the Gospels, other women also fulfilled all the three criteria (Lk 23:49, 55, Mt 28:1-8, Mk 16:1-7, 9-10, Lk 24:1-8, Lk:9, Mt 28:9).
- In the context of the Pauline Churches, Junia is described by Paul as an apostle (Rom 16:7). Phoebe was also called a *diakonos* (deacon) (Rom 16:1).
- Women as prophets: When the Holy Spirit was poured out on men and women (Acts 2:1-4, 17), both men and women exercised the gift of prophecy. The Bible records that women such, as the four daughters of the Evangelist Philip (Acts 21:9), Priscilla, and Maxilla, functioned as prophets (Rakoczy 2004:204).
- Women presiding at the Eucharist: The opponents of women's ordination argue that no woman could offer liturgical worship because Jesus ordained only men to be his disciples (Rakoczy 2004:205). Tetlow (1980:125) makes it clear that women also presided at the Eucharis:
 

Since, as we have seen, some women exercised the offices of apostle and prophet, it is possible that women were among the first Christian ministers of the Eucharist. There is no evidence to exclude the possibility of women presiding at the Eucharist worship until the close of the New Testament period.
- Women preachers and Evangelists: Pauline writings contain the information about women who exercised the ministries of preaching and evangelism (Rakoczy 2004:206). Among these women were Euodia and Syntyche, who had struggled hard for the spread of the gospel along with Paul (Phil 4:2-3), and Prisca who served with her husband Aquilla (Acts 18:26). Other women Paul mentions are Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa and Persis (Rom 16:6, 12).
- Women Deacons: Tetlow (1980:127) states that, "In the early church *diakonia* referred to Christian ministry in general, service to the community. Gradually this ministry evolved into a hierarchical office, subordinate to the Bishop". Paul in Romans 16:1 calls Phoebe a servant (*diakonos*) of the church at Cenchreae. Paul uses

this term in masculine form in reference to Phoebe in the same way he uses it for himself and Apollos in 1 Corinthians 3:5-9 (Rakoczy 2004:207). Therefore, Phoebe is one example of a woman deacon.

### **3.6 The role of Christian tradition**

Bernard Mncube (1991:355) asserts that “Christian tradition has emphasised the creation story, which sees woman created second out of man, rather than the story in Genesis 1 where man and woman are created at the same time, both in the image and likeness of God (Gn 1:16). Eve’s role as helper (Gn 2:18) has been reduced to childbearing” (1991:355).

He further asserts that, “in the New Testament, those passages which control and repress women are stressed, while those which imply women’s liberation are forgotten as in Galatians 5:1, for freedom Christ has set us free. The role of women in supporting Jesus and the disciples is overlooked as is the fact that women constituted Paul’s co-workers” (1991:355).

Bernard Mncube’s assertion corresponds with Schussler-Fiorenza’s (1984) views. The latter argues that contemporary translators of the Bible are influenced by the androcentric-patriarchal mind-set. Thus, Schussler-Fiorenza (1984:48-49) observes that all New Testament writings were written by male authors. Women were sidelined in the New Testament in terms of authorship and this carried over into the Early Church, as a result of which they were not considered for any leadership or teaching functions. This discrimination against women, Schussler-Fiorenza concludes, has its roots in the patriarchal beginning of the church and in the androcentrism of Christian revelation (Schussler-Fiorenza 1984:49).

It should also be noted that, since the early Christians, communities and authors lived in a predominantly patriarchal world and participated in its mentality, many of the traditions and much of the information about women are scarce (Schussler-Fiorenza 1984:49).



### **3.7 Conclusion**

In conclusion, this overview of Christian tradition has shown that the long-held practice of not ordaining women in the church is neither Scriptural. It was based on a threefold prejudice among Church leaders who considered women as inferior by nature and by law, in a state of punishment for sin and ritually unclean. These traditional reasons for barring women from ordination are based on secular pagan prejudice, a prejudice enshrined in Roman law. The ECZ continues to follow in this tradition.

The study also argues that the church, particularly the ECZ, should reconsider its refusal to ordain women in the church for the following reasons:

- a) it opposes the practice of Jesus who made women equal members of the new covenant;
- b) it is contrary to what Paul says: “there is neither male nor female in Christ Jesus – that we are all one” and
- c) it contradicts the practice of the early Church community who welcomed women as ministers and imparted sacramental ordination to women deacons (even though later Church traditions refuted these roles and discriminated against women).

In the next chapter, the study discusses the ecclesiological and hermeneutical principles of the ECZ, on which this church’s denial of women’s ordination is based.

## **Chapter Four**

### **THE ECCLESIOLOGICAL AND HERMENEUTICAL PRINCIPLES OF THE ECZ**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

In this chapter, we discuss the ecclesiological and hermeneutical principles upon which the ECZ's refusal to ordain women is based. The chapter first gives a brief history of the ECZ in order to facilitate the reader's understanding of these principles' source.

#### **4.1 Brief history of the ECZ**

Unlike the Baptists or Methodist churches, the ECZ cannot trace its history to the Reformation. Instead, it came into being as a result of the work of several missionaries from different denominational backgrounds. As a denomination, the ECZ has its origins and subsequent development in the work of the South African General Mission (SAGM), which was renamed Africa Evangelical Fellowship (AEF) in 1963 (Snelson 1990:108).

##### **4.1.1 History and development of SAGM (AEF) in Zambia**

The SAGM, an interdenominational organization was formed in 1889. It traces its origin to the early 1880's when a Christian Workers' Union was formed in Cape Town to minister to the spiritual needs of the soldiers and sailors of the many nationalities who passed through the port. Dr Andrew Murray took a keen interest in the work of this group. He consequently raised support for it amongst Christian leaders in England to form a missionary society which was called "The Cape General Mission" (CGM) (Snelson 1990:108). Andrew Murray and William Spencer Walton respectively became the first President and Director of the mission. After two years of its inception, the CGM amalgamated with the South East Africa Evangelistic Mission to form the SAGM, an interdenominational, evangelical fellowship which drew its membership from England, South Africa, United States, Canada, and Australia (Snelson 1990:108). In 1963, at the international Council held in Johannesburg, South Africa, it was decided to change the name of the mission to Africa Evangelical Fellowship (AEF) (Snelson 1990:108-109).

The SAGM took up the challenge to meet the need for the Gospel of the BaKaonde people of the North-western province of Zambia (Snelson 1990:108). In 1910, with the help of Fred Arnot, Albert Bailey established the first mission station at Kisalala, sixteen kilometres South-East of Solwezi district (Snelson 1990:108-109).

In 1912, a second mission station was opened on the Lalafuta River, but was later moved to Musonweji by Mr and Mrs Vernon (Snelson 1990:1990:109). In 1926, both Kisalala and Musonweji stations were closed and central stations were opened at Mukinge Hill and Mutanda Bridge Station in 1927 and 1929 respectively (Snelson 1990:110-111).

#### **4.1.2 History and development of the ECZ**

The ECZ began its ministry in 1910 when John Pupe was converted to Christianity together with others. According to Lupyani's interview with Keith Donald in 1998,<sup>23</sup> the church was only found where the mission station was found (Lupyani 1998:4). Believers were not organized into local churches as it is today. Early in the 1940's in Luampa, under the directive of P V Watson, pastors were ordained and local churches were organised in a number of centres. This was also done in the Kaondeland as well (Mark 1970: 65). Later, in the 1950s, greater attention was given to the organising of believers for the purpose of cohesion and overall goals. Districts were organised and they were called central churches. By the end of 1956, District Treasurers were appointed and church money held by Mission, then SAGM was handed over to the respective treasurers. The first District Councils were formed at Luampa, Mukinge, Mutanda and Chizela. The Kaindu and urban Districts were added, at a later stage.

At about the same time, the mission felt it was time to organise the church in each of its fields and to give the Local Churches autonomy. In 1961, a conference of missionaries and Church leaders was held and accepted autonomy for the church in Zambia. Individual missionaries were to be accepted as members of the church, but AEF, as an organization, was to be separate from the Church, even though the two bodies would be mutually interdependent. A draft constitution was tabled and approved (ECZ G O minutes 1979). The following year, the first Regional Church Council (RCC) was convened with representatives from each District Council (DC) and

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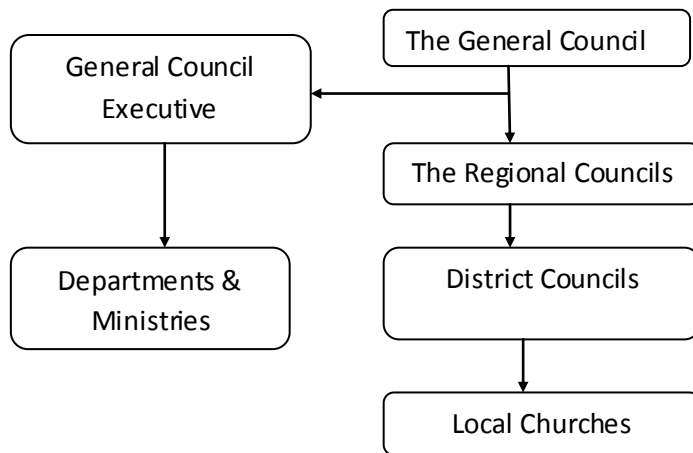
<sup>23</sup> Keith Donald, the AEF field Director in Zambia from 1995-1999 and long serving missionary,

a number of missionaries. At this meeting, a few amendments were made to the constitution and the name “Evangelical Church in Northern Rhodesia” was adopted. This name was changed to the Evangelical Church in Zambia after Zambia’s independence was achieved.

The formation and organisation of the ECZ led to considerable expansion of church work in Zambia. Many Local Churches were established quite independently of the mission or missionaries. In the 1970’s, the R C pursued further the issue of the relationship between the ECZ and AEF. By the end of 1975, Executive officers were appointed and assumed full-time duties with the Church. The late Rev. W K Kasonso was the first General Secretary and Rev Gray Watson was the Assistant General Secretary. There were also two other missionaries on the Executive Committee (ECZ G O Minutes 1979). No females were appointed as executive officers or in any other office.

#### 4.2 Church Government

Looking at the ECZ church government, we find that it is very complex and difficult to understand. It is a combination of Congregational, Episcopalian and Presbyterian types of government. It is generally structured as follows:



The Diagram – Showing the ECZ Structure

- a) General Council (GC) which meets once every two years, is the highest body of the ECZ and is the final council of appeal in all matters of the church (ECZ Constitution 2008:49).
- b) The Regional Council (RC) is a representative council of the District Councils (DC) in its region. It is a link between the DCs in its region and the GC. It is also a link between the Management Committees in its region and its DCs (ECZ Constitution 2008:46).
- c) The DC is a representative council of the local Churches in its District. It is also a link between the local Churches in its District, the RC and the GC. The DC is also a link between Management Committees in its district and its local Churches (ECZ Constitution 2008:42).
- d) The Local Church is a group of born-again believers in a particular locality. The Local Church is led by a pastor, elders and deacons (ECZ Constitution 2008:21).
- e) Management Committees: These are committees of institutions, ministries and services or departments as determined by General Council Executive Committee (GCEC).

#### **4.2.1 Responsibilities**

The GC is responsible for the overall affairs of the Church. It reviews the decisions and policies of the GCEC, with power of confirmation, veto or amendment (ECZ Constitution 2008:29-30).

When the GC is not in session, the GCEC acts on its behalf. Thus, the latter derives its authority from the GC and is finally responsible to that body (ECZ Constitution 2008:50).

The GCEC comprises five full-time officers (Executive Officers), who hold office for a term of four years. They are the Bishop, the Director of Church Affairs, the Director of Missions and Training, the Director of Finance, and the Director of Administration and Development (ECZ Constitution 2008:49). Other members of the GCEC are four GC representatives, the GC Chairman and two women co-opted from the women's Fellowship (ECZ Constitution 2008:51). The GCEC meets twice in a year.

The GCEC has a sub-committee known as 'The Executive Officers Committee' which consists of the Bishop and his four Directors. The committee acts on behalf of the GCEC when GC and GCEC are not in session (ECZ 2008:52). This means the total administration of the ECZ is under the leadership of a male Bishop and his Assistants who are also males.

The same scenario is repeated at all levels of the Church. Top positions at Regional and District Councils, Local Churches and departments/or ministries are held by males. Female members are completely excluded from the leadership of the Church (ECZ 2008:25-52). Until December 2007, female members were not included in the church committees at any level of the Church. The GC of November 2007, approved the co-option of women into Church committees (GC 2007 minutes no. 50-56), which allowed women to be co-opted at all levels of the church. That means, at the local church level, three women are co-opted in the Local Church committee from amongst the deaconesses. At District and Regional Councils, three women from the Women's fellowship are co-opted in the District Executive Committee and Regional Council Executive Committees respectively. Then at GC, only two women are co-opted into GCEC.

It must be noted here that women have a very small role in the affairs of the Church although they are now co-opted into committees at the various levels of the church. The way the ECZ is structured, women are kept at the periphery of the Church. Right from the Local Church up to General office, key positions are given to male members of the Church. For instance, at the Local Church level, the total administration is under the leadership of a pastor, male elders and male deacons. Similarly, executive positions at the District and Regional Councils are all given to males (ECZ Constitution 2008:43, 48).

#### **4.3 The ECZ doctrinal position**

The ECZ doctrine is a fusion of both Calvinistic and Arminian theology. This is because of the diversities in the background of the pioneer missionaries. Missionaries such as Andrew Murray came from a Calvinistic reformed background, while others, came from Armenian Methodists. Thus, both streams are reflected in the doctrine of the Church.

Against this background of doctrinal differences between the two doctrinal positions and the fact that the first missionaries in the ECZ were divergent denominations with their own distinct doctrines, the ECZ doctrine has subsequently come to have a balanced representation of both. The reformers believed that both the Old and New Testaments are inspired by God, and, therefore, the revelation is originally given and without error (Ferguson & Wright 1988:121). The ECZ subscribes to the same. In its Constitution no. 23, it states “All Scripture (i.e. 66 Canonical books) is inspired by God and is the inerrant and authoritative word of God in all matters of doctrine and conduct” (ECZ Constitution 2008:7).

The ECZ Church government and its structure show that women are completely barred from formal ministry. This has resulted in women exercising their ministry through women’s fellowships. Women’s fellowship groups are known by various names in different church organizations. In South Africa, women’s movements/or organizations are known as Mother’s Union or *Manyano* (Haddad 2002:102). In Malawi, they are known as *Chikwilidzani Cha Amayi*. The Mothers’ Union, which was introduced in South Africa in the early twentieth century by deaconesses of the Church of England, was founded in 1876 by Mary Sumner, a wife of the rector of a Hampshire parish, with the sole purpose of teaching women the spiritual values of wifehood, motherhood and the great responsibility of parents for their children and power and example of prayer (Haddad 2002: 102). The Women’s Fellowships in the ECZ exist for the same purpose. They are there to teach and train church women to be good wives and mothers, to engage in the regular teaching of the Word of God to other women and children, to provide hospitality, and to have regular prayers (ECZ Constitution 2008:31). Therefore, women are not allowed to teach men or preach to them. They are only allowed to teach or preach where there are no men. Traditionally, Wednesday is the day when women meet to conduct their ministry freely in the ECZ.

#### **4.4 Reasons for the exclusion of women from ministry**

The main reason for excluding women from ministry is the patriarchal theology that has prevailed in most Christian traditions throughout most of the Christian history (Reuther 1993:194). This patriarchal theology came to Africa in general, and Zambia in particular, through missionaries.

Writing about the problem of patriarchy within the Baptist Convention in Malawi, Fiedler (2002) observes that missionaries and their sending body enforced their policy that only males could be pastors (Fiedler 2002:181). As far as this policy was concerned, women in the Church were to be good wives to their husbands and look after their homes and children (Fiedler 2002:181). When this policy came to Africa, it did not find a vacuum. It found a male-dominated society which acted as a fertile ground for patriarchal theology. Phiri (1997) states that, “The majority of the African societies and almost all African Churches are structured on the basis of patriarchal patterns” (1997:12). Rupert Hambira (in Phiri 2002:135), describing “the London Missionary Society as a men’s club”, points out that, “The male-dominated mission came from overseas to a male dominated society” (Phiri 2002:135).

Similarly, as the preceding discussion has shown, the ECZ is a church that is structured on the basis of a patriarchal pattern. The source of this structure is SAGM who pioneered the work in Zambia. Most of the women who came to Zambia came as missionaries’ wives or nurses and teachers to work in the mission schools and hospitals.

Ruether (1993) points out that the reasons for denying women leadership in the churches are identical with the arguments of patriarchal anthropology (Ruether 1993:195). Both the church and society have similar reasons for denying leadership to women. In patriarchal anthropology, the denial of ordained ministry is based on the general theology of male headship and female subordination (Ruether 1993:195). This subordination is attributed to women’s physiological role in procreation, and their supposed inferiority of mind and soul (Rakoczy 2004:30-31). Thus, women are regarded as less capable than men of moral self-control and reason. Therefore, it is assumed that they can only play a passive role in the giving and receiving of ministry (Ruether 1993:195).

The other reason for excluding women from leadership comes from the priestly traditions, where women are regarded as unclean because of their menstruation (Ruether 1993:195). Their bodiliness is seen as polluting and defiling the sacred. In the ECZ, this can be seen in the way the ECZ women are not allowed to hold positions that deal with Holy Communion. It is only the pastors and Elders who have the authority to preside over the Lord’s Table, with Deacons assisting in serving.



We therefore conclude that the ECZ ecclesiological principles are based on a tradition that regards women as inferior and unclean. Like the Nigerian women (Ezenya 1976:107), women in Zambia, and the ECZ in particular are generally regarded as inferior. Underlying this perception belief is that, intellectually and physically, women cannot compete with men (Akintunde 2002:86).

Ann Oakely (1985) argues that “There is no scientific evidence to back up the claims of male superiority either intellectually or physically” (Oakely 1985:315). We totally agree with her because there is overwhelming proof that women can work as well as men. In some cases women have done even better than men. For instance, in the academic field, women have proved that they can compete equally with men and have excelled. In most of the universities, particularly the University of Kwazulu-Natal where I am studying now, women have proved themselves intellectually by obtaining the highest qualifications and being appointed as Professors.

Other reasons for the exclusion of women from ministry in the ECZ is the way in which male headship has been interpreted, which is discussed below.

#### **4.5 Male headship**

In history, male headship has usually been interpreted as authority and subsequent submissiveness for the subject/or woman (Van de Walt 1988:31). Most men in the Church, particularly in the ECZ refer to two Scriptural passages (Ephesians 5: 23 and 1 Corinthians 11:3), which clearly teach that Christ is the head of the husband and that the head of woman is the man. Fisher (1975) is convinced that the emphasis of these passages is that of superiority and rulership (1975:173). Grosheide (1954) is also of the same opinion, stating, “Of every man it can be said that he is above the woman” (Grosheide 1954:250). Similarly, Ladd opines that Paul is retaining the Jewish idea of the subordination of woman to man (Ladd 1974:328). From these comments it is evident that people have taken it for granted that headship means having authority over or being boss.

Looking at the ECZ organisational structure, which has excluded women from decision-making positions, we conclude that the ECZ has also adopted the above interpretation of headship. Since its inception in 1910, men in the ECZ have been in authority and women have been left in submissive positions. They have no say in the affairs of the Church. We also note that the ECZ structure fits in very well with Zabolai-Caekme (1975)'s description of a patriarchal society, that is, as a place, "where male members of the society define both male and female roles and values; the male way of understanding reality is then internalised by all" (Zabolai-Caekme 1975:325). The society becomes man's society where women are allowed a place. Henry (1975) equally observes that this is true of the Church in history where "Protestant emphasis on the universal priesthood of believers seems to have meant male believers; since the priesthood of women was envisaged almost solely in terms of motherhood and childbearing" (1975:345).

With reference to Ephesians 5:23 and 1 Corinthians 11:3, Evans (1983:65) points out that the word 'head' is a metaphor. The phrase "the head of the woman is man" is not used to indicate control or supremacy, but rather "the source of". The woman derives her existence from man as man does from Christ and Christ from God. When Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11:8 that "the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man", he does not mean that the man is superior as most people understand it. The idea is rather "of beginning or source than the idea of authority or dominion" (Van der Walt 1988:41). The word 'head' should be understood from the first century point of view rather than from the twenty first century point of view. In the first century, the head was seen rather as the source of life, rather than the source of intellect as among the Westerners (Evans 1983:65) or as the source of thought and reason as among Easterners (Van de Walt 1988:32). This view, according to Van der Walt (1988:32), is the result of unbiblical stereotyping of women. Chrysostom (1969) argues that, "if Paul's objective here had been to indicate dominion and subservience, then he should rather have used master and slave as examples" (1969:150-151).

In Greek word *kephale* ('head') has various meanings: first, it can be an indication of source, beginning or growth point (Evans 1983:66, Morris 1985:149). Second, it can also mean a unifying principle. Third, it can be an indication of leadership or authority (Van der Walt 1988:32).

‘Head’ as an indication of source, can be seen in the way Christ is spoken of as ‘the head’ of the church in the context of his being before all things and the source of creation (Col.1:18). As a source of all things, Christ offers men an example to follow. Van der Walt (1988) points out that, “it is not his strength, authority or dominance but his humility, self denial and service” that are meant (1988:33). We therefore deduce from the above arguments that Christ’s headship in the relevant texts in Corinthians, Ephesians and Colossians always means a source of life, growth and service. Furthermore, although Paul’s reference to the creation narratives has mostly been taken to indicate the subjection of the woman, Evans argues that “Greek-speaking readers would see the mention of women being created from man as emphasising the idea of origin rather than as introducing the idea of authority” (Evans 1983:66).

‘Head’ as unifying principle can be seen in 1 Corinthians 11:11 “Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman” . The idea of headship in this case is a metaphor of closeness, unity, and mutual dependence (Van der Walt 1988:34). Men and women need each other not only in marriage but also in the church (Evans 1983:92). *The Life Application Bible* comments that, “God created lines of authority in order for his created world to function smoothly. Although there must be lines of authority even in marriage, there should not be lines of superiority. God created men and women with unique and complementary characteristics. One sex is not better than the other”. Van der Walt states that, “if a man, therefore, abuses his headship, it indicates the sheerest stupidity, because he acts to his own disadvantage in this way” (1998:34). Similarly, men in the church who understand headship as authority and submission destroy the oneness/or interdependence that is there.

‘Head’ as an indication of leadership or authority:

In Ephesians 5:21-23 the concept of the husband’s headship is found alongside the concept of the submission of the wife and this has been generally taken to imply a position of authority” (Evans 1983:67; Van der Walt 1988:34). For this reason, men have generally placed themselves in positions of authority and subjected women to themselves. The question that needs to be asked is, “What did Paul want to convey when he referred to the concept of head?” Evans (1983) gives two points that need to be noted. First, although the passage provides the analogy of Christ’s headship over the church, he argues that, “this headship is not interpreted in terms of the

authority which Christ undoubtedly has, but rather in terms of his loving and giving himself on behalf of the church” (1983:67). Similarly, he argues further, that the headship of the husband should be understood in this way (Evans 1983:67). Second, Evans sees Ephesians 5:21 as forming a natural development in the husband/wife context of the call to mutual submission within the church (1983:67).

Furthermore, both Van der Walt (1988) and Evans (1983) point out that the Hebrew word *rosh* (=head) was used in the figurative sense of head over. For example, head of family. The idea often carries the meaning of priority rather than of controlling authority (Van der Walt 1988:34, Evans 1983:66).

#### **4.6 The ECZ ecclesiological principles**

From the preceding discussion, we conclude that the ECZ ecclesiological principles are based on the patriarchal theology and the patriarchal anthropology brought by SAGM. We noted that the ECZ organizational structure is founded on patriarchal patterns where male members are the only ones to hold positions of authority. Women in the Church, according to the policy contained in the patriarchal theology, are to be good wives to their husbands and look after their homes and children. We also noted that the ECZ has adopted theological principles that are based on the general theology of male headship and female subordination in which women’s subordination is attributed that physiological role in procreation which is extended to an inferiority of mind and soul (Ruether 1993:195). Women are classified “as less capable than men of moral self-control and reason” (Ruether 1993:195). Therefore, in accordance with this general theology, “they can only play a passive role in giving and receiving of ministry” (Ruether 1993:195). In the priestly tradition, women are seen to be in an unclean state. Their bodiliness is regarded as polluting and defiling the sacred. Therefore, they cannot hold positions that will allow them to preside over the Lord’s Table. In summary, the ECZ theology is both discriminatory and dehumanising.

Since its inception in 1910, the ECZ has been applying ecclesiological principles that are based on evangelical and early Christian theology which are discriminatory in nature. The ECZ is discriminatory because of its traditional view of humanity and the respective roles of men and women. Roles assigned to men centre on the superiority and headship of men, while roles assigned to women centre on that assumed low status, ability and subjections of men. The

reasons given for not ordaining women are founded on sexist, androcentric and patriarchal elements in the Christian theology.

Sexism in the Christian tradition is promoted by viewing women as inferior human beings who are therefore, incapable of ministry in the Church. Some of the reasons that the ECZ women are denied leadership positions such as eldership and pastoral ministry are because they cannot preside at the Holy Communion and stand before men to teach them.

By contrast, Grum in Kanyoro (1997:28-29) sees a church as a round table that has no sides and no preferred seating. A round table with no first or last place, but a table which has room for all. This image of a church symbolises inclusiveness.

Likewise, Fiorenza (1997) sees the church vision and its ministry as a discipleship of equals. For her, a discipleship of equals means that women and men have equal status, dignity and rights as images of the divine and equal access to the multifarious gifts of the Spirit. It is a place where everyone enriches the discipleship of community of equals with their different experiences, vocation and talents (1997:2).

#### **4.7 Authority of the Bible**

Bryant (in vasanthakumar 1997:41), defines authority “as that which is acknowledged as rightly and worthily commending loyalty and obedience”. In other words, authority means a “sense of identity, the feeling of hope, the standard for belief and norms for behaviour” (Vasanthakumar 1997:41). The authority and interpretation of the Bible go hand in hand. This is seen from the fact that both proponents and opponents of the ordination of women to the presbyterate use the same texts to justify their stand (Milne 1982:45; Vasanthakumar 1997:41).

In Evangelical circles, there are three different views about the Bible. “The Bible is the word of God”, “the Bible contains the word of God” and “the Bible becomes the word of God” (Vasanthakumar 1997:41). These will be discussed below:

**i. The Bible is the word of God**

The proponents of this view believe that “the Bible is the word of God because it is inspired by God” (Evans 1974:194). For them, “The Bible is a record of events and truths describing the eternal communication of God to His people through the mediation of prophets and apostles” (Berkhof 1968:16; Vasanthakumar 1997:41). They believe that God chose and inspired writers of different generations through the Holy Spirit to write God’s words for their contemporaries as well as future generations. Therefore, the Bible is perfect and inerrant in its entirety and in all its details. Thus, the entire Bible is an authoritative book from which Christian life, witness, theology and faith must spring (Vasanthakumar 1997:41). They base their argument on passages such as 2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:20-21 and John 10:35 (Vasanthakumar 1997:41). Vasanthakumar (1997) regards as problematic this stance to the Bible: “When it is said that the Bible in its entirety is the word of God, it is not clear whether this refers to the original language or to translation” (1997:41). Furthermore, it is not clear as to which of the texts is inspired when there are textual variations (1997:41).

**ii. The Bible contains the word of God**

The proponents of this view hold that the writers of the Bible were divinely inspired and that their writings were for their contemporaries. As such, the Bible is a product of its own socio-cultural and political context because the writers of the Bible understood and communicated in their own language and culture (Ridderbos 1978:29; Vasanthakumar 1997:42). Furthermore, they believe that, although the message of the Bible is divinely inspired, it was given to human beings and as such, it may even contain some errors. Therefore, the word of God has to be discovered in its context, and only then becomes authoritative (Vasanthakumar 1997:42).

**iii. The Bible becomes the word of God**

The advocates of this theory believe that the Bible is not identified with the word of God because God is the source of the Bible (Vasanthakumar 1997:42). To them, the Bible is “only an instrument to disclose the revelation of God and as such it witnesses to the word of God” (1997:42). They argue that readers discover the word of God in their existential situation when they encounter Christ by reading the Bible. For them, the authority of the Bible lies in

its capacity to address human beings in their existential situation and not in its intrinsic value (Vasanthakumar 1997:42). Therefore, they conclude that the Scriptures become authoritative because they provide a way for a divine-human encounter.

Vasanthakumar (1997:42) notes that the strength of this position is that “the Bible becomes the word of God when a person meets Christ in his or her existential situation”. In other words, the Scriptures become authoritative because they provide an avenue for a divine-human encounter. Although this position has merit, its main weakness is that it does not take into account the context in which the Scriptures were written (Vasanthakumar 1997:42).

#### **4.8 The ECZ on Biblical Authority**

Looking at the three views discussed above, it would seem that the ECZ holds the view that “the Bible is the word of God”. There are many similarities between the ECZ beliefs and those advocated by the proponents of this view. The ECZ also holds the view that, “All Scripture (i.e. 66 Canonical books) is inspired and is the inerrant and authoritative word of God in all matters of doctrine and conduct” (ECZ Constitution (2008:7). They too quote passages such as 2 Timothy 3:16-17, 2 Peter 1:19-21, John 17: 17, Romans 15:4, Psalm 119:9-10, 105 and Hebrews 1:1-3 in support of this view. Furthermore, the ECZ’s Christian Education Department (CED) book, *Starting to grow: A course for New Believers*, they teach that, “All the Scriptures of the Old Testament and the New Testament were breathed out by God; that is they expressed his thoughts” (1986:22), and that “Holy men of God spoke (and then wrote down) the words of God as the Holy Spirit gave them the power” (CED 1986:22). Because of this view, the ECZ like many Christian denominations all over the world, regards the Bible as a book of authority which should be obeyed regardless of the contribution of the culture in which it was originally written. That is why they enforce the passages that support the denial of ordination to women.

Although the Bible is regarded as a book of authority, feminist theologians warn that the authority of Bible ought not to be taken for granted because it is male-produced literature in which women are absent, with their experiences and writings not belonging to the normative body of literature (Deifelt 1997:49-51). Through feminist hermeneutics, feminist theologians have discovered the absence of women from the biblical tradition. They have pointed out that

traditional male scholarship has also excluded women from the mainstream of history and literature, thus making men the normative and dominant representation of humankind and placing women as subordinate and secondary to men (Deifelt 1997:49-50). The analysis of biblical texts presented in this chapter, lead us to agree with feminist theologians that “the record of the past is only a partial record since it omits the past of half the human species, and it is distorted since it tells the story from the viewpoint of the male half of humanity only” (Deifelt 1997:50). Because of this distortion, feminist theologians are careful not to take the Biblical authority for granted.

The opponents of women’s ordination take verses such as 1 Tim.2:11-12 literally without taking into account their historical context and the original readers’ historical context. For instance, chapter two revealed that the message of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 was based on the Jewish ordinance which stated that women were not permitted to teach in assemblies or even to ask questions. This was on account of prevailing prejudices at that time, and should not be taken as normative for all time.

#### **4.9 Hermeneutical Principles followed by the ECZ**

Having noted that the authority of the Bible should not be taken for granted, and that the authority of the Bible and interpretation of the Bible are hermeneutically linked (Milne 1982:45), this part of the study discusses the hermeneutic principles that are appropriate for a life giving interpretation of Scriptures. Hermeneutics is “a field of study that attempts to determine which methods or principles would be best used to interpret an individual Biblical author’s meaning, apply it devotionally, and then discern how it would best be applied to the world around us”.<sup>24</sup>In other words, hermeneutics is simply defined as “a principle by which the biblical text is interpreted to make the message relevant to the modern situation.<sup>25</sup> It takes into consideration the text and its context, as well as the reader and his or her context” (Milne 1982:45-46; Vasanthakumar 1997:43).

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<sup>24</sup> How to Read the Bible: Evangelical hermeneutics (how to read & interpret the Bible). Available at <http://heatlight.wordpress.com>. Accessed on 03/08/2007

<sup>25</sup> How to Read the Bible: Evangelical hermeneutics (how to read & interpret the Bible). Available at <http://heatlight.wordpress.com>. Accessed on 03/08/2007



#### **4.9.1 The Text and its historical context**

Both Milne (1982:46) and Vasanthakumar (1997:43) observe that the Bible is not just a collection of metaphysical ideas, but contains events and geographical names that (a) can be verified in history, and (b) show how the community of faith lived their own lives and how generations of faith communities appropriated this experience in their historical praxis.

George Casalis, (in Vasanthakumar 1997:43), points out that, “To understand the text we must not only decode, translate and analyse what is written but also reconstruct the situation and the role that the witness played in it”. Therefore for us to understand the Biblical text or particular Biblical text, it is important for us to understand the economic, political, social and cultural factors within which it was written. The appropriate method suitable to reconstruct the situation is reading behind the text (West 1993:29).

Schussler-Fiorenza (1983:29) refers to reading behind text as “a feminist critical hermeneutic”. It is a tool used in a feminist Biblical hermeneutical principle to retrieve “the historical-patriarchal elements of prophetic traditions in order to set free their liberating social-critical impulses for the struggle for women” (West 1991:113). By using a feminist critical hermeneutic, “women move behind the text to a reconstruction of the context from which the text emerged” (Schussler-Fiorenza 1983:21). According to her, Biblical texts themselves are androcentric (1983:27) because:

- a) Biblical language is without question androcentric;
- b) early Christian authors have selected, redacted, and reformulated their traditional sources and materials with reference to their androcentric interests and perspectives (1983:43-48) and
- c) the textual and historical marginalisation of women is also a by-product of the patristic selection and canonisation process of the Bible” (1983:49-53).

Since androcentric texts have been taken as informative ‘data’ and correct ‘reports’, it is, therefore, important to move behind the text in order for women to retrieve their heritage and see their Christian forefathers not merely as victims but as victims and participants in the struggle for

liberation (Schussler-Fiorenza 1983:27). They can only do this by employing a feminist critical hermeneutic of the Bible.

#### **4.9.2 The reader and his or her context**

Vasanthakumar (1997:43) states that, “No reading is neutral”. He says so because he sees the quotation of the same texts by the opponents and proponents of the ordination of women to the presbyterate to justify their stand as a demonstration that every reading is done from an ideological position (Vasanthakumar 1997:43). To put it in Croatto’s words, “Any reading is the production of discourse” (1987:21). The ideological bias of the reader always determines his or her reading of the Bible. It must be noted that when a woman reads the Bible, the context in which she finds herself is always at the back of her mind (Vasanthakumar 1997:44). Vasanthakumar’s example of the context of the subjugation of women in India for some 4000 years of history helps us to understand how the ideological bias determines the reading of a reader (Vasanthakumar 1997:44). She points out that a woman in that context “will either be submissive, accepting her role as God-given, or she will rebel against her subjugation as something man-made”. This is true of the women in the ECZ. They see their context as God-given and therefore, they are not able to question the Church’s discrimination against them. It is, therefore, very important that the Scripture is re-read in the context of the struggle of women to affirm their human dignity and humanhood (Vasanthakumar 1997:44).

#### **4.10 Conclusion**

The chapter has shown that the ecclesiological and hermeneutical principles upon which the ECZ’s refusal to ordain women is based, are derived from the patriarchal theology that has prevailed throughout most Christian traditions. As we noted in the previous chapter, Christian tradition has emphasised the creation story to bar women from ministry. We also discovered that contemporary Bible translators were influenced by an androcentric- patriarchal mindset. As such, care must be exercised not to take the authority of the Bible for granted. The ECZ, therefore, must re-evaluate its ecclesiological and anthropological principles if it wants to be a church where everyone has a place regardless of his or her sex. It must employ hermeneutical principles that are appropriate for a life giving interpretation of Scriptures. The ECZ position on biblical

interpretation, as we noted in section 4.8, rests on a literal interpretation which does not take into account, both the text and its historical context, and the reader and his or her context.

According to Schussler- Fiorenza (1983:27), “Biblical texts themselves are androcentric”. They are androcentric because they have erased women as active participants in history. This fact can be seen from the patriarchal patterns on which the ECZ organisational structure is founded where male members are the only ones to hold positions of authority. Women in the Church are good wives to their husbands and look after their homes and children. Therefore, the ECZ must not take these androcentric texts as informative and accurate reports (Schussler- Fiorenza 1983:41), but must read their silences as evidence and indication of that reality about which they do not speak. The ECZ must learn to read the silences of androcentric texts in such way that they can provide clues to egalitarian reality of the early Christian movement as we saw in chapter 2. The ECZ can only read the silences by getting behind the texts through ‘behind the text reading’ method.

## **Chapter Five**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **5 Introduction**

Our main hypothesis was that the ecclesiological and hermeneutical principles of the ECZ, which are based on the limited anthropological and biblical views of women, prevent women from being ordained in the church or from living out their vocation to the fullest. This study has shown that the ECZ is among the churches that are still dominating women. Such churches use certain biblical texts to defend their actions, and have adopted their arguments against the ordination of women from church tradition.

In chapter two, we discovered how the ECZ, through its constitution, has kept women on the peripheries of the entire church ministry. The ECZ Constitution restricts women's ministry to their fellow women and children. It does not allow women to become pastors and elders or even to assist the pastors or elders in practical matters such as conducting baptismal services, Holy Communion and Sunday services. As with other churches who uphold the same practices, the ECZ bases its stance on what it regards as God's revealed will and divine sanction that men take precedence over women in the church and at home. It argues that the dominion of men over women comes to its clearest expression in 1 Corinthians 14:34, 35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-14 which forbid women to speak and teach in the church, and which, in turn, presupposes male headship. The presupposed male headship has its foundation in the creation story of Genesis 2 and 3. For the ECZ, the Bible is a book of authority which should be obeyed regardless of the culture in which it was originally written.

The third chapter outlined the Church tradition which has, over the past centuries maintained the practice of not ordaining women. This discriminatory practice was based on a threefold prejudice amongst Church leaders who considered women as inferior by nature and by law, in a state of punishment for sin, and ritually unclean. The study has shown that the ECZ still follows this tradition.

Finally, in the fourth chapter, we discovered that the ECZ's ecclesiological and hermeneutical principles are based on the patriarchal theology and the patriarchal anthropology brought by SAGM. We noted that its organisational structure is founded on patriarchal patterns where male members are the only ones to hold positions of authority. Women in the Church, according to the policy contained in the patriarchal theology, are to be good wives and look after their homes and children. The chapter also showed that the ECZ has adopted theological principles of male headship and female subordination in which women's subordination is attributed to that physiological role in procreation which is extended to inferiority of mind and soul.

## **5.1 The way forward**

In the light of this study, it is evident that the modern church in general, and the ECZ in particular must re-examine and alter its attitude towards women. For the ECZ, we present the following recommendations:

### **5.1.1 Legitimise egalitarian structures of community with reference to Gal 3:28**

Since the Bible is considered authoritative in the ECZ, the first part of call would be for the ECZ to legitimize egalitarian structures of the community with reference to Galatians 3:28. Rakoczy (2004:246-247) states that,

Reflection on the experiences of women in the early church reveal that the initial vision of equality of Galatians 3:28 was lived for a while, but forces of patriarchy as exemplified in the household codes of Colossians and Ephesians, began to erode and then severely limit women's ministry. This has continued to this day and African women, together with their sisters around the world, experience the power of cultural limitation on their public roles combined with patriarchy of the church.

The women in the ECZ are just as equally affected by the power of cultural limitation as their other African sisters. This can be seen from the fact that women are not allowed to take up leadership positions such as eldership and pastoral ministry. The way forward would for the ECZ to legitimize two images of the church with reference to Galatians 3:28 namely the church as a discipleship of equals and the church as a community of liberation for all. Members of the ECZ, especially men, should take the forefront in turning the church into a discipleship of equals

where “women and men have equal status, dignity and rights as images of the divine and equal access to the multifarious gifts of the Spirit and where every one enriches the discipleship community of equals with their different experiences, vocation and talents” (Fiorenza 1997:2). They can only make this happen by allowing women to take up leadership positions.

### **5.1.2 More women to be theologically trained**

A second step would be to encourage more ECZ women to be theologically trained. This would enable women to approach Scripture critically, and be able to negotiate its authority in their lives (Deifelt 1997:53). The theological training would enable ECZ women to write from a feminist point of view, based on their experiences of exclusion and the search for equality. Furthermore, it would enable them to uncover the stories of women found buried under layers of patriarchal practices and ideologies. It would also enable women to challenge such practices (Deifelt 1997:53).

The ECZ women need to re-examine and challenge the ECZ’s ecclesiological and hermeneutical principles that are based on SAGM’s patriarchal theology and patriarchal anthropology from a feminist ecclesiological perspective. This is only possible if more women are theologically trained. Once, they are theologically trained, they would, like other Christian women theologians in Africa, turn their attention to the Church with a concern for its redemption from the patriarchal captivity that undermines its Christlikeness (Oduyoye 2001:32). The current state of affairs does not allow them to challenge mission theology that has been with ECZ since 1910. We therefore, recommend to the ECZ to have a deliberate policy of training women theologically.

### **5.1.3 Women to take up decision-making positions**

As stated in the previous chapter, the ministries of women in the ECZ are exercised through the women’s groups called “Women’s Fellowship” which are found in the local Churches and District Councils. Women’s fellowship groups are led by women’s committees comprising of deaconesses (ECZ Constitution 2008:31). These women’s committees are subcommittees of the main committees that are charged with the responsibility of running the affairs of the church, which include policy making and decision-making. It is an undeniable fact that the ministries of women in the ECZ are highly significant. They are known for doing more work than men. For example, women are known for supporting full-time workers financially and visiting the sick in

the hospitals. Although the ministries which women do exercise in the church are significant, they are incomplete unless accompanied by women's involvement in decision-making and providing theological leadership (Oduyoye in Rakoczy 2004:229). So too Oduyoye (in Rakoczy 2004:182) "only then will the church become a home for both women and men" (Oduyoye 1995:182).

The ECZ will not be a home for both men and women unless it starts integrating women in decision-making positions along with their male counterparts. At its 2008 General Council meeting, the ECZ passed a resolution to co-opt three women deaconesses in all its main committees at every level of the church. The purpose was for them to represent women on matters concerning women. We contend here that, although, these women have been co-opted, they are still not on the same footing as the male members. Furthermore, women in the ECZ, no matter how qualified they may be, cannot hold positions such as Chairpersons, Treasurers, and Secretaries of the main committees. They cannot hold positions as pastors and Elders. The ECZ needs to level the playing field by allowing every believer to be appointed to leadership positions on the basis of each one's gifting and not on the basis of their gender.

The ECZ must therefore, start allowing women to take up positions such as pastoral ministry, eldership and heads of departments. The Theological College of Central Africa (TCCA), an inter-denominational theological college in which the ECZ has more than 40% share holding, has in the past fifteen years produced eight women graduates who are members of the ECZ. None of them, apart from teaching in the government schools, has been given any significant ministry. It is sad to note that these women graduates, who are supposed to take up leadership positions even in the Women's Fellowship, have been left out completely. The Women's Fellowship groups throughout the ECZ are still being led by lay women leaders. They are the ones who have been co-opted in the main committees of the Church. Our contention is that as long as these women are theologically untrained, they will not stand up and challenge the status quo.

#### **5.1.4 Ministry as partnership and mutual empowerment (Rakoczy 2004:224))**

The male leaders in the ECZ must look at ministry as partnership and mutual empowerment rather than one way in which women just want to have power (Rakoczy 2004:224). Oduyoye (2001:86) is right when she asserts, “the true image of the Church of Christ is characterised by the partnership of both men and women which is based on the baptism women and men in Christ and are gifted by the Spirit for mission and ministry. Kanyoro (in Rakoczy 2004:224) also points out that “Ministry as partnership is necessary not only for the Church as *koinonia*, but also to enable the church to provide a model for society, which is grappling with the same issues of shared responsibility and accountability between its leaders and its people”. Ministry, according to her, should be based on the baptism of both men and women in Christ and should be based on empowerment of men and women for mission and ministry (Kanyoro in Rakoczy 2004:224).

#### **5.2 Conclusion**

In conclusion, we argue that the traditional and Scriptural arguments against the ordination of women are based on ancient prejudices of the humanity of women that influenced the Church fathers. We argue that the ECZ needs to research the Scriptures and tradition for imagery of human wholeness. Furthermore, we argue that the ECZ women need to advocate for an anthropology which affirms women’s dignity and equality.

It is our contention that these conclusions point to the need for a re-examination of the attitude of the church, the ECZ in particular. While other denominations have started ordaining women, the ECZ has accepted the status quo. The ECZ needs a drastic re-appraisal of its outlook. The ECZ, as a church has missed out on the way that God wants men and women to work together in the church and to be together as a church; to live out their diversity, unity and complementarity.



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## APPENDIX A

### Extracts from General Council Minutes

#### The Evangelical Church in Zambia 30<sup>th</sup> General Council 2007

50. Local Church Executive Committee

General Council resolved that Local Church Executive Committee should be chaired by the Pastor and the Local Church business will be chaired by another person.

It was agreed that the Local Church Committee include three deaconesses, the chairlady, Secretary and any other member of the women's fellowship. They shall be co-opted members.

51. District Council

General council agreed to have six women represented at District Council.

52. District Council Executive Committee

It was agreed that three women shall be co-opted to be District Council Executive Committee members among those present at the District Council meeting.

53. Regional Council

54. Regional Council Executive Committee

It was agreed that three women out of those present at the Regional Council meeting shall be co-opted to be Regional Council Executive Committee members.

55. General Council

General Council resolved that each Regional Council sends one woman as delegate to the General Council along with three other bringing the number to four.

56. General Council Executive Committee

It was agreed that three women shall be o-opted with full responsibility at General Council Executive Committee.

**THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH IN ZAMBIA 28<sup>TH</sup> GENERAL COUNCIL 2005**

51 ECZ Restructuring Constitution Review

The CRC committee chairperson reported that the idea of women teaching men in the ECZ was not favoured by all six Regional Councils.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **EXTRACTS FROM REGIONAL COUNCIL MINUTES 2006**

30

Women to be allowed to teach and preach where there are men

The Copperbelt Regional Council rejected the idea of women teaching or preaching where there are men. It was observed that according to 1 Timothy 2:12, women are not allowed to teach. Therefore the RC resolved not allow this item be included in the New Constitution.